

**LITERATE PRACTICES AND THE  
PRODUCTION OF CHILDREN:  
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PRE-  
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISCOURSES**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines discourses around reading and reading instruction, with particular reference to children. The argument is that literate practices are crucially involved in the formation of that child. Psychology, when it establishes itself as the science which has the measure of the individual, becomes intertwined with literate practices and illuminates the relation between reading and the child in a new way. This thesis suggests that to understand the interrelations between reading, psychology and the child in our culture, one must pay attention to problems connected with the government of that culture, and, more specifically, to what Foucault has termed 'governmentality'.

Nowadays, literate practices are fundamental to the construction of citizens fit to take their place in society; this has not always been so. This thesis writes a genealogy of how a cognitive maximisation of literacy skills became a social imperative. It examines a series of crucial historical moments in this transformation.

First, a set of reorganisations in the philological world in the middle of the eighteenth century enable the reader to become, for the first time, a problem.

Second, the nineteenth-century reappraisal of the

transformative effects of education makes literacy for the lower orders desirable. Experiments in techniques of schooling allow for the formation of certain sorts of individuals. The thesis examines these processes of formation and analyses the contemporaneous reorganisation of the teacher-pupil relationship.

Third, the beginning of our century sees psychology take an interest in literacy and the child. Psychology colonises such discursive processes and provides techniques for making new aspects of the literate child visible. The child is scientifically made subject to a set of practices which aim to calculate and administer.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Education may well be, as of right, the instrument whereby every individual, in a society like our own, can gain access to any kind of discourse. But we well know that in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it.”<sup>1</sup>

“In Books lies the soul of the whole past time the articulate and audible voice of the past when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream.”<sup>2</sup>

This thesis attempts to investigate the topic of children learning to read. In doing so, it situates itself in a critical way in relation to a whole series of theoretical and experimental projects in developmental psychology which have set out to discover the truth about this process: it takes these various studies as its backdrop and its point of departure. However, this thesis does not engage directly with these studies - it engages

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in R. Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.64.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carlyle.

rather with the historical conditions which have allowed these studies to occur, the conditions of possibility for such studies to constitute themselves as possible (that is to say, thinkable) projects. The thesis attempts to develop an argument that dominant psychological explanations of the developmental reading process are produced within a field that can be termed the field of 'governmentality'. That is to say, they relate to a series of historically specific strategies which have concerned themselves with the problems involved in governing the population or specific populations according to specific rationalities of government. 'Governmentality' does not carry a simply negative meaning: a sense of the 'state' repressing individuals by forming apparatuses of oppression above them. Rather, it refers to all those processes which, since the eighteenth century, have aimed at the maximisation of the abilities, happiness, and health of the population - a process we might think of as the 'amplification of capacities'.<sup>3</sup>

My argument is that the child is caught up in the web of governmentality; s/he is constantly incited to an amplification of his/her capacities, whether cognitive, emotional, or physical. Governmentality causes a series of interventions to be targeted

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<sup>3</sup> I follow Michel Foucault's periodisation for the birth of governmentality here. See also Chapter Four, 'The New Pedagogy', which deals with the beginnings of these maximisation strategies in relation to literacy, starting also early in the eighteenth century.

at the subjective existence of the child; in fact, these interventions are crucial in the constitution of the child. The humble techniques of reading instruction, and the uses that literacy skills are put to, are some of the vectors of these new types of power.

Many recent critiques of psychology have focused on psychology as an agent of oppression.<sup>4</sup> They have pointed to the theoretical and epistemological problems that make psychology unable to function as a liberatory mechanism in people's lives. It would have been possible for me to have taken a similar perspective in regard to the psychology of reading: in particular, because of the theoretical problem of dualism, I would have been able to sustain a critique of psychology as something which distorts our understanding of the 'real' processes going on.<sup>5</sup> No doubt psychology is constrained ultimately to conceptualise reading as a mechanical, cognitive process. This conception of reading as a transaction between the child and the text, involving the former in some way processing the latter, in its pure form ignores the social context in which the 'process' takes place; and

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<sup>4</sup> In the field of psychology, the texts that assume this position are legion; some of the Marxist accounts of the functioning of psychological knowledge are clear examples. See, for example, Edward Sampson, 'Cognitive Psychology as Ideology', *American Psychologist* 36, 730-43, 1981; Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics*, London, Routledge, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In the field of education, it is a fairly common strategy to engage in arguments of this sort. See, for example, Herbert R. Kohl, *Reading - How To*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974.



in its diluted form reduces the social context to a purely additive effect, 'surface noise' that, in the final analysis, is secondary to the cognitive transaction between the individual and the object (in this case, the child and the text).

While there is much to be gained from such critiques of psychology, I am ultimately not interested in disputing the truth claims that psychology makes as regards its knowledge of the reading child: I do not wish to join battle with psychology on the terrain of epistemology. On the contrary, I am willing to go some way to accepting such psychological theorisation, because I believe that it is productive, rather than merely descriptive, of people and the social world they live in. What I aim to do is unsettle some of the claims this body of knowledge makes to be self-evident and humanitarian.

To do this, I make use of theory that has originated outside psychology, partly because it is my contention that the way psychology is set up as a discipline makes it unable to conceptualise its history and its role in the formation of 'the social' in any way other than as a history of progress: a privileged access to 'truth' which is a neutral, scientific understanding of

the individual.<sup>6</sup> The theory I make use of can be broadly termed 'critical theory', and has in the main developed in France over the last thirty years or so. Of primary importance among these alternative positions is the notion of 'discourse'; discourse, at its most basic, refers to people's talk, but the meaning of discourse in French critical theory has become somewhat extended. A particular discourse refers to a coherent set of beliefs or practices: thus there may be particular discourses that are appropriate to medicine or schooling, for example; one can speak of the discourses of paediatrics, or of developmental psychology. These phenomena, by exhibiting a systematicity in the ways in which they can be spoken of as well as practised, attain the status of discourse. The notion of discourse has been extended to encompass not just words, but actions and practices as well. So, to think of this extension of meaning in the context of developmental psychology, we need to consider not only talk, but practices, beliefs, texts, and so on. To take an example: the corpus of Jean Piaget's work can be said to be part of developmental psychological discourse: the texts themselves are not literally 'talk', but are nonetheless part of what we might

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<sup>6</sup> A quick glance at any of the standard accounts of the history of psychology, as written by psychologists, will confirm this view. See, for example, Thomas H. Leahey, *A History of Psychology, 3rd Edition*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1992; James F. Brennan, *History and Systems of Psychology, 3rd Edition*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1991; L. S. Hearnshaw, *The Shaping of Modern Psychology*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

term the 'regime of meaning' that is modern developmental psychology, and feed back in to the continuing change and development of psychological discourse. Piaget's work is a part of modern psychological discourse, and can only be understood with reference to that discourse; conversely, it makes other aspects of psychological discourse themselves comprehensible - in fact, I would go further and say that it makes them sayable and/or visible. A discourse, then, can be characterised as a 'regime of meaning' in that it sets up the intelligibility of any series of practices - developmental psychology is only understandable through a series of developmental psychological discourses, ways of talking about and practising developmental psychology. In addition, a discourse can be characterised as a 'regime of truth', in that it forms the limit of intelligibility, and thus constrains what can be said (and so what can be accepted as true); we might also think of a discourse as a 'regime of truth' because the essential productivity of its nature means that it is the source of any innovation which it might in turn legitimate.<sup>7</sup> My approach to 'truth' within such a discursive framework is radically different from that typical of what we might term 'scientific' psychology; in brief, I do not conceive of truth as a

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<sup>7</sup> One may note in passing that such a definition of discourse radically disturbs the foundations of 'truth', which can be thought of as discursively produced and thus potentially alterable. The phrase 'regime of truth' conveys something of this notion of truth as non-absolute, tied rather to a discursive and historical specificity.

*priori*, out there in the world waiting to be discovered by science; rather, discourse has a crucial role in the production of truth.

Baldly, 'truth' itself is an effect of discourse: part of a discourse's 'positivity' (its nature as productive) is in its production of 'truth'.

My aim in this thesis is to examine reading and the discourses that relate to reading, in particular in connection with the child beginning-reader. Because I start off by examining reading discursively, I am already moving towards an explanation of the child becoming a reader which is different in important respects from those usually entertained in psychology: I am now able to treat the child as a 'subject' of discourse, that is, as in an important sense produced through the workings of discourse; and I am able to consider the text as a 'discursive monument', that is, as something which is itself intrinsic to its discourse, explainable only with reference to the conditions of its production and having a further effectiveness within its own discourse (and possibly others). Neither the child nor the text in the reading process are treated as *a priori*, which in essence is what most psychological explanations do: instead, the discourse in which the act of reading takes place is always-already present. One can think of the child as always positioned within a discourse, and as being a subject in and of discourse; and one can

think of texts as part of the ebb and flow of discourse, not springing spontaneously to life, but evolving out of discourse, and altering its subsequent pattern - monuments in and of discourse.

I began my investigations by working in the field: I followed two classes of children, first and second year infants, in two inner-city, working-class primary schools, for a period of just over a year. I made use of techniques of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, focusing on both the children and the teachers in a variety of classroom settings. I was also able to interview other teachers at the same schools, formally and informally. From this field work, I was able to develop a theorisation of the 'state of play' in the modern school: how the child, in learning to read, is constituted as a subject of governmental strategies, is maximised in terms of his/her subjective existence, has his/her capacities (particularly the cognitive capacities) amplified. In addition, one sees how the teacher is bound up in this process of producing a citizen through such devices as the transmission of literacy skills, and the strains and anxieties that flow from such a duty. One also sees something of the relationship between the school and the home, and how they form a complex, a grid from which the child is extorted. My account of this fieldwork is given in Chapter 10.

I precede this chapter with the bulk of my research, in

which the basic question is: how did such modern discursive formations come about? My contention is that these modern knowledges and practices are historically produced and thus do not refer to a timeless and universal process through which the child learns to read. By drawing attention to their specificity, I can embark upon an analysis of how these knowledges gain the status of truth: how does the cognitive maximisation of literacy skills become a social imperative? How does psychology become the technique which can adjudicate on the success or failure of this maximisation? It is perhaps not giving too much away to say that these truths do not arise through the 'march of progress', but because they relate to wider projects to regulate and govern the population. This reworking of how one can think about truth and knowledge necessitates this second strand of my work, since it becomes impossible to understand the present without looking at the past that is constitutive of it. This strand of my work is directed primarily at a period from about 1830 to about 1870, a time of important technical change in methods of instruction related to reading, and a time which I maintain was the scene of the production of a set of stable discursive concerns, that is, concerns that are still relevant and still have an effectiveness with relation to modern practices and problems. The institution of compulsory education facilitated the consideration of children

as a distinct group with their own specific educational characteristics, while technical shifts in the teaching of reading and the reading materials considered suitable were also part of the conditions of possibility of having this new object of study, the child at school. My research also uncovers ways in which the teaching of reading was related to a series of wider concerns: for example, a concern to produce a workforce suitable for Britain's changing role in the world (and a workforce whose education was circumscribed to avoid the 'dangers' of over-education). The inculcation of good habits into this workforce (and here there was a concern with generation and hygiene, as well as morals) was seen as best achieved through the education of the workforce's children, who would take home the lessons learned through reading, which had by now been transformed into a widespread skill.

I maintain that it is in the period immediately after this that psychology, arising in response to a need for an intensified programme of social regulation and administration, effectively 'colonised' reading, which became in its turn an intensified vector of power, aiming at the body and the soul of the child. This colonisation transformed and 'reinvented' reading; psychology now became the discourse that most effectively claimed to speak the truth of the individual - reading became a

relay, enabling psychology to operate as an effective regulatory practice. From this time on, reading can be thought of as no longer just a discourse in its own right, but also as a 'surface of emergence' for the new discourses of the human sciences, and psychology in particular.<sup>8</sup> Having argued, then, that the period 1830-1870 is a crucial one in the formation of modern literate practices and modern literate subjects, I attempt to produce a history, or genealogy, of some of the crucial innovations that set this period apart.

The organisation of the thesis reflects this split in the research. The 'historical' chapters, which form the bulk of the thesis, detail what can be called a 'genealogy' of the modern child beginning-reader, tracing the 'conditions of possibility'<sup>9</sup> for what one might think of as a crucial discursive shift which happens around the middle-to-end of the nineteenth century. This shift is itself shown to be part of the conditions of possibility for

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<sup>8</sup> Foucault discusses the concept of 'surface of emergence' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Tavistock, 1972, p. 41. Literacy makes a strange bedfellow for some of the other surfaces Foucault instances, such as the family, religious groups, sexuality, criminality, etc, but I maintain that literacy is not the straightforward set of skills it might appear at first glance.

<sup>9</sup> The terms 'genealogy' and 'conditions of possibility', which I have already begun to use, will be outlined below in detail. The former is a Nietzschean term designed to mark a difference in terms of investigative procedure from 'history'. The latter was originally a Kantian term, and is used to signal a distrust of the totalisation of most versions of the cause-effect relation, or of such notions as 'influence'.



modern practice. I am concerned to demonstrate how a project like the psychology of reading became 'thinkable', and to do that I have to trace some very old roots, or 'discursive resources', indeed. The history of different forms of discipline, of examination, of the silencing of reading, and of projects aiming to correct the moral life of the child, are among the topics I cover. I also deal, although much more schematically, with some of the shifts and adjustments that need to be made when the psychology of reading becomes established: problems which relate to the transference of certain ethical exigencies to a psychological register. In attempting to do this work, I have concentrated on material that relates to the situation in England; however, I also make use of material that relates to the situation in other parts of Western Europe and in North America. No doubt, to do justice to all the countries involved would require a much more microscopic analysis. However, I have been content with producing a much more schematic account, at the risk of over-generalising: I have taken the generation of hypotheses to be the most important part of this research. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 1, I am less concerned with the production of a 'standard' historical work than with attempting to undermine certain cherished beliefs about the foundations of modern educational practices.

In Chapter 10, I introduce the field work I have conducted. I demonstrate how the production of certain forms of knowledge and of power are not merely of historical interest, but can be seen in the running of the modern classroom and in modern attempts to make the child literate. This account of modernity will also be seen to act as a test of how useful my historical work has been: how far the historical work makes aspects of the present more understandable is perhaps the best way of judging its success.

The two parts form a coherent single project: the analysis of modernity is taken to be a key step to empower the possibility of change; and a genealogy of modern practice effectively demonstrates the latter's cultural and historical specificity. This is a necessary step, given my contention that modern practices cannot be understood outside the (newly-problematized) categories of knowledge and truth. A (presumptuous) subtitle to the thesis might be "A History of Reading and Truth", since this is the crux of my investigations: the analysis of the modern configurations of truth as they relate to the child reader; and a history of those configurations. My intention is to demonstrate that things that appear to be givens are not so, and consequently that we can make a difference to the present. Uncovering and enabling such possibilities, or at least

making a contribution in that direction, is perhaps the most this  
or any thesis can hope for.

# 1: THE THEORETICAL

“Theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice... A theory is exactly like a box of tools.”<sup>1</sup>

To begin: why this investigation of reading and children, a well-worn research topic in developmental psychology, on which a plethora of data has already been collected? - reading readiness, phonics, look-and-say, reading and cognition, phonological encoding, the importance of short-term memory, saccadic reading, reading disabilities, the relative contributions of environment and heredity, all these have already been examined and re-examined, and the results duly set down in those great scientific texts that promise us the truth of the individual from a roster of performance. My (minor) polemic is meant to signal a break, a stepping-back to reconsider the terms on which the whole (psychological) venture is based. There will be no new ‘facts’ here, no definitive answers. This piece of work is a more modest venture, and takes its cue from Derrida’s “profound suspicion” of all those taken-for-granted concepts that invest (and maybe infest) our lives.<sup>2</sup> I am simply interested in re-

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault/Gilles Deleuze.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in Art and Architecture*, Academy Forum/Tate Gallery Video, 1988.

examining those questions around reading, and around children, and around the relation between the two, while trying to problematise those explanations and facts which come all too easily, “suspiciously” easily one might say. For example, research into reading is often conducted with an implicit model as to the status of the phenomena that are under investigation, a model which provides the limit of theorisation: the child is a particular (autonomous) thing, the text is something else quite separate and likewise autonomous, and the ‘transaction’ between the two involves the ideas of the author (as embodied in the text) getting into the child’s mind. All of this is ‘reading’, a ‘neutral’ activity, and fundamentally a ‘cognitive’ activity, both benign and self-evident. Of course, to be fair, this degree of naivety is not characteristic of all research in this area, but psychology has been slow to take up work in semiotics, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism<sup>3</sup> and other approaches in the human sciences that have disputed these simplicities with some success; but then again, one must problematise a definition of psychology as an academic venture in search of the truth, making use of the best theoretical tools that it can lay its hands on. More of this later.

This venture of “profound suspicion” leaves one wondering

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<sup>3</sup> I follow Deleuze and Guattari in using these totalising expressions for convenience, “out of habit”. One must, however, guard against the periodisations that such shorthands may evoke.

where to start; how to proceed when one must try and force oneself to suspect all those taken-for-granted that underlie one's investigations - and when one must perhaps suspect 'investigation' most of all. The whole history of 'investigation' under the aegis of Western metaphysics has been cast into doubt by the simple manoeuvre of suspicion; for the West orients itself around what Derrida has termed the 'logocentre' (or 'phallogocentre'). In particular, the logocentricity of Western science privileges 'reason' and 'rationality', which in their turn pathologise 'unreason'; an unreason which can attach itself to women, children, the lower orders, savages, or any group that seems in need of regulation. What I hope to demonstrate is that this 'reason' or 'rationality', which excludes and delimits, forms the bedrock of scientific psychological investigation and theorisation; nonetheless, it can be demonstrated that this is a project, in the sense that it is a political endeavour in which strategic investments are made.<sup>4</sup> Psychology orients itself around the twin poles of 'reason' and 'government', and reaches its goal in the production of the reasonable citizen who can regulate him- or herself even more effectively than an overt

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I am most interested in the privileging of rationality in the service of government, a process Foucault has referred to by the neologism 'governmentality'. It is also worth pointing out that Foucault has argued in *Madness and Civilization* that Western civilisation is founded on the insistence of a dichotomy between reason and unreason.

system of control can manage. Psychology colonises reading and extorts it to do its will: reading becomes a relay in the production of the obedient subject, reading works as part of a technology of government. Yet the way 'reasonable' projects like psychology operate is to exclude all counter-arguments as 'irrational' and thus as 'wrong': and it becomes very hard to question that which presents itself as self-evident. The problem is: how does one deconstruct these claims to truth, how does one write about the 'hidden' history of social regulation that I maintain lies behind the seemingly-innocuous story of how and why children are taught to read, when one's tools are fashioned to work in the opposite direction?

What seems clear is that any critical venture is forced to begin on the metaphysical terrain that it would maybe rather undercut, and thus runs the perpetual risk of restoring, of reasserting, the logocentre in the very act of deconstruction. Derrida has made this risk very clear in his critique of Foucault's attempt to write an archaeology of a silence, the silence around madness:

"But first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organised language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work? Would not the archaeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle

restoration, the *repetition*, in the most irreducibly ambiguous meaning of the word, of the act perpetrated against madness - and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced?"<sup>5</sup>

Foucault's own suggestions as to how one can write a history of silence are perhaps idealist: he privileges a space outside discourse from where a 'counter-memory' might arise.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever, it seems likely that this is an insoluble problem: how can one step outside one's own *milieu* and produce a history of

silence? Nonetheless, there would certainly seem to be

strategies one can adopt, the simplest (and simultaneously the

most difficult) of which is to keep as critical an eye on one's own venture as on those 'truths' that one works to deconstruct.

Certainly, it would seem theoretically impossible to avoid the

reassertion of the *logos*, but in practice, as reason, according to

Derrida, always refers to, and exists by virtue of its difference

from, unreason, such proximity might well make possible some

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Writing and Difference*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p.35, italics in original. The lecture of which this is a translation was a response to Michel Foucault's *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris, Plon, 1961.

<sup>6</sup> See Donald F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977, p.113-196, and especially 'Theatrum Philosophicum', a translation of an essay which appeared in *Critique* 282, 1970, 885-908. For many of the French texts I refer to in this section I have given references both to the original version and to the English translation; this is because some of the theoretical points have either been badly rendered or else have become rather opaque in translation, and thus may benefit from being considered in the original as well as in translation.



subversion of the logocentre - as would be suggested by the work of Nietzsche, Freud, Bataille, Artaud and Foucault among others. The existence of such 'otherness' in these authors' work suggests that the production of alternative positions is possible in practice even if it is very difficult to outline the conditions under which they might come into existence.

However, I should not want wish this thesis to be read as in some sense defending a primitive and 'wild' form of literacy which can stand outside of and escape those governmental strategies which seek to pervade it. In this sense, I am not writing a history of the referent, of 'reading itself', but rather seeking to outline the deployment of reading in a constellation of projects which constitute 'society' "as an historically specific assemblage of positive knowledges of the soul and 'the social', of technologies for the policing of conduct, and of rules for the government of the self".<sup>7</sup> In this sense, my account is less an account of 'silenced discourse', than an account of what discourse produces; and further, why certain statements are not made, why certain possibilities are excluded from the discourses around reading.

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<sup>7</sup> I borrow these words from Nikolas Rose, 'Of madness itself: *Histoire de la folie* and the object of psychiatric history', *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 3, 1990, 373-380, p.374. Foucault himself suggests that there is a tension in his work between a description of the wild and untamed object of a genealogy, and a denial of the possibility that such an object can exist outside of a nexus of discourses. See *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp.16, 47.

My concern, then, is with the power-knowledge edifice that supports contemporary (developmental) psychology and particularly its incursions into the activity of reading. My approach will try to combine two apparently antithetical positions. On the one hand I shall evidence a complete refusal of psychological explanation: taken to its logical conclusion, my position is that a 'progressive' psychological theory of reading is impossible. Psychology cannot be 'saved', because its practice is not, as is commonly believed, a progress towards truth - that is to say, I will not partake of an 'act of faith' in science. Rather, I maintain that psychology is in essence a series of disciplinary and administrative practices, and the fact that its truths (or what I would term 'truth effects', that is, what has an effective status as true within psychological discourse) are so often seen as universal is only a mark of what I would term its 'effective ideologisation': how effectively it works as a discourse to

establish itself as 'true'.<sup>8</sup> My deconstruction of psychological theory, of a psychological claim to tell the truth, is mindful of Lyotard's warning that deconstruction can easily nurture the same terrorist pretensions to truth as 'construction'. He makes this clear in his critique of Baudrillard, locating the trap set by rationality at the moment of its apparent defeat:-

"This perfectly simple trap consists in *answering the demand of vanquished theory*, and this demand is: 'put something in my place'. Now the important thing is the place, not the content of the theory. It is the place of theory which must be beaten. And that can only be done by displacement and flight."<sup>9</sup>

Part of my method is to refuse the place where psychology seeks its answers, and I hope to reveal how it is not only possible but also necessary to reveal psychology as something other, and

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<sup>8</sup> This term is deliberately used in contrast with the concept of 'ideology' as it is frequently used in the social sciences, and particularly in some forms of Marxism. 'Ideology' implies that another, more real, truth exists behind the ideological level. My analysis suggests rather that there is no truth apart from what is produced through discourse - if discursively something is 'true' and has 'effects' ('truth effects'), then my interest is in analysing these truths rather than disputing them and claiming they are false because they are unpalatable, which is the thrust of most theories of ideology. Deleuze and Guattari sum it up with characteristic iconoclasm: "There is no ideology and there never has been" (*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London, Athlone, 1988, p.4, a translation of *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, Paris, Minuit, 1980). What I do dispute are the claims to universality that these truths often make: they are historical and cultural specificities.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie libidinale*, Paris, Minuit, 1974, p.129, italics in original; the translation is taken from Geoff Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988, p.35.

something more, than it presents itself as: psychology as self-occulting.

My second position is, however, to take psychology very seriously indeed as a productive discourse; my analysis will show how psychology is crucially implicated in the production of the particular truth that is the self-regulating citizen - accomplished, in part, through teaching the child to read. However, given the way in which 'truth' is conceptualised in the present thesis, it should be clear that it is possible both to dispute and deconstruct the eternal truths of psychological practice while examining just what these truths accomplish.

In addition, it is important to avoid any extravagant claims about how revolutionary this thesis is, and Derrida again puts it nicely:-

“The reproductive forces of authority can get along more comfortably with declarations or theses whose content presents itself as revolutionary, provided that they respect the rites of legitimation, the rhetoric and the institutional symbolism which defuses and neutralises whatever comes from outside the system.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Derrida, 'The Time of a Thesis: Punctuations', in Alan Montefiore (ed.), *Philosophy in France Today*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.44. Derrida continues by arguing that for him a 'thesis' is strictly speaking impossible since a 'thetic' presentation implies a positional (or, no different, an oppositional) logic. To the extent that I agree with him perhaps the present work should be regarded as an 'athesis'.

The apparent paradox of linking such modesty with a deconstructive venture, which has aroused such antipathy in so many quarters, can be dissolved if one realises that such a venture is not a modern invention, but merely part of a hermeneutic practice that stretches back at least to the Greeks.<sup>11</sup> The great achievement of modern psychological practice is that it has defined what are legitimate and illegitimate modes of inquiry; the knowledge that these are historically specific allows one to see one's deconstructive investigations as part of a long tradition which 'science' tries to exclude. Thus a refusal of these strictures can only be seen as revolutionary if one fails to retain a historical perspective which can show us just how extensively the terrain on which we argue has already been defined by the 'other side'.

Now it would seem that this process of breaking down psychology's claim to exclusivity in the field of knowledge about the individual is perhaps the most important step: once one puts into question the self-evident quality that much psychological investigation assumes for itself, one's own work can lose some

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<sup>11</sup> Derrida in *Deconstruction in Art and Architecture* contests the notion that deconstruction is a new venture or investigative paradigm, but is merely a practice that has gone on at least since the time of Plato. The obverse of this is his claim that he does not exclusively practice deconstruction. This recourse to the Greeks to dispute naive interpretations of his work has a parallel in Foucault's attempts to demonstrate the discursive roots of modern 'technologies of the self' in ancient Greece and Rome. For all their anti-metaphysical rhetoric, Derrida and Foucault frequently tread the well-worn paths of philosophy.

of that defensiveness which is engendered by psychology's appropriation of the 'truth', and the consequent hostility it has towards those who dispute this truth. Consequently, I shall not spend too much time justifying the legitimacy of my approach: its usefulness should be seen to lie in what anyone can derive from it, and whether it seems to provide a plausible account<sup>12</sup> of phenomena annexed to the domain of the psychological. In this venture, I am greatly helped by other recent work which has begun these inroads into the taken-for-granted, and has enabled the present work to be situated as part of a project whose need continually to justify itself is perhaps less than it once was. The most obvious debt here is to recent French theory, which has contested the notions of social determinism and individual coherence, and has suggested a range of possibilities for thinking about human action, political practice, and the importance of the socio-historical domain in the productivity of everyday life. This work is usually characterised as descendant from the problematics of *les événements* of May 1968 and crises within the French Communist Party regarding the 'failure' of Marxism, but it seems clear that, well before this time, a renewal of

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<sup>12</sup> In seeking to give nothing more than a 'plausible account', I am deliberately echoing the playfulness of Foucault, who often remarked that his books were 'novels'. However, a serious point lies behind this playfulness, since it demonstrates an unwillingness to set up an absolutist text with those 'terrorist' truth-games to which Lyotard has alerted us.

interest in Nietzsche and Heidegger was fuelling a concern with the irrational and the possibilities of undermining the logic of the dominant Western modes of thought. Derrida and Foucault are key names here, as is Jacques Lacan, who more than anyone disputed the coherence of the individual and opened up a renewed consideration of subjectivity; Louis Althusser, too, was concerned with this problem, and although his notion of the interpellation of the subject, an attempt to fuse Marxism and a modified Freudo-Lacanianism, is generally regarded as problematic, his work inspired much of what was to come later (particularly Pêcheux), and demonstrated that Marxism's conception of the individual needed to be problematised; while Roland Barthes's textual analyses brought into question the categories of author and text, and challenged the empiricism and humanism that had dominated literary criticism, with repercussions way beyond his chosen field. Some of this work concentrated specifically on psychology and its related disciplines, particularly the research done by Foucault and his

circle,<sup>13</sup> although most of the 'new' approach to psychology developed in Britain. I am thinking here in particular of the journal *Ideology and Consciousness* (later *I&C*, which played an important part in introducing much of this theory to those interested in radical psychology) and books that were written subsequently by members of that journal's editorial collective and others.<sup>14</sup> A renewed interest in psychoanalysis also chipped away at the psychological edifice: the impetus for this

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<sup>13</sup> Foucault's training was initially in psychology, although in the latter part of his career he rarely dealt with psychology *per se*. He gained his *Licence de psychologie* in 1949 and his *Diplôme de psycho-pathologie* from the Institut de Psychologie in Paris in 1952. Just after this he published the text that deals more explicitly with psychology than anything else in the corpus of his work, *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1954, which was revised and republished in 1962 as *Maladie mentale et psychologie*. This is available in translation as *Mental Illness and Psychology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987. His later book, *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* concentrated on psychiatry. This is available in an abridged translation, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, New York, Random House, 1965. Of Foucault's circle, Jacques Donzelot is perhaps most concerned with psychology. See his *La police des familles*, Paris, Minuit, 1977, translated as *The Policing of Families*, New York, Pantheon, 1979, as well as his *L'Invention du social: essai sur le déclin de passions politiques*, Paris, Fayard, 1984.

<sup>14</sup> This journal made available, often for the first time in English, pieces by Foucault, Donzelot, Deleuze and Guattari, and others, and dealt with work in the psychoanalytic tradition (Lacan, Irigaray, and others). It also provided an opportunity for British psychologists to develop work using these theoretical positions. Notable in this regard are Diana Adlam et al., 'Psychology, Ideology and the Human Subject', *Ideology and Consciousness* 1, 1977, 5-56; Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine, 'The Acquisition and Production of Knowledge: Piaget's Theory Reconsidered', *Ideology and Consciousness* 3, 1978, 67-94; Denise Riley, 'Developmental Psychology, Biology and Marxism', *Ideology and Consciousness* 4, 1978, 73-92; Nikolas Rose, 'The Psychological Complex: Mental Measurement and Social Administration', *Ideology and Consciousness* 5, 1979, 5-70; and Karen Jones and Kevin Williamson, 'The Birth of the Schoolroom', *I&C* 6, 1979, 59-110. Perhaps the most important books in this tradition are Julian Henriques et al., *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity*, London, Methuen, 1984, and Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England 1869-1939*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.



'rediscovery' of Freud came from the work of Lacan, and it was taken up, again, particularly in the *I&C* circle, some of whose members developed a theoretical position which attempted to reconcile post-structural notions of discourse with psychoanalytic conceptions of subjectivity.

It is possible, then, to situate the present thesis within an already existing tradition which, roughly speaking, problematises the notion of the subject and stresses the importance of the discursive. I shall gradually unveil my own theoretical predilections and refusals, but at this point it will suffice to stress the basis for my selection of theory. It is not simply a case of eclecticism to combine, for example, Latourian notions of enrolment with Foucaultian theories of the power-knowledge couple; and even though it seems to me entirely proper to do what one likes with theory,<sup>15</sup> my own regroupings of French theoretical work are justifiable because of the common themes (or better, *paranthèmes*, anthems) that much of this writing inspires. This is not to suggest an identity among the work that inspires my own, but is rather a recognition of the similar problematics with

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault comes to my defence, so to speak, while discussing his use of Nietzsche: "The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if commentators then say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest." 'Entretien sur la prison', *Magazine Littéraire* 101, June 1975, 27-33. Translated as 'Prison Talk: an Interview with Michel Foucault', *Radical Philosophy* 16, Spring 1977, 10-15.

which all these endeavours engage. Thus I maintain that it is possible to utilise various aspects of differing theoretical orientations with a reasonable chance of non-contradiction: besides which, an obsession with non-contradiction, with theoretical purity, while attempting to describe the functioning of the most tortuously complicated discursive formations is perhaps not the most helpful approach. To feel oneself hamstrung by logic is to risk restating the logocentre; none of which points to a rejection of rigour or of care, but the emphasis is rather on the exploration of possibilities. Is it possible to think differently?

It should by now be a little clearer what sort of approach to the question of children and reading I have decided to take. First of all, the principles of suspicion and care are evoked. One needs to select tools for this task carefully and critically, and alter them as the task demands. This section is designed to lay out those resources that seem most apposite for the task in hand, given the inescapability of the metaphysical (but don't forget the refusals above, the exergue to this thesis: this is a modest venture, content to try and use those fissures in the *clôture* of

the metaphysical domain<sup>16</sup> to suggest new departures, new questionings, in an area that seems to labour under the hegemony of the common-sense). What I would like to suggest is a dual strategy to begin these questionings, a duality formed from a couple that I hope to show are mutually informative, and, indeed, indissoluble. The first strategy: try to examine those modern practices around the child and reading, and situate them critically in their relation to the other discourses of social life: that is, one must ask such questions as 'why is this as it is?', 'who stands to gain from it?', 'is there a wider context in which these practices are comprehensible?' The second strategy: try to construct a history of these practices - 'where do they come from?', 'with what other discourses are they coarticulated?', 'could things have been otherwise (and could they still be)?' These two strategies form part of one overarching method of inquiry, since the examination of modern practices can only be done by an attention to their (historical and other) specificities, which can be drawn out by situating them in relation to their history, the context of their emergence, and the conditions of

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<sup>16</sup> I take these terms from Derrida's *Positions*, Paris, Minuit, 1972, translated as *Positions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981. Derrida's point here is that, overall, a strategy of escape from the Western phallogocentre is impossible, and it would be idealist to suppose otherwise. However, there exist points from which this 'closure' can be identified and critiqued, the kind of place (or non-place) from which Derrida's work itself comes. It sums up neatly the *raison d'être* of this (a)thesis: find fissures and make use of those positions.

their possibility. However, it is not just the attention to specificity which constrains one to look at the past: it is precisely because knowledge and truth are to be problematised, that one needs to look to the past to analyse the emergence of those particular forms of knowledge and truth that are relevant to children and reading. Not only is the examination of modernity in this way made inextricable from its historical underpinnings, but the reverse is also postulated: a meaningful history of practice must concern itself with present problematics and conjunctural thematics - it must be a 'history of the present', taking its cue from there and aiming at the deconstruction of those present practices, aligning itself with the politics of radical change. At which point the reader (my ideal reader, a fictive reader) will have noticed a subtle shift in orientation - the introduction of the political.

This work starts from particular premises about the role of intellectual labour and its instrumental value in terms of bringing about social change. I start off with certain assumptions about the nature of social life, and a certain investment in the possibilities of changing that nature. The value of this work lies in whether it contributes to opening up new spaces for manoeuvre, finding its usefulness in whether it helps lay bare what Foucault has termed the 'mechanisms of power'. I

intend, by taking up such a position, to disavow the Marxist-Leninist stance in which intellectuals form a separate class, in some senses in advance of the proletariat; rather, it seems to me that the task is to expose the truth effects of power, and to avoid being the instrument of those effects. It is perhaps worth eavesdropping on a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze:

Foucault: "The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge', 'truth', 'consciousness', and 'discourse'.

"In this sense theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice. But it is local and regional, as you said, and not totalising. This is a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious. It is not to 'awaken consciousness' that we struggle... but to sap power, to take power; it is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance. A 'theory' is the regional system of this struggle."

Deleuze: "Precisely. A theory is exactly like a box of tools."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, 'Les intellectuels et le pouvoir', *L'Arc* 49, 1972, 3-10. Translated as 'The Intellectuals and Power', *Telos* 16, 1973, 103-109.

What should become clear from this is that an emphasis is not being placed on the Kantian ideal of the universal intellectual, but rather on the specific intellectual, who can engage in local, transversal struggles.<sup>18</sup> Here's Foucault again on the intellectual's role:

“The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses - or what's in their heads - but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.

“It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.

“The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of

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<sup>18</sup> This is a recurrent *motif* in the work of Félix Guattari. See his *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984, a translation of material from *Psychanalyse et transversalité*, Paris, Maspéro, 1972, *La Révolution moléculaire*, Fontenay-sous-Bois, Editions Recherches, 1977, and *Les Années d'hiver 1980-1985*, Paris, Barrault, 1986.

Nietzsche.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus the intellectual’s role is political, but limited, and the limitations are produced because reality is a discursive entity for Foucault; in the end, discourse is a matter of words, and words are the concern of intellectuals. This is the point of the reference to Nietzsche - when politics comes down to discourse, intellectuals become the politicians of our era.<sup>20</sup> All of which is to make a subtle change of emphasis in the intellectual’s task: it is still very much a political one, although the notion of ‘politics’ has become subtly altered; however, the task now also concerns the effect intellectual labour has on the self. Foucault is clear that the struggle is to avoid becoming an instrument of power, but at the same time to change oneself, to move to the possibility of *penser autrement*:

“one writes to become someone other than who one is”,<sup>21</sup> “to learn how (and how far) the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Brighton, Harvester, 1980, p.133, a translation of ‘Intervista a Michel Foucault’, in Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino (eds), *Michel Foucault: Microfisica del Potere: Interventi Politici*, Turin, Einaudi, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> This point is made by Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p.239-40.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, ‘An Interview with Michel Foucault’, postscript to Foucault’s *Death and the Labyrinth: the World of Raymond Roussel*, London, Athlone, 1987, p. 182, a translation of ‘Archéologie d’une passion’, *Magazine Littéraire* 221, July-August 1985, 100-5, p.104.

other things... what is philosophy today  
- what philosophers should actually be  
doing, I mean - if it is not the critical  
work that thought brings to bear on  
itself? What is it all about, other than  
the attempt to know how (and how far)  
it might be possible to think  
differently, instead of legitimating  
what is already known?"<sup>22</sup>

Lyotard takes this 'downgrading' of the intellectual still further,  
and would seem to deny the possibility of political intervention -  
politics for Lyotard is merely another *genre*, yet some of his  
aphorisms are strikingly reminiscent of the later Foucault:-

"One writes before knowing what there  
is to say and how to say it, to find out  
if possible."<sup>23</sup>

"Obviously the only interesting thing  
for the philosopher is to think what he  
can't manage to think: without that... I  
wonder what the hell he'd be doing...  
When you're trying to think about  
something in philosophy, you couldn't  
care less about the addressee, you don't  
give a damn. Someone comes along and  
says, 'I don't understand a word of what  
you say, of what you write': and I reply,  
'I don't give a damn. That's not the  
problem. I don't feel responsible

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<sup>22</sup> Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité II: L'usage des plaisirs*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, p.14-5, my translation. This passage can be found in the standard English translation, *The History of Sexuality Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, New York, Pantheon, 1985, p.8-9. The reference to "critical work" is an allusion to the production of an archaeology; the sense here has a flavour of 'thought archaeologising itself'.

<sup>23</sup> Lyotard, *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants: correspondance 1982-1985*, Paris, Galilée, 1985, p.160. Translation from Bennington, *Lyotard*, p.103.



towards you. You're not my judge in this matter...' There's no contempt, it's not at all a problem of contempt."<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the role of the intellectual and of intellectual labour has been given great consideration by recent French theorists. But while, for example, Derrida<sup>25</sup> and Lyotard (to oversimplify) eschew the necessary involvement of political issues in intellectual labour, Foucault always stressed the relevance of his inquiries to a project of changing the present and laying bare those mechanisms of power which characterise modern disciplinary society, and to a project of working to produce new forms of subjectivity. From the outset, I would ally myself with these aims and these hopes for the usefulness of intellectual work. This is why I have sought to write a Foucaultian account of the discursive production of the reading subject, that is, to provide a history of this present with an investment in forging new forms of subjectivity - a first step towards revolutionary

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<sup>24</sup> Lyotard, *Unpublished conversations with René Guiffrey*, typescript, p.63-4, quoted in Bennington, *Lyotard*, p.104-5.

<sup>25</sup> Derrida's exegesis of his 'positions' as regards his work can perhaps best be grasped from his *Positions*. One of his interrogators, Houdebine, desperately tries to make Derrida pledge allegiance to a project of progressive Marxism (all of this being of particular concern because of a series of wrangles internal to the *Tel Quel* group). Derrida, of course, refuses, preferring the option of a multiplicity of positions (hence the title of these interviews).

change.<sup>26</sup>

If, as we have seen above, theory is a box of tools, it may well be justifiable to use an exotic French set; but first, we must be clear about the tools to hand that must be discarded: what exactly is wrong with the obvious tools for the job, those commonly used in psychology? My contention is that psychology is unable to provide adequate or complete explanations to problems of the functioning of individuals in social life. My use of the word 'adequate' signals certain problems of theoretical orientation that are a bar to a convincing characterisation, such as the (usually unacknowledged) problem of dualism, or the radical separation of both mind from body and the individual from society. Indeed, psychology's continuing faith in the coherence

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<sup>26</sup> 'Revolution' should not be understood here in its Marxist sense, referring to class-based revolution: this assumption is at the root of many misapprehensions of Foucault and derogations of his work, because he does not provide an obvious blueprint for the overthrow of capitalist modes of production. But since this is not the point of his work, the criticism is misdirected. 'Revolution' for Foucault is a much more modest endeavour, "the simultaneous agitation of consciousness and institutions", 'Revolutionary Action: "Until Now"' in Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.228, a translation of 'Par delà le bien et le mal', *Actuel* 14, Nov 1971, 42-7, p.46. This task of 'laying bare the mechanisms of power' is conceived of as the first stage in a process of social change, at which point the intellectual's thought gives way to the decisions of those who actually choose to revolt; and the 'revolt' is history's breath of life:-

"it is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life... A people refuses the regime which oppresses it". 'Is It Useless to Revolt?', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* VIII, 1, Spring 1981, 1-9, p.7, a translation of 'Inutile de se soulever?', *LeMonde* 10, May 11, 1979, 661.

and inalienability of the individual shows a remarkable lack of knowledge and interest in debates external to the domain it has defined for itself. However, in another sense, psychological explanations of individual functioning are entirely 'adequate' to the task in hand if one is suspicious of psychology as an autonomous, neutral quest for truth, striving to be 'good' science. An epistemological critique of psychology's claims to truth and accuracy is certainly an important undertaking, but one which can be taken as read: there is a growing body of work which demonstrates the internal contradictions of psychological theory and the unexamined and unconvincing *a priori*s that keep the whole venture in place.<sup>27</sup> However, I am less interested in establishing whether psychology is 'true' or not than what are its 'truth effects': that is, how does psychology come to its position of ascendancy, what are the 'conditions of possibility' of its emergence, how does it maintain its 'effectivity', how did it achieve its 'positivity'?<sup>28</sup> What does it produce as true, and how do these productions lay claim to legitimacy? If psychology is 'adequate' to tasks of discipline and administration (which is my

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<sup>27</sup> Especially thorough, again, was work done under the aegis of *Ideology and Consciousness*. See particularly Adlam et al. 'Psychology, Ideology and the Human Subject' and Venn and Walkerdine, 'The Acquisition and Production of Knowledge'.

<sup>28</sup> A discourse has an 'effectivity' when it is able to produce truth effects. A discourse becomes 'positive' when it enters into the fray of the true and the false, and can be used to make adjudications as to the truth value of pertinent statements. See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 125ff.

claim), how is this adequacy guaranteed?

The clue to this problem lies in the characterisation of psychology as a productive discourse; that is, one must abandon empiricist and essentialist claims that psychology acts on objects which exist independently of it and precede it ontologically. My contention is: objects of psychological inquiry are created and modified by the discursive activities of psychology itself. Now, the Foucaultian corpus has demonstrated specific domains of production: medical discourses about 'folly' and 'unreason' produce the mentally ill person, penology produces the criminal, discourses on sex produce sexuality.<sup>29</sup> If we take such a perspective, does this mean that before the existence of these discourses, we did not have mental illness, criminality, sexuality? No, indeed not. To take the last example: we only have the beginnings of sexuality from the eighteenth century, when a variety of strategies of power and knowledge applied themselves to the field of sex. Before sexuality, we had other things entirely: a series of deployments of alliance based on kinship ties, deployments of the flesh based on Christianity, deployments

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<sup>29</sup> *Madness and Civilisation; Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975, translated as *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, New York, Pantheon, 1977; *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, translated as *The History of Sexuality Volume I: an Introduction*, New York, Pantheon, 1978; *The History of Sexuality II; Histoire de la sexualité III: Le souci de soi*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, translated as *The History of Sexuality III: The Care of the Self*, New York, Pantheon, 1986.

of the uses of pleasure based on self-mastery. Sex may be subject to certain physiological limitations, but its practice is always discursive. As far as children and the practice of reading go, I would follow a Foucaultian line of reasoning: the modern child is produced by psychological discourse, in coarticulation with other discourses concerned with reading. There are, of course, other discourses which target and produce the child as an object of their gaze (sexuality is an obvious example), but I intend to limit my study to those strategic deployments around reading and psychology in this production, while also considering the mutual effectivity of the reading/psychology couple on each other.

At this point I shall begin a discussion of the theoretical tools I have selected for this task. Their difference from some of some of the conventional tools of psychological investigation will be drawn out, and this difference will be a crucial principle of selection. It seems to me politically important to refuse those old tools, as they have been fashioned as part of a project of social regulation. The mute and blind strategies of psychology can do no other, its purpose and usefulness lying in its ability to

deploy a normal/pathological distinction to regulate social life.<sup>30</sup> It is clear that not all psychology will have this effectivity, of course, since the hazardous play of discourse precludes any simple correspondence between ambition and realisation, desire and fulfilment: the cycle of cause and effect remains ineffable, producing bizarre and unexpected *monstra*. However, it seems sensible to avoid the psychological tool-box given that the aim of this work is the undermining of that project of social regulation which psychology serves; thus I reject traditional tools of psychological investigation on political grounds. Perhaps the most important theoretical tool which (developmental) psychology implicitly employs is the tool of dualistic thinking, which I critique below. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that I am not concerned to resist dualism on straight philosophical grounds, although one often is forced to commence a critique on such a terrain; by suggesting that dualism is not an unalterable fact of nature, I seek to problematise not only dualistic modes of thought, but also the products of dualistic discourse (including the modern child), arguing that they are not

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<sup>30</sup> I need not specifically rehearse here the arguments that demonstrate psychology's implication in techniques of normalisation. This ongoing project can only demonstrate this role by exemplification, since, as I have tried to show, it is not merely a matter of the proof of theoretical insufficiency but also the exposure of the workings of power in the diagrams of social regulation, which can only be done issue by issue. I hope my section providing an archaeo-genealogy of reading practices will contribute to this project of exemplification.

'natural' or 'necessary'.

## DUALISM

By 'dualism', I mean here specifically individual-social dualism, or the separation of the individual from the social world that surrounds her/him. My critique of the problem of dualism in psychology is first and foremost done on theoretical grounds; however, because my attempts to get over this problem (or at least confront it more effectively) make use of theory conceived of as part of political practice, my critique is necessarily also political, claiming that the way psychology deals with the problem of dualism conceals the political problem at psychology's heart. In addition, I would maintain that dualism is in some senses a condition of possibility for the functioning of psychology.<sup>31</sup> The inscription devices<sup>32</sup> that psychology uses to make the individual calculable rely on an easy dichotomy between

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<sup>31</sup> It would be easy here to accuse me of over-generalisation. Is all psychology dualistic? Perhaps one can think of variations in psychological discourse which try to resist such categorisation (although rarely explicitly) - for example, it could be argued that behaviourism or gestalt psychology or sociobiology are attempts to bypass some of the problems I describe in this section. Nonetheless, I would argue that these radical solutions to the problem of the relation between individual and society only 'work' because they deny a problem exists at all.

<sup>32</sup> This notion is taken from the work of Bruno Latour. See, for example, 'Visualization and cognition: thinking with hands and eyes', in H. Kushlick (ed.) *Knowledge and Society*. Vol 6. Greenwich CT, JAI Press, 1986. By 'inscription devices', I refer to the means by which psychologists typically 'codify' the individual, and attempt to turn him/her into something quantifiable. Typical inscription devices are the measurement of reaction times, responses to questionnaires, and the various categorisations of children's behaviour, as well as all the statistical paraphernalia which usually accompany these procedures.



the individual and the social, such that the measurement of the individual can be conducted without any interference from 'noise' in the social world. Dualism as a kind of epistemological project and the psychological technologies of making subjects calculable and manageable are, in this sense, a self-supporting couple.

Within psychology, then, dualism has usually been necessarily 'dealt with' in ways that prioritise the individual at the expense of any theory of society, which is then in turn conceived of as in some way impinging on the individual.<sup>33</sup> Particularly in social and developmental psychology, a series of critiques that appeared in the early- to mid-1970s were aimed at redressing what was seen as a lack of concern with the social world; particularly important in this context were Harré and Secord's work, and collections by Armistead and Richards.<sup>34</sup> However, as Henriques et al. point out, the commitment of these writers to understanding the terms of this couple as interacting, in however sophisticated a formulation, inevitably means that the

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<sup>33</sup> Dualism is not, however, a problem exclusive to psychology. Interestingly enough, sociology tends to repeat the problem but with a prioritisation of society. This is what Henry terms 'the field of complementarity', that is, whatever is considered non-psychological is thought to belong to the social order, and vice-versa. This is why psychology and sociology bypass each other, even though they often evoke each other to explain away what falls outside their particular domains of responsibility and interest. See P. Henry, *Le mauvais outil*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Nigel Armistead (ed.), *Reconstructing Social Psychology*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974; Rom Harré and Paul Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972; Martin Richards (ed.), *The Integration of a Child into a Social World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974.



core of these terms remains untouched, and the separability of the couple is reaffirmed; in such accounts the individual can rapidly reduce to a biological base once 'society' has been invoked to explain everything else.<sup>35</sup> It is ironic that this should happen given the desires of many such theorists to escape the determinism of behaviourist theories of action in the social world, a motive that was particularly evident in, for example, John Shotter's accounts of the infant's entry into the social world.<sup>36</sup> However, Shotter's account of the transmission of humanity to the infant from a maternal provision of a 'structure of motives', with its implication of a somehow 'pre-social' infant, rapidly reduces to an account of the social world impinging on a biologically-given individual. It is interesting that Colwyn Trevarthen produces a similar picture, although his structure of motives is innate, that is, internal to the child.<sup>37</sup> While Shotter's account appears to invoke a form of social determinism, presumably the infant must in some sense recognise

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<sup>35</sup> See Henriques et al, *Changing the Subject*, p.13-25. These positions which stress the 'interaction' between the individual and the social world are still current, as can be seen from the sterile debates in the *British Journal of Social Psychology* Special Issue 25, 3, 1986: The Individual-Society Interface.

<sup>36</sup> John Shotter, 'What is it to be Human?', in Armistead (ed.); 'The Development of Personal Powers' in Richards (ed.); 'The Cultural Context of Communication Studies: Theoretical and Methodological Issues', in Andy Lock (ed.), *Action, Gesture and Symbol: the Emergence of Language*, London, Academic Press, 1978.

<sup>37</sup> Colwyn Trevarthen, 'The Primary Motives for Cooperative Understanding', in George Butterworth and Paul Light (eds.), *Social Cognition: Studies of the Development of Understanding*, Brighton, Harvester, 1982.

and engage with the structures the mother provides; for Trevarthen, the infant 'directs' his or her engagement with the social world (reduced to the concept of 'intersubjectivity'). Yet both these positions, despite appearances, require some sort of 'core' to the individual, a directive source we can think of as an 'homunculus', and in this way restate the biologically-based individual that moves through the social world. Theories of this type tend to rely on processes of internalisation to explain how the social world has any effect on the individual (Shotter, for example, introduces Meadian/Vygotskian mechanisms of internalisation), and thus fall prey to the problem of the relation between the knower and the known; as with Kant's express duality of the knower and the known, these accounts need to rely on the pre-given individual, and thus again reduce to the 'homunculus'.<sup>38</sup>

The problem of dualism, then, has a constraining effect on how psychology can conceive of the relation between the biological individual and the society that surrounds her/him. In developmental psychology in general, and in developmental pictures of learning to read, this dualism is restated time and again. The (biologically-given) child is separate from the social world (in the form of the textual world); the child may learn to

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<sup>38</sup> The same theoretical problem occurs in, for example, socialisation theory and role theory. See Henriques et al., p.18-25.

read by internalising reading skills.<sup>39</sup> A separability of child and context is affirmed, and the problem of the relation between the knower and the known is 'resolved' through internalisation. Such are the dualistic positions which I maintain are virtually the only conceptual possibilities in psychology as it is presently constituted. Psychology is positioned on the individualistic side of dualism, and as such falls prey to the traps of biological reductionism, social reductionism (as for example in the reduction of the social to the mother-child dyad), and the cognitivism that springs from a conception of the individual as rational, autonomous, and directed by an 'homunculoid' core.<sup>40</sup>

I have gestured towards a critique of the predication of psychology on a dualist conception of the individual and the social. However, I should perhaps again make it clear that my purpose is less to engage in an interminable round of debate around the truthfulness of such notions. I am content on the one hand to unsettle the comfortable self-evidency of dualism; and on the other to establish my contention that dualism is a necessary

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<sup>39</sup> These 'common-sense' views of the child's learning are ubiquitous, but in the field of reading are perhaps most forcefully expressed in the tradition of psycholinguistics, particularly as evidenced in the work of Frank Smith. This tradition will be analysed later.

<sup>40</sup> 'Cognitivism' refers to the theoretical problem of prioritising structure over content and the consequent elision of process and content. Cognitivism is psychology's answer to the Kantian problem of understanding the relationship between the knower and the known; but as can be seen in socialisation theory's recourse to cognition, the emphasis on interaction and the priority of the individual can only reduce to a watered-down biological determinism.

theoretical base for a science which aims at rendering individuality calculable. Put simply, it would be too hard for psychology to provide a grid of specification for the individual if it was also necessary to consider the social in any convincing way. Historically, psychology has never really needed a more convincing approach because its vocation has typically lain in its abilities to administer, rather than in its abilities to solve academic problems. Interestingly, as we have seen, this is even true of social psychology, a domain where one might expect theorisation in terms other than the dualistic ones adopted. This is not to say, however, that psychology is uninterested in the functioning of the individual in his/her social world. Far from it; in fact, I would argue that psychological knowledge is, frequently, all about fitting out the individual for optimal effectiveness in a variety of social domains. The task psychology is set is to produce the optimised citizen; psychology's method of achieving this is first to make the citizen knowable and calculable. This it can only do with the aid of dualist epistemologies.

By stepping outside mainstream psychology for my tool-kit, I hope to make use of work which confronts the problem of dualism in a slightly different way from some of the critiques I have outlined. First of all, I would emphasise the mutuality of

relations between 'the subject' and 'the social', as I wish to reconceptualise the deconstructed categories of individual and society. I maintain that the best way to approach the problem of dualism is to forget about the individual and society as pregiven categories, and to develop instead a theory of the positioning of subjects in discourse. This is not simply a matter of changing the terms of the debate, but involves a radical reconceptualisation of just how we can think in this debate at all. In addition, as I have already suggested, this is not just a matter of challenging the epistemology of psychological knowledge and contesting its 'truth': the point is to go beyond epistemology and into the realm of political critique by examining what is actually produced within the dualistic articulations of psychology.

Some terms need explanation before we move on, terms which I have already begun to use, and whose importance for my project will become more apparent: the notions of discourse, of the axis of power/knowledge/subject, and of archaeo-genealogy.

## DISCOURSE

The term 'discourse' has gained a certain contemporary currency, and has perhaps become all things to all people: it seems sensible to rehearse my own definition of discourse, even at the risk of appearing abstruse. First of all, I use the term roughly as it is used by Deleuze or Derrida or Foucault: that is, it is not used in a purely linguistic way (as in most incarnations of 'discourse analysis'<sup>41</sup>), although, finally, discourse is about words.

Henriques et al. give an excellent *résumé* of a post-structural conception of discourse:

"... it is regulated and systematic. An important proposition is related to this recognition: the rules are not confined to those internal to the discourse, but include rules of combination with other discourses, rules that establish differences from other categories of discourse (for example scientific as opposed to literary, etc.), the rules of production of the possible statements. The rules delimit the sayable. But (except for axiomatic systems such as chess) they do not imply a closure. The systematic character of a discourse includes its systematic articulation with other discourses. In practice, discourses delimit what can be said, while providing the spaces - the

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<sup>41</sup> The clearest example of the project of discourse analysis in psychology is Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*, London, Sage, 1987.

concepts, metaphors, models, analogies, for making new statements within any specific discourse... The analysis which we propose regards every discourse as the result of a practice of production which is at once material, discursive and complex, always inscribed in relation to other practices of production of discourse. Every discourse is part of a discursive complex; it is locked in an intricate web of practices, bearing in mind that every practice is by definition both discursive and material."<sup>42</sup>

To develop this a little: the term 'discourse' is used for a corpus of 'statements' whose organisation we can describe as regular and systematic. If a corpus of statements forms a discourse, we should be able to identify a series of rules relating to the discourse: rules of formation, rules of succession and rules of derivation, for example. These rules will enable us to specify the conditions any other statement or group of statements will need to satisfy if they are to be thought of as part of that discourse.

In addition, because discourse provides the limitation of the sayable, that is, of the domain of the statement, discourse must

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<sup>42</sup> Henriques et al., p.105-6. One point perhaps needs clarification: in theory, discourses are *not* closed systems, and the possibility of innovation in discourse is inscribed within the discourse itself and within tangential or succeeding discourses. However, discursive formations, or systems of dispersions of statements, may well *evidence* closure. For example, Derrida suggests that the domain of the metaphysical maintains its status as closed; this closure is produced through the strategic micro-operations of power in the service of the logocentre. In other words, closures such as these blindfold us through their evidencing closure. However, because the closure is not perfect but is fissured, the possibility of change remains with us.



also provide the limit of 'truth': discourses are 'regimes of truth'. This, indeed, is a particular characteristic of scientific discourses, that they aim at systematicity, and systematic truthfulness. Thus a discursive formation<sup>43</sup> like psychology produces 'truth' and has its specific 'truth effects', i.e. an effectivity given by its privileged position as 'true'.<sup>44</sup> These effects are produced by those discursive relations which mediate between the discursive and the non-discursive domains.

### *The Discursive and the Non-Discursive*

'Strata' are the starting point for my distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive: we may consider strata to be historical formations ('positivities' in the Foucaultian sense, 'empiricities' in the Deleuzian sense). Strata are composed of words and things, speaking and seeing, the sayable and the

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<sup>43</sup> A 'discursive formation', as we have seen above, is a system of dispersion of discourses. In this instance I use the term because I am thinking of the *historical* dispersion of statements in the discourses around psychology whose 'truth effectivity' I wish to lay bare. The term comes from Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p.44-54, translated as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Tavistock, 1972, p.31-9.

<sup>44</sup> Different discourses may have competing claims to truth, so some discourses may be discredited or come to be regarded as false; for example, behaviourist psychological discourses are in some sense 'falsified' by modern cognitive psychological discourses. In general, discourses can only be established through a claim to truth: the production of truth is a function of discourse.

visible, fields of readability and bands of visibility. The first of each pair has the form and substance of *expression*, the second the form and substance of *content*;<sup>45</sup> the attribution of form and substance mean that a content/expression distinction can go beyond a purely linguistic signified/signifier couple. Many examples of this distinction can be gleaned from the corpus of Foucault's work: prison as a form of content defines a place of visibility, while penal law as a form of expression defines a field of sayability;<sup>46</sup> the asylum is a place of visibility for madness, while medicine is the field of sayability about 'folly';<sup>47</sup> similarly, the clinic and pathological anatomy make distinctions and distributions between the visible and the articulable respectively;<sup>48</sup> while an analysis of the work of Raymond Rousset reveals how a contradistinction between extraordinary machines and an unusual 'method' outlines a distributive field between visibilities and statements.<sup>49</sup> All of which suggests that in Foucault's work, while the field of saying relates to discursive

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<sup>45</sup> I follow Deleuze in taking the terms 'content' and 'expression' from Hjelmslev. See Deleuze's *Foucault*, Paris, Minuit, 1986, p.55ff., translated as *Foucault*, London, Athlone, 1988, p.47ff.

<sup>46</sup> *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>47</sup> *Madness and Civilisation*.

<sup>48</sup> *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1963, translated as *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, New York, Pantheon, 1973. The translation is of a revised edition published in 1972, with some discrepancies.

<sup>49</sup> *Raymond Rousset*, Paris, Gallimard, 1963, translated as *Death and the Labyrinth*.

practices, the field of seeing relates to forms of self-evidence. As is clear from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the articulable is equivalent to the discursive, while the visible is equivalent to the non-discursive. What is important is that Foucault grants the statement a radical primacy; thus the mediation between the two is from the realm of discourse: *discursive relations* are what exist between the discursive statement and the non-discursive domain. The importance of this move is in understanding the way in which materiality is subsumed under a theory of discourse such as Foucault's. The existence of the real is not denied, but it is clear that it is only comprehensible, articulable even, from within the web of discourses which always-already exist, always *precede*. This is why a radical primacy is granted to the statement. For example, 'bodies' are not discourse - they are non-discursive - but never stand in a non-discursive vacuum; the word itself is a discursive production, while the entity, the body, is under the sovereignty of discourse.<sup>50</sup> for example, 'torture' is a discursive practice (that is, a practice always-already inscribed in a series of statements) which changes the material, the body. Thus the body's form is not independent of discourse, and articulations of the body (in a wide sense) are always discursive,

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<sup>50</sup> The body is actually a 'grid of specification' of discourse, if one takes the example of, for example, psychopathology, as Foucault discusses in *Birth of the Clinic*.

although the body itself is non-discursive. The objection may be raised that there are other non-discursive entities which lie outside the influence of any discourse, such as those of nature.<sup>51</sup> Yet even the 'facts' of natural phenomena only enter into discourse as produced 'truths'. Rain may be the urine of the gods or a precipitation derived from clouds, but its changing discursive existence, in the modern age guaranteed through scientific theory, only suggests that science is a discourse like any other, and raises the problem of how one examines scientific theory - and thus what is the relation between science and the materiality that science takes as its object. We might say that the object, rain, is made visible by Greek myths or by meteorological science, or the body is made visible by torture or by incarceration, depending on the historical specificity under consideration. Yet these visibilities are not forms of objects, but rather forms of luminosity, that allow a thing to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer:<sup>52</sup> "each historical medical formation modulated a first light and constituted a space of visibility for illness, making symptoms gleam" comments Deleuze, discussing

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<sup>51</sup> Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1987, argues convincingly that 'Nature' can never be the final arbiter about a dispute in science: other forms of justification are constantly needed because of arguments about "the composition, content, expression and meaning of that [sc. Nature's] voice." Nature is only ever a *post hoc* justification of an established fact. See especially p.94-100.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault developed this theme of visibility as early as *Death and the Labyrinth*.

*The Birth of the Clinic*.<sup>53</sup> This first light refers to discourse, which enables objects to attain a form of visibility. Psychology, as a first light, makes the child gleam, colonises reading and makes it gleam also. The task of an investigation of these phenomena (the task of an *archaeology*) is to break open words, phrases and propositions, and extract statements<sup>54</sup> from them, and perform a similar operation on visibilities. Now, the discursive and the non-discursive are the two poles of knowledge, that is, knowledge is a mechanism of statements and visibilities; thus to break them open and extract statements from them is to conduct an archaeology of knowledge.<sup>55</sup> The knowledges or strata I must archaeologise are those concerning children and reading.

So what sort of task would this be? How does one reach the extractive conditions of these (hidden?) statements? What is the key to producing this archaeology (of a silence?)? The search

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<sup>53</sup> Deleuze, p.58 in the English translation, p.65 in the French edition.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault deals at great length in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* with the statement, which is, for him, a more fundamental unit for analysis than the word, or the speech act, or the sentence, or any other candidate for 'atomic' archive unit. See especially p.79ff.

<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to note that in *The History of Sexuality Vol. II*, Foucault concerns himself with the relation between truth and knowledge. For Foucault, truth only offers itself to knowledge through what are termed 'problematizations', which are themselves created only on the basis of 'practices'. By spelling out that practices are both of seeing and of speaking, and restating the disjunction between these two, the important point is being made that the statement may have its own object which correlates to it, but it never merely designates an object (as would be the case for a version of 'discourse determinism'): the visible object is not merely a mute meaning. This disjunction between seeing and speaking, must, incidentally, raise problems for archaeology, since the archive, as 'audiovisual' (as Deleuze puts it), must also be disjunctive.

must always relate to the conditions of possibility of statements and visibilities, and must strive to read the inscription of the statement and its conditions. The statement is always present, although it may be hidden: its extraction is simply a matter of knowing how to read.

## POWER-KNOWLEDGE-SUBJECT

### *Why Power?*

The relation that exists between the discursive and the non-discursive is, as we have seen, a discursive relation. Thus the field of knowledge can be seen as dominated by the primacy of the statement. However, we can be more specific about these discursive relations: they are relations of *power*. These power relations coadapt the visible and the articulable, the two poles of knowledge, yet exist outside these poles. Power is a strategy, rather than a stratum, a strategy which maintains a relation between the articulable and the visible and prevents the escape of the latter. The latter is always in danger of escape because it is completely determined by articulation: the problem is one of how visibilities, being completely receptive in contrast to the spontaneity of the articulable, are inexhaustible.<sup>56</sup> For Foucault, the solution lies in regarding the two elements of the stratum as always in struggle, and he describes their inter-relation by martial metaphors. The articulable and the visible are divided

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<sup>56</sup> This is a recurrent problem in philosophy: for example, for Kant understanding was a determining element over intuition, and thus the problem arose of how intuition was not exhausted. Kant's solution was the 'mysterious imagination'.

from each other, yet insinuate themselves inside the relation between the other and its conditions.<sup>57</sup> Consequently in the conduct of an archaeology, one reveals something of the visible in opening up statements, and something of the statement in opening up visibilities. For example, in his archaeology of the prison, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shows how the prison as a form of visibility produces statements which reintroduce criminality, while statements around the prison produce forms of visibility which reinforce prison. There is, then, a necessary double relation between the two anisomorphic forms which is productive (and the production of this relation is truth).<sup>58</sup> The notion of the struggle within this double relation is not sufficient, however, because the primacy of the articulable would seem to suggest only one victor: hence the need to introduce a fully-fledged theory of power.

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<sup>57</sup> An anisomorphism or heterogeneity obtains between the articulable and the visible, but the former 'conditions' the latter. The articulable offers the visible in a 'space of dissemination', while offering itself up as a 'form of exteriority'. See the discussion in Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p.66 [p.73].

<sup>58</sup> This theorisation owes a lot to the work of Bachelard and Canguilhem, whose work on epistemology and the transformation of concepts respectively alerted Foucault to the tasks a general history, as opposed to a total history, must set itself. See the discussion in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 4-5. This thesis aims at the production of a general history in the sense that seeks to provide an account of the relations between discontinuous and discrete discourses, in this instance discourses around literacy-children-psychology. The name one could give to this series of series, or table, is governmentality.



## *What is Power?*

“Power is a relation between forces, or rather every relation between forces is a power relation... Force is never singular but essentially exists in relation with other forces, such that any force is already a relation, that is to say power: force has no other subject or object than force... It is ‘an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which may arise in the present or in the future’; it is ‘a set of actions upon other actions’. We can therefore conceive of a necessarily open list of variables expressing a relation between forces or power relation, constituting actions upon actions: to incite, to induce, to seduce, to make easy or difficult, to enlarge or limit, to make more or less probable, and so on.”<sup>59</sup>

Power, then, is not essentially repressive; it is not possessed, but is practised;<sup>60</sup> power is not the prerogative of ‘masters’, but passes through every force. We should not think of power as an attribute (and ask ‘what is it?’), but as an exercise (and ask ‘how does it work?’). Moreover, forces have a capacity for resistance,

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<sup>59</sup> Deleuze, p.70 [p.77]. The quotations are taken from Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, an afterword to Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>60</sup> Deleuze’s claim is that it *is* possible to talk of power in this way as a possession, in a determinable form of class and in a determined form of State, but I would suggest that these forms are attributions of discursive formations that include relations of power, rather than attributions of power itself. See Deleuze, p.71 [p.78].

such that power is only exercised in relation to a resistance,<sup>61</sup> each force having the power to affect and be affected by other forces. Thus far we have established power as a series of relations between forces, and knowledge as a series of relations between forms; what, then, are the relations between these relations? The two are completely heterogeneous, but engage in a similar process of struggle as the forms of knowledge. However, power passes through forces not forms; it is diagrammatic<sup>62</sup> - it mobilises non-stratified matter and functions, it is local and unstable, and is flexible. Knowledge is stratified, archived, and rigidly segmented. Power is strategic, but it is anonymous: the strategies of power are mute and blind, precisely because they avoid the forms of knowledge, the articulable and the visible. Foucault characterises the workings of power as 'microphysical', but this should not be taken as referring to a miniaturisation, but rather to the status of power as mobile and non-localisable.<sup>63</sup>

Power and knowledge are mutually dependent and exist in a

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<sup>61</sup> Foucault, *La volonté de savoir*, p.126-7; *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, p.95-6.

<sup>62</sup> Foucault discusses the Panopticon as diagram in *Surveiller et punir* (see particularly p.207); *Discipline and Punish*, p.205. The diagram is:-

- (i) the presentation of the relations between forces unique to a particular formation;
- (ii) the distribution of the power to affect and be affected;
- (iii) the mixing of non-formalised pure functions and unformed pure matter;
- (iv) a transmission or distribution of particular features.

<sup>63</sup> The term 'microphysics' is intended by Foucault to distinguish himself from Kant. Kant's practical determination is irreducible to a *connaissance*, whereas Foucault is concerned that the practice of power be irreducible to a *savoir*.

relation of interiority to each other, although Foucault accords power a kind of primacy: power would exist (although only in a virtual form) without knowledge, whereas knowledge would have nothing to integrate without differential power relations.

### *Subjectivity*

I now need to introduce the concept of *subjectivity*. The term 'subjectivity' (a somewhat simplified translation of the multiple meanings of the French 'asujettissement') is chosen to mark a difference from the psychological 'individual'. As should by now be clear, for psychology the individual is a rational being, the origin of human action, forming a unitary and non-contradictory object occupying the same physical space as the body. This 'individual' is, as we have seen, one of the twin foundation stones of dualistic conceptions of the world; however, it is an 'individual' whose existence is an historically contingent phenomenon, an invention that begins to be produced in the seventeenth century, but is rigorously defined in the nineteenth

century.<sup>64</sup> I shall go on to explain how this emerging psychological invention comes to be seen as the 'site' (or 'grid of specification', to use the terminology of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) where reading takes place, and becomes an object of those 'technologies of the self' founded by the reading/psychology couple.<sup>65</sup>

Just as I maintain that a dualistic conception of human action constrains the ways psychology can think about practices, so I maintain that the 'individual' of psychological theory is crucial to the ways we can understand the working of that psychology. By contrast, a theory of the 'subject' problematises the coherence and rationality of the individual (etymologically, that which cannot be divided) with a theory of multiple positionings in discourse. But just as power is implicated in discourse, so it is in the field of subjectivity. For power, as we have seen, acts upon actions: but these are the actions of *subjects*. Subjects' actions take place in discourse, and subjects

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<sup>64</sup> On the birth of the psychological individual, see Couze Venn, 'The Subject of Psychology' in Henriques et al., *Changing the Subject*, and Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex*.

<sup>65</sup> A 'technology of the self' is a term developed in the later Foucault to describe the processes of construction of selfhood through the workings of (for example, psychological) knowledges. These knowledges are 'technological' in the sense that they are systematic mini- or inter-discourses implicated in self-construction. The etymology of 'technology' ('technique' in the French), from the Greek 'techne', implies an art or skill, particularly a constructive skill (such as weaving). 'Technology' in its Foucaultian sense is precisely such a 'weaving' or production. Compare the Latin 'texo', I weave, from which is derived our word for 'text': both the self and the text are weavings or productions inscribed in discourse.

themselves are produced through discourse. Subjects are the punctuation of discourse, and provide the bodies on and through which discourse may act: thus we may say that subjects form some of the conditions for knowledge. For Foucault, the subject is produced out of the doubling of force upon itself, the attention to self, *le souci de soi*. This production of subjectivity always occurs as a doubling of self upon self in every realm, in the realm of the body, of force, and of knowledge. Human action within discourse is always positional, that is, it always occurs through a subject position which inhabits a fissure between the two poles of knowledge, the discursive and the non-discursive.

Such a theory of the subject, then, has important repercussions for the psychological 'individual'. Theoretically, we need no longer depend (should we so choose) on that individual as originary and rational. The various subject positions that are taken up in discourse can be and are contradictory and irrational: furthermore, the subject within discourse is both produced and productive. For a Foucaultian theory of the subject, attention must be drawn to the ways in which power relations differentially position subjects in discourse, even when (perhaps especially when) this produces 'contradictory subjectivity'. It has been contended that such a theory of the subject raises the twin problems of discourse determinism and the essentialisation

of power: the subject seems at times to be moved mechanically through discourse by the workings of power relations which themselves only seem to be exercised through what we might term a 'will to power'. However, it seems to me that the complex intertwining of power, knowledge and the subject precludes the questions of origin and of determination: this triad is so systematic that it begins to make little sense to consider them separately - they all condition, and form the conditions for, each other. Thus it would seem inaccurate to suggest that discourse determines the subject, or that power *in the last instance* is responsible for the production of subjectivity: the circularity of interdependence precludes questions of primacy, since none of the terms in the triad would exist (except in a virtual form) without the others.

In this move to unsettle psychology's truth claims in regard to individuality, we have arrived at a being which takes up a variety of 'subject positions' in different discourses, positions which may be (and indeed almost certainly are) contradictory and non-rational. At first sight this seems to give us a new degree of explanatory power: we can begin to understand the 'individual' who might simultaneously be a Conservative voter, transvestite, Catholic, wife-beater, and voluntary worker. The example may be contrived, but the simple point is that such contradictions are the

stuff of social life; and theories of subjectivity allow us to examine such contradictions in ways that an individualistic analysis, with its emphasis on rationality and coherence, would never permit. There are two obvious objections to the take-up of this new theoretical orientation: the first is, does not such a theory of the subject, counterposed as it is to the individual, rely on some notion of 'truth' to sustain itself. Why believe in the subject rather than in the individual? The second question is, if we accept this theory of subjectivity, what is it that holds the subject positions of a particular human being together? That is, given that we very often do act in ways that are rational and consistent, do we need to fall back on the homunculus to understand the internal consistencies among our different subject positions in different discourses?

In response to the first question: it seems clear that, given my problematisation of the category of truth, it is difficult to propose competing theories of what it is to be human. How can we judge between competing theories, given that the ground of absolute truth has been cut away from under us? In the first place, I would draw attention to the fact that I am interested in examining 'truth effects' rather than 'truths' - that is to say, I am less interested in adjudicating between competing theories on epistemological grounds than examining what they construct as

true. This much has already been made clear. However, the implication of psychological individualism in a series of regulative practices suggests that we need to work towards other forms of subjectivity which may give us the potential for change and ‘revolution’ in its Foucaultian sense. The ground from which I am able to distinguish between ‘individualism’ and ‘subjectivity’, and assess the one as regulative, the other as potentially ‘progressive’, is the ground of ethics. While this is not the place to lay out my ethical positions, I would like to point out that it is surely the ‘ethical substance’ that drives critical work such as this.<sup>66</sup> As a strategic move, I wish to bracket this ethical domain: suffice it to say that I work with a theory of subjectivity rather than individualism because of the progressive possibilities it would seem to open up. The obverse of this is that we can only make *post hoc* judgements about how effective such interventions may be - what new explanatory power do they offer us, and what possibilities for change do they empower?

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<sup>66</sup> Part of the problem, I think, lies in the assumption that work such as Foucault’s must be set in opposition to, for example, Marxism, and supply answers to a whole series of questions in every domain. My approach is rather that, when considering certain issues, Foucault can be very useful. My ethical commitments, however, belong to a series of spheres I can hardly begin to analyse. Foucault’s later work began to deal with this problem of the ethical self-construction of the subject. Very interesting on the thorny problem of political commitment in the context of Foucaultian investigation are Jeffrey Minson’s *Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche, Foucault, Donzelot and the Eccentricity of Ethics*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1985, and Ian Hunter’s *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989.



To the second question: what is it that holds together all these subject positions and enables us to conceive of an 'identity', a coherence (however contrived) across discourses? Any answer to this question, must, I think, refer to the domain of the psychic, and stress the social construction of that psyche as a 'factor of coherence' in subjectivity. I shall not rehearse these positions here, because it is not essential for the work I wish to carry out. As I have already pointed out, some radical theorists have drawn particularly on the work of Lacan to begin to answer these questions; while the 'libidinal theorists', Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari, also present useful possibilities. For my purposes, it is only necessary to signal that my theorisation of the discursive formations that form or are contiguous on the reading/psychology couple is dependent on the inextricable triad: power, knowledge, and the subject. My task from Chapter 2 onwards is to analyse this complex historically: this is the task of an archaeo-genealogy.

## ARCHAEO-GENEALOGY

Already I have begun to indicate which features of an archaeological investigation are suggested by the theoretical positions to which I adhere. However, the notion of 'archaeo-genealogy', critically derived from the work of Foucault, is the tool which I contend is the most important part of my approach, especially because it provides for the possibility of a radical break with previous (deeply problematic) forms of socio-historical investigative procedures.<sup>67</sup> An archaeo-genealogical analysis of, for example, children's imbrication in the practice of reading does not examine the web of discourse in terms of rules of formation that are purely internal to it, but in terms of the specific practices which are dispersed throughout the discursive domain and which have children and reading as their target. Archaeo-genealogy represents an attempt to combine the investigative procedures of both archaeology and genealogy. First, I must outline the constituent parts of this procedure.

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<sup>67</sup> On this 'crisis' see, for example, the special issue of *Social History*, *Social History Today... and Tomorrow?*, 10, 2, 1976; Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978; Allan Megill, 'Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History', *Journal of Modern History* 51, 451-503, 1979; Derek Attridge, Geoffrey Bennington and Robert Young, *Post-Structuralism and The Question of History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

### *What is Archaeology?*<sup>68</sup>

It should be clear by now that a primary concern of this thesis is with discourse. Now Foucault wished to investigate discourse (specifically the discourses of the emergence of 'man') not in terms of 'truth', but in terms of history. His recourse, then, given that his goal is the investigation of the history of the statement, is to the *archive*, and we can say that archaeology is this process of investigating the archives of discourse. In addition we can formulate two principles of archaeological research: first of all, in merely seeking to provide a description of regularities, it is non-interpretive; secondly, in eschewing the search for authors, and concentrating instead on the statement (and the visibility), it sets itself up as non-anthropological.<sup>69</sup>

An archaeological analysis proceeds in four directions. First of all, it attempts to elucidate how statements are related to a field of objects: that is, to understand the relation between the articulable and the visible - Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* attempts to describe the links between the two poles

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<sup>68</sup> This section is derived primarily from Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

<sup>69</sup> In being anti-interpretation and against simple stories of causality (replacing the mono-cause with the polyhedron of intelligibility), Foucault is very much in a tradition of positivism, especially as it is characterised by Ian Hacking in his *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 41ff.

of knowledge. Second, it attempts to analyse the relation between one statement and other statements in that discourse. Third, and following on closely from the second point, it attempts to formulate rules for the repeatability and strategic potential<sup>70</sup> of statements within discourse. Fourth, it attempts to analyse the positions which are established between subjects in discourse.

There are, in addition, three more elements that are characteristic of a properly archaeological investigation of the production of 'discursive objects'. First there are 'surfaces of emergence', practices (or places) within which objects are 'individuated' (in the sense of being made objects in discourse), designated or acted upon; for example, I shall contend that 'reading' forms a surface of emergence through which psychology can 'act' on children. Second, there are 'institutions', which acquire authority and provide limits within which discursive objects may act; for example, the school (and, from the nineteenth century on, the family) forms an authoritative institution which delimits the range of activities of the discursive object, in this case the child beginning-reader (institutions are usually 'places of visibility' and as such have

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<sup>70</sup> Strategies are selections which are unified at the level of objectives. We might think of a strategy as a formation which orients itself to produce a particular outcome. See Foucault, *Conférence inédite à la Société Française de Philosophie*, Bibliothèque le Saulchoir, Paris, May 1978.

already been described as belonging to the non-discursive pole of knowledge). Third, there are 'forms of specification', which refer to the ways in which discursive objects are targeted; the most common forms of specification of the human sciences are the body (the task of an anatomo-politics) and the species or population (the task of a bio-politics),<sup>71</sup> but may also focus on the soul (the task of a truly disciplinary politics). Reading, as a vector of power, both psychological and pre-psychological, targets itself on the body and soul of the child, and attempts a disciplining of the entire population through these micro-physical operations.

Thus we might say that an analysis of discourse that is properly archaeological must specify the rules of formation of objects in terms of the surfaces on which they appear, the ways in which limits are provided for them, and how they are specified.

### *What is Genealogy?*

For Foucault, archaeology was a response to a whole series of theoretical problems that were very much of the 1950s

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<sup>71</sup> These terms will be discussed in the next chapter.

and 1960s<sup>72</sup>. It was a 'methodology' (if one can call it that) that owed much to Heidegger, as well as the work of Bachelard and Canguilhem, and in some senses sat apart from Marxism (Foucault's theoretical starting point is anti-humanist, and thus he takes off from much the same place as Althusser, but in a different direction). Genealogy<sup>73</sup> was developed by Foucault in the 1970s to address problems that seemed to him paramount (in particular, the problem of how to theorise power in the context of his own political involvements); as such, it was often pushed by Foucault as a kind of successor to archaeology, whose complex theoretical edifice, ironically, was consigned to the archives. Genealogy, which gained its name through an allusion to Nietzsche's work, maintained many of the essentials of archaeology (for example, the examination of bodies of statements in the archive), but added to it a new concern with political analysis, which manifested itself in the twin directions of a new emphasis on power, and the provision of a 'history of the

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<sup>72</sup> Foucault's archaeological work was at the time considered to be part of the wider structuralist tradition; whether this is accurate or not, it is fair to say that Foucault, like the structuralists, was seeking to respond to, and to break free from, the traditions of phenomenology and existentialism; ultimately, to escape from Hegel.

<sup>73</sup> Foucault became more and more preoccupied with this method in his later studies and in interviews and lectures. It is dealt with *passim* in *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*; also important statements of intent are:- 'Nietzsche, le généalogie, l'histoire' in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971, translated as 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in Bouchard (ed.); *Discipline and Punish*; and 'Corso del 7 gennaio 1976', in Fontana and Pasquino (eds), translated as 'Two Lectures', in Gordon (ed.).

present' which is:

“structured by conclusions and considerations already established concerning present practices and institutions... [Genealogy] finds its point of departure in problems relevant to current issues and... its point of arrival and its usefulness in what it can bring to the analysis of the present.”<sup>74</sup>

The practice of genealogy, then, would seem a highly significant endeavour in the light of my own research project, particularly because of genealogy's commitment to changing the present and its status as a *political* mode of inquiry. Genealogy concerns itself with “disreputable origins and unpalatable functions”,<sup>75</sup> and thus is at a remove from the more ‘academic’ archaeology: genealogy involves making calculations as regards possible interventions and orienting one's research towards such interventions. In this thesis, certain assumptions are made about the implication of psychology and reading in the production of the disciplined subject and self-regulating citizen. In addition, genealogy establishes its difference from archaeology in that the former pays attention to the processual aspects of the web of discourse, while the latter provides us with a snapshot, a slice

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<sup>74</sup> Henriques et al, *Changing the Subject*, pp.101, 104.

<sup>75</sup> I take the phrase from Nikolas Rose, *The Formation of the Psychology of the Individual in England 1870-1939*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1984, introduction.

through the discursive nexus.<sup>76</sup> It is perhaps obvious why I think the two could usefully be put together: the detailed analysis of the slice fits perfectly with the politically directed 'history of the present'.

### *What is Archaeo-Genealogy?*

There has been much dispute over the relation between archaeology and genealogy in Foucault's work, but I maintain that, despite his occasional efforts to distance himself from the terminology of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he himself regarded these two methods as separate but complementary, distinguished by their differing emphases on 'historical slice' (however extended that slice might be) or 'historical process'.<sup>77</sup>

Now this complementarity of the two is something whose usefulness I should like to reaffirm, in contrast to most avowedly

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<sup>76</sup> This point is also made in Angèle Kremer-Marietti's study of the archaeology-genealogy relationship, *Michel Foucault: Archéologie et généalogie*, Paris, Librairie Générale Française, 1985, p.194-7. See also Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p.62-5, translated as *The Order of Discourse* in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p.70-1.

<sup>77</sup> See *The Order of Discourse*, *ibid.* Also in the *Conférence inédite* Foucault maintains that archaeology and genealogy, along with a dimension of strategic choice, form a single methodology: "En parlant d'archéologie, de stratégie et de généalogie... [il s'agit] plutôt de caractériser trois dimensions nécessairement simultanées de la même analyse." (p.16).



Foucaultian investigations which tend to dismiss one or other of the couple.<sup>78</sup> Rather I should like to suggest that what is called for is neither genealogy nor archaeology alone, but a contiguous approach, a space for manoeuvre that might open up potential for change in a way that has been claimed for a 'history of the present': such an approach I have termed archaeo-genealogy.<sup>79</sup> My use of this term is designed to signal a series of positions which draw on existing post-structuralist work, positions which address a concern to avoid problems of essentialism and academicism.<sup>80</sup> First of all, the refusal of the separability of archaeology and genealogy is designed to keep a rein on any 'history of the present': the genealogical concentrates attention on the processual aspects, as well as orienting the ongoing work in the direction of effective intervention; the archaeological concentrates attention on the specificities of analysis that are required to describe the play of discourse. Now, given that a 'total' archaeo-genealogy is an impossible venture, what sort of short-cuts do we need to take to make such an investigation

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<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Jones and Williamson, *Birth of the Schoolroom* and Rose, *The Formation of the Psychology of the Individual*, who prefer to archaeologise; and Donzelot, *La Police des familles* and Henriques et al., *Changing the Subject*, who work as genealogists.

<sup>79</sup> This section, and the theoretical formulation of archaeo-genealogy, owe much to Phil Bevis and Michèle Cohen.

<sup>80</sup> I have tried to draw out elsewhere such problems in Foucault's work. See Phil Bevis, Michèle Cohen and Gavin Kendall, *Archaeologizing Genealogy: Michel Foucault and the Economy of Austerity*, *Economy and Society* 18, 3, 1989, 323-345.

feasible?

I would suggest that the terrain of possibilities is bounded on the one side by what we might call a 'genealogy of erudition', and on the other by a 'laminary archaeo-genealogy'. In a 'genealogy of erudition' the onus is on the researcher to maintain on an *ad hoc* basis the particular collection of bits and pieces of archaeologies that bear on the specificities of the project. This is a massive, burdensome task, requiring great scholarship and patience. It becomes feasible only when the specific research problem permits a programme of work of manageable options, and will be an unlikely option for most projects and most researchers. A 'laminary archaeo-genealogy' consists of a series of selected slices which allow the genealogy to proceed by interpolation: archaeologies, selected for their strategic importance, need to be situated on their genealogical frame if they are to be anything other than academic; on the other hand, the frame is vacuous unless preoccupied with these *laminae*. What is important is the tension inherent in the relation, the co-extension of the *laminae* and the frame: for a 'history of the present' to be 'knitted' into a comprehensible pattern that will also protect the wearer against conjunctural inclemencies, the tension needs to be finely adjusted. This option has the advantage of the safety and convenience deriving from the

systematicity of operating with whole slices; at the same time it may be wasteful of scarce research resources and run risks from its reliance on interpolation. Such research is necessarily thoroughly one-off and characteristically 'bespoke', and it is this feature which makes the setting down of the general prescriptive methodological principles of an archaeo-genealogy so elusive and indeed so futile a venture. At the same time, the bespoke character of the research holds up the hope that the resources for the research will be deployed optimally, with the choice of each area of archaeologisation, its extensiveness, and the amount of effort invested in that locus decided on its merits and tailored to the requirements of the project.

Wherever an archaeo-genealogy might be situated in this terrain, certain general problems will recur. It is obviously a matter of some importance how archaeologies and genealogies are selected and conducted, and it is here that an insistence on

the necessity of deconstruction comes into play.<sup>81</sup> My characterisation of archaeo-genealogy and its relation to deconstruction is through a notion of radical interiority.<sup>82</sup> a way in which this can be reconciled with the practical limitations of research is through a recursive process moving between archaeological work and genealogical analysis. Deconstruction too is a recursive process, and as such, it can proceed indefinitely, but since it is an analytical tool rather than an end in itself we must choose carefully when it is politic to stop. What should become determinant in such decision making derives from the present conjuncture and its problematics, for by imbricating the deconstructive processes in our present problematisations we are able, so to speak, to harness the former while refusing the essentialisations of the latter.

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<sup>81</sup> It would indeed be difficult to rehearse a definition of Deconstruction. The term is most closely associated with the name of Jacques Derrida, and refers to a close and critical analysis of concepts, texts, etc., in an attempt to lay bare their hidden allegiances and affiliations. Deconstruction is perhaps most fruitfully practised on the 'obvious' truths that are productive of our existence. Henriques et al. suggest that Deconstruction in the context of genealogy involves retracing the system of 'dependencies' of a discourse - that is, describing statements in terms of the bodies of other statements on which they stand (cf. *Changing the Subject*, p.104). Traditionally, deconstruction has concentrated on the binary structures of meaning and value which condition the discursive structure of Western metaphysics. Given that this thesis is concerned with the individual-social divide as well as the distinction between form and content so characteristic of psychology, deconstruction is a particularly apposite approach, suggesting as it does that the undervalued term in the binary structure must be a condition of possibility for the entire edifice; thus to an extent the edifice is collapsed from within.

<sup>82</sup> This term is derived from Derrida's *Positions*, and is meant to signal a relation between the two which denies the possibility of one ever being exterior to the other: their unitary character is guaranteed by each only existing through the other.

Deconstruction has a vital integratory role, therefore, while simultaneously being put to use within the confines of archaeo-genealogy. An insistence on deconstruction ensures that the entire ensemble of recursive processes converges to focus mutually on present problematics rather than diverging into an oblivion of academicism, because the deployment of the deconstructive principle within the project is itself tailored to the overall aim of convergency. To sum up, I can represent my overall position as follows:-

First, the separability of archaeology and genealogy must be refused.

Second, their relation can be characterised as one of radical interiority.

Third, a recursive principle must be used to maintain the interrelation of these two aspects of the research process.

Fourth, deconstruction must be included in this formula, both because it allows us to disperse the monoliths about which we should be suspicious, and because it plays a key integrative role.

Fifth, a principle of mutuality is intended to ensure that both types of recursive processes work together.

Sixth, there is a principle of convergence which aims to retain a sharp focus in relation to the problematics of the

present.

It should perhaps be pointed out that such a theoretical edifice echoes other post-structural work. The notion of archaeo-genealogy is, of course, very close to the 'nomadology' of Deleuze and Guattari (although they, somewhat perversely, claim it is anti-genealogical, I suspect they are not taking up a position against Foucaultian genealogy). The emphasis on heterogeneity and multiplicity (guarding against a unitary history) in both Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari recalls both Derrida's recourse to what he terms 'strategies without finality' and Lyotard's emphasis on the 'dissensus' that obtains throughout the heterogeneity of regimes. All these concerns are stated very much in the shadow of Kant, and particularly the *Third Critique's* analysis of 'purposiveness without purpose'.<sup>83</sup> To this extent, all these important post-structuralist theorists are neo-Kantian; and my own investigations are even more neo-Kantian in their determination to search for 'conditions of possibility'. However, as opposed to Kant, I am interested in the conditions of 'real experience' (such as the conditions of the limited corpus of statements); and my investigations are on the side of the 'object' in its historical specificity, rather than the Kantian universal subject. To this extent, my investigations are thoroughly

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<sup>83</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, introduction, §2.

Foucaultian. What I am not doing is seeking to provide a history of mentalities or behaviours.<sup>84</sup>

I began this chapter promising the exposition of theory, only to conclude that the archaeo-genealogical positions necessary for my investigations can only be described in the most general terms, while the bespoke character of the theory means that exposition can only proceed by exemplification. The chapter is called 'The Theoretical' to signify its difference from 'Theory': to this extent I propose a break with theory, since 'The Theoretical' will not work in the abstract, but can only inhere in the chapters that follow it. My chosen route is what I have termed the laminary option. Remember, this is an exploratory venture, content to open up spaces, inhabit the fissures that the continual play of power and knowledge has created, then like a scout to report back on what is seen and what is said, on the articulable and the visible: words and things.

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<sup>84</sup> My project begins to look even more positivist, especially if one follows Hacking's characterisation of positivism.

## **TO DIGRESS: INSCRIPTION, ENROLMENT, TRANSLATION, HABITUS**

I should perhaps say a few words about some other theoretical tools that are evident in the conduct of my research. It should be obvious that my investigative framework is heavily Foucaultian in its emphasis, but some other useful methodological principles have been thrown into the pot. Foucault has analysed at great length, primarily in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the ways in which what we might think of as a grid of perception-enunciation comes to be formed: this relates, of course, to the discussion earlier of fields of visibility and sayability. The work of Bruno Latour in this area is, it seems to me, very compatible with Foucault's. Latour draws attention to means of visualisation and techniques of inscription, which seem to be very helpful ways of thinking about what I term, following Foucault, 'individuation', that is to say, the entry of an object or a subject into discourse. For Latour, sciences (or knowledges) act as means of visualisation of phenomena: they are the means for making objects visible. However, there is also a need for making these objects amenable to analysis by a science, and herein lies the importance of inscription devices. These devices are techniques



for rendering visible objects calculable in some form: for example, the psychologist can make use of tests and statistical techniques for producing a calculation about the individual; and the production of dossiers, case histories, and so on, are still further ways of inscribing. This perspective is useful in that it directs our attention towards what might otherwise be considered minutiae in the lofty ambitions and achievements of a science like psychology. What is important about psychology is the new ways it has given us for understanding and intervening in subjective life, based on a variety of apparently uninteresting bureaucratic-type innovations; which sounds a lot less noble than the accounts of the many standard histories of psychology.

In addition, the Latourian notion of enrolment provides us with an interesting way of thinking about subjective involvement in discourse. Latour attempts to theorise how it is that particular discursive innovations can come to be taken seriously, while others do not.<sup>85</sup> It is always important for us to remember that people will only become literate for specific purposes, given the huge investment required in the acquisition of so complex a skill. Thus we need to consider exactly how it was that certain

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<sup>85</sup> Latour, *Science in Action*, p.108ff. For Latour, the task is one of 'breaking open' taken-for-granted notions like 'interest', or the 'black boxes' (historical and scientific 'facts') that support them. The way to do this is to examine interests and black boxes in the making, rather than using them tautologously as explanatory categories. I discuss the black-boxing of normality below: see especially p.142.

interest groups were able to win over others in their literacy strategies, and, indeed, how they were able to convince 'ordinary' people that literacy was something worth acquiring. In the late-nineteenth century moves to institute compulsory education, a complex reshuffling of discourses and of actors (human and non-human) enabled new alliances of interests to take place. These new alliances were the conditions of possibility for what had once been unthinkable: the education of the lower orders. What had happened was a series of translation tactics<sup>86</sup> - a reorganisation of the goals of different groups, and a remarshalling of knowledges.

Finally, the notion of 'habitus', as developed by Marcel Mauss, and later by Pierre Bourdieu, is also a useful concept for the sort of story I wish to tell.<sup>87</sup> For Mauss and Bourdieu, the concept of habitus relates to certain habits of mind and of body. These 'habits' are formed in a variety of domains; what is important is that such habits are always culturally and historically specific. The ensemble of habits and of the places where these habits 'make sense' is the 'habitus'. We might think of the early nineteenth century experiment in monitorial schooling as forming a habitus: the sorts of school that were set

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<sup>86</sup> Latour, *Science in Action*, p.103ff.

<sup>87</sup> Marcel Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', *Economy and Society* 2, 1, 1973, 70-87. Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Economics of Linguistic Exchange', *Social Science Information* 6, 1977, 645-68.

up, with their distinctive architecture and organisation, formed a habitus within which existed certain 'habits' of body and mind, such as the posture and deployment of the body, the mental habits formed through rote learning, and so on. I think of these particular schools as forming a 'literate habitus', a habitus where different sorts of habits and 'personalities' are formed primarily through the relation of the school and its pupils to particular literate techniques. The organisation of the institution and of the individual are both comprehensible as part of the habitus. Mauss and Bourdieu are both deliberately eschewing complex philosophical or psychological explanations of 'habits'; Bourdieu, in particular, regularly asserts that to explain behaviours in such a way is to subscribe to the 'intellectualist fallacy', a belief in the necessity of metaphysics. Once again, there is a nice correspondence with the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* who is content to describe rather than to interpret.

In this attempt to organise a theoretical tool-kit, I am bearing in mind Marx's critique of the 'Illusion of Politics' in *The Holy Family*.<sup>88</sup> Marx suggested that there is a problem in the conviction that all change flows from the conscious action of people, and that human destiny is therefore in the hands of educators and legislators. While such figures play an important

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<sup>88</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1956, see especially pp14ff.

role in my account, I should not wish this thesis to be interpreted as suggesting that there is a self-evident link between schooling and literacy, for example; and by stressing the importance of discourse, the statement, and strategic interests, I hope not to fall victim to this illusion. It is not just a matter of telling a story of the programmes of such bureaucrats, but also of interpreting the role of contingency in puncturing and scarring discourse: an anonymous discourse whose constant murmur echoes through the ages.

## **POSTSCRIPT: METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**

Before we proceed, it is perhaps necessary to establish what claims can be made for any archaeo-genealogical description, given that any account cannot correspond to 'truth'. There are perhaps four points to bear in mind when assessing the success or otherwise of an archaeo-genealogy (or, for that matter, of an archaeology or of a genealogy). First, we can examine the account in terms of how closely it sticks to its own analytical framework, and, conversely, whether it manages to avoid the theoretical problems that it itself identifies in other approaches. Second, it is necessary to ask whether it goes beyond other techniques of interpretation: does it justify its copious and obscure theoretical base? Third, do the documents and monuments used in the construction of an archaeo-genealogy seem to work in such a framework, or would they rather tell a different story? Finally, does this account facilitate the possibility of us thinking differently: does it allow us to bring new sets of relationships into focus, does it throw up new sorts of problems, and perhaps most importantly, does it allow us to understand our own situation any better and from there to move towards change?

## 2: READING UNTAMED

“We can learn from the wisdom of Jesus Sirach how much perversion, corruption, and vice there is in children, and how easily and quickly they are spoiled, if we do not, by means of good discipline, retrieve them from their wickedness.”<sup>1</sup>

As I have indicated in the preceding sections, the following chapters of the (a)thesis is constructed as a laminary archaeo-genealogy: this is not to suggest that this is the only, or indeed, necessarily the most fruitful method of investigation into the problem of children and the instruction of reading; but it did seem at the outset the research method which enabled me to cope best with limited resources and to fulfil certain predilections for investigative procedure. This section is less a history than a detective novel, seeking not to reconstruct the past (what Donzelot calls ‘un bel objet fetichiste’) but to uncover some of its monuments, to see what lies just below the surface of the present, and thus to write a history of that present - rather than a history of the past. At first sight, the kind of account that this approach produces might seem anarchic, cavalier, irresponsible even; yet my defence against such charges would be that this

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<sup>1</sup> Huberinus.

reading is (at least partially) an effect of a contrast with the more usual and 'legitimate' methods of historical investigation, such as political or social history. I am questioning not the necessity to produce a rigorous account, but rather the necessity to produce an account which respects certain rites of legitimation: these rites are an obstruction to a description of the widespread deployment of the discursive domain, and as such I feel no compulsion to take part in them. How, then, does one begin to do such an archaeo-genealogy?

A crucial starting point for understanding this contrasting approach can be found in the Foucaultian notions of bio- and anatomo-politics; in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards, a series of policies started to appear which took the body (as physical surface of investment, the body as machine; or as population, the species body) as their target:-

"In concrete terms, starting in the seventeenth century, this power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however; they constituted rather two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations. One of these poles - the first to be formed, it seems - centred on the body as a machine; its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of

efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes; propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population. The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology - anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed towards the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life - characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through.”<sup>2</sup>

My analysis of the teaching of reading will demonstrate that this discourse too was the target of anatomo- and bio-political strategies, strategies which, one might say, aimed at the body

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, p.139; *La volonté de savoir*, p.183.



and the soul of the individual. In the West, at any rate, these strategies form part of a series of techniques of regulation which can be seen as a unified political project, unified at the level of a more efficient management of the population. My emphasis will be on explaining change by reference to these strategies, which embody the very transformation I am seeking to analyse. Clearly, then, the emphasis on anatomo- and bio-politics does not rule out reference to political or economic relations or facts; however, my approach tends to give weight to concerns and problems which are usually regarded as technical or contingent, and which are typically thought of as somehow peripheral to the 'real' political issues. Questions such as 'how can an examination be run efficiently?', or 'how can a dictionary be organised?' can be shown to be of crucial importance in the production of new forms of social life. I shall attempt to situate reading instruction within the orbit of such 'peripheral' concerns and explicate its role as a technique of normalisation and its position within strategies of surveillance and social regulation. I posit, then, a double principle of investigation which will guide the archaeo-genealogy. First, I begin from the Foucaultian contention that there develops what he terms a reversal of the political axis of individualisation, and that this development gathers still more momentum in the mid- to late-nineteenth century: that is to say,

there is a new focus on the individual, who previously was not considered worthy of such concentrated attention. This attention is political, and is part of a more widespread strategy of population management and what is termed 'disciplinarity':

For a long time ordinary individuality - the everyday individuality of everybody - remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day... was a privilege... The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination... This turning of real lives into writing... functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection."<sup>3</sup>

This new attention to the individual can be seen as the microscopic incarnation of an increasing concern with what Foucault has termed 'governmentality';<sup>4</sup> there is a relation of dependence between those discourses or technologies of the self which target the individual as an object of disciplinary practice (and reading and psychology are ultimately such discourses or technologies), and those more global projects of national government (which constantly reform in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.191-2.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Foucault, 'On Governmentality', *I&C* 6, 5-21, 1979; 'La gouvernementalITÀ', *Aut Aut* 167-8, 1978; *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, p.135ff.; 'Omnes et singulatim: towards a criticism of political reason', in S. McMurrin (ed.), *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Vol. II*, Utah, University of Utah Press, 1981.

perceived crises in the role of the State)<sup>5</sup>, and which cluster around a threefold problematic: security, population and government. There is no arbitrary distinction, however, between the micro- and the macro-levels, and it is perhaps helpful to think of the microscopic as *mobile* and *local* rather than miniaturised, as I have already argued in Chapter 1. It is clear that strategies at the level of governmentality, or of bio-politics, have effects at the local level, and vice-versa: the subject who is caught up in discourses around reading is affected by both anatomo-political and bio-political strategies. All of which points to the second principle of investigation, which is a denial of the usefulness of internal/external dichotomies in a history of reading. Reading is only comprehensible in a framework which emphasises its deployment in a variegated discursive nexus. To understand reading, one must understand this political reversal of the axis of individualisation which has an effectivity at both micro- and macro-levels, working at the level of the individual and of the population.

This section, then, attempts to impose a mutual relation

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *On Governmentality*. He goes on to analyse how this new technique of governmentality is born out of a triple set of discourses: those around the Christian pastoral, those around a diplomatico-military technique, and those around police. The latter is perhaps the most important for this thesis, and I shall expand upon it below.

of comprehensibility in relation to reading. On the one hand, it attempts to sketch out some points in relation to this surface of emergence, but to make those points within a framework already established by Foucault, encompassing discipline, government, and political strategy. On the other hand, it attempts to open up reading and make it a window onto this Foucaultian framework in the hope that the framework might be better understood. Reading and discipline should each afford insights into the other.

Before I continue with this section, it should be pointed out that this research does not involve a critique of reading instruction, or of psychology's role in the particular deployments of reading; it does not align itself in favour of one type of deployment or against another, nor does it attempt to prove the truth or falsity of any practice. Rather, it seeks to analyse how particular practices became possible; how these practices relate to other, apparently external, events; what effects these practices had; and what possibilities they in turn permitted - all the time focusing on what lies below the surface of the present. This refusal to 'judge' should not be seen as a dereliction of the investigator's duty; my hope is, on the contrary, that a field for further examination and consideration may be opened up by this

research:<sup>6</sup>

“The intellectual no longer has to play the role of an advisor. The projects, tactics and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting. What the intellectual can do is to provide instruments of analysis, and at present this is the historian’s essential role. What’s effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years. In other words, a topological and geological survey of the battlefield - that is the intellectual’s role. But as for saying ‘Here is what you must do!’, certainly not.”<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, it is clear that I have made a strategic decision to investigate certain forms of regulative practice with some commitment to the possibility of change. Such considerations, as I have already intimated, form part of an ‘ethical space’. It is perhaps sufficient to say that I do not wish to characterise the discourses around reading as monolithically oppressive - they are

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<sup>6</sup> These remarks are meant to echo Foucault’s in his introduction to *The Birth of the Clinic*. Nikolas Rose sees himself as part of this tradition also; see his *The Psychological Complex*, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, ‘Pouvoir et corps’, *Quel Corps? 2*, September/October 1975. Translated as ‘Body/Power’, in Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge*, p.62. It should be clear from my discussions of intellectuals that to include the present work as ‘intellectual’ does not represent a grandiose claim of the author’s value, but rather a realignment of what we mean by ‘intellectual’: a technician of a specific field of knowledge.

frequently the opposite - but to lay open the processes of formation of discourse as a first step towards being able to judge (which latter activity forms part of the 'ethical space' referred to above), and then (perhaps) to change.

In broad terms, the discussion below will centre on technical shifts in the rationale behind reading practice and instruction, and seek to outline the conditions of possibility for these shifts. Sometimes the shifts are only noticed because of changes in what is said; sometimes changes in what is said only present themselves to archaeological analysis because technical shifts enable us to extract them from their strata. As far as an attribution of primacy, or causality, in these matters is concerned, I would prefer not to risk an answer. What can begin to be delineated, however, is the general coarticulation of a series of discourses which seem to be part of a common strategy, a strategy which concerns itself with the most efficient methods of social regulation. Discourses of reading come to be part of a new political technology of the body; reading begins to provide a technique to get at the soul by regulating the body. In the sixteenth century, the target of reading is the spiritual and pedagogical transformation of individuals: the Bible is the very notion of the book. By the mid-eighteenth century, while the centrality of the Bible is not yet questioned, reading becomes

part of a penitentiary technique, part of the production of the obedient subject. The body becomes a target of power, and the teaching of reading becomes more and more a series of techniques of the precise wielding of power over the body. A sign of this new concern, this new operation of power, is the examination. The examination, in turn made possible by literacy, enables a precise register of the individual's attainment to be made, the very self condensed into a mark. This technique *par excellence* of microscopic power<sup>8</sup> makes its appearance in schools at the end of the eighteenth century: schools now become first and foremost examining institutions. The concern with moralisation is still present, a descendant, no doubt, of Christian techniques of self-analysis and inquisition (and Inquisition); but the birth of the human sciences, in a period beginning around 1840, sees the 'psychologisation' of reading and a change in the orientation of the concern with producing an obedient subject. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, there is a shift from a concern with the moral regulation of bodies and populations, to a concern with the pedagogical transformation of the individual, although still conceived in terms of a revitalised 'moral training'; this pedagogical transformation, however, is unlike that of the sixteenth century, as it is concerned less with spiritual well-

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<sup>8</sup> That is to say, power operating at a local and mobilisable level; examination, of course, is also a technique of macroscopic power.

being (although such concerns are not completely absent from discourses of this time) than with a more intensified control over the body and the population - a control so intense because it comes from the individual itself. The individual's place in the home, the nation and the empire is made clear as he or she is transformed into a self-regulating phenomenon, mindful of his or her place but also sufficiently well-read to perform the duties of his or her station. All of this is accomplished through a coarticulation of already-existing discourses or practices and the new discourses of the human sciences. I am proposing, then, that there are two major shifts in reading instruction and practice, and these form part of a larger series of discursive discontinuities which transform subjectivities and materialities. These shifts occur in the middle of the eighteenth century and in the middle to end of the nineteenth century. The latter shift, which is only accomplished with the help of the burgeoning discipline of psychology, seems to have been to a field of practices and concerns which is relatively stable; that is, it is formative of problematics we might term 'modern'. Thus I intend to look in greater detail at this period and the complex of discourses that form a 'modernity' of reading practice and instruction. All of this will form no more than an archaeo-genealogical sketch, with certain laminae plucked from obscurity



to hold centre stage. Taking my cue from Foucault,<sup>9</sup> at this point I start a section that must serve as a historical background to various studies of the power of normalisation and the formation of knowledge in modern society, with particular reference to reading and its instruction.

### *Before 1750: A Golden Age?*

My hypothesis is that after the middle of the eighteenth century, the world is 'written' in a new way, as there arise discourses and strategies concerned with the disciplining of individuals in a far more exact and measurable way, techniques of bio-politics which form a complement to earlier techniques of anatomo-politics, which themselves appear to become intensified. We see the widespread introduction in schools, for example, of practices such as examination, of a concern with 'silence' (the triumph of silent reading), and of a concern with the 'moralisation' of children in a far more efficient way. These power-knowledge shifts signal something of a discursive discontinuity, although silencing, examination and moralisation all make appearances before 1750. It may be more accurate to state that a 'fissure'

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<sup>9</sup> See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.308.

opens up in the archaeological field, and new discourses, previously hidden underground, come to light, taking on new significance and empowering new possibilities. We can begin to understand how this fissure appears by an analysis of its significant discursive predecessors, or 'discursive resources'. While it is clear that many of the techniques of discipline were already to hand, it seems that they were not employed with anything like the systematicity that we begin to see after about 1750.

The reading child has been a target of textual advice since time immemorial; for example, in antiquity, Plato claims:-

"The child is of all wild animals the most difficult to curb... it is wilful, fractious and utterly insolent, and therefore it needs to be tied down, as with bridles."<sup>10</sup>

while Quintilian's advice is:-

"Let instruction be an amusement to the boy".<sup>11</sup>

While these two have different views as to the nature of the child, Plato the 'disciplinarian', Quintilian the 'humanist', they nonetheless recommend the same course of action to promote learning: rote methods. This view of the child as animal-like, but a willing learner (given habitual drill), persists through into the

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<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Laws* 808D-E.

<sup>11</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1, 1, 20.

seventeenth century. These traditional views, although in some senses contradictory, are often held simultaneously, and are both thought to entail one essential method of instruction, giving primacy to memorisation. In the field of reading, the only instructional technique is the alphabetic method, which effects a total separation of signifier from signified and in so doing, disallows the possibility of there being any meaningfulness in the learning process: first of all, the alphabet is learned, then strings of syllables, called bridles, which are gradually extended viz: B-A, B-E etc., then B-A-B, B-A-C, etc. The child becomes equipped to deal with any combination of letters he or she (usually he) might come across, and thus is enabled to decode

their meaning.<sup>12</sup> This use of rote learning reaches something of a pinnacle in the sixteenth century, as there is an intensification of discipline in respect of the child and a concern with building a god-fearing society through well-trained individuals. The power-knowledge techniques of this time are those that will later be refined and deployed with such finesse that they take on the aura of natural, basic, common-sense, obvious procedures: schooling, examination, discipline, surveillance. In the eighteenth century, this concern with discipline is discursively transformed; the individual (child or adult) to be disciplined (or taught) will be known in a far more intensive sense. Before this shift, the individual is still regarded as “psychologically simple”,<sup>13</sup> a

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<sup>12</sup> The alphabetic method is discussed in detail in W. J. Frank Davies, *Teaching Reading in Early England*, London, Pitman, 1973. The reader may notice that the current work does not make use of many of the excellent accounts of the history of reading practice that exist, most notably M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1979; Mitford Mathews, *Teaching to Read: Historically Considered*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966; R. O'Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800*, London, Longmans, 1982; and Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, London, Methuen, 1982, except as guides to source material. This is because the present work conceptualises its role differently and does not seek to provide a *history*, in its usual sense. It is perhaps an axiom of archaeo-genealogical inquiry that secondary materials must be treated with circumspection if used at all because of the tendency to view the past as 'trace' rather than as 'monument' (see the introduction to Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*). Davies, as well as Keith Hoskin, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: Writing (and) the Child*, Unpublished MS, University of Warwick, 1983, point out that the alphabetic method still survived in some Kent schools in the 1960s according to one survey (although in company with other methods). This is a demonstration of the point that discursive shifts are never complete or total, but proceed with many exceptions and reversals. The archaeological strata are pitted with instances of 'anachronism', pockets of resistance to the transformation of knowledges; we can still speak generally of these strata, but no claims to totalisation will be made.

<sup>13</sup> I borrow this phrase from Hoskin, *op. cit.*

universal, unproblematic reader. This reader exists in coadaptation with the 'universal text', the characteristic of seventeenth century writing. The universal reader and the universal text are each a condition of possibility for the other, and just as the universal text reaches its apogee in the late seventeenth century, so the universal reader accompanies it as its textual object.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> To develop footnote 12: I could be accused of giving an historical account which is too broad, enforcing an unlikely heterogeneity on massive periods of time, perhaps suggesting that a *Zeitgeist* forces all thought and all behaviour to follow a single pattern. Of course, it might be objected, not everybody in the seventeenth century thought in one way, or believed the reader was such as has been described here. Perhaps this is so, but this is not the issue for my research. Such objections could be made if I were constructing a total history of literacy practices. However, I am seeking to do something else: to indicate what things became sayable and thinkable and at roughly what point, and how, this happens; in addition, I am only interested in discovering this information about what is pertinent to the modern age. My evidence for my contentions is the archive, the collection of statements that are available to us for analysis. In fact, in this time period, the archive is comparatively limited and very few statements seem to be made: I contend that those that are made can be read with reference to the general characterisation of the period that I make. To reiterate: this is not a history of mentalities or behaviours, but an analysis of the sayable and the thinkable, made with the purpose of understanding, in addition, visibilities.

## *The Project of the Universal Book in the Seventeenth Century*

“I delight in envisaging the innumerable multitude of Worlds as so many books which, when collected together, compose the immense Library of the Universe or the true Universal Encyclopaedia. I conceive that the marvellous gradation that exists between these different worlds facilitates in superior intelligences, to whom it has been given to traverse or rather to read them, the acquisition of truths of every kind, which it encompasses, and instils in their understanding that order and that concatenation which are its principal beauty. But these celestial Encyclopaedists do not all possess the Encyclopaedia of the Universe to the same degree; some possess only a few branches of it, others possess a greater number, others even more still; but all have eternity in which to increase and perfect their learning and develop all their faculties.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus did Charles Bonnet express the ultimate dream of the seventeenth century, that a book might encapsulate all that is in the world, and conversely that the world, thus gathered in, might

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Bonnet, *Oeuvres IV (Contemplation de la nature)*, 1781, p.136, as quoted in Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, p.100, *The Order of Things*, p.85-6. Much earlier Grudé de la Croix du Maine, *La Bibliothèque*, Premier Volume, Abel L'Angelier, Paris, 1584, had anticipated an encyclopaedic solution to problems of the incompleteness of knowledge and proliferation of books (see “Epistre au Roy”).

become a total book, an encyclopaedia. We see the start of the search for an absolute mastery over language, which Foucault characterises as crucially dependent on the possibilities engendered by the invention of the 'double sign', the place where signifier and signified meet in perfect correspondence: "it presupposes that the sign is a duplicated representation doubled over upon itself."<sup>16</sup> This technical shift is away from an undifferentiated conception of how meaning is conveyed through words; now, each signification corresponds exactly to a given sign - signs become pure presences with no overspill of signification into the spaces between them. This link between signifier and signified was conceived of as a literal and physical one, and is perhaps best exemplified in John Webster's *Academiarum Examen*.<sup>17</sup> Webster proposes relating "Hieroglyphical, Emblematical, Symbolical and Cryptographical learning" to grammar. He derives his evidence that means exist to repair "the ruines of Babel, and... Cure... the confusion of tongues" from dactology ("the ability of the deaf and dumb to communicate by signs"), Chinese characters, and Boehme's 'Natural Language'.<sup>18</sup> For Webster, the reorganisation of language, despite its appalling state of confusion, is a possibility because

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.65.

<sup>17</sup> John Webster, *Academiarum Examen*, London, 1653.

<sup>18</sup> Webster, *op. cit.*, p.24-5.

of this belief in the equivalence of signifier and signified; Webster's task is the production of the one, true sign-system.

Providing the place where the double sign can show itself is another seventeenth century innovation, the monolingual dictionary, with its implicit commitment to the possibility of the precise definition of the sign: every word and every definition can be found, in its place, in the same book. The 'true' monolingual dictionary for the age is the complete and exhaustive word-book. Now, while the dictionary is the first book explicitly to write double signs, it is revealing that the practice of making dictionaries, lexicography, forms part of a much wider linguistic world. Our seventeenth-century lexicographers turn out also to be the writers of grammar and reading books; in this period they are producing universal language schemes, shorthand systems, and suchlike. These new wordsmiths crop up in some profusion, but so many of them, including, as Murray Cohen remarks, "the ones who have the greatest impact", are schoolmasters.<sup>19</sup> Reading, writing, teaching, the production of didactic and pedagogical texts, these practices exist in mutual relation. Books like the dictionary and the 'reader' (the textbook aimed specifically at the individual learning to read) are never produced as a result of purely epistemological breakthroughs; being the

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<sup>19</sup> Murray Cohen, *Sensible Words; Linguistic Practice in England 1640-1785*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p.6.



work of pedagogues, they are pedagogic as well as epistemological, vehicles of power as well as knowledge. This is why they prove so important in the construction of the child - they constantly prescribe as well as describe. This practice of prescription later became defined in terms of a practice of proscription, when reading became 'psychologised', 'colonised' by psychology from the late nineteenth century onwards.

This seventeenth century concern with prescription and description is part of the project of universal language schemes; a project aiming at uncovering or creating the single universal structure of language, to heal the fractioning of Babel. For example, George Dalgarno believed a "Natural and Universal Grammar" existed awaiting discovery;<sup>20</sup> he had also produced a form of shorthand "that drove me before I was aware upon a Real Character; that again, after a little consideration, resolved itself into an Effable language".<sup>21</sup> These different writings exemplified by Dalgarno are essentially a set of doublings of the sign system.

The testing of the possibilities of the double sign to its

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<sup>20</sup> George Dalgarno, *Didascalocophus; or, the Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor*, Oxford, 1680. He had previously outlined his version of this grammar in his *Ars Signorum* of 1661. These concerns are eerily reminiscent of modern attempts to theorise a universal grammar, such as those of the Chomskians; although, as Hoskin, *op. cit.*, points out, modern day adherents of this type of universalism prudently locate their universal structures at deeper and deeper levels, and thus avoid the 'rout' their predecessors were to suffer.

<sup>21</sup> Dalgarno, *Works*, Edinburgh, 1834, p.164. "Real Character" is 'Universal Writing'.

limits is characteristic of this period; universal languages, shorthands, sign-languages for the disabled, are all ways of producing an eternally valid spatial representation of language, a perfect and exhaustive grid of double signs, where signifieds (as ultimate, fixed meanings) are 'captured' in signifiers (as ultimate, fixed word-forms). And as Foucault shows in *The Order of Things*, this can be done not only for words but for things and values as well, providing the conditions of possibility for the discourses of natural history and the analysis of wealth; in each case, the world of things and values permits a Total Book, eternally and exhaustively valid.<sup>22</sup>

This venture to produce the Total Book works; that is, the discursive formations around this venture have truth effects and are 'veridical'. Yet these attempts to reduce language to pure spatial representation do so at the cost of ignoring temporality, trying to overcome temporal changes in, and differences between, languages. The reader (both the child beginning-reader, the object of this study, and the adult 'sophisticated' reader) is coadaptive with this universal language, and like it is seen as eternal and ideal. Those texts of the seventeenth century which deal with reading instruction do not treat it as problematic; to

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<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966; translated as *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London, Tavistock, 1970.

get the reader to read, all that is needed is the presentation of a system where self-evidently correct signifiers cannot fail to be recognised. John Buno, for example, uses pictures to illustrate letters' shapes as well as their sounds - 'b' is represented by a berry, whose stalk and body form the shape of that letter.<sup>23</sup>

Richard Lloyd has a similar system, although he opts to deal with sound and shape separately (for example, 'h' is written like the back of a chair; and in sound, "'b' is the creature that doth make honey").<sup>24</sup> Charles Hoole lists various techniques for learning the letters - letters written on dice, on packs of cards, or on a wheel which reveals only one letter at a time, for example.<sup>25</sup> All the semiotic relations of these texts and the many others like them refer back to the pure and eternal relationship of signifier to signified, while the texts themselves strive to remove all possibility of error and ambiguity from the system. An example of this aim is provided by Christopher Cooper, with his charts of ambiguous words, whether those with the same sound but different meanings, or those with the same spelling but different sounds, or those with the same sound but different spellings.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> John Buno, *Newly Set-Out ABC and Reading Book*, 1650.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Lloyd, *The Schoolmaster's Auxiliaries*, 1653.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Hoole, *A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School*, 1660.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Cooper, *The English Teacher*, London, 1687. Cooper's is an example of the working principles of seventeenth century pedagogy: to try to make the method of teaching, the sequence of learning, and the structure of language compatible with the order of things.

The ideal is the production of the one true sign-system, in which each double sign would consist of totally unambiguous signifiers signifying the eternal signifieds of ultimate, absolute Truth. Seventeenth century reading books attempt to produce themselves as texts on this model, lifting the veil between text and reader and making the process of reading transparent. Reading may be made fun or easy, as Quintilian had pointed out in antiquity, but the reader *per se* is not a problem - reading error is a temporary aberration which will be eradicated with the production of the pure sign-system.<sup>27</sup> While one can see an increasing complexity in reading instruction books at this time, this complexity is in complete contrast to the perceived simplicity of the learning process, which proceeds through memorisation and habituation. However, the reader does not escape attention entirely.

### *The 'Simple' Reader: Anatomico-Politics*

We have seen, then, how the reader is regarded as an

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<sup>27</sup> An early example of the attempt to make reading 'fun' was the publication in 1694 by "J.G." of "A Play-book for children to allure them to read as soon as possible. Composed of small pages on purpose not to tire children and printed with a fair and pleasant letter. The matter and method plain and easier than any yet extant". In the Preface the author states he wants "to decoy Children in to reading".

unproblematic individual, and the child as beginning-reader needs no particular consideration as far as instruction is concerned; the text is the crucial element in the relationship. Nonetheless, this child reader was not permitted to engage in the learning process without outside intervention. The body was incessantly a target of discipline, a surface on which power-knowledge relations might play. Foucault suggests that anatomo-political techniques of disciplinary power begin to make their appearance in France in the seventeenth century; similarly, in England, there is an explosion of books dealing with the bodily disciplining of the reader and writer; posture, the dressage of the body, is the crucial consideration, as can be seen from Edward Cocker's thirty or more writing books from the 1650s onwards which supplied detailed instructions such as "How to Hold the Pen" and "How to Manage and Use the Pen". A precise utilisation of power over the body, an anatomo-political power, is characteristic of this period, and its conditions of possibility lay in those techniques of surveillance developed by Reformation pedagogues.

The Reformation is the scene of the creation of the good society out of well-trained individuals, which in turn made use of techniques refined by the Inquisition to guarantee the efficacy of that training: control, surveillance, examination, schooling, discipline. The child was the particular target of Reformation

disciplinary practice, since theologians of that time attached their hopes to future generations, but these techniques are comparatively simple; the child is seen as animal like, a paradoxical combination of the sinful and the innocent, best trained by the indoctrination typified by rote learning.<sup>28</sup> This comes across time and again in Reformation authors like Luther, Melanchthon and Erasmus, and particularly in the educational theories of Peter Ramus; these texts stress ensuring the bodily disciplining of the child as a necessity of good educational practice. Corporal punishment is ubiquitous, but the evidence suggests it was not indiscriminate. Educational laws of both the Protestant and Catholic Reformations show an abhorrence of inhumane punishment, and an attempt to temper punishment with gentleness came to be seen as the best means of 'civilising' the child.<sup>29</sup> A *reduction* in punishment is seen as needed to increase its effectiveness; and accompanying this intensified targeting of the body as a surface for intervention, intensified because more effective, is an intensification of the desire to teach reading.

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<sup>28</sup> See Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Strauss concentrates on the German Reformations, but nonetheless many of his arguments hold good for England at this time. An account of the contemporary situation in England is given by John Morgan, *Godly Learning; Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986. Morgan also provides an exhaustive bibliography of primary and secondary sources for the period.

<sup>29</sup> Strauss, p.179-82.

The school became a *de facto* institute for the instilling of literacy, often limiting its ambitions only this far. And while reading is primarily a means to salvation by giving access to the Bible, there is also an acknowledgement of the importance of literacy for other occupations, especially those connected with commerce.<sup>30</sup> However, it seems clear that the concern to produce pious individuals is foremost in the minds of Reformation pedagogues - something which could only be achieved through 'discipline' (what the Lutherans called 'Zucht'), which Gerald Strauss characterises as:-

“a systematic, habit-shaping regime, part upbringing, instruction, and character formation, part surveillance, control and punishment, a procedure expected to mold and tone the personality until obedience to established rules became automatic. Initiated in youngest infancy and kept up through adolescence and early adulthood, *Zucht* counteracted the youth's natural proclivities, eventually replacing them (or so it was hoped) with the traits of an evangelical personality. 'We can learn from the wisdom of Jesus Sirach,' writes Huberinus, 'how much perversion, corruption, and vice there is in children, and how easily and quickly they are spoiled, if we do not, by means of good discipline, retrieve them from their wickedness.' Left to their own

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<sup>30</sup> Strauss, p.193-8.

devices, untamed and undisciplined,  
they bring ruin on themselves and  
everything around them.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the period of the Reformation sees the institution of a pervasive disciplining, focusing on the body, and making use of techniques of control that are medieval in origin.<sup>32</sup> These can be seen as the discursive resources for what I have characterised as anatomo-political techniques, although as yet they are rather crude: the object of discipline or *Zucht* is the spiritual transformation of the individual, and particularly the child. These early forms of discipline furnished the tools for the seventeenth century anatomo-political attempts to discipline the body for the sake of discipline, a truly modern phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> The disciplinary practices of the Reformation and of the seventeenth century take an object (in particular the child) that is still relatively untheorised, but by the middle of the eighteenth century this was no longer the case. Other puritan techniques are also important for our story, and these will be examined below.

On the surface, the disciplinary practices of the sixteenth

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<sup>31</sup> Strauss, p.238. Cf. Caspar Huberinus, *Spiegel der Hauszucht...* Nuremberg, 1565.

<sup>32</sup> See Hoskin, *passim*, and p.1 on the medieval institution of 'control' through the 'counter-roll'.

<sup>33</sup> One is reminded of Nietzsche's much-quoted observation: Nietzsche reverses Christian dogma when he suggests that the soul is the prison-house of the body. One can view the history of the West as the history of the construction of the government of the soul, as a way of constraining more and more what bodies may do.



and seventeenth centuries do not seem so different: both stress the importance of education, and especially reading, as the means to salvation, and both concern themselves with the child as the privileged object of these educational discourses, and particularly of reading instruction, which in this period is almost synonymous with education.<sup>34</sup> Both concern themselves with the body as a target of disciplinary action. Yet the differences between these centuries are crucial.

As Cohen points out, in the period 1630-1660, Samuel Hartlib and John Wilkins were at the centre of those learned groups who were at the forefront of the universal language schemes described above.<sup>35</sup> These are the same men who make up the Royal Society, founded in 1660 by Charles II for research into science. The institution of this organisation is not without significance, since it is indicative of an important discursive shift, the irruption of scientific discourses into the study of the world. We can characterise scientific discourses as having two

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<sup>34</sup> On the birth of the child as object *par excellence* of educational practice, see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962, *passim*. Although there was no longer a lack of interest in education, Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, 1570, could still complain that horsetrainers got more attention and better wages than schoolmasters. Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in some quarters teaching was thought of as a stand-by job, or a last resort: "He is impotent and cannot stand upright: the only suitable employment for him is teaching" - see François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p.111.

<sup>35</sup> Cohen, p.2.

essential features: first, that they are predisposed towards theory; and second, that they are systematic and truthful, or, rather, veridical.<sup>36</sup> It is this systematicity that is important for our purposes, since it is exactly this which is characteristic of the closer mapping of the body as an object of anatomo-political practice. The seventeenth century is the scene of increasing attention to detail, discipline existing as a political anatomy of detail. The venture to produce universal language schemes is the beginnings of this new obsession with detail, a veritable 'microphysics' of the operations of power, and forms, no doubt, an important condition of possibility for the scientific 'onslaught' of the later part of the century. However, it seems clear that this microphysical attention to the detail of the body could only go so far - its object, the child, was still relatively untheorised, and one of the most important discourses through which these microphysical techniques could operate, the practice of reading and its instruction, was still relatively unentangled

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<sup>36</sup> 'Veridical' in the sense that they have truth effects. This emphasis on the irruption of scientific discourse is not meant to suggest the beginnings of a 'march of progress', in the manner of, for example, Richard F. Jones, *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, Second Edition, Gloucester, Mass., Smith, 1961. I am concerned rather with the way in which a systematic targeting of the body could be part of a scientific endeavour to 'know' the individual. I am not intending to privilege science as a space of pure knowledge, or to commit the opposite error, to stress the social conditions that formed the background to this innovation. My intention rather is to provide a description of this period which respects the multi-dimensionality of the dispersion of discourse. On this aim of Foucaultian investigation, see Nikolas Rose, *The Formation of the Psychology of the Individual in England 1870-1939*, introduction.

with a whole other corpus of discourses, techniques and knowledges that were to transform it. Reading was slowly becoming subject to a series of calculations, first evidenced in the rationalisation of dictionaries and wordbooks, which were to enable reading to become a vector of power, a technology to get at the body *and* the soul.<sup>37</sup> We can see the discursive resources for this investment in the pre-Classical Age: but it is at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth that we really see the start of an intensification of the operations of micro-power on the child. This is not a move from a golden age to a time of oppression, but is rather a move from a period characterised by an unsophisticated wielding of power to a period in which cunning surveillance and the strategic operation of power techniques were not only to become the norm, but were to create it as well.

It should now be clear that the title of this chapter is ironic: reading in the period before anatomo-political and bio-political strategies was not simply a pure space of knowledge, uncorrupted by such 'external' factors as techniques of government. On the contrary, it would be possible to write

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<sup>37</sup> The aim to produce universal language schemes had the side-effect of producing a whole series of (almost) exhaustive texts and word-lists, such as the monolingual dictionary, as discussed above. This rationalisation, however, is fairly simple, and does not encompass, for example, the calculated development of different footnotes and typefaces characteristic of the first half of the eighteenth century, as discussed below.

histories of reading in the pre-modern age which demonstrate how reading is always connected up with, entangled even, in a whole series of other discourses. Reading and the instruction of reading always have a purpose, are always techniques formed in a cultural and historical specificity. To understand reading, we must try to understand those specificities, whether they relate to the devotional practices of pre-Classical Christianity, or the rhetorical and philosophical techniques of antiquity.<sup>38</sup> 'Reading' before 1750 does look quite strange to us, but it was tied up in a different web. We must move on to consider how the web of the present was woven.

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<sup>38</sup> For example, one could talk about how ancient Greek techniques of self-knowledge, self-mastery and self-care were related to their literate abilities, or even forged by them; or how the Romans, inventing the technique of examining the self through autobiography, perhaps first seen in the figure of Marcus Aurelius, were able to constitute new notions of the self in and through literacy.

### 3: THE INVENTION OF THE NORMAL

“For this is above all others the wisdom the eloquent man wants, namely - to be the regulator of times and persons.”<sup>1</sup>

*The End of Universalism: The Intensification of  
Anatomo-Politics and the Beginnings of Bio-Politics*

My argument has been that the seventeenth century schemes and grammars were locked in a nexus of coarticulation with discourses around the double sign and the ‘simple’ reader, each aspect of this equation depending on the others for its continued existence and comprehensibility. So long as this discursive formation was undisturbed, it was able to have a whole host of ‘truth effects’, most notable among them being the creation of rigid codes of discipline, which themselves could refer back to a desire to produce a pious population. Cornerstones of this whole complex of discourses were the child, and the possibility of teaching the child to read to guarantee this piety; cornerstones indeed, yet cornerstones paradoxically produced by the very

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *The Orator*.

edifice which rested upon them. However, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the attempt to produce universal wordbooks slowly dies out, and refocuses in an aim to write “universal or General” grammars and language schemes. While the seventeenth century project had ignored temporality in the concern with what is true for all time, the eighteenth century books incorporate temporality in the concern with what generally happens in a particular language at a given time.<sup>2</sup> This shift is exemplified in changes in the contents of, and approaches to the construction of, the dictionary.

In the seventeenth century, when the monolingual dictionary first appears, it is modelled on a sixteenth century invention, the bilingual dictionary, and features a list of Latinate ‘hard words’ and an equivalent list of vernacular ‘common words’. The seventeenth-century dictionary is an attempt to produce (or, rather, an act of faith in the possibility of producing) a complete wordbook which contains every word in the language. It is not until the eighteenth century that the modern monolingual dictionary, with one alphabetical list of words, is produced, but when it is, it is immediately concerned with temporality or specificity, as I shall explain.

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<sup>2</sup> This transformation occurs in each discursive domain; for example, natural history becomes biology, and analysis of wealth re-forms as political economy, but it seems to happen first in the domain of language. These parallel transformations are dealt with in detail in Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

The first lexicographer to produce a modern English dictionary is John Kersey; his *New English Dictionary* of 1702 claims to be a “Compleat Collection of the Most Proper and Significant Words, Commonly Used in the Language”. This concern with the ‘common and the proper’ is expressed here for the first time, suggesting that something is stirring in the discursive field; while his *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* of 1708 goes still further, being the first abridged dictionary.<sup>3</sup> It abandons the dream of the universal word list and aims at a general list of commonly-used words. This shift is not limited to dictionaries, but is more generally characteristic of contemporary theories of language, “a temporal aspect subsum[ing] the spatial”, as Murray Cohen puts it;<sup>4</sup> the figure of the Total Reader suddenly becomes derogated, as, for example, by Jonathan Swift: “Throughout Swift’s works... the enemy is someone who completely and literally knows all”.<sup>5</sup> This new incorporation of temporality into the text produces a different reader; again, with reference to Swift, “the reader’s alternative to being implied and totally mirrored by the satire is to read *differently*, to recognise the mental habits that lead, miserably,

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<sup>3</sup> John Kersey, *A New English Dictionary*, London, Henry Bonwicke... and Robert Knaplock, 1702. John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum; or, A General English Dictionary*, London, Printed by J. Wilde for J. Phillips et al., 1708.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, p.74.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, p.75.

to literalization”.<sup>6</sup> The search for a “Real Character”, a universal language scheme, is abandoned - for example, grammars become general grammars of specific languages rather than a universal grammar of Language. My contention is that the shift towards the inclusion of the temporal is perhaps the most important condition of possibility for the intensification of a control over the body; the fictions created by these new language schemes, dictionaries, grammars, histories, novels, become ‘fleshed out’ - “its [sc. writing’s] fictions become more life-like and more of us become like them the more (and the better) we learn to read and write.”<sup>7</sup> We can understand this process as one of normalisation, the production of individuals according to a rigorous code of norms: this production of normality, which is perhaps the essence of modern disciplinary society, can be seen to arise first, I would argue, in the world of lexicography.

‘The normal’ is the product of these new eighteenth century wordbooks; indeed the term ‘normal’ is not used in its modern sense until now, and we even have acknowledgement of the ‘normal reader’, perhaps first in Kersey’s 1702 dictionary. Kersey derogates the older style of dictionary, in particular Coles’s, for including various foreign and rare words “never us’d or understood anywhere else. So that a plain Country-man, in

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Hoskin, *op. cit.*, p.17.



looking for a common English Word... must needs lose sight of it".<sup>8</sup> Previous dictionaries had designated a particular readership, but this had always before been 'unlearned'.<sup>9</sup> Produced with reference to this abnormal reader, our 'normal reader' now appears regularly in prefaces to dictionaries, but perhaps most explicitly in Walker (1791), who discusses which usage should form the directing principle of his work:

"Is it the usage of the greater part of Speakers... Is it the majority of the studious in schools and colleges... or of those who, from their elevated birth or station, gives laws to the refinements and elegancies of a court?"

Walker's range of possibilities, then, encompasses the general mass of speakers, the university staff, and nobles, but his verdict is in an impossible, fictive combination of them all:

"The usage, which ought to direct us, is neither of these we have been enumerating, taken singly, but a sort of

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<sup>8</sup> Kersey, *A New English Dictionary*, preface. Cf., Elisha Coles, *An English Dictionary*, London, Samuel Crouch, 1676. This excerpt is quoted in Tetsuro Hayashi, *The Theory of English Lexicography 1530-1791*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins B.V., 1978, p.81.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall*, London, Printed by I. Roberts for Edmund Weauer, 1604, claims on the title-page that his dictionary is "for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other vnskilfull persons", while Henry Cockeram, *The English Dictionarie*, London, Nathaniel Butter, 1623, also on the title-page, aims at "Enabling as well Ladies and Gentlewomen, young Schollers, Clarkes, Merchants, as also Strangers of any Nation to the understanding of the more difficult Authors". Quoted in Hayashi, p.40. Incidentally, Cawdrey's is the first and Cockeram's only the third English dictionary produced.

compound ratio of all three.”<sup>10</sup>

This normalised fiction, however, is essentially productive: and what it produces more than anything is the child as a normalised language user. The Reformation injunctions to intervene first and foremost on the child still have their effects, but the fiction of the normal reader changes the ways in which such interventions work. While the Reformation ambition of producing more pious citizens, citizens more interested in religion and more able to take part in it more actively and in a more informed way, can only be judged a failure, the discursive shifts at the beginning of the eighteenth century secure a closer control and mapping of that citizen, and especially the child. These shifts, occurring first in the field of language, signal the beginnings of the production of the modern child. The temporalised, fleshed-out figure of the normal language user was able to produce the reader in its own image. At this point, the problem of how to teach reading undergoes a transformation, and acquires a new problematic object: the text now shares its problematisation with the reader.

There is, then, a double action of temporalisation from the beginning of the eighteenth century: both the text and the reader ‘attain’ a temporal existence. As they are temporalised, so they

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<sup>10</sup> John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, London, G. G. J. and J. Robinson, and T. Cadell, 1791, preface, quoted in Hayashi, p.123.

lose their status as universal and unitary:<sup>11</sup> as they become more complex, they become more detailed; and the presence of the 'detail' gives a domain to discipline. We notice the slow encroachment of discipline into pedagogy, but in general, following Foucault, one may distinguish three characteristics of discipline that begin to emerge at this time: the requirement of *enclosure*, the principle of *partitioning*, and the classification by *hierarchy*. In addition, there is the imposition of the timetable in the field of pedagogy: this is the imposition of disciplinary time.

### *Enclosure*

"Discipline sometimes requires *enclosure*, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony. There were the great 'confinements' of vagabonds and paupers; there were other more discreet, but insidious and effective ones. There were the *collèges*, or secondary schools: the monastic model was gradually imposed; boarding appeared as the most perfect, if not the most frequent, educational régime; it

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<sup>11</sup> This fractioning of the text and the reader can be most clearly seen in the contemporaneous invention of the footnote, which splits the text, but also distinguishes different users: the learned are distinguished from the unlearned, the master from the child. See Cohen, p.55, and the discussion of the new pedagogy below.

became obligatory at Louis-le-Grand when, after the departure of the Jesuits, it was turned into a model school.”<sup>12</sup>

The principle of enclosure was one which worked its way from the secondary to the primary school: the latter had gradually disassociated itself from the community by its exclusive attention to children, and by long-standing attempts to ‘professionalise’ teachers. The elementary school was, by this period, a space with its own logic of organisation, separate from ‘life’, and a domain for the ‘expert’ education of children.<sup>13</sup> There is evidence for a growing distinction between the various ‘ages’ of childhood, such as adolescence, middle-childhood and infancy,<sup>14</sup> and the realisation that education (in this period virtually synonymous with being taught to read) needed to be more closely tailored to the different needs of its recipients.

### *Partitioning*

“But the principle of ‘enclosure’ is neither constant, nor indispensable, nor sufficient in disciplinary machinery.

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<sup>12</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.141.

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, p.203-5 discusses the efforts to ‘professionalise’ teaching, starting in the 16th century, particularly through ‘licensing’.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, p.275 and *passim*.

This machinery works space in a much more flexible and detailed way. It does this first of all on the principle of elementary location or *partitioning*. Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual. Avoid distributions in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyse confused, massive or transient pluralities. Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are elements or bodies to be distributed. One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled appearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation; it was a traffic of anti-desertion, anti-vagabondage, anti-concentration. Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. Discipline organises an analytical space.”<sup>15</sup>

This use of partitioning, or disciplinary space, is still comparatively crude, as we shall see when discussing the far more sophisticated monitorial system of education. Nonetheless, reading began to be extorted from a grid of localised power

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.143.

relations, which is crucially dependent on the development of a new disciplinary architecture. Foucault quotes the chilling passage from Delamare:

“Sleep is the image of death, the dormitory is the image of the sepulchre... although the dormitories are shared, the beds are nevertheless arranged in such a way and closed so exactly by means of curtains that the girls may rise and retire without being seen.”<sup>16</sup>

No longer is it possible to educate an undifferentiated mass of people; the focus has moved to the child (now distinguished from the adult in educational practice), and to the specific child occupying a position in disciplinary space. By such strategies is it possible to raise the threshold of individuality. This move to ‘individuate’ the individual brings its own problems, of course, which are in their turn answered by discipline. How else to comprehend the appearance of an entirely new sort of book, the *Onania*?<sup>17</sup> What is interesting about the *Onania* is that its main

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<sup>16</sup> N. Delamare, *Traité de police*, 1705, p.507: ‘Réglement pour la communauté des filles du Bon Pasteur’, quoted in Foucault, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, *Onania; or, the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution*, London, 1710. It is interesting that this new crop of books seem to be directed at the lower orders: see, for example, Samuel Auguste André David Tissot, *L’Onanisme: Dissertation sur les Maladies Produites par la Masturbation*, Lausanne, Grasset, 1764. These lower orders are, of course, a principal target of disciplinary practice, since there is frequently concern expressed about their ‘idleness’. Tissot revealingly writes *AVIS à peuple* ten years later (*peuple* = ‘the common people’). His simultaneous concern with healthiness, and thus with the extortion of the capacities of the body rather than its simple ‘negation’ can be seen in his *De la Santé des gens de lettres*, Lausanne, Grasset, 1768.

proscription is against the wasting of seed rather than the actual 'sin' of masturbation: it is thus indicative of a move away from the action of discipline as negative, towards an attempt to promote absolutely every aspect of the body. This is the very essence of modern disciplinary power - it does not forbid, but rather incites and produces. The most perfect control over individuals comes to reside not in saying 'no', but in sanctioning, producing and dictating what is allowable.

In addition, I have already alluded to the partitioning of the child that is taking place in the textual world, and I shall develop this theme below; it seems possible to develop Foucault's notions about the reorganisation of the child's life beyond its physical conditions. The very concept of the child was in the process of being enclosed, partitioned and hierarchised.

### *Hierarchy*

"Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.146.

The principle of hierarchical arrangement is perhaps the most important for the education of disciplined individuals. The eighteenth century sees the introduction of rows and ranks of pupils in classrooms and yards, and the ordering of pupils according to performance. Rochemonteix gives an account of the military organisation of the Jesuit colleges,<sup>19</sup> while Jean-Baptiste de La Salle dreamt of the classroom in which the spatial arrangement of pupils would be a co-articulation of a whole series of assessments of the pupil's progress, worth, character, industry, cleanliness and wealth:

“In every class there will be places assigned for all the pupils of all the lessons, so that all those attending the same lesson will always occupy the same place. Pupils attending the highest lessons will be placed in the benches closest to the wall, followed by the others according to the order of the lessons moving towards the middle of the classroom... Each of the pupils will have his place assigned to him and none of them will leave it or change it except on the order or with the consent of the school inspector... Those whose parents are neglectful and verminous must be separated from those who are careful and clean... an unruly and frivolous pupil should be placed between two who are well behaved and serious, a libertine either alone or

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<sup>19</sup> C. de Rochemonteix, *Un collège au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 1889, III, p.51ff.



between two pious pupils.”<sup>20</sup>

Foucault stresses how this drive to tabulate people, performances and things was a mark of the eighteenth century, and marked the perception of a problem that was simultaneously scientific, political and economic.<sup>21</sup> The question was:

“how one was to arrange botanical and zoological gardens, and construct at the same time rational classifications of living beings; how one was to observe, supervise, regularize the circulation of commodities and money and thus build up an economic table that might serve as the principle of the increase of wealth; how one was to inspect men... and constitute a... register of the armed forces; how one was to distribute patients... and make a systematic classification of diseases: these were all twin operations in which the two elements - distribution and analysis, supervision and intelligibility - are inextricably bound up. In the eighteenth century, the table was both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge.”<sup>22</sup>

This tabular hierarchy that was imposed on pedagogic practice also manifested itself in the arrangement of time. The time-

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes*, 1720, p.248-9. The manuscript, which in all probability was not written by La Salle himself, but definitely refers to Jesuit colleges, is usually attributed to the year 1706. Many of these practices remain in Jesuit schools to this day, as I know to my cost. Much the same divisions had been suggested earlier by Batencour; cf. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.147 and p.314, n.3.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.148; cf. *The Order of Things*.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.148.

table had had a long history, but now the division of time became more and more minute: again the anatomy is one of detail:

“At the last stroke of the hour, a pupil will ring the bell, and at the first sound of the bell all the pupils will kneel, with their arms crossed and their arms lowered. When the prayer has been said, the teacher will strike the signal once to indicate that the pupils should get up, a second time as a sign that they should salute Christ, and a third that they should sit down.”<sup>23</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century this discipline of the time-table had become still more precise; Tronchot outlines how the following time-table was suggested for the *Écoles mutuelles*: 8.45 entrance of the monitor, 8.52 the monitor's summons, 8.56 entrance of the children and prayer, 9.00 the children go to their benches, 9.04 first slate, 9.08 end of dictation, 9.12 second slate, etc.<sup>24</sup> We can also see in La Salle's description of the correct posture for handwriting how much more precise were the eighteenth century disciplinary procedures than their seventeenth century predecessors (cf. Cocker's instructional books of the mid-seventeenth century, discussed above). The pupils must always:-

“hold their bodies erect, somewhat

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<sup>23</sup> La Salle, *op. cit.*, p.27-8; cf. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.150.

<sup>24</sup> R. R. Tronchot, *L'Enseignement mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833, les luttes politiques et religieuses autour de la question scolaire*, Thèse de doctorat d'Etat, Paris, 1972, i, p.221. Cited in Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.150.

turned and free on the left side, slightly inclined, so that, with the elbow placed on the table, the chin can be rested upon the hand, unless this were to interfere with the view; the left leg must be somewhat more forward under the table than the right. A distance of two fingers must be left between the body and the table; for not only does one write with more alertness, but nothing is more harmful to the health than to acquire the habit of pressing one's stomach against the table; the part of the left arm from the elbow to the hand must be placed on the table. The right arm must be at a distance from the body of about three fingers and be about five fingers from the table, on which it must rest lightly. The teacher will place the pupils in the posture that they should maintain when writing, and will correct it either by sign or otherwise, when they change this position."<sup>25</sup>

In this way, disciplinary time and space gradually imposed themselves on educational practice. The school years were now rigidly separated from adult life, and regarded as a time of 'training'; the hours at school were becoming more regulated; different stages of progress were beginning to be theorised, the passage between which would be secured by the passing of examinations. A precise analytics of educational progress was slowly replacing the traditional, more undifferentiated

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<sup>25</sup> La Salle, *op. cit.*, p.63-4.

supervision of the schoolmaster. In the field of reading, the French educationalist Charles Démia was perhaps the first to produce a precise ‘anatomy’ of instructional technique:-

“Demia [sic] suggested a division of the process of learning to read into seven levels: the first for those who are beginning to learn the letters, the second for those who are learning to spell, the third for those who are joining syllables together to make words, the fourth for those who are reading Latin in sentences or from punctuation to punctuation, the fifth for those who are beginning to read French, the sixth for the best readers, the seventh for those who can read manuscripts. But, where there are a great many pupils, further subdivisions would have to be introduced; the first class would compose four streams: one for those who are learning the ‘simple letters’; a second for those who are learning the ‘mixed’ letters; a third for those who are learning the abbreviated letters (â, ê...); a fourth for those who are learning the double letters (ff, ss, tt, st). The second class would be divided into three streams: for those who ‘count each letter aloud before spelling the syllable, D. O., DO’; for those ‘who spell the most difficult syllables, such as *bant, brand, spinx*’, etc.”<sup>26</sup>

Time and space thus become vectors of power: power is grafted

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.159-60. Charles Démia, *Réglement pour les écoles de la ville de Lyon*, 1716, p.19-20.

directly onto them. But it should be clear that this is not a sudden shift in the wielding of power, but draws on a series of dispersed discourses and practices which one can begin to make out as a general form. For example, the temporal invasion of readers and texts is a *sine qua non* of the detailed disciplining of the individual, the heterogeneity of the reader existing as a spur to exhaustive knowledge, a knowledge of the detail of the subject; the indissolubility of power and knowledge ensures that knowledge about the reader, especially the child, does not exist in a pure space of its own, but becomes part of the productive discourses of education where the relations of power can play further.

Furet and Ozouf suggest that the principles of these sorts of schools usher in the reign of the Norm; but a Norm, moreover, that can have a universal power, a validity throughout the order of things. They quote from a school handbook, *L'Escole paroissiale*, written by a Paris priest in 1654:

“uniformity must be the rule for all, without departing in any way from received practice; thus, the same signs are to be used in lessons, the same method for reading, writing and arithmetic; the same manner of coaching for the Catechism, of saying prayers and hearing them, of assembling and dismissing children; the Conduct of schools should be an unvarying rule for

all. A Master shall find in his efforts to conform to it his hopes of success.”<sup>27</sup>

From this point on, classes in schools run by the Brothers were held in silence.

We have seen in this chapter how the invention of the normal, a crucial innovation which allows for a whole new set of ways of understanding objects, is accomplished first in the some rather humble, literacy-related spheres. It would seem to be occasioned not by the machinations of the State, wishing to control and oppress the population as much as possible, but thanks to a series of technical lexicographical problems. The individual who comes under the this normalising gaze is already being changed, being made docile:

“In accordance with a programme of normalization... when an object becomes observable, measurable and quantifiable, it has already become *civilized* : the disciplinary organization of civilization extends its subjection to the object in the very way it makes it knowable. The docile object provides the material template that variously supports or frustrate the operations performed upon it.”<sup>28</sup>

The concept of the normal is well on its way to becoming ‘black-

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<sup>27</sup> Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, p.79.

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.162-3.

boxed'.<sup>29</sup> to becoming an unquestioned, reliable tool in the service of a series of other projects; and by its very nature, it brings with it civilisation and docility. What could be more civilised or docile than the silent schoolboy reading his text?

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<sup>29</sup> Latour developed the notion of the black box in relation to those fixed beliefs that enter into the calculations of technoscience, but without ever having to be problematised (because they been 'proven'). Latour borrows the term from cybernetics: a black box is something that is too complex to be represented fully, and all that is needed is for the inputs and outputs to and from the black box to be understood. I am extending the notion here to a non-scientific setting; the discursive elaboration of disciplinarity similarly has a series of 'black boxes' that it does not need to worry about - 'the normal' is perhaps the the most crucial.

## 4: THE DETAILING OF THE CHILD: THE NEW PEDAGOGY

“Maybe it was a sign of the times that the last great saint of the Century of Saints [Jean-Baptiste de la Salle] should have been a man identified with elementary schooling.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1711, Charles Gildon’s *Grammar of the English Tongue* is the first text to make use of the footnote (as opposed to the differentiation *within* the text common in earlier pedagogical works such as Comenius’s), a split not only of text, between the ‘practical’ and the ‘rational’ grammar, but also of reader, between “Children, women, and the Ignorant of both Sexes”, who get the large print, and “the reasonable Teacher”, who gets the “Reasons of Things” in small type.<sup>2</sup> In the period up until 1740, this

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<sup>1</sup> Furet and Ozouf, p.78.

<sup>2</sup> [Charles Gildon], *A Grammar of the English Tongue, With Notes, Giving the Grounds and Reason of Grammar in General*, London, 1711. Much of this work is little more than a translation of Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot’s, *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*, Paris, 1660. Murray Cohen, *inter alios*, ascribes great importance to this and other works of the Port-Royal linguists in breaking down the universal language schemes of the seventeenth century, although he suggests that Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole’s, *La logique ou l’art de penser*, Paris, 1662, was a more crucial work as it was available in English translation as early as 1685, and in seven editions in either English or Latin before the turn of the century. The *Grammaire générale* did not appear in English translation until 1753. See Cohen, *op. cit.*, p.37 and p.154 n.100, and on the Messieurs du Port-Royal more generally, p.34-8. Foucault’s *The Order of Things* deals with Port-Royal with customary brilliance; see especially p.94ff.



tendency to drop the philosophy of language from the main text grows apace, first of all through the device of the footnote, then with a still more radical separation as the philosophy comes to occupy separate texts in its own right. Robert Lowth's *Grammar of 1762* makes an explicit statement about the desirability of such a separation and suggests that anyone interested in the niceties of language should consult a specialist work such as Harris's 'Hermes'.<sup>3</sup> The project of teaching reading, once inextricably linked to the progression of Protestantism, moves further and further away from simple theological promotion. The teaching of reading now concerns itself more and more with the precise detailing and ordering of the reader. Texts are reorganised not only to exclude the more arcane elements of the language, but also to present a rational order in which learning might best take place. Johnson maintains that "Order in Teaching [contributes] mainly to Order in Understanding, so far as anything is out of Order, so far 'tis out of the way of being understood."<sup>4</sup> This order, the correlate of the order just beginning to be extorted from the individual, still proceeds from alphabet up, in the manner of the alphabetic method, but ignores such things as

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Lowth, *Short Introduction to English Grammar With Critical Notes*, London, 1762. Cf. James Harris, *Hermes; or, a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Language and Universal Grammar*, London, 1751.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Johnson, *Grammatical Categories: Being an Apparatus to a New National Grammar: By way of Animadversion Upon the Falsities, Obscurities, Redundancies, and Defects of Lilly's System*, London, 1706, p.16.

pronunciation to get straight to etymology and syntax, which are prioritised as the places where meaning is made possible; tables are fitted into this new organisation by becoming more general guides to the workings of language rather than merely being vehicles for the presentation of massive chunks of specific information (I would argue that tabulation is employed to organise both the text and the reader). The meaningfulness of words as they function in discourse is the crux of these instructional texts, and authors no longer strive to give some imaginary meaning to letters and bridles (see the discussion above of Buno and his contemporaries, p.114ff.). The best students would go on to learn the reasons behind the words, but this was no longer necessary in the teaching of reading and writing nor did it follow automatically from the learning of language, as was thought in the seventeenth century. This technical shift had consequences for the links between reading and religion, since no longer was learning to read a (guaranteed) step on the road to Christian brotherhood; while the differences in the level to which reading could be taught placed more emphasis on social status, since it seemed pointless to educate the poor beyond what they would need for everyday life.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the links between religion and reading were slowly being

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<sup>5</sup> These points are dealt with in greater depth in Cohen, p. 63-8.

broken, while the higher orders were gaining a stronger and stronger hold on the techniques of knowledge acquisition.

“Pedagogy has shed its philosophical responsibilities”<sup>6</sup> in the period we have been examining, but it began to take its new responsibilities even more seriously. Its new responsibilities centre around fitting the specific beginning-reader with the appropriate form of education. Reading begins to be taught in the 1730s in a variety of specific ways rather than as a kind of universal skill. Thus, for example, William Loughton’s *Grammar* is aimed specifically at youth who will need it “for Trade and Business”, and he specifically claims that had he bothered to include rational explanations about language, it would have made his book less useful.<sup>7</sup> In moving away from philosophy and into the specifics of providing targeted reading instruction, the grammar books of the day are beginning to make visible a differentiated child, a child with a specific life-course ahead of it. Life, labour and language<sup>8</sup> are the crucial three elements which begin to be conditioned by and to form conditions for our emerging modern disciplinary society, but my own research suggests that language is the site of the first organisational transformations. What is surprising is that the general

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<sup>6</sup> Cohen, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> William Loughton, *A Practical Grammar of the English Tongue*, London, 1734. See page opposite title page and p. ix. Cf. Cohen *op. cit.* p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> The three themes first distinguished by Foucault in *The Order of Things*.

reorganisation of social life seems to require a series of apparently banal *linguistic* changes to make it possible. The child as a target of disciplinary techniques is made visible by a set of pedagogical and lexicographical changes. The new pedagogy, the explicit distinction between different types of reader, is a crucial step in this emergent disciplinarity. If you like, you could see it as the first step in Latour's process of inscription - we now have objects for analysis (people) who are becoming amenable to analysis. What we do not yet have are the technical means of rendering them knowable and docile.

As an example of this new detailing, I shall deal at some length with a curious text which appeared in 1754. The text is an example of one of the many books on the government of children that begin to appear around this time. It pays particular attention to the differences between the education of boys and girls, and is curious in that it purports to be written by a woman, but in fact is the work of a man.<sup>9</sup> John Hill, the author of this text, writes like a man (or woman) who thinks the times are changing; and we see him describe an education where all kinds of problems now begin to press in on the child:

“It might be at one Time a Dispute,  
Whether a School or a Home Education  
were the best for Boys: but that must

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<sup>9</sup> [John Hill], *On the Management and Education of Children* “by Juliana-Susannah Seymour”, London, Printed for R. Baldwin, 1754.

have been when the World was less wicked than it is at present; for now there can be none. The debauched Principles which the Generality of Youths acquire so early, and which they propagate so strongly and so universally at Schools, are such, that it is Destruction to be mixed among them, and in the way of Mischief. I am clearly, and against all Considerations, for the bringing up your sons at home.”<sup>10</sup>

The school, then, is clearly a place of some potential trouble, and boys are best not sent to them. Hill reverses his judgment for girls, however; and again we see a constant detailing, a constant bringing into focus of the object of an educational gaze:

“As to that [sc. education] of your Daughters, I think a little differently. I do not suppose that Vices and the Seeds of Vices are crept into Schools for Girls.”<sup>11</sup>

In addition, for girls, reading should also be carried on outside the school:

“Home should be the Place of reading Lessons upon the School.”<sup>12</sup>

There then follows an extraordinary passage in which Hill maintains that one should leave the precise content of education to the experts, and he, *being a woman like the reader of his text*,

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, p.196-7.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, p.199.

<sup>12</sup> Hill, p.202.

is in no position to make such assertions and recommendations anyhow. The gradual construction of the 'expert', which we have seen attempted in the world of lexicography, is no doubt being speeded up by such commonplace texts as Hill's:

"It would be ridiculous in me to pretend to describe any thing with respect to the Education of the Boys, so far as it regards their Learning, nor am I about to do it. You are a Woman as well as myself, and as little able to judge of the Proficiency they may make. All is to be trusted to the Gentleman who has the Care of their Education... You are no judge of his qualifications, so I would have you take the Advice of some learned and ingenious Person on that Head."<sup>13</sup>

He then proceeds to tell us a whole series of quasi-psychological facts about how to encourage boys to read - essentially, it is important to keep them fresh by keeping the amounts of work short, and frequently to interrupt them in their reading to keep them in a state of constant anticipation:

"A Boy will have as much eagerness to get to the Bottom of a Page, as a Woman has to come to the End of a Hem... and if he be purposely taken away at the middle of a Paragraph, he will be impatient to return to the Book again to finish it... The Tutor may have marked beforehand that Part of the Relation where it is most interesting, and there

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<sup>13</sup> Hill, p.205-6.

break off for that Time. No Matter that the Child is ever so keen to go on; the more of this Eagerness he has, the greater will be the Advantage of breaking it off, and he will return to it with the more Appetite from his Play... If on any Day one of them be quite unwilling to read at all, let it be omitted, rather than have the Appearance of a Task; and on the next, let Artifice, rather than Persuasion, be employed to bring him to it.”<sup>14</sup>

As far as I can tell, there is something new stirring here; such a thorough ‘psychologisation’ of the child does not, indeed can not, happen previously. Hill develops the theme by suggesting how it is necessary to breed competition, offer rewards, foster ambition, and so forth, to maintain the child’s interest in reading:

“Pleasure alone may have been, after a Child is taught its Letters, the Beginning of its Attachment to Reading; but after that it is this Sense of Praise, and this Spirit of Emulation, that must be the Agents.”<sup>15</sup>

The child that is visible in Hill’s text is already one that is quite familiar to us. In a contemporaneous text, that of James Nelson, we see similar attempts to divide up the targets of an education in reading.<sup>16</sup> Nelson’s overall task is to discriminate between the

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<sup>14</sup> Hill, pp.216, 218.

<sup>15</sup> Hill, p.220.

<sup>16</sup> James Nelson, *An Essay on the Government of Children*, London, Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1756.

different sorts of education befitting men and women of different social classes, all of which can be justified because it is part of the Great Creator's plan. Nelson constantly downgrades education as against manners, and knowing one's station in life; thus it is important for women to educate themselves in such a way that they make themselves good companions (an over-education of women, for example their learning Latin or Greek, can lead to (unspecified) problems), while those of a lower class should not concern themselves with the more esoteric aspects of knowledge: "My Advice then is, that Boys of this [sc. lower] class never once attempt to learn *Latin*."<sup>17</sup> In addition, we see the truths of lexicography entering into the field: "nice grammatical Rules are not strictly the Province of Boys in Common Life."<sup>18</sup> Nelson even goes as far as to say that the education of the peasantry is less important to them than the education of the classes above them; the latter would then be enabled to treat the former with "Justice and Humanity".<sup>19</sup>

I briefly mentioned above the importance of the woman being able to fill the role of companion, and how education was an instrument in the constitution of what was, in its highest form, the 'companionate marriage'. We see in Lady Sara Pennington's

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<sup>17</sup> Nelson, p.337, italics in original.

<sup>18</sup> Nelson, p.346.

<sup>19</sup> Nelson, p.365.



popular advice manual for young ladies a perfect example of how this was used to justify a limitation in the education of girls:

“It is necessary for you to be perfect in *the first four rules of Arithmetic* - more, you can never have occasion for, and the mind should not be burdened with needless application...

“It has been objected against all female learning, beyond that of household economy, that it tends only to fill the minds of the sex with a conceited vanity, which sets them above their proper business... and serves only to render them useless wives, and impertinent companions. It must be confessed, that some reading ladies have given but too much cause for this objection... but... such ill causes proceed chiefly from too great an imbecility of mind to be capable of much enlargement, or from a mere affectation of knowledge, void of all reality. - Vanity is never the result of understanding - a sensible woman will soon be convinced, that all the learning her utmost application can make her mistress of, will be, from the difference of education, in many points, inferior to that of a school-boy: - this reflection will keep her always humble, and will be an effectual check to that loquacity which renders some women

such insupportable companions."<sup>20</sup>

Again, I would suggest that such books are discursively new; although some of the subject matter, for example the necessity of women maintaining a particular place in the social order, may be familiar to us, the sorts of justifications, with their quasi-psychological understandings of what is and what is not appropriate for particular sorts of minds, are brand new.<sup>21</sup>

What we are witnessing here is, I think, the birth in popular culture of the child that was constructed for us in the far-off realm of lexicography. Such a child has been individuated out of discourse, produced as a truth effect. It is a child that is produced as possessing certain sorts of attributes that one day will be thought of as 'psychological'; these attributes include certain sorts of literacy skills, but they have also been produced

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<sup>20</sup> Lady Sara Pennington, *A Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters, Eighth Edition*, London: Taylor and Hessey, 1817, pp.27, 28-30, italics in original. The original version, which was titled *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters*, was published in the middle to late eighteenth century. The author died in 1783. A more bald statement is made by N. Restif de la Bretonne, *LesGynographes ou Idées de deux honnêtes femmes sur un projet de règlement proposé à toute l'Europe pour mettre les femmes à leur place et opérer le bonheur des deux sexes*, Paris, 1777: "All women should be prohibited from learning to write and even read. This would preserve them from loose thoughts, confining them to useful tasks about the house, instilling in them respect for the first sex, which would be all the more carefully instructed in these things for the second sex having been neglected." Cited in Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, p.340-1, n.4.

<sup>21</sup> A nice contrast can be made with an advice manual like William Fleetwood, *The Relative Duties of Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants*, London: Charles Harper, 1705, which is just a standard trot through a doctrine of obedience based on Biblical dogma. Fleetwood's characters are completely psychologically uninteresting.

through certain sorts of literacy practices. These practices we might think of as part of the habitus that such children occupied, and that fostered particular habits of mind. Perhaps we need to analyse what these habitus look like.

I have stressed the philosophical or ontological conditions of possibility for the invention of a new character, or rather, for the making visible of a new character - the child as reader, and even the child as a form of subjectivity. I should stress again the 'truth effectivity' of such moves, or what we might think of as the 'feedback effect' of innovations in this area. The production of the 'normal' reader discussed above is not merely the idealism of an obscure set of schoolmasters, but is a luminosity in discourse which reflects and intensifies objects of the gaze of discourse. The setting up of the normal reader is, admittedly, at first a philosophical and linguistic endeavour. However, this linguistic chimera begins to come to life as more and more children (and adults) are taught to read according to the latest fashions for what a good reader should look like. Notions of what it is to be a normal reader exclude other possibilities, especially when, as Ian Hacking dryly notes, "few of us fancy being

pathological, so 'most of us' try to make ourselves normal".<sup>22</sup>

However, the normalising effects of lexicography are only part of the story. I shall make a couple of digressions to begin to flesh out the story.

### *Digression I: Puritanism as a Literary Habitus*

I have referred sporadically to religion and to the importance of the Bible as a spur to acquiring literacy skills. Perhaps a few more schematic remarks might help at this point.

It is not too difficult to tell a story which gives a central place to Puritanism as an incitement to literacy. As Eisenstein has noted, the Puritan household was subject to a nexus of literate interests.<sup>23</sup> Outside of 'specialists', like monks and bureaucrats, who were acquiring literacy skills, the Puritans were perhaps the most literate of groups. The sixteenth century

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<sup>22</sup> Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 2. See the discussion above of John Kersey and the normal reader. Hoskin, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, remarks that it is at the beginning of the eighteenth century that the word 'normal' is first used in its modern sense, being derived from an etymological contradiction. The normal is 'the common and the proper'; the common is what is shared and by extension what is vulgar, the proper is what is one's own and by extension what is refined and superior. The constitution of new characters in social life is founded on such 'fictions'.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communication and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979. See also Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*.

Reformation was the scene of expanded schooling programmes and mass literacy in radical Puritan areas. Mass literacy campaigns in Sweden, for example, were common in the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> In Scotland, the First Presbyterian Book of Discipline of 1560 called for a national system of education; after an extensive series of legislation in Scotland throughout the seventeenth century, a network of parish and high schools were established throughout the lowlands, for the education of both rich and poor, paid for by the taxation of landlords and tenants.<sup>25</sup>

Of overriding importance, however, was the relation between reading and the salvation of the soul. Reading the Bible was an important way of making your particular devotions outside of the church itself, and thus there seemed to be some point in acquiring literacy skills (which was presumably quite a commitment in an age without any governmental programmes aimed at the promotion of reading).<sup>26</sup> Puritanism, then, was the overriding 'logic' of a crucial literate habitus. It seems clear

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Egil Johansson, 'The History of Literacy in Sweden', in H. Graff (ed.) *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

<sup>25</sup> T. P. Young, *Histoire de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire en Ecosse de 1560 à 1872*, Dijon, 1907, chs 2, 5, 6; H. M. Knox, *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Scottish Education, 1696-1946*, Edinburgh, 1953, p.5-10.

<sup>26</sup> A good example of this, although a slightly late one, is P. Doddridge, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, London, The Religious Tract Society, 1745. See especially 'Habitual Devotion', pp. 189-206, where Doddridge gives guidance on a whole series of techniques of self-examination and ways of maintaining communion with God at different times of the day.

that the ability to read and write transformed the way in which the Puritan could conceive of him- or herself in relation to the Almighty:<sup>27</sup> these are very obviously conditions of possibility for the founding of new forms of subjectivity. The reader can enter a new form of relationship with the self once he or she has become literate (this is a point Walter Ong makes throughout his work - in the mainstream psychological literature, David Olson has frequently made similar observations); the interiorisation of the word, to use Ong's term, has a profound effect on subjectivities and social life because of the importance we now realise, following Latour, must be attached to new ways of being able to make inscriptions: new techniques of inscribing empower new possibilities for making objects visible - in this case, the self can become a newly visible object.<sup>28</sup>

Max Weber has suggested a mechanism by which these new techniques might be productive of new forms of subjectivity. Weber pointed out how the new skills which were being acquired by the Puritans were constantly related to a field of ethical practice, with the gradual formation of a particular type of

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, M. M. Knappen (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, Gloucester, Peter Smith, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> This is the point that Jack Goody makes in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

'character' the result:<sup>29</sup> the man of conscience. This character, previously found only in a select number of environments (for example, in the monastery), is now distributed much more widely throughout the population. The man/woman of conscience spends a great amount of time doing work on the self: constantly training, constantly indulging in a form of asceticism which was gradually becoming transformed into what Weber termed 'Worldly Asceticism'. Asceticism gradually became no longer limited to non-secular environments, but was now firmly in the 'real world' as well. Reading the Bible was a fundamental skill in the practising of this 'Worldly Asceticism', since through reading the link between God and life in the world could be made explicit.

However, as Weber makes clear, the realm of ethical practice gradually developing within Puritanism was not a simple reflection of the *mores* of religion. Weber maintains that 'Worldly Asceticism' was a form of living which developed from the Doctrine of Predestination,<sup>30</sup> but it was, in essence, an unforeseen development from it. This contingent set of

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<sup>29</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1930, especially ch.4. In particular, Weber notes that '[t]he moral conduct of the average man was thus deprived of its planless and unsystematic character and subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole' (p.117).

<sup>30</sup> The Doctrine of Predestination as a code does not, therefore, have a simple causal relationship with the ethical forms of living for which it was a condition of possibility. These relatively independent life-techniques might then link up with a whole series of other objects (apart from 'Grace') such as road building or chocolate (Macadam, Cadbury), for example.

developments was to prove, however, a crucial one, since it was now the case that certain sorts of 'personalities', those men and women of conscience, could become more widespread throughout the social body. The sixteenth century had been the scene of mass literacy in radical Protestant areas of the world, but the regular revivals of Puritan ideas in the West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enabled the character of the man or woman of conscience to become firmly rooted in the cultural make-up of our societies.

The Puritans' voracious desire for knowledge via literacy as the *sine qua non* of religious devotion was able to overcome other traditions in the Christian West, such as the Catholic fear of heresy arising from Bible study. Lawrence Stone makes a sharp dichotomy between the Catholics, for whom literacy was always problematic because of the danger of heresy, and the Protestants, for whom lack of literacy was always to be feared because of superstitions that would arise from a lack of Bible study.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, however, the Protestants 'won out', and literacy skills did begin to spread more widely. We shall notice again in a later period a similar theme, a similar debate: is it more dangerous to educate people, or to keep them ignorant?

As I mentioned above, Puritan ideas were subject to many

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<sup>31</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900', *Past and Present* 42, 1969, 69-140. See especially p.76ff.



revivals in the period of the Renaissance and the liberal legacies of the Enlightenment. As Weber points out, revivals of Puritan ideas were occurring regularly, at least through until the last great revival in the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup> By now, reading has begun to acquire different sorts of problematisations, problematisations which free it from a simple dependent relation with religion. The spread of the new 'personality' is an additional element, along with the linguistic changes I have described earlier, in the gradual elaboration of the 'complex' reading individual. Weber has left us with a convincing account of how the 'average man' became subject to a new set of what Foucault has termed 'technologies of the self'; my contention is that one can go beyond this level of description - the linguistic changes I have described above are beginning to 'psychologise' the Weberian average man - making visible a new complexity in the reader.

### *Digression II: Who is Learning to Read - and Where?*

I am aware that I have talked in very general terms about the conditions of possibility for the insertion of new forms of

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<sup>32</sup> Weber, p.117.

subjectivity into social life. These new forms spread beyond their more circumscribed beginnings and move out into the general populace (an example being the spread of 'Worldly Asceticism'); yet the spread of literacy is not uniform. I shall begin by looking at literacy practices in schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Phillipe Ariès provides the account *par excellence* of the Renaissance grammar school.<sup>33</sup> Populated in the main by the well-born and by males, the typical age range of the pupils was from ten to fourteen years of age. However, it was quite possible to find a nine year old studying alongside a twenty four year old (the latter almost certainly trying to acquire literacy to move into a new profession). However, as Ariès makes clear, these grammar

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<sup>33</sup> Ariès, especially p.154ff. It is also worth referring to Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, *passim*. On the timetable of such schools see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1944, p.353-8. On the content of the lessons, and the importance of a training in the rhetorical arts, see Donald Lemen Clark, *John Milton at St. Paul's School: A Study of Ancient Rhetoric in English Renaissance Education*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1964, especially p.178-84; Walter Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*, London, Cornell University Press, 1971, especially pp.48-67, 71-81, 101-3; Foster Watson, *The Old Grammar Schools*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1916, especially p.16-18. Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1988, p.257-8, describes the incredible monotony of the pedagogical techniques of the time, the students remorselessly repeating and memorising their lessons, learning only three new words a day. Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, stresses how such schools had recourse to the Classics even for practical knowledge about such things as horticulture and engineering, and even military drill - see especially pp.1-7, 13-15, 28-31, 67-9.

schools, and other sorts of schools in the period from medieval times right through until the middle of the eighteenth century, confine themselves to teaching Latin. The equivalent of our primary education - elementary reading, knowledge of one's mother tongue, and of what one needed to get by in one's station in life - were taught at home or in apprenticeship to a trade.<sup>34</sup>

The Renaissance grammar schools were a site for those who had a set of specific cultural purposes attached to their desire for education - and thus were typically well born - so it is also important to think outside the school environment as well, and get some idea of who else is learning to read.

I have already begun to deal with the 'new world' of the eighteenth century (for it is there that I locate one of the sharpest discursive ruptures), but it is clearly the case that many of the innovations which we have begun to investigate were gradual outgrowths from a much earlier period. Eisenstein is surely correct when she speaks of an 'elusive transformation', although a profound one;<sup>35</sup> as she points out, even rural villagers who would have belonged to an exclusively hearing public right through to the nineteenth century, would have heard material utterly transformed by the advent of printing. She stages an exemplary scene in which the storyteller has been replaced by the

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<sup>34</sup> Ariès, p.137.

<sup>35</sup> Eisenstein, *op. cit.*, p.129ff.

(exceptional) literate villager, who reads out to other villagers from a supply of cheap books and ballad sheets, produced anonymously for distribution by peddlers. Such changes no doubt begin to insinuate themselves at the level of the subjectivity of the hearer: it also seems clear that the family became endowed with new functions, both educational and religious, and was moved in this direction by the moralising literature that began to flood into the home.<sup>36</sup> In addition, there must have been profound effects on the public life of the citizen, even if not literate him/herself: the production of propaganda laid the ground for political parties, while the dissemination of printed reports began to change the meaning of participation in public affairs. Malesherbes observed in 1775 that “what the orators of Rome and Athens were in the midst of a people assembled, men of letters are in the midst of a dispersed people” - that is to say, the very nature of the link between individuals in a State has moved from one of actual contact (one is in touch with one’s peers as one hears an address) to a much more impersonal and diffuse relation.<sup>37</sup>

Natalie Davis’s account of the impact of printing and literacy can be read in tandem with Eisenstein’s.<sup>38</sup> Like

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<sup>36</sup> Eisenstein, p.133.

<sup>37</sup> Eisenstein, p.130.

<sup>38</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Printing and the People: Early Modern France*, in H. J. Graff (ed.).

Eisenstein, she stresses the enormous impact that literacy had on the lives of ordinary people, paradoxically in spite of those people's own lack of literacy skills:

“Rural literacy remained low throughout the sixteenth century. Of the women, virtually none knew their ABCs, not even the midwives. As for the men, a systematic study by Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie of certain parts of the Languedoc from the 1570s through the 1590s found that three percent of the agricultural workers and only ten percent of the better-off peasants - the *laboureurs* and *fermiers* - could sign their full names.”<sup>39</sup>

Among the peasants, then, the rate of literacy was low, but possibilities for literacy were nonetheless provided by the tenaciousness of Protestant booksellers, who kept trying to distribute the word of God in a climate where commercial booksellers would not take such risks for the sake of a meagre profit, if a profit could be gleaned at all. The Protestants opened up bookselling routes which awaited commercial viability for their concentrated use.

In the urban areas, the situation was somewhat different. There is evidence for a growth in the number of teachers, and newly established municipal orphanages give elementary instruction for poor boys - and Davis adds that even some orphan

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<sup>39</sup> Davis, p.73.

girls were taught their ABC.<sup>40</sup> Ability to sign one's name is higher in these urban areas: of 115 printers' journeymen assembled in Lyon in 1580 to give power of attorney, two thirds could sign their names fully; in Narbonne in the 1560s and 1570s, one third of the artisans could sign their name, one third could write initials, and only one third were totally foreign to letters. At Montpellier, only twenty five per cent of the craftsmen were limited to making simple marks. At one end of the scale, well-off merchants were almost completely literate; at the other, women outside the families of publishers, merchant bankers and lawyers would be almost completely illiterate.<sup>41</sup> In fact, it is worth pointing out that many women would have developed literacy skills, although no doubt to a much lesser extent than the men. There is evidence that there were plenty of female writers, and reading specifically for women (such as the life of St Margaret, complete with its prayers for the pregnant). However, the fact that Erasmus felt he had to defend the education of women so strongly, suggests that the idea of teaching women to

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<sup>40</sup> Davis, p.83.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, p.83-4.

read was not uncontroversial.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Eighteenth Century Incitement to Literacy*

So far I hope to have shown two things. First of all, a series of epistemological (though not just epistemological - power and knowledge constantly intertwine) developments in the world of lexicography at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries are the conditions of possibility for a new 'psychologised' reader. Second, a series of cultural and religious developments prior to the eighteenth century are conditions of possibility for a new self-monitoring, self-checking form of personality. I have tried to stress the contingent nature of these developments, and to suggest that they are not inevitable, progressive moves to a set of more correct or true understandings of the world. To take an example: I would not wish to suggest that any understanding of the relation of signifier to signified is 'better' than any other. What interests

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<sup>42</sup> Erasmus, *The Abbot and the Learned Lady*, in *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, translated by Craig R. Thompson, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965. On the question of the education of women at this time, see also Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education through Twelve Centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1929, especially p.156ff.; and Shirley Nelson Kersey, *Classics in the Education of Girls and Women*, Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1981, especially p.29ff.

me is what such contingencies enable, and how they relate to the possibility of the formation of our present.

The legacy of Puritanism for the beginning of the eighteenth century was enormous. By this time, levels of functional literacy (such as the signature) were reasonably high, although an ability to read or write would still be quite rare. It is worth stressing how piecemeal the development of what is sometimes called 'discursive literacy' was. I have already alluded to the existence of literate communities, such as particular Puritan groups, but it also possible to extend this notion of 'communities': for example, artillerymen were more literate than cavalrymen - and no doubt the fact that the former had to read manuals to learn how to use the guns was a crucial factor here. We know that wigmakers had quite a high level of literacy, perhaps because their waiting rooms typically had literature in them. No doubt when there were no customers around, they would satisfy their curiosity about this relatively new (at a mass level anyway) phenomenon.<sup>43</sup>

What sort of literature was available to these different 'literate communities'? Clearly, a whole host of religious works, books of hours, etc, were common;<sup>44</sup> but literature did not just

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<sup>43</sup> See Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965, especially p.189ff.

<sup>44</sup> J. Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth Century England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, gives some indications of the breadth of religious works available, and stresses how it was not the clergy but laypeople who were the backbone of the religious book market. See especially p.38ff.



stop with the Bible. For example, the distribution and use on a mass scale of pornography, both written and pictorial, is an early outgrowth of this new area of social life.<sup>45</sup> The possibility for the consumption of this and other literary products was strengthened by a series of important contemporaneous developments, such as the establishment of the first road networks, the development of postal services, and the appearance of the first newspapers.

Newspapers are an obvious place where we can see the spread of literary interests beyond their religious beginnings. John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* is an interesting case in point; Dunton invented a question and answer section in the paper which dealt with readers' queries. This quickly became massively popular and a huge success, and we can see, in the kinds of questions readers sent in, an intellectual curiosity in a range of areas - religious, philosophical, moral, sexual, and so on.<sup>46</sup> This personal intellectual curiosity on a wide scale would seem to be an innovation, and to back up Foucault's general point about the productivity of forms of power: Foucault showed us that

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<sup>45</sup> See Ian Hunter, David Saunders and Dugald Williamson, *On Pornography: Literature, Sexuality and Obscenity Law*, London, Macmillan, 1993, p.36ff.

<sup>46</sup> Questions were of the order of 'Did Adam have a navel?' or 'Where did the waters go after the Flood?' Similar concerns can be found in R. Stoddard, 'An Answer to Some Cases of Conscience', in P. Miller and T. H. Johnson (eds.), *The Puritans*, New York, Harper, 1938; particularly entertaining is the section 'Is it lawfull to wear long hair?'. Daniel Defoe pirated this method and there was a legal dispute between him and Dunton as to who owned the technique.

Puritanism is not simply a form of social organisation which interdicts, but one which intensifies and produces. In the same way that Puritanism led to an intensification of interest in sex and sexuality rather than being (as common sense and most historical accounts would suggest) a barrier to such interests, it was also a vehicle for an intensification of literary interests - and in unforeseen directions.

This was a time of great social and cultural change in which literacy plays its full part. 1710 saw the world's first Copyright Act, the Statute of Queen Anne;<sup>47</sup> and a whole series of disputes, like the one between Dunton and Defoe, led the development of specialist lawyers for the book trade and related areas. The profit margin in publishing was beginning to make such moves necessary and worthwhile. In addition, the law begins to attempt to rein in the world of publishing; the first prosecution for obscene publication takes place in 1727, and most interestingly, one of the judges maintained that the obscene publication in question was clearly a criminal matter (as well as a sin) because of the distribution of the offending material throughout the kingdom.<sup>48</sup> Literacy could thus be seen to impinge directly on

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<sup>47</sup> Queen Anne was, incidentally, the last British royal to cure people of scrofula by touching them. We are clearly examining a period of great social change.

<sup>48</sup> See Ian Hunter et al., *op. cit.*, p.48ff.

public morality.<sup>49</sup> Defoe in *The Storm* is alive to the problem of the potentially universal audience of a book - "He that prints has a tenfold obligation".<sup>50</sup>

At the risk of overstating the case: a series of technological and epistemological innovations are able to serve, and, of course, to shape, a new set of interests. These new interests are exceedingly diverse - even if one restricts oneself to looking at the literary interests of the Puritan household at this time, there are several: religious books themselves, spiritual autobiographies (e.g. John Bunyan), spiritual diary keeping, casuistry, conduct books, and so forth. A different sort of organisation of life and of self is both established and guaranteed through these various forms. I would like to stress the contingent nature of the development of various sorts of 'habitus', and have already, I hope, begun to cast doubt onto explanations that see some necessary unfolding of the course of history being evidenced here - whether that be the development of individual experience from the constraining effect of social norms, or the emergence of capitalism, to take two frequently used explanatory devices as examples.

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<sup>49</sup> We shall see this theme again in the prosecution of Thomas Paine, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel Defoe, 'The Storm', preface, in Laura Ann Curtis (ed.) *The Versatile Defoe: An Anthology of Uncollected Writings by Daniel Defoe*, London, George Prior, 1979.

I have argued in this chapter that the eighteenth century is the scene of a variety of discursive innovations, a series of historical contingencies that begin to make other projects thinkable. Discipline does not simply act on a set of individuals who await its invention. The individuals themselves have to be produced. They are produced out of pedagogy, out of a psychologisation of the literate individual, and out of the habitus of Puritanism. These, at least, are some of the themes my research has uncovered.

## 5: MEANINGFULNESS AND SILENCE

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”  
“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master - that’s all.”<sup>1</sup>

‘Meaningfulness’ in teaching reading seems to arise, according to Murray Cohen, around 1750.<sup>2</sup> This concern with meaningfulness first seems to surface in relation to reconceptualisations and reorganisations of rhetoric, but to deal with this discursive reorganisation would go beyond the scope of this thesis; what is interesting for our purposes is a move away from more mechanical processes of learning reading and associated arts. John Mason’s *Essay on Elocution*, for example, stresses the importance of a good delivery which makes ideas seem to come from the heart,<sup>3</sup> while John Rice’s *Art of Reading* has much the same concern.<sup>4</sup> Reading books of the middle to late eighteenth century all begin to raise the profile of meaningfulness in one

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, VI.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, *Sensible Words*, pp.105ff., 120ff.

<sup>3</sup> John Mason, *An Essay on Elocution or Pronunciation, Intended chiefly for the Assistance of those who instruct others in the Art of Reading*, London, 1748. p.5.

<sup>4</sup> John Rice, *An Introduction to the Art of Reading with Energy and Propriety*, London, 1765, p.3.

way or another, although the initial concern seems to be with giving a good oratorical performance. Reading can also be made 'fun': in 1764, David Manson produces a set of literary cards (reading can become a kind of game),<sup>5</sup> while John Wallis's *Enigmatical Alphabet* of 1790 is a set of twenty five puzzles, the answer to each of which is a letter of the alphabet.<sup>6</sup> Bearing in mind the stunning lack of meaningfulness associated with the dominant tradition of learning to read, the alphabetic method, the introduction of 'fun'<sup>7</sup> or 'meaningfulness' can be seen as to some extent a reversal of this trend. In addition, when one considers the invention of the method of 'wholes', developed by Gedike and Jacotot, one can see that the rather slavish, mechanical alphabetic method is under attack.<sup>8</sup> The concern of many texts in this period is with good oral performance in reading, but paradoxically, in so doing, they provide the conditions of

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Tucker, *Reading Games: Some Victorian Examples with an Essay on the Teaching of Reading*, Wymondham: Brewhouse Private Press, 1973, provides some nice examples of reading games, but is surely mistaken in his assertion that we have to wait until 1820 for the first reading game.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in G. S. Chalmers, *Reading Easy 1800-50*, London, The Broadsheet King, 1976, pp.143, 129.

<sup>7</sup> We saw 'fun' in Quintilian. It has hardly been on the agenda since then.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Gedike, *Aristoteles und Basedow oder Fragmente über Erziehung und Schulwesen bei den Alten und Neuren*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1779; *Elnige Gedanken über die Ordnung und Folge der Gegenstände des jugendlichen Unterrichts*, Berlin, 1791; Jean Joseph Jacotot, *Enseignement universel... Langue maternelle, Third Edition*, Louvain, 1827. The method of wholes is the opposite of the alphabetic method, although was often learned in tandem with it. The child/reader first learns meaningful wholes (in Jacotot's original idea *Telemaque*, a 400 page book) and then learns how to decipher them.

possibility for the virtual elimination of reading aloud. This is because good reading aloud is seen to necessitate an understanding of what you are reading: the real reading soon comes to be seen as the internal, silent reading.

### *The Move to Silent Reading*

It may come as a surprise to some that virtually all reading, up until about 1800, was reading aloud. The silencing of reading (and writing, which also would have been engaged in aloud) was a crucial step for the formation of modern disciplinary society, as I shall explain below. At this point, I need to make a digression on silent reading, for which I need to start with the problem of the sign for the ancient Romans. Latin, as the first copying culture (copying from the Greek), instigates clearly, perhaps for the first time, the problem of the sign - what is the relationship between the word and the thing represented.<sup>9</sup> The first recorded enunciation of this problem that I know of is made by Terence in the *Adelphi* in around 160 B.C. - "verbum de verbo expressum

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<sup>9</sup> A (different) specific problem of the sign was discussed above in relation to the 'double sign'. A useful orienting text for the problem under consideration here is H. L. Pinner, *The World of Books in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, Sijthoff, 1958.

extulit”, as the playwright represents his achievement.<sup>10</sup> Cicero concerns himself particularly with this problem in the *Tusculan Disputations*,<sup>11</sup> and at some length. He is particularly concerned with the problems of equivalences between languages, and comes to the conclusion that Greek is deficient and inferior to Latin. For example, Cicero regards the Greek ‘πovos’ as less precise than the Latin, which ‘represents’ it by both ‘labor’ and ‘dolor’; Cicero cannot fail to be disturbed by the realisation that the Latin ‘translations’ of the Greek represent not equivalence, but rather different ranges of the human condition.<sup>12</sup>

The relationship between Latin and Greek, however, was not a static one, but, we might say with hindsight, dynamically bound up with power-knowledge relations. Surprisingly, even in the Roman world, Greek had become far more prevalent than Latin by about 180 A.D., yet two centuries later the situation had become reversed - Greek was becoming an almost exclusively written language. This does not seem to be simply a decline in the use and importance of Greek, but a move into a new interlinguistic and intertextual world, connected with a new ‘legalised’ and ‘codified’ writing of the world. Eventually, we see the exclusive

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<sup>10</sup> ‘The translation was made word for word’. Terence refers to his use of a scene from the Greek playwright Diphilus; *Adelphi*, Prologue, 11, 6-11. My point here is that the problem of the relation between signs was first enunciated, I might even risk saying ‘discovered’, through considerations of the problems of translation.

<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, II, 35; III, 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the range παθη, νοσος, αταραξια, morbus, perturbatio.



use of Latin in legal settings, and its preeminence was an important step towards the visual and silent preeminence of the sign. Soon enough, Latin was being used in formal settings by people who would not speak it as their mother tongue. Such individuals might well, I would hazard a guess, ponder the problem of the equivalence of signs between their native language and the Latin that they used in more formal settings. 'Learned Latin' developed as a direct result of writing,<sup>13</sup> and became essentially a language learned through reading and writing rather than speech; it was learned particularly through pedagogic texts (word-books and grammars), and these were the media through which a new pedagogic reading and writing of the sign ensued - the world came to be written in different ways and, importantly, by different people (pedagogues). The clearest indication of the development of this new world can be seen in the way that the vernaculars of the Latin West used the already existing alphabet for their own writing. By the thirteenth century, a whole network of new books of the written sign was being produced, with their implicit origins being in books of double signs; for while the discourse is of 'Learned Latin', constant reference to its basis in Greek is made. The equivalence (or problem of equivalence) of

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<sup>13</sup> This is a point that Walter Ong makes repeatedly. See especially *Interfaces of the Word*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977, p.24-9 and *Orality and Literacy*, p.112.

sign-systems could now be seen and read, if not theoretically, certainly at the level of the signifier. Henceforth, the problem of the sign is ever-present, but it surfaced again particularly in the seventeenth century, as I have discussed above.

Paul Saenger has demonstrated how this emerging new textuality in turn produced a new orientation to the page:<sup>14</sup> instead of the ancient world's preference for reading aloud and oral composition (by means of dictation), silent reading and written composition infiltrated the university world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, spreading thence more widely, particularly to the Court. This certainly seems a plausible story, since it is unlikely that anyone would gain much from reading aloud the purely 'formal' language that Latin had now become.

Saenger suggests that the conventional view, that oral communication prevailed in the middle ages until the invention of

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Saenger, 'Silent Reading: its Impact upon Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator* 13, 1982, 367-414.

printing instigated the Modern Age, is a vast oversimplification.<sup>15</sup> To expand on this somewhat: for the Romans, a written text was essentially a transcription which, rather like modern musical notation, became intelligible only when performed orally. In similar vein, Leclercq has demonstrated the prevalent 'orality' of the early Middle Ages - how, for example, twelfth century authors used dictation when composing their texts, and how monks of the twelfth century and before had habitually read aloud even in private.<sup>16</sup> Other indications and evidence are consistent with this, such as St Augustine's documented astonishment that St Ambrose read and studied with his lips sealed.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically, the oral nature of reading and writing should come as no surprise:

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<sup>15</sup> A view expressed in, for example, Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the Making of Typographic Man*, London, Routledge And Kegan Paul, 1962, p.89-90; Walter J. Ong, *Systems, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism*, Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance 18, 1956, p.229; *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1958, pp.x, 79, 128, and *passim*; *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, p. 58-61; 'Commonplace Rhapsody: Ravisius, Textor, Zwinger and Shakespeare', in *Classical Influence on European Culture A.D. 1500-1700: Proceedings of an International Conference Held at King's College Cambridge April 1974*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.104-107; Elizabeth Eisenstein, 'Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society', *Journal of Modern History* 40, 1968, p.30-1; 'L'avènement de l'imprimerie et le réforme', *Annales* 36, 1971; *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, pp.10-11, 698; Cecil H. Clough, 'The Cult of Antiquity: Letters and Letter Collections', in C. H. Clough (ed.) *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1976; Pierre Francastel, 'Poussain et l'homme historique', *Annales* 19, 1964, p.6.

<sup>16</sup> Leclercq's work was based upon consideration of the scanned and formulaic nature of texts of that time, in a thesis analogous to that of Parry, who discovered the oral nature of the Greek Epic. See Jean Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu*, second edition, Paris, 1963, pp.21ff., 165-6; *Recueil d'études sur Saint Bernard*, Rome, Spinetti, 1962-1966, *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> Saint Augustine, 'City of God' 6.3, in *Confessions*.

a pictographic system is more amenable to silent comprehension and writing, and so we know, for example, that Chinese priest and mandarin bureaucrats were able to communicate silently to the gods in written prayer. Our own phonetic system seems to have encouraged the reader to read orally - and this would have particularly been the case for the Romans, who did not make use of word division (that is to say, texts did not have spaces between individual words). It was the invention of word division that gave written Latin an ideographic value similar to that of pictorial systems. Saenger suggests that word division began as an aid to oral reading for Saxon and Celtic priests in the seventh and eighth centuries, probably because their Latin was not good enough to cope with an undivided text. The practice spread into continental Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries. Once it became common practice to write Latin using word division, it was only a short step to making use of this technique for the Western vernaculars.

It is ironic that this aid to reading aloud provided the *sine qua non* for silent reading and copying, but this does appear to be the case. The new ideographic value that single words had (at first in the writing of Latin, but later, of course, in the writing of the vernaculars) made it much easier to copy and read without giving a performance, as it were, of the text. The silent copying

of texts by medieval scribes began in the ninth century, certainly at Tours in the silent monastery; there is also some evidence that monks used silent writing less formally to communicate and avoid censure.<sup>18</sup> By the eleventh century, silent copying was considered a normal part of monastic life, in France at any rate. However, it is clear that not all reading in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was silent, and, in particular, reading outside the scriptorium was still predominantly oral in character. Leclercq showed that the twelfth century author dictated (to self or scribe), and Valois's work on the pseudometrical prose of the time demonstrated how reading aloud continued into the High Middle Ages and beyond.<sup>19</sup>

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France and England, the nobility were beginning to accept silent reading and composition; thirteenth and fourteenth century changes of library architecture in the Oxbridge colleges (moving from cloistered arrangements to central halls) would seem to reflect a move from oral to silent reading, and Oxford University's regulations of 1412 recognised the library as a place for quiet. Now, although we can trace this gradual move to silence among the upper

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<sup>18</sup> Saenger, p.378ff.

<sup>19</sup> Leclercq, *op. cit.*; Noël Valois, *De arte scribendi epistolas apud Gallicos medii aevi scriptores rhetoresque*, Thesis at the University of Paris, 1880.

classes,<sup>20</sup> the lower orders would have read and been taught to read orally, well into the nineteenth century.

To sum up: the 'silencing' of reading has begun to take place, perhaps mainly because of a technical contingency, and has become a useful mode of operation, particularly in religious settings. The educational world has also come to make use of silenced reading, and from there it has begun to spread abroad, particularly among the nobility. Meanwhile, reading has been bathed in a new glow, with 'meaningfulness' coming to occupy a preeminent place. One might imagine that silent reading must just be a step behind meaningfulness (since silent reading enables the reader to back-track and go over parts not easily understood the first time, while oral reading will usually entail the sacrifice of some understanding, particularly of the more difficult pieces of a text); but silent reading as a universal phenomenon for all classes of society does not emerge until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>20</sup> Interesting in this regard is George Steiner on the development of the 'classical act of reading'. See, for example, *After the Book?*, in *On Difficulty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978.

*Meaningfulness Gathers Pace: Different Meanings for  
Different People*

'Meaningfulness' takes its time to insinuate itself as an important concept in educational practice, but begins to coexist as a strategic goal of teaching alongside the differentiation of different types of reader.<sup>21</sup> The new pedagogy, then, seems to be formulated along a double axis, both of which give a domain to a kind of psychology of the reader. Meaningfulness (which is becoming silent) sets up the possibility of different sorts of reading and understandings of reading, some of which, of course, will be judged better than others. This clearly adds a new domain to a disciplinary function, which previously was limited to a concern with how good a performance the reader had given (we again epistemological changes are inevitably more than they seem at first sight). A more formal assessment of the reader is not long coming. In addition, in our second axis, this new, meaningful reader is being more and more precisely differentiated by different sorts of texts (and within texts) which guarantee and are guaranteed by the child reader. We saw that Gildon split his text and targeted/created a series of differentiated readers. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this process was continuing

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<sup>21</sup> See the discussion of Gildon's *Grammar* above.

apace. So James Gough can take this a stage further:

“But these [sc. earlier grammars] seem to have been written for Men rather than for Children, so that there still seemed to be room for a *practical English Grammar for the Use of Schools*; which must not be a Critical Grammar of the Language, but a summary of the most material Rules observed by good Writers in the Construction thereof...”<sup>22</sup>

The force of Gough’s move is to initiate the idea of separate texts: children can now have their own specific text, while the teacher, or whoever is “desirous to be... compleat Masters of the Language” is referred to another text, such as Greenwood’s or Brightland’s grammar. James Buchanan’s text is an example of the closer and closer delineation of the teacher; as Cohen points out, he uses the full range of printer’s devices - the ample footnotes act as a teacher’s manual, giving additional examples and questions that might be helpful for the teacher, while italics give rules and principles, specifically for those working on their own.<sup>23</sup> Both teacher and pupil, then, are being ever more closely written, ever more closely defined.

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<sup>22</sup> James Gough, *A Practical Grammar of the English Tongue*, Dublin, 1754, p.i, italics in original. Quoted in Cohen, *op. cit.*, p.83.

<sup>23</sup> James Buchanan, *The Complete English Scholar*, London, 1753. Cf. Cohen, p.82.



Several writers have noticed how the child is in the process of being invented in this period.<sup>24</sup> John Newbery, the publisher known as the father of the book trade for children, was active at this time;<sup>25</sup> the child, now recognisably dressed as a child, at least by the nobility, was becoming a figure that we moderns might identify with. What is interesting about Newbery's book is how coherent the child is; one book will serve boys and girls of all ages - although the 'afterthought' of the ball or pincushion does make some concession to the gender of the reader. Almost as soon as they appeared, however, children's books were to engage in a similar fractioning to that taking place in the more

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<sup>24</sup> See Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*; Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*; J. H. Plumb, 'The New World of Children in Eighteenth Century England', *Past and Present* 67, 1975, 64-95. Plumb's seminal article raises a number of problems about the interpretation of 'childhood', and the nature of historical research in an area like this; these are admirably documented by Ludmilla Jordanova, 'New worlds for children in the eighteenth century: problems of historical interpretation', *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 1, 1990, 69-83. Jordanova criticises Plumb's attempt to tell a generalised history of childhood, and to construct a monolithic 'world' they inhabited and inhabit, as if 'children' were of a piece, and able to be separated from adults and their life. It should be clear that such a project is not what is intended in this thesis; by reading the historical evidence available, I am not seeking to talk of childhood itself, to say what the referent was 'really' like. I am more interested in the attempts to constitute childhood that the historical record betrays. Of course, the constitutions are not just of academic interest, but enter into the realm of the true and the false.

<sup>25</sup> A nice account of Newbery's work is given in F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, Second Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958. Newbery's most famous book, and perhaps the first 'children's' book, was *A little pretty pocket book intended for the instruction and amusement of little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly with an agreeable letter to read from Jack the Giant Killer as well as a ball and pincushion the use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good boy and Polly a good girl; to the whole is prefixed a letter on education humbly addressed to all parents, guardians, governesses, etc, wherein rules are laid down for making their children strong, healthy, virtuous, wise and happy*, London, 1743.

ethereal realm of the dictionary and the grammar, a fractioning which, as I have been contending, begins to produce the child in its image. Mrs. Barbauld writes her reading book for the two- to three-year-old; Lady Fenn writes hers for the five- to eight-year-old; John Marshall publishes a reader for four- to five-year-olds.<sup>26</sup>

The child that is slowly being elaborated is also needed for linguistic theory. As I outlined above, the world of lexicography was moving from universal explanations of a one true language, to a concern with the general and the specific. It is now no longer the case that the question of the origin of language can be settled by reference to some moment before Babel, to a divine intervention; language, now it has assumed a temporal dimension, needs to be understood in terms of its development. Cohen suggests, plausibly enough, that there were two possible routes that this investigation could take: it could either look at the language of the undeveloped language of primitive cultures, or it could look at the undeveloped language of the child.<sup>27</sup> These can

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<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Barbauld, *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old*, London, 1778 (Mrs. Barbauld also provided sequels which brought these texts up to the level of older children); [Lady Fenn], *Cobwebs to Catch Flies; or Dialogues in Short Sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years*, London, J. Marshall, 1783; Anonymous, *Familiar Dialogues for the Instruction and Amusement of Children of Four and Five Years Old*, London, J. Marshall, 1783. An excellent guide to the many similar texts around in this period, complete with many illustrations of the original, is Joyce Irene Whalley, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: Illustrated Books for the Nursery and Schoolroom 1700-1900*, London, Elek, 1974.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, p.122.

quickly become conflated, however, as we see in James Burnet's tome: he finds the first stages of the "progress of the human mind" in primitive languages and in children, as well as in those who are deaf.<sup>28</sup> At a stroke, the child is seen in a completely new way, and is immediately constituted as a fit object for scientific/linguistic investigation - in which context the interest in (or even furore around) the Wild Boy of Aveyron is perhaps a little more understandable.<sup>29</sup>

I have dwelt at some length over the invention of two sets of practices which are, I maintain, essential to our understanding of the intervention of governmental strategies in the lives of schoolchildren. First of all, reading is being transformed such that the meanings that can be obtained from reading are coming to be the most important parts of the whole process; reading is now slowly becoming reading for meaning rather than giving a

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<sup>28</sup> James Burnet [Lord Monboddo], *Of the Origin and Progress of Language, Second Edition*, Edinburgh, 1774. See also Cohen, p.125.

<sup>29</sup> Victor, the boy found living rough in the forests of Aveyron at the end of the eighteenth century, is perhaps the first subject of a psychological inquiry. I would contend that the sorts of interests shown in Victor in this period just could not have happened even fifty years earlier. Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex*, p.11ff., makes a case for the Wild Boy as initiating modern psychological enquiry. See Jean Itard, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, London, New Left Books, 1972. Monboddo and others like him are beginning to debate the question of the nature of language in the child, and the relative contributions of powers inborn in the child and of the society that surrounds him or her. See, for example, Anselm Bayly, *An Introduction to Languages, Literary and Philosophical... Exhibiting at one view their Grammar, Rationale, Analogy and Idiom*, London, 1758, p.24-5. Cf. Cohen, p.125.

good oral performance. Such a shift no doubt has repercussions as to how important reading is as a technology of the self, since reading would seem to become necessarily more reflective and careful. At the same time as reading is being transformed such that the emphasis is on meaning, the reader who interacts with this 'meaningful' text is being reassessed, rewritten even. There are different meanings for different people - children, boys, girls, teachers, all begin to get their own texts and come to be more and more like the texts that claim to be merely helping them. These texts, of course, do more than that: in 'representing' the interests of their specific readerships, they prescribe what the 'typical' reader looks like.

Silent reading may look like an obvious accompaniment to reading for meaning: after all, how can one understand a difficult text if one has to concentrate on performing it, and cannot go back and try to take in more slowly the bits that escape one the first time? However, this self-evident link is only so because it has been made self-evident; meaningfulness and silent reading come from entirely different roots. Silent reading, when by pure chance it appears, is welcomed as a useful technique. Yet, as we shall see, other consequences flow from the silencing of the reader - in particular, the examination. Who would have thought there could have been a relation between medieval monks with

poor Latin and the disciplinary technique *par excellence* ?

I shall try the reader's patience no more. Let us look at some good, old-fashioned politics.

## **6: TOWARDS A PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIMENT: MONITORIALISM**

“How many hours, days, months have been prodigally wasted in unproductive occupations! What a host of half formed impressions and abortive conceptions blended into a mass of confusion... In the best regulated mind of the present day, had there not been, and is not there some hours every day, passed in reverie, thought ungoverned, undirected?”<sup>1</sup>

I hope to have shown that a series of changes, both gradual and sudden, have radically transformed/produced the object of my inquiry. The child has begun to be rigorously specified, and in this process of specification, has become an appropriate object for still further knowledge institutions and disciplinary techniques. The nineteenth century will see several crucial interventions into this still developing object. I shall discuss the hegemony of silent reading, the examination, and mass schooling; perhaps most importantly, we shall see the birth of the human sciences, and in particular psychology, which objectify and civilise the child reader still more - render him or her a docile

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Wedgwood.

body. But we still need to add some more pieces to the jigsaw before we can move on.

Two hundred years ago, in March 1791, one intellectual writes a response to another: they had both been concerning themselves with the recent events in France. A veritable uproar occurs: trials, escape plans, new laws, a state of national emergency. What is going on?

### *Language and Class*

At the end of the eighteenth century, the state of language could be monitored by examining three authoritative texts: Lowth's *Grammar*, Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, and Harris's *Hermes*.<sup>2</sup> I have outlined how universal grammar projects were gradually being worn down in the course of the eighteenth century; but it is reasonably clear that this new interest in the specificities of language did not extend to a belief in the equality of the different types of language. The kind of 'refined' English that the great

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<sup>2</sup>This, at least, is the claim of Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1984, p.3ff. The following section borrows heavily from her work. See also Lowth, *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols., London, 1755; Harris, *Hermes*. I have already talked a little about two of these works; a useful discussion of the third is set out in R. De Maria, *Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1986.

three texts endorsed was very Latinate; familiarity with the Classical authors and the attaining of Classical modes of expression were the guarantee of intellectual and moral fitness to participate in cultural life. By contrast, the vulgar language of the masses necessarily debarred them, so the story went, from being able to express any lofty thoughts. The expression of the sensations and the passions was the natural limit of the vulgar language. It is perhaps impossible to overstate how important such conceptions of language were in the way cultural life was organised. The unthinkable was the existence of a vulgar or vernacular speaker who could be both moral and intelligent.

The attempt to model English on the 'more perfect' Classical languages clearly had an element of the assertion of national and cultural superiority. Thus James Buchanan argues that because the English are respectable, then the rules for the conjugations of the verb must be complex; to claim it were simple "is manifestly alarming, that the English Language is nothing superior to that of the Hottentots; and that the wisest and most respectable Body of People upon the Face of the Globe, own a Language which is incapable of ascertaining their ideas, or of exhibiting the Soul, and its various Affections."<sup>3</sup>

Certain writers, however, began to question these ideas,

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<sup>3</sup> James Buchanan, *The British Grammar*, London, 1762, p.105, cited in Smith, p.9.



and to attempt the impossible - to produce a work of intelligence and substance in the vernacular. This was no simple academic conceit, however, but was an act of political will. As I discussed above, the teaching of reading was coming to be more and more tailored to the needs of the recipient, something which William Cobbett, among others, railed against. Cobbett was alive to the fact that the prescription of the texts was also a form of proscription, and a way of maintaining class divisions. Sunday Schools,<sup>4</sup> a form of free education which had spread from the end of the eighteenth century, were very careful in how far they instructed their charges - their main duty was to teach deference and industry. The dame schools taught along the same lines. The dominant voices in these cheap or free modes of education at the time - Trimmer, Hanway, More - all stress the dual goal of attaining political quietude and religious piety.<sup>5</sup> According to Trimmer, students were taught enough writing to be shopkeepers or servants, learning handwriting which only they could read; students who would become teachers were, by contrast, taught a

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<sup>4</sup> The Sunday Schools actually became very popular, with an attendance figure of nearly a million by the 1830s. See M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1938, p.142-54; M. E. Sadler and J. W. Edwards in Education Department, *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, London, H.M.S.O., 1898, ii; Frederic Hill, *National Education*, London, 1836, i, p.4-10.

<sup>5</sup> See, example, Jonas Hanway, *A Comprehensive View of Sunday Schools, 2 parts*, London, 1786.

'fine hand'.<sup>6</sup>

One more example, slightly lengthy, again culled from the work of Olivia Smith, will perhaps make clear just how things stood at the turn of the century, and how important the apparently arcane contents of a dictionary could be in relation to political struggle.<sup>7</sup> Leeds Grammar School made a petition in 1805 to add arithmetic and modern languages to its syllabus (which at that time included just Latin and Greek).<sup>8</sup> The petition was originally successful, but the decision was then overturned by the judge, who ruled that as a free school, Leeds must be a free grammar school; and as a grammar school was defined in Johnson's Dictionary as a school for teaching the learned languages, it would not be lawful for it to do anything else, at least with its endowment. The movement towards elitism in grammar schools was already in progress, and this ruling could only hasten it: Latin and Greek were now the only subjects that could be taught free of charge, a state of affairs which had a detrimental effect on the attendance of the poorer pupils. Things

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools*, London, 1792, pp.21, 23; Smith, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, p.16-17.

<sup>8</sup> More details on this case can be found in John William Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1930, p.43ff. Language has been linked with the possibility of class struggle for a longer period than I have stressed, though not in quite the same way. An early voice warning against the dangers of educating the lower orders (an obsession that will grow from now on) is T. Sheridan, *British Education, or, The Source of the Disorders of Great Britain*, London, 1769.

came to such a pass that when in 1810 the directors of Harrow were in court for not fulfilling the obligations of their trust, they were able successfully to defend themselves by arguing that as a grammar school, Harrow was “not now adapted generally for persons of low condition, but better suited to those of a high class”.<sup>9</sup>

Such was the backdrop against which Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* would have been received.<sup>10</sup> Paine attempted the ‘impossible’ style, an intellectual vernacular prose, that owed much to the style of Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and to which it was a reply.<sup>11</sup> Paine’s project was a colloquial articulation of hitherto unexpressed political ideas, and a refutation of the political implications of the literary skills marshalled by Burke: what is interesting is that it was less the radical content in Paine’s work that was important but the way in which the content was expressed - the medium really was the message. The success of Paine’s venture can be measured by the repression and retaliation that followed

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<sup>9</sup> Adamson, p.63-4.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, in Maurice D. Conway (ed.) *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4 vols, New York, Franklin, 1894-6.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1969. Burke’s style was a curious one which was recognised as both refined and vulgar. Philip Francis, on reading an early draft of the *Reflections*, advised against publication, seeing in its emotive tone the fuse for a pamphlet war which could only aid the radicals’ cause. See Alfred Cobban and Robert A. Smith (eds.) *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 4, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p.85-7; Smith, p.37.

its publication. 1792 saw Paine's trial,<sup>12</sup> the King's Proclamation, the Treasonable Practices Act, the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act; 1794 saw treason trials and another Treasonable Practices Act; and in 1795 the prohibition of the publication of radical tracts was established in law, further legislation being added in 1798. A 'Pamphlet War' ensued, as radicals and conservatives took each other on, although both sides were caught in a paradox: the radicals needed to prove they were not 'vulgar', but were faced with the problem of how to write in a plain style that did not show vulgarity; the conservatives, meanwhile, because of their desire to forestall the growth of democratic ideas, did not want to extend either literacy or political awareness, which the production of pamphlets was always in danger of doing. The Association for preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, which was almost certainly government backed, was formed in November 1792, and published the Liberty and Property series, advising

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<sup>12</sup> Burke sold about 30,000 copies of his *Reflections*. Paine's response, in March 1791, was at first an edition which cost 3/-, but even at so expensive a price it sold about 50,000 to 60,000 copies. In the Spring of 1792, a second part was published at 6d, along with a cheap reprint of part one. By the following year, perhaps 200,000 copies were in circulation, and by the time of Paine's death in 1809, the total circulation was perhaps as high as 1,500,000 (the total population of Britain at the time was no more than 16,000,000). Interestingly, only the second part of *The Rights of Man* was prosecuted, its cheapness and availability being seen as evidence of the author's malicious intent. Part I was not prosecuted because it was thought that its price prevented those who could not argue against it from purchasing it. Price and style, then, were the two means by which the government decided whether or not a book should be prosecuted.

workers on financial self-improvement and on the merits of ignoring books, with such quotes as “I seldom read anything except my Bible and my Ledger”.<sup>13</sup> Church and government aided the association in many ways, but most importantly by help with distribution.

However, Paine’s ambition was ultimately realised, because the concept of vulgarity seems to lose its force in the period between 1780 and 1815. Once again, reading and writing were transformed in the period after the Napoleonic Wars:<sup>14</sup> a new kind of writing emerged, epitomised by William Hone’s ground-breaking *The Political House that Jack Built*, an account of the Peterloo massacre.<sup>15</sup> I contend that such political writing has its conditions of possibility in the Paineite deconstruction of vulgarity as a barrier to certain sorts of thought. Nonetheless, it would be hard to underestimate the fear that the prospect of an education for the lower orders still incited in their social superiors. Robert K. Webb outlines a couple of anecdotes which

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<sup>13</sup> Association for preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, *Liberty and Property preserved against Republicans and Levellers. A Collection of Tracts*, London, 1793, no.4, p.8.

<sup>14</sup> The analysis of this shift is beyond the scope of the current thesis, although it is clear that some of the technological changes I have touched on already were relevant factors: thus, the growth of newspapers as a source of intellectual information, and changes in the copyright law were the sort of discursive reorganisations that facilitated this transition. Again, Smith is worth consulting on this topic; see p.154-201.

<sup>15</sup> [William Hone], *The Political House that Jack Built*, London, 1819; see Smith, p.165ff.

perhaps enable us to comprehend this depth of feeling. First: in Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, Mr. Flosky is made to say, "How can we be cheerful when we are surrounded by a reading public, that is growing too wise for its betters?" Second: a newspaper report from 1828 details how a barrister told magistrates at Westminster that a forger owed his trip to Botany Bay to the 'march of intellect'; to which some of the magistrates responded, "Hear, hear".<sup>16</sup>

This period in the study of the production of literate subjects is important, I think, because we are witnessing the birth of new ways of intervening into the lives of readers. In a sense, this is a necessary prerequisite for what Foucault has described as a reversal of the political axis of individualisation, and which I shall discuss in more detail below. Someone like Hannah More was, at the time, widely criticised by Tories for her insistence on educating the lower orders; but her reply showed just what her technique was all about - "I allow of no writing for the poor... My object is not to make them fanatics, but to train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety".<sup>17</sup> As James Donald points out, she was not working in the

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<sup>16</sup> Robert K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848: Literacy and Social Tension*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1955. The report on the Westminster magistrates comes from *Sphynx*, 9 April 1828.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education: The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1960, p.133.

context of a simple fear of the growth of literacy in the lower classes:

“The threat she saw lay in the conjunction of this already existing competence with a number of other factors - with the increasing urbanization of the working class, with techniques of printing, publishing and distribution that could make material widely available quickly and comparatively cheaply and, above all, with a popular political discourse newly formulated in the wake of the American and French revolutions.”<sup>18</sup>

In a sense, Paine was an incitement to these new forms of knowing the lower orders and regulating them. The task, from this point on, lay in the production of new forms of reader. Yet this is clearly not an overarching political ambition of the state; a series of contingencies open up new possibilities which may or may not be developed and made use of - and the take up of these possibilities is correspondingly piecemeal. There is still much opposition to such a move, which continues to be mobilised through until Forster's Education Act of 1870 and even beyond; yet it is important for us to note the seeds of such a reconceptualisation.

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<sup>18</sup> James Donald, *Language, Literacy and Schooling*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1986, Unit 29, p.51. Much of what follows is based on Donald. See also Donald's development of his ideas in his more recent *Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty*, London, Verso, 1992.

While the reaction to the Paine episode can easily be read as an instance of repressive action by the State, it is also much more than this. The processes of governmentality that are going on here are not just limited to the officers of the State; philanthropists, educators, philosophers, are all involved in this process. The education of the lower orders may still evoke controversy, but the political landscape has been so fundamentally changed that it is becoming clear that the problem cannot just be ignored. The threat is now that the lower orders will educate themselves, will acquire dangerous ideas from who knows where. From now on, the discourse arranges itself around the problem of changing the hearts and minds of men, and education is the means to effect such transformations. We are seeing a period before education was 'black boxed': it is now, of course, common sense that education is a good thing, maybe even a human right. The situation was not so clearcut at the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1807, the Whigs attempted to get a bill through parliament to establish parish schools. The bill failed, but in the debates round it we can see the polarisation of views that I am contending the Paineite revolution made possible. Davies Giddy, President of the Royal Society, was among those opposed to the bill:



“However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and their happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing countries; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors; and in a few years, the result would be, that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power against them.”<sup>19</sup>

The pamphlet war that ensued, was, as I have noted, entered into with some trepidation by the conservatives because it led to a necessary incitement to literacy, something which they hoped to avoid; on the other hand, Paine and his like needed to be countered in some way. Societies like the SPCK and the RTS<sup>20</sup> gave away a series of tracts as well as Bibles, often with the enticement of food, as well as at public gatherings like executions; but there was always the problem that they might not

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<sup>19</sup> Cited in Simon, p.132; Donald, *Language, Literacy and Schooling*, p.52.

<sup>20</sup> Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, Religious Tract Society.

be read, or might even be used to make fires!<sup>21</sup> The problem was one that one that faced an alliance of educators, clergy, and anyone else worried about the question of the lower orders.

In addition, those on the side of the lower orders (if it makes any sense to talk about 'sides') were entering into the equation. Wily radicals, for example, were putting their own material inside RTS covers.<sup>22</sup> The almanac was possibly a more popular literary form for the radicals' messages; unstamped (i.e. illegal) almanacs appeared quite frequently - the SDUK<sup>23</sup> made use of this convention, recognising its popularity, for their first publication. Overall, we should be careful not to underestimate the desire of the labouring classes to become literate, and the lengths they would go to to achieve this aim. Small reading and study groups crop up frequently in Trade Union history; the Leeds Mutual Improvement Society, for example, was a small self-help literacy group which cost its members 3d a week. The problem, then, of the education of the masses is not simply one which is answered by the State; it is one in which the processes of constructing a form of governing people is entered into by a variety of bodies.

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<sup>21</sup> There is some concern about this at the time in, for example, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, i, December 1838, p.457-8, and xi, August 1848, p.218.

<sup>22</sup> *Christian Spectator*, 19 June 1839, p.107; *Poor Man's Guardian*, 11 January 1834.

<sup>23</sup> Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

We saw above how Giddy expressed his fear of the lower orders; there were other upper class views on the 'problem' of working class literacy, of course. Patrick Colquhoun, for example, accrued a mass of statistics on the urban poor; he was one of the first to make correlations between illiteracy and criminality, and consequently began the call for an organised police force. The education of the lower orders struck him as a necessary evil, provided they were not over-educated:

“... the higher and noble aim of preventing those calamities which led to idleness and crime, and produce poverty and misery, by guiding and properly directing the early conduct of the lower orders of the community, and by giving a right bias to their minds, has not, as yet, generally attracted the notice of those who move in the more elevated walks of society... The prosperity of every state depends on the good habits, and the religious and moral instruction of the labouring people. By shielding the minds of youth against the vices that are most likely to beset them, much is gained to society in the prevention of crimes, and in lessening the demand for punishments... It is not, however, proposed by this institution, that the children of the poor should be educated in a manner to elevate their minds above the rank they are destined to fulfil in society, or that an expense should be incurred beyond the lowest rate ever paid for instruction. Utopian schemes for an extensive diffusion of

knowledge would be injurious and absurd.”<sup>24</sup>

Colquhoun does not enunciate a need to wring all that one can from the lower orders; his aims are more conservative. Yet there is no hint of simple interdiction in his pronouncement - he realises that the (potentially dangerous) education of the poor may be pragmatically useful.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it is gradually becoming clear that there is now no going back to the uncontested linguistic and educational hegemony that the higher orders enjoyed only a few years before.

Colquhoun provides us with a nice link between the problems uncovered by Paine and the monitorial system of schooling; the latter is, in fact, the ‘institution’ Colquhoun refers to above. After Paine, it is no longer possible just to deny education to the lower orders; but monitorialism is an attempt to make sure that that education is a fitting one. But before we continue, it is worth making a brief excursus on the character of literacy in this period.

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick Colquhoun, *New and Appropriate System of Education for the Labouring People*, London, 1806.

<sup>25</sup> Colquhoun anticipates a concern with the expense to the nation that the poor create. The state of the poor, and particularly the state of their morals, has already become of the utmost importance, but there is also this rather simple discursive concern with how expensive they are. A discursive shift enables popular education to be seen as one way of reducing these costs by giving the poor ‘a chance’ (see John Morley, below). Thus the 1841 Report of the Poor Law Commissioners goes into great detail about the cost of the poor as a kind of rationalisation for the extension of education. See Poor Law Commissioners, *Seventh Annual Report*, Parliamentary Papers 1841, xi.201.

### *Digression I: Who is Reading?*

Thomas Laqueur's estimate of the numbers of people who could read and write in England in the mid-eighteenth century is surprisingly high. In 1754, he claims, 60 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women were able at least to sign the marriage register; even more were probably able to read.<sup>26</sup> We can update these figures by looking at Richard Altick,<sup>27</sup> who suggests the following distributions for literacy:

	<b>Males</b>		<b>Females</b>	
	% of literate	% gain	% of literate	% gain
1841	67.3		51.1	
1851	69.3	2.0	54.8	3.7
1861	75.4	6.1	65.3	10.5
1871	80.6	5.2	73.2	7.9
1881	86.5	5.9	82.3	9.1
1891	93.6	7.1	92.7	10.4
1900	97.2	3.6	96.8	4.1

As we can see, Altick suggests that high levels of literacy are established by the middle of the nineteenth century. For Altick, these levels begin to rise after the Napoleonic wars, having

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Laqueur, 'The Cultural Origins of Popular Literacy in England 1500-1850', *Oxford Review of Education* 2, 3, 1976, 255-275, p.255.

<sup>27</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1957, p.171.

remained much the same from about 1790. Lawrence Stone suggests that literacy of the urban and rural middle classes had risen to 95 per cent by 1840, from a level of 75 per cent some sixty years earlier. The literacy levels of the lower classes did not reach a level of 30 to 35 per cent until 1800; by the early nineteenth century it had risen dramatically to about 60 per cent.<sup>28</sup>

Another source of evidence about levels of education is school attendance, although we must of course be wary about what conclusions we draw from these for literacy levels. In 1816 in England, 875,000 children - out of a potential 1,500,000 - attended some sort of school for some period, and in 1835, 1,450,000 out of a potential 1,750,000 did likewise. By this latter date, the average duration of school attendance was about one year; fifteen years or so later, the average attendance time had doubled. By the end of the century, under the impress of the 1870 Act, virtually all children attended school until the age of twelve.<sup>29</sup>

In 1833, the working class population of England and Wales was about 12,400,00, of whom about 2,604,000 were aged between three and twelve years. At this point, nearly 900,000 children were estimated to have been through some sort of

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<sup>28</sup> Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England', p.109-12.

<sup>29</sup> Donald, *op. cit.*, p.48-9.

school, a figure which had nearly doubled by 1851.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, we have some information from the Census of Great Britain of 1851. 988,615 boys attended day schools, of whom 870,061 were taught reading (88%); 829,409 girls attended day schools, of whom 738,526 were taught reading (89%).<sup>31</sup>

Literacy, then, was clearly rising quickly throughout the population until it was almost *de rigeur*. As promised, we shall now turn to looking at some of the institutions that sought to implant this literacy, beginning with the monitorial system that Colquhoun supported.

### *Monitorialism: An Experiment in Surveillance*

The monitorial school in Westminster developed by Andrew Bell was graced by the presence of Colquhoun as Chairman of Committee.<sup>32</sup> Colquhoun praised the surveillant organisation of the school, which clearly had affinities with his own ideas for the organisation of a police force to report back on the activities

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<sup>30</sup> Adamson, *English Education*, p.23; A. E. Dobbs, *Education and Social Movements*, London, Longmans, 1919, p.89-90.

<sup>31</sup> Census of Great Britain 1851. Education: Report and Tables. Parliamentary Papers 1852-3, (1692), xc.1.

<sup>32</sup> Bell's system is outlined in *An Analysis of the Experiment in Education, made at Egmore, near Madras*, London, Cadell and Davies, 1807.

of the lower orders:

“The province of the master or mistress is to direct the whole machine in all its parts... It is their business to see that others work, rather than work themselves. The master and mistress, from their respective chairs, overlook every part of the school, and give life and motion to the whole. They inspect the classes one after another; call upon the monitors occasionally to bring them up, that they might specifically examine the progress of each pupil.”<sup>33</sup>

Bell and Lancaster were the most famous exponents of this monitorial system, which functioned on a system of mutual instruction (pupils were strictly hierarchised and given duties in relation to the teaching and regulation of their inferiors) and constant surveillance.<sup>34</sup> These schools were ‘total institutions’: their concerns lay not merely with education, but extended to the inculcation of useful habits, especially cleanliness.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> Cited in Donald, p.54.

<sup>34</sup> The system of mutual instruction was seen at the time as a significant advance on the old individual method. M. Herpin, *Sur l'enseignement mutuel, les écoles primaires des campagnes et les salles d'éducation de l'enfance*, Paris, 1835, in his advocacy of mutual instruction calculated that under a system of individual instruction, in a six hour school day, with a class of sixty pupils, each would only be occupied for about four minutes - the rest of the time was wasted.

<sup>35</sup> The Reverend W. Johnson's evidence to the Select Committee on Education concentrated on this aspect of monitorialism: “After prayers every morning, a regular inspection of the hands and faces of the children takes place; so that cleanliness growing into a habit, attaches itself to the child as he grows into life.” Select Committee on the State of Education, Parliamentary Papers 1834, ix, p.13. See also Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis, Parliamentary Papers 1816, iv, which also concerns itself extensively with the relation between education and cleanliness.



monitorial schools were distinguished by their religious affiliation, Bell's being the school of the established Church.<sup>36</sup>

Bentham, perhaps the central figure of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, also drew up plans for a similar monitorial school on the model of the *Panopticon*, surveillance and rigorous control of the inmates/students being the ultimate goal of the institution.<sup>37</sup>

Panopticism is the sign of a new form of political control. Bentham's Panoptic model was one in which a collection of cells were arranged in a circle with a gap in the middle. The architecture and lighting are such that each inhabitant of the cell is completely individualised, cut off from the possibility of any knowledge about or communication with his fellow detainees. In the middle of this arrangement is a central tower, which contains the warden; the lighting is again such that the prisoners/students never know when they are being observed: thus they must behave at all times as if they were being observed. In fact, there is no

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<sup>36</sup> Lancaster's schools were set up under the 'British and Foreign School Society', the society of the dissenters; while Bell's were set under the aegis of the Anglican Church as the 'National Society for Educating the Poor according to the Principles of the Established Church'.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Wedgwood was another figure who planned a new rational system of education, with an explicit link to the logic of the workplace. He was particularly concerned with the unregulated use of time: "How many hours, days, months have been prodigally wasted in unproductive occupations! What a host of half formed impressions and abortive conceptions blended into a mass of confusion... In the best regulated mind of the present day, had there not been, and is not there some hours every day, passed in reverie, thought ungoverned, undirected?" Letter from Thomas Wedgwood to William Godwin, 31 July 1797, cited in David Erdman, 'Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Wedgwood Fund', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* ix, 1956.

need for the warden actually to be present in the tower - the prisoners would be none the wiser. For Foucault, such an arrangement is a powerful metaphor for modern systems of discipline. Constant surveillance is guaranteed, not by the external actions of the warden, but by the inmates themselves, who become, as it were, their own gaolers, taking upon themselves the responsibility for their own good behaviour.<sup>38</sup>

The monitorial system of education was, in fact, unpopular<sup>39</sup> and, many believed, unsuccessful; yet we see in the principles of monitorialism the beginnings of crucially important disciplinary techniques. "The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination."<sup>40</sup> Hierarchical judgement was central to the reorganisation of teaching of which monitorialism was a sign. Surveillance is actually built into the business of instruction, even supersedes it as the logic of the school: "*It is not the monitor's business to teach, but to see that the boys in*

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<sup>38</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, especially p.195-228. On page 228, Foucault remarks: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"

<sup>39</sup> Although I say this with some reservation - they may have been unpopular but they were packed. In 1813, Bell's National Society boasted 230 schools containing 40,484 scholars, in 1820, 1,614 schools with 200,000 scholars, and by 1830, 3,670 schools with 346,000 scholars - see Sadler and Evans ii, p.446.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.170.

*his class, or division, teach each other.*"<sup>41</sup> The system of mutual instruction which was so important to the monitorial schools, then, was a guarantee both of knowledge acquisition and of hierarchised observation. As Foucault suggests, the new form of power which such institutions presage is a kind of anonymous, silent and ever-present one; a power which does not need to rely on force:

“The power in the hierarchized surveillance... is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery. And, although it is true that its pyramidal organization gives it a ‘head’, it is the apparatus as a whole that produces ‘power’ and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert... and absolutely ‘discreet’, for it functions permanently and largely in silence. Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism... Thanks to the techniques of surveillance, the ‘physics’ of power, the hold over the body, operate... without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence. It is a power which seems all the less ‘corporal’ in that it is more subtly ‘physical’.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Lancaster, *Improvements in Education; Abridged, Containing a Complete Epitome of the System of Education Invented and Practised by the Author*, London, J. Lancaster, 1808, p.19, italics in original.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.177.

The second 'simple instrument' was normalising judgement:

"The best boy stands in first place; he is also decorated with a leather ticket, gilt, and lettered, *merit*, as a badge of honour. He is always the first boy questioned by the monitor... If he tell readily what letter it is, all is well, and he retains his place in the class; but if he fail, then he forfeits it, together with his number and ticket, to the next boy below him who answers the question aright.

"This promotes constant emulation."<sup>43</sup>

"In short, the art of punishing, in the régime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the

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<sup>43</sup> Lancaster, p.19.

external frontier of the abnormal (the shameful class of the *École Militaire*). The perpetual penalty which traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*.”<sup>44</sup>

This tactic of normalising judgement reaches its first stage in the monitorial schools of men such as Bell and Lancaster. The hierarchisation of the pupils is, as we have seen, a *relative* one, where pupils are ranged from best to worst. This, however, is a less than perfect way of rendering each individual calculable, ‘individualising’ them, as it were. The mark gained from the examination is the tool that will complete the job.

It is clear from contemporaneous sources that the management and regulation of children is in fact far more important than the subjects they are taught. William Allen’s is a typical voice:

“A person may be well qualified to teach reading and writing, and yet be incapable of managing a school upon the economical plan of the new system of education, which is the only means of instructing the great mass of the people, except at enormous expense.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.182-3, italics in original.

<sup>45</sup> Select Committee on Education of Lower Orders, Parliamentary Papers 1818, (426), iv.55, p.63. Allen hits upon the other great virtue of the monitorial system: it was very cheap.

Regulation has come to supersede education as an organisational logic of the school. The insertion of this form of regulating children, through monitoring them and getting them to monitor themselves, is a vital step in the establishment of modern forms of government. No doubt in part, it is merely a solution to a technical problem: how to educate a huge number of children. In answering this question, the monitorial schools came upon a technique that was to ensure the docility of those subjects caught up in the discourses of literacy (remember, these schools are doing little else other than teaching literacy skills). Reading, then, is being constituted as a necessary technology of government in a variety of ways: first, it is the reason why the children are there in the first place, the glue that holds the school together; second, it is the medium that has its own force (the monitorialists sought to answer the question 'how to instruct with discipline?'); third, it is the medium through which useful habits may be learned by the school population - the texts used by these schools are still the old religious ones. Discipline has infested the school, but it has done it through the teaching of reading, its logic deriving from a series of problems which are, ultimately, connected up with language.

A few strands need to be drawn together. First of all, our old friend, silent reading: this has made its way patiently through

the religious institutions and the universities, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century is the norm in the school as well. Lancaster boasts that his school “procures that great desideratum of schools, *quietness*, not by terror, but by commanding attention”.<sup>46</sup> Keith Hoskin argues that both reading and writing must now be engaged in silently; in particular, he notes that books like *Cassell’s Popular Educator* warn against the idiocy of each stroke of the pen being imitated by the mouth - as if, Hoskin suggests, an old practice had suddenly been rendered strange.<sup>47</sup> We may not know precisely when silent reading became dominant, but we can surmise that its introduction is not just technical, but is also political. The silencing of the reader, of the schoolchild, is in itself clearly a disciplinary measure - a method of getting children to work that is at once more orderly and respectful. In addition, the examination (Foucault’s ‘specific procedure’) requires silence, once it has moved from being a largely oral and individual procedure to one conducted on many candidates simultaneously in silence in a large hall.<sup>48</sup>

Another old friend: the examination. The school had become

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<sup>46</sup> Lancaster, p.26, italics in original.

<sup>47</sup> Hoskin, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> It takes a long time for the examination to become modernised. It seems clear that most examinations at Universities, for example, would have been oral in nature, and there is some evidence to suggest that they may have been something of a farce up until the nineteenth century. See Stephen Rothblatt, ‘Failure in Early 19th Century Oxford and Cambridge’, *History of Education* 15, 1986, 1-21.

“a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination”,<sup>49</sup> and in so becoming, has begun to change the nature of its technical objects, the students. In particular, Foucault points to the way in which the objects of the gaze of the examination are turned into ‘cases’ with ‘case histories’:<sup>50</sup> ordinary individuality, as Foucault notes and as is discussed earlier in this thesis, is transformed, is moved from below the threshold of description to assume a new visibility as the ‘case’. The examination actually constitutes the individual, produces him/her as a replacement for the ‘memorable man’ located within a family genealogy, made visible by kinship ties and ceremonies of a very different order. The birth of the psy-sciences, only just around the corner, coincides with this reversal of the political axis of individualisation:

“All the sciences, analyses or practices employing the root ‘psycho-’ have their origin in this historical reversal of the procedures of individualization. The moment that saw the transition from historico-ritual mechanisms for the formation of individuality to the scientifico-disciplinary mechanisms, when the normal took over from the ancestral, and measurement from status, thus substituting for the individuality of the memorable man that of the calculable man, that moment

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<sup>49</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.186. Foucault continues: “It became less and less a question of jousts in which pupils pitched their forces against one another and increasingly a perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and to judge.”

<sup>50</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.191.



when the sciences of man became possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implemented.”<sup>51</sup>

The strong claim is made, then, that the kinds of disciplinary tactics that one can see in, for example, monitorialism, are a condition of possibility for the sciences of man, and in particular the ‘psy-sciences’.

A convergence of a variety of discursive forms have provided the conditions of possibility for a new way of inscribing individuals and of making them calculable. In this chapter, I have shown how a series of linguistic disputes, made obvious in examples like the the events around *The Rights of Man*, propel the debate about the education of the masses briskly forward. We still see many objectors to education on a mass scale, and many attempts to limit degrees of education, but the battle is all but over. Government can no longer be about repressing, saying no, keeping things hidden. The most efficient government is that which gets the governed to do the work themselves. In monitorialism we see this explicit aim; and the use of the techniques of silent reading and of the examination, themselves with a long and varied history, are, it just so happens, perfect for the job. Once again, we have seen the formation of something

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<sup>51</sup> Foucault, *op. cit.*, p.193.

recognisably modern: but it has been formed out of a variety of discursive odds and ends. Educating people and teaching them to read seems to be neither a conspiracy to keep people in their place, nor a humanitarian gesture, the concession of a right. It seems more that it is about new forms of government, and the convergence of contingencies.

## 7: MORALISATION: FOR LOVE'S SAKE

“The primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings... The struggle against illiteracy is indistinguishable, at times, from the increased power exerted over the individual citizen by the central authority.”<sup>1</sup>

Claude Lévi-Strauss sums up a popular set of ideas about the function of education in the modern age; and to an extent, he is right - how do you govern someone who does not read or write? How do you get them to read all the things that guarantee their successful functioning in an advanced liberal democracy? One gets a sense of this when one travels to a country where one cannot speak the language. One is almost completely removed from the rights and duties of citizenship: simultaneously helpless, yet immune from the demands of that society. But we have begun to see ways in which Lévi-Strauss may be overly pessimistic. First of all, literacy skills are Janus-like: we saw how the Puritans opened up literacy routes which were to be taken up by pornographers, for example. Teach someone to read the Bible and they may go off and read Thomas Paine. Monks may

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, New York, Pantheon, 1965, p.292-3.

use writing to communicate with each other secretly and avoid censure. All of which is to say: power does not merely impress itself on a compliant target - power coexists with resistance. Second, to analyse the situation in terms of the actions of the State upon the poor helpless individual, dwarfed by this leviathan, is perhaps not the approach that does most justice to the evidence we have seen so far. We have seen the development of 'governmentality', but this is not a synonym for the actions of the State; rather, we have seen a reorganisation of the relation between the individual and techniques of government of the self. The individual has a stake in this process, and has come to be an important site in the production of government. One must learn to govern oneself if one is to be an adequate citizen.

This is exactly why the experiment in surveillance that Bell and Lancaster ran is so important: it marks out for us a new conception of the field of government, and seeks out new ways of intervening into the lives of the population - regulating the child, and particularly the poor child, in the name of the maximisation of capacities. However, I would suggest that the monitorial schools do not by any means perfect the technologies of

discipline;<sup>2</sup> I suggest rather that they delineate a path for modern education. First of all, they do not yet introduce the examination mark; secondly, and a topic that will be dealt with at more length below, they do not yet stumble upon one of the most powerful disciplinary technologies available, the 'special relationship' between the teacher and the pupil.

The examination in schools would appear to become written, and to adopt a mathematical system of grading, at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It does not seem to have been a technique which the monitorial schools employed at first - that was a job to be left to their successors. It could be argued that the lack of techniques for turning a population into calculable subjects, in the way the examination mark does, was the Achilles' heel of monitorialism: what was still needed was a way of getting the student to discipline the self through self-

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<sup>2</sup> It is noticeable that many writers on the monitorial system at the time do not privilege any kind of cunning operation of power, but rather regard the schools as ideal sites for the rote learning of useful principles. Thus I would maintain that the disciplinary functions of such schools are limited. For example, Abbé Affre generally supported the new system of schooling, but thought the system of mutual instruction was misguided because it decreased the amount of time that children spent in schools - Affre thought it safer to keep them in schools as long as possible. He had similar 'simple' disciplinary hopes for his book, *Nouveau Traité des Ecoles Primaire ou Manuel des Instituteurs et des Institutrices*, Paris, 1826; he hoped that it would "above all serve to weaken the spirit of independence which our revolution has caused to germinate in so many heads." This would work through the reading of "good authors" who stress "order and submissiveness." See Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, p.121.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Hoskin, 'The Examination, Disciplinary Power and Rational Schooling', *History of Education* 8, 1979, 135-46.

evaluation.<sup>4</sup> A more precise technology than rank ordering is required for such a task, since rank ordering provides the most useful information to those at the top and the bottom of the distributions, but for the great mass in the middle, the precise details of their progress or of their failings are invisible. Hoskin and Macve estimate that in the colleges in the United States, and in the monitorial schools in England, mathematical-type marking systems, such that we would be familiar with today, get introduced around 1820.<sup>5</sup>

A range of disciplinary techniques, then, have been woven into the popular schools. The children have been silenced, and their very form of visibility has begun to be transformed by the reversal in the political axis of individualisation: such a transformation is achieved by that disciplinary technique *par excellence*, the examination. The apparatus of the examination, and the mark derived from it, act as inscription devices, making children 'legible' within educational settings. In addition, the goals of the popular schools were the ones familiar to us from the ideas of Jonas Hanway and his like. First of all, there was importance of teaching literacy skills to enable the Bible to become a literary resource for the new citizen who is gradually

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<sup>4</sup> See Keith W. Hoskin and Richard H. Macve, 'Accounting and the Examination: A Genealogy of Disciplinary Power', *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 11, 2, 1986, 105-36, see especially pp.125, 128.

<sup>5</sup> Hoskin and Macve, p.129.

being unveiled; schooling is seen as having a role to play in improving the moral (and, indeed, the physical) wellbeing of the urban poor.<sup>6</sup> Second, the kind of links that were being drawn between crime and illiteracy began to make the school seem something of a necessity.<sup>7</sup> A third theme was in training up students for useful employments.<sup>8</sup> We can think of the child being extorted out of a new site of perception-enunciation, a new grid of visibility-sayability. In linking together a whole series of previously separate discourses, on crime, on education, on

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<sup>6</sup> A theme in the writing of, for example, Sir Thomas Bernard. See his edited collection *Of the Education of the Poor; being the first part of a digest of reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor; and containing a selection of articles which have reference to education*, London, 1809.

<sup>7</sup> A point dealt with in some detail in Jones and Williamson, *The Birth of the Schoolroom*. As I mentioned above, Patrick Colquhoun was one of the first to concern himself with such links, and Mary Carpenter also began looking at the statistics on prison populations and the inmates' state of literacy. See her *Reformatory Schools, for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders*, London: C. Gilpin, 1851. Literacy was always on the agenda as a possible resource to be used to intervene in such problems, especially once it began to be understood that reading had proved a 'successful' reformatory aid in the prisons. The discourse linking crime to illiteracy seems to appear throughout the Western world at this time; in some countries, it seems to be the most important factor in pushing them towards a universal free public education system, as Suzanne de Castell and Allan Luke argue is the case for Canada. See their 'Defining "Literacy" in North American Schools: Social and Historical Conditions and Consequences', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 15, 1983, 373-89. The late nineteenth century Ontario educationalist Archibald McCallum put the argument very clearly: "Over seven percent of New England's population over ten years of age can neither read nor write; yet 80 percent of the crime in these states was committed by this small minority; in other words, an uneducated person commits fifty-six times as many crimes as one with education." 'Compulsory Education', in A. Prentice and S. Houston (eds), *Family, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975, p.176-7.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Jelinger C. Symons, 'On Industrial Training as an Adjunct to School Teaching', in Alfred Hill (ed.) *Essays on Educational Subjects, read at the Educational Conference of June 1857*, London, Longman, Brown, 1857.

literacy, on the state of the poor, and so on, new ways of understanding the population and of intervening into the behaviour of particular groups were now becoming possible.

### *Health, Crime, Education*

As I have suggested, such a series of arrangements are precursors of more cunning and insidious techniques, which soon began to insert themselves into educational concerns. From a period beginning around 1830, a new domain of political knowledge, based around what Jones and Williamson call 'the moral topographies of classes', began to be formed.<sup>9</sup> This new domain was extorted out of three sites of 'perception-enunciation', as Jones and Williamson put it.<sup>10</sup> First of all, the recently-formed town police forces defined one site; they divided the town up into police districts and, in time, extracted from these districts statistics about types and rates of crime.<sup>11</sup> Second, the formation of town health boards, which likewise divided the town up into

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<sup>9</sup> Jones and Williamson, p.78.

<sup>10</sup> Their use of this terminology derives from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. I talked in similar terms in 'The Theoretical', above, about fields of visibility and sayability.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Henry Miller, *Papers Relative to the State of Crime in the City of Glasgow*, Glasgow, W. Lang, 1840, cited in Jones and Williamson, p.78. Miller was Superintendent of the Glasgow Police.



districts, produced another set of statistics on illness rates, infant mortality, etc.<sup>12</sup> The third type of site was defined in relation to the spaces of the prison and the workhouse, and focused on the construction of what we might think of as the inmate's 'career', that is to say, the circumstances that led to the person coming into 'vicious courses'.<sup>13</sup> All of these knowledge projects, though, needed the development of statistical techniques to enable them to emerge; this was happening at about the same time, by happy coincidence - one can almost see the human sciences being constructed in front of one's eyes.<sup>14</sup>

Swiftly enough, patterns of crime and of disease, both

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education*, London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862, p.5. There are many writers and theoreticians at this time who concern themselves with the moral and physical condition of the working classes, Kay-Shuttleworth among them; see, for example, Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, London, 1842.

<sup>13</sup> See the following, all of which attempt to develop the notion of a criminal 'career' or 'life-course': Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders, *Fifth Report*, London, 1823; Glasgow Society for repressing Juvenile Delinquency, *Report of the Directors*, Glasgow, 1839; William Beaver Neale, *Juvenile Delinquency in Manchester: its causes and history, its consequences, and some suggestions concerning its cure*, Manchester, 1840.

<sup>14</sup> Hacking, *The Taming of Chance*, puts a strong case for statistics as the discourse without which none of the human sciences can come into being, setting down as it does the modern techniques of calculation in a world that was slowly becoming more and more indeterministic. Hacking argues that the loss of belief in all events as divinely pre-determined required a new set of explanatory categories. Statistics gave us this by allowing us to understand the statistical regularity (and thus governability) of chance.

geographical and historical, could be extracted from the data;<sup>15</sup> it became clear that the overlaps were more striking than the discrepancies: health and crime seemed to exist in an inverse relationship.<sup>16</sup> Just as we saw earlier a series of techniques which actually began to produce the child by detailing it more and more, in the same way these power-knowledge techniques predicated on incidences of crime and disease began to be the parameters through which the character of a class was understood. What is important for our purposes is the notion of a class as an entity with its own inherent qualities connected with health and crime - in the case of the 'dangerous classes', an inherent quality as dangerous to themselves, and, more particularly, to others (especially the 'perishing classes').

We see a clear summary of just what was meant by the notions of 'dangerous' and 'perishing' classes in Mary Carpenter:

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<sup>15</sup> The first Registrar General of England and Wales, William Farr, is famous for his work both on disease and on crime rates, which seem to be the areas in which the discourses we are interested in can surface. See, for example, 'On the Law of Recovery and Dying in Small Pox', *British Annals of Medicine, Pharmacy, Vital Statistics and General Science* 2, 1837, 134-43; 'Opening Address', in *Fourth Session of the International Statistical Conference*, London, 1860.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the prison inspectorate began to see religious and moral education as a way to stem the rising crime rate, especially among the children of the urban poor. See First Report, Parliamentary Papers 1836, xxxv, p.83ff, and Parliamentary Papers 1840 (490) xl.385. A useful account of some of these policy moves is given in Richard Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England', *Past and Present* 49, 1970, 96-119. Conversely, the school inspectors began to sound more like prison inspectors, needing to answer questions like "What is the nature and height of the fence with which the playground is enclosed?" - see *Form of Report for Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools*, Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1840-1, p.3.

“That part of the community which we are to consider, consists of those who have not yet fallen into actual crime, but who are almost certain from their ignorance, destitution, and the circumstances in which they are growing up, to do so, if a helping hand be not extended to raise them; - these form the *perishing classes*: - and of those who have already received their prison brand, or, if the mark has not yet been visibly set upon them, are notoriously living by plunder; - who unblushingly acknowledge that they can gain more for the support of themselves and their parents by stealing than by working, - whose hand is against every man, for they know not that any man is their brother; - these form the *dangerous classes*. Look at them in the streets, where, to the eyes of the worldly man, they all appear the scum of the populace, fit only to be swept as vermin from the face of the earth; - see them in their homes, if such they have, squalid, filthy, vicious, or pining and wretched with none to help, destined only, it would seem, to be carried off by some beneficent pestilence; - and you have no hesitation in acknowledging that these are indeed perishing and dangerous classes.”<sup>17</sup>

‘Dangerousness’, then, was closely related to the possibility of crime, which in turn was seen to flow from the unhealthy conditions in which such classes existed:

“In Manchester and the manufacturing

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<sup>17</sup> Carpenter, p.2-3, italics in original.

districts, as everywhere else, the class of criminals spring chiefly from the most abject, ignorant, improvident and poverty stricken of the population; and the quarters which they occupy are the lowest, the most incommodious and loathesome in the city... Here, then, the narrow, ill-ventilated, and filthy streets, with their stunted and filthy hovels, markedly contrast with the spacious warehouse, the lofty factory, and the public buildings situated in the more airy and commodious quarters of the town; and while such is the uninviting character of the external appearance, it is only exceeded by the confinement, darkness, nakedness, and filth which characterise the thickly populated dwellings of a class who live by a mingled recourse to eleemosynary relief and criminal pursuits, and whose honest or illicit gains are spent with equal improvidence and profligacy... It is from such a region of physical degradation that contagion and pestilence spread abroad, and it is out of such a community that crime has its birth, and principally emanates."<sup>18</sup>

This notion of dangerous classes as a particular danger to health was articulated in relation to those classes who were 'at risk' from them: the 'perishing classes'. Thus was established a mutual relation between two classes who were viewed as having intrinsic qualities or characteristics, as either dangerous or at risk in terms of their health. The theoretical establishment of

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<sup>18</sup> Neale, p.8-10; cited in Jones and Williamson, p.83.

such classes enabled the elaboration of notions of treatment and prevention, frequently understood in terms of public hygiene. Of course, the most obvious such ‘treatment’ or ‘prevention’ was the establishment of compulsory education, which sought to make appropriate interventions that were guarantees of health.<sup>19</sup> In the debates of the time, many saw education as providing an almost magical solution to crime:

“And do you consider that as a means of prevention [sc. of crime], education stands pre-eminent?”

“So much so, that I conceive a well digested system of national education skilfully carried into execution, would in the course of a generation or two almost extirpate crime.”<sup>20</sup>

Others, however, were more circumspect:

“I must further observe, that, though the ultimate effects of education be to diminish crime, the steps by which it works out this change are many, and slowly made, and nothing can be less judicious than to insist upon the

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<sup>19</sup> A kind of sub-discourse existed, which insisted on the necessity of educating the young; they were both fit subjects for a corrective education, and were believed to take home their good lessons and spread useful knowledge most effectively throughout their family. For example, H. S. Tremenheere, an education inspector, reported that not only were children the beneficiaries of their instruction, but also that the parents were “led insensibly to better habits by observing the effects of the school upon their children.” See Parliamentary Papers 1849, xxii, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Select Committee on the State of Education, Parliamentary Papers 1834, ix, p.49, evidence of Professor Pillans. A detailed breakdown of the ‘cost’ of crime, that is to say, the expense of prisons and police, which is explicitly linked to lack of education, is given in R. A. Slaney, *Speech of R. A. Slaney, Esq., M. P., in the House of Commons on Thursday, November 30, 1837 on The State of Education of the Poorer Classes in Large Towns*, London, J. Hatchard, 1837.

diminution of vice as the due and invariable result of elementary instruction.”<sup>21</sup>

As I have suggested already, the growth of the science of statistics in the nineteenth century enabled the police and health boards to notice patterns of disease and patterns of crime, and to conclude that these two must somehow be linked, assuming a topographical link to be evidence of a causal link. This is perhaps the beginning of an understanding of the relation between the individual and the state which emerged by the end of the nineteenth century and which sees an intimate link between the political health of the nation and the ‘health’ of the individual. This is a refinement of an earlier view which, from at least the seventeenth century, had linked the political health of the nation with the condition of the inhabitants of that nation.<sup>22</sup> This refinement, this ‘individualisation’ of the members of the population, seems to be something which relates to a new way of calculating individuals and populations.

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<sup>21</sup> Select Committee, p.221, evidence of the Lord Chancellor. It should be borne in mind that the Lord Chancellor was opposed to compulsory mass education, and thus his playing down of the effects of education on crime may well reflect an overall strategy that was accordingly hostile to the extension of the educational network. Other voices opposed mass education more vehemently; Richard Lloyd, for example, a rector who published many books on the importance of a properly regulated Christian education, believed mass secular education could only inflame the lower orders to rebellion - see his *A Letter to a Member of Parliament*, London, Rivington, 1821.

<sup>22</sup> Keith Tribe, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

The class (and the individual) was now much more thoroughly theorised as having its own particular characteristics, which were thought of very much in the way of a contagion: members of a class almost 'breathed in' their class characteristics from the area they lived in; likewise, nearby individuals and classes were susceptible to any malign influence. How might this 'dangerousness' be combated?

Two 'obvious' strategies were undertaken. First of all, attempts were made to break up the topography that seemed to emit these dangerous characteristics; in particular, known rookeries were broken up.<sup>23</sup> The topography was also altered by attempts to improve the physical conditions under which the labouring poor lived, especially through the provision of clean water and adequate sewerage facilities. The science of sanitary engineering, then, rapidly became of crucial importance, but its 'hygienic' (health) value was of a double character, equating the provision of physical hygiene with a more thoroughgoing 'health' in the population, and in particular in relation to the dangerous and perishing classes. The supply of water on a regular basis to the large cities was an enormous problem, but one which in its

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<sup>23</sup> Two examples will suffice: Jones and Williamson cite the deliberate routing of New Oxford Street in London to break up the notorious area of St. Giles - see also J. J. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Penguin, 1967. A similar tactic led to the decision about where to site Manchester's Central Station (J. Halforth, *pers. comm.*).

solution “enabl[ed] cities of unprecedented size and complexity to develop”. As such, “[t]he real heroes of the age were not the general run of doctors, politicians or businessmen, but a forgotten group of sanitary reformers.”<sup>24</sup>

The urban areas of nineteenth century Britain were still rather dangerous places to live, with frequent outbreaks of diseases which killed thousands. Much energy was expended on sewerage and water-supply systems, as mentioned above, but there were also attempts to remove insidious pollutants. For example, the Health of Towns Association was formed in 1844 to address the problem of factory smoke.<sup>25</sup> Another, less obvious, pollutant derived from the decaying dead. As Cannon notes, in relation to Australia, some cemeteries had to be re-sited:

“as late as the 1880s, Sydney people were still burying their dead in the Devonshire Street cemetery, ‘in the midst of a bustling community’, where in rainy weather ‘slimy and offensive matter’ oozed through the stone walls into Elizabeth Street.”<sup>26</sup>

By 1765, Manchester had inaugurated a system of Police Commissioners for “cleansing and improving the streets”.<sup>27</sup> In so

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Cannon, *Life in the Cities*, Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1975. p.164.

<sup>25</sup> Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Harmondsworth, Pelican, 1968, p.375.

<sup>26</sup> Cannon, p.145ff.

<sup>27</sup> P. J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982, p.158.



doing, Manchester was continuing a mediaeval obsession with keeping streets 'clear of encumbrances' and 'clear of dirt'. In Paris, similar tactics involved "street widening, street straightening, demolition of balconies, projecting oriels, and even occasionally whole buildings."<sup>28</sup> It should be clear, however, that these hygienic tactics also operate in relation to other, more politically dangerous aspects of the health of particular populations.<sup>29</sup>

The second type of strategy used to combat this newly perceived dangerousness was in an area that should come as no surprise to us by now: the pedagogic. There was a subtle shift in what was seen as the rationale for the school, and some of the 'virtues' of monitorialism, such as the ceaseless activity and the lack of a need for contact between teacher and pupil, began to be derogated. It was believed that a new relation between the children of the poor and their schools needed to be constructed, a relationship which would be much more successful at giving children a system of moral values. Jones and Williamson notice precisely the difference between the old style monitorial schools

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<sup>28</sup> M. Girouard, *Cities and People: a Social and Architectural History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, p.65, and see especially chs 12, 14.

<sup>29</sup> A whole series of these sorts of interventions and projects can be glimpsed in Viscount Ingestre (ed.), *Meliora, or Better Times to Come. Being the Contributions of Many Men Touching the Present State and Prospects of Society, Two Vols*, London, Parker, 1852. Ingestre was President of the Society for Improving the Dwellings of the Working Class, founded in 1851.

and what is required of the new schools:

“with Stow’s training system, as with Kay-Shuttleworth’s pauper training school and Carpenter’s ragged and reformatory schools, the quality of the teacher’s relationship with every child within the school was crucial to the mechanism of the school, and the quality of that relationship was seen as conditional upon the quality of the teacher himself. In short, for the mechanism to work it required the teacher to have special skills and attributes.”<sup>30</sup>

The shift is, to all intents and purposes, a small one, but its significance is immense. I would argue that such a change signals the beginnings of modern teaching practice. Children were now accompanied by a plethora of theory as regards their nature, and the best and worst ways to educate them. They were no longer virtual automata who ‘undergo’ teaching and come out on the other side inculcated with useful habits. Such a view of education was no longer possible, and could no longer sit alongside the individual now made visible in ways recognisable to us today. David Stow anticipated modern ‘progressive’ forms of education in his critique of systems like the Madras: “Education is abortive at present. Why? Because it is teaching the head, not

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<sup>30</sup> Jones and Williamson, p.87.

training 'the child'."<sup>31</sup>

### *Schooling and Literacy: Moralisation and Aestheticism*

The teacher and the pupil, then, were suddenly bathed in a new light, and stood in a different relation to one another. Partly this resulted from the perceived failure of older methods of education,<sup>32</sup> and partly it was made possible by new ways of understanding how children may be 'brought up' in crime if interventions were not made. Yet the overriding transformation was one that we may call 'disciplinary'. The notion of how one may effectively discipline individuals has now shifted, such that the responsibility for the calculation of one's own interests and development came to lay with the self, rather than with an entirely external form of surveillance.<sup>33</sup> All of this raised the individual to a new level of importance; in fact, in reversing the

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<sup>31</sup> David Stow, *National Education. Supplement to Moral Education and the Training System, with Plans for Erecting and Fitting Up Training Schools*, Glasgow, W. R. M'Phun, 1839, p.20.

<sup>32</sup> This raises an interesting point: the critique of monitorialism was, in fact, virtually contemporaneous with it, and thus could only make rhetorical claims about its failure. Training systems like Stow's were not, then, a progressive step on from monitorial schools, as a standard history of education would suggest, but were much more about reorganising some of the principles of monitorialism to work in a different register - that is to say, in harmony with a 'reversed axis of individualisation'.

<sup>33</sup> The shift was, of course, gradual, and the new Glasgow system makes use of many of the resources of the system of mutual instruction.

political axis of individualisation it made the individual visible in a completely new way. The focus fell particularly on the teacher, who now had to play a new 'facilitative' role in the child's 'development'. This new role demanded administrative support, and sure enough, there began to be projects for teacher training, or 'normal schools'.<sup>34</sup>

Not only did the teacher's role change, but so did the main objective of the pedagogy. The monitorial system had insisted on literacy as a technique for the inculcation of useful habits, and an activity to fill time; whereas

"the training systems advocated by Stow, Kay-Shuttleworth, Symons and Carpenter, had as their main aims the formation or reformation of a set of dispositions within children, and a development of their moral, intellectual and practical understanding, useful dispositions being, for example, a love of one's brother man, a love of knowledge, a love of cleanliness, a love of labour, and a love of order. And it was precisely through the relationship to the teacher that these aims were to be achieved. Mary Carpenter, for example, makes it clear that the fundamental role of the teacher's love for his pupils lies in its power to form or change their dispositions."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Committee of Council on Education, *Minutes in August and September 1846*, Parliamentary Papers XLV.1, 1847.

<sup>35</sup> Jones and Williamson, p.88; see Carpenter, p.75.

The monitorial systems of Bell and Lancaster had no need of any notion of the child having a realm of 'personal experience'. This idea is a modern invention. What monitorialism required and delivered was a specialised disciplining or regularising of human behaviour. Looked at in this light, we can see that proposals of Bell and Lancaster were for a purpose-built environment to carry out this task. The monitorial schools were a habitus, an organized social space, in which specific skills were formed and became habitual.

A technically organised achievement was required for the acquisition of the monitorial forms of literacy, involving techniques of the body and of specific notations (the formation of letters).<sup>36</sup> We have already noted how the formation of literate abilities in such a habitus were seen as regularising and structuring a student's life. Literacy was a tool to give one's life a shape, and the shape desired was one given by the kind of religious materials that were directly connected to the process of acquiring literacy skills.

David Stow's reform of the monitorial system (his 'Glasgow System') is particularly important for our story. He agreed with the purpose but not the techniques of the monitorial system, objecting that they did not allow it to achieve its goal of the

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<sup>36</sup> We may think of these as abilities; Mauss would call them 'assemblages of actions' - see *Techniques of the Body*, p.76.

'moral equipping' of the urban population. For Stow, the rigid disciplinary techniques of monitorialism and its immediate predecessors were too mechanical and too remote from the other formative environments of the urban young. Because of this remoteness from 'real life', children resisted the teaching they were given and failed to internalise the moral norms of the school.<sup>37</sup>

Stow's two major reforms were aimed at the architecture of the school, and, as I have hinted above, at the role of the teacher. First of all, Stow claimed that all schools needed playgrounds, where pupils would display their real selves; similarly, they must have a gallery, a raised platform of banked seats from which all students could see and be seen by the teacher.<sup>38</sup>

"every school ought to be furnished with a play-ground. Physical exercises and singing are used more as a means to an end than for their own sake - the end being to arrest and secure the attention of the children, and prepare them for receiving the intellectual and moral lessons to which they are called...

Without a play-ground, therefore, there

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<sup>37</sup> See David Stow, *The Training System, the Moral Training School, and the Normal Seminary*, London, Longman, Brown, Green, 1850.

<sup>38</sup> From now on, the architecture of the school becomes a matter of the utmost importance. The precise nature of school architecture is discussed at length, for example in Extracts from Minutes of Committee of Council on Education of 4 January and 15 July 1840, p.13ff. Later on in this document, there is some concern with giving carpenters, smiths, plasterers, and so forth, a proper grounding in school construction - see p.22ff.

cannot be an *approach* to the development of the real character and disposition of the child... and, also, without the gallery principle, there cannot be the patient, full, and dispassionate review of their *play-ground* conduct by the master-trainer."<sup>39</sup>

Stow's second principle lay in the reorganisation of teaching and the teacher: the teacher should take on a new 'personality', and be 'parent, priest and friend'. The monitorial school, with its quasi-military attention to drill, has been transformed into the caring administration of a set of educational experiences. The objectives of the new system were built into the structure of play and classroom interaction, around a new relation (of trust and love) between teacher and child. The origins of progressive schooling are writ large here.

One of the things that we can learn from Stow is that the domain of personal experience, at least for the child (and perhaps for the teacher as well) is not an escape from the norms and disciplines of the school, but is a particular form of them. Disciplinarity is the source of even that most pure and chaste love, the love of teacher for pupil. In addition, it is clear from a comparison of the training texts of Stow with those of Bell or

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<sup>39</sup> Stow, p.47-8. For an account of the architectural changes as moral interventions, see M. Seaborne, *The English School: its Architecture and Organisation 1370-1870*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

Lancaster, that the latter insist on a completely mechanical set of techniques for the acquisition of literacy, whereas the former do not. Yet we must remember how and why these things happen - how a new set of techniques aims at the elaboration of a new set of personal experiences; if we bear this in mind, we can realise that, contrary to common belief, personal experience was not, is not, and never will be, a foundation for the use of literate techniques. It seems much more helpful to suggest that that experience is something formed by and through the use of such techniques. This, I think, is one of the most important claims made in this thesis: the relation between forms of subjectivity and forms of literate techniques is the opposite of what one might intuitively assume - literate techniques are determinant of the possible forms of personal experience.

In Stow's system, children were being gently forced to question and correct their own behaviour without any apparent external discipline. Stow and his like transformed the school, now complete with its playground, into a space of supervised spontaneity and regulated freedom. I would maintain that Stow began to introduce into schools some of the distinctive 'aesthetic' techniques of modernity. In particular, we can notice in Stow the attempt to get the self to 'balance' the self and its drives: a kind of aesthetic self-perfectionism:



“The play-ground, or ‘uncovered school’, as we have already said, permits the superabundant animal spirits, or ‘steam’, to escape, while at the same time it adds to the health of the pupils, affords relaxation, and secures contentment with their other lessons in-doors, without the usual coercion which is necessary when there is no play-ground”<sup>40</sup>

Ian Hunter makes the case that we see in Stow the working out of aestheticism as a *techne* (to use the Foucaultian term) achievable in the classroom.<sup>41</sup> What seems to be happening, as Hunter convincingly puts the case, is that a fairly obscure late-eighteenth century German cult was being inserted into the practices of the schoolroom; the functioning of literary techniques was, however, different for Stow than for us aesthetic moderns. Stow’s system still regarded reading as a way of accessing religious and moral lessons;<sup>42</sup> reading actually took a back seat to the play-ground, which had the function of opening up the pupil for inspection and correction - a function which has devolved back onto the book in the modern era, as I

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<sup>40</sup> Stow, p.192.

<sup>41</sup> Hunter, *Culture and Government*. See especially p.70ff. See also Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968.

<sup>42</sup> So, for example, James Phillips Kay is the author of the following minutes: “Their lordships are, however, strongly of opinion, that no plan of education ought to be encouraged to which intellectual instruction is not subordinate to the regulation of the thoughts and habits of the children by the doctrines and precepts of revealed religion.” Extracts from Minutes of Committee of Council on Education of 4 January and 15 July 1840, p.12.

suggest in Chapter 10.

I am suggesting that this profound shift (what, if we take Hunter's argument seriously, we might regard as occasioning the invention of the 'aesthetic personality') needs to be understood at the level of 'discipline'. New forms of discipline actually produce new forms of human subjectivity: they do not obstruct or militate against them. A quite different view of this shift has been taken by other historians. For example, Mary Sturt suggests that Stow's regime is indicative of a belief in education for its own sake - a kind of triumph of humanitarianism, which leads to the imposition 'from above' of more fulfilling modes of teaching.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, scholars such as E. P. Thompson, Brian Simon and Richard Johnson try to understand the contemporaneous changes that mark the world of education at this time by stressing the continuation of religious norms and 'repressive' discipline; for these historians, the shift to a training system such as Stow's cannot mean anything in terms of cultural or subjective change - that must be achieved outside of the repressive school atmosphere in some idealistic space where the working classes

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<sup>43</sup> Mary Sturt, *The Education of the People*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, esp. p.1-92.

realise their own educational desires.<sup>44</sup> Ian Hunter puts the objection to accounts of this sort:

“[they] assume that education is a manifestation of culture, pictured as the historical reconciliation of an exemplary opposition between the self-realising and the utilitarian, the self-expressive and the normative. They disagree only over whether this universal movement towards the complete development of human capacities has already occurred or has been blocked by a freezing of the dialectic on the side of ‘class cultural control’. However, it seems to be the case that self-realisation and social norms, self-discovery and moral training, are by no means opposed to each other in Stow’s modified version of the pedagogical disciplines. Quite the opposite: it was in the supervised freedom of the playground that moral norms would be realised *through* self-expressive techniques; and it was in this space that the forms of self-discovery organised around the individual would *permit* the realisation of new social norms at the level of the population.”<sup>45</sup>

We can actually think of schools like Stow’s, then, as a habitus in which ‘culture’ is produced, alongside and through ‘the individual’:

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<sup>44</sup> Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*, p.126-276; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, Pelican, 1963, p.385-440; Richard Johnson, ‘Notes on the Schooling of the English Working Class 1780-1850’, in R. Dale, G. Esland and M. MacDonald (eds), *Schooling and Capitalism*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

<sup>45</sup> Hunter, p.38-9, italics in original.

neither of these entities, 'culture' or 'individual', exists outside a particular milieu, a particular set of technical organisations.

Interestingly enough, the teaching of reading was something of a casualty in this move to intervene more completely into the child's educational life. Stow advised against concentrating over much on literacy, because he believed that otherwise parents would quickly remove their children from schools before the real work of moral training was accomplished; parents were likely foolishly to equate 'reading' with 'education'. In addition, Stow worried about the way in which reading keeps children in their seats for such a long time.<sup>46</sup> In concerns of this type we can see the birth of the valorisation of activity in education and in child development. The healthy child is no longer the child who sits still and rote learns.

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<sup>46</sup> David Stow, *The Training System Adopted in the Model Schools of the Glasgow Educational Society; a Manual for Infant and Juvenile Schools, which Includes a System of Moral Training Suited to the Condition of Large Towns*, Glasgow, W. R. McPhun, 1836, p.99-101. See also C. Baker, 'Infants' Schools', in Central Society of Education, *Third Publication*, London, Taylor and Walton, 1839.

### *'Principles' Replace 'Rote Learning'*

The derogation of the rote learning methods of monitorialism gathered pace;<sup>47</sup> and by 1835 we see that the enquiries into the training of pauper children set up by the Poor Law Commissioners stressed the importance of explaining the principles of religion, rather than just learning the precepts by heart.<sup>48</sup> There was a considerable concern with the possibilities of miseducating children; the Select Committee of 1835, for example, concentrated on two areas. First of all, they made digs at what a bad system of education could do for the child; this was an attack both at the 'pathological' homes that many children of the lower orders emerged from, and at existing systems of education, like monitorialism, that were presented, for rhetorical purposes, as their only escape at that time:

“At present a great portion of the population can read and write; and is it not to be apprehended that many of the evils which are dreaded from the diffusion of education are infinitely more probable from the sort of false or mis-education to which the lower

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Carpenter, *Reformatory Schools*, p.153.

<sup>48</sup> James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth and Edward Carleton Tuffnell, *Reports on the Training of Pauper Children*, London, 1841, p.123ff. See also Poor Law Commissioners, *Seventh Annual Report*, Parliamentary Papers XI.201, 1841, who are full of praise for Stow's 'elliptical method' because it makes the child an active learner rather than a passive recipient of knowledge - see especially App. VIII, p.361. Jones and Williamson, p.89, note that the publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge show a similar set of concerns during this period.

classes of the people are exposed, than if an efficient and ameliorated system of education was put in action by the powers of the Government and the people combined? - I have no doubt of it; it has been in everyone's experience discovered that reading is perverted to the purposes of the perusal of the very worst species of publications, and that writing has also been used for extremely doubtful and even criminal purposes; and that a great deal more will be necessary (sic) than these mere instruments, which are capable of that perversion, and which the immoral and the unenlightened are very apt so to pervert."<sup>49</sup>

The second theme noticeable in this report is the doubt about the moral quality of the home, and the belief that such a moral quality could be better supplied by professionals.<sup>50</sup> A vision of a very different sort of future is seen in the evidence of James Simpson to the Committee (we shall presently come upon Simpson as a supporter of Stow):

"I think that the removal of an infant at two years old into the society of its fellows, into what was well called a regulated nursery, is the best disposal of infants, without distinction of

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<sup>49</sup> Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Education in England and Wales, 13 August 1835 (Kerry Report), London, H.M.S.O., p.205.

<sup>50</sup> The school was becoming a perfect, regulated space where a whole host of concerns - aside from education - could be dealt with. So, for example, we see in the Extracts from Minutes of Committee of Council on Education of 4 January and 15 July 1840, p.13ff. a long excursus on how 'healthful' a proposed site for the building of a school should be.

rank.”<sup>51</sup>

Simpson’s evidence suggests that to view this as purely a class issue might be an oversimplification. I suggest that it is far more than that; the complexity of reading interests was forcing people to confront the possibility of new ways of organising society. In particular, new forms of intervention were making visible new forms of the social. New modes of perception were arising; but people like Simpson were still struggling with the forms of codification needed to complete the grid of specification. They did not have long to wait.

Derogation of the existing system, is, of course, a common and popular discursive resource. One of the conditions of possibility for the establishment of a new way of organising education is to demonstrate the fallibility of other systems of schooling. Monitorial schools were mainly derogated for their inability to supply meaning along with the rote lessons; dame schools also got a hard time of it:

“Did you see the books that were used?”

“They use such books as Carpenter’s spelling-book, and Mavor’s spelling-books; and in many cases they just repeat the words after their mistress, which, I suppose, is considered teaching the art of reading... I am quite satisfied that in dame-schools they cannot teach

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<sup>51</sup> Select Committee, p.122.

reading.”<sup>52</sup>

This ‘re-rationalisation’ of the activities of the classroom extended beyond the content of the teaching, however. As we have seen, the space of the school came to be considered in a new way, valorised as a place of development in its own right (if proper use was made of it).<sup>53</sup> Similarly, time became, as Jones and Williamson note, not a negative medium to be filled in any way possible, but a new dimension which needed to be filled and developed in a positive way.<sup>54</sup> Education could now become something much more subtle, something which the mere filling of time could not measure:

“It is common for children to have large tasks to prepare at home... In most cases, on the old and other systems, the schoolmaster simply hears the lessons which the children commit to memory at home: and parents deceive themselves by determining the amount of education their children are receiving, *by the number of books and the length of the lessons* which they have to pore over during a whole

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<sup>52</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Education of the Poorer Classes in England and Wales, 16 August 1838, London, H.M.S.O., p.136. Similar derogations are evident throughout the Report from the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Children, 8 August 1853, London, H.M.S.O.

<sup>53</sup> Many texts apart from Stow share this obsession with the playground as a sphere of moral and intellectual transformation; see, for example, James Simpson, *The Philosophy of Education, with its practical application to a system... of popular education as a national object*, Edinburgh, 1836, p.98-9.

<sup>54</sup> Jones and Williamson, p.89-90. See also James Hole, *“Light, more Light!” On the Present State of Education Amongst the Working Classes of Leeds, and How it Can Best Be Improved*, London, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860.



evening.”<sup>55</sup>

We see, in this discovery of new areas of life to valorise and into which it was possible to intercede, a new political rationality, which now began to aim at the maximisation of the abilities of the citizen: the elicitation of all that can be elicited. This change was a subtle and a gradual one, but it is very noticeable here. The continuity with monitorialism lay in wanting to push large numbers of children through the system and subject them to a single regime of care which could mould them into the sorts of individuals society desired - a tactic we can refer to as a governmental strategy of ethical individualisation. Ian Hunter spots the paradox:

“The new organisation of the popular school, in which the abolition of coercion and the encouragement of self-expression would permit a profusion of individual characters to show themselves, was at the same time a mechanism for subjecting these characters to new general norms of development. The playground, which provided the space in which children might manifest ‘their true character and dispositions... free and unconstrained’, was also the prophylactic space in which these characters and dispositions could be moulded according to new social norms embodied in the ‘moral observation’ of

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<sup>55</sup> Stow, p.46-7, italics in original.

the teacher.”<sup>56</sup>

### *Education as Discipline: New Technologies of the Self*

At the level of an assertion, the above argument may well be cogent. But why does an explanation of the development of schooling and the role of literacy which privileges disciplinarity make more sense than one which describes events in terms of progress, humanity, or the needs of capital? The beginnings of an answer can be perhaps be given from a reading of an important book by Thomas Laqueur.<sup>57</sup> Laqueur argues explicitly against an analysis of Sunday Schools (the turn of the century predecessors of the monitorial and the Glasgow system schools) as middle-class institutions designed to make the working classes submit to the logic of new forms of workplace organisation.<sup>58</sup> Laqueur does not deny that such schools attempted to inculcate in working class children new norms of orderliness, punctuality, cleanliness, conduct, literacy, and so forth, which equipped them for factory life (among other forms of ‘life’). However, he claims that they

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<sup>56</sup> Hunter, p.41.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976.

<sup>58</sup> A view found in E. P. Thompson and Brian Simon *inter alia*. See the discussion above.

were neither a middle class 'plot' - the forms of philanthropy and evangelism they embodied were firmly rooted in working class culture - nor did their rise coincide geographically or temporally with the spread of factory production. It is worth quoting some of his argument at length:

“Sunday schools began at a time when the factory system had scarcely gained a foothold and grew to contain millions of children before the factory became the dominant organisation of production. They were as much a rural as an urban phenomenon, as much part of an agrarian as of an industrial economy. Furthermore... Sunday school teachers were predominantly working class, funds often came from the working class community, and indeed the lower orders responded as eagerly to the philanthropic surge of the late eighteenth century as did other strata of society. The great majority of Sunday schools were neither the direct product of industrialism nor of the middle class.”<sup>59</sup>

Secondly, Laqueur maintains that the new norms of literacy, cleanliness, temperance, and so on, were not religious or moral ideologies forced onto the working classes by the middle classes; rather, a variety of social and religious practices, given new scope by the (disciplinary) organisation of the school, enabled the new norms to appear. Literacy, cleanliness, and so on, are not

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<sup>59</sup> Laqueur, p.216.

simply imposed from above via the school, but actually arise out of it.

Laqueur goes on to describe the precise ordering of time and space of the schools,<sup>60</sup> but insists that there is not a discontinuity between these new forms of social organisation and regulation, and the longstanding forms of care of the self, particularly the Christian pastoral. Laqueur, then, argues that the new practices of the schools have a double aspect: on the one hand, they satisfy new concerns about the moral and physical health of the individual, who is now available for a new kind of inspection of self; on the other, they satisfy something like a ritual of observance, linking care of the self to care of the soul.

We notice a recurrent theme: religious mores are not an obstacle to the development of certain forms of sociality: in fact, they may often be an incitement to it. The more systematic forms of social organisation that were now available may well have been helped along by an ancient discursive resource. The transformation of Christian notions of care of the self into something like the modern artillery of disciplinary self-regulation should not, by now, surprise us; and we can see something of a specific grid of transformations taking place in the domain of reading.

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<sup>60</sup> Laqueur, p.220-5.

Reading as a skill stood at the centre of this 'transformation'; or perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of a 'transcendence'. We have already noted how within the Sunday school movement, certain spokespersons such as Hannah More and Sarah Trimmer maintained a distinction between reading (which they were prepared to have taught in Sunday schools) and writing and arithmetic (which were more jealously guarded skills). Simon and Thompson again portray this as a kind of religious obscurantism, an ideological decision with its roots in maintaining political hegemony.<sup>61</sup> However, Laqueur's point is that the majority of Sunday schools took little notice of the dispute and continued to teach all three; while even the conservatives were happy for this teaching to happen during restricted parts of the week.<sup>62</sup> In fact, it seems clear from Laqueur, and also from Margaret Spufford, that what was at issue here was not cultural hegemony, but an attempt to maintain a long-standing distinction between reading as a 'devotional

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<sup>61</sup> Simon, p.132-3; Thompson, p.389.

<sup>62</sup> Laqueur, p.124-6.

practice' and writing (and arithmetic) as a secular art.<sup>63</sup>

In practice, however, such distinctions between devotional practice and secular arts became impossible to maintain. The insertion of reading into a transformed pedagogical set of discourses enabled it to become more than simply a devotional technology; new techniques of social regulation and transformation allowed it to link up to the child's attributes as future citizen, to his or her health and criminality (for these have become the obsessions of the age, as we have already seen).

However, the old forms of regulation of the body did not go away; it is rather the case that a whole new set of technologies of discipline were overlaid onto a space that was already saturated with discipline. However, the precise detailings of achievement that were being constructed at this time are very much more recognisable to the modern analyst. For example, in reading, government regulations were such that children in schools were divided into three classes of achievement, first, second and third; each class was divided in turn into a series of

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<sup>63</sup> Margaret Spufford, 'First Steps in Literacy: the Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest, Seventeenth Century Spiritual Autobiographies', *Social History* 4, 1979, 407-35. The distinction also holds up in France; see Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, p.76ff. In mid-eighteenth-century Scotland, a proposal was made that Catholic children should not be taught these 'secular arts' unless they attended Church services conducted by a Presbyterian minister. There seems little doubt that writing and arithmetic, by virtue of being thought of as secular, were inherently more problematic than reading. See John Mason, 'Charity Schools in the Eighteenth Century', *Scottish Historical Review* xxxiii, 1954, 1-13, p.8.

sections, which were themselves split up into subdivisions.<sup>64</sup> The child was now precisely located by these more and more exact forms of specification. The physical space of the child was also regulated more and more precisely. There was an attempt to set up a regulated amount of space per child, and a properly regulated construction of the desk; the Committee of Council on Education made extensive use of "General Observations on the Construction and Arrangement of School-Rooms, &c, &c", published by the National Society:

*"General Rules for fitting up School-rooms -*

1st. The space or passage between a form and the next desk is one foot: 2d. The horizontal space between a desk and its form is three inches: 3d. The breadth of a desk is nine inches: 4th. The height of a desk is 28 inches; the height of a form is 16 inches: 5th Every child, being seated upon his form, occupies a space of 18 inches in length of the desk: 6th. The passage between the walls and the ends of the forms and desks is from five to six feet... The leg should rest easily on the ground, the fore-leg and thigh forming at the knee nearly a right angle."<sup>65</sup>

In addition regulations were laid out for the dormitory

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, with Appendices and Plans of School Houses, Part II, 1839-40, p.20. The division was derived from the Classification System of the Rotterdam Poor School in the Lombard Straat.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes, pp.6, 8.

arrangements in the orphan house:

“These wards contain accommodation for 80 boys in single beds; but among the youngest boys some would sleep two in a bed, and thus 100 boys would sleep in the four rooms.”<sup>66</sup>

The constant supervision of these dormitories was made possible by the teacher sleeping in an adjoining room which had a window on to the dormitory. A series of apparently petty disciplinary tactics; yet a series of tactics which, I have tried to maintain, we should take very seriously indeed as producing the conditions under which social life, in the forms we know it, can exist at all.

I have spent some time in trying to dispose of a theory of change which is monocausal; I have argued that reorganisations in educational practice, with reading and literacy skills frequently acting as a vector of power in such reorganisations, were not simply a matter of calculating how the working classes can be fitted out to take part in capitalism. What I am trying to do instead is to trace out how popular education and literacy were transformed in relation to the family, to health and morality, and to crime, as part of the formation of a new domain of ‘the

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes, p.22.



social'<sup>67</sup> which allowed the possibility of a series of regulatory interventions into the lives of targeted populations.

We have already examined some of David Stow's ideals for his Glasgow system. In particular, we noted how his insistence on the teacher as a sympathetic companion of the child can be read as a redirection of the pastoral ideal into a just-forming area of 'the social' - something Hunter describes as governed by a voluntaristic Christian philanthropy.<sup>68</sup> The concerns of Kay-Shuttleworth, although directed at exactly the same area of 'the social', approached it from the perspective of the state's responsibility for its subjects, both in terms of their 'health' and in terms of their 'good order'. For Kay-Shuttleworth, education was like public order or the water supply - "too vast, or too complicated, or too important to be intrusted [sic] to voluntary associations."<sup>69</sup> We see with a man like Kay-Shuttleworth the education of the working classes firmly emerging as a legitimate object of governmental knowledge, along with a whole host of other legitimate objects: health, literacy, criminality,

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<sup>67</sup> The term 'the social' is used to designate those new areas of life which are becoming objects of new forms of regulatory practice. I also mean to distinguish this usage from the usual totalising designations such as 'society'. See Henriques et al, *Changing the Subject*, p.106-7 for a justification of such terminology. Gilles Deleuze makes some schematic remarks on this new territory in 'The Rise of the Social', foreword to Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, while some of Donzelot's more recent work bears explicitly on this topic - see his *L'Invention du social*.

<sup>68</sup> Hunter, p.52.

<sup>69</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education*, p.451.

temperance, and so forth. An expanding web of social statistics had begun to show the interrelation of these domains and create the possibility of a new area of intervention and regulation: an area we now think of as 'social welfare'.

I have described above how the splitting up of the town into various areas, which were then the responsibility of police and health 'boards', created the possibility for understanding interrelations between these different areas of life to be constructed, especially in the form of the statistical correlation. Kay-Shuttleworth's biography shows him to have been a man well placed to construct for himself these sorts of ideas about relations and dependencies between different domains of the social. He was a founder-member of the Manchester Statistical Society, one-time Chief Public Health Officer of Manchester, an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, and, from 1839, the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education. In his dealings with the different sorts of agencies which began to 'map out' the city, he was part of the project of understanding health, literacy, and other concerns of the social, through 'moral statistics', which were beginning to exert a new kind of control by imposing forms

of normativity on social life.<sup>70</sup>

Whereas for Stow, the monitorial system had failed because its system of mutual instruction did not replace the (potentially dangerous) 'sympathy of companionship' to be found in the child's life outside the school, for Kay-Shuttleworth, the monitorial system did not make sense because it dealt with only the intellectual side of the child, and did not take into account the now-burgeoning knowledge about those other contiguous areas - the child's medical, social and moral circumstances.<sup>71</sup> Both, however, saw an answer in a kind of re-registering of the techniques of pastoral care onto those which objectified the population in a new way, in terms of their moral and physical health.

Although David Stow sketched out a few ideas as to the training of the new personality that was required to run his system, the sympathetic teacher, it was Sir James Kay-

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<sup>70</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth is just one name among many in this headlong project to collect statistics and through them to come to know the population better, and thus to bring it within the orbit of government more fully. About the same time, for example, we see the first publications of the Statistical Societies of London and of Manchester, who both concerned themselves to a large extent with these 'moral statistics'. Hacking's *The Taming of Chance* is an invaluable aid to understanding this new domain of public and private life.

<sup>71</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth also concerned himself with the relations between the economic needs of the community - the pros and cons of free trade, the cost of labour, etc - and how these related to the moral and physical condition of the workforce. Paul Q. Hirst argues that the making of such calculations to maintain a certain standard of 'civilisation' inaugurates 'the social'. See his 'The Genesis of the Social', *Politics and Power* 3, 1981, 67-83.

Shuttleworth who put this training on a formal setting. The Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education (see above) set out the techniques for the production of these new teachers. Between the ages of 13 and 18, the best pupils were apprenticed to school masters, and received an honorarium. At 18, the pupil-teachers would compete for Queen's Scholarships for two years training in the special training colleges. The whole system was brought under the jurisdiction of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, who were to examine the trainees at the end of each year of apprenticeship and award the certificates, which determined the salary level of the newly qualified teacher.

In addition to these general governmental strategies aimed at improving the lot of the master, Kay-Shuttleworth set up his own Normal School at Battersea, which was

“intended to be an institution, in which every object was subservient to the *formation of the character of the schoolmaster*, as an intelligent Christian man entering on the instruction of the poor, with religious devotion to his work.”<sup>72</sup>

Kay-Shuttleworth derived much of the organisation of Battersea from De Fellenberg and Vehrli's school for training schoolmasters for the poor at Hofwyl in Switzerland, which he visited. He began

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<sup>72</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods*, p.399, italics in original.

by

“select[ing trainees] from the classes immediately in contact with the people, and generally from children of the manual-labour class... ensuring an identity of interest and harmonious sympathies.”<sup>73</sup>

The school itself sought to instil a love of good habits, such as industry and cleanliness, and adhered to a strict timetable which ran from 5.15 a.m. until 9.20 p.m. Most interestingly, however, it inserted into the training the figure of the Principal, as a kind of ethical exemplar of what the teacher was to become; thus the relationship between the trainee teacher and the Principal was also one of ‘love’:

“The Principal should be *wise as a serpent*, while the gentleness of his discipline, and his affectionate solicitude for the well-being of his pupils, should encourage the most unreserved communications with him... He should be most accessible, and unwearied in the patience with which he listens to confessions and inquiries... there should be no such severity in his tone of rebuke as to check that confidence which seeks guidance from a superior intelligence. As far as its relation to the Principal only is concerned, every fault should be restrained and corrected by a conviction of the pain and anxiety which it causes

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<sup>73</sup> Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth, *Memorandum on Popular Education*, London, Longmans, 1868, p.8.

to an anxious friend, rather than by the fear of a too jealous authority. Thus conscience will gradually be roused by the example of a master, respected for his purity, and loved for his gentleness, and inferior sentiments will be replaced by motives derived from the highest source."<sup>74</sup>

Literacy and reading instruction have become fundamentally transformed by these moves. Previously, reading instruction had existed as an instrument in the inculcation of useful habits. Learning to read had operated as a vector of power because reading had borne an almost transparent relation to salvation. There had always been the possibility of heresy, of course, although heretical discourses were not what the great school reformers were particularly interested in. With Stow and Kay-Shuttleworth, the pedagogical space was recast as something more - a space of moral improvement (and soon, of course, physical improvement, now that the playground has given the teacher another area to inspect). The relationship between the teacher and the pupil was transformed also, into one of gentle correction, powered by something like moral emulation. A new pedagogical system was constructed in which "new social norms for the government of the population could surface inside the

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<sup>74</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods*, p.405, italics in original.

formation of the individual conscience.”<sup>75</sup> Teaching to read, learning to read, now had become vectors of a different sort of social power, now began to bring with them new possibilities for self-formation and self-transformation: literacy became the tool *par excellence* through which the child could learn about him- or herself, check him- or herself, make calculations about the self, and ultimately change the self.

### *Universalising Moral Training*

I have suggested that a change of the utmost importance in terms of ushering school practice into a state of modernity has taken place. From now on, the discourse is relatively stable. However, it is worth stressing that Kay-Shuttleworth’s development of the form of modern pedagogy did not take a grip immediately. He was himself perhaps aware of the lukewarm response his measures would generate, and how the Inspectorate he proposed would have humble beginnings, with only a few men serving a multitude of schools. In addition, as long as schooling was not compulsory, such a reorganisation of the morality of a class would necessarily be piecemeal. Indeed, we see the beginnings of a call

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<sup>75</sup> Hunter, p.64.

for universal education, but at this point in time it was still politically and economically unthinkable; in particular, the element of compulsion involved in such schooling plans did not coincide with contemporaneous ideas about individual freedom characteristic of the liberal forms of government prevalent in the West. Another reversal was therefore required before mass education could become the responsibility of government: and I shall begin to deal with such a shift at this point.

First of all, it seems fair to say that a new set of discursive concerns did arise to push schooling this extra step; it was not simply the case that concerns about the moral and physical health of the lower classes become more pressing. In fact, it seems that the discourse linking the necessity of education in the eradication of crime just disappeared. Moving centre stage seem to be a series of concerns with how well individuals were fitted out to take part in a variety of institutions, ranging from the macro (representative democracy) to the micro (friendly societies, mechanics' institutes and the like). Skills like reading were recast in a relation of instrumentality to such overarching social imperatives; yet once again, the concern seems to be less with the efficient functioning of capitalism (although it would be an exaggeration to say that such discourses were entirely absent) than with the fulfilment



and maximisation of the citizen. The equation became simply one of giving children (literacy and other) skills in the schools which they could then use in subsequent institutional groupings.

The school was no longer part of a range of calculations which included the workhouse, the prison - a network of social problems. It was transformed by now being grouped with organisations like consumer cooperatives - a network of social facilitation. Literacy, the instrument of the schools, moved along with them to become enmeshed in discourses of facilitation and maximisation rather than of control and limitation. The school now became firmly established in a relay of maximising institutions, and demands for compulsory education often referred to the necessity of improving the entire system of which schooling now formed a part; so, for example, citizens needed a good education to enable them to take part fully in mechanics' institutes, which was both taking part in, and enabling them to take further part in, representative democracy.<sup>76</sup> In addition, however, there was the recognition that something needed to be done above and beyond the mechanics' institutes and the other sites of literacy; it was coming to be recognised that the mechanics' institutes were serving merely as cheap reading

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<sup>76</sup> Of course, there were still pockets of resistance to the extension of education to the masses. The situation was almost identical in France leading up to Guizot's 1833 Act, and again leading up to the Jules Ferry law of 1882; see Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, p.118ff.

rooms for the middle classes, and not intervening effectively enough on their real targets:

“Mechanics’ institutes and occasional lectures have little effect in prolonging the period of instruction of the working classes. They are chiefly of use to the middle classes.”<sup>77</sup>

“The institution [sc. the mechanics’ institutes] has continued to exist as a cheap reading-room, where several newspapers are taken in; but the ordinary members are in general not working men, but small shopkeepers.”<sup>78</sup>

A second important shift also took place. As I mentioned above, there was a perceived problem in imposing education on the free citizen of a liberal state. Lawrence Stone, exemplifying this tendency, argues that the English tradition was one of laissez-faire, with a preference for strong local government but with a weak executive.<sup>79</sup> The English state was thus slow to move on compulsory mass education, and when it did, it merely grafted a state supported system onto the existing church system. By contrast, Italy and Russia embarked on massive programmes of

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<sup>77</sup> Royal Commission to inquire into State of Popular Education in England. Answers to Circular Questions. Parliamentary Papers 1861, (2794 - v), xxi, Pt.v.1, p.16, evidence of Edward Ackroyd.

<sup>78</sup> Royal Commission, p.84. Evidence of Rev. J. W. Blakesley.

<sup>79</sup> Stone, *Literacy and Education*, p.96. See also W. L. Sargant, ‘On the Progress of Elementary Education’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society of London* xxx, 1867, 80-137, who maintains that “it is always unwillingly that the English submit to forcible interference” (p.123).

state intervention from the 1870s which saw the literacy levels in their countries raised from lower than that of England in 1660 to levels comparable with those of the most advanced countries in the world in virtually no time at all.<sup>80</sup> However, in England, we notice plenty of resistance to the idea of imposing any system on the people, although clearly this was on the political agenda as early as 1834:

“I do not think the habits of our people would suit any compulsory system; the system of voluntary subscription is now generally established; it is working well, and every year working better.”<sup>81</sup>

“Suppose the people of England were taught to bear it [sc. compulsory education], and to be forced to educate their children by penalties, education would be made absolutely hateful in their eyes, and would speedily cease to be endured. They who have argued in favour of such a scheme from the example of a military government like that of Prussia, have betrayed, in my opinion, great ignorance of the nature of Englishmen. But even if measures far short of decided compulsion were taken to induce the poor to educate their children, such as holding out advantages of imposing disqualifications, my opinion is, that the same consequences would follow, namely, making education unpopular, and so retarding its progress

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<sup>80</sup> Stone, p.97.

<sup>81</sup> Select Committee on the State of Education, Parliamentary Papers 1834, ix, p.191. Evidence of the Bishop of London.

incalculably.”<sup>82</sup>

The difficulty was resolved in an astonishingly quick reversal: first of all, no doubt the new role of the schools as sites of maximisation enabled a reconsideration of what they were doing as less an imposition on the individual, and more a necessary prerequisite to give him or her the wherewithal to take part in modern life.<sup>83</sup> It became possible to represent education and literacy skills as a right: the State was seen as having an obligation as regards its citizens in this respect. The following passage perhaps sums up some of these concerns:

“No one now pretends that ability to read or write is any assurance of honesty or manual skill or sobriety. No one pretends that the provision of elementary education absolves the legislature from all further attention to evils which are within the reach of legislation, and are as hostile to the common weal as the prevailing ignorance. Skill in reading and counting will not protect its possessor against mischief that is wrought by overcrowding, by exhausting labour in childhood and youth, by unbounded temptations to get drunk, by inveterate traditions and class habits of self-

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<sup>82</sup> Select Committee, p.221. Evidence of the Lord Chancellor. A typical defence of maintaining a kind of ‘free market’ in education is given by Edward Baines, *Education Best Promoted by Perfect Freedom, Not By State Endowments. With An Appendix, Containing Official Returns of Education, In 1818, 1833, and 1851*, London, John Snow, 1854.

<sup>83</sup> A brief discussion of a similar discursive shift in France is given in Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, p.73-7.

indulgence. But it will give the man a better chance. Reading furnishes him with the instrument by which he may know how the world fares outside his narrow penfold. Writing and counting enable him to manage his own small affairs with order and confidence. We make no transcendental claims for primary instruction and what it can do. The influence of its effective diffusion would always have to be expressed in very homely terms. But these homely terms cover large spaces in the art of more orderly living.”<sup>84</sup>

In addition, the concern with the international competitiveness of England in commercial endeavours became paramount. In fact, we also see this concern in John Morley’s text; his worries about the number of children who fail in their reading examinations was couched in terms of how low the English standards are anyway by comparison with foreign standards:

“We should never allow ourselves to forget what Mr. Mundella told the House of Commons in 1870, that the English sixth standard (in the Revised Code, not the New Code), our highest, is below the lowest Saxon, Prussian, or Swiss standard even for country schools.”<sup>85</sup>

Many of the arguments in favour of making mass education compulsory arose from ideas about how the education of the

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<sup>84</sup> John Morley, *The Struggle for National Education*, London, Chapman and Hall, 1873, p.113, cited in Jones and Williamson, p.104.

<sup>85</sup> Morley, p.25.

masses was the only way to guarantee the safety of the nation. Sargant, for example, pointed out how the better-educated side tended to win in wars: in the 1860s the North beat the South in the U. S. civil war, and Prussia beat Austria.<sup>86</sup> Similar notions were current in France in the 1880s as they prepared to take a similar step. Once compulsory education in Britain was established, the governmental reviews of its progress, which were, of course, almost exclusively conducted around literacy skills, concerned themselves obsessively with international comparisons.<sup>87</sup>

Joseph Kay, too, was very conscious of the international context of educating the young. We see him very worried indeed about the number of young people on the streets of Manchester and Salford who were doing nothing, and he claimed that they would inevitably be drawn into crime; he contrasted this situation with the excellent methods for keeping children off the streets in the rest of Europe (especially Germany), particularly those methods that educated children at the same time; and he continued:

“To leave them thus neglected [sc. educationally] is to deteriorate the moral and physical condition of a great part of our people and our race; to

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<sup>86</sup> Sargant, *Progress of Elementary Education*, p.93.

<sup>87</sup> See Royal Commission to inquire into Working of Elementary Education Acts (England and Wales), *Final Report*, Parliamentary Papers 1888, xxxv.1.

injure the physical condition of our town populations; to breed moral disease and political danger in England, the heart of our vast Anglo-Saxon empire; to fill our gaols and penal settlements; to prepare audiences for the demagogues in times of gluts and depression of trade; to render such times times of grave political danger, and to make our cities, instead of being the schools of Christian civilisation, the nurseries of disaffection and of crime.”<sup>88</sup>

As early as the 1830s, these sorts of comparative statements about the various education systems of Europe were made. The Central Society of Education’s publications are a good source of information about this obsession, which seems always to tread a thin line between an admiring fascination with foreign systems of education and what they achieve, and a horror at the way in which foreigners run their countries. Prussia is particularly interesting in this regard, because it was regarded as having an excellent education system which achieved all those things we in Britain desired; yet many writers inveighed against the ‘mechanical’ nature of Prussian schools and society, where

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<sup>88</sup> Joseph Kay, ‘On the Comparative Conditions of Children in English and Foreign Towns’, in Alfred Hill (ed.), *Essays upon Educational Subjects read at the Educational Conference of June 1857*, London, Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857.

“education is police... It is military muster and parade!”<sup>89</sup> The production of disciplinary educational techniques, for British liberal democracy, was clearly problematic.<sup>90</sup>

This chapter has been necessarily dense; I have maintained that the transformations occurring in the period from about 1830 to about 1870 are of the utmost importance in understanding modern school practices. We see an abundance of significant innovations. First of all, the examination was fine-tuned: every individual has now become material for a dossier, an apparently boring bureaucratic technique, but one which completely altered the calculability of the individual. Next, schooling was transformed: the child became an object of a set of techniques aiming at the maximisation of every aspect of life, and at the ‘balancing of the drives’; the teacher became someone who could ‘love’ the child. This love of teacher for child was extorted in the service of the amplification of capacities. To a casual observer, the movement to moralisation appears to be guided by an

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<sup>89</sup> Reverend Richard Winter Hamilton, *The Institutions of Popular Education. An Essay: to which the Manchester Prize was Adjudged*, London, Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1845, p.153.

<sup>90</sup> A good example of this is Thomas Wyse, *On the Present State of Prussian Education*, in Central Society of Education, *Third Publication*, London, Taylor and Walton, 1839. G. R. Porter is interested in comparing education systems, and also wheels in the other great obsession of the age, crime; see his *Statistics of Crime and Education in France*, in Central Society of Education, *First Publication*, London, Taylor and Walton, 1837.



inexorable logic, giving privilege to something like 'humanitarianism': I would suggest that this movement is, rather, made possible by things as banal as the systems by which health boards and police boards decide to carve up the city. The ways in which they made classes visible enabled projects like Stow's and Kay-Shuttleworth's to be enunciated. Literacy and literacy skills took a back seat for a moment - they were subordinated to the establishment of these new forms of knowing the individual. The child was inextricably caught up in this web: even the playground became a place for supervision, amplification, maximisation - it was (and is) never a place for escape.

Health and crime were the obsessions of this period, but they do not seem to be the motors that propelled these new educational forms to become compulsory. A series of discourses which privileged international comparisons seem to do this, but what was most crucial was the transformation of the provision of education from an imposition to a right of the individual and a duty of the state. Latour would call this transformation a 'translation'; it is clear that there was a dramatic reappraisal of what would best serve the health of the nation.

Again, I would stress that the key to describing these changes can be found in the notion of governmentality: what we are witnessing here is a maximisation of the population.

However, it should be clear that governmentality is not the imposition of an idea, but a collection of disparate interests, brought together by chance or by a sudden convergence of interests. One of these areas of interest is in a newly invented area, an area I have called the social. Crime and health may have been of less importance in the final push towards compulsory education, but it is clear that never again will the child be understood in ways that do not link together knowledge from a complex of sites, educational, medical, criminological, economic, and, of course, psychological.

## 8: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GAZE

“L’Angleterre victorienne commençait à douter d’elle-même. Un peuple d’amateurs était obligé de reconnaître qu’il était mal équipé pour tenir tête à un peuple de professionnels.”<sup>1</sup>

What was the means by which England was to render itself internationally competitive? How could the English ‘professionalise’ themselves? Of course, educating people according to the position that they were to fill in later life was a start, but where were the bureaucrats who would put this system of education on a rational footing, who could make the art of amplifying capacities a science?

At this point, we must begin to consider how reading was reorganised by the gradual intrusion of the human sciences. The new social interventions which took place in and through institutions like the school (as well as the workhouse, the prison, the juvenile court, and so forth), institutions like welfare, could now begin to surface through practices like reading; at the same time, these new interventions used institutions like schools as a lens through which to view children, and used the practice of

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<sup>1</sup> E. Halévy.

reading as an instrument of assessment. Reading became something of a mixture between a 'surface of emergence' and a 'grid of specification' for the discourses of social intervention, but it was also transformed in serving this purpose. How did this happen?

The foundation of big institutions, like the school or the juvenile court, served as what we might think of as a scientific instrument for disciplines like psychology. These institutions formed a lens through which individuals could pass, perhaps for the first time, beyond a threshold of visibility: that is to say, such institutions established a regime, or field, of visibility. The job of the disciplines, of the human sciences, was to provide conditions under which the now visible behaviours could be codified. This dual technique of establishing a field of visibility and a means of codification of behaviour, together form a grid of perception.<sup>2</sup> The codification of individuals, the task of the new sciences of man, could take place primarily at the level of the case history, the file, the dossier - those great nineteenth-century inventions for rendering into a manageable form the life of the 'inmate'. The individual became 'inscribed' into the disciplines through a variety of apparently very dull bureaucratic methods of representation; dull methods which were able to

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<sup>2</sup> See Lynch, 'Discipline and the material form of images: an analysis of scientific visibility'.

transform individuals into diagrams, tables, measurements.<sup>3</sup>

These twin processes are the processes by which a science can operate; science must first of all render phenomena visible, and then it must find some way of making these phenomena representable, so they can be analysed. The science of psychology performed the same act with reading, which had to be made comprehensible by being transferred to a different register: a register of numbers, graphs and statistics, a register where having been thus distilled, it could be the more quickly assessed. Reading ability could become a 'real' indicator of something within the child, an attribute which is a window onto the child's success or failure: is the child advanced or retarded? A series of questions of this type slowly became askable with the irruption of the human sciences. Such questions became the staple diet of academic publications. Specialist psychology reading journals were curiously delayed, however: the American publication *Reading Teacher* was perhaps the first to appear, in 1947. Up until that point, the psychology of reading was debated in more general psychology and education journals. When specialist journals did appear, they were typical of the discourse: they concerned themselves with failure.

Failure is an important concern in the development of

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<sup>3</sup> On this process in psychology, see Rose, *Governing the Soul*, p.132-50. On the idea of inscription and inscription devices see Latour, 'Visualization and cognition'.

Western societies, and is a topic which perhaps deserves a more extended treatment. The construction of psychological discourses has regularly been achieved in relation to the problem of pathology and failure; the normal is, quite simply, that which does not need to be regulated, that which does not fail.<sup>4</sup> In psychology, the normal does not come first, because the normal is not the problem; the abnormal is what has pride of place, the normal being nothing other than the absence of abnormality. It is interesting that in the build up to compulsory mass education in 1870, it was the statistics of failure that seemed to carry the most weight in terms of justifying a fundamental change in educational practice. Failure is, of course, anathema to the advocate of maximising every aspect of the body and the mind. Crime could fade into the background as the most important consideration of government; it can become just one failure among many once a whole constellation of pathologies began to be mapped out.

The 'amplification of capacities' was and is accomplished against the backdrop of knowing one's weaknesses, whether as an individual or as a nation. In the late 1860s, it was the business of government to know the reading public as intensely as possible. Statistics were presented for England/Wales and

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<sup>4</sup> See Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex*.

Scotland, dividing up readers into the six standards of reading which formed the basic structure of the examinations in reading. The lowest standard was to be able to read a narrative in monosyllables, the highest a short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, "or other modern narrative".<sup>5</sup> Results were given for students attending day and night schools, for each standard; the results were presented in the form of the percentage who fail. Somehow, this has become self-evidently the way to assess how successful a system is; failure is a better guide to success than success is. (Actually, the situation for reading did not look too bad - only about ten per cent failed overall, whereas more than a quarter failed the equivalent examinations in arithmetic). We suddenly had access to a new way of panicking; so James Kay-Shuttleworth became most concerned when he examined the patterns of failure, and saw that there were more failures in the reading examination for 1866 than there were for 1863-4.<sup>6</sup> Almost as soon as they were introduced, the statistics produced from the examinations connected with literacy took on an extraordinary truth value. The importance of these figures lay not least in that they were used to make decisions about whether schools should receive grants or not.

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<sup>5</sup> Return of Time during which Examinations of Revised Code, Parliamentary Papers 1867-8, (54), liii.165.

<sup>6</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth, *Memorandum on Popular Education*, p.18.

So reading simultaneously faced a number of ways. First, it formed one of the objects of burgeoning psychological assessment - reading performance was one of those areas of 'behavioural adjustment' that psychologists could begin to investigate. Second, it actually formed the instrumental means by which assessment could take place - the child needs to be able to read many of the 'tests' to which he or she is subjected to engage in them at all. Third, it provided a simple representational means of getting the desired information across - the child could read up on the information which can later be tested. By learning to read, the child is constituting him- or herself as a legitimate object of further testing, and propels him- or herself into an intertextual world where examination, surveillance, assessment, all become unavoidable. Fourth, in so constituting him- or herself as literate, a number of less formally regulated arenas may be opened up for the child - s/he could learn to fulfil him or herself, perhaps by becoming an



aesthetic personality: a lover of good literature, for example.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the status of reading has changed subtly. Reading has moved from being virtually synonymous with education, to being not nearly enough to constitute a thorough education. A more comprehensive education was what the modern liberal state demanded. This move was evident in Stow's attempts to reform education; it had become common sense by the 1880s, when the Royal Commission reported on the workings of the new elementary school system.<sup>8</sup> The appendices of this report devoted more time to reading than to any other subject, but the main body of the report was full of witnesses to the fact that education is more than just reading. I would maintain that we can see in this report the signs of some confusion over a change that is taking place. The change is in the nature of education and the kinds of intervention into an individual's life an education can reasonably make. At this point, there was some difficulty in

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<sup>7</sup> The topic of Hunter's *Culture and Government*. It is worth pointing out that in no way does this constitute an 'escape' from disciplinarity; in fact, such a form of personality can only be formed within such disciplinary projects. There is no 'wild' reader, potentially untouched by disciplinary literary skills - but there are unintended consequences of disciplinarity, fissures in the geological slice which it may or may not be worth occupying (depending on our ethical substance). The reader may remember some of the other unintended and bizarre consequences of literary/disciplinary technologies referred to above: the figure of Shakespeare emerging from a technical and anti-aesthetic environment; puritanism and the development of chocolate; the spread of pornography and its relation to the spread of religious books, for example.

<sup>8</sup> Royal Commission to Inquire into Working of Elementary Education Acts (England and Wales), *First Report*, Parliamentary Papers 1886, [c.4863], xxv.

conceptualising what reading now is - it is no longer the master discourse which provides access simply and unequivocally to a range of 'goods', as it did when it was considered primarily a devotional practice, giving one access to the divine, enabling one to make one's devotions at any time.<sup>9</sup> It has now clearly become a psychological technique or skill; and as such, it will slowly become the object of scientific psychology, which promises to tell us the true facts about it.

Indeed, psychology seems slow to take on the job of telling us what literacy is; but in the meantime the job of defining the child more closely continued apace. Literacy was caught up in a whole series of techniques which aimed at the 'policing' of society;<sup>10</sup> however, at the end of the nineteenth century, while some of the serious scientists of the age were transforming the

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<sup>9</sup> A puritan devotional technique: open the Bible at random and read. So long as you always carry the Bible with you, you are always in a position to make your devotions.

<sup>10</sup> 'Policing' refers not to a negative and repressive ordering of the population, in the sense it is often understood today, but as a set of techniques for developing the quality of the population and the strength of the nation: "The purpose of policing is to ensure the good fortune of the state through the wisdom of its regulations, and to augment its forces and its power to the limits of its capability. The science of policing consists, therefore, in regulating everything that relates to the present condition of society, in strengthening it and improving it, in seeing that all things contribute to the welfare of the members that compose it. The aim of policing is to make everything that composes the state serve to strengthen and increase its power, and likewise serve the public welfare." Johann von Justi, *Éléments généraux de police*, 1768, cited in Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, p.7. On this notion of 'police', see also Pasquino, 'Theatrum politicum'; J. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1954.

schoolroom into a quasi-medical site,<sup>11</sup> it was left to other, lower status interest groups to continue the work of refining what literacy meant. The period just after the 1870 act saw a rash of attempts by educationalists to understand gender differences in preferences for different sorts of literature. For example, William Sumner wrote an article on “What Our Boys are Reading”, while Edward Salmon’s equivalent was “What Girls Read”.<sup>12</sup> Salmon’s text was explicit on the way in which literacy could function as an aid to the imperial race and the proper running of the family:

“Boy’s literature of a sound kind ought to help to build up men. Girls’ literature ought to help to build up women. If in choosing the books that boys read it is necessary to remember that we are choosing mental food for the future chiefs of a great race, it is equally important not to forget in choosing books for girls that we are choosing mental food for the future wives and mothers of that race. When Mr. Ruskin says that man’s work is public and woman’s private, he seems

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<sup>11</sup> See Rose, *The Psychological Complex*, p.131ff. The Education Department Circulars at the end of the nineteenth century back up Rose’s point, exhibiting a bizarre concern with health and how reading aloud might threaten it. For example, Circular 408 from the Education Department to Training Colleges and Pupil-Teacher Centres, 13/2/1897 deals with the care of the throat when reading, and details a series of preventative exercises and vocal gymnastics for children to perform. See the appendices to A. Burrell, *Clear Speaking and Good Reading*, London, Longman Green and Co, 1899.

<sup>12</sup> William Graham Sumner, ‘What Our Boys Are Reading’, *Scribner’s Monthly* 15, 1878, 681-5; Edward G. Salmon, ‘What Girls Read’, *Nineteenth Century* 20, 1886, 515-29.

for the moment insensible to the public work of women as exercised through their influence on their husbands, brothers, and fathers. Woman's work in the ordering, beautifying, and elevating of the commonweal is hardly second to man's; and it is this which ought to be borne in mind in rearing girls."<sup>13</sup>

In addition to attempts to theorise differences between the sexes, we also see in this period a revival of an old discursive resource: meaningfulness became once again a crucial topic for educationalists. There had been a curious lacuna in the discourse of meaningfulness. It surfaced as a crucially important resource for understanding language around 1750, as part of the undermining of the universalist projects of the beginning of the eighteenth century. We have already seen a set of projects which raised the profile of meaning and attempted to make reading something that is fun. Of course, much of this was rhetorical: a common ploy seemed to be to find something to derogate in order to establish the modernity of your own practice - and slavish rote methods were perfect for the job.<sup>14</sup> The alphabetic method was particularly prone to attacks of this sort, but no one really had any great alternatives (excepting Gedike and Jacotot, whom I discussed in Chapter 2). Most of the 'new' methods actually

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<sup>13</sup> Salmon, p.526.

<sup>14</sup> They still are. Plus ça change...

relied on a basic knowledge of the letters, which have to be learned by rote (although this fact was often kept quiet). The proponents of the new methods could have their cake and eat it: they had a technique to hand which was an easy target for derogation, even though the technique quite often formed a condition of possibility for their own up-to-date method.

Interestingly enough, once the experiment in monitorialism began, the concern with meaningfulness seems to disappear momentarily from the archive; it became what I term a 'passive discursive resource'.<sup>15</sup> It was as if there were a momentary blockage in the theorisation of the reader in one particular direction. The monitorial experiment was about the production of the reader in a different direction, in terms of a different register; in the rush to inculcate useful habits, the concern with meaningfulness just did not seem relevant.

However, this resource was reactivated soon enough. My research suggests that roughly when Stow's arguments about the moral training of the individual began to have a wide currency, then the individual's 'psychological' functioning returned to the stage.<sup>16</sup> For example, in 1839, C. Baker, a supporter of Stow and a

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<sup>15</sup> By this, I mean that it still is available within the discourse, and can be revived if need be; but it (temporarily) loses its effectivity.

<sup>16</sup> It strikes me that monitorialism in the history of education filled a similar role to behaviourism in the history of psychology. They both effected a radical simplification of the discourse and in so doing rendered a whole series of previously crucial concerns irrelevant.

practising schoolmaster, made a long derogation of rote learning and praised 'meaningfulness' - the Madras system (monitorialism) with its teaching of reading by rote came under particular attack.<sup>17</sup> A few years later, the Reverend Hamilton made a similar point: "The child cannot be made to take any interest in what he does not understand. He will no longer delight to read than as he catches the meaning."<sup>18</sup> A whole host of texts aimed at teachers took the same line - in fact, they are monotonous in that they only had two concerns: first, an obsession with the health of the pupils (are they sitting correctly, do they get enough fresh air, etc); second, a derogation of rote methods of teaching reading and an insistence on making reading meaningful.<sup>19</sup> Other texts continued some of the other concerns we have mentioned - particularly the concern with the running of the empire,<sup>20</sup> and there were a third set of texts, still very few at this time, which

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<sup>17</sup> Baker, *Infants' Schools*.

<sup>18</sup> Hamilton, *Institutions*, p.68.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Joseph Payne, *Why are the Results of our Primary Instruction So Unsatisfactory?*, London, Head, Hole and Co., 1872; Henry Kiddle and A. J. Schem, *The Dictionary of Education and Instruction: A Reference Book and Manual on the Theory and Practice of Teaching*, New York, E. Steiger and Co., 1881; almost any issue of *The Practical Teacher*, especially 12, 11, May 1892; Board of Education, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools*, London, H.M.S.O., 1905; Henry Cecil Wyld, *The Teaching of Reading in Training Colleges*, London, John Murray, 1908.

<sup>20</sup> Most interestingly, the British concern with making their education system appropriate for the concerns of empire was noticed almost immediately by writers abroad. Thus E. Halévy wrote: "L'Angleterre victorienne commençait à douter d'elle-même. Un peuple d'amateurs était obligé de reconnaître qu'il était mal équipé pour tenir tête à un peuple de professionnels." *Histoire du peuple anglais au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1912-32, p.152.

began to express the importance of a new *connaissance*, psychology, as intervening into our understandings of the child reading. A very significant intervention would seem to be signalled by Jenkins's text from 1915 on reading.<sup>21</sup> Jenkins's was an almost completely 'modern' text: perhaps because it was produced in the United States, it is able to escape the obsession with empire which was to plague English educational thinking and policy through to the First World War and beyond.<sup>22</sup> It gave voice to a whole series of (by then) common sense ideas about the nature of reading: reading is impossible unless the child is motivated, reading is part of a thought process, reading is a good basis for other activities which in turn strengthen reading, reading gives the individual the opportunity for self-fulfilment. All the signs are there in the text that reading has finally won through to become a technology of the self, a means of producing a particular sort of individual, and moreover, a means of furnishing that individual with the techniques to continue developing the self: "the redemption of reading from the dull status of a formal and mechanical drill... is already well under way."<sup>23</sup> Of course, we have spotted the roots of this process that

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<sup>21</sup> F. Jenkins, *Reading in the Primary Grades*, Cambridge, Mass., Riverside Press, 1915.

<sup>22</sup> Excellent on this obsession and the language experiments it gave rise to is Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan; or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1984, especially p.115-36.

<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, p.x.

Jenkins claims is well underway, perhaps a little earlier than he would have suspected, in the moral training systems of the 1830s. However, what is interesting is Jenkins's insistence on the importance of testing to assess reading properly, and his wholesale support for a new technique: the psychological reading test. In particular, Jenkins touted Edward Thorndike's brand new test of reading ability which had been given an airing in a recent edition of a teachers' magazine.<sup>24</sup> The story of the development of the psychological test of reading ability is in fact a very unsurprising one: it was developed very much along the lines of the kind of test Binet was reduced to employing - a test that gave up the idea of measuring the abstract mental ability and concentrated instead on a serial ranking of children.<sup>25</sup> Thorndike had concerned himself with the psychology of reading from the first decade of the century,<sup>26</sup> but in the development of the reading test, we see the true vocation of psychology as a new technique for intervening into the social.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Edward L. Thorndike, 'The Measurement of Ability in Reading', *Teachers College Record*, September 1914.

<sup>25</sup> See the discussion in Rose, *The Psychological Complex*, p.112ff. The reading test was in fact originally a subcomponent of the first intelligence tests - perhaps first developed in the work of Binet and Simon.

<sup>26</sup> Particularly important are his *Principles of Teaching*, New York, A. G. Seiler, 1906, and 'Reading as Reasoning: A Study of Mistakes in Paragraph Reading', *Journal of Educational Psychology* 8, 1917, 323-32.

<sup>27</sup> A few years later, the standardised test was ready: the Thorndike-McCall Silent Reading Test. See Florence Goodenough, *Mental Testing: Its History, Principles, and Applications*, New York, Rinehart, 1949.



The early years of the psychology of reading accomplished very little; few psychologists took up the call to rationalise the classroom, and those who did were mainly working in the United States. A group of lower status researchers seem to be the most active on this front, those people who wrote teaching manuals or encyclopaedias of education. However, a couple of things of some significance have happened: first of all, state education has provided psychology with a place of visibility for the objects of its gaze; secondly, in the development of a test that purported to be 'psychological', and thus qualitatively different from the 'ordinary' tests of reading that had existed during the nineteenth century, psychology had elaborated what its means of inscribing the objects of its gaze was to be. It was now time to colonise reading: to reinvent it.

## 9: THE REINVENTION OF READING

“Conventional reading instruction may develop book worms, children who read omnivorously, but at the expense of the development of social and executive abilities and skills.”<sup>1</sup>

I have suggested that the series of interventions into the lives of individuals and populations that are characteristic of the modern age can be thought of as constituting the invention of ‘the social’. Reading and the teaching of reading have been crucial techniques in this reorganisation of social lives, and in addition, they have themselves been transformed. The irruption of the human sciences, contemporaneously with the invention of the social, meant that it would not be long before reading was taken as an object of scientific, and more specifically psychological, concern. The early psychology of reading, ten years or so into our century, was predicated on notions that will be familiar to us from the concerns of the nineteenth century. For example, in the psychology of John Dewey, we see some old themes: first of all, a notion linking education to some conception of social evolution - schooling could provide the individual with the skills and

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<sup>1</sup> John Dewey.

knowledge necessary to serve him- or herself, as well as the nation. Second, education could also relate to an appropriate moral training for the new age. These are two themes that have been seen in the writings of, among others, David Stow and John Morley. As Dewey puts it:

“The key to the present educational situation lies in the gradual reconstruction of school materials and methods so as to utilize various forms of occupation typifying social callings, and to bring out their intellectual and moral content. This reconstruction must relegate purely literary methods - including textbooks - and dialectical methods to the position of necessary auxiliary tools in cumulative activities.”<sup>2</sup>

The call was for the classroom to become a kind of learning environment, enabling the child to develop naturally in accordance with his or her interests. This ‘natural’ development of the child is, of course, recognisable to us as the aim of modern liberal forms of education; yet this was no development for development’s sake, but an attempt to fit out the individual for a role in society. Reading instruction needed to be made socially useful; the danger lay in conventional instruction, which “may develop book worms, children who read omnivorously, but at the expense of development of social and executive abilities and

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<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, New York: Macmillan, 1915, p.315.

skills.”<sup>3</sup> Dewey was aware of calls for a more scientific method of teaching reading, one which could accommodate these ambitions, as well as making reading more and more meaningful, more and more ‘natural’.<sup>4</sup> Thorndike’s work, which attempted to understand reading as a type of reasoning, was in part an answer to these requests; and the challenge was also taken up by Edmund Huey and W. S. Gray, also working in the United States.<sup>5</sup> In particular, one notices that these scientists gave a scientific justification of silent reading. The disciplinary technology has now received psychological blessing:

“In school practice it appears likely that exercises in silent reading to find answers to given questions, or to give a summary of the matter read, or to list the questions which it answers, should in large measure replace oral reading.”<sup>6</sup>

The same process seemed to be happening in England.

Government circulars stress the necessity for reading instruction

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<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, *The Sources of a Science of Education*, New York: Liveright, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> It is, of course, characteristic of scientific discourses that they regard themselves as uncovering truths which are ultimately guaranteed by nature. The early psychology of reading in the United States at the beginning of this century concerned itself with reading as part of the ‘natural’ processes of reasoning.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Edmund B. Huey, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, New York, Macmillan, 1909; W. S. Gray, *The Twenty-Fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Bloomington, Public School Publishing Co., 1952.

<sup>6</sup> Thorndike, *Reading as Reasoning*, p.324.

to be made scientific, to be virtually overhauled.<sup>7</sup> As Jacqueline Rose tells the story, the invention of the ‘synthetic’ method of teaching reading, which stressed the relation of words to the visual image they ‘represented’, was part of an imperialist education, with an emphasis on making the known world subject to interpretation and control, accomplished through the metaphor of the word ‘controlling’ the object in the world by being its perfect counterpart. However, one can also notice explicit attempts in this system to understand the reader as a psychological phenomenon, a ‘reasoner’. At this point, psychological knowledge about the reader was articulated with a set of theorisations of the development of the nation through the development of the individual/child.

In fact, the ‘crises’ in the teaching of reading seemed to relate in a fairly systematic way to the crises of the nation. For example, the British showing in the Boer War gave her “a warning to reorganise her education, her system of Imperial Defence and

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<sup>7</sup> The most important are Board of Education, *The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools*, Circular 753, London: Board of Education, 22 December 1910; *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of the Public Elementary Schools: Instalment no. 4: Suggestions for the Teaching of English*, Circular 808, 15 July 1912; *The Teaching of English in England: Report of the Departmental Committee*, London: H.M.S.O., 1921. Partly, no doubt, in response to these demands, a new method of teaching reading, the synthetic method, is invented: see Rose, *Peter Pan*, p.121ff., and also R. Wilson, *Macmillan’s Sentence Building: a graduated course of lessons in synthetic English*, 14 vols, London, Macmillan, 1914; *The Progress to Literature*, 5 vols, London, Macmillan, 1914.

the administration of her public affairs.”<sup>8</sup> The First World War gave the nations of the West another set of procedures for amplifying the capacities of their citizens; the testing and examination of recruits was the primary means through which this amplification was able to emerge, although it seems as though it may well have emerged quite contingently. The situation in the United States bears some examination.

The entry of America into the First World War required psychologists to prepare a series of intelligence tests for the deployment of the new recruits. A group led by Robert Yerkes, President of the American Psychological Association, developed two tests, Army Alpha for literate candidates, Army Beta for those who could not manage the Alpha test.<sup>9</sup> The finding that nearly thirty per cent of the recruits were unable to read well enough to take the Alpha test was a major shock to the psychologists who had prepared the tests: many recruits were discharged or were found menial tasks within the military. Yerkes and his co-workers claimed that the utility of psychology in the war both established its scientific credentials through its production of this knowledge and made it clear that psychology

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<sup>8</sup> Arnold White, *Efficiency and Empire*, London, Methuen, 1901, p.vii.

<sup>9</sup> See Clarence S. Yoakum and Robert M. Yerkes, *Army Mental Tests*, New York, Henry Holt, 1920; Lewis M. Terman, 'Methods of Examining: History, Development, and Preliminary Results', in Robert M. Yerkes (ed.), *Psychological Examining in the United States Army, Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 15, part 2, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1921.

had a leading role to play in personnel matters. Franz Samelson, however, has disputed Yerkes version and suggested that psychology was nothing like the success story it has claimed to be in this domain.<sup>10</sup> Personnel was the domain where psychology was to have its effect, but it was at the level of providing a means of making the individual amenable to management through a card system. Walter D. Scott rerationalised the personnel system of the U.S. Army through a card index system which sought to link the known skills of individuals with the needs of particular units. Scott's achievement should not be underestimated:

“One of the major contributions of the psychological sciences to our modernity has been the invention of techniques that make individual differences and capacities visible, through devising means whereby they can be inscribed or notated in legible forms. The routine inscription of personal capacities into documentation enables the individual to become simultaneously calculable - individual capacities can be thought about and planned into the running of industrial life - and practicable - individuals can be distributed and allocated in such a way as to make use of their capacities to minimize malfunctioning of the institutional machinery and to maximize its

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<sup>10</sup> Franz Samelson, 'Putting Psychology on the Map: Ideology and Intelligence Testing', in A. R. Buss (ed.), *Psychology in Social Context*, New York, Irvington, 1979.

efficiency or profitability.”<sup>11</sup>

After the war, Scott's achievement was seen as sufficient to merit a Distinguished Service Medal. Despite the claims of Yerkes, the Army decided they did not really need a set of trained psychologists, and the psychological service was abolished in 1919. Samelson claims that the psychological tests were not extensively used in terms of decisions about personnel anyway: other military criteria were more important. In Britain, the use of psychological testing in the army was minimal in the First World War and in the period leading up to the Second, although Germany made extensive use of psychological knowledge in personnel matters until the techniques were suddenly dropped in 1941.<sup>12</sup>

Psychology may not have been taken seriously in the military domain where it was called in to make decisions about the placement of personnel, but this false start nonetheless established the visibility of psychology as a serious technique for the quantification of human abilities; and the development of tests such as the Army Alpha and Army Beta were pushing psychology in a particular direction. The take up of the tests was

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<sup>11</sup> Rose, *Governing the Soul*, p.19.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Rose, p.19ff. See also Cyril Burt, 'Psychology in War: the Military Work of American and German Psychologists', *Occupational Psychology* 16, 1942, 95-110; P. Vernon and J. Parry, *Personnel Selection in the British Forces*, London, London University Press, 1949.



unimportant; what we are witnessing is a developing science organising its inscription devices. Psychology was to have more luck in the school.

In the years following the war, testing strengthened its position as a useful psychological technique in educational settings, the grading in these standardised tests giving the child, but more importantly the educator, evidence of how successfully the teaching and the learning was proceeding.<sup>13</sup> Slowly, the psychology of reading emerged as a subject in its own right, worthy even of its own journals, with a relative autonomy from 'the crises of the nation'. Certainly in England, the eugenicist concern with the state of the nation which had been an incitement to much of the discourse of testing was on the wane by the mid-1920s. Psychology was able to develop its social vocation, primarily by acting as a measuring technique, inserting itself into the spaces of the school and the family; by now, the latter

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<sup>13</sup> This technique became enshrined in educational practice in England following the highly important government report on the uses of psychological testing. See Board of Education, *Report of the Consultative Committee on Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity and their Possible Uses in the Public System of Education*, London, H.M.S.O., 1924. Other important testing texts of the time included Philip B. Ballard, *Mental Tests*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1920; William Brown and Godfrey H. Thomson, *The Essentials of Mental Measurement*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1921; Cyril A. Richardson, *Methods and Experiments in Mental Tests*, London, Harrap, 1922. For a discussion of the similar wave of testing in the United States, see Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962; David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Education*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1974, p.198-216.

had become a crucial surface of emergence for a whole series of disciplinary techniques.<sup>14</sup> The self-evidence of testing remained unchallenged for at least forty years, and remains a crucial axis of pedagogical organisation. The techniques used in the teaching of reading up until the end of the Second World War were very much a continuation of notions developed from the late nineteenth century onwards; the emphasis was constantly on meaningfulness, and, in the post-synthetic method of the post-Montessori period, on making reading 'natural'. For example, A. F. MacKenzie derogates any method of teaching children to read which uses 'artificial' sentences, and suggests that nature, in the form of nature tables, nature walks, and so forth, be used to provide material for a reading method.<sup>15</sup> The stress on nature extended to attributing a series of natural attributes in the child which the teacher needed to build upon: "*Economy in education consists introducing to the child the right activities at the right moment.*"<sup>16</sup> Similar themes can be found in a host of other contemporary texts: E. G. Hume, for example, claims that, although reading is not innate, love of self-assertion, curiosity and

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<sup>14</sup> This is another story. See Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*; Rose, *The Psychological Complex*; *Governing the Soul*.

<sup>15</sup> A. F. MacKenzie, *Learning to Read*, London, Evans Bros, 1925, p.101 and final chapter 'A Natural Childhood'.

<sup>16</sup> MacKenzie, p.19, italics in original.

imitation are, and these are the spurs to begin reading.<sup>17</sup> Enid Blyton's *Teacher's Handbook* pushes a similar line, in suggesting that "most children learn to read by themselves when they have something they like to read."<sup>18</sup> All of these texts took for granted the idea that the child learning to read has a specific psychological form, and this form is coincident with the form of participation in modern Western democracies. The child was constituted as an active member of the micro-communities<sup>19</sup> that classrooms had now become. The content of reading had been transformed from one based on religion and its doctrines, to one based on nature, ordinary social life, occupations, and so on. Children were even given a stake in this production of themselves as useful citizens: testing, and the review of the test, particularly in areas like spelling, enabled them to keep track of

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<sup>17</sup> E. G. Hume, 'The Teaching of Reading', in Irene Serjeant (ed.), *The Child Under Eight at School: A Comprehensive Guide to the Training of Infants, Vol. IV*, London, Gresham, 1938.

<sup>18</sup> Enid Blyton (ed.), *Modern Teaching in the Junior School*, London, George Newnes, ?1933, p.8. Cyril Burt is among the contributors to this directory.

<sup>19</sup> The jargon at the time was 'learning environments'.

their own progress.<sup>20</sup>

Psychology, then, emerged as a technique in the day-to-day running of the school, and helped provide rationales for the most up-to-date experiments in teaching reading. Yet the period between the wars was essentially a period of consolidation, rather than a period of innovation.<sup>21</sup> After the initial excitement at the discovery that reading was amenable to scientific testing, the refinement and development of these tests was the goal and the limit of theorisation of many psychologists interested in reading. Literacy itself became imbricated in a particular notion of the social which we have seen developing from the late-nineteenth century - a notion of the secular development and maximisation of the citizen of an advanced liberal democracy. Interventions into the social took the form of a developmental programme with surfaces of emergence in the school and the

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<sup>20</sup> The notion of 'nature' had slowly but surely become a fundamental condition of possibility for the emergence of psychology, and the guarantor of its truths. See Couze Venn, 'The Subject of Psychology', in Henriques et al., for a convincing account of how 'natural reason' became psychology's professed object of inquiry. As Venn tells the story, the Cartesian privileging of reason was a crucial first step towards a scientific psychology; however, as this reason was *a priori* and guaranteed by God, there was no space for a scientific investigation into reason. However, after Darwin, the task was to explain how reason evolved from its form in the lower animals. Reason was still privileged by Darwin, as it had been by Descartes, but it was now guaranteed by Nature rather than by God. Venn argues that at this point, a task had emerged for scientific psychology: to explain and understand this 'natural reason'. Virtually all scientific psychology has since pursued knowledge about aspects of mind, consciousness or behaviour that are ultimately rooted in nature.

<sup>21</sup> At least this seems to be the case in reading; the gradual elaboration of the child-centred pedagogy, within which the instruction of reading was embedded, is dealt with by Walkerdine, *Developmental Psychology and the Child-Centred Pedagogy*.

family. A kind of progressivism provided the logic of instruction, privileging nature and the innate abilities of the child.

However, this set of concerns was disturbed after the Second World War. War provided, once again, a shock to the nations of the West as regards the standard of literacy of their citizens. Recruits who could not read properly were not just a liability in wartime, however; they were also clearly unable to take part in democratic social life in times of peace. Out of the experiences of war came a new goal for society to achieve: 'functional literacy', defined as "the capability to understand instructions necessary for conducting basic military functions and tasks".<sup>22</sup> The notion of functional literacy spread beyond the confines of the military, of course, and came to reside in a judgement about the relation between the citizen and his or her social world: was s/he equipped to make the most of his/her life? Research into reading in the post-war period unsurprisingly began to make use of the dominant behaviourist paradigm to conceive of the reading process and to develop what de Castell and Luke call a 'technocratic' model of education:<sup>23</sup> a kind of refinement of the scientific strands of progressivism. Essentially, this seems to involve a restatement of the supremacy of science, and the

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<sup>22</sup> The term was actually invented by the U. S. Army. See Amiel T. Sharon, 'What Do Adults Read?', *Reading Research Quarterly* 3, 1973, 148-69.

<sup>23</sup> de Castell and Luke, p.169.

necessity for education to be modernised to fit in with the demands of a 'scientific' age. Reading was reconceptualised as a set of subskills, each of which could be analysed in terms of stimulus and response: the manipulation of the text (as stimulus) evoked the desired skills (as response). A whole series of learning packages were developed, in the United States in particular, to enable literacy skills to be acquired (emitted?) by the child. The language of these courses is noticeably different from only a few years before: the emphasis was not so much on the teacher 'loving' the pupils and ensuring a sufficiently motivating learning environment for the natural abilities of the child.<sup>24</sup> The teacher was now described in the language of managerialism:

"By using a management system the teacher can select specific objectives to be taught, monitor pupils' learning progress continuously, and diagnose the source of individual learning problems, prescribe additional instruction and meet pupils' needs and make sure the pupils have achieved proficiency in skills objectives."<sup>25</sup>

The language of business and science are combined here to give a

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<sup>24</sup> The teacher's 'love' of her children becomes a passive discursive resource. It is certainly much in evidence in the 1930s, and resurfaces in the 1960s, but it seems to disappear in between. No doubt the hegemony of behaviourism in that period is at least partly responsible for this disappearance.

<sup>25</sup> Xerox Ginn 720 Reading Series, p.ii, cited in de Castell and Luke. The series is from the 1950s.

new authority to the reading package and to the teacher running it. By now, the United States was the place to be for the amplification of capacities. By comparison, British attempts to understand the reading process are almost apologetic: the techniques one sees recommended are still couched in the language of progressivism.<sup>26</sup> The maximisation of the British citizen was still being accomplished with the aid of old technologies of the self.

### *Psycholinguistics: A New Technology of the Self?*

In the area of reading research, a psycholinguistic approach came to be seen as providing an explanation of a child's meaningful reading that the previously dominant approaches, such as the skills approach (which was an offshoot of behaviourist theories of the self) could not do.<sup>27</sup> What was important about this work was its attempt to revive progressivism: it was intended to work at the level of a refutation of behaviourist ideas by then seen as

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<sup>26</sup> The lack of new ideas in England can easily be judged from Ministry of Education, *Reading Ability: Some Suggestions for Helping the Backward*, Pamphlet no. 18, London, H.M.S.O., 1950; Ministry of Education, *Language: Some Suggestions for Teachers of English and Others in Primary and Secondary Schools and in Further Education*, Pamphlet no. 26, London, H.M.S.O., 1954.

<sup>27</sup> Essentially, skills approaches broke down the reading process into a variety of subcomponents which the child could master separately.

problematic in the context of debates on human freedom. The work of Frank Smith<sup>28</sup> provides an example *par excellence* of a psycholinguistic theory of reading; the keynotes of theories of this type are chronicled by Smith himself:

a) a distinction is made between deep and surface levels of grammar, following Chomsky (which in turn, incidentally, allows a distinction to be made between performance and competence):

“There is no simple correspondence between the sounds of language (at the surface structural level) and their meanings (deep or underlying structure). Extracting the meaning of an utterance - getting from surface structure to deep structure - involves complex syntactic and semantic decisions.”<sup>29</sup>

b) the reader is claimed to be an active organiser of the the sensory qualities of the world:

“Rather than saying that he discovers order and regularities that are properties of the environment, it is more appropriate to say that the perceiver imposes his own organization upon the information that reaches his perceptor systems.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See particularly Frank Smith, *Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971; *Psycholinguistics and Reading*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973; *Reading*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, *Psycholinguistics and Reading*, p.71.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Understanding Reading*, p.187. There is a veiled derogation of behaviourism in this statement.



c) a further claim is made that cognitive mechanisms (which are, incidentally, innate) guarantee this active construction:

“The organization of his knowledge of the world lies in the structure of his cognitive categories and the manner in which they are related.”<sup>31</sup>

Such a conception of the nature of language and of reading means that Smith comes to emphasise not the passive decoding of events but the reader’s active capacity to read for meaning:

“A reader who concentrates on words is unlikely to get any sense from the passage that he reads. It is only by reading for meaning first that there is any possibility of reading individual words correctly.”<sup>32</sup>

Of course, there is a cost to making the child visible as one who is in possession of all these abilities; the teacher gets downgraded to a mere facilitator of the reading process:

“The most critical aspect of the teacher’s role [is] as a supplier of information, to provide feedback, to say ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.”<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting that once this paradigm is established, its claim to speak the truth about the individual reader is particularly strong, but with just a hint of defensiveness. Reading is

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *op. cit.*, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> *op. cit.*, p.228.

redefined as natural and basic (in fact, it has a “basic nature”<sup>34</sup> ), and Smith’s research has a monopoly on ‘truth’:

“We have nothing but reason on our side... In such an approach, the adjective ‘psycholinguistic’ would be synonymous with ‘objective’, ‘analytical’, or ‘scientific’.”<sup>35</sup>

This new ‘true’ approach has once again provided for a revival of the notion of ‘meaningfulness’ which had been snuffed out by behaviourist theories of reading. Behaviourist-informed methods, such as the ‘skills’ approach or the ‘phonics’ approach, understood the process of reading to take the form of a hierarchy of separable skills; any problems in the process of learning to read could thus be remedied by attention to the particular subskill problem that blocked the way to progress. By contrast, the psycholinguistic method, in prioritising meaningfulness, stressed the provision of more meaningful material in the event of failure to read: apprehending some meaning was regarded as the priority in successful reading.

I maintain that we see in theories like the psycholinguistic approach to reading the operation of two contradictory moves which coexist uneasily, but enable such strategies to be part of a

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<sup>34</sup> *op. cit.*, p.12.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman, ‘On the Psycholinguistic Method of Teaching Reading’, in F. Smith, *Psycholinguistics and Reading*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

domain of governmentality. On the one hand, they treat the child as an isolatable target of instructional technology; on the other, they use such strategies to maximise the possibility of the child's participation in social life - in other words, they aim at the amplification of individual capacities in and for social life.

### *The Desert-Islanded Child*

Many writers have produced critiques of the way in which psychological theories of the child's cognitive functioning cut out the social context in which that functioning takes place; or, if these psychological theories are more sophisticated and do not exclude the social context, then this context is added on merely as a variable which merely has 'effects' on the more fundamental internal processes.<sup>36</sup> If one understands this in terms of such theories being predicated on various epistemological dualisms (especially the individual-society dualism), then it becomes possible to enumerate ways in which many apparently quite different theories in child psychology are in fact very similar.

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<sup>36</sup> See, for example, D. Hutchinson, 'Psycholinguistics for the Teacher', Unpublished MS, University of London; and, at a rather more sophisticated level, Valerie Walkerdine, 'From Context to Text: a Psychosemiotic Approach to Abstract Thought', in M. Beveridge (ed.), *Children Thinking Through Language*, London, Arnold, 1982.

For example, Venn and Walkerdine point out how the Piagetian insistence on a strict division between the child and the environment which the child needs to develop, necessitates recourse to something like a set of genetically-encoded *a priori* rule systems in the child, to enable him/her to structure the environment and proceed with the business of accommodating and assimilating.<sup>37</sup> It thus becomes possible to see that the distance between epistemological systems like Piaget's, and those like Chomsky's (which latter system, of course, provided the intellectual conditions of possibility for psycholinguistics), is in fact very small: both sorts of theory depend on isolating the child as a meaningful target of intellectual analysis.

In this way, we can see that the psycholinguistic model of reading, and its main competitor, the Piagetian model of reading,<sup>38</sup> are, in fact, epistemologically very close.<sup>39</sup> More modern psychological theories of reading do not significantly advance on these epistemological limits: for example, the current interest in children learning to read as being a form of

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<sup>37</sup> Venn and Walkerdine, *Piaget's Theory Reconsidered*.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, E. Ferreiro and A. Teberosky, *Literacy Before Schooling*, London, Heinemann, 1982.

<sup>39</sup> Most psycholinguistic accounts of reading tend to borrow from Piagetian theory, perhaps unconsciously; a good example is Margaret Spencer, who grafts a notion of 'storying', a classic form of Piagetian symbolic play, onto her psycholinguistic approach. See 'Learning to Read and the Reading Process', in H. Rosen (ed.), *Language and Literacy in Our Schools - Some Appraisals of the Bullock Report*, London, University of London Institute of Education, 1975; 'Stories are for Telling', *English in Education* 10, 1, 1976, 16-23.

interaction and a distribution of labour between phonological processing and working memory would appear to have been prefigured in earlier psycholinguistic work.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the 'real books' approach, in its attempt to forge a rapprochement between the dominant developmental theories, stresses an active learner, a 'natural' social context within which reading can occur (to include 'natural' rather than 'synthetic' texts), and the benefits of regular testing and assessment.<sup>41</sup> Such theories work with a mode of perception-enunciation which is fundamentally individualistic, perhaps in the main because the assessment of reading is so much easier at an individual level. That is to say, the techniques of inscription and calculation that modern psychological theories of the reader make use of set up the individual as the limit of intelligibility. Simply put, such theories could not begin to comprehend reading as a social process. The greater and greater recourse to cognitive

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Psycholinguistics and Reading*, deals at length with the problem of the trade-off between visual and non-visual information in reading, and on limitations on the capacity of working memory as crucial in this process.

<sup>41</sup> On the 'real books' approach, see Martin Coles, 'The 'Real Books' approach: is apprenticeship a weak analogy?', *Reading* 24, 2, 50-6, 1990. On the importance of testing, see Department of Education and Science, *Reading Policy and Practice at Ages 5-14*, London, H.M.S.O., 1989; Department of Education and Science, *The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools*, London, H.M.S.O., 1990; Peter Pumfrey, *Measuring Reading Abilities*, Sevenoaks, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977; Peter Pumfrey, *Reading: Tests and Assessment Techniques*, Sevenoaks, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985; Denis Vincent, *Reading Tests in the Classroom*, Windsor, NFER-Nelson, 1985. For examples of borrowing from a range of traditions, see Jane Oakhill and Alan Garnham, *Becoming a Skilled Reader*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988.

psychology to try to fill out the gaps in these theories is hard not to notice. In fact, many areas of developmental psychology are experiencing this movement towards cognitivism.<sup>42</sup>

However, my concern is not to debate with these theories on an epistemological level: whether reading should be thought of as a more social process is not at issue here. I am merely concerned to establish that this is how the psychology of reading constitutes its objects. What is important about this individualising inscription is that it is part of the process whereby the norms of development are outlined. In particular, norms for the individual child are constructed here, and they can make their way into INSET courses, teacher training, and the apparatuses of testing and examination. However, we can also see the construction of another set of norms, for the teacher and for the family.

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<sup>42</sup> Edward Sampson argues that cognitive psychology provides the perfect understanding of the individual for late capitalism - the individual as a completely isolated information processor. See his 'Cognitive Psychology as Ideology', *American Psychologist* 36, 730-43, 1981. If anything, his view is being borne out in recent valorisations of the entrepreneurial self; in Britain, at any rate, we are familiar with such political fostering of these ideas and with the idea that there is no such thing as society. If this is the case, the individual of cognitive psychology is both 'true' and that to which we should aspire.

*Psycholinguistics, Reading and Social Life*

I have already argued that psycholinguistic theories of the reader have an effectivity at the level of the teacher. The teacher's central role in the process of reading instruction (and as a kind of moral guardian) had been unquestioned since the middle of the last century: with Stow's reforms, the teacher had been transformed from an overt disciplinary presence to something we would recognise as modern - the teacher who 'loves' the pupils enough to ensure their training proceeds as it should. With psycholinguistics, the teacher is demoted to a mere facilitator: the child has all the apparatus s/he needs to learn to read; the teacher's job is to help this 'natural' process along. No doubt this is the occasion of the insertion of a whole series of new anxieties into the life of the teacher; it becomes hard to see who else might be to blame for the failure of the child. In between the space of the actual performance of the child and the idealised version of the self-educating child can form a whole new set of occasions for self-doubt. Psycholinguists such as Spencer and Smith begin to insist on a rigid separation between reading, a kind of pure space of knowledge, and reading instruction, a space of potential confusion and failure. Spencer argues that the

teacher should concentrate on “helping children to read” rather than “teaching reading”,<sup>43</sup> while Frank Smith is more polemical:

“An additional discouragement to many cognitive psycholinguists to involve themselves in reading has been the incredibly confused and inconclusive state of reading research, aggravated by the fact that research into reading fails to separate itself from matters of reading instruction, instructional theory, and social and educational bias.”<sup>44</sup>

However, help for the teacher is at hand; or at least, an alternative place where blame can be laid. The psycholinguistic revolution in the theorisation of reading was part of an overall re-evaluation of education, and a series of consequent attempts to reconfigure family life. The discovery of the importance of ‘the early years’ in the development of the child was a justification for a new set of interventions into the relationship between the mother and the child, which, as Nikolas Rose puts it, sought to govern this relationship “in the name of the intellect”.<sup>45</sup> A series of longitudinal studies and government reports established beyond doubt the importance of the early years, and

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<sup>43</sup> Margaret Spencer, ‘Understanding Children Reading’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 18 June, 1976, p.3.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Psycholinguistics and Reading*, p.5.

<sup>45</sup> See Rose, *Governing the Soul*, p.178-199. Also important on this reconfiguration is Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey, *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters*, London, Virago, 1989.



the differences between families of different social classes emerged as the standard problem. If the problem was one of the failure of some children to become the sort of citizens we all want them to be, then the solution was seen to lie in a cognitive maximisation of those children. The Plowden Report concentrated on the amplification of capacities through the medium of the primary school;<sup>46</sup> the Bullock Report stressed the importance of language education occurring in the home, and justified early intervention as necessary to compensate for any 'social handicap' the child might be suffering.<sup>47</sup> The form this 'social handicap' took had become clear: Plowden had pointed out some years earlier that the educational disadvantage of being born the child of an unskilled worker is both financial and psychological; with Bullock, this point is made again specifically with reference to reading achievement. In addition, the gap between the classes increases over age, which is where the necessity for intervention comes in. A set of relays becomes established between official policy, academic research, and the structure of home life: the result is that the home can, ideally, be transformed into a completely stimulating learning environment, while the good parent (or, perhaps more accurately, mother) is the individual

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<sup>46</sup> Central Advisory Council for Education, *Children and Their Primary Schools (The Plowden Report)*, London, H.M.S.O., 1967.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Education and Science, *A Language for Life (The Bullock Report)*, London, D.E.S./H.M.S.O., 1975, p.216.

who never misses a pedagogical opportunity (but so skillfully that it never seems unnatural or forced).<sup>48</sup>

The teacher is removed still further from the spotlight; or perhaps her role is subtly redefined. Relegated to facilitator she may be, but she can still play an important part in picking up the pieces when the child is failed by his/her home environment. Bullock is also a sign to the academy of what they can usefully do; the importance of early experience and the child as a 'natural' reader<sup>49</sup> move reading research away from theory and towards a more down-to-earth, nuts-and-bolts approach:

"the real data for attaining educational certainties lies in an understanding of what children actually do in the classroom."<sup>50</sup>

Shortly we shall consider what children actually do in the classroom.

We have seen in this chapter psychology's attempts to colonise reading. Reading, by being transformed into a scientifically analysable skill, becomes amenable to a whole series of normalising judgements. Reading maintains its link

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<sup>48</sup> See Walkerdine and Lucey, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> The paradox that the child has a set of natural abilities which nonetheless need to be (gently) coerced and extorted is not noticed. Curiously, the natural is that which has to be produced.

<sup>50</sup> Keith Gardner, 'After Bullock - Whither Reading Research?', *Reading Intelligence: B.E.R.A. Bulletin* 2, 1, 1976, 2-5, p.3.

with the production of the socially useful and fulfilled citizen, but the promise is now that this technique of fulfilment can be guaranteed by science. So a series of projects such as behaviourism and psycholinguistics claim that they are more scientific, that they can tell us the truth about reading, and can aid the production of this ideal child. However, in reorganising the child, in reinventing reading and telling us the truth that they claim was there all along, these projects necessarily disturb some of the supports of the old child, the one we had before psychologists gave us the true version. The teacher is now constituted as little more than an assistant to the child; perhaps the teacher still has to 'love' the child, but little else. The family is increasingly targeted as a site where educational opportunities ought to be provided: the home that cannot do this will require an intervention.

I have argued, then, that the significance of the psycholinguistic revolution lies at a different level than one might expect, particularly if one reads psycholinguists' self-publicity. Epistemologically, psycholinguistics offers us nothing revolutionary - 'universal' language schemes are an old discursive resource, while the active learner counterposed to the passive recipient of behaviourist-inspired theories was prefigured in the developmentalism of the 1920s. Psycholinguistics is important

on a different level, in that it represents perhaps the apotheosis of the isolated individual of cognitivism. This isolation is effected by continuing the theme, that we have already seen in Stow, of the teacher as the pastor of the developing child; by locating the processes of development more firmly within that child and naturalising them; and by the virtual removal of the teacher from the mechanics of this process. It should be clear from the orientation of this thesis that I am sceptical of the claim that psychology is the scientific investigation of objects which pre-exist it and have an independent existence outside of the attentions of science. I suggest, rather, that people, children learning to read, are 'made up' by discourses such as psychology. The psycholinguistic revolution is not so much the discovery of the reality that has been lurking beneath educational malpractice all these years; it is a profound reorganisation of life and of subjectivities.

## 10: OF THE PRESENT: THE CONTEMPORARY CLASSROOM

“Language, with its four elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing, cannot and should not be regarded as a subject to be taught.”<sup>1</sup>

“I mean, to a certain extent, I suppose you’re um... constantly urging the children to conform, but then in any institution you can only get by, in a sense, by, you know, by conforming. So I suppose that’s a negative aspect to it. But on the other hand, you’re training them to take their part in society, so in that sense perhaps it’s not negative, it’s positive. I suppose it depends on where you’re standing and how you’re looking at it.”<sup>2</sup>

The modern classroom does not have a simple, transparent relation to the academic, educational, and political discourses that attempt to shape it. That classroom has a regime of truth which has a certain independence, an autonomy given it by the fact that the teacher is constituted as the boss: a teacher remarks to me, “each teacher is a queen of a very tiny area. I

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<sup>1</sup> Motto on first page of ‘Language Policy and Guidelines’, a document produced for parents and teachers at one of the schools I studied.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Ms Williamson, primary school teacher.

mean, I am in control here, I am the boss". Later on, I ask one of the children in her classroom if she is going to draw a face on the picture of a little girl she has done: "I don't know." "Why not?" "I'm not the boss, am I." "Who is the boss?" "Miss Williamson."

If the teacher is in charge, this is not to say that her organisation of the classroom is predicated on a series of whims; teacher training, refresher courses, teachers' own self-help groups, INSET (in-service training) courses, all combine to ensure that the teacher is enmeshed in a series of discourses whose conditions of possibility I have described above. But contradictions in the methods they are taught, the teachers' own resistance to particular methods, and the acquisition of their own idiosyncratic tactics as a result of experience at the 'chalk-face', produce a series of heterogeneous practices which exhibit a 'relative autonomy'. Nonetheless, one can produce an analysis of the practices of the contemporary classroom that have some claims to generalisability.

This chapter attempts to exemplify how a certain set of knowledges and truths are produced; for example, the notion of the teacher as a kind of relay point between psychological knowledges and the children who are in her charge. It attempts to outline an example of a set of pedagogic practices, in exactly the same way as the chapters which have preceded it set out to do. If

I may anticipate a possible reading of what this chapter is about, I would resist the idea that it represents the empirical work of the thesis: the thesis has **all** been empirical work. Here we see one of the crucial differences between a post-structural account and other sorts of accounts; the historical empirical work is a necessary analytical tool to lay bare the modes of functioning of our present practices, while the analysis of the present obeys the same methodological rules in aiming at a systematic account of what is said and how knowledge and truth are produced. Such an analysis should be a refusal of any simple separability between theory and practice, a necessary refusal I argued for in Chapter 1.

*In the Classroom in the 1990s: Some Additional  
Principles of Investigation*

My approach to this strand of my work was to engage in systematic analysis of the classroom discourses connected with reading in two first year infant classes at different schools in inner-city Manchester. This systematicity of analysis should be seen as a continuation of the methodological principles informing the historical work, but a set of additional principles were also

invoked; different tools were brought into use as the changing needs of the research demanded, in keeping with the bespoke nature of my research.

A central tenet of this part of the research was that information derived from any participant in social life would be valid, since the account thus derived is a product of the social domain. An analysis of this domain in its specificity will produce an interpretation that is valid without the support of statistical samples. That is to say, I am rejecting an empiricist tenet that I must show that whole groups do the same thing (or, at least, are normally distributed in their behaviour). I am not involved in the production of anecdotes, but in analysing what is 'thinkable' within classroom practice, in exactly the same way as the rest of my thesis attempted to produce not a complete and universalistic account of the history of an object, but to point to crucial moments where new luminosities appear in discourse. My analysis of interviews with teachers, for example, are not meant to stand up by themselves, but are meant to enable the cracking open of discourse, to reveal what is thinkable as true.

In addition, I am seeking here to problematise the relation between the researcher and the research, acknowledging the implication of subjective choice in the generation of the data. This problematisation is still quite rare in developmental



psychology, despite the fact that it has long been acknowledged in the natural sciences, from where hypothetico-deductivism is derived.<sup>3</sup> A theoretical correlate of assuming researcher and research to be separable is the distinction between theory and method in the social sciences. David Silverman has pointed out how, on the principles of the hypothetico-deductive method, a hypothesis is formulated on the basis of theory, and data is collected quite independently to test the hypothesis.<sup>4</sup> In the strict empiricist terms of experimental psychology, a null hypothesis is formulated which the researcher attempts to falsify, a “rhetoric of verification [which] notably fails to specify how theory is to be generated - except by abstract contemplation.”<sup>5</sup> Statistical sampling reflects this separation of theory and method; the test itself, and what it purports to measure, is assumed to be in some way removed from the social world and thus from any ‘contamination’. The social history of statistics, and the historical specificity of its procedures and rationale, are likewise regarded as irrelevant.

Such principles of research are incompatible with my own understanding of the positioning of subjects in discourses constituted in cultural and historical specificity. I am not

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<sup>3</sup> See F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, London, Fontana, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> David Silverman, ‘Methodology and Meaning’, in P. Filmer et al. (eds), *New Directions in Sociological Theory*, London, Collier-Macmillan, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Silverman, p.187.

interested in statistical sampling as a methodological principle, or at least as a principle which guarantees my account, but would accept instead a notion of something like 'theoretical sampling', as first expounded by Glaser and Strauss.<sup>6</sup> They argue that the collection of data should be designed to generate as many categories and properties of categories as possible and to relate categories to one another; much of what they argue asserts the existence of universal truths, in contrast to my own insistence on discursively produced 'regimes of truth', yet there is still much to be learnt from their method. In thrusting the role of theory to the fore, it paradoxically leads to the possibility of a dissolution of a strict theory/method divide. Similarly, Glaser and Strauss's exposition of the 'comparative method' suggests ways of generating theory from the categories that have been isolated. Each segment of data is taken in turn, and once its relevance to one or more categories has been noted, it is compared to other segments of data similarly categorised. The range and variation of any given category can thus be mapped out in the data, and such patterns plotted in relation to other categories. Such a method contains an explicit acknowledgement of the role of the researcher in the generation of theory, and is a deconstruction of social science claims to neutrality. My approach to the classroom

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<sup>6</sup> B. Glaser and A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago, Aldine, 1967.

data was, perhaps, a hybrid of Glaser and Strauss's method, in that it attempted to relate what is said, and thus what is thinkable, to what is true. Knowledge and power, discourse and subject, must be treated as unities.

But where does this leave the status of theories and categories thus generated? Roy Bhaskar is clear that it is only possible to produce explanatory accounts: because social sciences are open systems, "social scientists are denied, in principle, decisive test situations for their theories... [thus the theories] cannot be predictive... [but] must be exclusively explanatory."<sup>7</sup> However, this does not mean that such theories are not testable: "once a hypothesis of causal mechanism has been produced... it can then be tested quite empirically, though exclusively by reference to its explanatory power."<sup>8</sup> The research I have engaged in can be thought of as a kind of 'theory generating'; nonetheless it comes within the ambit of the empirically testable, and with its own (qualified) claims to generalisability.

The question now arises of how participants are to be identified according to principles like those of theoretical sampling. Here, I introduce the importance of contradiction. Many researchers have pointed to the importance of studying

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<sup>7</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *On the Possibility of Naturalism*, Brighton, Harvester, 1979, p.21.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

sites of potential structural contradiction as a way of throwing into relief aspects of discourse which might otherwise remain hidden. I decided that it might be worthwhile studying schools in a working-class district; it was reasonably clear that the working class are frequently at the sharp end of structural changes in educational practice, and that their exposure to the predominantly middle class ethos of the school might illuminate some of these points of structural conflict and contradiction.<sup>9</sup> I set out to collect a variety of 'texts' for analysis: semi-structured interviews (with teachers and children), children's stories, tape recordings of reading sessions, field notes, and teacher training documentation available in the schools.

The age range of the children at the two schools was wide; when I started my research they were aged from 4 years 3 months to 5 years 11 months. As far as the timescale of this empirical work was concerned, I was keen to work in the schools for as long as was practically possible, partly because of the way in which time is structured at primary schools. For example, a reading group I was keen to follow only took place once a week, and with the illnesses of teachers or children, the cancellation of sessions

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<sup>9</sup> I have no wish to be dogmatic on this point, or to subscribe to any of the more simplistic readings of the relationship between classes, such as 'trickle down' theories of cultural hegemony, or theories of the working class as a 'living laboratory' for bourgeois experimentation, and all the rest. The problem was simply one of where to start research; pursuing an interest in possible sites of structural contradiction seemed as good a place as any.

for some 'special occasion', and a variety of other interruptions well known to anyone who has spent some time in a primary school, a lot of time was taken up in gathering small amounts of data. In the context of a limited period of research, I decided to spend two terms at each school on this strand of the work, a total of four terms in all. The rest of the chapter deals with the 'categories' that I produced from the data.

### *The Role of the Teacher: Facilitator or Instructor?*

The teacher is caught up in a complex situation as educator of the young citizen. Education is a matter of leading children through from one place to another, as its etymology makes clear, but to what extent can the teacher interfere in this 'leading through'? First of all, the teacher must 'love' her children; if she does not, it is quite possible that she will feel anxious. Ms. McCarthy talks to me about one of the children she does not particularly care for:

"Really I should be trying to mother him a bit, but I can't stand it. it's awful, I hope I don't show it too much... It does irritate me that.

Yeah, and you can't help it so you've got to make a special effort with the ones you don't care for. The only thing that

worries me, that relieves me I should say, is that I felt this way about him before I knew all that was going on. I think I'm going to have to work very hard and make a special effort."

The teacher refers to the recent discover of a history of sexual abuse in the child's family; her anxiety and relief in relation to this child are what are most noticeable: the teacher is clearly constituted as someone much more than the person who teaches reading. Yet the teaching of reading is profoundly affected by the emotional dynamics of the classroom:

"It... It is difficult. You just have to make sure you spend the same amount of time with them all, with their reading and everything. And I'm especially careful to spend the right amount of time with John, well because... well, you know."

The teacher is responsible for the ambience of the classroom; it must be something like a 'learning environment', but it is more than that - it is a place for the constitution of young, autonomous citizens. The teacher's love for the children is one of those techniques for producing such citizens, especially in those instances where the home does not provide the right sort of love. Ms. McCarthy continues to talk about John:

"It's just as I say, you don't get that much help from the parents. I've only ever seen his mother once; now there's

some man appeared called Malcolm, so I don't know what the mum's doing. She's supposed to be seeing the children but I don't know what she's doing."

The teacher cannot just pursue the simple business of teaching John to read; the family dynamics press in on her, she has a role to play in compensating to a child who has now been placed in care.

In one of the schools there are a set of teaching guidelines available in the staff room, typed up and culled from a variety of sources. The advice for helping the backward reader is instructive, because it concentrates on precisely these aspects of the teacher-child relationship as crucial. The most important things are not the method one uses, the books that are best; what counts is the teacher's attitude - the ability to display this 'love':

"Maintain the closest possible personal contact with the slow reader. Let him see from your attitude that you have a warm interest in him as a person, and that his happiness, welfare and progress are your constant concern. You will need to be consistent and not blow hot and cold in your relationships with him."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Emphasis in original. This school is very interesting in that many of the teachers are antagonistic to what they consider the 'trendy-lefty' philosophy of teaching, such as anti-racist and anti-sexist initiatives. All of their teaching guides are written up using the masculine form for the child.

The teacher has been placed in a curious position; by virtue of access to social work files, she becomes part of a network of possible interventions into family life - yet she also is required to substitute almost directly for mothers (and fathers) who take no interest in the child's progress at school. As Ms Williamson relates:

“There definitely are some, like, you know, like Jocelyn, for example. I mean, I think it's a matter of supreme indifference to her mother how she does at school. Then all her encouragement etcetera has to come from me.”

Ms. McCarthy runs through the children on her register to tell me something about their reading: every one is commented upon in terms of how their school work is supported by or obstructed by what happens at home; a typical example is her comment on

Andrea:

“Andrea's doing very well. She's a little hard-working girl. Nice parents who help her. And she's a nice child anyway, she is quite keen, you know, to learn.”

The home is simultaneously the place that the teacher must somehow try to reconstruct in the school environment, with herself as a kind of substitute mother, and also the place that can be given ultimate responsibility for failures in the education



process. Ms Williamson tells me “home predetermines everything”; no doubt, such a discourse is possible as a result of all those scientific enterprises which have shown both the importance of innate abilities in the child and the importance of the ‘early years’ in child development. If the parents have let the child down by not providing enough stimulation in those years, then it makes the teacher’s job almost impossible. On the other hand, it offers the teacher a kind of escape from what would otherwise be an overwhelming responsibility. Ms Williamson talks about Tracy, who is not quite a case for social welfare intervention, unlike John; but the parents’ lack of interest mean that there is nothing much she can do:

“Yeah, she’s a pathetic little creature, she’s in and out all the time. She’s actually quite bright but because her attendance is so poor, she’s never going to do much. She’s sort of way... way down the list as far as progress in reading. It’s a shame because she could do a lot better. Very little interest from home. You can tell to look at her, she looks pale and wan, uncared for.”

Me: “Why is her attendance so bad, do you know?”

“Usually not very good reasons. Mother’s waiting in for the electrician, they got up late, somebody was ill, somebody else was ill, this happened, that happened, you know, never especially good reasons, and often when she does come in her eyes are like that

because she's been up late watching television. It's... it's not uncommon...

They'd know about any major problems, but I mean social work agencies are so understaffed and overworked that you can only deal with the really serious cases. Things like children going to bed after watching the midnight horror movie, I don't think they'll ever stop them, I mean, I've just known it throughout my teaching career."

The transformation of reading, and education more generally, into an interaction between the home and the school means that the teacher does not have to bear the ultimate responsibility for the failure of the child. The teacher is finally confirmed as a mere facilitator of the process by the insertion of another piece into the theoretical jigsaw: the child as a natural learner:

"You know, you can also see children who are so... bright and hardworking etcetera etcetera, and even a poor teacher isn't going to stop them... racing ahead."

Not only does Ms Williamson espouse a belief in these natural gifts in childhood; it is also very visible in notes from a teachers' self-help group she attends. It is full of statements which sketch out the philosophy of teaching I have been trying to describe: "parents are crucial", "children learn to read by reading", "reading is a mixture of innate ability and

environmental influence”, “teachers can help reading by providing motivation”. The process of reading is constructed along this typical nature/nurture axis, and the delineation of the role of the parent and of the teacher is written into this grammar. Activity is a crucial way of eliciting these natural/environmental skills, and reference in Ms Williamson’s notes is made to Cliff Moon’s notion of reading as an ‘active dialogue with the text’.

In such ways are the teachers’ practices in relation to teaching reading formed. Ideas about ‘naturalness’ or the importance of family life are inserted into the logic of the classroom almost at the level of common sense; of course, we know from an archaeo-genealogy of these practices that they are historical specificities. Teachers have access to a variety of academic psychological and educational literature which becomes part of their practice. One school has a (well-read) copy of Henry Pearson’s account of psycholinguistics for the teacher;<sup>11</sup> the teachers in the staff room tell me they are familiar with psycholinguistics as a theory of reading and know something of the work of Frank Smith, for example. In the teachers’ reading group, documents are circulated with titles like ‘The Fallacy of Phonics’, and ‘Reading Readiness’, which attempt to use Frank Smith to derogate these methods: meaningfulness should be the

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Pearson, *Children Becoming Readers*, London, Macmillan, 1987.

guide to everything - phonics is a bad idea because it does not put the stress on the overall meaning of the text, while the concept of reading readiness is a bad one because “there is no moment in early schooling before which nothing concerned with reading could be achieved”.

Unsurprisingly, an eclecticism informs most teachers’ practice: so, elsewhere in Ms Williamson’s notes is a section on the dangers of pushing children too hard; yet this discourse can coexist with an understanding of reading readiness as unhelpful. Ms Williamson herself has an insight into how her classroom practice has evolved:

“Um, I mean, it’s a long time ago since I trained, twelve years ago, and it would perhaps be wrong for me to work from a theoretical basis in the first place if that theory came from college because it’s probably outdated anyway. Yes, and I learnt far more actually in the classroom than at college. That’s... teaching is about individual children and you can’t learn about individuals in college, it’s only when you’re in the field, so to speak, that you learn to identify their particular needs, how they respond, how they are likely to respond, etcetera etcetera.”

It is clear that teachers do not simply buy into a set of theories, psychological or otherwise; teachers’ practices are formed from

a wider set of concerns. However, many of the theories that inform a teacher's practice become black boxed, even become common sense; attention to an individual's particular needs is one such 'common sense' aspect of 'good teaching practice' which is only gradually elaborated in modernity.

Because the teacher is able to pick and choose from all these different resources, she is, I would suggest, always more than just a facilitator, as the current psychological theories urge her to be. Teachers themselves are aware that they 'teach skills' in certain situations (the two contradictory discourses of teaching skills and facilitating some natural path of development coexisting quite happily, since they are marshalled and put to use as the need arises). In addition, the teacher is constituted as part of the web that is 'the social'; she forms part of a relay which subordinates the inculcation of literacy to the master discourse: the production of citizens.

### *The Classroom as Learning Environment*

John Dewey's call for the classroom to be reconstituted as a 'learning environment' continues to be answered. With David Stow we saw a new valorisation of time and space, and the institution of the playground as a site of moral training. Valerie Walkerdine has outlined the shift in the 1960s from the 'conventional' classroom, with its rows of desks facing the teacher, to the modern 'activity-centred' classroom, with a new arrangement of children and teacher in the thrall of active learning.<sup>12</sup> We see in this new classroom evidence of a new mode of producing citizens; no doubt, some strands of the 'technocratic' revolution of the 1950s instigated the substitution of 'science' for 'nature'. Yet, in allowing for a whole range of activities, play, silent reading, the "uncommitted area for the sudden unpredictable activity that requires space", the modern classroom is modern society in microcosm. One is perhaps most struck by the 'reading area' in the modern primary school; teachers have long since given up Lancaster's philosophy that quietness is the most important achievement of the school - in fact, there is seen to be a kind of healthiness in the bustle and

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<sup>12</sup> Walkerdine, 'Developmental Psychology and the Child-Centred Pedagogy'.

the incessant noise of the primary classroom.<sup>13</sup> However, the silence of the reading area is preserved at all costs, is a disciplinary priority. Silence is grafted onto reading in an effective disciplinary procedure; yet it is a silencing and a disciplining in the name of good education. This is precisely the theme of this thesis. Discipline produces: in this case, it produces that most useful of skills, literacy.

The classroom is very much a training ground for our young citizens, and reading is a technique which is used to produce in them the attributes of a full citizen, all capacities amplified. Reading instruction is oriented around a notion of choice: the child is never compelled to do anything, but is won over, buys into the benefits that literacy can bring. This is done through a variety of simple techniques. First of all, we see the phenomenon of the library visit. When the child is at school, s/he can pick books freely from the school's own resources; however, the visit to the library is a much more explicit message to the child that the freedom to choose is part of learning to read. The children rush round the library, some too excited to remember the rule about silence - they pick it up after a few visits - and select

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<sup>13</sup> If anything, silence has been recast as unhealthy, especially as it is regarded as indicating a kind of repression (of things like authenticity, creativity and activity); silence is also unhealthy because it can be opposed to a freedom from 'authoritarianism'; 'healthy noise' is anti-fascist and anti-prussian. See the discussion of these issues in Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery*, London, Virago, 1982.

whatever they like. Often, of course, they pick books that are inappropriate; much too hard or much too easy, and some have the curious habit of picking out books they have already read, as though they fail to understand what they have to do and settle on an old friend instead. These children are gently coerced into making different selections, shown that they are in error and how they can stretch themselves. David selects a pop-up book, much too easy for him considering how well his reading is going; Ms Williamson manages to convince him to put it back and get something else. She told me why afterwards:

“Yeah, yeah, because he’d had that one, one of those that opened out into a big long [inaudible]. And that type of book I tend on the whole to discourage... David was just getting that big long book for, for no good r... because he liked the look of the book not... the actual...”

Unfortunately for Ms Williamson, another child manages to get the pop-up book out of the library, so when I talk to David about his book choice, he insists that he has got the wrong book:

Me: “What did you pick then David?”

David: “I picked... I dunno... That’s the one, no, that’s the one Miss Williamson gave to me.”

Me: “Well, which one did you pick? Can you remember?”

David: “This one.”

Me: “Why do you like that one?”

David: “Cause it’s got... I’ll show you.”



It does this [shows how book pops up].”

David is still resistant to having his choice altered, but, of course, these are early days. In other areas, a similar tactic is engaged in, and the children seem to accept it. They are told to draw their own pictures, but the teacher will come round and suggest they do something else if their own choice is inappropriate. They are also constituted as authors of their own stories, although these too are rewritten by the teacher if they are inappropriate.<sup>14</sup> John wants to write a story about going to prison to see his dad, and this is redrafted into something less delicate; Collette has a story about going to Norweb (the electricity board), but the teacher redrafts something more aesthetic. By such techniques are children produced as authors of their own accounts, but accounts which have been sanctioned. Quickly enough, they learn to sanction their own accounts as they discover what is and is not appropriate. But this is another story.

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<sup>14</sup> In both schools, children were asked what they wanted their ‘story’ to be. This took the form of a sentence, such as ‘I went to the shops on Saturday’. The teacher would write out the sentence, and the children would either write over the teacher’s writing or copy underneath. They would also draw a picture to accompany the story.

## *Surveillance Through Examination*

It will not be a surprise to anyone that the examination of children is considered an educational priority; take this extract from some notes taken from an INSET course:

### The need for an objective test

Teacher's opinions of children, no matter how expert, are liable to be highly subjective. What we want to know, regardless of other factors like running noses, poor dress and speech, naughtiness, good arithmetic [sic] ability etc, (all of which may cloud a teacher's Judgement) is how does a child compare in reading with average children of his age i.e. what is the average standard?<sup>15</sup>

The teacher is given a procedure to obtain a score for the child, both in the form of a reading age and in the form of a reading quotient.<sup>16</sup> The teacher has a simple and effective way of transforming the performance of the child (in this instance, the ability to read words) into an 'objective' score. The teacher is thus furnished with the means to know and to make calculations

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<sup>15</sup> In this context, one can see that recent government moves in Britain to institute a National Curriculum with regular testing is only an attempt to make explicit a logic which is already well understood in the schools.

<sup>16</sup> Reading age: a child with a RA of 7.6 reads like a child of 7.6, regardless of his/her chronological age. Reading Quotient: calculated in a similar way to IQ, i.e. reading age divided by chronological age times 100.

about the child in a new way, a more scientific way than by whim.

What is this new knowledge about the child used for?

We need to know a child's reading age so we can:-

1. Put him on suitable reading matter
2. Give him appropriate reading treatment. e.g. a 10 year old with a reading age of 7.2 is an obvious candidate for remedial treatment; a 6 year old with a reading age of 10 will require to be stretched well beyond the average level of an infant class or acute boredom and under-achievement will result.
3. Put him in the right group.

What it is important to note here is that the examination and the mark, the production of a new sort of knowledge about the child through a specific means of inscription, is not the operation of a negative power. The examination is a technique of normalisation, but it is a normalising technique which has the amplification of capacities built into it as a *raison d'être*. The child who is behind must be given remedial treatment; the child who is ahead must be stretched. These tests in fact form a relatively minor part of the school timetable: they are regular but they are not seen as the be all and end all of the school.<sup>17</sup> As a school's "Language Policy" document states, "Tests don't teach the child anything!" Such a notion of examination as instrumental to the real business of

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<sup>17</sup> Or at least they were not when I conducted this research. Recent moves by the current Conservative government seem to be privileging tests more and more.

'giving children a chance' is reflected in the way in which other attempts to maximise the child's potential are given far more time and attention. One school, for example, runs a system called 'Work Samples', a kind of dossier of the child's progress, but a dossier where the child's work can speak for itself:

"The most important indicator of the work a child is doing is the child's own work. Consequently, the work samples are essential to enable the school to monitor progress in terms of rate and level of achievement. Whilst work samples are taken once each term special pieces of work - both good or bad - may be relevant for inclusion in the files. In this way the files can become a true reflection of the child's work."

These files are 'true reflections' precisely because they are a kind of democratisation of the process of evaluation. The child is the one producing the work, and the child, having taken on this prototypical authorial function, can actually present his or her own work in the name of his or her own processes of development. Of course, what is hidden in this story is the question of who does the selecting, how the child is lured into producing these pieces of work, 'good or bad'. Yet I would contend this issue has become invisible: if one understands education as a right rather than as an imposition, and if one understands teachers as

guardians who ensure that this right can be enjoyed, then this production of a young member of an advanced liberal democracy seems unproblematic.

The test, then, is only one amongst many procedures the schools have in their battery for developing the child. Another crucial technique, certainly in the schools I studied, was the additional language teaching given to children of ethnic minority parentage under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act. Under the terms of this act, Local Education Authorities can receive money for the employment of extra staff if they have to “make special provision in the exercise of any of their functions in consequence of the presence within their areas of substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose language or customs differ from those of the rest of the community.”<sup>18</sup> Such interventions into the lives of children are, of course, easily critiqued as manifestations of ‘racist ideology’, manifesting an attempt to substitute white bourgeois language and values for those of another ethnic group. But to approach these interventions in such a way is to risk missing an important point: the influence of ‘race’ has been inscribed in a particular way - in the schools I studied, the child had to have both parents born in a foreign country (not just the Commonwealth) - and having been

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<sup>18</sup> Home Office, *Circular 72/1986*, London, H.M.S.O., 1986.

inscribed, is put into play in a series of calculations about the child. The potential dangers of something like Section 11 are obvious to the teachers and the schools; as one school handbook states, just after a piece on Section 11 and Remedial Education (which are, incidentally, strongly distinguished):

“This includes communication across the curriculum - the acquiring and passing on of knowledge, value [sic], beliefs and ideas. The children will learn as much from how we teach them as they do about what we teach them. We must ensure that opinions, beliefs and other value judgements are taught as such. We must avoid using methods or materials that may discriminate either openly or subconsciously and be able to justify everything we do.”

Ms Williamson, my epigrapher, makes it quite clear that she understands the costs and gains of teaching children to read:

“I mean, to a certain extent, I suppose you’re um... constantly urging the children to conform, but then in any institution you can only get by, in a sense, by, you know, by conforming. So I suppose that’s a negative aspect to it. But on the other hand, you’re training them to take their part in society, so in that sense perhaps it’s not negative, it’s positive. I suppose it depends on where you’re standing and how you’re looking at it.”

Techniques like Section 11 education may well have a negative

effect on children's consciousness of their own racial identity: but that is not the point of such measures. As Ms Williamson eloquently put it, the point is "training them to take their part in society". No doubt, costs and gains are incurred in such strategies.

I have dealt with some of the tactics of the modern classroom in relation to the teaching of reading which weave a web ever more tightly around the child. Probably there is no escape, no space outside these discourses where the child could refuse to be produced as a fulfilled citizen who is armed with literate techniques for living a particular sort of life. But I should not want to suggest that there is no resistance. Perhaps it would be appropriate to include in this chapter an anecdote about such forms of resistance.

Late in the school afternoon, the children have a playtime. When they come back after play, they have a story, and then for the last fifteen minutes of the school day, finish off what they were doing before play. When they have finished their work, they can 'choose', that is, select an activity such as a game to fill the rest of the time. One child, Michael, in the period leading up to play, works laboriously slowly on his story. He does this day after day. In fact, it is clear that he has finished his story, but

spins out time with some extra colouring in, tracing over of letters, and so on. He finishes his work exactly at the moment when the teacher says it is time for play. One day, I go over to him and say that he has obviously finished his story; why does he not show it to the teacher. He tells me that he would not do that; if he does, she will make him start something else, and he will have to finish it off when he comes back from play. Michael would rather be able to 'choose' after play. At five years of age, after a term at school, Michael has begun to work out how institutions operate.

In this chapter, I have argued that in the modern primary school classroom, one can see the uneasy coexistence of a variety of discursive forms connected with education, whose conditions of possibility I have traced out in the preceding chapters. Many of these forms can be made visible by an attention to the problem of literacy in the classroom. I have characterised the classroom as a learning environment which suits the demands of the modern liberal state; within its confines, children are produced as young citizens, authors of their own works, free and independent, who can choose the path of their learning. In addition, these characteristics of children are regarded as natural, and their naturalness is guaranteed by scientific psychology. Of course,



this is an idealised picture of what is going on - I have suggested that the notions as 'choice' and 'authorship' are not as straightforward as they might seem at first glance. A variety of disciplinary technologies operate as guarantors of this supervised freedom: the production of the silent, individualised reader is begun here; techniques of examination begin to operate upon the beginning reader; and the 'special relationship' between the teacher and the child, a technique which oversees the process, is forged in the carefree spaces of the classroom. A variety of malign influences, such as the disadvantages that might attach themselves to ethnic minority children, are guarded against. These practices have come to be regarded as self-evident, in the main because they present themselves as necessarily humanitarian. Perhaps humanitarianism is nothing more than a sophisticated mode of enslavement.

I suggested that such discursive forms have an uneasy coexistence; and there is certainly evidence of a variety of resistances to the 'amplification of capacities'. Children in the modern classroom may well be able to devise complex strategies of resistance, as do the their teachers. In particular, I argued that teachers are caught between the roles of facilitator instructor, between their own 'common-sense' conceptions of how to help children learn to read and that formulated for them

by scientific psychology. Out of a confusing and confused set of discourses, however, arises a regular, daily pedagogical practice which seems to facilitate the production of the literate citizen.

“A meticulous observation of detail, and at the same time a political awareness of these small things, for the control and use of men, emerge... bearing with them a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data. And from such trifles, no doubt, the man of modern humanism was born.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.141.

## CONCLUSION

“I do not say things because I think them; I say them rather with the aim of self-destruction, so that I will not have to think any more, so I can be certain that from now on, they will lead a life outside me, or die the death, in which I will not have to recognise myself.”<sup>1</sup>

I have traced out a story over a long historical period: from Plato to the modern primary school. In the latter, there is evidence of discourses that have a very long genealogy. How have the modern practices of the school become thinkable? What are their conditions of possibility? These are two of the main questions I have addressed in this thesis. In this concluding chapter, I should like briefly to review some of the points I have made in the main body of the thesis in seeking to answer these questions.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the theoretical framework that informed the conduct of the thesis, using certain problems in modern psychology as points of departure. I suggested that psychology and psychological explanations of the reading process are beset by a variety of problems - philosophical,

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault.

methodological and political - which mean that a certain, perhaps rather strangulated, conception of the child beginning reader is inescapable. However, from the beginning, I claimed that what interested me most was an examination of what psychology produces as true in the course of its disciplinary activity. I took this to be the most useful step in a project of disputing and deconstructing the self-evident humanitarianism that is the frequent justification for the conduct of psychology and for the instilling of literacy skills in young children.

In Chapter 2, I began, very schematically, to look at reading and the child in the period before governmentality began to map out a new political terrain. I argued that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries one could see a world which, although very different from the present, is comparatively easy to understand. Power operated in a simple and unambiguous way over the child; the child became a reader because of the necessity so to do to engage in devotional practice. However, the child learning to read was quite untheorised: in the terminology I have adopted, s/he was invisible, unilluminated, uninscribed, incalculable. And yet it is important to note that a whole set of disciplinary techniques, like the multifaceted techniques of *Zucht*, forged to serve religious ends, made themselves available in the pre-Classical period. Later on, the same techniques could be used in

connection with problems of secular life. The silencing of reading and the slow ascendancy of the examination are two such techniques which are born in a field of naked power, but which come to serve more cunning and insidious purposes.

When I suggested that the child reader was as yet untheorised, I meant that, before the beginning of the eighteenth century, s/he did not have any 'psychological' dimension. S/he had become an object of anatomo-politics, but not yet an object of bio-politics.

In Chapter 3, I indicated when and how a 'psychologisation' of the reader (and of the young citizen) began to occur. I argued that this happened primarily because of a set of apparently contingent lexicographical problems. The enunciation of a series of linguistic problems connected with the double sign in the early eighteenth centuries was the key here; the 'discovery' of language as a temporally located, culturally specific phenomenon led to the 'discovery' of the reader, and especially of the child beginning reader, as a potentially complex entity. In the books of this period, we can see a little light being shone on the child: the problem of the sign illuminated the problem of the reader. I went on to argue that the concept of the normal was invented at the same time, perhaps first in the world of lexicography and linguistics. 'Normality' swiftly became a concept which was

'black boxed', and which took on the aura of the natural and the obvious. Its deployment procured a certain docility, a certain civilisation, through the imposition of principles of hierarchy, enclosure, and partitioning, and of disciplinary time. In the social organisations of the time, one can see a prototype of the advanced liberal democracies of the modern West.

This psychologisation of the child reader continued apace in the eighteenth century. As I argued in Chapter 4, the child reader was more and more finely defined and detailed: and the presence of detail provided new domains for discipline. Technical innovations, like the invention of the footnote, and the production of more and more texts targeted at specific readerships, brought in their wake, no doubt, new forms of subjectivity, new ways of being a reader. A comparison of texts from the middle of the eighteenth century, like those of John Hill or of James Nelson, with texts from only fifty years before, gives some weight to my claim: while the former place more and more 'psychological baggage' onto the figure of the child reader, the latter have nothing to say about this figure that is remotely psychological. I also suggested that this shift in sensibility could not be understood in relation to one simple cause, and argued that Puritanism was an important incitement to discourse, an almost ever-present backdrop. A whole series of literate habitus were

given their conditions of possibility by the intense activities of this particular group of religious devotees. What Puritanism did, more than anything, was to provide a motor for the spread of literacy; and once literacy had become a valued and valuable skill more widely distributed among the population, all kinds of unintended consequences could arise.

If we are to understand the constitution and character of literacy in our age, the phenomena of silent reading and of 'meaningfulness' deserve an extended treatment. In Chapter 5, I argued that silent reading spread throughout the educational world, especially in the period from about 1750, until by about 1800 virtually all reading and writing was silent. This silencing served the function of 'individualising' the reader, of course; there was no need for reading to be a social activity; it became, perhaps, the private act *par excellence*. In addition, silent reading permitted that great disciplinary technique, the examination, to become the double process recognisable to us today: examination as a continuous apparatus of intervention and correction, and the examination, the testing of large groups. The latter eventually allows for new forms of inscribing and calculating the worth of the individual.

Silent reading is, doubtless, a great help if the meaning of what one reads becomes paramount, but I contended that the

emphasis on meaningfulness in reading arose quite separately from the emphasis on silence. I suggested that the new importance of meaningfulness from about 1750 onwards was psychologically crucial. Reading became no longer about giving a good oral performance; it was about internalising the deep truths of literature.<sup>2</sup> Indubitably, this shift initiated a new psychic realm; the 'interiorisation of the word' must be formative of new forms of subjectivity and sociality - and I suggested that the emergence of the Weberian 'man of conscience' is compelling evidence of this point.

The problems that are posed by governmentality, the problems of the rational arrangement of the art of government and of the procurement of the happiness and health of the masses, slowly marked out a domain of problematisation: and the child as a reader was constituted as part of that domain. If we skip ahead to the end of the eighteenth century, we see that the sorts of battles over language typified by the prosecution of Thomas Paine were conditions of possibility for the reappraisal of the operation of educative power: for the upper classes, the problem of the education of the lower orders was starting to be seen less

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<sup>2</sup> I am not intending to argue that before this moment it was impossible to ponder literature deeply; clearly, there was a long tradition of Bible study and commentary which gives the lie to such a naive interpretation. However, I would guess that the old dominance of oral performance must have meant that a deep understanding of the text was arrived at in spite of the prevalent oral mode of reading. Silent reading must facilitate 'thinking' better than reading aloud.



in terms of a negation of opportunity - the power to say no - and more in terms of the possibility of transforming the ways in which social objectives could be achieved by the transformation of the desires of the lower orders. This was the main theme of Chapter 6. At last, it was beginning to be realised that education can accomplish many things, and that there is power to be had in giving people certain sorts of freedom.

The first experiment which made use of this new way of understanding the world and of intervening into it, the monitorial school, was comparatively crude. Yet it empowered much of what was to follow, especially in its insistence on a new technique of personnel management, the government of the self by the self.<sup>3</sup> From an examination of what was said on the topic of monitorialism, I concluded that it would be a mistake to characterise it as an attempt to oppress the unwilling schoolboy; but it would be equally misleading to say that its practice was an exemplification of a pure humanitarianism. Rather, I suggested that we can see the operation of a new kind of logic, the privileging of the rational government of of the child and of the reader. Schooling was transformed into a hyper-rational discourse, and old-fashioned ideas about the 'joust' of learning

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<sup>3</sup> It would be more accurate to say that this was a revived technique of the self. The Greeks and the Romans were, of course, renowned for their attention to the problem of the relation of self to self.

were forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

In Chapter 7, I dwelt on a series of concerns which seem to enable us to link together monitorialism and its 'successors', the systems of reformers like Stow and Kay-Shuttleworth. A continuation of Christian notions of pastoral care, the discursive resources of the Greek interest in self-knowledge, self-care, and self-mastery, and a brand new German cult, a cult of the aesthetic personality, associated especially with the name of Schiller, enabled a transformation to occur in the turn to monitorialism; but these concerns almost immediately suggested that it was necessary to go beyond monitorialism, which was too crude to achieve its social objectives. David Stow doubted whether the monitorial atmosphere really enabled useful habits to be instilled in the pupils. Stow's answer was to reinvent the child and the teacher: the teacher must 'love' the child, while the

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<sup>4</sup> To expand on this idea of the 'joust'. My feeling is that in a variety of discourses, the operation of rational principles or rational inquiry came to replace a notion of something like the 'test', or the 'joust'. For example, in science in general, rational inquiry came to the forefront; to take the specific example of chemistry, an attempt to understand the 'reason' of the elements replaced the 'testing' of substances (as exemplified in the practices of alchemy). In the area of medicine, a rational understanding of disease replaced the idea of disease as a 'test' of the individual; the doctor's job was once merely to accompany the patient through the course of a disease - if the patient died, s/he had 'failed' the joust with death. Similarly, in legal discourse, rational inquiry into the facts of cases replaced the 'testing' of witches, for example, by seeing whether they floated or sank. I would argue that something similar happened in literacy: the child no longer engaged with a text and succeeded or failed in conquering it, but was taught to read by the application of more and more rational principles. I understand Foucault's global notion of governmentality as being, in similar vein, an attempt to name the translation of the problems of government from the register of the 'joust' to the register of rational principles.

child can develop into a good citizen partly as a result of this new relationship with the teacher.

At this point, reading almost disappeared. It had been the technique through which children had been inserted into discourse. Learning to read had been the technique through which the self was constituted: both the self and its relation to the self, and the self and its relation to the social. The message of reformers like Stow, however, was that reading is not nearly enough to constitute a full education.

In addition, meaningfulness emerged still more strongly as a discursive resource with Stow. Rote methods of teaching reading were deemed inappropriate. With techniques of self-government at stake, a certain flexibility was required in the person doing the governing - rote learning could never give the child the kind of mental flexibility required of a governor (of self or of others). With Stow, meaningfulness was reintroduced into the educational curriculum as a priority; and once reading was reasserted as a crucial skill by about 1870, it is easy to see how a link between the two became possible - reading had to be meaningful.

I also dwelt in Chapter 7 on the invention of 'the social'; a moment at which a whole series of previously independent discourses could link up. With the invention of the social (and of

course, the statistics that did the job of linking concerns together 'causally'), reading could be seen to have a relation to crime and health. And yet it was nothing more than a series of contingencies which enabled this new set of concerns to become visible. When the health and the police boards began to demonstrate class patterns of bad education, illiteracy, crime and ill-health that were historically and geographically stable, a series of new interventions became possible. Once again, the changing of the lives of the lower orders was not a matter of oppressing them; it was a matter of changing their lives for the better, to remove the possibility that there might be 'failed citizens' in our midst. Education and literacy increased dramatically. With the aid of discourses connected with comparisons between nations, a transformation was made which enabled mass education to become compulsory. This was not an easy moment in British educational history, but one which fitted with the logic we can clearly see developing: the necessity for the amplification of the capacities of the individual. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it would be accurate to say that schools were part of a set of relays which included the prison, the asylum and the workhouse: schools were part of a set of social problems. By the middle of the nineteenth century, they were much more closely connected with institutions like

Mechanics Institutes: they now formed part of a network of social facilitation.

In Chapter 8, I discussed the moment at which the human sciences were able to come into existence. The institution of compulsory schooling was an important factor in this development. The human sciences, and particularly psychology, intervened on exactly the territory we have seen marked out by the problems of governmentality; but by using the school as an instrument, they came to inscribe the child reader in a new way. Psychology colonised reading over time: the development of psychological techniques of inscription like the reading test, reading age and reading quotient gave us a scientific truth about an object we could otherwise only know subjectively. I suggested that the reading test was one of the most crucial ways of inscribing reading, and of translating it to a new register. Psychology could now begin to fill its social vocation as a 'codifier'. As I discussed in Chapter 9, this process was begun by such pioneers as Thorndike and Huey, but was most crucially developed in the psycholinguistic revolution in reading in the 1960s and 1970s. The psycholinguistic approach empowered what I have termed the reinvention of reading: reading tests were already pretty much standardised by the time the psycholinguists

came along<sup>5</sup> - but in producing new positive knowledges of what reading and the child reader were, they profoundly changed teaching practice, and inserted yet another undercurrent into the discourse - that of 'teacher as mere facilitator'. Psycholinguists are among those who reshape the social domain because, through their attempts thoroughly to amplify capacities, they intervene in the relation between the teacher and the child, as well as the mother and the child, and more recently in the relation between the parent and the teacher, 'in the name of the intellect'.

Finally, my examination of the operation of the modern classroom in Chapter 10, I attempted to show how practices with very old discursive roots are able to operate. I stressed how the classroom has become a micro-democracy, a place of supervised freedom and organised spontaneity, a place where, through the discourse of literacy, children are constructed as liberal citizens, with a stake in their own development, learning to become authors, aesthetes, lovers of good literature, as well as acquiring the levels of functional literacy required to make their way in the world. I suggested that techniques like examination are not, as we may suspect, repressive, and barriers to the development of subjective experience; rather, such techniques are

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<sup>5</sup> A very old test, Burt's Word Recognition Test, is still widely used in schools; most of the alternatives, like the Schonell Test or the Watts Sentence Reading Test, are no spring chickens either.

conditions of possibility for such experience. There is no 'ideal' child who pre-exists discourse, no 'wild' subjectivity which stands outside of the discursive.

*Implications of the Thesis: for Psychology, for Literacy, and for the Child*

There are, I believe, some important implications for political and for psychological practice that flow from this thesis. It should be obvious that the kinds of psychological knowledges I have been seeking to put under the spotlight are not politically or ethically neutral; however, this should not be taken as meaning that they are somehow oppressive. I am happy if this account to some extent debunks cherished ideas about the birth of intellectual disciplines, and outlines how they arise from a series of discrete, and ultimately very chancey, roots which are frequently less than glamorous and perhaps somewhat surprising. If, following on from these discoveries, this thesis is an aid to political action, it aims at enabling action which is piecemeal and local, with all due respect to the complexity of discourse. As for psychology, I hope that this thesis can be set alongside those

texts which argue that to consider psychology as a purely intellectual endeavour is a nonsense. This thesis should be taken as an a refusal of the pure/applied distinction often made in psychology. The thesis is not pure research in that it suggests that knowledges like psychology are never abstractable from their effectivity - psychology is a productive discourse. Consequently, the relationship between methodology and data, which is usually rigidly enforced in psychology, is quite untenable. 'Knowledges' like psychology are necessarily both theoretical and engaging in specific fabrications: 'knowledge' and 'power' are indissoluble.

What are the implications of this research for children, and for reading? First of all, this thesis is an exemplification of the (by now well known) idea that persons are made up in discourse. I have argued that the child is not a raw datum awaiting scientific charting, but is made possible in its modern incarnation by psychology and by sets of literate practices. The child as a disciplined and maximised 'docile body' is a product of those power-knowledge realms I have outlined, as well as of many others, no doubt; I suggest that the ones I have chosen to examine are some of the most important for the formation of the modern child. As for the psychology of reading, this thesis would dispute the aims of that psychology as they are occasionally expressed or



as they are implicitly employed. Such a psychology cannot produce an absolutely true understanding of a set of problems outside of which it stands. When psychology began its colonisation of reading and reading instruction, it inherited a set of functions, in that literate techniques were already enmeshed in a set of habitus, imbricated in the production of technologies of the self. It added in a new set of devices for making objects visible and for making calculations about those objects. It is constantly making up the object of its study, fine-tuning its fictions and delivering them into regimes of truth.

However, it is also important to note that discourses like the psychology of reading constantly blind themselves to what they are doing by their rather naive understanding of scientific and social scientific practice. For example, I have outlined how the 'psycholinguistic revolution' of the late 1960s and early 1970s is less innovative than its rather immodest claims would suggest. Modern reading research often claims to be a discontinuity, a break with a derogated past; yet I hope to have shown how the discourse became relatively stabilised in the nineteenth century. Many of the distinctions and innovations that such psychology claims for itself after this watershed are very minor indeed. This thesis would call for a reappraisal of the functions of such research, and would attack strongly the

triumphalist notions of the progressive accumulation of knowledge that is so frequently the rationale for its conduct. Psychologies of the child are doing many things, but they are not doing what psychologists think they are doing.

### *Limitations of the Thesis*

My account of the conditions of possibility for a series of discourses connected with reading and the instruction of reading should not be read as intending to replace other sorts of accounts. I would rather it were read alongside them, in the hope that it sheds a different sort of light on some very old problems. An important difference, I think, is that I have not set out to write a history of the object itself, reading. I have rather attempted a study of a series of discourses in which reading is implicated, as way of giving some sense to our experience of modern practices. I should like to reclaim some of the playfulness with which I started, when I claimed my account would be more like a detective story. So it proved: the main 'object' of the study, reading, virtually disappeared from 1830-1870 from serious consideration; yet this was the period in which reading was made

modern, almost in its absence, we might say.

I am aware that the story I have told about the child who is an object of literacy practices is a counter-intuitive one. I have suggested that individuals are made up by discourses, rather than pre-existing the discourses which take those individuals as their objects. My method has been to concentrate on what has been said, and if I wished to take a more defensive position, I could retreat and claim that I have given nothing more than an account of discourse. However, it seems to me unlikely that discourse is nothing more than a reflection of 'reality': it must also create it. It is impossible to prove this claim, although I regard it as a cogent one. If nothing else, I certainly hope to have generated some hypotheses about the history of literacy (even if they are untestable to a diehard empiricist) and to have enabled the possibility of thinking differently.

The option I chose to follow in the conduct of this research, that of a laminary archaeo-genealogy, was a somewhat risky one. Indeed, as I was working on the thesis and a variety of books were coming out in the area, it was easy to become disheartened and to be unsure whether the work was proceeding in a helpful and sensible direction. Perhaps, in the face of these doubts, I clung on too closely to the periodisations and hypotheses of Michel Foucault; perhaps I have ended up writing little more than

a defence of Foucault's controversial 'generalisations'. Perhaps notions like governmentality became rather monolithic, explanatory categories in my account. Nonetheless, I still believe in the value of work of this type for the generation of ideas, and I still value the commitment of a history of the present to the disruption of present certainties. While researching this thesis has only increased my respect for the work of those professional historians who work with incredible care and hardly ever dare to guess, I still feel that a history of the present has much to offer - but it should not be confused with 'history'.

### *Directions for Future Research*

In very general terms, there are many areas of psychology which need the disruption that a history of the present can supply. A 'deconstruction' of the cognitivism that is invading developmental psychology and having effects on educational practice, for example, is an important venture.

More specifically, there are research projects that could be taken up from this thesis. I am aware that I have talked about subjectivity very frequently, but have hardly begun to address

what one might term the 'nuts and bolts' of subjectivity. I have been happy to suggest that subjectivities are transformed by discourse, but how, exactly, does this happen? The notion of habitus I have made use of in this thesis provides a good place to start, but it is, to my mind, rather sketchy; it may well collapse into a kind of neo-behaviourism if pushed too hard. What I think is required is some research on the psychic constitution of the reader, research which would take seriously notions like desire. For example, some of the data I collected in primary schools and discussed in Chapter 10 cries out for a psychoanalytic or quasi-psychoanalytic explanation of the 'transferences', the 'counter-transferences' and the 'resistances' of the classroom. The French libidinal theorists (Lacan, Deleuze, Lyotard) would provide a good tool-kit here. While working on this thesis, I took a rather Pyrrhonian line, and was particularly dubious about anything which looked like it might be phenomenological or existential, so I ended up rather suspicious of 'experience'; yet I am slightly worried that a Foucaultian approach leaves subjectivity under-theorised.

It would also be possible to conduct more genealogical research on modern forms of government. In the course of researching this thesis, I became interested in the way in which the urban (as opposed to the rural) environment has become the

main governmental problem. I think it would be possible to extend the analysis I have begun to the ways in which the city has been 'read'. That is to say, how far has modern urbanisation required a reorganisation of the skills of the city-dweller. No doubt literacy is important here: at the very least people need to understand street signs, transport timetables, and the like. But there are doubtless a whole host of other 'skills' which the city-dweller must have, or discourses into which s/he must be initiated - forms of hygienic behaviour, for example. Some of the 'miscellany' of everyday life would be the topic of such research, and the labours of Mauss and of Norbert Elias would be inspirational in this regard.

All this projected work would share, however, in a commitment to the undermining of the 'certainties' of the present which this thesis has tried to maintain. The laying bare of the mechanisms of power must be an urgent priority for future research.

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