

THE READING WORLD OF BLACK WORKERS

THE READING WORLD OF BLACK WORKERS

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A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education.

JOSIANNEBURG
February 1988

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

E French

Edward French

29th day of February, 1988

ABSTRACT

An understanding of the identity of reading and its social meanings should contribute to the quality of adult literacy work. This study is an inquiry into ways of understanding reading, and specifically into its meaning and role in the lives of black workers in South Africa. The understanding of reading has been dominated by positivism, but increasing interest has been shown in the relationship of literacy and society. However, even these approaches remain largely objectivist. Alternatives to objectivism are presented in some detail. This provides the background and rationale for a broad account of the social history and contexts of reading in black society in South Africa and for a study of what reading means to eighteen leading black employees at two East Rand factories. The reading world of black workers is characterised by various deprivations and disadvantages. The printed word is owned and controlled by white government and capital in a contradictory and contested hegemony, yet it is perceived positively as an aspect of our society in which black people participate fully, and from which they benefit unequivocally. Reading is understood in terms of aspirations to modernity and to being at home in a national and cosmopolitan community. The experience of reading is felt to be vitally important, although it is not a major feature in the daily lives of most of the participants in this study. Newspapers occupy a dominant position in the reading world of black workers, but the level of critical awareness of the media would appear to be low. The study as a whole works against reductionism; the tendency for literacy to be claimed in the name of instrumental purposes is contested. Implications of the study for adult education and research are briefly considered.

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CHAPTER 1

TOWARDS A MORE ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF READING (I)

The true importance of literacy today is that it has such close relations with what a modern society does, thinks, and feels.

We need a careful examination of the functions of language ... This must include both the written and the spoken language, and the manner in which the functions of these are changing with the advent of new techniques and with changing needs of the individual and society.

M.M. Lewis (1953:123 and 126)

Literacy, finally, can no longer be seen as a universalistic quantity or quality to be possessed however unequally by all in theory. Needs, aspirations, and expectations must be best met for all members of society. And literacy must be accorded a new understanding - in historical context. If its social meanings are to be understood and its value best utilized, the "myth of literacy" must be exploded.

Harvey J. Graff (1978:324-325) Emphasis added.

The most promising new approaches are found in ethnographic studies of reading and writing in use, analysis of functional literacy requirements of jobs and social cultural activities, and reconceptualizations of macro-relationships between literacy and social, economic, cultural, and political change.

Harvey J. Graff (1982:13)

1.1 Aims

This study grew out of an involvement in the promotion of adult literacy in South Africa. It has been guided by a belief, based on reading, observation and experience, that there is a need to step back from the practice of adult literacy work and to examine the received and seldom-articulated notions of what literacy is and what it means to people. The study is influenced by a concern with ways of understanding social and cultural phenomena, and presents a range of perspectives on the understanding of literacy, focusing on the nature and meaning of reading within a section of the population which is considered by some to deserve priority in literacy efforts. It is exploratory and seeks to contribute to the insight necessary if efforts to extend literacy or to develop curricula for adult basic education are to be sensitive to needs and context - in other words, if they are to have "ecological validity".

The present chapter deals more fully with the interest, value and limitations of the study, and offers accounts of the background, the context and the broad reasons for the ways in which the investigation has been approached.

1.2 The idea of "a reading world"

The idea of a "Reading World" (the name of one of the professional journals of studies of reading) may well be rooted in the idealism of middle-class culture. It suggests a world somewhat set apart from ev-

everyday concerns, belonging to the realms of civilised leisure, a world which bears an oblique relationship to the "real" world, one into which readers escape for a time and from which they return refreshed and informed to the concerns of life.

However, the term "reading world", while not excluding this sense, also exploits the notion of "the experienced world" found in phenomenology (as in Lebenswelt). This brings into play a number of connotations: an element of holism, the idea that human institutions can only be understood by reference to the discourses constructed out of individual, social and linguistic histories within specific contexts, and that these pursuits should rightly be understood in terms of the beliefs, perceptions and experiences of particular people and communities.

There is some danger, though, in the idea of "experienced worlds" that they will be taken to be completed totalities which provide points of ultimate reference and which fix the horizons of possible experience and growth. This is most emphatically not what is meant by "the reading world". Rather, as we shall see, "the reading world" is constructed of a variety of narrative understandings in which there is no closure. The study starts and ends by taking a position against the various kinds of reductionism by which so rich and irreducible an achievement as reading is claimed for narrow sets of instrumental purposes.

1.3 The interest of literacy

Reading is a remarkable phenomenon. In 1908 Huey wrote:

to completely analyze what we do when we read would almost be the acme of a psychologist's achievements, for it would be to describe very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind (Nell 1984:5).

Unesco's (1985) most recent figures estimate that there are over 889 million illiterates in the world and that the number is growing even as the rate of illiteracy declines. But at the same time there are 2315 million literate people, which, even if a majority of them do not read very much, is striking when we consider that before the industrial revolution relatively few Europeans read (see for example Cressy 1980), and most of the world was untouched by literacy.

"The McLuhan scare" of the sixties has passed, and although the role of reading is undoubtedly changing, both television and computers have stimulated rather than replaced reading. Monographs such as Gault's The future of the book (1982) and Hills' The future of the printed word (1984) provide a vindication of reading. The virtues of print in terms of accessibility, transportability, permanence, availability for scrutiny and criticism, and freedom of choice are such that it is difficult to see it being replaced by newer technologies, except for specific information processing purpose.

Escarpit (1982) reports world book production figures for 1980. Nearly 700 000 titles were produced with an estimate of nine billion

copies, or 3,9 copies per potential reader. There is an enormous dominance of book production in the developed countries, and an "alarming increase in the gap between demands for reading matter and book availability in most of the developing countries" (From The Charter of the Book 1972). According to Nell (1984) there are some 8 210 daily newspapers worldwide; in America newspapers are read seven times more frequently than books. There is a correlation between education, social status and book reading, with a tendency to a bimodal distribution ("either you are hooked or you are not"), and the great weight of world publishing is in non-fiction. Fiction accounts for between 16-28% of titles published - although huge runs of best-sellers restore the balance. Magazine reading is less popular than the other forms of reading.

1.4 The problematizing of literacy

Reading has been valued both as a skill and as a pursuit in literate cultures, and "literacy" has been considered to be almost synonymous with "civilization" and an educated sensibility (Johnston 1985), as well as being seen as a sine qua non for human advancement. Yet for much of its existence literacy has also been taken for granted, much as language and other everyday accomplishments are taken for granted, and has generally been seen as a transparent medium or as a neutral technology. It has only recently been studied as a problematic and opaque social phenomenon as much in need of study as the practices of disappearing cultures.

The "problematizing" of literacy - which will be handled at greater length in Chapter 2 - was pioneered by the school of media and communications studies associated with Innis (1950, 1951), to which McLuhan gave great publicity in the sixties, but has been reflected as well in social history, anthropology and cognitive psychology. In one human endeavour this problematizing has had decidedly more than academic interest: the promotion of adult literacy.

Deliberate projects to promote popular literacy have generated polemics which have demonstrated the intensity of belief in the power of literacy. Probably the first serious attempts to study literacy from a social perspective were linked to the Russian literacy campaigns of the 1920s and 30s (see references to Krupskaya, Strumilin and Luria in Chapter 2). After the Second World War, and particularly after the granting of independence to most of the colonial world, considerable hopes were placed in the potential of literacy to trigger and support social and economic advancement. By the late 70s many of these hopes had foundered. Apart from the fact that no decisive causal connections could be established between literacy and development, the broad movement was seen to contain elements of cultural imposition, most notably by Paulo Freire. One of the clearest conclusions from the relative failure of ambitious literacy programmes was that the clients did not share the promoters' valuing of literacy, and that far too little attention had been given to the cultures in which literacy was promoted or to the possible meanings that literacy had for the target populations.

Jenkins (1985:15-16) illustrates this with an anecdote from the first adult literacy programme in Tanzania. There, well-intentioned planners with a knowledge of world markets and the supposed needs of national development focussed the literacy programme on the theme, "cotton is wealth". The assumptions were that reading and writing are narrowly practical activities (rather, for example, than meaning-making activities) and that readers and writers are essentially passive recipients in the flow of information; being able to read information about modern agricultural methods, marketing and so on will lead to the implementation of those practices, or will contribute to their implementation; specialist planners know what is good for the learning communities. What happened in Tanzania, where the primers contained sentences like "Cotton is wealth", was this:

They were saying: 'Here we have great problems because in this particular area of Tanzania, we are trying to say to people you should grow more cotton and they are saying 'Why' and we are saying 'Well you'd get more money' and they're saying 'What do we do with it' and they quoted one man saying 'Look, I have a corrugated iron roof to my house, I have a bicycle and I have a radio, what else do I need?' and then looking at these eager expert faces, he said, 'Well, with more money I could buy another wife but that could mean more trouble.' I think that epitomises the cultural gap in the thinking between Unesco which had this wonderful global idea that the drive in literacy was going to transform developing countries and the reality of the people who were being drawn into these programmes.

Similar reflections have been made on the introduction of literacy to Fiji in the nineteenth century. There the islanders were eager to master literacy because they understood it to be the magical source of the missionaries' impressive powers and their wealth. Their discovery

that literacy did not automatically confer these benefits led to problems of disillusionment and loss of motivation (Clammer 1976).

1.5 The research questions

The present study represents an attempt to take seriously the problem of cultural imposition and lack of appropriateness in adult literacy work. The questions which it explores are outlined by Szwed (1981:14), who writes:

I propose that we step back from the question of instruction, back to an even more basic "basic", the social meaning of literacy: that is the roles these abilities play in social life; the varieties of reading and writing available for choice; the contexts for their performance; and the manner in which they are interpreted and tested, not by experts, but by ordinary people in ordinary activities. In doing this, I am following a recent trend in language studies, one which recognized that it is not enough to know what a language looks like and to be able to describe and measure it, but one must also know what it means to its users and how it is used by them.

Szwed's statement comes close to epitomising the scope of this study; the study goes beyond his catalogue of issues in disputing notions such as "social meaning" and "ordinary people", and in attempting to come to terms with some of the questions which these notions themselves raise in a world where - according to Baudrillard (1983) - meaning and "the social" have become problematic - and where the disappearance of "meaning" has much to do with the simulations of mass communication, media and reading.

1.6 The broad argument of the study

After this introductory chapter, the study continues with a consideration of the ways in which reading has been understood in the academic and "scientific" discourses on the subject of reading. Although these have turned increasingly to ethnographic approaches, both in the study of the ways in which people acquire literacy and in the study of literacy as a broad social phenomenon, their orientation remains substantially objectivistic, and we still know little about the place of literacy in the lives of individuals and societies. Chapter 3 is concerned with the inadequacy of objectivism and discusses the challenges posed by hermeneutics, critical theory and post-structuralism. The shift in the understanding of the nature of social phenomena reflected here makes it difficult to interpret cultural practices like literacy or reading in terms of some reference to foundations, or to privilege "social reality" or a "normative culture" (for example) as though they were prior to, generative of, or the meaning behind such practices.

Chapter 3 establishes the importance of "narrative understandings" of social phenomena and argues the value of a more holistic, though necessarily discontinuous, understanding which encompasses a non-reductionist view of both social structure and individual modes of being and valuing. This sets the direction of the rest of the study in which an attempt is made to describe the social context of literacy among working people (Chapter 4) and to gain insight into the ways in which individuals understand the value of reading and its place in their lives (Chapters 5 and 6). The latter is a report on an inquiry

in which some of the major themes raised in the problematizing of literacy are seen from the perspective of the narratives and practices of eighteen leading black employees at two East Rand factories. Chapter 7 draws together the central trends in the study and some conclusions about the reading world of workers are formulated; it is also concerned with pointing to the value of the study for adult basic education and literacy work.

The remainder of the present chapter offers a fuller account of the genesis and context of the study and rationales for some aspects of the approach adopted in it.

1.7 The genesis of the project

(1) The seeding idea

A major problem in adult literacy work is the general lack of suitable reading matter for the newly literate. In the effort to develop suitable literature various difficulties are encountered. These are dealt with in a number of articles by the writer (French 1980, 1983, 1985). They range from the shortage of writers who are willing to submit their talent to the rigours of writing simply, achieving a tone which is not condescending and sustaining interest, to the reluctance of publishers to move into a market where the reading public must still be created and where conventional avenues of distribution are not adequate.

Learner-centred literacy teachers resist notions of appropriateness prescribed by others on behalf of their clientele. Yet adult learners are often passive and dependent, and activists working with them find themselves in a paradoxical position in seeking to help the illiterate to break out of the vicious circle of dependency, so that an element of prescription and imposition seems inevitable. Those developing easy adult reading matter need to establish a starting point. Various ways of doing so have been tried, from writing workshops among adults with little formal education leading to the publication of their writing, as in the British literacy campaign, to questionnaire surveys of the interests of illiterate adults and national writing competitions - two options adopted in Tanzania.

There is, however, one way in which to develop a more informed awareness intended to make action insightful: to study systematically and critically what literate people in the community of the clientele for adult literacy and basic education actually read, the significance that reading has for them and the influences which shape and limit the horizons of their reading worlds. According to Gudshinsky (1962:8), "In order to know what type of literacy material to prepare first, the (literacy) worker must take into consideration the status of literacy in his community."

The importance of these issues goes beyond the provision of suitable reading matter. Observation of many literacy efforts in South Africa suggests that the adult learners often have a vague, and certainly not compelling, notion of the purpose or value of the skills they are ex-

pected to acquire. They seem to have little sense of what literacy has to offer, and their environments seldom provide them with a rich literate culture in which to locate their efforts. What one might call "the ecology of literacy" does not appear to be conducive to success and it may well be that for the promotion of adult literacy to prosper on any scale it will be necessary to give attention to the enrichment of the reading world in the community as a whole. But before we can do this it is important, for ethical and practical reasons, to attempt to understand the reading world that has come into being in their communities.

(ii) The question of needs

The growth of critical perspectives on the nature of culture and its relationship to social "reality", of cultural relativism and historicism, together with rapid social change and cross-cultural interaction, has led to an increasing concern about the question of "needs" in education. This can be seen in the development of curriculum studies and is strongly felt in adult education, where the clientele are hard pressed for time, and where it is critical that what is offered is meaningful to the learners. Boshier (1986) shows that the issue of needs has been a prevailing concern in adult education programmes in the United States over the last thirty years. The question of needs is complex and demands attention to social context, individual perceptions, the dynamics of interaction, and the nature and demands of the subject matter or disciplines being taught. One of the most significant studies of needs is that of Charnley and Jones (1979), who

adopted an "ethological" approach in order to arrive at what adult literacy programmes meant to those taking part in them; from observations of the interaction of learners and tutors they generated emergent criteria for arriving at an understanding of The concept of success in adult literacy. A recent study of a similar kind, but which pays more attention to the nature of literacy itself, is Levine's (1986) The social context of literacy. Both of these studies indicate that understanding the social and cultural meanings of education and the contents of education among the clientele for educational services is a prerequisite for sensitive curriculum development; this need not entail absolutizing the status quo. (An elaboration of the problem of needs in adult literacy work can be found in French 1985.)

The lack of progress in the promotion of adult literacy in South Africa, and the inadequacy of programmes in industry (Wedepohl 1984; French 1986) can be attributed to many factors, but one of the reasons may be that what little is offered is presented with no systematic attention to needs, or is designed on the basis of the largely unresearched assumptions of middle class education planners and course designers about the literacy and learning needs of adult blacks with little formal education. Literacy programmes in South Africa have been and are initiated and run by whites for blacks, and throughout the world by an educated elite for those with little education. Such a situation - and there are structural and cultural reasons for not expecting a groundswell of demand for adult basic education by those who are seen to be in need of it - means that a special attention to needs is essential. Understanding of these needs can be produced in

many ways, and especially through programmes designed on a model of critical action research. A few projects are indeed being conducted on this basis, notably those of the English Literacy Project (ELP), Using Spoken and Written English (USWE), and a number of small "alternative" adult education organisations, but the demands of action tend to overwhelm the research - Walters (1983) comments on this problem - and while worthwhile work has been done, virtually no research or evaluation has been produced which might contribute persuasively to the understanding of needs in this field.

Because of the problems and cost of action research it seems at least worthwhile to attempt to contribute something to the understanding of needs by undertaking studies like the present one.

(iii) The methodological quest

There is a continuous crisis in the social "sciences" concerning issues ranging from methodology to the *raison d'être* of social science itself. The very existence of formal and academic social inquiry shapes and limits what it means to be human. In South Africa the crisis is heightened by the tendency to use "social scientific" (often little more than a euphemism for "bureaucratic") knowledge as a substitute for democracy - for making "rational" decisions on behalf of those who have no part in them, other than as sources of data (Schutte 1982). Even more serious, the multiple centres of dominance, the prevailing authoritarianism, create unavoidable tensions for those concerned with authenticity in their research. A failure to reflect

under these circumstances must lead to technicism - business-like knowledge obtained for the sake of a dubious efficiency instead of right action or genuine understanding.

The study attempts to create something approaching to a whole picture. It is influenced by a variety of aspirations, among them:

- a desire to bring together theorizing and social history and a certain empiricism rooted in the records of people's actual, concrete experience (or at least their accounts of it);
- the need to develop an alternative to "hard" research and to resist the pressure for theoretical closure; - the belief that "findings" have only a misleading appearance of usefulness and are neither as practical nor as yielding of insight as understanding (verstehen) is;
- the belief that both theoretical and speculative understandings and the concrete experience of people expressed in their narratives, are essential to the understanding of any social issue, and that it is probably impossible to bring them together other than in a disjunctive, discontinuous totality;
- the conviction that the need in the promotion of literacy among the people of South Africa is not for highly specific studies establishing yet more marketable techniques for the manipulation of development and learning, but for a deeper sense (however incomplete) of

the social and personal reality of the human pursuits involved. In pursuing this it is more important that people's narratives and their contexts be "read" with the openness of our response to texts than that they become sources of data.

(iv) Two peripheral issues concerning literature

Two further questions must be touched on briefly because they contribute to an understanding of the genesis of the study.

The first is the problematic position of serious literature in South Africa. Since the late 1960s there has been an extended argument about the relationship of literature to society in the country. Central issues have been the question of social commitment and the attempt to create space for indigenous voices burdened by "the great tradition" of English literature and the interests with which its maintenance are associated. In this movement there has been a tendency to see literature as a vehicle for promoting social change. Inasmuch as the present study is concerned with the role of reading in people's lives and their uses and perceptions of it, it is of interest within this area of contention.

The other question is a somewhat curious and idiosyncratic one. It concerns the lack, other than in certain recent novels influenced by semiotics and reception aesthetics, of any serious attention within literature itself to the shaping role of reading. Why do writers, themselves often more deeply influenced by reading than by action and

personal relationships, so very rarely touch on the role of reading? This puzzlement creates an underlying curiosity about what reading means to people, which has an obvious relationship with the central thrust of this study.

(vi) The specific occasion for the research

The research for this project took place within a broad programme of research in the Human Sciences Research Council into "Language in the labour situation". The aim of the programme was that it should lead to the institution of technically effective courses of language and literacy instruction among industrial workers. However, reflection and a survey of the slender literature on the subject of language proficiency in industry suggested that far more needed to be known about the place of language and literacy in that context. Various studies and arguments had raised doubts about the idea that educational and linguistic inadequacies play a major part in the lowering of productivity (e.g. Chisholm 1985, Gilmour 1984, van Dyk 1985, Etheredge 1985), and the technicistic and instrumental orientation which is prevalent in the literacy projects introduced by business management was open to question. Widdowson's (1984) critique of the notion of "English for Special Purposes" is particularly telling in this respect.

Attention was therefore given within the programme to at least some attempt at a critical account of the roles of language and literacy in industry in order to obtain a clearer picture of the needs. Reagan

(1986) is the first outcome of this effort, the present study being the second.

1.8 The scope of the study

(i) Why "reading", not "literacy"

There were a number of reasons for focusing on reading rather than on literacy in the study. Although reading itself is a very broad subject, it has some precision compared with literacy. "Literacy" creates considerable problems of definition (Ellis 1982) and has become something of an emotive term. Among other things, it is clear that the kind of questioning described in Chapter 5 would be much more difficult and less defined if "literacy" were used instead of "reading". In any case, most literate people read incomparably more than they write, so there is a considerable degree of overlap between the concepts. "Reading" has not been specified at all narrowly in the study, and there are times when writers and the workers involved in the study speak of "reading" (or literacy) as though it were synonymous with "education". This conflation is understandable, considering the centrality of reading in education; where the distinction is blurred it has been allowed to pass.

(ii) The element of coherence in the concept of reading

Some justification must be provided for taking such a broad subject rather than fragmenting it into fields such as "work-related reading

tasks" or "leisure reading". That there would be place for such narrower approaches cannot be doubted - especially in, say, an academic context where reading is likely to be a far more highly specialized pursuit than among workers whose reading is relatively limited.

The concept "reading" might be seen to be the sum of its discrete attributes, or as a field with numerous dimensions, some of which have very little in common with others. Thus reading as a field of investigation could be considered as information processing or in terms of purposes and functions, of levels of abstraction or of depth. From the point of view of strict empiricism reading would have to be fragmented into its components, or into more narrowly defined variables, for research to produce interpretable findings. In the case of the present study, which is not nomological, a case can be made for looking at reading from a holistic perspective.

The following argument uses five examples which offer a fair cross section of reading:

- A a newly literate person struggling to extract information from a bus timetable (or from a written sign)
- B a scholar rapidly scanning a learned journal
- C a student working through to the heart of a poem
- D a worker absorbed in light leisure reading
- E a newspaper reader using numerous cues to find information of interest to her.

All that these readers might have in common is that they are engaged with printed text. Yet this in itself may be more significant than it seems.

All five readers are engaged in making meaning out of their experience, in searching for significance, admittedly of very different orders, and recreating for themselves worlds beyond their own experience or knowledge (Smith 1985). More usefully, they are all set in relation to a culture and a society in which reading is allocated not only functional, but also a certain sacral value. There are common aspects of their relationship to the text which lie at a much deeper level than the obvious differences. For one thing, they are on their own with the text, and although they are engaged in a social act, what they are doing is also, in however small a way, an exercise in autonomy and an affirmation of autonomy. Moreover, what they are doing is concerned with the reification of intelligence, it has a built-in abstraction, an otherness, which few human activities can equal. Although it has affinities to various creative acts (story-telling, shaping a tool) those acts are more closely bound by their social nature or by their concreteness.

However, the autonomy is accompanied by a particularly intense form of participation. Taking a phenomenological approach to the identity of reading, Poulet (1969:55-60) sees reading as a unique process in which

I am the subject of thoughts other than my own... as though reading were the act by which a thought managed to bestow itself within me with a subject not myself... I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers and acts within me. The phe-

nomenon appears in its most obvious and even naivest form in the sort of spell brought about by certain cheap kinds of reading, such as thrillers, of which I say "It gripped me". This strange displacement of myself by the work ... provokes a certain feeling of surprise within me. I am a consciousness astonished by an existence which is not mine, but which I experience as though it were mine.

In language we externalize our inner lives which in turn have been shaped by language, its interpretive frameworks and its often conflicting strata of accumulated meanings. This process is considerably heightened in writing and reading, where language is in a sense petrified and made available for analysis and reflection in a way quite impossible with spoken language alone. This means that reading (together with writing) is a powerful process for understanding and manipulating the world. It would seem to be a precondition for any extended application of the imagination to changing reality; it infinitely multiplies the power of consciousness and must undermine the validity of crudely deterministic interpretations of reality (Leed 1980).

At a slightly different level, reading has a built-in liberating capacity - not without ambiguity. The reader, and especially the silent reader, is in communion with a broader community beyond the local community, a communion at times across classes, culture and time. This has its danger in the loss of the absolute tie with immediate human relationships; in reading the significant other can become an abstraction without the responsibility implicit in real ties. But in spite of this, liberation from the purely local or provincial is an

important aspect of personal and social development in which reading may play a vital role together with other social forces.

There is yet another way in which reading is liberating, and in which, as in most processes of liberation, there is a potential for oppression. There is an underlying contractual element in the very act of setting language down on paper. This means that the reader is in a sense making an appeal to a sanction beyond persons or specific communities. Reader A is working with a contract in which personal whim or contingencies are, ideally at least, set aside. In doing this he is affirming his relationship to a wider world governed ostensibly on rational grounds. Reader E is implicitly relying on a contract whereby she is supplied with accurate information freed (in principle) from the distortions of anecdote and rumour. Readers C and D expect a special experience and B expects to get findings with a high degree of validity which he can either add to his store of knowledge or submit to detailed reflection and criticism in a way not possible with the spoken word. It is very likely that one of the first uses of writing was for the ratification of contracts; this includes the keeping of accounts (Oxenham 1982). The Bible is centrally concerned with contracts, or covenants. Nothing makes this clearer than the fact that it is made up of Old and New "Testaments". (An interesting point of speculation is whether our religious concepts are not very substantially conditioned by the nature of literacy. Writing takes on a life of its own, beyond its writers, beyond immediate human interaction. Perhaps the very idea of transcendence and its reflections in notions such as that of natural law, are shaped by the nature of the written

word. This argument links closely with the growing identification of decontextualisation as a major achievement of literacy and schooling discussed more fully in Chapter 2.)

The oppressive potential of this liberating power lie in the permanence and the domination of tradition. Oral cultures are flexible in as much as they change their ideologies and their folk memories much more easily to respond to current conditions and needs. Literate societies may need revolutions to bring the inherited ideological order into a working relationship with social reality. Secondly, the "contract" is by no means always kept, and there is no doubt that the written word can be used to falsify and mystify like no other medium of communication because of the respect accorded it, because of its built-in credentials. But on the other hand, no other medium is so available for criticism. Smith (1985) argues that "written language invites contention, and then by its persistence through time and space offers every facility for the contention to expand and persist."

Reading, then, of whatever kind, can be seen as an activity with certain unique features. It is partly by nature thus, but has become more so by the interlocking attribution of meaning over time, so that the diverse reading of the readers mentioned above is sanctioned and supported in a web of significance.

Definitions of reading are misleading. In terms of the brief argument here the inadequacy of speaking of reading as "decoding printed symbols" is clear. There are also limitations in defining reading in

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Definitions of reading are misleading. In terms of the brief argument here the inadequacy of speaking of reading as "decoding printed symbols" is clear. There are also limitations in defining reading in

terms of functions and purposes. As we have seen, although some reading has very simply-described purposes, such as "helping one to catch a bus", there is an underlying aspect of reading which cannot be understood in terms of goal-directed behaviour.

1.9 The value of the study

The study should contribute to the understanding of adult learning needs in the industrial context, and while it does not lead to the prescription of programmes or methods, it should be helpful in the design of more sensitive and appropriate curricula for adult education. It contributes in a small way to the study of literacy and society mentioned above and may stimulate more interest in this field of inquiry in South Africa. The research has been methodologically innovative and may be of value to those interested in approaches to social and educational inquiry. One of the most fruitful aspects of the research may be its uncovering of areas which will have to be researched if we are to gain a fairly comprehensive understanding of the place of literacy in South African society. Some of these possibilities for research are suggested in Chapter 7.

1.10 Limitations

The study is exploratory and descriptive. It covers a wide range of perspectives and discourses on reading and literacy, but it does not pretend to research reading behaviour other than through its reflections in people's own accounts and understanding of their experi-

ence. The use of objectifying methods like testing has been avoided on principle. This is not to say that testing would not show some interesting characteristics of the reading situation, but that it was inappropriate to the particular kind of research and the aims of the research. Another limitation is the lack of an analysis of the kind of reading matter commonly found in the reading world of black workers. Such an analysis, on the model of Hoggart's classic The uses of literacy, in which the contents of working class reading matter are discussed, would be of great interest and relevance to the present study, but is beyond its scope. The issue will only be touched on in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDINGS OF READING IN THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

Prospero: Me, poor man, my library
Was dukedom large enough...
so, of his gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From my own library with volumes that
I prized above my dukedom.

Caliban: You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse.

Gonzalo: Had I plantation of this isle, my lord, -
I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty
And use of service, none; contract,
succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none.

Caliban: there thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books; or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cut his wezand with thy knife. Remember
First to possess his books, for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command -

Prospero: I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous
winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war:
But this rough magic
I here abjure;
I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

2.1 An overview

"Reading research" is a highly specialised and fragmented field; both it and "readership research" are almost entirely concerned with a technicist commitment to control, but there are signs in these fields which point to the need to know what reading means to people. The growth of a social perspective on reading has occurred outside of mainstream reading research and by now constitutes a significant multi-disciplinary field of inquiry. Reasons for its growth are suggested, and the contributions of theoretical disputes and investigations are reviewed. Themes isolated here concern the relationship of literacy to economic growth, social change, thought and language. In spite of the relevance of these studies, largely in terms of their qualification of widely accepted generalisations about the benefits of literacy, it can be seen that relatively little attention has been given to what reading means to people. This question is of interest both for the study of reading and society and for the issue of adult learning needs discussed in Chapter 1.

2.2 The understanding of reading in "Reading Research"

Reading research has very largely been, and continues to be, concerned with the acquisition of reading. It covers a wide spectrum from teaching methods to the nature of comprehension, and, as can be seen from an overview of the contents of the journals dedicated to reading research and the recent handbooks of reading research, it has reached a high level of specialisation and fragmentation.

Already in 1959 we find criticism of the "extensive use of, and reliance upon, the normative survey technique in pseudoscientific educational research" directed specifically at reading research, and of the utilitarian emphasis in reading research (Brower 1963). Brower makes this attack in terms of Leavis's rejection of "the mechanization of human relations", and argues for the meaning of reading to be seen as a moral concern deeply rooted in judgments about values. In 1964 Ennis pointed out that "the first interesting fact about sociological research in reading is that there has been so little of it" in spite of the demonstration that "the most important single factor in progress in reading at school is socio-economic class." Although reading research has become much more diversified and sophisticated since then, the emphasis persists, and the major journals continue to look like adjuncts to mathematical psychology. Ingham (1985:146) argues that the major body promoting reading research - the International Reading Association (IRA) has "a view of research which is rooted in positivism and values an experimental approach above all", and Engel (1986:86) writes of the way in which "the dominant positivist/behaviorist paradigm (in reading research) has led us astray." Allan and Muller (1985) comment on "the dominance of psychologists in reading research" and argue the need for more comprehensive models of the reading process, and not only models which are easily accessible to testing. They quote Venezky on "the lack of ecological validity" of much reading research.

The major concerns of reading research can be seen in the contents of Mackinnon and Waller's Reading research: advances in theory and prac-

tice (four volumes, 1981-1985), one of a number of handbooks and surveys of reading research which have appeared recently. It covers

1. reading readiness
2. learning to read - pedagogics, school readers, writing systems
3. the development of reading comprehension, and
4. the development of reading comprehension beyond the initial stages
- disabilities, information processing of skilled readers etc (Harrison 1986).

In the 60s "the great debate" centred on the virtues of phonics versus the language experience approach to teaching reading (Chall 1967/83). More recently the focus seems to have been on the nature of text processing, but any broad generalisation about the field is misleading. One of the most controversial subjects has been the contribution of metalinguistic awareness to reading achievement; here an attempt has been made to go beyond the findings about the relationship of social class and family background to reading and to find out what it is that does promote or inhibit achievement in certain classes and families. A major programme in the USA focussed on out of school influences on reading, and paid special attention to the metalinguistic concepts passed on in some middle class homes (Chall and Snow 1984). Reviewing two recent books on this subject, Harste (1985) warns that the positive relationships established are "correlational at best". More satisfactory results would appear to have been achieved in ethnographic research into The making of a reader, where it is shown that "adults in the community were making readers of children long before they could read and write, without deliberately trying to teach these

skills" and that "exposure to literacy events" plays a large role in making readers (Ingham 1985). But this takes a sociological position and does not answer the questions posed by the notion that knowledge of discourse about language is a prerequisite for successful reading acquisition. Guthrie (1983) points out that socio-economic status correlates with reading partly through its influence on language and partly through values and attitudes towards schooling. On the other hand, Morrow (1985) quotes research by Chomsky and Cohen which establishes that children exposed to reading develop sophisticated language structures which seem to contribute to a high rate of reading success, and recommends the systematic development of voluntary reading in school and home. His own research showed that this important aspect of reading development was undervalued by teachers of reading. Wells (1985) and Ferreira (1985) both gave strong support to the need to read to children, quoting research which shows the importance of children's growing perceptions and the hypotheses which they create in developing their concepts of reading and writing.

Labov's studies of the structural and functional differences between non-standard Negro English and standard English led to the conclusion that the "cultural conflict" involved was a major contributor to reading failure (Labov and Robins 1967). Focussing on the failure of many black American school children to learn to read, Dummett (1984) argues that this may be ascribed to the language difference between black English and the language of school readers rather than to social and cultural deficits. The interrelationship of reading and language is stressed by Nagy, Herman and Anderson (1985:233) who found that "inci-

dental learning from context accounts for a substantial proportion of the vocabulary growth that occurs during the school years", an observation of some relevance to the learning situation in South Africa where many people are required to master English while being segregated from speakers of English; it underlines the importance of reading here, and the seriousness of the relative neglect revealed in this study.

There are, of course, ideological implications in the dominant paradigm of reading research. The underlying assumption is that people are passive processors of fixed and static data - in this case texts - and that reading is basically not a social or intentional act, but a set of behaviours for which the most significant criterion of judgment is that of efficiency. A corollary of this is that research is not concerned with understanding or emancipation, but with control (cf Habermas 1971), or with making neutral processes more efficient. Readers and the processes they are engaged in are infinitely available to manipulation. In line with the tenets of logical positivism, ends are not available for discussion. This orientation in research and thought goes together with the observation that "our schools, indeed our society, seem to be structured in such a way as to make the occurrence of a certain amount of passive failure almost inevitable" (Johnston and Winograd 1985:295). Passive failure is a syndrome in which the learner's inability to orient themselves cognitively or affectively in relation to the subject is a major cause of non-achievement.

There has been a small but important change in the orientation of reading research. Beck (1985) points to changes over the last ten years which centre on a shift from viewing the reader as a passive recipient to an active information processor, and to the growth of ethnographic methods, although he limits the value of these to the identification of problems and areas for more quantitative research. Even where the commitment remains one to a positivist orientation, there is an admission of the multi-faceted nature of reading. Southgate (1981:27) writes of a movement from mechanical approaches to a greater concern with meaning, thought interaction in thought about reading, quoting from Goodman to the effect that "what distinguishes more and less proficient reading is how well integrated it is: how efficiently and effectively cues of all sorts are used, strategies applied and meaning created". Chall, who is perhaps best known for her demonstration of the value of phonics in the initial acquisition of reading by children, has developed a model of reading growth where the five stages involve qualitatively different features; recognition of these changes helps to reconcile conflicting findings from various fields of research (Purves 1985). Popp (1982:109) argues that "the successful development of literacy programmes involves ... the materials used in instruction, the motivation of the learner, the prior knowledge of the learner and the interrelatedness of these factors" and Nist (1985:87) that reading should be taught holistically: "the total performance ... is made up of a complex set of processes - cognitive, attitudinal and manipulative." Mainline reading researchers, even while holding onto their stress on the centrality of decoding skills in initial learning, now give more recognition to the impor-

tance of other factors, from language proficiency to context (Evans and Carr 1985).

The change has been brought about by various shifts in focus; there is a certain movement away from quantitative approaches in social inquiry as a whole which has influenced reading research - this is dealt with in Chapter 3. Contributions from psycholinguistics have also had some impact here. Most notable perhaps is the work of Smith (1978), who argues on the grounds of evidence from cognitive psychology and transformational linguistics that whatever the most effective teaching methods may be, the act of reading can only be understood as the work of active, meaning-making subjects, imaginatively engaged in what they are doing. Smith bases this thesis on analyses of the role of background knowledge, expectations or predictions, as well as of the processes involved in letter and word recognition, and concludes that "meaning is in the mind, not in the text" and that "teachers have a crucial role in ... making reading meaningful" (195). Engel (1986:88) echoing Smith, says that "human acts are characterised by the meaning and intention of those who perform them" and stresses the importance of the kinds of knowledge a person brings to reading and that "a child's readiness to read also depends on the priority accorded to reading, books, and education in the home." Studies of the psychology of reading have not only been concerned with cognitive aspects, and have recorded the vicious circle of stress, fear, low achievement, negative self-concept and "learned helplessness" which leads to learning failure (Guthrie 1983).

The most serious alternative to the dominant paradigm in reading research has come from the ethnographers of language and reading. Pearson's Handbook of reading research (1984) has a whole section devoted to ethnographic research (Allan and Muller 1985) and titles such as Goelman and Smith's Awakening to literacy (Zwinger 1985) and Bettelheim and Zelan's On learning to read: the child's fascination with meaning (1982) provide some indication of the field. Hutson's Advances in reading/language research (1982) outlines major assumptions that must be brought to reading research, among them the idea that that "a full understanding of reading and language must, at a minimum, consider linguistic, cognitive, social/personal, and physiological factors", and that "there are many styles and conventions of research and each can play a role in the total ecology of reading/language research" (Harste 1983). She quotes from Bloome and Greene that "reading is a context specific activity, that is, the nature of the specific performances can be defined only within the context in which they occur" and that "reading is often conducted in the company of other people and may even be a means of identifying oneself as a group member."

Szwed (1981:14 and 20) has made one of the most substantial arguments for an "ethnography of literacy". He points out that

the stunning fact is that we do not fully know what literacy is. The assumption that it is simply a matter of the skills of reading and writing does not even begin to approach the fundamental problem: What are reading and writing for?... It is entirely possible that teachers are able to teach reading and writing as abstract skills, but do not know what reading and writing are for in the lives and futures of their students.

(After outlining the scope of the field.) One method of studying literacy - ethnography - represents a considerable break with most

past research on the subject. I would contend that ethnographic methods, in fact, are the only means for finding out what literacy really is and what can be validly measured.

Probably the most notable ethnographer of language and literacy in western reading and educational research is Brice Heath (1982,1984). Her most recent work is an extensive survey of two industrial towns in the United States, where she studied the primary interactions and uses of language and reading in context, treating her subject in much the same way as it had been handled by anthropologists in less "developed" parts of the world. An interesting example of the use of a related approach in adult education is a study of three "disabled adult readers" using a case study approach. The study reveals a childhood failure to perceive what reading was about, compounded by anxiety, maladaptive strategies and conflicting motives (Johnston 1985).

Ethnographic approaches have become common in educational research. In reading research they have been used in studying the interaction of young learners with parents and teachers (Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986), and have even reached into the domain of testing: Johnston and Winograd (1985:295) ask us to "move towards a focus on ideographic assessment of reading". The influence of social context has also been taken into account more thoroughly in the study of the nature of texts. Piper talks of "the culture-dependence of text" in looking at story-grammar. The ways in which narratives and longer statements are ordered have been found to be culture-specific. "Texts, like all of language, achieve their status as a function of the pervasive undergirding of linguistic conventions" (Piche 1983). School readers, put

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into social context, have been found to have a hegemonic role, pressing on children adults' assumptions about the world and their sanctioned view of what childhood should be like (Freebody and Baker 1985).

Guthrie and Kirsch (1984:352-355), in an article titled The emergent perspective on literacy make a particularly strong case for "a social-interaction perspective":

From cognitive psychology to anthropology to literary criticism, communication is thought to be conditioned by the social context in which it occurs. Thus a person reads not only with certain specialized cognitive processes, but also with certain expectations and purposes... The choices of whether to read, when to read, how to read and what to read for are in part social choices. To read at all is to enter into some sort of social contract with the author... Ecological validity will be an increasingly important criterion for the construction, selection, interpretation, and purchase of measures of educational achievement... Educational settings must simulate literacy practices in homes, workplaces, community institutions, and future learning environments... (In Sticht's research) literacy was learned best when the social context, purpose, and content of the reading in classrooms were similar to those of the environments in which students would ultimately function... By adopting the social-interaction perspective on literacy, educators will be flexible enough to accommodate this diversity.

2.3 Understandings of reading in readership and library science

Recent studies in reading research move in the direction of an interest in reading and society, but their focus is still largely on the individual learning to read. We move closer to the meaning and role of reading when we come to readership studies and library science - a field which has remained very much apart from the reading research discussed above. Developed to a high degree of professionalism in the 30s and 40s, especially in the USA, they were concerned above all with

the rigorous statistical analysis of reading habits. Although they were focussed on questions relating to an efficient and more democratic provision of library services, they also sought answers to questions about the relationship between reading habits, class and other variables, as well as questions about what motivates people to read. Like reading research, readership research has been dominated by positivism, and by an instrumental role definition concerned with the control and improvement of library services. Although it has suffered from the limitations and contradictions of a positivist approach to social reality, it has been concerned with many of the questions posed in the present study, and the limitations are illuminating. In what follows the isolated page references are to Karetzky's extensive Reading research and librarianship: a history and analysis (1982).

Readership research came into being as a result of a variety of influences, among them the adult education movement which arose after the First World War (p. 35), the growth of professionalism and the establishment of post-graduate work in librarianship (p. 49) and more generally, the sense of cultural crisis particularly strongly felt in the 30s, with its intense political commitments, fears and hopes. The movement to use quantitative methods from the social sciences and from education - the influence of Dewey and Thorndike were strongly felt - was opposed by humanists like Compton, whose Who reads what? offered a literary approach with close affinities to qualitative and ethnographic research, but was over subjective and lacking in rigour (pp. 83-88).

The prime mover in the movement was Waples. Through his enormous influence he ensured the dominance, still felt in library science, of rigorous survey methods, although he himself set qualitative analysis against his quantitative findings (p. 101). Waples - and the whole movement - was fundamentally concerned about needs and interests, but also about the social aspects of reading, such as correlations of reading habits with variables such as class, sex and occupation. Although personally a committed social democrat and anti-fascist, he believed very strongly in the value of objective data on the uses of reading. In his first major work, What people want to read about (1932) he offered a number of fairly predictable findings about the distribution of tastes, but his major finding was that people's interests were very inadequately met by reading because of poor accessibility and low readability. In his magnum opus, People and print (1937) Waples ventured more boldly into social theory, attempting to formulate the relationship between social phenomena and changes in reading patterns. He was criticised by the Chicago sociologists for the inadequacy of his theory, but Karetzky maintains that he made significant contributions. In his analysis his underlying social moralism and his belief in the value of serious reading for common people, show through the "facts" (pp. 121-123).

Titles produced by Waples and his school include Libraries and readers in the state of New York (1938), Who uses the public library (1937), Book selection: its principles and practice (1937), and The geography of reading: a study of the distribution and status of libraries in the United States (1938).

The American model appears to have been influential in much Western readership research. It stands in fairly strong contrast to two Russian approaches. The Soviet approach was championed by Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya. It centred on "the idea that reading interests must be studied in relation to the reader's entire social backgrounds - everyday activities, jobs, communities of residence, and so on" and that the "central concern of librarianship is the 'scientific' analysis of how libraries are influenced and in turn influence the social and economic conditions of society" (303). The truth was to be arrived at in the dialectic of action for change, informed by theoretical analysis. This contrasted with the American emphasis - somewhat unwilling on the part of Waples - on "noninterference" and giving the readers what they wanted.

The other Russian contribution was made by Nicholas Rubakin (1863-1946), a liberal who developed a sensitive and eccentric science called "Bibliopsychology" (pp. 307-317), which was intended to provide the key to the provision of reading matter to match the psychology of the individual reader. He believed that reading was in the mind rather than in the book.

Apart from problems such as the distortion of findings by such factors as limited book stocks and the neglect of the study of non-users of libraries, the weakness of mainstream readership research lay in its entanglement with "facts" (what readers did read, or what they said they thought they wanted to read) its consequent difficulty in stimulating action to contend with the status quo and the frequent banality

of its findings, especially compared with the intuitions of a talented and experienced library practitioner. Karetzky points to a failure to integrate the literary and artistic side of librarianship into the field and regrets their continuing separation from most library work and library education. Concluding his study, he writes:

... preliminary investigation indicates that reading research has not received the scholarly attention that it did in the 1930s and that great advances have not been made since those years. Research on the psychology of reading, reading motivation, and the individual and social effects of reading are still needed. Emphasis should perhaps be on the qualitative approach and the case study. The in-depth research should study individuals and specific groups of people, not just a broad representation of the public (pp. 356-7).

American-style readership research, which appears to have been the major influence on studies of reading in South Africa to date, (see Chapter 4) bifurcates into a fairly obvious form of market research on the one hand, and generalised belle-lettristic reflection on the other. The predictable nature of readership studies is seen in Berelson's Who reads what books and why (1957), where the writer is reduced to a rather vapid reflection on the social role of reading after presenting the latest facts. A similar quality can be found in Bogart's Press and public: who reads what, when, where and why in American newspapers. In a 1969 study of The magazine reading habits of political activists, Grupp finds that activists read mainly newspaper and political magazines, and that their choice of these reflects and reinforces their established opinions. Sharon, reporting in 1974 on a survey entitled What do adults read, summarizes the findings thus:

The results indicate that reading is a ubiquitous activity of American adults. A substantial portion of the waking hours of

many persons is spent in reading, frequently during daily activities - such as working; shopping; attending school, church or theater; and traveling or commuting - and during recreational or free-time activities. Most reading time is spent on newspapers, magazines, books, and job-related reading matter. Many types of reading on which a relatively short time is spent, however, are an integral part of other activities of the individual, such as reading street or traffic signs while traveling. Although the average person reads for almost 2 hours on a typical day, people differ greatly in the amount that they read. Persons with high socioeconomic status tend to read more of all kinds of printed matter than those with low status. The 5 per cent of all adults who are unable to read have an extremely low socioeconomic status and frequently depend on others to read to them.

The more generalised reflections on the state of reading, such as those in the issues of Daedalus dedicated to this subject in 1963 and 1983 are more interesting, but the amount of unsubstantiated editorialising leads to dissatisfaction.

Two related fields of investigation are of interest to the present study. The first is book development championed by Unesco in its "Division for book promotion and international exchanges" and reflected in a useful series of monographs which are referred to in the discussion of the extent and significance of reading above (Escarpit 1982, Hasan 1982, Gault 1982 etc). The division can be said to have "the prime objective of making this educational and intellectual life-blood as available in less developed countries as in the highly developed industrial ones" (Oakeshott and Bradley 1982:3). The second is to be found in a small group of publications concerning the nature of popular reading and working class culture. Classics which stand on their own here (the field does not appear to have grown beyond them) are Altick's The English common reader (1957) and Hoggart's The uses of literacy (1958). Both are highly informative descriptive studies.

The first gives an account of the development of the British reading public in the nineteenth century, offering insights into the conflicting trends in the development of reading, the efforts of middle class associations to propagate "improving" reading, and the more vigorous growth of "street literature". Similar studies have been Davies An enquiry into the reading of the lower classes (1970) and James Fiction for the working man 1830-50 (1973). Hoggart's study blends subjective insights and a literary-critical approach to the popular literature of the 50s in Britain to make a portrait of the working class which is sympathetic to its strengths and aware of the dangers of the penetration of shallow mass media.

Although library science and the latter studies bring sociological insights and methods to the study of reading, they have not been included under the study of reading and society largely because they regard reading and literacy as fairly unquestionable "givens". In what follows we will see that literacy has over the past twenty five years become problematic; it is no longer treated as a transparent phenomenon. This has led to a more distanced, though often passionate, stance in which descriptive studies are replaced by studies which query the value and impact of literacy in society.

2.4 The understanding of literacy in studies of literacy and society

For people to start investigating the role and value of a phenomenon requires a confluence of factors, but perhaps above all some sense of

crisis is needed. The study of the social role of literacy has been stimulated by a crisis of confidence in literacy, but also by the development of old and new academic disciplines. The following are some of the influences on the growth of interest in the relationship of literacy and society:

- the sheer growth of literacy and publication over the last century, and the criticism of mass society and culture which it has stimulated;
- the related development of communication studies which has been stimulated by the rapid advances in communications technology; in particular, the apparent threat of the electronic media to "print culture";
- large-scale efforts to promote literacy worldwide; the partial failure of these efforts in comparison with the hopes which they raised has led to a more questioning spirit regarding the uses and value of literacy;
- trends in the sociologies of knowledge and of education in which both the phenomenological position (the social construction of reality) and the neo-marxist critique of ideology and schooling undermine our tendency to take common phenomena -- including reading and writing -- for granted;
- a focus on literacy, and the differences between literate and oral societies, in anthropology, social history and the history of education.

Slaughter (1985:111) says that what

is striking about this literature (on reading and society) is that, discounting the pedagogical studies and the literature of the literacy specialists, there is so much of it. Also that it is widely scattered. There is furthermore little integration between these various studies and disciplines and the available information has not yet been pulled together.

In what follows an attempt is made to draw together various tendencies. The boundaries are difficult to draw. Slaughter categorises the literacy specialists into four groups: linguists, literacy (i.e. reading and writing) specialists, "theorists" (anthropologists and sociologists) and social historians. Here, however, the field is studied thematically, covering the relationship of literacy to economic issues, social change, culture and language. The distinctions are useful, but their artificiality must be recognised. In reality the different aspects are virtually inseparable.

(1) Literacy and prosperity

The belief that literacy leads to prosperity for many years provided the basic motivation for literacy campaigns. The theory was simple: literate people are more productive, and where there is greater productivity there is greater wealth; everyone benefits from this. It was, after all, easy for anyone to see that the wealthiest nations were invariably the most literate nations. The argument was attractive to people who were critical of the quality of cultural mission, or imposition, in colonial education and who wished to focus on the need of humanity for survival and a better life.

In fact, there is no clear evidence that literacy contributes directly to productivity, or that productivity and economic growth as such benefit everyone in society. Greater national wealth does not necessarily mean less exploitation. In general, it makes sense to see that literacy works together with many other factors to produce a modern society, and that these other factors also contribute to the growth of literacy.

In the 1920s a Russian researcher, Strumilin, claimed to have established that rudimentary education raised the productivity of workers quite considerably. His research provided support for the huge Soviet commitment to universal literacy (Bhola 1969). Subsequent research and thought on this subject has been far less conclusive about the material benefits of basic literacy.

In the early years of political decolonization the notion of "functional literacy" became increasingly popular. The enthusiasm for functional literacy stimulated a number of studies and much thought. Undoubtedly the most notable of the studies was Unesco's "Experimental World Literacy Programme" (Unesco 1976). This expensive international project was designed to demonstrate the benefits of literacy once and for all. Various measures were used to link literacy with an improvement in productivity, especially agricultural productivity, and quality of life. The experiment seems to have established little beyond the fact that large international research projects are extraordinarily difficult to run, and that establishing causal links between literacy and development is almost impossible, especially in the short

term. The evaluators of the project sustained their belief in the value of functional literacy programmes. Harman (1978) is very critical of the inadequacy of the evidence and of the critical analysis of the experience. However, the project encouraged the growth of a focus on cultural and contextual factors in the promotion of literacy, and may have contributed to a subsequent decline in international concern about adult literacy per se.

In discussing functional literacy programmes it is necessary to make an important distinction: the proponents of functional literacy were of two types. There were those who saw literacy mainly in terms of industrialisation and economic growth and those who wanted literacy for people. The latter argued, not that literacy would lead to growth, but that literacy was good for people. However, adult literacy projects had not been very successful, and they held that this was because what was learnt in literacy projects had little to do with people's lives and needs. For literacy to be successful, it would have to be related to those needs (Bhola 1969). In spite of the growing influence of thinkers like Paulo Freire (1970,1972), at that time, adults' needs tended to be identified with the needs of the growing nation: to be more productive, less hungry and healthier. Courses and materials were designed which were severely practical and were focussed on local problems: how to grow better crops; how to fill in forms; how to combat bilharzia; birth control. We have already seen in Jenkins's account in Chapter 1 how there seem to have been a number of problems in the concept of functional literacy: a misconception of the nature and benefits of basic literacy; too narrow a concept of hu-

man needs; and above all, an external perspective regarding how, and by whom, those needs should be defined. Winchester (1985) attacks the inadequacy of Unesco's assumption in the 60s that literacy is self-evidently the essential link for modernization that will bring about prosperity, wealth and peace.

In one of the most comprehensive surveys of literacy research, Versluys (1977) found that the desire for education as such equalled economic benefits as the first motivation for acquiring literacy, followed by social prestige and religious needs. (He also points to the need for a reasonably high level of literacy if people are to be able to learn from reading and to be willing to do so.)

Various research projects conducted over the past twenty years all have results which lead to a questioning of the relationship of literacy to development. An investigation of literacy in the English industrial revolution showed that literacy actually declined in the early years of industrialisation, among other things because of the use of children to work in factories when they might have been at school or at least in a more favourable learning environment. The literacy rate rose dramatically only later, in response to the demands of an increasingly complex social order (Sanderson 1972). On the other hand Scotland and Sweden had the highest rates of literacy for a long period during which they were among the least developed countries in Europe. Their literacy rates were due in large measure to the power of the Protestant churches, which made the ability to read the Bible

mandatory in Sweden, and developed universal schooling in Scotland (Stone 1969).

By 1967 there was a growing rejection of the notion that education was a major causal factor in development (Hurd and Johnston 1967). A study of world literacy statistics showed that literacy was not always a good guide to socio-economic standing, although a certain minimum level of education seemed needed for there to be any development at all (Kamerschen 1968). In Chile an experimental study suggested that modernization did depend on certain appropriate attitudes, but that these attitudes tended to be held by people with a somewhat higher level of formal education than basic literacy (Rogers 1969). In a powerful thrust for modernization in Iran, the Shah placed great emphasis on literacy and made Iran into a world centre for literacy work. Yet a longitudinal study of what is achieved by a literacy programme, which follows the subsequent careers of learners in Iranian literacy projects, finds the highest achievers leaving almost immediately for industrial centres instead of staying to raise the quality of life in their own communities, which was the intention of the campaign (Unesco 1973). Similar findings are reported from Botswana (Winchester 1985). One can only speculate on the contribution of a high powered, westernizing literacy campaign to the discontent which fired the resurgence of Islamic traditionalism in Iran.

The contribution of literacy in the work situation has also been brought into doubt. In Zimbabwe it was shown that illiterates could pick up improved agricultural techniques without literacy (Smith

1971,1978). An implication of this seemed to be that literacy classes might get in the way if they were given priority over practical improvement. It is easy to imagine the awkwardness of planting maize according to the instructions in an oversimplified handbook, especially when one considers how difficult it is to write instructions for a common process like lighting a match compared with the ease of demonstration. On the other hand, it is equally clear that it demands much more than basic literacy to master the appropriate literature on agricultural science and to communicate it effectively to practitioners. Analyses of job grading and requirements in South Africa (Baucom 1978) and the USA (Diehl and Mikulecky 1981) have shown that literacy or reading ability have little to do with status in many fields of industrial work, and that very specific literacy skills seem to be required in most of the jobs where literacy is important. The latter study quotes evidence to support the conclusion that status is indeed related to the scope and depth of demands in the job, but that greater literacy ability is neither required nor held by people with higher job status. A recent study in the USA, which looks at the way language and reading are used in two whole communities, shows that the industrial context there offers "almost no opportunities to write, few chances to read, and almost no occasions when (the use) of oral language (is) critical for success" (Heath 1984:449). Rush (1985:35) found that "although the literacy and related competencies required in skilled and semi-skilled occupations are far more complex than the term 'functional' implies, only marginal literacy competencies may be required for success on the job." Research in which the writer has been involved recently seems to show that the industrial workers and

management concerned do not perceive low language and literacy skills as placing serious constraints on work relationships, communication or productivity; the distortions of social and political factors would seem to be far more significant (Reagan 1986). Gilmour (1984) suggests that the relationship between education and hiring practices in South African industry is ambiguous.

Literacy is undoubtedly an essential component in the making of a modern society, but it is clearly not the master key to widely distributed prosperity - and it would seem that people are aware of the limitations of literacy in their lives.

(ii) Literacy, power and social change

The excerpts from The Tempest which preface this chapter indicate the ambiguities of literate civilisation and the problematic relationship of literacy and power. Prospero loves his library so much that it makes him unfit to rule; his retreat to it is the main reason for the success of his brother's usurpation. Yet on his island his book, kindly furnished by Gonzalo, is a source of power over a strange environment and ultimately over the destiny of those who had defeated him. Yet from Caliban's point of view the book is the major instrument of oppression; although Prospero has taught him language, presumably for Prospero's convenience, but also as a gesture of compassion, he has presumably not taught Caliban to read. Caliban personifies the subject of colonial rule (Mannoni 1950), and he yearns to destroy Prospero's power, not to become literate himself. The book is a polyvalent sym-

bol here; it is a recipe book for magic, but in the context of the play it also symbolises the power of both science and artistic imagination. It also symbolises the power of literacy. This is something that Gonzalo would banish from his ideal republic. He is perhaps influenced by Socrates' playful condemnation in the Phaedrus of the written word as a destroyer of memory and tradition and a falsifier of reality. Or perhaps - this is suggested by the context - he believes that letters are a source of inequality and strife. At the end of the play Prospero announces his intention to give up his art. This means drowning his book. His art and his book have been the cause of miracles of moral growth and self-knowledge in the play. Yet the play ends with a suggestion that there is something unhallowed, something that must be renounced, in the power of imagination and knowledge (extended and consolidated by the written word), and that we must resign ourselves to returning to the real world from its magic spell.

Slaughter (1985) points out that "we know very little about the acquisition of literacy over long periods of time and we know even less about its causes and effects"; according to Winchester (1985) "the social consequences of elementary literacy are not well understood" and Graff (1982) writes that the "meaning and contribution of literacy cannot be presumed but rather must be a distinct focus of research." Such studies should contribute to "an analysis of the changing nature of literacy (itself a late nineteenth century term) as a historically situated social practice" (Stubbs 1985).

Enlightenment thought makes literacy almost synonymous with rationality. The commonest form of this notion is to be found in the assumed contribution of the philosophes to the making of the French Revolution. According to Rude (1964:13), "In France, there were thirty-five papers and periodicals of all kinds in 1779 and 169 in 1789" - in spite of widespread illiteracy. Markoff (1986:323) shows the effects of "literate rationality" in a study of rural areas during the French Revolution:

The less literate districts were notable for mobilization against rumored but nonexistent invasions, whereas the most literate districts nurtured attacks on the central social institutions of the Old Regime.

One of the main reasons individuals and governments have had for promoting literacy has been the belief that it can lead to greater justice and equality. Paulo Freire is most closely associated with the idea of literacy for liberation. Freire (1971, 1972a and b) was critical of traditional and of functional literacy teaching. He argued that both of these helped create a mindless integration of the learners into a system that exploited them, making them more efficient cogs in the industrial machine. He developed methods intended to help adults towards a recognition of their creativity as makers of culture and of their capacity for critical awareness. The actual way in which reading and writing were taught was a key aspect of the method. According to Matthews (1982) Freire's approach was designed "to bring into scrutiny the innumerable ways in which metropolitan culture was imposed upon the life and minds of the colonised." Lenin had touched on this idea fifty years earlier when he argued that the illiterate were of necessity a-political, that people without literacy were

likely to be passive victims rather than participants in the social process (Hoyles 1980).

Yet literacy has been a subject of controversy, probably since before Socrates, and its critics can be found from the left to the right of the ideological spectrum. Oxenham (1980) shows how it has at times been a jealously guarded preserve of priestly and bureaucratic castes. Cressy (1980) offers examples of how passionately literacy was promoted by Protestant divines and teachers in early modern England, as well as its opposition by Catholics. Giesecke and Elwert (1983) show how literacy was close to the centre of violent conflict in Reformation Germany. Well into the industrial revolution we find examples of a conservative reaction against evangelical and popular movements to spread reading and writing (Rooke 1978; Altick 1957). Recent opposition to literacy has come from anthropologists and social critics of schooling. Its most extreme statements can be found in Levi-Strauss's conclusion that "the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery" (Musgrove 1982:393), and in Lefebvre's (1971) direct linkage of the written word with the concealment of the encoders of bureaucratic power and with what he sees as the intimidation and terrorism of the modern state. Reservations about literacy are also expressed by a leading anthropological researcher into literacy, Goody (1967, 1976), who describes the hegemonic use of literacy by the colonial administration in Ghana, and the creation of a co-opted literate elite. Postman (1970) and Galtung (1981) link literacy efforts to the critique of schooling popularised by Freire and Illich. Their arguments have close affinities with those found in the revisionist his-

tory of education, in which the hegemonic role of formal education and the failure of progressive education to promote democracy or to work against stratification is argued. Verne (1981) offers similar criticism with a different focus in his article, Literacy and industrialisation - the dispossession of speech. The critique of literacy has reached into the community of literacy workers; in 1983 the Journal of Adult Education and Development issued a warning against an overemphasis on literacy, claiming that it legitimised education-based hierarchies and left the illiterate with an undeserved sense of inferiority. The argument was attacked by Bhola, a leading specialist in adult literacy programmes in the Third World (1984). Providing some support for the Journal's argument is the finding of de Avila (1983), in case study research, that "illiterate adults develop social networks to cope with their surroundings." They use a "nonmonetary payment pattern in the form of a service exchange" which allows them "to maintain their personal dignity while extending appreciation for the service."

The radical critics of literacy and education are criticised for theoretical incoherence by Demaine (1981) in an argument which seeks to demonstrate that their basic assumptions do not entail, but rather undermine, their conclusions. Musgrove (1982:21) argues that the critics of literacy and those who celebrate the virtues of illiteracy are "extremely confused. Literacy in the hands of the dominant classes, it seems, makes them more powerful; but literacy in the hands of the subordinate classes makes them weaker and more vulnerable". To add to the confusion, Stone has argued that revolutionary

movements in Europe have occurred when the rate of male literacy is between 33% and 66% (quoted in Slaughter 1985). The implications of this observation are difficult to fathom. Levine (1982), who is in sympathy with the analysis of the radical critics of functional literacy suggests a way out by redefining literacy in terms of its capacity to promote access and participation; according to his definition anyone who writes in an obfuscating manner, or who uses language to deny access and as a hegemonic tool is illiterate.

Parsons, a major sociologist, sees the coming of literacy as establishing one of the most significant changes in social structure (1966, Chapter 2). The development of writing demarcates the boundary between prehistory and history, and Parsons argues that literacy in its early stages enabled the creation of larger empires than had hitherto been possible, allowing distinctive bureaucratic roles to a priestly caste and the extension of centralised royal power. Though based on a survey of historical and anthropological research, Parsons' analysis is largely speculative. Possibly the most important work on social structure and literacy has been done by H.J. Graff. Graff researched the relationship between literacy and social mobility in nineteenth century Canada and came to the conclusion that literacy did not correlate with changes in status, nor did it necessarily work in favour of a more egalitarian society.

In a study which relates South African literacy statistics to sociological theory, Ellis (1984) comes to the conclusion that literacy plays different roles in different communities, depending on their

level of development. Thus literacy - seen in terms of educational levels - contributes to the shift from a system of ascribed status to a system of achieved status, and therefore has significance for various values and practices. However, as the community becomes more literate the contribution of literacy to status declines.

Studies of the development of the printing industry (Febvre and Martin 1976, Eisenstein 1981 and 1985), efforts to ascertain how many people could read and write and what they did with their reading and writing in earlier centuries (Cressy 1980 and various papers in Graff 1981), and anthropological studies of the role of literacy in non-western cultures (Goody 1968, 1977) all work against technological determinism - that is the idea, associated with McLuhan (1963, 1964) that a communication technology like literacy is a shaping force in society. It is impossible to draw striking conclusions from these studies. Rather, what emerges is a sense of diversity. Literacy is used in a wide variety of ways within social structures and is by no means always narrowly functional. Cressy shows a notable linkage of the spread of literacy with occupations, which seems to be stronger than status, in his study of English literacy until the eighteenth century, while Goody and Scribner and Cole (1981) show a variety of "literacies" in use in different contexts.

Whether the historical and anthropological studies have much to contribute to an understanding of the role of literacy in a highly-industrialised modern state is debatable. They do, however, bring doubt to the notion that prefabricated literacy campaigns can be easily suc-

cessful in any "developing" context, since they show that the conditions for the attainment of high levels of basic literacy are varied and complex, and cannot be reduced to an assumption that an outsider's idea of the need for development will provide sufficient motivation for the achievement of literacy.

Against these findings we must set the findings of one of the few comprehensive investigations of the role of literacy in an actual development programme. Working in five Colombian villages, Rogers (1969:68-94) found positive, if not always strong, correlations between literacy and empathy, agricultural innovativeness, home innovativeness, achievement motivation, social status, "cosmopolitaness", political knowledge and opinion leadership. Some of these findings replicated findings in a similar project in Pakistan which suggested that identification with the nation rather than with a village was related to literacy (Schumann et al 1967). These findings are not pure, inasmuch as it is impossible to isolate literacy as a variable from other variables such as exposure to the broadcast media (in both projects) and factory/urban experience (in the Pakistan project), but at the same time they are not negated by broad historical surveys of social change.

It is easy to forget that there is a difference between what literacy does to societies over many years, maybe over centuries, and what it does for individuals. In fact, it may be the difference which literacy makes to individuals which provides the enduring motivation for adult literacy programmes. Some of the most sensitive research into

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literacy suggests that the growth in the confidence of adults who previously had very little self-esteem is the main outcome of adult literacy programmes. Using an "ethological approach" in The concept of success in adult literacy, Charnley and Jones (1979:175) found "emergent criteria of achievement" to be the following (in order of priority): affective personal achievements, affective social achievements, socio-economic achievements, cognitive achievements and enactive achievements. Affective achievements are described as relating to feelings of self-respect, diminution of anxiety and greater openness, while affective social achievements concern improved relationships with others. In socialist and radical literacy programmes it is not information about the standard of living that convinces so much as the accounts of the process by the participants, and the voices of the newly-literate speaking in terms of learning to see for the first time, or as though they had been freed from the prison of fatalism (Unesco 1984, Kassam 1977). In South Africa it has been argued that the value of literacy to industrial workers lies in its contribution to workers' sense of self-worth (Baucom 1978). As Jenkins (1985) points out, it is impossible to calculate the effects of a growth of confidence among those marginalised by illiteracy on the society as a whole. In the long term this may have an important influence on the way in which a society is organised, in promoting a more democratic and egalitarian society. But even basic literacy may mean more to people than they realise. In an unusual experiment in social psychology, it has been found that people have a far stronger aesthetic preference for the letters in their names than for the other letters of

the alphabet, clearly seeing the former as symbolic extensions of their identity (Hartmann 1985).

(iii) Literacy, language and thought

Another inspiration for literacy programmes has been a general idea that literacy makes positive changes in the way people think. Here one may consider the observation that learning to read and write is our first major lesson in analysis. In a very decided sense it is a primary course in linguistics. For when we learn to read and write we start breaking down and categorizing perhaps the most important shaping element in our lives as human beings - our language. Breaking up the words into sounds, sentences into words, and paying heed to the structures is possible but unlikely without writing. Once written, language is much more available for analysis and manipulation, and maybe also for the development of a far more radical imagination and a stronger theoretical capacity than we are capable of without writing. On the negative side, it is also possible that literacy leads to an exaggerated individualism in which the sense of responsibility built into the social context of speech is thinned out and the writer or the reader can have the illusion of existing only in relation to ideas, sometimes extravagant ideas detached from community. This possibility, raised as an assertion by McLuhan (1962), is concisely set out by Leeds (1980), who discusses the apotheosis of oral "folk" culture by the romantics in their search for an integrative and intuitive form of expression which might breach their literate isolation from community and nature.

Reading has often been thought of as a potential evil. Moralists in sixteenth and seventeenth century England inveighed against popular books, lamenting, for example, that "books and pamphlets of scurrility and bawdry are better esteemed and more vendible than the sagest books that be" (Cressy 1980:8). Schopenhauer (1970:90) believed that "much reading robs the mind of all elasticity ... makes most men duller and sillier than they are by nature.... Reading is merely a surrogate for thinking for yourself". One of the most notable expression of this suspicion of popular reading is Q.D. Leavis's Fiction and the reading public (1932/1979). Leavis outlines the growth of the middlebrow novel in order to show the deterioration of taste brought about by industrial civilization. Her complaint about popular writing is its invitation to facile and uncritical emotional engagement. Hoggart (1957:338) is similarly critical in his discussion of popular mass publications which "make their audience less likely to arrive at a wisdom derived from an inner, felt discrimination in their sense of people and their attitude to experience".

Nell (1984) in his study of the behaviour of "ludenic" readers is critical of the moralists of reading matter. Using physiological tests, questionnaires and unstructured interviews to study the phenomenon of "reading trance" he shows that there are two basic types of readers - those who aim for depth and those who seek escape and gratification - and that light leisure reading should be seen as beneficial, reducing anxiety and creating valuable alternative worlds which can at times have more permanent educational value. (SS's reading biography in Appendix B would seem to provide support for this view.)

An interesting development in literary studies with oblique relevance for the present study has been the establishment of "reception aesthetics", most closely associated with Iser's The act of reading: a theory of aesthetic response (1978). Here, as in Frank Smith's very different work, the role of the reader, or rather the community of readers, is taken into account, and the text is no longer reified as a fixed object of contemplation.

What Iser (1978:151) says about meaning and significance is of particular interest:

Meaning is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading. Significance is the reader's absorption of the meaning into his own existence. Only the two together can guarantee the effectiveness of an experience which entails the reader constituting himself by constituting a reality hitherto unfamiliar to himself.

Reception aesthetics has not contributed to the sociology of literature, which remains an arena of theoretical dispute (see Hall 1979), but has shifted the focus of some literary criticism, so that more attention is now given to the "implicit reader". An interesting experiment in integrating the thought of Iser and other theorists into a more empirical approach is reported by Radway (1984:67) who blended literary and ethnographic modes of inquiry to produce a study of the meaning of romance reading in the lives of women in her community. She finds a mixture of escape, learning, reinforcement of roles and the creation of areas of freedom in the pursuit, and points out "how intricate the connections can be between the social context surrounding a reader's activity and the texts that an individual chooses to read."

According to Ricoeur (1974), language plays the major part in the transmission of cultural heritage "because it is fixed through writing." He adds that

fixation through writing and by all comparable procedures of the inscription of human discourse is the major cultural event which conditions all transmission of cultural heritages and every constitution of a tradition. Writing, in effect, assures the triple autonomy of the text which characterizes it: autonomy with regard to the reader and his intentions; autonomy with regard to the initial situation of the discourse and from every social-cultural conditioning affecting that situation; and autonomy with regard to the initial hearer and the original audience.

But the actual impact of literacy on cultures is disputed. Havelock (1959) drew conclusions from his studies of classical literature which suggested that the Greek alphabet had given birth to history, scepticism and science, and destroyed the more integrated oral culture. He was followed by McLuhan (1962, 1964), whose sustained argument for the determination of thought by media led to more sober studies. Pattison (1982) rejects their theses, claiming that writing is only an inert medium taking its identity from particular functions in particular societies. His own broad argument is that literacy must be seen as more than the mastery of mechanical skills, and that the concept is only meaningful if it is understood to entail cultural depth and an educated sensitivity to language. Graff (1979) describes literacy as a limiting skill and a training in the mechanical. His discussion of nineteenth century Canadian school primers and readers shows the extent of the hidden curriculum of order and rule-following.

However, Leeds (1985:53) argues that "the emergence of a self-defining subject was early associated with literacy" and quotes Ong, a

leading student of oral literature, who has written controversially that "until writing, most of the kinds of thoughts which we are used to thinking today would not be thought". Leeds points to the growing understanding of the interaction of oral and literate cultures and summarizes the new perspective:

The introduction of writing and print created the conditions in which those responsible for the maintenance of cultural traditions could organize, amass, analyze, and ultimately manipulate those traditions, creating new forms of representation and thought.

Experimental evidence that literacy in itself changes the way that people think is not very strong. In the 1930s the leading Russian psychologist, Luria (1976) conducted some ingenious experiments to establish the difference between the thought of literate and illiterate adults. What he found was that illiterate peasants classified things very differently from literate workers. When the peasants grouped objects they did so on the ground of their usefulness. Thus, given a hammer, a saw, a spanner and a log and asked to identify the incongruous object, they were likely to classify hammer, saw and log together, and explain their choice by saying that with those three things they would be able to make something, but the spanner would not be much use. The literate workers would use an abstract, decontextualised system of categorisation into tools and non-tools; the log would therefore be the odd one out. Luria's findings are enlightening, but one does not know whether the difference in thinking is a result of learning to read or of exposure to an industrial environment. However, in a recent study it is argued that literacy develops "decontextualised thinking" and that this is one of its most important contributions to education and society (Slaughter 1985).

Providing some contrast with Slaughter's thesis, the most extensive programme of research into the impact of literacy on thought casts serious doubt on the idea that literacy in itself changes the way people think. Scribner and Cole (1980,1982) worked for many years in a unique West African community which used Arabic and Latin script, as well as a script which they had developed themselves. Thus, they were able to isolate literacy as a factor more successfully than in other contexts. While they found that literacy did make certain limited differences to individuals, their evidence did not support any bold conclusion that literacy makes individuals more rational, or develops decontextualised thinking. It would seem that these qualities may be the product of more extensive formal education and experience rather than of literacy in itself. This is compatible with Vygotsky's thesis (1962) that the deliberate mastery of abstraction can be seen as the principal contribution of schooling. Winchester (1985) warns that decontextualised thought may operate only at a fairly high level of educational achievement.

A curious finding is that reported by Fondocaro and Higgins (1985:98), who studied the effect of writing on writers. Because writers were found to become much more committed to the contents of their discourse than speakers, they come to the conclusion that, "all things being equal, the social consequences of communication tend to be greater for written than for oral communication."

Printing seems particularly important, rather than writing. Eisenstein's studies (1981,1985) show that the more rapid dissem-

ination and the greater availability of knowledge, and even more of nonsense, gave people the chance to compare evidence and arguments with vastly increased critical power. This only reached a small minority in societies which had low levels of literacy, but the flow of information and ideas from the literate elite in largely illiterate communities was much more effective than a modern community might think (Ladurie 1981).

The most recent field in which literacy has been studied is that of linguistics. Traditionally linguistics has been concerned with spoken language, but some attention has lately been given to the special characteristics and demands of written language. We tend to think that writing is just spoken language encoded in visual symbols, but there are significantly different conventions used in most written language compared to those in spoken language.

As yet there is not much to be reported in this field. There is a highly controversial argument that modern languages have evolved, presumably into more efficient and scientific instruments (possibly with a concomitant loss of expressiveness) and that the major factor in this evolution is written language (Kalmar 1985). Preliminary studies suggest that the introduction of literacy into formerly non-literate languages does change aspects of those languages (Chafe 1985). Beyond that we have the common-sense knowledge that educated speakers speak differently from uneducated speakers. This may be most closely related to the linguistic codes of different classes but there is probably a

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strong influence of written language on the spoken language of classes advantaged in terms of formal education.

Assessing the current position in the study of literacy and society, Olson (1985:4) writes that

when we discuss the consequences of literacy, we are not suggesting that environmental changes cause behavior; rather we are examining the ways in which human actions, intentions, goals, beliefs, and skills are executed and altered in an environment in which people have access to written language... Writing does not simply cause social or cognitive changes. Rather, a world with literacy is different from one without literacy, and people's beliefs and actions and intentions are formulated in that altered world. Only in this altered way does the invention of a technology alter thought and action.

2.5 Directions for this study

It has become clear from this chapter that the need to study and understand the uses and functions of literacy, and the role and meaning of reading and writing in individual lives and in communities, has been increasingly recognized in the relatively recent past. This development, which has occurred in a wide range of disciplines, is part of a movement away from mechanistic modes of understanding and technicism in the social sciences.

With only a few exceptions, however, the studies of the uses and consequences of literacy have been conducted from a perspective external to that of the common user of literacy. Even the ethnographic studies tend to express a commitment to objectivism. Concern with the need to make more use of the meanings and intentions which people bring to their experience has been growing in thinking on social inquiry. This

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problematic endeavour, and particularly the critique of objectivism, is the central subject of the following chapter. Questions about the role and meaning of literacy that have emerged here are built into the design of Chapters 4, 5 and 6. No further attention is given to "reading research". Library research provides data for Chapter 4. The studies of reading and society, prosperity and culture, have influenced the questioning described in Chapter 5, and play a part in the discussion in Chapter 7.

What stands out in this survey of reading research is how inconclusive the findings have been. They remain of great interest in the wide range of debates and concerns in this field, however, and amply demonstrate the inadequacy of reductionist, either/or understandings of literacy and its relationship to individual meanings and social structure.

CHAPTER 3

BEYOND OBJECTIVISM: THE INTERPRETIVE TURN

AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF READING

There are no facts, only interpretations.

Nietzsche, Nachlass (Danto 1966:76)

The difference between a rationalist or empiricist explanation and a hermeneutic interpretation is a little like the difference between a map of a city and an account of that city by someone who lives in it and walks its streets.... The professional mapmaker must regard the city as merely a juxtaposition of physical objects. For its inhabitants, it is a system of possibilities and resources, frustrations and obstacles. and two people will find both commonalities and differences in their accounts of it.

Martin J. Packer (1985:1061-1093)

The simultaneous building up of our own world in language still persists whenever we want to say something to each other.... Genuine speaking, which has something to say and hence does not give prearranged signals, but rather seeks words through which one reaches the other person, is the universal human task...

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976:36)

I would say, then, that what has emerged in the course of the last ten or fifteen years is a sense of the increasing vulnerability to criticism of things, institutions, practices, discourses. A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence - even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behaviour.

Michel Foucault (1980:80)

3.1 An overview

In the previous chapter we saw a comprehensive range of approaches to the study of literacy. These approaches not only yield "findings" about various aspects of literacy, they themselves embody implicit understandings both of literacy and of social reality. In spite of their variety they show an overwhelming commitment to objectivism, even when they do not fall strictly within the positivist paradigm. They stand outside of, or are only peripherally concerned with, the debates of recent times about the nature of human inquiry and about the relationship of culture and knowledge to social reality. For the most part they are based on a received notion of causality, and their objectives are broadly nomothetic; with few exceptions they share a certain deterministic reductionism about the motivation of human behaviour. At the same time, they nearly all draw on a basic functionalist model in which culture and knowledge (and, of course, literacy) are seen as having an instrumental relationship to some supposedly more fundamental reality outside of culture and knowledge: social structure, productivity, adaptation, development, cognitive efficiency and so on; or, vice versa, in which literacy, culture and knowledge are determined by a more fundamental cognitive or socio-economic reality. Even where, as in Graff's studies, they rely on a central concept in contemporary thought like the idea of hegemony, the concept is used in a somewhat deterministic, undialectical fashion.

The aims of this chapter are threefold: to bring the study of literacy into a closer relationship with the debates mentioned above, to pro-

vide the background for an alternative approach, and at the same time to add a further dimension to the understanding of literacy. The limitations of objectivism are discussed, and some of the emergent alternatives to objectivism are explained. A broad model for the understanding of human pursuits and social reality is outlined; this model provides a background for the presentation of the general features of the approach adopted in this study.

At this stage, however, it is necessary to be more precise about the concept of literacy/reading at play in this study. The previous chapter and much of what will follow provide ample grounds for rejecting the understanding of literacy or of reading as no more than a basic skill or technology. Granted that the basic processes of reading and writing contain an inescapable element of skill development, that element has no self-sufficient existence outside of the culture from which it takes its meaning, or considered without reference to the higher-level pursuits which it serves. That this has been understood by educationists for a long time is reflected in a recently republished article originally printed in 1867. Hodgson (1986) argues that reading and writing are dulling and oppressive if they are seen as the ends of education, without the awakening of the interests in culture, the eagerness of mind, which they serve, and which is embedded in a "higher" or "nobler" reading. Introducing this article, Graff comments that Hodgson strikes out generally "at the limits of reading and writing as independent, autonomous skills, from whose basis a true education will doubtlessly follow", and adds that the uses and development of literacy are "bound by individual and social contexts" (380).

This perception is in fact the theme of Pattison (1983), who devotes a book to the thesis that the pursuit of literacy is meaningless unless it is viewed from the defining perspective of the heritage of literate culture. In short, literacy only makes sense as a cultural form, as a meaning-making and a meaning-shaping pursuit. As we have seen in Chapter 2, this is a practical assertion and is not simply an academic or humanistic point of some curiosity. Literacy is not effectively promoted and has little impact if it is understood without reference to this observation.

In this study as a whole, then, reading is understood as a broad human pursuit transcending the basic skills. In the following sections the specific question of literacy is set aside in order to consider some contemporary ways of understanding culture and its relationship to society.

3.2 The objectivist view and its inadequacy

In spite of the speculative demolition by German idealist philosophers of the pretensions of natural science to provide the authoritative model for understanding man and society, methods which appeal in one way or another to this model have dominated the human sciences for much of the twentieth century. Social inquiry in the middle decades of the century would appear to have been given over almost entirely to positivism; this was expressed by logical positivism in the philosophy of science, behaviourism in psychology and educational theory, and functionalism in sociology. Even Marxist thought succumbed to the cult of

science when dialectical materialism degenerated into economism. In this period, resistance to the scientific model was offered by existentialist thought, phenomenology, some forms of psychoanalytic theory and by ethnomethodology. It is only in the past two decades that positivism has been seriously undermined, although its influence is still strongly felt.

The terms positivism and objectivism have been used so far without clarification. It will have been noted that "objectivism" has been given greater emphasis. There are two reasons for the preference: "positivism" has become a term of abuse and has been over-generalised; "objectivism" as not as yet developed these emotive overtones and at the same time it has greater scope, since positivism can be seen as an extreme form of the more general belief in the possibility and desirability of objectivity. Objectivism takes two forms: the methodological belief that human affairs can be observed, with sufficient contrivance, in a disinterested manner (positivism), and the ontological belief that individual and social realities are determined by objective structures beyond the control of consciousness or intentions (structuralism). Both forms are based on the assumption of some permanent a-historical and extra-linguistic frame of reference.

Harre (1981:9) writes of objectivist method as a "retreat from depth to surface", "a strategic retreat to certainty". The quest

for the kind of certainty which would serve as a defence of absolutist claims to knowledge inevitably leads to an impasse. The more powerful and speculative, the deeper do our theories purport to go in the exploration of nature, the less can we be certain of their correctness.

Objectivism does not necessarily limit human inquiry to the quantifiable relationships between observed data, allowing the use of descriptive methods. Thus, for example, a number of the approaches to reading in Chapter 2 qualify as positivist (most "reading research" and "library science"), a number as objectivist without being positivist (the ethnological approaches; Graff's work), and only the phenomenological study mentioned in Chapter 1 and some very recent work, such as that by Brice Heath, would seem to avoid objectivism. Frank Smith's work is curious in that he uses a groundwork of positivist-type research in support of a mentalist perspective, which in turn leads to conclusions which tend to undermine the certainty of the science on which they are based.

Abercrombie et al. (1983:146) offer a set of disabling arguments against the notion of objectivity in sociology, and Reason and Rowan (1981:xiii-xiv) list eighteen reasons for not approving of objectivism. Among these are: a narrow model of the person, reductionism, a concern with variables rather than with wholes, reification, quantophobia, the need for deception, an emphasis on testing, low actual utilization, a preoccupation with bigness and a tendency to serve conservative interests.

The problem, above all, lies in what Garamer (quoted in Lyotard 1984:64) calls "the scandal of distancing":

The sort of alienating distancing ... which is not merely a feeling or a mood, but rather the ontological presupposition which sustains the objective conduct of the human sciences.

For Gadamer, understanding depends on both a depth of involvement and an ability to step back from the involvement - even though this stance can never be without presuppositions. Much of the argument against objectivism has focused on its political implications. A leading objector is Fay (1975) who argues that a positivist human science is committed by its underlying assumptions to a technology of social control and the hegemony of "scientism". Keat's critique (1981) of Fay suggests that there might be more validity in a Weberian position which allocates an instrumental role to "value-free" objectivism within an interpretive framework, thus recognizing the inescapable influence of values. However, the objections to objectivism have been experienced most vividly in the legacy of imperialism and colonialism, where people have reacted against the definition of their meanings and realities by means of so-called objective and scientific methods which are in fact ethnocentric to the First World (Hall, Gillette and Tandon 1982). Objectivism denies the primacy of public argument which underlies any authentic notion of democracy, and also denies the understanding of the person as "that creature whose Being is essentially determined by its being able to speak" (Heidegger 1977:71). In this vein, Habermas (1980:184) points out that questions related to practice and actual human contexts "can only be resolved dialogically and for this reason remain within the context of everyday language" - i.e. they cannot be resolved primarily by means of the data and findings of objective methods. With his focus on the role of interests and legitimation processes in the creation and distortion of knowledge, Habermas (especially 1972 and 1976) has done much to promote the political

critique of objectivism. The issues touched on here are more fully argued in French (1987).

Carr and Kennis (1986:86) write that

one of the most important controversies in the history of social thought has concerned the relationship between the understandings people have of their own actions and the purpose of the social sciences.

The point of the present outline of the critique of objectivism is not to deny all value to the objectivist understanding of people and society, but to show that there is room for, and give status to, other approaches. Rorty (1985), who gives qualified support to hermeneutics and implicit support to scientific methods as long as they do not claim a privileged access to non-existent foundations, argues that the conflicting approaches should be regarded as different ways of handling the narratives which we use to understand ourselves and others. It may be difficult, however, to sustain such complacent tolerance in the face of the continuing empire of objectivism and positivism in the social sciences, particularly in their manifestation in South Africa (see e.g. Rex 1981, Schutte 1982, Buckland 1984).

3.3 The interpretive turn

Concurrent with and underlying the more accessible criticisms of objectivism has been a substantial contribution from the speculative disciplines. There would appear to be two major traditions of opposition to objectivism, both rooted in responses to Kant's demonstration of the limits of knowledge. The first is a radical

relativism, or in some cases a position "beyond relativism" (Bernstein 1982), which denies the masked metaphysics of objectivism and seeks to come to terms with the belief that there is no absolute which offers a foundation for knowledge, and no such thing as a fact. This form of critique, which Habermas (1983) has called "the interpretive turn", can be traced through

- Nietzsche's perspectival understanding of knowledge as the willing of life-giving form imposed upon a universal formlessness;
- the bracketing and self-inspection of mental experience in phenomenology;
- Heidegger's retreat to a paradoxical ontology of existence in time;
- Wittgenstein's world limited by language;
- Gadamer's hermeneutics, and, most recently;
- the post-structuralist movement, with its attempt at an abolition of the problem of metaphysics through the displacement of any "centre" or "presence" or "sovereignty" and an acceptance of the unfathomable play of language or of power - salient notions in deconstructionist thought.

In different ways these speculative positions all undermine belief in an underlying reality, let alone the belief that a privileged point can be found - some fulcrum, template or objective distanciation - which would allow one to reach even an approximation to such a reality.

Probably the most influential contribution to this undermining of the claims of science has been Kuhn's (1970) historical analysis of The logic of scientific revolutions, which has given currency to the term

"paradigm". Kuhn demonstrates the dependence of observation on theory, the element of (religious) "conversion" to new scientific paradigms, the social and communal nature of scientific knowledge, and the complex of beliefs, values and assumptions which underlie science but which are not made explicit in scientific practice. In spite of this relativity, Kuhn remains respectful of the changing scientific disciplines. Feyerabend (1978), on the other hand, has expounded an extreme relativism according to which even the most occult "sciences" deserve no less epistemic status than "normal science".

The second tradition of opposition to objectivism is that of dialectical thought: Hegel, Marx, Gramsci, the Frankfurt school and other neo-Marxist thinkers. Here the dynamics of growth and change are paramount. "Objective" experience, the reality of the material world and of social structures is not denied, but is subsumed in the patterning of a historical and relational process. Objectivity and subjectivity are seen as equally unreal; their categorical separation is regarded not as a necessary aspect of the nature of things, but as the problematic ideological function of particular historical structures. From a dialectical point of view any reductionism to universal laws of "human nature", or to an unqualified unidirectional determinism (say, of culture by relations of production or vice versa) is undialectical. Thus there is a place for empiricism as long as it is brought into relationship with critical theory. There are facts, but no facts which exist outside of their relationship with consciousness, and certainly no fixity in facts.

These traditions of opposition to objectivism are by no means discrete. They are brought together at various points: Weber's sociology, for example, where there is a use of "value-free" objectivity within an interpretive understanding in which the influence of interests is recognised as inevitable. More recently, research based on the concept of The social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman 1969) has attempted a fusion of dialectical and phenomenological understandings of the interaction of world-views and everyday experience.

Although the opposition to objectivism found expression in various schools as different as symbolic-interactionism and Schutz's phenomenological sociology, it is only relatively recently that it has become more widely influential. Habermas (1983:252) attributes the rise of the interpretive paradigm to "the failure of mainstream social science to keep its theoretical and practical promises". The two broad schools which have emerged since the 1960s promise renewal and greater relevance in human inquiry, although their interest has lain more in the quality of argument than in their empirical application. As it is these tendencies which have not come into play in literacy research, and as they seem to promise valuable alternative perspectives for this field, they will be dealt with in somewhat greater detail than has been the case so far.

3.4 Hermeneutics and critical theory

Taylor (1985:92-3) points to the disanalogy between natural science and social science, which he attributes to the

common-sense understanding that theory challenges, replaces or extends. There is always a pre-theoretical understanding of what is going on among the members of a society, which is formulated in the descriptions of self and other which are involved in the institutions and practices of the society.

The aim of human inquiry is therefore to understand people and social reality in terms of an interpretive understanding of the actors' own interpretations of reality, the meanings they ascribe to their social practices, or the ways in which they make sense of their situations and pursuits (such as reading) - in short, what I shall call their "valuing".

(1) Valuing

The term "values" is avoided, because it reifies a process into an a-historical product to be possessed or consumed. Even this statement brings out of a certain concealedness a commitment and a pre-understanding which is always already at work in the investigation. Much more might be "unconcealed", since all our doings are written against receding backgrounds of culture and practice, language and events, which are dark, which are curained off by positivism, and which need to be unconcealed - an unending task - for understanding to be understood. Understanding is always already happening in a constant unconscious reference to this background, making sense according to accumulated pre-understandings, most clearly in the activities of be-

ing-at-hand. The pre-understandings need not be unconcealed for understanding to happen - indeed, they cannot all be unconcealed, finally - but understanding is only possible in a way that is formed by them; whenever there is understanding there is this background. If this background is erased, as it is by instrumental rationality, understanding is suppressed in the interests of an atemporal "truth" (Faulconer and Williams 1985). Without such pre-understandings any human investigation is impossible:

To attempt analytically to do away with this background and to treat human acts as though they are object-like entities is a methodological error, because it would be to remove the conditions for genuine comprehension of the phenomena being studied. Our interests and involvements, our habits and our cultural practices, play a constitutive role for the entities and events that we create and experience around us (Packer 1985:1087).

(ii) More specific questions about valuing

The question of valuing can be broken down into more specific questions. What do people value, and what are the characteristics of their valuing? How do they come to value what they value? What is their relationship with the valued object or pursuit? Does this valuing have any significance beyond the act or the object of valuing? And how might we set about answering these questions?

The questions could perhaps be answered satisfactorily in terms of classical thought. Valuing would correspond by mimesis (Plato) or relate through potentiality (Aristotle) to a good, THE good, absolute truth or essence; people would value what they valued through a process of revelation, by teaching, contemplation, discovery or rediscovery. The valuing would be part of the natural striving of Man -

certain select men - for the good, and what was valued would either represent ideal or essence, or would aid in the pursuit of ideal or essence. In short, the pre-patterning of the dominant tradition of essentialist thought made it easy to know, if not the concrete answer, at least what it would look like and where to find it.

However, the erosion of essentialism, the slow and continuing decentering of the transcendental subject (God, Man, Word, essence, structure) has made our questions much more problematic. In the flux of cultural relativism and the acceptance of the ethnocentric and contextual nature of knowledge the question of valuing becomes much more urgent and less clearly defined.

Ricoeur (1974:243) makes the question of valuing the focus point of his essay on the debate between Gadamer (the leading proponent of hermeneutics) and Habermas, whose "critical theory" has stood at the centre of the arguments about the nature of human inquiry. He points to a fundamental antinomy in the concept of values:

On the one hand, we oppose values to things in order to bind them to freedom. Drawing the most extreme consequences of the Kantian concept of autonomy we say that values are the work of freedom, that they express its power of innovation or renovation, its creative spontaneity. On the other hand, it does not seem that it depends upon our will that values outline a certain order, a certain hierarchy; for example, that respect for the other person should be superior to values of simple utility. It seems here that values can only orient action because they are discovered, not created.

In short, do we create our values, or are we subject to inherited values? Ricoeur (1974:269) believes that both moments in this dualism are necessary for the wholeness of our projects:

Freedom only posits itself by transvaluing what has already been evaluated. The ethical life is a perpetual translation between the project of freedom and its ethical situation outlined by the given world of institutions.

This reflection is particularly relevant to our later discussions of Giddens's structuration theory. But it does not answer our basic questions. First, why inquire about valuing? From a structuralist point of view this is to inquire after inessentials, the mere phenomena of determining structures such as basic drives, the nature of mind, economic Unterbau and so on. It is only in terms of the alternatives to structuralism that the question of valuing is given prominence.

(iii) The importance of valuing

There are a number of reasons for regarding the question of valuing as important:

Taylor (1985) writes of the failure of positivism to recognise that people are beings to whom things matter. Rorty (1985:167-174) offers a qualified view of Taylor's position:

The only general hermeneutic rule is that it is always wise to ask what the subject thinks it is up to before formulating our own hypotheses. But this is an effort at saving time, not a search for the 'true meaning' of the behaviour.... (It is) a mistake to think of somebody's own account of his behaviour or culture as epistemologically privileged.... But it is not a mistake to think of it as morally privileged.... Civility is not a method it is simply a virtue... What we hope from the social sciences is that they will act as interpreters for those with whom we have difficulty talking.... If we have the vocabulary we can skip the principles.... accounts of the ways in which people are presently conducting themselves (are) useful chiefly in providing hints about ways in which they might conduct themselves differently.

Rorty's revised pragmatism thus suggests that it is reasonable to claim that this "mattering" is not only morally privileged, but that it should take priority in inquiry. An inquiry in depth about what matters to people - by no means as simple as it seems - is of both intrinsic and practical interest in social inquiry.

The affirmation of valuing is among other things a political act, since it takes a position in support of freedom: in it people are considered as makers of knowledge within their values, makers of judgments, though often unconscious, in terms of the rules governing their activities, and potentially as exercisers of autonomy within the limits of Ricoeur's paradox presented above; that is, the notion of autonomy is upheld only with a simultaneous decentering of subjectivity. Thus, the factors of language and consciousness come more fully into play in human inquiry.

People's intentions and projects, which are closely related to the possibility of rationality, are restored to importance, after the hegemony of behavioural approaches with their tendency towards mass considerations and automatism. Harre (1981:16) argues that:

If one adopts as a general theory of action, that people are agents acting intentionally in accordance with socially grounded rules and conventions to realize projects, then the entities in need of empirical investigation are clearly defined. We would need to know more about intentions and their modes of realization relative to more or less over-arching personal projects.

It might be thought that rules and intentionality - hence a certain freedom - are incompatible. Bhaskar (1985) demonstrates that the concept of rules entails the idea of intentionality. According to Heidegger, the valuing one brings to an event is of primary importance in

action and knowing. This knowledge is especially apparent in the knowledge which people show in everyday interaction. Concern with valuing thus keeps us alive to a constitutive aspect of knowledge and action, and is itself an act of valuing since it attends to the "whoness" of people. It also recognises that people's perceptions are open to change and replaces notions of manipulation and conditioning with communicative action, persuasion and tolerance.

Valuing has come to play an important part in dialectical thought because of the current salience of questions of ideology, legitimacy and hegemony. While regarding people's valuing as much more problematic and more open to distortion than the positions outlined above, this valuing is nonetheless important - as we will shortly see - as symptom, potentiality and starting point for growth. The shift of perspective is manifest in the rediscovery of Gramsci (1971:333), with his suggestion that a form of thought superior to common sense "never forgets to remain in contact with the 'simple' and, indeed, finds in this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve", and his awareness of the power of cultural forms to shape and constrain social change, and in Laclau and Mouffe's argument that so fundamental a structuralist concept as class has to "be produced through political activities. Members of economic classes do not simply know their material interests but have to form conceptions of them" (Bocock 1986:103).

Does this valuing have any significance beyond the act or object of valuing? In other words, is it constitutive of or a signifier of any-

thing beyond itself? Followers of Wittgenstein might argue that the valuing and the valued objects cannot be described as ends-in-themselves (since this presupposes access to a foundation for knowledge unknowable from within the inescapable limits of language) nor as means to ends or instruments of some function (which is to misconceive human pursuits in various ways). To the deconstructionist the question would become entangled in the problematic identity of the sign, so that the act and the object would be seen as elements in an infinite play on a "bottomless chessboard" - an expression which Derrida uses in his attempt to remove the remnants of "the self-assured certitude of consciousness" and of the quest for a metaphysical key to unlock the secret meaning of Being". Instead we have in language and the text (which characterises all possible human experience) nothing more than "a play that has not meaning beyond itself, no deep, underlying ground that supports it and speaks through it" (Hoy 1978:78). Neither cause nor caused, yet not free of causality either, the object of valuing cannot be separated from what it signifies or from the signifier "valuing". Meaning is always context-bound, but cannot be reduced to context, and context itself cannot be exhausted, saturated or made fully explicit (Derrida 1977; Norval 1986).

Although far removed from instrumentalism, hermeneutics might offer some external reasons for such valuing which transcend the object or valued act or their naming: because action is shaped by pre-understandings, insight into these understandings must help towards a more appropriate practice in relation to an object or pursuit which we seek to promote. The understandings are embedded in language and culture

such that no action or further understanding can happen without them; all events and projects are constructed with some reference to them. But even if this practical value of understanding could not be demonstrated, and if understanding could not be seen as constitutive or "significant" (pointing to something beyond or behind it), it may retain value - if one subscribes to this mode of thought - in the quest for the Being of beings within their temporal horizons: "Time must be brought to light and genuinely grasped as the horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being" (Heidegger 1977:61).

Thus the quest for understanding arises out of a particular life-world and serves to reconstruct and re-animate the life-world against the threat of a mere social system or technical environment.

Within the Marxist critical theory the problem in the above conceptions of understanding is that they neglect the constitutive interests of labour and power (Habermas 1970). Thus Gadamer's notions of the "linguisticity" of human experience and "the dialogue which we are" point to important features of existence which cannot be transcended, but which not only contain contexts of enlightenment, but contexts of domination (Habermas 1990:204). In a similar vein, Rorty (1983:174), discussing what he calls the "quest for the sublime" of the French radicals, writes that to

present the fact that the unrepresentable exists (is) one of the prettier unforced blue flowers of bourgeois culture. But this quest is wildly irrelevant to the attempt at communicative consensus which is the vital force which drives that culture.

Habermas's criticism posits some kind of dialectic between interests and language/values/culture. What is valued is shaped and distorted

by these interests. But it is not determined by these interests in any directly causal sense. Indeed, a major object of study for Marxists has been to understand the relationship between the material and cultural aspects of society. The major questions in recent times have concerned ideology (for Habermas "the systematic distortion of communication"), legitimacy and hegemony. The extent to which culture is constitutive of structure is important because it limits the possibility of deliberate and critical action for change. How and why people value something is interesting in that it may be symptomatic of this "systematic distortion" and provide a locus for the dialogue in which the process of demystification is to take place. However, it must not be reified into a knowledge of "the nature of things" or "human nature". To know that a community believes or values P does not mean that the belief and valuing is a constitutive feature of P, since there is no fixity in the dialectic. Knowledge is constructed and deconstructed in a perpetual process. The valuing might thus point to a potentiality or mask an enslaving aspect of the object. The "truth" of that object can only be realized in liberating action. "In praxis, the ideas which guide action are just as subject to change as action is; the only fixed element is phronesis" ("the moral disposition to act truly and justly" - Carr and Kennis 1986:33).

The critics of this school of thought point out that it assumes what they regard as a metaphysic based on an unknowable or non-existent foundational "presence", the possible manifestation of some sovereign centre of reality (to use several of the key terms from Derrida's practice); in other words it embraces some more or less explicit theo-

dicy or eschatology. Habermas argues that rational action is impossible without at least a regulative ideal, which in his case is a community of unconstrained communication. This is seen to be a regression to a belief in a presence whose assumed possibility is thought to provide the basis for believing that something could be better than it is. His critics say either that this is no argument, and comes uncomfortably from a thinker who sets out to free social science from ontology, or they argue that emancipatory action does not require justifying foundations (Rorty 1985, Laclau and Mouffe 1984). Habermas in turn deplores the neo-conservatism implicit in the arguments of his critics. Within his scheme there is, then, a place for studying the valuing of something - act, object, pursuit, skill - as long as this is understood within the critical perspective. For example the practice of "reading" may be reified and understood in certain ways so that it becomes a symbol of distorted relationships. In a genuine act of understanding this will not only be approached with a blend of empathy and distance (as in hermeneutics), but will be handled in dialogue and action, which aims at "desymbolization" and "re-symbolization" on the model of Freudian psychoanalysis, and will be integrated with praxis in a potentially infinite process of becoming. Its test is whether it works according to the liberated judgment of the parties involved. Whether this is all that different from hermeneutics is open to doubt (see Hoy 1978:49). According to Lyotard, "narrative knowledge ... does not give priority to its own legitimation, and ... certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof" (Rorty 1985:164).

(iv) Some implications for inquiry

The schools of thought opposed to objectivism and positivism which have been outlined here have a number of consequences for the practice of social science. They challenge the dualism of art and science, giving artistic creation and interpretation at least the status of the natural scientific model in human inquiry. They give status to self-reflection and a mediated subjectivity, and to empathy. At the same time they undermine the self-certainty of science and the identity of the subject (be this the researcher, or the notion of an atemporal authority, or the subjectivity of the participant in the research). They direct attention to the whole, to the lebenswelt, and the circle of understanding in which whole and part are never kept separate for long. Bhaskar (1985:203) prefers the notion of a "spiral" of understanding, which reflects more adequately the contribution of critical theory to hermeneutics.) They recommend to the researcher awareness that the object of research is cast within the formedness of the researcher's pre-understanding and the meanings and intentions which the participants bring to this - the ability to see knowledge as constructed (but without the knowing and acting subject on which much sociology of knowledge is centered.) Perhaps above all, they emphasise the centrality, and the open-endedness or necessary incompleteness, of interpretation.

Interpretation is, however, difficult to correct. In its extreme forms the only ground for approving the interpretation "is the intelligibility of the account itself" (Hoy 1978:143). Bhaskar (1985:157)

articulates the problem when he points to the undialectical dualism of positivism versus hermeneutics: "For the positivist science is outside society; for the hermeneuticist society is outside science". It is difficult to know quite what empirical hermeneutic research should look like. The influence of hermeneutics may have been mainly in sensitizing ethnographic and cross-cultural research (see Bernstein 1982, Geertz 1974) and seems to be expressed most concretely in the practice of "grounded theory" (Darkenwald 1982). Packer (1985) offers an example of a possible hermeneutic investigation of social interaction, but may bear out the criticism that hermeneutics is strong on theory but yields findings which are "valid but thin" either in their definitiveness or their power to direct intervention. This may, however, be of benefit to the temporal "truth" and to right action:

The "responsive" or "illuminative" evaluator does not regard his or her work as non-reactive, but attempts to represent as faithfully as possible the perspectives of those already in a situation. As far as possible these approaches attempt to leave the power for change in a situation with participants rather than with the observer (Carr and Kennis 1986:28).

Hermeneutic thought poses a challenge, particularly in the possibilities opened up by the legitimizing of narrative knowledges by the more recent post-structuralist derivatives of hermeneutics. This not only suggests a different way of looking at the history of institutions to uncover the formative exercises of power which are "sutured" to apparently natural world-views in shaping discourses, but a way of looking at all human affairs in terms of their "textuality" - so that human inquiry might look more like literature than like data analysis. "There are no data, and a fortiori, to attempt to formulate descriptions of regularities in the sequence of human action, is

folly" (Harre 1981:17) Barthes, for example, "explodes the meaning of 'science' as such, noting that in many ways literature is science, and that science (human sciences, and particularly literary study) must become literature" (Hoy 1978:142). There are very few models, if any, for such an endeavour, and the practices of Derrida and Foucault (very different themselves) are impossible to replicate.

Critical theory has been more productive than philosophical hermeneutics in its stimulation of a range of research approaches such as participation and action research. It is currently enjoying a decided influence which is reflected in relatively popular texts such as Human inquiry: a sourcebook of new paradigm research (Reason and Rowan 1981) and Becoming critical (Carr and Kennis 1986). Here the basic model takes its theory from the dialectic as sketched above, but there is an openness to approaches ranging from critical self-reflection (de Vries 1986) to the client-centered versions of Freudian psychoanalysis, all of which are infused with the hermeneutic aim of making sense of everyday experience. It follows from this that research is an open-ended, participative activity in which subject and object play interactive roles in the pursuit of a kind of health/understanding/emancipation (all three being conflated), of which the precise nature cannot be defined as a goal or objective prior to, or outside of, the process itself.

3.5 Towards a synthesis: Giddens's structuration theory

The opposition between hermeneutics/post-modernism and more objectivist understandings of society and culture may leave room for rapprochement. Heron (1981:22), who stresses the creativity and openness of research behaviour, attempts a compromise when he argues that

whenever a person is functioning as a person, that person's construing-and-intending is a necessary part of the explanation of his or her behaviour. But it is not therefore a sufficient explanation of the behaviour. For ... explanation in terms of relatively intelligent agency as an irreducible notion does not exclude further explanation in terms of relative determinism, that is, in terms of causal laws that delimit the range of options, the degrees of freedom, within which such intelligent agency can manifest itself.

Reflecting on the conflict between modernism, with its hopeful, if qualified, support for a positive science, and the conservative potentiality in hermeneutics, Ricoeur (1981:101) writes that

nothing is more problematic than the alleged antinomy between an ontology of primordial understanding and an eschatology of freedom. We have encountered these false antinomies elsewhere: as if it were necessary to choose between reminiscence and hope!... Eschatology is nothing without the recitation of acts of deliverance from the past.

Rorty (1985) makes a sustained argument for taking the sense out of both sides and dismissing the nonsense, promoting a liberal politics and human inquiry while rejecting the dysfunctional quest for foundations or grounding.

However, the most sustained effort at finding common ground may be that of Giddens (1986), who, after years of involvement with the conflicting claims of structuralisms and subjectivism, has arrived at a finely-honed accommodation, if not synthesis, of the two positions in

a theory which he calls "structuration". This merits a somewhat fuller exposition.

Giddens believes that the notion of structure recognizes that society and institutions "are more enduring and are wider in scale than individuals", and that objectivism has its strength in facing "issues concerned with long-term processes of change which occur in history and the large-scale organization of institutions". Subjectivism, on the other hand, is "very adept at demonstrating qualities which I think quite rightly have to be attributed to human agents: that is to say, self-understanding, intentionality, acting for reasons", but fails to take into account problems of history, problems of large-scale social transformation, and conflict and change generally.

However, structure and subjectivity should be conceived of as a "duality of structure" rather than as a "dualism". This requires a change in our understandings of both human agency and structure. Action must not only be understood as "an aggregate of intentions", but must be set in "the underfolding of the routines which constitute day-to-day life". Social structure is not to be understood in terms of a visual and anatomical analogy, like the girders of a building, but on the model of Saussure's discussion of the structural qualities of language. Here structure is more like the rules which "are not contained within the speech act but are nevertheless fundamental to understanding it or to producing it".

This shift in understanding helps us to see structure not as some alien constraint standing over against the individual human agent, but as constituting, and constituted by, action (533):

Structure is both the medium and the outcome of the human activities which it recursively organizes. By the recursive character of social life I mean that social activity in respect of its structural properties exists in and through the use of the resources which agents make in constituting their action, which at the same time reconstitutes those structural properties as qualities of the systems in question.

At the same time, subjectivity should not be seen as a preconstituted and axiomatic given. Giddens accepts the structuralist decentering of the subject, but argues that the critique of theories of ostensive reference should not entail the disappearance of the referent. "The theme of the decentering of the subject ... should not lead to the disappearance of the self as agent." The dualism of structure and conscious subject can be mediated by "practical consciousness", the "knowledgeability that human agents display in the context of social life".

Here there is a set of ties not just between discourse and 'the other side of language', but between the individual as an agent and the institutions which the individual constitutes and reconstitutes in the course of the duration of day-to-day activity. A good deal of what we do is organized knowledgeably in and through practical consciousness; it follows that the way in which we make sense of our own actions and the actions of others, and the ways in which we generate meaning in the world, are in an elemental sense methodological.... They derive ... from the methods which speakers and agents use in the course of practical action to reach 'interpretations' of what they and others do (537-538).

Following Wittgenstein rather than Derrida, Giddens argues that it

is in the time-space settings which agents make use of in order to organize their day-to-day social activities that we find the origins and the nature of meaning, (and that) there is another sense of what cannot be said, and that is what has to be done. There is a massive conceptual arena here for the reintroduction of the skilled knowledgeable subject, whose activities are geared into

the continuities of day-to-day social life and whose knowledgeability is expressed in practice.

Accepting that "knowledgeability" also includes a large amount of unconscious knowing (in the sense that our knowledge of the rules of language is unconscious and not easily accessible to the discursive awareness of the speaker), Giddens regards "temporally and spatially situated conversation" as most essential for understanding what language and meaning are. The consequences of this are important (541):

They essentially involve rescuing the knowledgeable Agent as the conceptual center for social analysis, and situating what "knowledgeability" is in the context of the ongoing practices of social life. Social life does then not appear as a phenomenon external to agency, but is contingently produced and reproduced in the moments of social activity stretching across the time/space context of action.... (This) does not involve treating social life as the outcome of what preconstituted agents do. On the other hand ... the structural properties of social systems exist in their instantiation only in specific forms of human conduct.

Giddens draws several conclusions from his thesis. He recasts the notion of intentionality, arguing that "there is not a single set of discrete intentions built into any cultural product; there is a context of intentionality and practice which saturates that product". But "it is a characteristic of social life generally that its products escape the intentional input of its creators." A social institution (in which we might include "the reading world") is not "an objectified expression of the subjectivity of the individuals who produce and reproduce it in the course of their activity".

So far we have been concerned with the contribution of hermeneutics and critical theory to the understanding of culture, and have also touched on the contribution of post-structuralist thought. All three

have much to contribute to our understanding of the relationship of culture to social reality, at the same time as they undermine our belief in the fixity of these entities and of the idea of "the relationship" itself. But (with significant exceptions) they seem to speak from within a reasonably consensual society. Habermas is concerned with interests, but the element of conflict seems to be reduced by the emphasis on negotiation in the cultural sphere. Giddens's structuration theory gives an illuminating account of how subjectivity and objectivity interpenetrate and lose all distinctness, and denies that the one constrains the other. This may be a fair description of how things work, even in societies which are riven with conflict, but they create problems for those closely involved in such societies. First of all, one may intuitively reject such relatively harmonious attitudes when one is intensely conscious of an "objective" and dehumanized (even as it is constructed by people to whom it makes some sense) world of industry, military and bureaucracy, and, as in much of the Third World, the penetration of one's "structured" universe by an invasive alien social order to which one may be forced to comply without consenting. Compliance itself may become consent as the new order over time demands subjective accommodation; subjectivity may become schizophrenic, so that one side will be actively involved in making a home in the new order while another challenges it. One therefore wants something as well as the hermeneutic interpretations or structuration theory, something of the Hegelian, Marxist or Foucaultian sense of the importance of conflict, of the inescapable power of negativity in social history, and in the generation of understandings and their use. One wants a tougher theory of hegemony. In short, one wants the

question of power to come into play. Foucault (1980) points to the failure to give adequate attention to the role of power, and, since he rejects the metaphysic hidden in the dialectic (as a process which moves against a rational schema and drives to an historical end) he looks at the play of power in manifold local instances. From either a dialectical point of view or from the point of view of a fragmentary and discontinuous Weltanschauung, the thrust of power and counter-power must be brought into consideration in any understanding of culture and social reality. There may be occasions when what is structural, albeit created in and through the subjective actions of others, posits itself as a constraint to one's own subjective and structured reality in that the only way in which structuration may return to its homeostasis will be through violence. This is the condition of class, race and sexist conflict. Without recognizing it, theories of interpretation and of the generation of structures will not only be complacent, they will be wrong. To recognize it is not to deny the sense of discussions of intentions, meanings, structures, circles (or spirals) of understanding, and so on; it is to see this dignifying of the social as shot through with the ambiguities of a little-understood play of power which takes and makes positions over an indeterminate reality which sanctions nothing. Thus, Giddens's patterning of the understanding of the dialectic of meaning and structure-making practical activity and consciousness, and the more compelling dialectics of Hegel and Marx, are at once affirmed for modelling our understanding, and erased by the unfathomable traces and blanks which open up behind language and will.

3.6 The significance of "the new paradigm"

Most of what has been said above has influenced the design of the research, and, as was suggested in Chapter 1, the concept of what was being researched itself. The content of this chapter is presented more as necessary background, as part of a richer context of intentionality, than as the rationale for methodological guidelines. Some specific points can, however, be outlined.

In the first place there has been a principled rejection of "a method". This does not mean that the research is unmethodical, but that a commitment to one incisive method has been eschewed and little faith has been placed in the relationship between method and understanding. The approach could be described as knowingly naive; it aims at being exploratory, at trying to look freshly at a new country, but inevitably seeking out the clear line of an old landscape "that is our secret discipline".

Hermeneutics leads to a special respect for speaking subjects' accounts of the sense they make of their experience of reading, for their knowledgeability about reading, and of the meanings, pre-understandings, intentions and projects which they bring to, and take away from, the reading world. The circle of whole and part is a shaping ideal, an ecological backgrounding, rather than a methodology. And all the notions in the hermeneutic project are subject to the overarching interpretative character of all knowledge.

Critical theory adds to this the suspicion of the distorting interests of labour and power embedded in language, and the need to enter the dynamics of dialogue and the project of promoting an emancipatory communicative competence. In spite of a suspicion about the metaphysics of wholeness in this theory, it can still be held that the method of social therapy holds out promise of more temporal validity than more static methods. However, in the present project, contextual constraints have not allowed for action research in the full possibilities of the term. The idea of action research exercises a centripetal influence on what can be seen as a basically hermeneutic enterprise.

Giddens's structuration theory has helped to shape the overall form of this dissertation, softening its presentation of the opposition of "objective" (Chapter 4) and the "subjective" (Chapter 5) reading worlds in terms of constraints, and allowing some conceptualisation of their complementarity. His notion of structure seems particularly enlightening, but his theory must be seen against a notion of a society of incomplete articulations; here various notions from the theorizing about power and hegemony must be allowed to come into play. Thus, the pre-understanding of the reading world is that it is potentially a world created by, or together with, the community of readers, participating both in the creation of structures (understood partly as the rules of social existence) and in the creation of meanings; but reading is also one of the sites of a struggle for power that is neither evenly matched nor uniformly distributed.

A radical openness is stimulated by the influence of post-modernism/post-structuralism. Derrida's assertion that we fall into ideology "when meaning is no longer at stake" (Norval 1986) is taken very seriously. The fragmentary nature of knowledges and systems of knowledge is strongly felt, and the indeterminate nature of the reading world (in this context a term too suggestive of completed totalities to be used without qualification) is considered to be axiomatic. The appearance of concreteness in the portrayal, especially of the "objective" reading world, is to be set against this background. Where the facts seem replete with meaning this is a contingent effect of a convenient rhetoric which turns traces into centered, self-sufficient "subjects". At the same time the quest for understanding of the kind outlined is not seen as necessarily entailing a conservative delineation of the way things are, since that is not dependent on the quest itself but on the inescapable necessity of taking a position.

All of the "schools" of thought which we have glanced into here are concerned with hearing and interpreting the stories told by experience, people, specialists, language. This activity, pursued with sufficient artistry or discipline (for which there are no predeterminable external criteria) has the status of wissenschaft if not of "science". The present study takes this notion of the narrative nature of knowledges fairly literally, seeing the three stories told about the reading world ("theoretical", structural and personal) as accounts of equal valency, to be interpreted, in Chapter 7, to some extent in terms of their "intertextuality" and their interpenetration, at the same time avoiding the temptation to suture them into an illusory to-

ality. The concept of narrative knowledge is taken particularly seriously in Chapter 5 and 6, where the "data" are woven into the texture of a story about the field work.

Chapter 5 shows an indebtedness to researchers who have maintained a practical stance against the empire of positivism in specific approaches to working with people. The indebtedness is discussed more fully there.

From this exploration of the relationship of interpretations to "reality", certain speculations can be made about the role of reading.

Firstly, the Derridean perspective reveals the irreducible complexity of writing/reading and its relationship to society. On the one hand there is the tendency to see all human experience as text. Writing, which throws into relief the character of language as absences and traces against a bottomless ground, is itself a text within the text of social life within the text of the unknowable universe.

The text may also however operate in places at times as an agency for the creation and maintenance of structures, somewhere beyond where it loses its subjectivity, its relationship to individual intentionality, and is instantiated as structure, from which it can come again into play in other contexts of intentionality.

The idea of a "reading world", false totality though it contains, is suggestive of an otherness, an incommensurable quality, an alternative

world that is not merely derivative, a world that people can only enter with a set of general understandings about what reading is, the set of intentions which they bring to all pursuits, not necessarily conscious, and the specific understandings and projects relating to the matter in hand. The pre-understandings are expressed in the total language of their experience. The text or book can then be seen as intentional objects posited in the language, in the environment, in the gestures and patterning of behaviour around text.

Reading is also a position of power, a kind of cultural height or fortress which holds a commanding position in the delimitation of the possible and the desirable; yet it is full of potential breeches, full of treacherous parties holding oppositional positions within the stronghold, but out of contact with their allies on the other side - a site, in other words, for the kind of local attack on the exercise of power recommended by Foucault.

If, as this broken line of thought suggests, people are in some way responsible for their cultural worlds, if they play a part in its constitution and reproduction which is more than consensual, then there are good reasons, not only structural or instrumental reasons, for things being the way they are. These reasons are important though not justifying. Thus, for example, where illiteracy is widespread and where the possibility exists to become literate, people have reasons, not unrelated to their understandings or volitions, though not necessarily capable of being articulated by them, for this being the case. This does not mean that these reasons can be respected to the extent

of not engaging in dialogue and critical action to articulate the reasons and open the possibility of change.

Finally for the present discussion, reading is as serious and unserious a subject as anything which allows itself to be looked at through language. We may no longer be able to consider it as anything more than a game played by interests or in its own interest, or to think that it is better because it brings us closer to the truth or reality - although that will not stop us from thinking that certain kinds of reading are better than others, and that reading is a better corner of the game than others. And at the same time, we can no longer regard certain forms of reading as mere entertainment or as "escapist".

3.7 Implications for this study

On the one hand this study is concerned with the meaning of reading:

Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness.... As a seeking, questioning needs previous guidance from what it seeks. The meaning of Reading must therefore already be available to us in a certain way. We intimated that we are always already involved in an understanding of Reading. But ... we don't even know the horizon upon which we are supposed to grasp and pin down the meaning. The average and vague understanding of Reading is a fact.... The interpretation of the average understanding of Reading attains its necessary guideline only with the developed concept of Reading. From the clarity of that concept and the appropriate manner of its explicit understanding we shall be able to discern what the obscure or not yet elucidated understanding of Reading means, what kinds of obscuration or hindrance of an explicit elucidation of the meaning of Reading are possible and necessary. Furthermore, the average, vague understanding of Reading can be permeated by traditional theories and opinions about Reading in such a way that these theories, as the sources of the prevailing understanding, remain hidden. What is sought in the question of Reading is not something completely unfamiliar, although it is at first totally ungraspable.

This, with apologies to Heidegger (1977:47) for the substitution of "Reading" for "Being", comes close to stating what the writer would most like the study to be about.

At the same time the study is concerned with the social reality of reading. In other words, reserving judgment about the "wholeness" in this statement, it attempts to exercise

a strong, implicitly Marxist, grasp of the webby wholeness of a culture and of the fine threads of interconnection that exist between everything we do, from breadwinning and making families to reading books and scaling mountains (Craig 1987).

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE READING WORLD OF BLACK WORKERS (I):

READING AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is not so much the intense suffering ... which makes it impossible for black writers to produce long and complex works of literary genius as it is the very absorbing, violent and immediate nature of experience which impinges upon individual life.... In Johannesburg there was too much of this direct experience to be had; there was no privacy in which to reflect.

L. Nkosi 1965 (In Hart 1984:36)

They don't like music in prison
so they banned Dennis Brutus' poems
and Wopko Jensma's poems
and Breyten Breytenbach's poems
and Wally Serote's poems
and Sipho Sepamla's poems
and James Matthew's poems
and my own poems

...
But unaccountably
music crossed the border
on waves of ether
through every crack
between the heavily armed border posts

Peter Horn (In "Staffrider" 2(1) 1972:5)

The South African press ... most advanced in Africa ... maintain international standards ... sharply competitive market ... one of the few collective mass media on the continent that deserve the description 'free' in the Western sense.

Official Yearbook of the RSA (1985:824)

One appreciates the ... efforts to encourage writers and writing, (but) there has been no corresponding and effective move to encourage readers and the reading habit. The number of people who voluntarily read books is still very small.

Henry Chakava (In Schuring 1982:28)

APARTHEID: by itself the word occupies the terrain like a concentration camp. System of partition, barbed wire, crowds of mapped out solitudes.... It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders.

Jacques Derrida (1985:292)

4.1 An overview

This chapter deals with the place of reading and literacy in black society in South Africa. Ready resources in this field are scarce and the chapter is at best an outline of what a social history of literacy in South Africa might look like. The aim of the presentation is to look at the social facts regarding literacy in order to create a background of the institution of reading and its social context which confronts black readers in South Africa and influences their valuing of reading. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the idea of such "givens" is problematic, but it shall be left to the following chapters to consider the sense and use which actual people make of these "givens". We look first at the broad social history of black South Africans and at the contexts of daily life in township and factory. Against the background of an account of the ideal conditions for the attainment of widespread accomplishment in reading we consider the linguistic contexts of reading, the reading contexts of reading, and the relevance of reading in urban black communities. In the course of this we touch on readership studies, the place of press and publishing, and the role of outlets, libraries and schools. The reading world is shown to be a site of opportunity and deprivation, hegemony and counter-hegemony.

4.2 The broad social context

Establishment accounts of the history and nature of South African society have characteristically emphasised the political and have por-

trayed the chequered advance of industrial and Christian civilisation in the sub-continent. Over the past twenty years these accounts have been challenged by the "revisionist" studies of South African social history, such as those by Bundy (1979), Marks and Atmore (1980) Lacey (1981), van Onselen (1982) and Lodge (1983), and sociology, represented in such works as Cock (1980) and Bozzoli (1983), to mention only a few of the works in a wide range of studies which may well turn out to be the most influential literature in this period in terms of the erosion of received "settler" interpretations of South African reality. The question of the influence of this movement and its more popular manifestations will be touched in in the final chapters. At present we are concerned with what they tell us about the social context of the reading world.

From these studies some broad and almost incontestable features of South African society become clear. Briefly, they relate to the frontier and the oscillation between accommodation of and resistance to white settlement, the penetration of capital and its victorious alliance with imperial military and hegemonic power, the reduction of the black peoples of South Africa to a labour reserve coerced by the gradual undermining of the base of subsistence, and the repression of resistance and of attempts on the part of black individuals and communities to compete and gain a position of advantage within the system. Although the revisionist history and sociology show how relentless this process has been, many of the writers involved are at pains to work against a reductionism that would portray the subject peoples as mere victims of inevitable historical and economic laws.

Thus, within the process we find at times a more than willing participation by black people in the modernisation of which the benefits have seemed so ambivalent (when they have not been withheld), at times a resistance reflected not only in attempts at building solidarity and effective action, but in the adoption of less direct forms ranging from low productivity and the resort to petty crime or virtual forced labour, to the development of survival cultures and the hiding of true identities and feelings, often in an apparent deference which puts the subjects beyond the reach of their masters.

Recent studies have focussed attention on the extent to which the education system (perhaps the major context of the reading world for black people) has been articulated with this history of oppression. Kallaway (1984) and Christie (1985) show how education has satisfied the needs of economy and polity in South Africa, both in terms of the disciplining (rather than training or education) of a largely de-skilled workforce, and in terms of its wider hegemonic function or its operation as Ideological State Apparatus. Once again it is pointed out that education has been inherently ambiguous in that it has also been a major site of resistance and of counter-hegemony.

The peculiar history of South African society makes the application of conventional categories of social analysis difficult. For example, while a broad attempt has been made to understand the society in terms of class rather than race or ethnicity, this attempt has proved difficult and may only have strategic value for the articulation of resistance. As we shall see, the dominant reality for blacks in South

Africa does not depend on any typifying category of socio-economic status or of personal identity, but on the fact that they are black. The role of capitalism in this society remains an issue of intense dispute; while capital seems clearly to have benefited from and supported (or even initiated) the coercive labour system, its contemporary dynamics may be at odds with this system. Moreover, the explanatory power of the notion of legitimacy, which has featured highly in recent understandings of European society, has been shown to be inadequate in the understanding of South African society. According to Adams (1986) the system of social control cannot be legitimized in the perceptions of black people, and other explanations, which we will consider below, must be found.

The participants in this study (Chapter 5) are profoundly affected by this history of dispossession and coercion, accommodation and resistance even though the process was well established by the time even the oldest of them were born (1922). Thirteen of the eighteen had personally succumbed to the pressure to move from the country to the industrial city, and even the five who were not first generation city dwellers had been affected by the contrast of contexts, having been sent to the country to school or having relatives still in rural areas, for example. With only a few exceptions they were rather unwilling participants in industrial work, being at the same time grateful for this work because of the lack of alternatives for survival in a situation where the rural homeland is impoverished and overpopulated, and where even in the industrial context they are only too aware of the extent of unemployment and dependency, and, especially in

the mid-eighties, of the constant possibility of being retrenched. They are forced by various laws to be dwellers in, and commuters from, the purposefully designed ghettos which are a product of this history, with little choice regarding their style of life. In spite of widely ranging individual differences in terms of personality, interests and "class", they are obliged to share the deprivations of a common society, and to be the servants and beneficiaries of an economic system in which they have extremely slender possibilities of full participation. They are the subjects of an ideological system which blurs their opposition without justifying the order which it purportedly legitimates. And they are intensely aware of the place of education in this history. Most of the older participants believed keenly that their experience of education before Bantu Education (i.e. prior to the mid-fifties) was far superior to what had been offered subsequently to their children and their younger fellow-workers, while some of the younger participants indicated an awareness of the problem of education even though they often showed a very positive valuing of what they had been able to derive from an inferior system.

4.3 The contexts of daily life

The South African black township is the product of the segregation of settler towns, the influx of landless peoples, legislation limiting where people may live according to race, and a policy of social engineering involving the provision of mass housing for supposed "temporary sojourners" who were held to have their roots and their rights elsewhere in their "homelands". The East Rand townships which, to-

gether with the more distant Soweto, supply the labour for the two factories involved in this study, were among the first products of this policy in the early 1950s. Because of the appalling and insanitary conditions of the largely squatter settlements around the East Rand towns, then and now the largest industrial complex in South Africa, even without including their gold mines, these were among the first to be subjected to Nationalist social engineering. Lodge (1983:131) describes the process thus:

Vast geometrically planned and tightly administered 'model' townships were erected - in each case at a considerable distance from the city centre - and location inhabitants were gradually screened and sorted and resettled according to the dictates of Verwoerdian dogma. Germiston, with its Katlehong township, and Benoni, with Daveyton, were, in 1949 and 1950, among the first municipalities in the Union to comply with the Group Areas Act. In terms of living space, housing standards and sanitation, the new townships may have represented an improvement on the old locations, but to some groups within the community they would have appeared threatening, and the manner in which these changes were implemented evoked widespread resentment. The removals tended to speed up a process of social differentiation within the local communities. The new townships, being isolated from city centres, provided improved business opportunities for African traders and their own administrations created a certain amount of clerical employment. This, together with their geographical characteristics, tended to make it less easy for political leaders to evoke a united communal response to a particular issue.

Ruzwayo (1985:6-8) provides a concise overview of contemporary township life from the inside in her account of her life in teaching, social work and opposition:

From its failure to provide basic community needs, such as proper electrification, adequate sewage and rainstorm drainage, as well as well-built, tarmacadamed streets, the residents of that community have always looked on it as a permanent camp and overnight dormitory.... In this complex children are born and families live, under very difficult conditions. It is from here that the majority of parents leave every morning, some of them as early as four o'clock, and come back home late in the evening. Many arrive home as late as half past seven in the evening because of inadequate railway and bus services as well as limited, unsafe taxi

services. Most parents leave their children sleeping; they can only hope that they will adhere to the instructions and guidance they leave them.

Kuzwayo points to the general inadequacy of wages to cover the costs of meagre food, rent, relatively expensive transport, and school fees, clothes and books. She also laments the loss of traditional values (13-16)

Overnight, the values of the past became legend to the point of being ridiculed as old-fashioned and out-dated. People began to question certain long-standing practices which had been taken as the law and the truth and thus become the cornerstone of the moral fibre of the black community.... It is not easy to live and to bring up children in a community deprived of its traditional moral code and values - a community lost between its old heritage and that of its colonisers.

Both Kuzwayo and Lodge point to the fact of all people being thrown together by the official provision of housing, of which there is a chronic shortage, and by other legislation which leaves people with very little choice over where and how they are to live. "In Soweto, houses are not allocated according to the class or status of residents. It is not unusual for Dr X to find himself having as his neighbour Mr Y, the road-digger" (Kuzwayo 1985:16-17).

In spite of its frustrations and indignities, its insecurity and crime, township life is not only lamented by writers, but is often celebrated. It lacks the spirit of the old locations like Sophiatown (Lodge 1983: Chapter 4) and remembers a lost rural life of independence and pride of property like an idyll (Kuzwayo 1985:12). Yet, even while township dwellers experience divisiveness and isolation, township life has a diversity and human colour and a sense of community

which should not be romanticised, but seems real in the attachment of its people.

When tragedy hits Mr Y's family, without thinking twice Dr X puts his jacket on and goes to stand by his neighbour, even if just to hold his hand. In the case of death, he may do this several times until after the burial. This is us as a people, as a community call it a ghetto. Is it a ghetto? You can size it up for yourself. I have lived here for the last 27 years. With all its imperfections and shortcomings, and there are many, it is home to me (Kuzwayo 1985:6&17).

Hart (1984), in her study of the human geography of the township as seen in its literature, points to a number of central themes: nostalgia for the life of the old locations (Sophiatown has become almost mythical); the stereotyping of "matchbox" houses and the lack of any city centre, so that the contrast with the white city and suburbs becomes a recurring issue; control, supervision and police raids, squalor and poverty, gangsterism and fear, the bitter memory of removals, belonging, opportunity and a sense of place, and the "vibrant township atmosphere" with its frequently hazardous informal economic activities. Demographically, the townships have very young populations. Large numbers of children play street games - another of the themes identified by Hart - and are to be found in peer group formations. The school is the most common public building in the townships, but education is still not compulsory. When the employed are away at work, the township seems full of children - often untended by adults - old people, and those unemployed who have given up looking for work.

The other context of daily life (if one does not count the frequently long stretches of commuting) is the workplace. The factories of Alrode and Wadeville, where this study was undertaken, are part of an

industrial belt stretching in an arc to the south-east of Johannesburg between the towns of Germiston and Alberton. Observations at ten of these suggest that factory management appears to be based on an ambivalently liberal management philosophy, both because of the growing influence of the black trade unions which have developed since the early seventies and of the perception that segregation and a forced non-participation work against prosperity and a healthy political and economic climate. This means that workers may be treated with more respect, but their chances of participation in management remain low, hampered in part by their lack of educational and technical qualifications. There is a kind of segregation in the factories between the predominantly white-staffed executive office complex and the predominantly black-staffed factory floor. Technical trades are still exercised almost exclusively by whites because of the legacy of job-reservation, but blacks are largely responsible for clerical jobs in stores and dispatch. Lodge (1983) points to the considerable growth of demand for local black clerical workers created by the economic growth in this area during the 1960s and early 70s.

The factories themselves are often forbidding, isolated by roads dense with heavy traffic, surrounded by high barbed wire enclosures and policed by strict security (which makes regular access for research quite trying). This security is apparently not related so much to the continuing state of emergency, as to the need to control the purloining of factory goods. Workers generally work forty hours per week, with long days from Monday to Thursday and a half day on Friday being a popular distribution of time, while many factories work night

shifts, with rotating rosters. Wages at the factories are better than wages for such work as domestic service, but are still low. It is difficult to get exact wage figures, but discussion with the participants in this study suggest that wages start at a low of about R100,00 per week and rise to over R200,00 for clerical staff. Pensions and medical aids remain subjects of dispute, but the workers enjoy few additional benefits. Workers are almost totally excluded from any sharing in the ownership of the industries, and trade unionists are suspicious of the co-optive aspects of attempts to promote participation.

It is to the characteristics of daily life that Adams (1986) attributes the phenomenon of South Africa's ability to function, until recently, with very little legitimacy for the government and yet with relatively little overt coercion compared to other repressive states. According to him, this stability is brought about by dependency and the sheer struggle for survival. He shows that enormous numbers of people have a reasonably secure stake in the status quo through employment by state and capital, so that whatever indignities they experience, challenging the system does not seem worth while. The sheer struggle to gain a place to sleep and some sustenance for many people leads to inertia and a willingness to accept minimal benefits. Adams wrote this at the start of the uprisings of 1984-1986 and the imposition of a draconian emergency, so his analysis may explain the recent past better than the present. The imposition of increasingly severe states of emergency, with police and white troops in large numbers in the townships, and the censorship which forbids the publication of

news of vital interest to township dwellers and workers, must be born in mind when considering the reading world of the participants in this study. The emergencies did not shape the reading world, but were very much matters of concern during the field work.

The relevance of this brief account of the social context to the reading world will be explored in the following section.

4.4 The reading world in the context of black society

(1) The "ideal-typical" contexts of the accomplished reader

At this stage it will help if we picture the general social factors which facilitate the achievement of accomplishment in reading. Cook-Gumpert (1985) and Schieffelin (1986) offer many examples of studies which show how children's literacy is created in the interpersonal negotiations of home and school. Both Levine (1986) and Charnley and Jones (1979) have shown how important environment and perceptions are among adults seeking to develop their literacy skills. Studies of the social aspects of reading discussed in Chapter 2 generally indicate the significance of environmental factors over and above issues of didactics. Levine (1982) argues that the social environment of literacy is most important, and that access to authentic written communication is central to the identity and achievement of literacy. He suggests that the reason why writing (which he sees as almost more important than reading if literacy is to be an enabling or liberating skill) is

so little practised and found so difficult is that few people are surrounded by significant others who actually write in any sustained way.

The literature and common experience enable us to describe what might be called "the ideal context of accomplished readers". Such readers would be

- born into a language saturated with one or more historical forms of literate language; not only is this speech influenced by written language, the metalanguage of literacy may be one of the topics of speech;
- exposed to an environment in which there is a plenitude of printed and written texts, at least some of which are easily comprehensible and physically accessible, held in respect, used and delighted in by significant others, and in which self-presentation in terms of literacy is both expected and highly esteemed;
- given ample opportunities to enjoy printed text even before they are able to read themselves, so that reading is at least competitive with alternative media, social interaction and other pursuits in its accessibility and attractiveness;
- privileged by social circumstances which favour reading: reasonable comfort, opportunities for solitude, a certain valuing of the solitary individual withdrawn from the social round, and even, perhaps, an element of alienation;
- able to move out into a broader community in which the status of literacy is institutionalized in a multitude of forms, and in which literacy attaches to the completion of daily tasks and to the highest spiritual, technical, business and political accomplishments;

- in a position to perceive and enjoy a certain element of fit between their concerns, their needs - characteristically, in terms of reading, for information, self-fulfilment and escape (Greaney and Heggart 1986) and the diverse contents and styles of a variety of reading worlds;

The last point should not be seen as requiring a simplistic form of "relevance". Instead, it demands quantity and quality of reading matter, and a reading world where the reader is at least initially at home. Without this proviso an important feature of reading may be forgotten - its capacity, because of its durability and because of the conventions which weigh so much even in the publication of ephemera, to create its own contexts not entirely attached to immediate historical "realities". At the same time, even fantasy must launch itself from the actual experience of the reader, and the literate environment is necessarily one in which the rules and rituals of various forms of literate behaviour are given a place, and in which the contents of literacy reflect, interpret and influence social forms. That the reading world will reflect interests (in Habermas's sense of the word as the "knowledge-constitutive interests" of work and power) seems obvious, but this is of course no direct reflection. The relationship of the reading to the reader's interests would therefore be an essential element in the shaping of reading behaviour, but this should be broadly interpreted; both the need for self-fulfilment and for escape are related to these interests.

The fact that a high degree of reading accomplishment may be achieved by rare individuals in the absence of many of these factors, or that even when all these factors are present the ratio of highly-literate or avid readers will still be relatively small in the society as a whole, does not invalidate the description of ideal conditions. It seems reasonable to believe that without the normative reading culture outlined here a community which is literate both widely and in depth is not likely to come into being.

With this as background we are in a position to look critically at the general contexts of reading of black workers in South Africa.

(ii) The linguistic environment of reading

There can be little reason for believing that the linguistic context of black South Africans supports the acquisition of literacy or pleasure in reading. There are three basic reasons for saying this: literacy and reading are not deeply rooted in the African languages; traditional languages have undergone change in the urban context and oral literatures which might offer some support for a love of reading and literature in general would appear to be waning; and there is a misfit between the language of the environment and the language of the reading world.

Missionaries undertook the task of encoding the African languages in the nineteenth century. Although, as Esterhuyzen (1974) shows, they were sometimes well trained for this work, the process of reaching

agreement about standard forms for the various languages was only completed well into the twentieth century, and differences of opinion still mean that the languages shared across borders (Southern Sotho, Tswana, and Tsonga) have at least two orthographies. The differences are, however, reasonably trivial. The missionaries were, of course, mainly concerned with the translation of the Bible. The first forms of the translated Bible were completed between the 1830s and the 1880s. The missionaries were also concerned with creating primers for reading and arithmetic, as well as with accessible tracts and with the creation of grammars of the African languages. The Eastern Cape frontier was a leading area in this endeavour. The first serial publication aimed at a black readership was a Wesleyan bulletin published in Xhosa between 1837 and 1841. The missions not only established the first presses (notably Lovedale, which published The Kaffir Express - now S.A. Outlook - from 1870, and Moriija in Lesotho) but were the springboards for the establishment of a number of independent black newspapers (Switzer and Switzer 1979; Hachten and Giffard 1984).

What is striking in the development of black publishing is the extent to which it has been dominated by whites. (The black newspapers which survived had lost their independence by the mid-twentieth century.) The missionaries had to have helpers, and Guy (1983), for example, shows the confidential relationship which grew between Bishop Colenso and his Zulu adviser. Colenso, in spite of his involvement in evangelism and in political and theological controversy, seems to have spent considerable time and effort on the development of Zulu texts and text-books. Relatively democratic, he nonetheless kept control and

initiative in his hands. Kuzwayo speaks with pride of her grandfather, who was the only black on Moffat's committee translating the Bible into Setswana. The work of Sol Plaatje in the standardization of Setswana and in developing his language as a literate language through the collection of proverbs and the translation of Shakespeare stands out as unique. Written Xhosa had a champion in Soga, who wrote the history of his people in the late nineteenth century. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress exercised a strong influence on the early development of black language literatures (Gray 1984; RSA 1985). The official yearbook of the RSA, 1985 traces what looks like a dynamic progress in this field. In fact, it is the thinness of achievement that stands out, or the low profile of talent. Hardly any African language literature in South Africa has been translated into major world languages. A report on the proceedings of a committee for the promotion of "the native languages" and their literature in 1933 compiled by the leading scholar in this field, C.M. Doke, illustrates this feature. No blacks sat on the committee of five, nor were any consulted. In a long bibliography of works on the African languages only five of the authors are black. The tone of the report is mandarin:

In Folk-lore Xhosa literature is remarkably poor. (Oral performance is not considered to be "literature" - writer's note.) The educated Xhosa seems to be developing a distinct talent in the writing of the short novel (12). In vernacular works Zulu is extremely poor (14). "The following seem to be the salient questions at issue: (a) Should any development of Transvaal Sotho be encouraged at all, or should the language be abandoned .. (for ordinary literary purposes) ... in favour of Southern Sotho?" (sic - Professor G.P. Lestrade's communication, (17). There is hardly any item which could be prescribed with assurance as a set book for students of the language (20). Finally it is sincerely hoped that this committee will have the wholehearted co-operation of the Native peoples of South Africa,

in the aim of enhancing their literature and literary standard...(32)

The report shows valuable work being done at universities and educational (mission) institutions to promote vernacular literatures, but the large measure of non-participation of those on the receiving end of this benevolence is clear, whatever reasons there may be for this being the case. The report points to major shortcomings in the situation, such as the need for adequate grammars in many of the languages, the need to encourage literature (a publication fund is suggested), and the need for research.

That this phenomenon persists is reflected in a 1981 conference on the development of vernacular literature (Vink and Frylinck 1983) and in the convening of a seminar on the same subject at the University of Pretoria in 1987. The proceedings of these two gatherings were characterized by the leading role of white specialists in the African languages and other concerned groups (publishers, librarians, teachers), and point to a number of chronic problems in the status and future of writings in the vernacular: low levels of literacy, adverse attitudes, the general lack of the reading habit, the relatively small market in each of the languages, the lack of quality and interest of vernacular reading matter compared with English, the low status of the vernacular and so on. In part, the political context is blamed for this, as the advancement of African languages is associated with Apartheid. According to Vink and Frylinck (1983:65) the "promotion of literature in African languages is seen by some as an endorsement of separate development". Dr J. Molao, in a submission to the University

of Pretoria seminar argues that "there is a general reluctance among the adult Africans to read books authored in their respective languages"; "the existing literature in African Languages repels adult readers.... there is something wrong with African literature." He attributes this inter alia to the fact that nearly all of this literature is written with prescription for schools in mind - although he maintains that this does not even make it good reading for young people - and that there is a process of censorship promoted by the language boards, which accept poor rather than challenging or critical literature, and that writers in the African languages do not feel free to address "real life issues". (These are just some of the problems he lists.)

The South African National Bibliography, which lists all publications in South Africa each year, shows that publication in Afrikaans and English far outstrips publication in the African languages, and that most African language publications are either didactic or religious. (Figures in iii below).

This situation can hardly be favourable to the development of reading, considering that nearly 10 million black people (over 4 million of them adults) in South Africa know only their own language (Schuring and Ellis 1987), and that very few black children grow up with any contact with English. The situation is further complicated by the highly controversial issue of the language of education. The American debate on the effects of non-standard English on educational achievement and the attainment of literacy in standard English (associated

with the work of Labov) has drawn attention to the potential difficulty of learning to read when the reading matter is not in one's daily language. Schuring (1985), who has studied the "koine" which has emerged as the lingua franca of the Pretoria townships, has initiated a research programme to study the effects of the considerable differences between the local languages actually used by black people, and the "classical" (or "deep" in common parlance) languages used in printed texts. "Deep" Zulu, Sotho and so on still enjoy a high status, and the new languages, while not despised, are rejected as languages of education. The assumption behind the investigation is that these differences will be found to have some limiting effect on learning, among which will be a lack of growth in reading. In two personal observations the writer has found some confirmation of the negative or ambiguous attitude to reading in African languages. He was present when sets of attractive vernacular story books were issued to schools in the Eastern Free State for the first time in 1983, and was surprised to find some of the teachers to be more than indifferent to these innovative publications. They said that they would rather get on with the English primer. Secondly, during the development of standardized tests of literacy in the Sotho languages (French 1982a) he noted that teachers and some of the adults in the preliminary run read their own languages with greater difficulty than English, with which they were far more familiar as a printed language.

The difficulty of learning to read in a different dialect from one's own is presumably compounded when most of one's reading is in an entirely different language. The country's major project to promote the

attainment of proficiency in English at school, the Molteno Project, took its starting point from the observation that black school children generally failed to learn to read in their own language and only became proficient readers after they had started to learn English (Rodseth 1978). The project has developed methods to teach vernacular literacy quickly and pleasurably in order to establish a resource for the teaching of English. This project may help to create a generation more positively disposed to reading and writing in their own languages.

Current education policy requires a transition from mother tongue instruction to English after five years of schooling, but it is generally agreed that the English of pupils at this level is inadequate for the language of the study material they are offered. MacDonald, who is leading a research programme into this problematic transition to English writes (in a personal communication) that:

Black children face a formidable problem in moving from the vernacular to English. Firstly, they may well be functionally illiterate in their mother tongue (unless they have been taught via the Breakthrough system); and even if they are literate, the reading habit in the vernacular will be difficult to cultivate because of the virtual absence of suitable vernacular books in the school environment and on the general market. Secondly, the children may learn to read English with some success, but even here there may be very little access to English books, although in principle the reading of English books is encouraged. However, even if the pupils are equal to the Standard 2 English syllabus, this is inadequate preparation for the shock of the transition to Standard 3. For the first time they are exposed to expository texts in English (most of them poorly constructed), in four or five textbooks, each about 100 pages in length. Apart from unfamiliar constructions and a veritable mountain of vocabulary (moving from an expected vocabulary of 700 words in Standard 2, to the vocabulary of approximately 7000 words demanded by Standard 3 texts.) Many pupils drop out at this point.

At the same time, the writer has argued elsewhere (French 1979) that there may be a link between a valuing of the skillful use of one's mother tongue and one's development of a valuing of reading in another language. If this is true, the opposite may well be the case, so that the denigration of one's own cultural heritage will work against the enjoyment and appreciation of literature in another language. African oral literatures are being treated with increasingly serious attention, but this is partly because they are disappearing, or are maintained only in the diminishing rural contexts. The evidence in Chapter 5 and the description of the broad social context above suggest that, however vital interpersonal language in the townships may be, the wonder-inspiring story-telling grandmother and the formal and ritual enjoyment of oral literature have almost disappeared from the formative experience of young urban blacks. Vink and Frylinck (1983) point out that a still-existing oral literature may work against the promotion of published literature, so this must remain a matter of dispute. The writer's experience of working in black communities suggests that the closeness, the density and rich reality of interpersonal language there may lend a pallor to the printed word.

(iii) The reading environment of reading

The reading environment of urban black South Africans is characterised by plenty and by deprivation. Ellis's (1982, 1987) studies of literacy statistics in South Africa show that the literacy rate among black adults rose by one percent per year between 1945 and 1970, and that the rate of increase may have accelerated since then. However, the

actual number of illiterate adults in the same period has remained fairly constant - because of the increase in population and the inadequacies of education provision - at about five million. By 1980 some 63% of black adults in urban areas had some degree of functional literacy. The newspaper readership figures discussed below suggest that the literacy rate in the larger metropolitan areas is higher than this. But the standard of literacy is generally low; only 25% of economically active blacks have eight or more years of formal education, a level which many business people consider to be a minimum requirement for any work other than manual labour. Even in the most modern contexts, therefore, blacks are likely to have some familiarity with the issue of illiteracy.

St. Leger (1974) shows how low literacy skills have shaped the style and scope of the black press in South Africa. The extent of publication in the country is impressive. However, little of this would seem to reach into the lives of the townships and of black workers. While the distribution of newspapers and ephemera in these contexts is widespread, and there has been a marked growth in black newspaper readership over the past twenty years, the average black, and particularly the factory worker, has very limited access to books. Outlets and library services are virtually negligible, leaving the school and chance personal encounters as very inadequate sources of contact with the world of more permanent reading matter.

(a) The scope and penetration of publishing and press

The South African National Bibliography (SANB) for 1985 lists over 700 sources - including large corporations and educational institutions - for the indigenous publications which it received during that year. According to its summary statistics a total of 6131 titles were submitted, of which 4158 were books and 1973 were pamphlets. Of the books, 2515 were new titles. Calculations from the figures show that 23% of the titles (including a preponderance of reprints) were African language books, and that two thirds of these were school books. It must be remembered that these are spread over nine indigenous languages and include a large number of translations of the same text. In 1985 over 10 million copies of texts were published in English in South Africa, and only slightly fewer in Afrikaans; at the other extreme is Venda, with under 200000 copies. Perusal of the distribution of publications among the 24 Unesco categories indicates that the vast majority of these texts are school books, but religion also figures quite highly.

These figures do not include newspapers or magazines. The Audit Bureau of Circulations had a membership of 507 newspapers and magazines in 1984, according to The Official Yearbook of the RSA, 1985, while the total, including publications not registered with the Bureau, is closer to 700. The Yearbook lists major newspapers as follows: 21 English (many of which have special editions directed at black readers, but only two of which are directed specifically at black read-

ers), 7 Afrikaans and two in African languages - Imvo (Xhosa) and ilanga (Zulu).

The most illuminating figures regarding black participation in the reading world are offered by the All Media and Products Survey (AMPS), an annual national survey of readership trends and their relationship to consumer choices. The following trends have been drawn or calculated from the 1985/6 survey, which was based on lengthy questionnaires answered by a sample of 8778 respondents from an estimated population of 13,5 million. Only percentages taken to the nearest whole number will be offered here:

The figures for average issue readership by blacks are:

	% Total pop.	PWV	Rural Transvaal
Any English daily	14	39	7
Any English weekly	14	33	9
Any African language weekly	23	21	8
Any English magazine	16	29	10
Any Black magazine (also in English)	35	47	28
Any magazine	38	55	29

The trends are fairly clear. Readership of Afrikaans newspapers and magazines is too negligible to list. Blacks in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging complex (the industrial heartland of South Africa, or the PWV) read more than the country as a whole, except when it comes to African language writings, and considerably more than the neighbouring rural areas.

Among the most popular publications are:

	Total pop.	PWV
<u>Newspapers</u>		
The Sunday Times	12	28
The Sowetan	8	32
City Press	10	19
The Star	4	16
<u>Magazines</u>		
Bona	24	26
Drum	14	21
Pace	15	23
True Love	11	15
SA Soccer	10	15
Readers Digest	5	11

The publications which have the greatest reader loyalty in terms of the regularity of reading over the past six months are clearly Bona (a magazine published in English and the major local African languages by an Afrikaans publishing house) and The Sowetan, although The Sunday Times is also read regularly.

Soweto would seem to outstrip all other areas of the country for readership, but shows an interesting reversal when it comes to African language papers. Durban, on the other hand, with its largely Zulu population and the paper Ilanga, reads much more in Zulu:

	English newspaper	African language newspaper (%)
Soweto	46	13
Durban	24	69

This may have as much to do with the low regional availability of Ilanga as with the more cosmopolitan interests of Soweto.

Some contrast with the broadcast media is needed, since this probably bears closely on the reading world. The radio reaches enormous numbers of people, about 64% of those in rural areas and in the PWV, with the Radio Bantu stations being far the most popular. Television, an expensive medium introduced only in 1976, now reaches a surprising 41% in Soweto, but only 11% in rural areas.

Media usage throughout is characterised by a positive correlation with education levels, income and urban living. This is very strong in the case of television and English language reading. With radio the trend is flattened out, and two publications, Ilanga and Bona, are read by a larger proportion of people with some school education than of matriculants, but otherwise media usage rises strongly together with these variables.

These features are largely born out by an HSRC survey (Rail and Thiele 1984). Figures in The official yearbook of the RSA, 1985, show a dramatic growth of black newspaper readership over the past twenty years. The World increased its circulation from 77000 in 1967 to more than 200000 for its weekend edition in 1977, when it was banned. Ilanga increased its circulation from 24000 in 1967 to 110000 in 1983. According to an article in The Star (14.8.1986) the effect of television on newspaper circulation had been fairly negative. The controversial closure of The Rand Daily Mail in 1985, at that time the most popular English language paper among blacks, raised the circulation of other English dailies. The Sowetan rose by nine percent, and The Weekly Mail, a fairly radical attempt to save the heritage of The Rand Daily

Mail almost doubled its circulation in the first six months of 1986. The article points out that "black-readership newspapers ... have been growing by leaps and bounds". Although this is not a new trend, "the political situation in the country for the past two years had created a favourable climate for informative newspapers". Analysis in Marais et al. (1985:67) shows that the growth is more than a function of the increase in population. Between 1975 and 1984 the most striking growth was in the reading of English weeklies, where circulation among blacks grew by 64% in absolute terms, and by 23% when the increase in the population is taken into account.

(b) Points of contact: access to the written word

Compared with the vital nature of the press in the reading world of black South Africans, the situation of books is very different. There are no commercial outlets for reading matter in the townships other than the cafe stall, which carries magazines, photo-comics and low-grade paperbacks. Even the ubiquitous Central News Agency, or CNA, which sells stationery and popular books to most of South Africa, is only to be found in the white town. The adult black's most likely encounter with books is often likely to be the annual, and expensive, outing to major bookshops like Juta's in Johannesburg and Van Schaik's in Pretoria to buy schoolbooks for their children. For the commuter to the factory who seldom sees the city centre, this means that any encounter with books other than school books must be through friends. In spite of the existence of a fairly large publishing industry in South Africa, the vast majority of books on the shelves of bookshops

come from Britain or the United States. Not only have they become almost prohibitively expensive over the past years, they were until recently subjected to a special tax over and above the general sales tax. The reasons for the lack of outlets (other than a few schoolbook depots) in the townships would therefore seem to be economic and not only political; most blacks are simply not likely to be able to afford much more than ephemera.

Under these circumstances one would expect the library to play a most important role. In fact, libraries are under-developed and very inadequate. Manaka (1969), in his study of the provision of library services for blacks, describes a history of deprivation and little vision. Apart from libraries at the mission institutes, little thought was given to libraries for blacks until 1928, when a visit from the Carnegie Foundation and a national conference in Bloemfontein achieved some movement towards establishing a library service for blacks. Carnegie donated £99000, the Transvaal administration £1000, and the Witwatersrand Council of Education made a grant of £120 per annum. Couzens (1985), in his biography of the playwright Dhlomo, who was an unhappy choice as the first librarian of the Carnegie library, shows the dedication, but also the extreme paternalism, which ran through the management of this undertaking. The library, centred in the Germiston public library, and intended to provide a mobile service, still exists and was mentioned by two of the participants in the present study. Although segregated libraries had been established in various towns by the time of Manaka's study in 1969, they appear to have been very precarious. "In Brakpan the library has no regular

source of income, while in Krugersdorp the library depends for its finances on street collections which the library committee conducts from time to time" (Manaka 1969:112). Development was supposed to be dramatic after 1970, but serious difficulties listed by Frylinck (1983:iv) in a study of the developmental needs of libraries in the homelands probably apply to the urban areas as well:

Problems include gaining acceptance for library development plans, staffing and financing the service, underdeveloped book publishing and marketing infrastructures, poor reading habits, an ineffective bureaucracy and a hostile physical environment.

Musiker (1986), in his guide to South African libraries, devotes a short chapter to libraries for blacks. The amount of activity which he records looks fairly extensive until it is compared with the scope and funding of developments reflected in the rest of the guide. It would seem, in fact, that it is mainly in the universities that blacks encounter libraries of any scale.

While one finds various hortatory articles on the development of libraries for blacks, the only application of library science in the black context is Fouche's (1982) Investigation into the role of literature and the public library in the socio-cultural life of the urban black population of Pretoria. This consisted of a questionnaire survey of a sample of the adults of Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, and another survey of library users (hampered by the inadequacy of library records). As these townships are similar in many respects to the townships of the Reef and of other major centres in South Africa, the findings may be generalisable.

With the exception of the older and less educated people most of the respondents knew what a library was and where their local library was. Only four percent of the adult population were members, another five percent used the "library points" occasionally, and 20% said that they had at some time or another in the past used a library. Although over 94% of the library users said that they used the library for borrowing books for home reading, the use of the public library for study purposes is marked: 65% used library books for study and 57% studied in the library itself, and 91% said that they read books for self-education - as opposed to a 76% response for reading for recreation.

Most of the users thought that they were satisfied with the services, but Fouche suggests that this may be because of low levels of expectation. Both Fouche and Frylinck point to the inadequacy of the Western model of the public library for Third World contexts. This model, in a very rudimentary form, has guided the design of black libraries. Unfortunately Fouche's study gives no idea of the concrete reality either of the townships involved in the survey, nor of what he calls the "library points". The following profile of the library user is offered (Fouche 1982:23):

The typical urban black user of the public library emerges as a relatively young man; literate and relatively well-informed about current affairs; having had ten or more years of primary and secondary education; unmarried; employed in a so-called "white collar" position; born in the city; a member of an officially recognized church and having a western-oriented lifestyle.

Fouche's major conclusion from the study is that while there is a positive correlation between a fairly high level of education and a westernized urban lifestyle, these alone do not "explain" library use.

The library user differs more strikingly from the general population in terms of what Fouche calls a "broader communication syndrome" (Summary):

This communication syndrome is characterized by frequent interpersonal communication with people outside the immediate family, by participation in community activities and facilities which promote communication, and by the use of a variety of media, including the more exclusive printed media like books.

Only 32% of the general adult population said that they read books. Surprisingly, the photostory - a photographic human-drama comic - is more popular among better educated adults and the library users (55%) than among the general population (21%). Fouche discovered that the major sources of these and of periodicals in these townships were the cafe bookstall, followed by friends. While the book-exchange is a common phenomenon in white society, it was entirely absent from the townships.

Educational institutions might be expected to be major centres of reading. The township school seldom fulfils this expectation. Only recently has a start been made to supplying black pupils with free textbooks - as is the case with white pupils. This and the expense of duplicating facilities mean that several pupils often share one book and that the emphasis on chalk-and-talk approaches to teaching is reinforced. Data from the standardization of vernacular literacy tests (French 1982a) seem to suggest that younger pupils are more at home with handwriting - which they regularly encounter on the blackboard - than with printed text. The school library is either non-existent or poverty-stricken. A visit of white librarians to black schools after the Soweto uprising of 1976 - which was triggered by educational is-

sues - revealed a severe lack. Where there were libraries these tended to be half-filled, mainly with dated and irrelevant cast-offs from white society. This visit led to the creation of the READ organisation. Over the past ten years READ has obtained funding from the private sector in South Africa and abroad, and has designed and stocked appropriate school libraries, trained people in the skills to use these effectively, run reading competitions, and encouraged publishers to move into the potential market for a more suitable book stock. Although the organisation has grown rapidly, its management recognizes that it is far from satisfying the need and has run a massive media campaign in 1987 to draw attention to this need.

The black churches, both "officially recognized" and "separatist" are important centres of mutual support and culture in black society. In Fouche's data for the Pretoria townships, for example, 87% of the general adult population appear to be affiliated to one church or another. (For library users the figure is 96%, with a much lower membership of the separatist churches than the general population.) The Bible Society of South Africa ensures a large distribution of high-quality Bibles in all of the country's languages as well as many simplified religious readers, while many of the churches have liturgies and hymn-books in various languages. The Bible is thus a substantial source of reading matter, and religious materials would seem to have a high profile, possibly more in the context of public performance and Bible-study groups than as a private reading resource. If the social environment and other factors make it unlikely that

children will be read to, church practices may go some way to compensating for this.

Four other very different sources of reading experience in the community deserve mention. On the one hand, the University of South Africa functions as a correspondence university with a highly sophisticated distribution system involving the postage of guides, lectures and library books. In this way advanced reading matter reaches into black communities throughout the country. Although the students involved are a small elite, their influence on the public image of literacy and its uses is probably significant, and would reinforce the overwhelming association of book reading with study. Secondly, the institution of migrant labour, the fact that many township people have close kin in rural areas and homelands, and the existence of an extensive postal network where telephones are inaccessible and expensive, means that letters are an important point of contact with the written word. The ability to read one's own letters and the privacy which this allows has emerged as a major aspiration of literacy learners in South Africa (French 1982, Wedepohl 1984, Griessel 1986). Thirdly, the conflict of the recent past in the townships has led to a low intensity pamphlet war. Accounts from the townships suggest that popular mobilization for stay-aways and rallies is promoted by pamphlets, while the opposition to the mobilization is reflected in the distribution, including the use of helicopter drops, of pamphlets designed to show the government's plans and good will, and pamphlets with falsified sources designed to sow confusion - whose origins are hotly contested. The pamphlet war is conducted almost entirely in English. This largely

clandestine process indicates a widespread belief in the power of the printed word in township life. Lastly, the use of pamphlets and brochures for advertising would seem to be extensive.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Brice Heath arrived at the conclusion that the factory in the United States was hostile to language and reading. Even the executive offices of the factories are singularly barren of reading matter. An occasional company in-house journal may be found in the waiting rooms, an occasional management journal or training course material may be seen, and there is the written business of administration. The factory itself is noisy, safety notices and other signs are kept to a statutory minimum and do not seem to be noticed by workers, and notice boards are scarce, with aging communications stuck on them. Tea and lunch breaks are short (generally 10 minutes and 30 minutes respectively) and disciplined; workers may use them to sit out in the sun, eat, play cards or read and discuss the newspapers they bought on the way to work. (The popular perusal of horse-racing results is made more popular in the area of the present study by the proximity of two major race courses.) Most factories have training centres, often clean and set apart with impressive facilities, but it would seem that the average worker sees little of these in the course of the working year. In the experience of the writer, these facilities are often empty.

Dr K.B. Baucom, in a presentation to a seminar on the publication of reading matter for adults with little formal education claimed that many directors in industry were interested in the idea of starting

workers' reading room, and French (1982) reports a positive response to this idea in a survey of the country's major companies. No progress has been made in this direction, partly because it is said to be difficult to find a suitable book stock. It is also clear, however, that there is no particular thrust behind this idea, and that it would be difficult to accommodate a reading room within the present structures and routines of the workplace. Progress in this respect has only been made on the mines, where the hostel or compound offers better opportunities for libraries and reading rooms. As yet the unions have been too occupied with more basic issues to promote this kind of development (see French 1986), although they have been demanding greater say concerning management-initiated education projects. The unions themselves value the written word as a major resource for educating and mobilising workers, and one of the most serious losses in the bombing of union headquarters in Johannesburg in 1987 was a newly-installed printing press.

(c) The "relevance" of reading

To what extent is there a "fit" between the needs, concerns and interests of black readers and their reading world? The extent of use of the print media among black people, especially in industrial contexts, would seem to suggest a fairly compelling relationship of media to interests. In fact, the situation is profoundly contradictory. The printed word is owned almost exclusively by white capital, and works within traditions and discourses supportive of the interests of capital and the power elite. But this is not a seamless totality, and the

enormous hegemony is challenged, like education, by its contradictions and its own counter-hegemonic possibilities, and by a small counter-hegemony of alternative publication.

As far as ownership is concerned, it would appear that the media are for all practical purposes in the hands of whites and are controlled by them. The other groups have relatively little direct say over the production of what they read, listen to or watch (Marais et al. 1985:76 - author's translation).

Switzer and Switzer (1979) and Hachten and Giffard (1984) show how efforts to establish a genuinely independent black press have been taken over by white (mainly mining) capital, and even by Afrikaans publishing houses. Ainslee (1966:81) argues that the failure of independent black publishing can be blamed on the suppression of socio-economic development among blacks:

None of the wealthy African families who at the turn of the century had been able to send their sons abroad for education, and to assist in providing capital for those newspapers that flourished at the time, was wealthy any longer. Government policy since Union, in limiting African rights to own land, to work in certain professions or to gain industrial skills, had ruined them, and made it impossible for a new middle class to arise.

St. Leger (1974), in an extensive sociological study of the black press in South Africa, found that although the black press was capable of spirited protest, many factors - political, educational and administrative - had contributed to an emphasis on sensationalism, entertainment, sport and the pursuits of a small social elite; social criticism was of a lower quality and less intense than in some of the English press. The emphasis of black journalism had become almost exclusively consensual.

In Chapter 2 the hegemonic potential of the written word was touched on, and in this chapter we have seen how, even in African language literature, the endeavour has been overseen by whites. The extension of white settlement and power in South Africa would perhaps not have been possible without the written word. The progress of settlement was accompanied by the signing of treaties which can only have placed the signatories from pre-literate oral cultures at a considerable disadvantage. A survey of the major histories of South Africa - and even local histories of education - reveals scant attention to the introduction and impact of literacy. In a rare reference to the subject, Lacour-Gayet (1977:91) writes that during the Great Trek:

The Whites, always anxious to justify themselves with legal procedures, would draw up texts which even the most meticulous lawyers would have endorsed and which they presented to the tribal authorities, who then solemnly marked them with a cross as their signature. However, since Bantu tradition forbade a chief to dispose of his patrimony, the document had little value.

Today South Africa is regulated by an overwhelming number of laws and statutes. Lelyveld (1986:87) quotes from one of these, The Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, which defines the condition for residence in urban areas. Only in full does it give an idea of the use of ostensibly legal language as an act of aggression and an exercise in leaving the subjects of the law - and probably even their counsel - helpless and confused. Here the processes of reification mentioned by Ong and the practices of classification which Luria links to literacy (see Chapter 2) are taken to an extreme:

(A "qualified person") means a Black referred to in section 10(1)(a) or (B) who is not a Black referred to in section 12(1), and any descendant of such a Black who is a Black referred to in section 10(1)(a) or (b), and ... also any Black who is not a qualified person but falls within a category of blacks recognized by

the Minister by notice in the Gazette as qualified persons for the purposes of section 6A and 6B and the regulations relating thereto, or who has in any particular case been expressly recognized by the Minister as a qualified person for such purposes, as well as any person who has in general or in any particular case been expressly recognized by the Minister, subject to such conditions as may be determined by the Minister, as a qualified person for said purposes: Provided that the said conditions may also provide that a person shall be recognized for a particular purpose or for a particular period or until the occurrence of a particular event only.

In many ways the "free" opposition press in South Africa has challenged this kind of oppression. Within this press a critical journalism has been fostered which openly struggles against the abuses and folly of power, in spite of the interests represented by the ownership of the press. For example, The Sowetan is part of the near-monopoly of the English press by the Argus Group, which also controlled Ilanga until its takeover by the Zulu organisation, Inkatha in 1987. City Press is owned by the Afrikaans publishing group, Nasionale Pers. Black editors and journalists in these papers are given a certain freedom and voice strong, and sometimes even radical, criticism about the state of the nation. This continues even in the present situation when reporting about almost any events involving unrest, the police and the military, and anything deemed to be contrary to the national interest, is forbidden - even before the restrictions of the current state of emergency Hachten and Giffard (1984) identified over one hundred laws and regulations restricting press and publication.

However, this account conceals a great deal, as can be seen in a series of issues of the 1985 journal of the Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit at the University of Natal devoted to media studies. In reaction against the technical and positivist bias of media studies in

South Africa (Tomaselli 1985), these focus on the ways in which the media express and reinforce ideologies. While they draw on the critique of ideology in western contexts, they illustrate vividly how the visual and verbal discourse of the media in South Africa, including the most critical of the opposition press, shape the way we see things in the interests of the values which sustain the system. This ranges from softening or hiding the reality of the actions and policies of government and capital, to reproducing the belief that competition, material success, consumerism and military options are the natural and only ways of being human. Even if this criticism is taken with some reservations, Adams (1986) points to the anomalies of the very freedom of the press itself, which he sees as creating a misleading and literally misleading impression of openness. In either case, the press can be seen as participating strongly in "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only maintains its dominance by manages to win the consent of those over whom it rules", which is how Gramsci (1982:244) describes "hegemony". (The "ruling class" must be understood to be more than the Nationalist government in this case.) The government is fairly explicitly supported by the Afrikaans newspapers and The Citizen - a tabloid established with government money in the events leading to the information scandal of 1978, and taken over by the Afrikaans Perskor. As we have seen, these are little read by blacks. However, apart from controlling South African Broadcasting Corporation, the government itself publishes a range of "information" magazines for the various groups in the country and for distributing abroad; these are listed in The offi-

cial yearbook of the RSA, itself a publication of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In the face of this hegemony there has been a recent growth in the alternative press (Manoim 1986). There are diverse products of this movement, from The Weekly Mail (already mentioned), New Nation, a highly critical tabloid established by the Catholic Bishops Council, Work in Progress, a monthly dedicated to investigating and offering a radical analysis of events hidden from view in the daily press, Learn and Teach, a monthly in easy English that focusses on subjects relevant to workers and to the struggle for social justice, and a variety of other smaller community papers and journals dedicated to the achievement of "people's power".

In the field of more permanent literature, we find a similar syndrome. Recent studies, notably Willan's (1984) biography of Sol Plaatje and Couzens's (1985) literary biography of Dhlomo show the disabling contradictions which black writers have suffered in the effort to achieve an authentic voice. While identifying themselves with an image of "The New African", they found themselves between their own communities and the white community, where they were neither fully accepted nor given much notice. Until recently much serious black writing in South Africa seems to have been directed at a white readership. The writers and journalists who developed a distinctive voice in the 1950s were silenced by the severe repression of the 60s, many of them going into exile. In the 70s a vital movement came into being in which protest poetry played a leading role. Here we find a voice of defiance, often

linked to Black Consciousness themes, and a refusal to comply with western notions of what literature should be.

This movement came to be supported and stimulated by a number of new South African publishing houses, notably Ravan Press, which published new literature, the emergent revisionist studies of South African society, and a handful of texts directed at those with limited reading skills in English, alternative workbooks and so on. Ravan's Staffrider, a periodical dedicated to a non-prescriptive encouragement of new writing, is particularly notable in this endeavour. Even here the publishers were funded and directed largely by whites, and it was only in the 80s that the first black publishing house, Skotaville, was established (Ludman 1986). As yet its output has been small.

In a more conventional sense of the word "relevance" we find difficulties in the supply of books. The READ organisation has experienced chronic difficulties in finding, let alone selecting, anything like a wide-ranging collection of texts to promote the reading habit in schools. School textbooks for blacks in South Africa tend to be written by officials of the education departments and have provided the mainstay of Afrikaans publishing houses like Via Afrika and De Jager/HAUM. Du Preez (1983) has made a critical study of school books in Afrikaans which may well reveal the characteristics of more generally prescribed texts. She identifies a number of leitmotifs, among them an unquestioning attitude to authority, the superiority of whites and their right to possess South Africa, a nostalgia for the agrarian past, heroism and militarism. An exhaustive analysis of South African

history text books by Dean et al (1983) shows the principles of the discipline being overwhelmed by white ethnocentrism, the glorification of nationalism, racism and stereotyping - including an underlying assumption of black incompetence, somewhat modified in texts designed for black schools.

A consideration of prescribed works for English over the years shows a conservative approach, with Dickens, Hardy, Shaw being popular, and Shakespeare being perennial. Lately Achebe's Things fall apart has been prescribed. Its theme of the loss of traditional values may be used in a way which is consonant with official ideology. Reid (1982:140) finds that prescribed English literature in South African secondary schools has tended, among other things, to be "too difficult... too long and too remote... (and) seen as a burden". At a 1986 seminar organized by the British Council on the question of adding African literature to the curriculum, participants who were experienced and committed teachers pointed to a local reluctance on the part of black learners to read texts which were supposed to be relevant to their experience, or which had been specially made with their needs in mind. This point, which has recurred in various related seminars and discussions, reflects the status of western culture and a protest against the attempt, associated with Apartheid, to deny them access to it. Participants in these seminars have suggested that more "indigenous" texts must be introduced with tact and concern if people are to overcome the ingrained sense of the inferiority of their own heritage.

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4.5 Some conclusions

We now have at least fragments of a picture of the whole context of the reading world of urban black South Africans. (A more adequate picture would not only be more comprehensive, but would take into account the universal culture of reading, including its history, which impinges on and shapes the South African context.)

From this picture we can deduce that few of the conditions for an ideal context for the development of widespread competence in reading are met. A typical worker with some education lives in a social and working context which is not only materially unfavourable to the promotion of reading, but which limits the cultural and professional horizons of self-fulfilment. Even the positive aspects of this context such as its communal values may work against reading, and one might expect a certain thinness in formative experiences of reading. Language inhibits access to the reading world, and aspects of the education situation may compound rather than compensate for this problem. The horizons of the reading world are largely limited to the newspaper press and ephemera. The salience of the broadcast media at a stage when reading may not have been established as a pursuit with a high social and cultural status could prevent reading from becoming a major resource for the satisfaction of information needs and personal aspirations. Access to rich resources of reading matter, and membership of a community of readers, both of which might create a normative reading culture, are difficult and rare. The degree of fit between

the reading world and the needs and interests (in both senses of the word) of the worker is problematic.

Yet there are positive aspects to the situation. The publication of all kinds of reading matter is extensive in South Africa, and black readership, in spite of inadequate education and adverse circumstances, is growing, and is remarkably high in places like Soweto. Even the adverse social setting might be expected to promote reading for escape and for the wish-fulfilment of frustrated aspirations. And the sporadic struggle for power and freedom, which has one of its sites in the attempts to take over ownership and control of at least part of the written word, promises to make reading into a more authentic accomplishment rather than an imposed and overdetermining activity.

With this general context as background we shall continue by looking at how eighteen people living and working in this context understand their experience of reading, and its meaning and role in their lives.

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTING PERSONAL NARRATIVES:

METHODOLOGICAL AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Sociology was twin-born: the problem of determined structure can never make sense without a complementary focus upon creative individuality.

Ken Plummer (1983:149)

To purge research of all these 'sources of bias' is to purge research of human life. It presumes a 'real' truth may be obtained once all these biases have been removed. Yet to do this, the ideal situation would involve a researcher without a face to give off feelings, a subject with clear and total knowledge unshaped by the situation, a neutral setting, and so forth. Any 'truth' found in such a disembodied neutralised context must be a very odd one indeed. It is precisely through these 'sources of bias' that a 'truth' comes to be assembled. The task of the researcher therefore, is not to nullify these variables, but to be aware of, describe publicly and suggest how these have assembled a specific 'truth'. It is just such accounting that lies at the heart of much ethnomethodology.

Ken Plummer (1983:103-104)

5.1 An overview

A variety of approaches were used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the reading worlds of eighteen leading black employees at two East Rand factories. This chapter provides the methodological and contextual background to the findings presented in Chapter 6 and in the appendices. Specific methodological issues are considered, and accounts are given of how the participants were selected and of their personal and social identities. These are followed by a description of the procedures used for gathering the information.

In order to avoid the concealment of "researcher effects" I have at times used the first person in this and the following chapter.

5.2 The selection and social identities of the participants

The aim of the research specifically reflected in this chapter, Chapter 6 and the Appendices, was to obtain comprehensive, in-depth insights into the individual reading worlds of a selected group of black industrial employees. The participants had to satisfy a number of criteria: they needed to be literate, sufficiently competent in English to be accessible to interviewing by me, and influential and respected within the community of workers. (These criteria are discussed in more detail at various points in this chapter.)

The need for accountability in survey research is satisfied in part by the description of sampling procedures. Plummer (1983) suggests that

where individual life-histories are used in social inquiry, this need is satisfied by a careful account of the social background and contexts of the individuals concerned. The field work for the present research was combined with the field work for the investigation into language in the labour situation outlined in Chapter 1 above (see also Reagan 1986). The two factories at which the research was conducted were selected in consultation with the training management of one of the country's largest industrial corporations. The criterion for selection was that the two should reflect very different environments. Factory A was to be one with an excellent record of labour relations and productivity, Factory B was to be problematic in these respects. (The effect of these features - more relevant to research into language communication issues than into reading - on the present research is difficult to separate from other contingent features which differentiate the two groups of participants, and is not taken into consideration in this study.)

Factory A manufactures components for household appliances. It has 105 black workers, half of them women. The management is conservative but open-minded, and has been positively disposed to the work-force joining one of the more radical trade unions affiliated to the (then) Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu). The ambience of the factory is generally friendly, co-operative and caring, and the reasonably relaxed atmosphere is promoted by the fact that most of the workers live in the nearby townships of Katlehong/Natalspruit.

Factory B is a member of a large packaging consortium. It has over 500 black workers, all of them men (apart from two cleaners in the office block). There is a history of high management turnover with a production-before-people orientation. The workers are not members of any of the new black unions, and are represented by a Works Council. On the whole the ambience is more confrontational, impersonal and uncaring than that of Factory A. Some years ago the factory moved from the central Rand, with the result that many of the workers now commute from Soweto. In certain cases this involves catching two trains and a bus, which seriously limits leisure time and puts extra strain on the workers. The workers work night shifts on alternating weeks. This, plus the now standard security controls over access to the workplace, complicated the conducting of the research even more here than at Factory A, although the managements were helpful in both cases.

Both factories had participated in an ambitious literacy programme at the start of the decade. It was a total failure at Factory B, and not much better at Factory A. Discussions and a review of the evaluations at head office suggest that the failure might be attributed to middle-management attitudes, the design of the programme and the selection of teachers from the formal education system. Very few workers were even aware that such a programme had been conducted.

Random samples of the workers at each factory were interviewed by a multi-racial panel of researchers for the research into language in the labour situation. The researchers listed those respondents who had been particularly bold, aware and articulate in English, who in

turn were asked to suggest further members for a review panel. In the review panel the participants commented critically on the tentative conclusions drawn up by the researchers, and made suggestions about the improvement of communication in the workplace. In the case of Factory B the three members identified by the researchers were members of the Works Council, who in turn recommended their fellow members on the council for the panel. The Works Council is nominated by the workers and is elected by secret ballot. Thus, while its powers are limited and were the subject of intense dispute in the council itself at the time of the research, its members are in close contact with the body of workers and are trusted to represent their interests, even though half of them do clerical work in the factory.

Having shared in the design, the interviewing and the panel discussions in the language project, I was au fait with the context and had established an open and confidential relationship with the panels. As the panel discussions themselves had proved to be highly successful "research instruments", I decided in consultation with colleagues involved in the language project to use these review panels to constitute the groups who participated in the present research. They satisfied the criteria set out above.

The social identities of the participants can best be understood by reference to Appendix A Summary 1, Biographical Information. In spite of the wide range of ages and of the fact that nearly half of the participants are obliged to lodge with parents or strangers, all of the participants are responsible for a number of dependents - including

the one participant without children of his own, who is supporting his younger siblings through their education. They have fairly stable "careers", having been employed by their present employers for an average of six years. They come from most of the major African language groups in South Africa, and three quarters of them have rural origins. They have high levels of formal education, compared with black South African workers as a whole; according to Terblanche (1983), about 65% of the black workforce had at most a primary school education in 1980, and those with Standard 10 were in the top two percent of workers. Yet, as can be seen in the examples from the reading diaries in Appendix D, the quality of literacy in English of the participants is not high. Schooling in different systems does not create notable differences in this respect. Half of the participants are clerks, a phenomenon clarified by Lodge's observation quoted in Chapter 4 regarding the growth in demand for white collar workers. The others are either machine operators doing largely de-skilled jobs, but three are involved in what might be called semi-technical jobs - fairly complex tasks, but with no specialized training or apprenticeship required. There is one odd man out; PS is the newly appointed personnel manager at Factory B. Until this appointment he had worked as a clerk on the mines, where he had recently completed a Diploma in Personnel Management to supplement his Standard 9. He was included in the research - except for participation in the group discussions - at his request, and is included here because he presents some interesting differences in his personal and reading profiles.

Personally the participants range from outgoing to reserved, although, as shall be seen from their responses to being interviewed, they nearly all have a remarkable degree of self-certainty and tend to voice clear, unequivocal positions on most of the issues discussed. Their attitudes might best be described in terms of the idea of a "layered consciousness". While they may all, whether they like it or not, be conscious of political issues, the dominant concerns of two thirds of them might be described as domestic and local; this number includes five of the six who presented themselves as having a strong and principled concern with social justice and workers' rights, and some of the eight who presented themselves as assertively a-political. The participants fall into two broad groups, those with less education - generally the older people - and those with more education. Several of the former express resentment and frustration about what they had wanted to do with their lives: they had not wanted to be factory workers. The younger people with matric tend to see themselves as upwardly mobile; although they are aware of the difficulties facing them in South African society, they are fairly positive and ambitious and four of them present themselves as enjoying the pleasures of videos, cars, sport and a stylish sociability.

All of the participants, even those who present themselves at first as radicals, are committed to notions of tolerance, moderation and gentleness; they show a dislike of conflict even when they espouse tough fronts of resistance. In different degrees they are all caught in Heribert Adams's (1986) syndrome of dependency through fairly secure and relatively well-paid work in a general context of struggle for

survival, consumerism, and ambiguous elements of co-optation. Asked what they think constitutes "a good life" they characteristically arrive at answers relating to having enough money, not to be too rich, but to be able to survive without insecurity and trouble, even when they commence with a higher ideal such as "having our rights" (PN) or "to live in peace with our fellow men" (SD). On the other hand, a strong emphasis on collective values is found in the recurrence of the formula that "a good person" is one who helps others, is neighbourly, does not set himself above others in wealth or power or pride, and - interestingly in terms of the self-identity of the groups - the expression of this helping in terms of giving "good advices" (a common formulation) and not being secretive.

The groups have no decided "working class" identity. Perhaps two (SD and PT) live and work in circumstances which might class them as "lumpenproletariat". PT especially has had a difficult life. His work is repetitive and unskilled (he folds cardboard boxes endlessly), in spite of long service he feels insecure, particularly in terms of anxiety about his pension conditions, and fully twelve children and illegitimate grandchildren are dependent on him and share his small house with him. In spite of his efforts his older children have been "no good" and have lost any jobs he has managed to find them. He is disfigured after a "tsotsi" attack some nine years ago. He derives great consolation from his membership of the Apostolic Church, and does not think anything much worth reading besides the Bible. He is resigned and a-political. TM, although a clerk, is in the situation of a migrant worker, has few middle-class pretensions and stands up for gen-

eral rights against management, yet sees himself as a better sort of person than the people with whom he has found lodging and would like nothing better than to start a small business of his own. Only PN presents herself as decidedly class-conscious, which might be attributed to her childhood in the turbulent Old Location at Germiston. But this identity is qualified by her pride in her children's upward mobility, and by various small indicators of an aspiration to "gentility" (see her reading biography in Appendix B). Nearly all of the participants feel that they are in a position to represent the manual labourers' interests, but their identification or solidarity with the labourer may not in all cases be very substantial (see Appendix A, Summary 5).

The problematic question of class in South African society has been commented on in Chapter 4. The problem of class is illuminated by Laclau (1986), who argues that class consciousness has to be constructed in social action - something which has scarcely been attempted in South Africa - and that the notion of "the working class" in any case could well be jettisoned from left-wing interpretations of society.

5.3 The question of social distance

The problem of social distance between researcher and subjects needs especially serious consideration in qualitative research. Schutte (1982) shows that the problem is exacerbated in South Africa, not only by the fact that research is conducted across racial divides in an oppressive context, but because research may be seen to be an instrument

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of this oppression; as a result, those being researched may adopt strategies from non-cooperation to falsification in order to defeat the ends of such research. On the other hand, Schuring (1981 and 1982), on the basis of extensive investigations and experience, shows that the gathering of social data in an African context is feasible, as long as considerable problems are taken into account. As a result of his experience, Schuring has become convinced that a small-scale qualitative inquiry like the present one may be the best for gaining insight in this context.

From the beginning there was very little evidence of alienating influences on the field work for the present project. The participants were remarkably willing, open and frank, perhaps because the subject of the research appeared to be neutral and unthreatening. It may also have been that the broader political context, in which the trade unions, the United Democratic Front and community associations were contributing to black self-assertiveness, encouraged a greater openness. However, I used as many strategies as possible to encourage frank participation, openness and honesty:

- Those selected were invited in the course of a group discussion to participate or to withdraw at the beginning or at any stage if the research made them uncomfortable;
- They were told of the aims of the research, its origins, and my institutional connections, with as much openness as possible;
- They were given control of the tape recorder and allowed to switch it off whenever they wanted;

- Throughout the field work I was open about my own tribulations, doubts and feelings, especially regarding the chronically tense political situation.

Evidence of the participants' general openness can be seen in a number of aspects of their participation:

- The group discussions in the language research project were intense. For example, the group at Factory A had decided ideas on language issues, and came to the conclusion that where there was poor communication it had more to do with racial privilege than with linguistic competence. The discussions at Factory B led to a fierce confrontation among the participants themselves about the status of Afrikaans and about the question of the unions, some of them supporting the existing system of arbitration about work-floor disputes, some of them arguing that the system masked deeper problems which could only be faced when the workers had more power. There seemed to be no inhibitions about airing potentially dangerous opinions;
- In the sometimes protracted conversations before the tape-recorded interviews the participants often expressed their feelings very openly. For example, at Factory A half of the participants were bitter about the emergency and the police and troops in the townships. The other half were relieved because they had been appalled by the violence in their neighbourhoods. (Some months later they all said they wanted the troops out of the townships.) At Factory B I was drawn into a general dispute and much time was spent listening to the problems of PM, who resigned from the Works Council because

he had come to perceive it as a tame mouthpiece for management, and to the position of the conservative council members who, with the help of a general meeting of the work force, persuaded him to withdraw his resignation. TM, the cause of the dispute that had led to PM's resignation attempt, confided in me about his bitterness at his treatment by management in this case, and about his wish to resign. These were two of the more memorable occasions which led me to believe that being listened to with interested and respectful attention was a special experience for many of the participants and that it led to a high degree of openness;

- TM and PM started the series of interviews by subjecting me to a mildly hostile interrogation about my credentials and about the purposes of my work, and were the only two to avail themselves of the right to switch off the tape recorder. Both of them yielded what turned out to be among the most extensive interview transcripts (see PM's discourses in the following chapter).

On the whole the participants joined in with a relish that raised many interviews to special performances, and the desire to make an effect might pose more of a threat to validity than the issue of social distance. The interviews often had the warmth of conversations with friends.

5.4 The design of the information gathering

The content of the questioning was shaped by the broad areas of interest revealed in Chapter 2, and especially by the questions raised in

the study of reading and society. The information-gathering was informed by two thoughts: the belief that open ended questioning yields considerably more valid information than structured questionnaires, and the idea of "the mantle of the expert".

Structured questionnaires lead the responses of the informants, and, as Steenekamp (1984) has shown, the very form in which the questions are put can lead to different interpretations. An example from my own experience illustrates this vividly. In the course of managing field work in research into the language attitudes of "coloureds", I found numbers of informants answering the question of whether they used English expressions when they spoke Afrikaans with the statement: "Nee, ek 'aaik dit nie" (No, I don't like it.) The response would be encoded nonetheless as "No". In the present research I gave preference to questions which did not allow for "Yes/No" responses, such as "Tell me about ..." or "What is the use of...", and only gave leads if, after pauses or difficulties, these would help to amplify the responses. In this way a general conversation could ensue during which topics covered spontaneously were ticked off on an unobtrusive check list. I also used probes such as "Why do you say that?"

Writers on qualitative interviewing offer no rules for such work (Schurink 1986); the prerequisites for it are genuine interest, respect, sensitivity and attention. More than this may be needed in order to enable full and spontaneous responses, however. Terry (1986) gives an account of the use of a technique in educational drama she calls "The Mantle of the Expert". In this exercise in self-knowledge

authority is conferred on the participants. In the present research conferring authority posed no problems when it came to the participants' own lives, since they may be the best experts on their personal experience, while I was the interested and ignorant explorer. Nor was it a problem in the group discussions when I was asking their opinions about my conclusions and about how reading might be promoted in the work place. But getting at their beliefs and assumptions about reading and its value was a different matter. For a researcher privileged by tertiary education to ask "What is reading for?" of less educated participants could seem absurd and patronising. It could also lead to an inhibited response since the questioner would "obviously" know the answer better than they did. I therefore designed a role play and tried it out very tentatively, since it might also have seemed ridiculous and even offensive. I asked the participants to pretend that I was Mosotho recently arrived from the high Malutis, where I was an expert on cattle and Sotho traditions, but had no experience of the modern world and was puzzled by many of its practices, especially "this reading". Without exception the participants entered into the drama with enjoyment, either playing along fully with my assumed identity or using the third person, e.g. "I would say to such a person ..." (See for example the sustained use of the fiction in PM's transcript in the following chapter.) These procedures were discussed with, and tried out on, fellow researchers and on two company officials during negotiations for the field work.

The interviews took on different forms. They were conducted in three or four sessions. Some of the participants were brief and exact in

their answering, others spoke at length, so that I spent more than five hours with some of them - although the recorded sections only used more than two ninety minute tapes in one case (SS - see Appendix B). The questioning took this form:

General concerns

This series of questions was asked not only to obtain background understandings of the people involved and to relate them to their reading beliefs and practices, but also in order to see whether reading would be mentioned when it was not the specific focus of attention:

- What is a "good life"?
- What makes a "good person"?
(To these questions I initially added an elaborate preface about their difficulty, which I soon abandoned when I found that everyone answered the questions with an almost entire lack of hesitation.)
- What are your hopes for your children?
- What makes you/has made you a respected leader here?

(These four questions often led to broad informative conversations about the participants' lives.)

The nature and uses of reading (role play)

- What is this reading? ... Yes, but I can't hear it, all I see is scratches on the paper? What do they do?
- What is the use of this reading? These newspapers, what are they? ... And books?
- But from what you tell me, I might as well listen to the radio... How is reading better than the radio? ... Will it tell me more truth?
- Can I learn to read at my age? Where? How?
- It sounds like a lot of trouble. Will it make me more clever? How will it help me?
- Is it worth learning to read if I don't know English? What is there to read in my own language?
- Some people tell me that this reading is only a white man's thing, that it's for his power, not for us. What do you think about that?
- Some people say that reading destroys our customs and traditions. What do you think about that?
- Some people say that without reading the workers will never get far in their struggle. What do you think about that?
- (Resuming my own identity.) Tell me, from your own experience, what are illiterate people like to work with?

Life experience of reading

- Think of the time before you went to school. What was it like at home? Was there any story-telling or reading? Tell me about these. Was there reading matter in your home?
- And when you started school? Can you tell me about learning to read? Can you remember/ tell me about what you read ... in primary school ... high school ... since you left school. Can you tell me about things that you have read that made a special impression on you?

Reading diaries were kept for a week. These were presented to the participants with a sample "ideal" diary showing the kind of things which might be noted in them, and were divided into the parts of the day (see Appendix D). In the course of the interviewing the completed diaries were discussed, and at the end the summary questionnaire on reading habits and leisure preferences (Appendix E) was completed and discussed. A wide choice of reading matter (Appendix B) was offered for selection and discussion. The field work ended with two group discussions with the participants to evaluate my tentative observations on the research and to suggest ways of promoting reading in the work place.

Reason and Rowan (1981) in Chapter 21 of their Human inquiry: a sourcebook of new paradigm research make a number of suggestions for achieving validity in more qualitative and participative forms of research. (According to other contributions in Reason and Rowan's collection of papers the present research could be described as a "weak" form of participative research in which the participants are drawn into the process of making sense of their experience, but do not share in the actual design of the research itself.) This research does not follow all of their suggestions, but as can be seen here and in the study as a whole, I have attempted to comply with their listing of the

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need for a high level of awareness, for what they call "the systematic use of feedback loops" and "going round the research cycle several times", for an interplay between different forms of knowing, and for the use of multiple viewpoints (for "convergent and contextual validity"). While I have not been able to satisfy one of their most emphatic demands - that research be done by co-researchers - I have tried to compensate for this to some extent both by enlisting the participants as sharers in the project and by substantial discussions with fellow researchers.

5.5 Problems of presentation and interpretation

Plummer (1992) shows the diversity of ways in which life histories and personal accounts have been presented and interpreted in sociological studies. On the one hand there is the approach of letting the stories speak from themselves, typified in the work of Studs Terkel, and locally in Joubert's Poppie Nongena, Gordon's A talent for tomorrow: life stories of South African servants, the CIIR's Vukani makhosikazi: South African women speak, and various recent publications by Ravan Press. On the other hand personal accounts may be subordinated to extensive theorizing and analysis, reflected locally most notably in Cock's Maids and madams: a study in the politics of exploitation.

The dilemma posed by these two poles has been particularly strong in approaching the presentation and interpretation of the findings of the present research. The process of getting to know eighteen people, interviewing them at length, and transcribing the interviews has meant

that I have lived through a rich experience which is difficult to capture in written text. So much of the meaning was conveyed in responses in context. Tone of voice and facial expression were used with great effect by most of the participants to convey selfhood, eagerness, indignation, pleasure. Transcribing the tapes, I realised that I must have used many pointers to my meaning, for I found myself often wondering how, on the basis of an inarticulate question, the participants had managed to understand me as well as their answers suggested they had. At least some of the understanding that I gained came through these deictic and paralinguistic factors.

In this and the following chapter I have tried not to conceal the personal interaction. I have also brought a very slightly edited transcript into the text of the chapter. This has been done because it seems to me that some understanding is lost in the analysis without the significance which accumulates in the whole encounter. This is followed by a structured, thematic analysis of the findings.

The summaries in Appendix A give a synopsis of each individual's position on the main issues in the research. They are presented in such a way that the "collective" profile can be seen on one page and individual records can be followed through from page to page.

5.6 Limitations

The limitations of the research design outlined in this chapter relate to the selection of the participants as well as to the scope of the methods involved.

The selection of the participants involves the assumption that an understanding of the nature of the reading world of black workers can be arrived at partly through describing the perceptions and practices of a literate and influential elite among workers. A comparison of the contents of Chapters 4 and 6 gives reason to believe that the accounts of the participants reflect, in individual ways, a more general "reading culture". That the participants themselves articulate or in some way shape the understanding of reading of less literate workers in their community cannot be established with any certainty; it seems reasonable at least to say that their accounts identify the limits of the reading world among workers.

The methods described here restrict the findings to what the participants say about their perceptions and their practices. The importance of knowing this has been fully explored elsewhere in this study. The approach does not aim to arrive at an exact knowledge of actual reading behaviours or to any exact prediction of how the participants might respond to a project to promote reading.

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING THE READING WORLD OF BLACK WORKERS (II):

PERSONAL NARRATIVES, PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

In compiling his book about these people, Brother Juniper seemed to be pursued by the fear that in omitting the slightest detail he might lose some guiding hint. The longer he worked the more he felt that he was stumbling about among great dim intimations. He was for ever being cheated by details that looked as though they were significant if only he could find their setting. So he put everything down on the notion perhaps that if he (or a keener head) re-read the book twenty times, the countless facts would suddenly start to move, to assemble, and to betray their secret.

Thornton Wilder (1927: 114-115)

Like most black people born in South Africa, I lived with a very broken sense of history.

Bessie Head (New Statesman, 16.8.1985)

6.1 An overview

The previous chapter outlined the context and the methodology of the inquiry into the individual reading worlds of black workers. The findings of the research among eighteen leading employees at two East Rand factories are presented here and in the appendices. Comment on the findings is focused on the specific issues, and the advice of Lewis and Lewis (1980) has been followed: they recommend attention in the interpretation of qualitative data to what people do not say. More general discussion of the findings will be found in Chapter 7.

The findings are presented in four sections. These commence with a complete transcript of the interviews with one of the participants (including his reading diary). A thematic analysis of the interviews, diaries, reading and leisure profiles and group discussions completes the chapter. The appendices, which contain the information from the field work in condensed form (Appendix A) and two reading biographies (Appendix B), are used as sources of reference, but can be read in their own right.

6.2 PM's account of his life and reading

PM is 30. He is unmarried and although he would have liked to have continued his education after matric, he came to work as a clerk in Factory B in order to help his younger brothers and sisters through school. He lives with them and his parents in Natalspruit. He has contacts in the black intelligentsia and brings radical ideas to the

factory - especially an awareness of the functioning of the newer unions. He resigned from the Works Council during the interviews because he felt that the council was not heeded by management and was being used merely to convey management decisions effectively to the workers. Although the senior members of the council saw him as a hot-head, they regarded him with affectionate indulgence, feeling that he was young and did not know how to handle things properly. At a plenary meeting of the work force he was persuaded to withdraw his resignation and to stay on and speak for the workers.

Except for the bracketed questions which are only inserted when they are needed for intelligibility, the following are PM's words transcribed as faithfully as possible. This text has been chosen because it reflects many of the themes and concerns of the other participants in an especially articulate way (without in any sense being "typical"), and because PM speaks more concentratedly and comprehensively than the other participants about his reading world.

(What is a good life?)

A good life ... means to be able to afford to keep yourself well up within the society, not to struggle too much, not to feel too much of the pains of life. I don't want to say the pains of life because they come automatically; you should actually be able to experience them as they come and face them. A good life is, I think: I should be able to cope with the expenditures of my household and my children and everything - if it doesn't actually involve me in being selfish toward another, wishing all the best for me and not for the other people. Being actually able to help towards some people, towards your society, contributing whatever you can towards your society ... I don't believe in having a lot of money, in having more than necessary, in being too much rich. Just a simple life, just affording - I shouldn't have too much of a harsh life, too much of a good life. I don't like to be totally poor, not to be in a position to have some of my wishes, to be, say, everytime wishing and not getting, and you don't have any ways and means of doing it. Frustration, in a sense. It can be frustration of your own making, frustration by some status queue, but

in actual fact I should think one should strive. I should think one should strive; it doesn't come as easy as that. Having a good life you have to work towards it. You don't have to sit on your laurels and expect it to happen automatically. You have to have determination in order to work towards a good life. But sometimes it's so difficult to come by ... you have the guts, the determination, but environment, your social life, doesn't allow it to happen.

In my case, I didn't wish to be here at this time. I was thinking I should be at a University in order to have a good life in future. I can't help it because I'm supporting my family, educating my young brothers and sisters, and being the only breadwinner at home - my father doesn't work, my mother doesn't work - I have to help my sisters financially, to pay rents and all that. I find it difficult to fulfil these needs, because I would have to reject them and leave them like that. To go to University would take all my savings and everything.

(Your future?)

I'm somebody who don't care about my age, how old I am, I'm going to keep it the very same way I'm doing it. I'm going to educate my brother, I just want to hear from him whether he's going to do the same as I am. If he's not I'll have to go on. In the meantime my main goal is to go back to the University as I had some offers to go and study in the States, but I had to abandon that because I had to see to the interests of my family ... As it is now I'm doing a course in computer programming at ICS. I think it will give me a financial boost. I would actually prefer to be a doctor. I like people, I feel bad when I see somebody injured. I was so deeply sorry for those who died in Challenger!

(Political involvement?: Here he switches off the tape recorder.)

(What is reading?)

You have to understand how other people live, and you have to know about your society - the surroundings - and lives of faraway places. You have to understand your life, you have to understand the weather conditions and whatever interest might be for your home life. And it's through the media, through the reading, those people on the train, they can understand, they can see, they can hear from the newspapers how other people are living, the buses on which they are travelling, how much are they going to spend to all that, and expenditure of the groceries at the supermarkets whatever it is, and whatever commodities they may want to get at the supermarket ... what they can get at the cheaper prices, ... in actual fact it's in the interests of everybody to know about different people's opinions. Practically, I think, it's like that... (emphatically)...about the society in which you live. It's for news and information.

(But how does this reading work?)

What you see on the paper is a it's mmmmm.... when you have a mountain at Lesotho as you say you come from, when you're on a moun-

tain top and you happen to shout at the top of your voice you got something like an echo, and you hear your voice coming back at an angle, this what you see on the paper like this, It's some sort of art that I use as words. If you were literate, it's words written, you could translate it, you could read it, you could see it, it is meaning, just like we are speaking together ... you hear it through your eyes. As we are speaking now, you can hear me through your ears, but from the newspaper you can see it through your eyes, and understand it through your brain ... the very words that we are speaking.

(Are these pictures? - pointing to some printed text.)
Those pictures that you see are ... the combination of those pictures as you see them, they form out a word, they form what I can express with my mouth.

(But I can get this from the radio!)

This reading is better than the radio. There are some things that you actually can't get from the radio. You don't get everything from the radio ... you get the weather forecast and music and all that, but newspapers actually broaden your knowledge about faraway places and neighbouring people and your surroundings. I should think it is much better than the radio. It's not 100% better than the radio, in that the media, the newspapers, are written in foreign languages. You might find it difficult to understand the matter clearly written in the newspapers, but on the radio you'll find it clear in your own language. It depends how you actually understand the newspapers. It's more broad than the radio in the way that it covers a larger spectrum of life, it covers most of the things that might be of interest to you. For instance, I want to buy a motor car, and you can't find any advertisements from the radio. If I want to buy a motor car I must know how much I'm going to spend on the car, parts and all that; in the newspaper I have at least the scope of seeing if I buy that type of car I can afford it with my present salary and things like that, and petrol rises and everything. So to say, if I want to find information, not all of it, but mostly I find it from the newspaper.

Radio has got a timetable, it doesn't always give you the information at that particular time, whereas if I want to I can find it at that time.

(Is the newspaper more true than the radio?)
I should believe it's more true than the radio; I'm not sure to say further as to which one is true. The newspaper can make a heading that is only a publicity stunt to make the people buy it, but let me say 85% of what I'm reading in the paper is true. As lately I've been reading of the explosion on Columbia, of which I have heard from the radio, and I have pictures of it. A newspaper as a media of information, if it has truth, to tell lies I think it will deceive many people. If 90% of the news on the newspaper were not true then we're not bound to believe it.

(Where do the newspapers come from, who owns them?: Here again the tape recorder is switched off to present a fairly general radical argument about the interests expressed in all the mass media.)

(What are books for?)

In books its actually, mostly something that was written long ago. You can read what happened a hundred years ago. You can still read about Moshoeshoe in books, you can read about his childhood, his whole history in books. Newspaper specializes in daily events.

(Are books only about history then?)

They are mainly history books and informative boooks that acutally teaches you or help you to pursue a certain course, if you want to learn to be a mechanic, a doctor or nurse, or something like that...There are books that tell you about people in certain parts of the world and how they live, books that teaches you about the animal kingdom, plants and everything. As is the case when you start going to school, you get books.

(Will I find something like our praises or stories?)

Mostly it's what actually you find in books. The stories that you've been hearing from your grandfather you'll find it in books. How they fell in love, what they did.

(Can I learn to read?)

As I see you as somebody who doesn't know how to read, it doesn't have to take you a long time; it would take you something like a year. You have to take it step by step to understand each and every word until you understand the whole thing as it is.

(Is there somebody to teach me?)

Surely there are some people ... there are some night school ... we've got some in the township. In Katlehong we've got a night school, I think 7 o'clock to 9 o'clock ... It's a special school for adult people. It would be stupid of you to go to a day school for kids. It's a school for people like yourself, so you don't have to be ashamed or sorry ... There is no punishment whatsoever, because for an adult to start learning to read and write it's quite difficult ... I should think the teachers are quite patient, they have experience with that kind of thing.

(Will reading make things better for me?)

The first point you see it's going to be hard for you. If you're quite interested, if you see it's good, the way I've explained to you what does it mean to read and write, if you have that interest, it won't be hard. Apparently you have that interest. It won't take that long. If you've got the determination to do it you'll do it irrespective of how long you'll take.

(How can it help me?)

In the way you asked me, you had an interest of asking me what does it mean to read a newspaper, it is going to help you in that way, and in many a way you'll find that if you can read and write when you have to find a job you'll find it easier because ... maybe it can help you to get a better job. And again, to be in the law and not to be far removed from the society. As I say, you are far away from the society.

(Will people look down on me here in town because I can't read?)

You shouldn't look from the side of the people that they will look down on you, because there are so many people who can't read and write, but you have so much interest in knowing how to read and write, pursue it that way... They wouldn't look down on you. Having that interest of wishing to know how to read and write, it will actually keep you in touch, upgrade your position.

You doesn't know anything about what's happening. To be in the know what's happening round the world, people surrounding you, your environment, it will help you a lot.

(Will it make me more intelligent, more clever?)

If you know how to read and write, I'll take it as a sort of art.... but I should think it will help you in many a thing in life. It will get you in touch with the world, with the modern world. It's worth it because you've got too much to learn. It could be quite an experience to learn to read and to know more about what has been happening to you. It may take you 3 months/6 months.

(If I read Sesotho only, will that help me?)

What you're actually going to do is to understand how to read. Reading, practically reading, and as I say it's going to take you a long time. If you know how to read letters, it's then that you can learn how to read. It's then that you'll find it easier to read Afrikaans and Sesotho. The basic part of it is knowing how to do it in your own language, and later, when you learn it in Afrikaans and English.

Is there anything to read in Sesotho or Zulu?

As far as I'm concerned, not so much. What you can read in Zulu, there are some magazines like Bona, and as far as I can say, they've got a Zulu newspaper, Imvo, or something like that. (Note: Imvo is a Xhosa paper.) I don't know any newspaper in Sesotho, I think those are only available in Lesotho.

(Are you saying it's not so useful to read in that language except to learn English?)

It would be so much easier to learn in your own language, later on to learn English and Afrikaans. That's the most important thing. It will take much longer to learn to read in English. As you can see if you go to church they read from the Bible - there are some things you can read in your own language. As I say, there is the Bible, and there are some books that are written in your language, e.g. history, the stories that your grandparents have been telling you. In your own language you'll understand it better.

(Some people say reading destroys our customs and traditions.)

Your principles, your traditions, it's your traditions. It doesn't have anything to do with reading. You stick to your traditions; it doesn't have anything to encourage you to actually do away with your traditions. You can be a little bit Westernized but remember your traditions. Those people who actually write those papers, they've got their own traditions about which you don't know much, and they're sticking to them. Why should you lose our traditions while they're keeping theirs? They're not doing a benefit for you just because you

read in their language. You should intend to them that they won't take your traditions.

(Some people say reading belongs to the whites and only serves white interests.)

We are living in the modern world. It's not to say there's only a white culture. As you see you are here in Johannesburg, you are not living in Lesotho. Reading gives you a way of using the commodities you have got in your house, helping to help yourself and the community. It doesn't try to absorb the westernized way or adopt the traditions of the white man. No, it doesn't do anything like that. It's not basically that it teaches the traditional way of living - of which I think they're totally against; it teaches you how people live in faraway places, it gives you advices on life and everything, but it doesn't encourage you so much to neglect your tradition if you believe in your traditions, your ancestors and everything, but it doesn't discourage you. It's not just for white power. No, not at all, it's quite informative, it's not meant to discourage you from things that you can do.

(Some people say the workers won't succeed in their struggle until they can read.)

I should think it's quite important especially in working places because one then learns how to be conscious about activity and learns how to be able to be too efficient to the management. In turn one learns how to deal with his forms, with his payslip, how to read it, how to read and write letters to his family, and again it gives you the opportunity to be able to be promoted. A literate worker can be a total and productive worker. If you can't read it means that you can't know that "this I'm entitled to", that you will be able to stand up and say, "Right, I'm justified to say this is a matter of interest for me". If you can't read you are going to be used as a tool. It's the illiterate's belief that the white man is totally superior and that they should be subservient they should listen to what he says because he is there to pay him, he doesn't have to offend him, he just have to work to satisfy him, not to get a just wage.

(Tell me about reading and your childhood before school.)

Well there were magazines, not specifically for me but for my mother, and my brothers used to read them - we grew up in a big family, my father's brother's children they grown up with us, so they had some books, magazines. I didn't have books. I liked to gaze at pictures.

(Did someone tell you stories?)

My mother... she is still alive. She was a good story teller.

(What did she tell you stories about?)

(Long pause and a prompt) ... About animals, about some little ... I enjoyed it. I can still recall one that she told me about a small child who actually took (?) off most, he was smoking among a forest and then he happened to see himself lost and then comes a big storm,

and when he was standing there he automatically saw some of the parts of the body falling off ... until he totally died there ... uh, I've got a hazy idea to remember, I must have forgotten it. ... It was a traditional story. I had a Granny, but she read from the Bible. My mother used to read to us out of a book. If she didn't have anything to tell she would read from a book. About giants, all that, lions, Chaka... She used to do that when we went to bed at night. I can still remember my mother. I was the only one she would actually talk to. I should think it gives one an interest of getting to know how to read. Because that little interest, seeing my mother taking a book and reading a story, it made me quite interested in attending school. I can still recall when I was in Sub Standard A (First Grade).

(Primary school.)

I used to cry that my mother should take me to school, should buy me a slate that I could write and when I was at school I used to be the heaviest, the heaviest! The funny part of all is I had that interest of going to school but I seem to have been a little bit dumb by then because I took time before learning how to read and write. When it was the patient time to take this sentence down, write this, calling me down from the book, I used to gaze at the picture inside the classroom, I used to write ... not long actually until ... I should think that the method of teaching by then of that teacher wasn't good - I hate to criticise - because when I had a second teacher who actually taught us how to read vowels and consonants it was then that I learned how to read words. Because they taught us A up to Z and I didn't actually understand how should I ... if I had to spell children, how should I ... so I just gazed at the wall and see pictures with houses up and down, mix them up ... Until I learned to know that "blending", as you say - until I see that BA + NA which means children, it's then that I learned to read. It was a good experience, it was as if, just, the world realised, I'm just the brilliant one of them all, I've learnt something, or so much important.

Then at home I had an interest of telling them that BA + BA equals "baba" ... (An intonation of special delight at this stage.)

Look, during these times, our teachers used to hit us a lot. Ja, they used to lash us, they used to lash us. That's why in actual fact it takes you time if you can see that now he's asking a question and he's ... actually you become so scared you cannot answer the correct thing. I started school the hard way. They didn't believe in school all that much. They took us right into the sun so I could look after my grandfather's ... he used to have cattle, sheep, you know.

At Potchefstroom, deep in the veld, I used to walk 20 kms to school, from Sub A. And I even used to get first to school, with my slate under my arm. It was a farm school, but I appreciate, now that I'm in this position, what my father did. All my friends with me, they didn't even go up to Form 3. At that farm school I had a difficult time, all that long distance, in wintertime, without shoes, and then knowing immediately, having that experience, knowing how to read and wondering at knowing that thing, it was something amazing, and during that time when I had to come here at the township, I found it most

simple, enjoyable, going to school just next door. My mother gave me some money to go to the shops, I enjoyed that way, I thought it's not worthwhile being absent from school, whereas there at the farms I used to travel a long distance and I wasn't away unless I'm seriously sick. I learnt how to be tough. I can tell you how it feels when you get cold on the fingers and you can't write and then you had to hit your fingers in the sun, how it feels when they get hot - the pins and needles. But I got great joy. Sometimes I think that these kids ... I don't just get up...

I didn't have a book. They used "spel books". we used to read from that. Words and letters. And at school we used to have the prescribed books. And then when I started learning how to read I tried with the Bible, took the Bible and tried to read it, in Sesotho, and it used to be quite difficult because they used to write it that old way they don't write any more (Sesotho sa Lesotho).

I used to try those magazines, Bona and all that, but it was quite fascinating to read somewhat. I used to read them and ask my mother, "Am I right?" - "Ja, you're right" ... We had no bridge readers at home. We left our books at school. We had readers. Stories in Sesotho. At senior primary I was here in Natalspruit.

(Can you remember any of those books?)

Mmm...I can still remember one about Ali Baba. That was in English....Uh (long think) Tselane the Giant - that was Sesotho.

(Can you remember the first books that you read for yourself and enjoyed?)

That time? ... It's difficult ...

(At Natalspruit? ... Did you have good teachers?)

Umm ... eh-eh ... I've got no way of gauging ... I think they were good.

(Can you name me some reading in your school years that was an important experience? That stands out? - Even your History text book.)

Ja, I can still recall one that I read, I think it was in Form 2 (Grade 7). It was about a Malawian boy who came over here, he actually struggled to get enlisted to come over here, and then it was a joy dream when he eventually got the chance of coming to the Reef, he was so much fascinated to know where is that gold mine, how is it mined, and it was a fear experience for him to go underground. He actually excels himself so that he caught some medals, by rescuing some of his co-workers and he excelled in sport, in athletics and some things like that, and eventually he had to go home with all that money he had, and he got himself a girlfriend and got married. And another one that I remember was "The Winslow Boy" ... (laughing) ... About the "Winslow Boy". I think it was a genuine book; I think it was a very very genuine look and I think there his parents were rather people who actually want to ... they have faith in their child, they believe that he is telling the truth, so "to hold our powers as subjects of the crown", and eventually they won the case. I think it was

quite a good thing ... It was a terrible case, of course, forgery ... It was a very strong struggle, it took some efforts to overcome that.

(You didn't think this was a play about England, nothing to do with us?)

No, it didn't actually worry me. I found it a very good play... We had a very good teacher who explained ... he's an interpreter now... He didn't let us act the play, but his explanation, ... when he explained it you got a picture, the way he put it across, he was very good. I enjoyed reading it, and the other children as well.

That was in Std 8, and the other one was ... in the home language. Di malahotsereng(?) about the village. This girl, she had a religious family, and they were keen to educate her and she fell in love with a boy whose parents were not interested in religion; they didn't like anything about education, and they were rich by African standards of living. They believed that if their son was educated and some of his girl friend's parents were educated, they believed "this boy isn't suitable for you. His parents are not educated. You shouldn't get married there". And this girl said, "There's nothing you can do about it, I love him." And it happened that this girl went to university and while he (sic) was in university he was badly sick, and came home, and his father called a witch doctor - he didn't believe in Westernized doctors - but nothing. This boy was sick, and then he had to call a medical doctor ... Funnily enough, while this guy was having a break down at school and he happened to fall in love with this daughter ... He couldn't do any thing, he was already seriously ill, and he died. It's written by a white man. And this girl was in love with the doctor, and her parents said, "Now you have a good chance, you have to marry this guy." And this is what actually happened. When I analyse that book, I understand he's a good writer, it's a good book, but he's somebody who kills characters. The family of this boy, just because they're not Christians, whatever they've been trying to attain, it would end up a failure. But this girl because she's OK, whatever she's trying to do she achieved, got good results. In any case, I enjoyed it, it was a good read. I should think it's translated.

(These stand out more than your matric books?)

My matric books ... I don't have so much interest ... because uh it was this kind of book they prescribe for us you read a book it's got Afrikaans Ja Nee inside it - I didn't have any interest in them, I just read them to understand the story, it doesn't give you any insight of ... it doesn't give you that excitement of knowing, of choosing a character, of trying to analyse the book.

(English set books?)

That is what I am talking about. In English I've got ... mmh...what's that book?... ja, what was interesting was uh who wrote "Far from the Madding Crowd"... Really, I liked it. I'd really left school when I bought it. I had the one before(Under the Greenwood Tree?) No. (The Mayor of Casterbridge?) Ja, right.

When I had read the Mayor of Casterbridge... it happened to be my sister's prescribed book in Form 5 (Twelfth Grade).

(Is Hardy not a difficult writer?)

It's not really, he writes rather beautifully. (Shakespeare?)

We had no Shakespeare. And we had another one. I don't remember it. A South African book.

(Since school. Your favourite kind of reading, reading that has given the most to you?)

I should think it's romance, but not deep deep romance. And thrillers. I don't like a thriller that's so clear that it shows it's a fiction. I want it to be part true, realistic, just like "The eagle has landed", it's a little bit like a true story.

(What good do you think there is in reading love stories, thrillers?)

Let me say I like psychology, something that gives you an insight of things, like this woman I talked of the other day, Marilyn French, she actually gives you an insight, she makes you think somehow, she makes you involved in the thing, she takes your feeling, and you're not going to be sympathetic, but you're going to be empathetic, as you said, (laughing) I like ... a bit of philosophy, but ... uh ... in romance, I should think they create in my character, they're making me somebody who's considerate, somebody who is not harsh; I don't think that... I should think they build up my character, they make me tender, they make my heart tender ... (laughing).

(How do you react to a feminist novelist like Marilyn French?) So in my reading I'm rather confused. I haven't found my way; I can't really say that I'm a womanist; I feel for that. I think she's a suffragette. Because I ... I justify what the Bible said, and then get other people from that side, which I see is right and often tangible like that, but I think again it's against what God has said, it's being too antagonistic against God.

(You think the Bible is chauvinistic?)

I think what they said it's antagonizing what the Bible has said. I'm still lost about it. They want to pursue that course of which is justified, of which the Bible doesn't justify, so I'm in the middle of it. I don't know what is right. I've got that feeling, that compassionate ... (End of tape.) I'm not going to say that I believe the woman's place is in the kitchen. I believe, if she's got education, I won't restrict her doing that. I won't be too much of a chauvinist on her. What I'm saying is that, quite frankly, I believe it's unfair to say that "you're a woman, you should stay like this.....etc." What I believe is even if I don't have any restrictions on her, the thing is it must be in accordance that I am the figurehead, not restricting her... Think of her as a human being, giving her that chance, that due, but ... she shouldn't overdo, that you make her a figurehead.

(Discussing reading diary.)

I bought The Citizen just for that thing (the Challenger disaster). Because I just happened to hear it over the radio. It's against my principle. Citizen.)

(Discussing the selection of reading matter. Have you read Dick Francis?) He's writing good English, I don't like those writers who write like these little books ... James Hadley Chase ... this I don't like (strong feeling). Most people in the township read this. I'm not for this! I read, I think, two of these, then I felt now, not my life.

6.3 PM'S Reading Diary

Monday

On the way to work:

Bought a copy of The Citizen and was stunned by the explosion of the American spaceship (the Challenger) in mid-air. Felt sorry about the people who died. Particularly the woman. I further read the South African Prime Minister's message to President Reagan, and I felt it was "Senseless" and "Stupid".

At work, morning:

I glanced at the BP Top 8 Competition and was excited about the draw. I felt I will go to the Final if "Cosmos" wins the semi-final.

Afternoon:

I had to scratch my head for a good and winning combination in the race card.

During tea and lunch breaks: Practically nothing except discussing about the "school-crisis" with my co-worker.

On the way home:

I usually tell my mother what I read on the newspaper if it's important or something that amazed me.

At home in the evening:

I read a lot of novels. At present I am reading The Eagle has Landed which thrills me and I am so spellbound from the first page I stop reading it.

Tuesday

Before leaving for work:

No time to read, just have to switch on the Radio to hear the right time.

On the way to work: The Sowetan - Mandela may be free this week. I didn't believe it. Might be one of the publicity stunt.

At work, morning:

Didn't read anything. Had a lot of job to be done on my desk, didn't even know where and how to start going.

Afternoon: No reading, but only discussing about the workforce and my resignation as the secretary of the Work's Council. One Member even called me "Dr Slabbert" (Note: van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the op-

position, had recently resigned from parliament because he had ceased to believe in its relevance.)

During tea and lunch breaks:

Don't read most of the time except if there is something hot on the newspaper. I usually plays cards with my friends.

On the way home: Helped my sister with some Maths problems. Funny!! I found them more "tricky", since I left school long ago.

At home in the evening:

Slept very late, read a novel of Marilyn French - The bleeding heart. Resent the idea of her prowess as suffragette campaigning for women's liberation. She got some tangible facts, but one can't avoid if, it's God who made it like that - (man as head of the Family). If it's got to be like that my wife would like me to wash my child's nappies one day when I am married.

Thursday

On the way to work:

Nothing at all. Only enjoying an occational glance from a a pretty girl sitting opposite me. I have grown a great interest in her lately. Hope I found her in the afternoon. Read an "advert" at the caffee saying Halley's Comet could be seen on Feb 19. I decided I shouldn't forget the date. I dec ded I will go to Evaton at my Grandma's place to whatch it clearly.

At work, morning:

Clearing my desk and no reading at all, only glanced at the headlines.

Afternoon:

The heading "Bombs rock French capital" attracted my eyes and I found it quite awful how people act these nowadays, especially those who found pleasure in killing the others. I was shocked to read further that some of the bombs were defused in "Eiffel Tower". Thought the French Grand Tower could have gone.

During tea and lunch breaks:

I read about the MSL's Pro Mr Bamjee who was interviewed by the TV staff and prefer to give them irrelevant facts that got nothing to do with the problems of the game. I thought he isn't so clever and witty as I think he was.

On the way home:

Didn't read anything - I told my mother that I read in the press that our church was to build an office in central Jo'burg. She knew about it and wanted me to fork out a hundred Rand so that my name should appear on the list of those who helped to bring through these venture. I argued that it wasn't important and I couldn't spent that amount for only my name to appear on good church records. She was furious because I didn't even want to go to church.

Saturday

Morning:

Went to town for some shopping. No time to read at all.

Afternoon:

At 2.30 I went to the cinema in Kine centre. Was absorbed in the scene of girl who acted as a boy in order to achieve her goal (to be a reporter). There was a good picture that afternoon - "Just one of the Guys".

Evening:

I listen to Radio Bop Music but they played "Disco" mostly, which is not really my taste of music.

Sunday

Morning:

Read about Mr Botha's (President) speech in the Sunday Times. Lots of promises about equal rights and power sharing, but I am not impressed. I think actions can convince me.

Afternoon:

Started one of the good novels I have ever read - This is my street, by Nan Maynard. Didn't read long as I was invaded by a bunch of my old Buddies from school. We discussed everything from soccer, boxing, school days and politics.

Evening: I slept so early. I felt I had used all my energy for that day. Didn't even listen to the Radio, which I usually do on Sunday evenings.

6.4 Thematic analysis: perceptions of reading

(i) Major concerns and reading (Appendix A, Summary 2)

The concerns of the participants were discussed in the previous chapter. One of the reasons for asking about their self-perceptions and their notions of what constitutes a good life and for the discussions about the pursuits of daily life, apart from needing to gain an idea of their social identities, was to see whether reading or closely related pursuits would be mentioned spontaneously. Considering the fact that the participants knew that the subject of the interviews was reading it seemed likely that they would be inclined to bring reading-related interests into the discussions. This did not in fact happen, other than obliquely in terms of the importance they attached to

the education of their children. There was no sense that, in the words of a colleague: "I cannot conceive of life without reading". The only exceptions to this were the least educated of the participants, PT, for whom church and the Bible are the major props of daily life, and LN, who sees communication as the essence of a good life. Even SS (Appendix B), AK, AM and PM, all keen readers in different ways, do not mention reading or possibly related interests such as the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom per se.

This should perhaps be interpreted in terms of the transparency of reading in daily life than to a lack of valuing of reading. Such an interpretation would seem fair in the light of what follows.

(ii) Explanations of the basic skill (Summary 3)

The question, "What is reading?" caused some consternation. Most of the participants started answering with generalities, such as that reading is a good thing, and went on to explain what it is for. Brought back to the question by further questions like, "Yes, but what is happening when one reads, how does reading work?", only one participant formulated anything like an explanation relating to the translation of the sounds of language into visual symbols, and no-one suggested that written words are like pictures. Many resorted to a promise of demonstration: "I will read and explain every sentence in his own language" (PN), or pointed to a word and read out the alphabetic names of the individual letters - "This is a P" and so on (ER),

or said, "See, these are people's names" (SD). They were at a loss when the illiterate Mosotho failed to make sense of this.

Another response was to say that one could not know what reading was unless one had been to school. AM put this in a fashion which might have pleased Wittgenstein: "Reading is just something which is there to people who have gone to school" and SM said, "You can't understand one which is not doing this thing, but one which is doing the thing he can understand the scratches". WM was profound if not clarifying in his description of reading as discerning: "There's many things you can read from me, there's many things you can read in the book. Yes. Reading is not reading the book only. Reading from another person." PM (see transcript) created a charming image from the Mosotho's world, in which reading was compared to listening to mountain echoes, adding: "As we are speaking now, you can hear me through your ears, but from the newspaper you can see it through your eyes and understand it through your brain".

The most analytical approach was that of JS:

You can combine words to make a sentence by mixing the different alphabets. Let me put it this way. You've got A B C D up to Z. Now if you mix it, if you take A and B and A, you say 'aba'. Then you take another alphabet. Let us say W I L L, that's English, it's 'will'. Now if you continue doing like that you can make a sentence that can make sense to somebody.

The answers point to two interpretations. The one is that reading is very much an accepted part of the participants' experience and that they are far removed from its basics. The concept of reading is thus one in which the basic skills have been transcended, embedded and for-

gotten in the practice. The other interpretation is that there may be a fairly general absence of a high degree of decontextualised thinking among the participants. Their thinking here refers to the immediate and the concrete. There is a struggle to generalise - something which Aitchison (1984) argues offers a common problem for black students in tertiary education.

(iii) The uses of reading (Summary 4)

The most common, and often the first, response to the question, "What is the use of reading?" is that it is to know what is going on around you "every day!" (PN). In the general state of crisis it is understandable that this should reflect a concern with what is going on in other townships: "By reading I'm going to hear what they've done there in Soweto" (CT). Both WM and AM reveal the use of newspapers even for illiterates in this respect when they talk of being subjected to earnest questioning about the photographs accompanying major stories. For TM, far from his family in Venda, a major concern is to know about "what's going on in Sibasa", while CT, with her personal isolation and insecurity this need takes on a more dramatic existential turn: "To be killed and not knowing what's going on!"

The second most common response relates to the curiosity of knowing what is going on elsewhere, how other peoples live in "faraway places" (PM), and being able to orient oneself in alien places and to be at home with otherness (WG devotes a long rambling passage to this theme).

Reading gives you more knowledge of your surroundings so that you could not be only knowing Lesotho when you speak, you should be a person who knows what happens in Bloemfontein which is next to you, and they should also be knowing what are you doing for a progress in life (AK).

As the times is always improving then to read, it means you had to be to know that you can go to another place and understand another languages (CT).

Books tend to be associated with this function and are frequently associated with history. This emphasis, which can be seen in PM's transcript, reflects a common orientation.

The linking of reading with a generalised pursuit of knowledge and intelligence is very common: "Having light" (PN), "For a better mind, being more clever" (TM), "increasing your understanding ... your sophistication" (AM). Without reading "you don't know nothing in this land. You just like a storm rolling on the mountain" (SD).

Now you see, this reading is a very important thing, because they keep you clever, because if you are reading something like novels, everything like ... for myself, because I'm reading every paper which I find it I can read, it gives you some knowledge to know - to anything which is happening, or what is going to happen, and what it was happening before (SM).

Various minority issues which arise can be seen more clearly in Summary 4: reading for status - "being a somebody"(PN), "to be like a gentleman"(SD) - or getting a better job; reading to improve one's knowledge of English; reading for understanding others, for distinguishing between good and evil and for making better judgements concerning the future. A curiosity is the mention (twice) of being able to read the registration numbers of cars.

In this account we see very clearly a dominance of a social and public orientation in reading, something which must be both a consequence and a cause of the huge dominance of newspapers in the reading world which was seen in Chapter 4. Those things which are scarcely mentioned in these spontaneous accounts of the uses of reading are also interesting. In the first place, there is only one mention of reading for pleasure, a trend which is supported by the questionnaire (Summary 16). Only PS, who aspires to a "fast" lifestyle, mentions pleasure, while WM speaks of reading as "just something people enjoy" and goes on to tell of the magnetic attraction which almost any new written text arriving in the workplace can exercise over workers' curiosity. As we have seen, LN thinks that communication is the essence of the good life - a belief that he lives out in print and other media, judging his reading diary. But although all of the participants show eagerness, curiosity and pleasure about reading and reading matter throughout the research, one looks in vain for an outright avowal of reading for pleasure.

There is only a hint of an explicit notion of reading for personal growth, although various responses suggest that this is one of the strongest "uses" of reading. AK says that reading "upgrades your personality". Several spoke of reading for being a better person and for understanding others, and TM says that we must read because "we can't live like an animal", and that reading helps us to "reach our potentials".

More notable, perhaps, is that there is only one case where the participant (AK) attributes his sense of personal competence in any way to reading - through the command of English, reasoning and information which reading gave him. This was the only example of reading per se (as opposed to education and qualifications) mentioned in the discussion of the sources of personal authority - in spite of the fact that the interviews had oriented the participants towards the subject of reading. However, we have seen that several say that reading can lead to a better job, and WM says "you can't do anything without reading". WM offers a curiously complex case. A talented practical man with a quiet authority about him, the kind whom anyone in distress might turn to first, he is not a great reader, yet expresses a positive interest in reading. However, his prospects for promotion have been frustrated by his inability to pass a statutory written first-aid test in English - something told to me by his production manager, who found the technicality irritating in terms of WM's actual skills. This was the most direct example of the effects of a widespread literacy-based qualificationism encountered in the course of the research.

Although occasional practical uses of reading are suggested - PM speaks of its necessity for modern health practices, and SD says it is very helpful for deaf people - only ER, with her homely and practical intelligence - focuses almost exclusively on the functional benefits of reading, such as being able to read advertisements and write letters. On the other hand, when the participants ask me for information about various problems - opportunities for further education, pensions and community services - it is apparent that even where published ma-

terial exists on these subjects, it is not easily available or widely distributed among workers.

When in the discussion groups I point out that from their accounts the participants did not seem to see any direct relationship between reading and work I am unanimously contradicted by the assertion that they could not have got where they are without reading, and that the illiterate cannot be more than a labourer in industry. This suggests that at the level of a spontaneous valuing of reading, reading is not associated with work. After prompting it is recognised to be a sine qua non even for the machine operator's work. In an attempt to assess this relationship I studied the work of the individual participants and found that, with a few exceptions, even where reading is in common use as a technical requirement for the participant's work, there is little use for reading to deepen conceptualisation of or insight into the work processes, nor does it seem likely that the ability to read well contributes to the advancement of those with any prospects - with possible exceptions in the cases of AM, CM and PS.

Two further absences are interesting. The Bible only comes into consciousness directly and spontaneously in the case of PT, who reads little else. Nor is there a more general mention of spiritual "upliftment". Only later in the interviews is a widespread piety and fairly common and positive mention of the Bible to appear - mostly in discussions of the reading diaries - when the mission background to the reading world was to become apparent. It is also notable that no mention at this stage is made of reading for power, although two par-

ticipants told me in the lead-in discussions about political pamphlets in the townships, and several are concerned with worker organisation and read union publications.

(iv) Critical awareness of the mass media (Summary 5)

The South African Broadcasting Corporation controls the airwaves over the country; it is under government control and expresses Nationalist perspectives while making some show of offering alternative points of view. The left and the black trade unions are condemned and criticised, but seldom heard unless their pronouncements can be shown in a bad light. As we have seen in Chapter 4 the SABC reaches a huge black radio listenership and a considerable television viewing public in the urban areas. We have also seen that the newspapers read in large numbers by blacks are under white management, but that they do present strongly oppositional, if not radical, positions. Hence it seems useful when attempting to find whether there is any critical awareness of the shaping power of the media, of selection and bias, to ask about the differences between newspapers and broadcasting, and especially about their truthfulness.

PM expresses an awareness in strong terms of the interests reflected in the media, and is ironically critical of both. (He sees broadcasting as controlled by the government, and the press as controlled by the capitalists.) The fact that he chooses to make the point off the record shows that he considers his view to be dangerous. Yet, as will be appreciated from his discussion of reading and his reading diary,

while he is a fervent reader, his opinion would seem to be a position of principle rather than an internalised awareness which informs his reading and media-using life.

Apart from PM there are only three others who show some sense that the media are areas of control and bias. PN and AM show a hint of awareness about this and LN is ironical about the bias of the media, but does not allow this to blunt his enjoyment, especially of television. CT speaks blandly of the process of censorship as though it is to be accepted in the order of things. AR, who is a passionate consumer of newspapers and is one of the most sophisticated of the participants, says that the main difference between press and radio is that newspapers offer much more satisfying detail. TM is critical of the authorities, but shows no critical awareness in this area; he finds the Venda news magazine Mvelapanda useful, and does not know that it is an official publication.

The most common responses see the two media as being as truthful as possible; both "give the facts". Radio brings fresher news, but the newspapers are superior in detail, are useful for the small advertisements, and are more convenient because one can read them when and where one chooses.

While some point out that the printed word was introduced by whites, the participants are enthusiastically unanimous in seeing the printed word as something in which black people participate and from which they should strive to reap the benefits. The publishing industry is

seen as accessible, in theory at least. Even PM, in spite of his critical stance, takes this position.

(v) Reading, "the struggle", prosperity and work (Summaries 5 & 6)

The proposition that workers need to read if the collective effort to improve their lot is to be successful is one of the few questions which meets with some uncertainty. As can be seen in Summary 5, different images of the illiterate emerge from this discussion. There is a general feeling that the illiterate might be difficult to organize, but that there are ways of overcoming this difficulty besides teaching them to read. Illiterate people are seen variously as being apathetic about getting their rights and often unaware of their rights, being contented to receive inadequate pay or ignorant of conditions of service. It is sometimes difficult to explain things to them and they are sometimes obstinate.

Yet nearly all of the participants are respectful of the illiterate. With one exception, where the Mosotho is told that it is too late for him to learn to read, all encourage him to go to night school, and are reasonably well-informed about how he might go about becoming literate. (The township night schools is positively regarded.) At the same time they disagree that illiterate people are deemed stupid or treated with contempt in the townships, although two mentioned illiterates trying to conceal their literacy by buying newspapers. There are many illiterates who are intelligent and worthy of respect, they say, and many of the participants have at least one illiterate parent. One

participant tells of teaching her husband to read, another of a mother who taught her father to read. Only one feels that the illiterate should be dismissed as stupid and lazy "because there are so many chances to learn to read these days" (ER).

The benefits of reading are presented to the Mosotho in terms of his becoming an informed person at home in a modern community and of his chances of getting a job or a better job (specifically by being able to follow the newspaper "smalls"). Two advantages of literacy pointed out are being able to sign your name and being aware of job opportunities. IM says that life is dangerous without literacy. AK sees great advantages in literacy for the workplace in general, but at the same time points out that the factory and its routines create an adverse environment for literacy. CM does not think it worthwhile for the illiterate to become literate unless it has some use in their work. PS is ironical. He says that conservative (HNP) white workers are illiterate but get places because of their political advantage. In general the struggle for economic and political rights did not seem to be linked very strongly with literacy in the perceptions of the participants.

(vi) Reading, traditional culture and language

In contrast with the previous section, the participants have decided opinions about the relationship of reading to traditional culture and their own languages. Many reject traditions and customs out of hand, seeing them either as divisive, sectional and against the common in-

terests of a tolerant cosmopolitan community, or reject them simply because they are irrelevant or unmodern: "We don't need to live in mud huts or wear skins any more" (IN).

Some are tolerant of customs, or even like them. JS praises his ancestors, encourages his children to be respectful of old ways, and brews traditional beer. PM, as we have seen, tells the Mosotho to defend his traditions against those who despise them. SS feels that worthwhile aspects of a traditional way of life should be separated from the negative aspects, and, unlike most of the others, claims to love rural life. But none of this group feels that reading in any way works against the maintenance of traditions. Indeed, several see the printed word and the radio as their main sources of knowledge about old ways.

The general attitude to the mother tongue as far as reading is concerned is negative or at best ambiguous. No one expresses a love of their own language or a desire to preserve its beauties or its purity. Half of the eighteen volunteer the idea that it is worth learning to read in the vernacular because, they say, from there one can go on to learn English or Afrikaans more easily. Several participants feel that by being able to read in the vernacular one has access to dictionaries and can thus learn English on one's own. (AK puts this notion into practice; he is proud of his command of English which he attributes to his cherished dictionaries.) Many say that there are some worthwhile things to read in their own language (some speak with affection of their mother-tongue readers at school), but when pressed to be spe-

cific they are exceptionally vague, referring to histories and traditional tales, and to a frequently unclear idea that there might be a vernacular newspaper to be had in the homeland. Surprisingly, all except PT have to be prompted to mention the Bible in this regard, although most possessed and read vernacular Bibles. For say that while they read English easily they are not at home reading in their own languages, two mentioning that the standard written language is strange to them.

There are some complexities in the view. For example, WM, who says that reading Xhosa is not much use, but struggles with English, asked his brother to borrow Soga's classic Xhosa history for him - possibly influenced by having to keep a reading diary - and claims to have enjoyed it very much. ER thinks vernacular reading is for learning English and letters home, she dislikes Ilanga ("because its news is stale"), yet she is very proud that her family's history (the Radebe's) is published in Zulu, and she reads her Bible in the vernacular - as do the other Bible readers, although they say that they have an English Bible and read it as well. WG, on the other hand, prides himself on family records and diaries going back to early in the century, all in English, but he also says that he reads his Bible in Zulu.

The responses here are both supported and explained by the consideration of the linguistic environment of reading in Chapter 4.

6.5 Life experiences of reading

(i) Early childhood (Summary 8)

Most of the participants speak with fondness of their childhood homes, which range from non-literate to highly literate, from richly communicative to incommunicative, at least in terms of influences across generations. We have seen in PM's account a home which encouraged reading by reading aloud and story telling, and a more limited but still positive childhood reading world in PN's life story (Appendix B). SS (Appendix A) lived in what seems to be a mixture of the extended family and a broken home. While he remembers his grandmother's stories with a frisson of delight, his childhood acquaintance with reading came through the schoolbooks which his older cousins brought home with them.

The story-telling grandmother is a figure mentioned by many of the participants. The stories told, often to a gathering of children before bedtime, are various: histories of their nations and folk heroes, frightening stories in the style of the Ntsomis, and moral tales. Talking of these stories, AK (whose own grandmother did not have time to tell him stories) says:

That is another essence in my life ... these little stories, they create something in that way, which either it makes you a man or it demolishes you or it puts you somewhere in life ... it will add into your life again. It will really improve you a lot.

In the reading homes five talk of fathers reading English newspapers and speak of being challenged to read and explain - an experience

which Kuzwayo (1985) writes of with joy in her autobiography. A different five remember their mother (or grandmother or aunt) reading to them, but in these cases the texts were works of piety, the Bible or schoolbooks. PS remembers little reading, but from early on was involved in helping to run his uncle's village store, where it was the book-keeping that now provides a strong memory of achievement.

It is impossible to trace a clear line between a reading, communicative home life and reading in the later lives of the participants. LN speaks with warmth and pride of a grandmother who was a nurse, spoke English to him and read to him. Although unable to complete his schooling because of the disruption of education after 1976, he now lives a full communicative life, eagerly using all the media in his little and intensely consumed free time. TM lived in a context too remote to be reached by newspapers. His father read the Bible at bedtime, which he found soporific rather than enjoyable. After an education in which reading was not prominent he finds reading a fairly demanding pursuit; he takes it seriously, however, saving the week's Sowetans for Sunday. (He finds the white dailies too long, detailed and difficult for regular reading.) On the other hand FM had a childhood devoid of warmth by his own account, with no adult support for reading. He says that reading is "not my thing", but in fact reads quite extensively, mainly about sport, and is one of the two participants who say that they use the library often. AK, now a compulsive reader of newspapers, regards his early reading life as a complete blank. WG had by far the richest literate background of all the participants; stretching back to an evangelist grandfather in Victorian

times. His father kept a voluminous diary in English stretching over the two World Wars, something which WG treasures and uses to solve patrimony disputes. His aunt, a teacher and forceful personality, told the children stories, read to them and taught him to read even before he went to school. He later went to Adams Mission, one of the most distinguished of the pre-Bantu Education schools. Yet today he reads only what he has to at work, mainly council minutes, and virtually nothing else, although he says he likes soccer magazines sometimes. He watches television regularly.

What is most obviously missing here is any mention of children's literature other than schoolbooks. There is still very little children's literature in the local African languages.

(ii) The school years (Summary 9)

Talking of school reading, with the focus on what they remember vividly, as a special experience, most of the participants are extremely vague. With four exceptions they are very positive about school, their teachers and learning to read. Only SS (Appendix C) remembers his primary school reading in detail, retells his favourite stories eagerly and tells of reading under the desk when the lesson was too slow. The older participants remember the "Royal Readers" and the "Oxford Readers" with generalised pleasure, and many appear to have enjoyed their history books more than other textbooks - except for LN, who hated history.

High school reading is remembered more precisely, with undoubtedly the most positive feelings relating to Shakespeare. Among the seven who spoke of Shakespeare his status is high. None of those who had "done" Shakespeare had in any way acted the plays; the texts had been explicated in detail by teachers who appear to have had a special commitment to Shakespeare. On the whole the references did not reflect much more than the sense of status and desirability: ER remembered learning Mark Antony's speech, and PN says she likes Julius Caesar "because he was a great man". FM loved the "trickiness" of Portia in the trial scene in The Merchant of Venice he would like his son to be a lawyer and admires "trickiness". AM told the story of Twelfth Night twice over, with gusto both times.

As we have seen, PM speaks warmly of Terence Rattigan's The Winslow Boy and of Hardy's novels. Several very positive mentions were made of Paton's Cry the beloved country, in two cases read in the Zulu translation.

A particularly interesting case in this section is that of AK. He is adamant that his early years were barren of any meaningful encounters with reading. Then in Standard 8 (Tenth Grade) his teacher gave the class a project to read and summarize six of a list of books not on the prescribed list. "And then", he says, "it's when I started to have an interest in reading more, I developed an attitude of reading, because some of the stories were very interesting." One of the two books he remembers most clearly is Cry the beloved country.

It just coincided with my interest of knowing more in life and of seeing the difference between two people, because if you really

look at the book, it gives you a story of a man from the homelands coming to the towns, and how rapidly does he get into knowing the other people's cultures and the ways of living ... The book itself it gave me such background that I know really in life you've got to read and you've got to learn more from other people before you become a real asset or before you become a proud man of yourself ... It did give me an incentive to find out some of the facts of life about politics in our environment.

The other book he remembers is Romeo and Juliet. When I suggest that the conflict and "gang warfare" in the play must have been the centre of interest for a young person in Soweto he disagrees: "The book itself gave me to think more deeper about what love is."

Similar richness of recollection is limited to four of the participants. PN and ER remember books of moral saws and the catechism from their convent school, and WG remembers only one book from the Methodist curriculum at Adams Mission, what he calls a "psychology book" that told you how to live well. It was called Let's be normal, and he would dearly like to be able to get hold of a copy of it; it is the best book he ever read.

(iii) Adult reading (Summary 10)

Away from the school environment most of the participants read very little other than newspapers and most of their encounters with reading seem to be matters of chance, as can be seen from the analysis of the reading diaries (Summary 12). Very few are specific about a book read recently. Apart from SS's cafe-stall westerns, and PS's mention of a Hadley-Chase read recently, the only writers cited as having been read recently are Alistair Maclean (popular adventure thrillers), Marilyn

French (a sensationalistic feminist novelist), both mentioned by PM, and Nan Maynard (a novelist who writes of life and love in the British working class) by PM and PN - PN bought the novel at the CNA but had not read it (see Appendix C). School reading remains present in the reading of their children, and several speak of helping their children, or of their older children reading to them and keeping them abreast of news and ideas. Apart from the reading involved in clerical activities, there is little evidence of reading of a functional nature. There was the first aid manual cherished by ER throughout the field work (she is studying for an exam), AM mentions a union newspaper which probing reveals him to have read with interest and some gain in information, while PN carries around a dog-eared copy of a union handbook on retrenchment which had a lucid and simplified attack on the uncaring character of capitalism in it. When asked to tell about what this document has to say, however, she is unable to specify anything. The most useful reading is the set of Council Minutes at Factory B. The right of control over these minutes became a matter of contention at the time of the research; the minutes clearly play some kind of contractual role, and it seems that, while there is a legal aspect to their contents, it is above all the status residing in them, and especially in their confidentiality, that is important.

The lack of richness and variety in adult reading may be attributed in part to the factory routine. The working day is long, and a number of the participants at Factory B spoke of extraordinarily arduous schedules in terms of arriving home late at night and leaving again before dawn. The other factors mentioned in Chapter 4 undoubtedly play a

part. For example, very few of the participants use a library (Summary 16); some at least have no convenient library and two speak of their library as having been burnt together with the administrative offices in 1976 and never rebuilt. Those who have a convenient library say it is closed by the time they get home. FM, though not a keen reader by his own admission, lives in Daveyton and has what he believes is a very good library nearby. He visits it regularly during his week on night duty. For the others, either buying or borrowing books involves a special trip to Germiston, Alberton or Johannesburg. Thus the most common sources of reading matter are the street (or the station) and friends.

As a result there is a gap between the high valuing of reading and the actual reading practices. Not all the factors working against reading are negative however. Although reading is ranked highly among sedentary pursuits and even among a variety of other leisure pursuits, the responses to the questionnaire on leisure preferences (Summary 17) are remarkable for the general gusto with which various pursuits are rated. Here each of a variety of pursuits interspersed with a range of reading activities had to be given a score out of ten for how much they were liked and how frequently they were engaged in (Appendix E). In strong contrast to my colleagues in a trial of the questionnaire, the participants were decisive and largely affirmative in their likes and dislikes. The responses indicate that reading, while highly rated for pleasure (especially newspapers), would have to compete with many other activities - sport, sociability, housemaking. (A few, but far more than I expected, rated "Being on your own, walking, sitting,

thinking looking at the view" highly for pleasure and said they got too little of it.) Most of the participants say that they are satisfied with the availability of reading matter.

This may only be explained by the plentiful availability of newspapers and magazines on the one hand, and by the participants not having experience of anything better or being aware of the dearth in rural areas. Their response to the selection of reading matter (Appendix B) is one of great eagerness. They were asked to select three or four books and three or four magazines or newspapers that they might like to take home with them. Most chose far more than this, and the range of their choices (Summaries 11 & 12) is so varied as to be unanalyzable. Certain observations can be made from the process of selection, however.

In the first place, there is a definite difference between the ways of selection of those with more and those with less formal education. The latter have a very scattered and disorganized search procedure, and pick texts only for their titles and the pictures on the covers. The former go through the texts methodically, and make extensive use of cover information, contents and other scanning cues.

Discussions around the actual selection reveals that the participants are nearly all ignorant of the "alternative" press, and while some of the Ravan publications, the Learn and Teach Magazine and some African literature attracted interest, this interest is by no means dominant and is seldom reflected in the final choice of books and ephemera.

take away. Two participants show some awareness of the revisionist historiography in South Africa mentioned in Chapter 4, but they are unable to recall anything beyond broad and inaccurate generalities.

The eagerness of the interest is undeniable. In the first place, especially at Factory A, I end up giving some of my books and all of the ephemera away. AM became particularly keen on Call me not a man, started reading it and talking about it so that he had a small queue of people wanting it next, and I am prevailed upon to leave my copy for him to complete and pass on. Women and men vie for the photo-comics (love stories with white characters) and when I ask the three women why they like them there is a trio of responses:

It teaches you about life, it gives you courage (PN).

When I read those stories I feel young again (EK).

It happened to me like that (love troubles), only with me it didn't come right in the end (CT).

The fiction readers seem to like very realistic stories, and as we can see with SS (Appendix A) there is a tendency with all except the "fast" set to take reading as very serious and meaningful, even when it can scarcely be judged as anything more than escapism.

6.6 The discussion groups

After the interviews were transcribed and analysed the participants were engaged in discussion groups. They were issued with copies of a typed set of propositions which had been generated by the interviews - although some of these were the opposite of the conclusions that had actually been reached. This was done in order to encourage a critical

response. Individuals were given the opportunity to reflect on and come to conclusions about the proposition before the start of the discussion. The second discussion session was devoted to an open-ended consideration of the possibilities for setting up a reading centre in the factory. In what follows the propositions are presented, followed by a brief synopsis of the response.

1. In some nations a person who reads very much is very much admired. Among workers this is NOT how it is. Reading does not give status to an adult among us.

Response: General disagreement, with some feeling that the statement should be qualified. Reading, linked with being informed and being able to give good advice, was said to bring status.

2. The main use of reading is to know about what is going on in other places.

Response: General agreement, with a small minority wishing to supplement the statement with a notion of reading for insight.

3. Reading is NOT useful for factory work. To know our jobs better, or to get a better job, it does not help to read.

Response: Strong disagreement - even simple jobs require reading for operation and training, and more and more work requires education; two dissenting voices argue that there might be some truth in this, considering the limiting nature of factory work.

4. Reading is NOT helpful for organising the workers, or for worker education. Reading does not help in our struggle. Talking and action are much better.

Response: Uncertain, with some feeling that reading could help, but with assent to the last part of the proposition.

5. Reading stories is good for our own lives outside of work because it gives us courage to see how good wins over bad, and it helps us to understand life better.

Response: General approval except for two who feel that stories are not worth that much.

6. A very important use of reading is to keep our knowledge of history, especially of the deeds of our forefathers.

Response: Unqualified approval.

7. Most qualified workers like ourselves would like to read much more than they do, but they have too little time, too little privacy and too few facilities (such as books, libraries, quiet places to read).

Response: Eager approval leading to a discussion of these problems. The proposition is treated as something of a revelation.

8. A reader is more useful to his community than a person who cannot read. A reader can give better help and advice.

Response: Unqualified approval followed by the qualification that this should not be taken to mean that the illiterate are not capable of acting, helping or advising intelligently.

9. I take my reading for granted. It is not something special that I treasure.

Response: Scandalised disapproval; we are very aware of the value of our literacy.

10. To promote reading amongst adults is NOT very important. We have more practical things to worry about - housing, security, health, recreation, self-improvement.

Response: Disagreement, leading to protracted discussions in which it is argued that literacy is a priority, and a prerequisite for more adequate satisfaction of the needs listed here. Two sceptical voices say that it might describe what is the case, though it is not what they believe.

11. For most of us reading is a pleasure. We do not read so that we can do something else. We read for the sake of reading.

Response: General disagreement, with a strong emphasis falling on reading for greater understanding and judgement.

12. Reading was NOT an important influence in our youth. Reading did not take up a lot of our time.

Response: Regretful agreement with the second part of the proposition, and with individual exceptions, with the first part.

13. We wish we had read more at school; it would have helped us in life. We all encourage our children to read more than we did.

Response: General approval.

14. There are NOT enough people in our community who can tell us more about books and reading. We do not have friends who introduce us to new books, or lend us books. We would very much like to have a

reading adviser or a librarian who could introduce us to books that we would like.

Response: Strong approval, with two disagreeing only on detail in terms of their own lives, but agreeing that it reflects the situation in the community. Like 7, this is also treated as something of a revelation, and the idea of an activist promoter of reading being appointed in the community is thought to be excellent.

15. Blacks share in reading and publishing fully and benefit from it fully. Reading is not just in the interests of whites.

Response: General approval, with one somewhat doubting voice. A sad moment arises in a resulting exchange in one group: "Whites have lots to give to black people, and blacks have lots to give to whites." - "What do whites have to give to blacks?" - "Very, very much: motorways, TV, industry ..." - "And what do blacks have to give to whites?" - Protracted and embarrassed silence, not helped by the questioner's hints at what he thinks would be good answers.

Second session:

The discussion of the possibility of a reading centre is extended. A concerted attempt on my part to argue that clinics, skills training or a sports centre might all be priorities above the promotion of reading is stoutly opposed, and the suggestion that they are just doing this to please me is discounted. The discussion of what the centre should be like needs little prompting. The idea that the centre should be subject to some form of worker control is volunteered and generally

approved, although it is also recognised that specialist help would be needed. While most feel that priority should be given to literacy training and the provision of easy and practical reading matter, several would like to see the reading and educational needs of more sophisticated readers catered for at the same time. The siting of a reading centre within the workplace itself is considered to be essential for success. Most of the participants declare themselves willing to give time to such a project, although some are sceptical of its actually working, given its tenuous relationship to productivity and the interests of the shareholders.

Unlike the informal discussions which Marsden-Huggins (1980) used in her research into adult learning needs in Harare, these discussions were strongly influenced by the traditions of formal debate in which opinions and propositions are contested, often for the sake of contestation. Compared with the interviews, they present public views of reading; as such they mostly confirm, and otherwise nuance the more personal perceptions expressed in the interviews.

A summing up of this chapter is included in the following (final) chapter.

CHAPTER 7

TOWARDS A MORE ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF READING (II)

A language game is a more or less complicated sharable human activity which might, or might not, have a utility which could be grasped and stated outside the game.... We do not, in general, think, or use language, because we have found that it pays to do so - any more than we bring up our children because we have found that it pays so do so. But of course particular language-games (e.g. the making of calculations when building boilers) have been found to pay off. But even in these cases, Wittgenstein thinks, it would be misleading to regard calculation as a means chosen to an end.

Anthony Kenny (1973:168)

We make sense of an action when there is a coherence between the actions of the agent and the meaning of his situation for him. We find his action puzzling until we find such a coherence. It may not be bad to repeat that this coherence in no ways implies that the action is rational: the meaning of a situation for an agent may be full of confusion and contradiction; but the adequate depiction of this contradiction makes sense of it.

Charles Taylor (1985:24)

Still, I could claim that after all these were only trails to be followed, it mattered little where they led; indeed, it was important that they did not have a predetermined starting point and destination. They were merely lines laid down for you to pursue or to divert elsewhere, for me to extend upon or re-design as the case might be. They are, in the final analysis, just fragments, and it is up to you or me to see what we can make of them.

Michel Foucault (1980:78)

7.1 The difficulty of summing up

Brother Juniper, in Thornton Wilder's The Bridge of San Luis Rey, conducts an empirical investigation to find out what reasons God might have had for letting a particular group of people perish when a bridge in Peru collapsed. He ends with the situation described in the passage which prefaces the previous chapter, unable to draw any conclusions from the proliferation of facts which he had hoped would substantiate his faith in providence. He is subsequently burned at the stake for the heresy of inquiring into the grace of God. The virtue of his work lies in the end in the stories he recreates, their variety and irreducible individuality.

The aim of this study was to deepen our insight into the nature and meaning of reading as a social phenomenon, and especially to increase our understanding of the reading world of black workers in South Africa. Various accounts of the "meaning" of reading have been offered, and a substantial body of argument against the scientific reduction of such narratives and discourses to nomothetic "findings" or behavioural predictions has been outlined. Moreover, these accounts have not only been explicitly interpreted along the way, they were - following the argument in Chapter 3 - "always already" interpreted in the very shaping of the inquiry. It would therefore be inappropriate to attempt to reduce what has been written in this study to a summary of substantive findings. If the study has value, this must be found in the various accounts themselves rather than in the conclusions.

In what follows, a resumé of the study as a whole is offered, followed by a more detailed reflection on the material in Chapter 6 and a brief critique of an instrumental view of reading. The study concludes with some thoughts on its relevance for the provision of adult education in the workplace, and on the possibilities for further research.

7.2 Resumé

This study started by arguing the value of understanding the role and the meaning of reading in people's lives and of gaining insight into the reading world of communities where literacy was to be promoted. In spite of the diversity of activities subsumed in the idea of "reading", an argument was offered for there being sufficient unity in the idea to make it worth studying as such. Contextual reasons were given for focusing on the reading world of industrial workers in South Africa. A study of the academic literature on reading revealed a strong and continuing limitation of reading to the behavioural or cognitive skills required for its acquisition. Until the 1960s the study of reading as a social phenomenon had been conducted largely as a management science. Both reading studies and library science shaped an understanding of reading consonant with a social engineering philosophy which gives priority to values of technical efficiency. Against this tendency there has been a growth of studies of the social, political and cultural aspects of reading. These have qualified optimistic assumptions about the effects of literacy: social histories and ethnographies of literacy and other investigations show that the relationship of literacy to social change, economic progress, moderni-

sation, productivity, cognitive processes and so on, is tenuous. Certain effects do appear to accompany literacy, but are neither as considerable as they have been thought to be, nor can literacy itself be understood as a major causal factor in these changes. Negative critiques of literacy as a means of cultural dispossession and oppression have appeared in polemical and speculative writings, largely in reaction to the optimism of modernisation theories, and arguments have been made for understanding literacy within the context of specific social and cultural practices.

It was pointed out, however, that even these studies remain dominated by an objectivist understanding of culture and society in which pursuits are reduced to, or treated as instrumental to more fundamental socio-economic "realities". Developments in contemporary thought about the nature of culture and its relationship to social reality were outlined, showing a rejection of reductionism and of the notion of an idealist or ontological grounding of the "meaning" of human pursuits, and pointing to the importance of understanding people's valuing - or how they appraise, make sense of and esteem their experience and action. Giddens's idea of "structuration" was outlined as a way of understanding the manner in which social "givens" and individual valuing interact to sustain structure; structure itself is more like the rules hidden in actual language, and, far from being the reality underlying action and experience, cannot be separated from them. At the same time it was suggested that the play of power in social organisation and discourse might be given more emphasis in this otherwise persuasive model.

The critique of objectivism provided the rationale for an approach in which social history and individual understandings would be set side by side. These would be treated, together with the academic discourses on reading, more as discontinuous or indeterminately articulated narratives than as scientific accounts which are expected to combine to reflect and define a unified underlying reality.

The social context of reading in urban black communities in South Africa was shown to be one in which the accomplishment of widespread accomplishment in reading could be expected to be discouraged by a range of factors: basic living conditions, the difference between the languages of the community and the language of most available reading matter, generally low levels of formal education, the inadequacy of agencies promoting reading and outlets for reading matter in the community, and the problematic "relevance" of reading to black people brought about by the almost exclusive ownership and control of the printed word by interests outside of the black community (including the development of reading matter in the African languages). The reading environment could be seen as deprived, alienated and the site of a powerful hegemony of (white) state and capital, but it also creates space in which the hegemony is challenged. The limited freedom of the press, the oppositional stance of the liberal press, the growth of "alternative" publishing together with the decided growth of newspaper reading by blacks suggest a closer relationship to the interests of blacks than would appear from the apparent control of the printed word. The dissemination of more serious and permanent reading matter,

other than text books, is seriously limited by the social factors listed above.

Against this background an account is given of research into the personal reading worlds of eighteen leading black employees in two East Rand factories. A somewhat fuller discussion of this account is called for.

7.3 Observations on the personal accounts of reading

The reading worlds described in Chapter 6 and in Appendices A and C raise questions which may only be answered in terms of commitments to different ideological or conceptual positions. The ways in which, for example, functionalists, or Marxists or phenomenological sociologists would interpret the information are reasonably predictable, and will not be set out here. The character of the investigation means that the emphasis must fall on how the individuals involved understand their experience of reading. This section will therefore point to some of the questions raised by the accounts of the reading world, and will outline some of the more obvious generalisations which might be made about this experience.

SS's reading (see Appendix C) is undoubtedly something which he experiences as deeply meaningful. Yet, apart from clerical work which hardly extends him, his reading is restricted almost exclusively to pulp fiction. This may be regretted or condemned in the spirit of Hoggart's reflections on the trivialising inroads of the popular media

into working class culture in England. But SS, like all but one of the participants, is not judgemental about popular reading matter in the way, for example, that middle-class parents are about their children's comics. He finds cheap cafe-stall westerns absorbing, sees them as edifying and uplifting in various ways, and delights in his self-image as a discriminating reader of these works. Like the other participants, he describes the printed word as though it were an arena of unproblematic participation, easy access and great benefit for black people; there is no sense of it as a site either of alienation or of struggle.

Should this be dismissed as escapism, or deplored as a waste of intelligence and a denial of awareness, or should its "ludenic" value, with various psychological benefits according to Nell (1984), be appreciated? Does SS's reading internalise an ideology which legitimizes, and accommodates him to, a violent and insecure social order, or does it contribute to his functioning and mobility in a modernizing society? Does it undermine his reliance on the interplay of his intelligence and the experience and textures of his everyday life, as Hoggart suggests it does, or do we see here a positive phenomenon in which SS is in fact extended, develops understanding and empathy, and which helps him to maintain his dignity and self-worth? Does his unquestioning approval of the restricted reading world available to him express the false-consciousness imposed by the hegemony of which he is a subject, or is it the expression of an aspiration which could provide an opportunity for growth and positive resistance? And finally, have SS and the other participants been initiated into the meaning of his-

tory and politics through their literacy (following Lenin's thought on the subject), or have they been subjected to a process in which, according to the French social critic Baudrillard (1983 a&b), the media and modern communications have so immersed us in "hyper" that meaning has been imploded and strivings towards a more real constitution of human society have been subverted and emptied by simulation.

These questions, or questions very similar to them, could be posed about the reading worlds of all of the participants. Simple answers which privilege particular elements in the dualisms reflected here would be misleading and unhelpful. The questions are not of the type that ask for closure; rather, each might be seen as opening up a space for a more liberated discourse and action. This suggestion will be considered in 7.5 below.

A number of generalizations about the way in which the participants in this study speak of their reading worlds are possible.

- There is a high valuing of reading contrasted by a relative thinness in the experience and practice of reading, except in the case of newspapers;
- The perceptions of the uses and value of reading are complex, but relate strongly to the desire to orient oneself to the world and to know a world beyond the immediate community. There seems to be some feeling that reading creates a greater capacity for empathy and that it relates to the highly-valued ability to give advice to others.

- The status of reading in English is high; the valuing of vernacular reading and of traditional culture is ambiguous and generally negative.
- Critical awareness of the media is generally lacking;
- Reading is perceived as "improving" - this includes newspapers and escapist reading matter;
- The availability of reading matter and of agencies for promoting reading in the participants' communities is poor, but this is not spontaneously identified as a need. There would however, seem to be great potential for an active promotion of reading in their context.
- Four, or at most six, of the eighteen participants might be described as committed readers for whom reading is a regular and important pursuit; their reading is severely limited by the availability of reading matter, especially as far as books are concerned, and there is a considerable element of contingency in the kind and quality of reading matter which reaches them.

It is difficult to identify any central role of reading in the participants' lives. One of the concerns of the sociology of culture (specifically of Parsons) is to investigate the causes and nature of "cathexis", a Freudian term denoting the emotional force which attaches to an object of attraction. In other words, what makes certain objects or pursuits desirable or undesirable in particular culture? The evidence here suggests that cathexis in terms of reading is indeterminate. There do not seem to be any patterns running through the lives of the participants that might "cause" them to love or avoid reading, apart from the obvious, mainly constraining, factors de-

scribed in Chapter 4. It is vain to think that a wider statistical survey might yield any more insight into this other than to establish correlations which are meaningless in terms of the concrete realities of individual lives. Nor does there seem to be anything more than the most tenuous relationship between the central concerns or working lives of the participants, and their reading. Reading per se (as opposed to the more general modernizing influence of schooling) cannot plausibly be seen as contributing to their material prosperity or security, or to the prospects of all but one or two of them. While reading could conceivably contribute to their critical awareness and to their effective participation in liberating action, worker organisation or what have you, it does not do this either in terms of the participants' perceptions of the uses of reading or their experience and practice of reading. Critical knowledge in this sense may come through the newspapers to a certain extent, and even more through interpersonal contacts and exposure to the popular oral transmission of ideas disseminated through print and a reading elite.

Attention was given in Chapter 3 to the idea of valuing, and to the indeterminate ways in which valuing relates to other "realities" and structures. The high valuing of reading seen in Chapter 6 might be explained by various associations with a complex of discourses ranging from the discourse of modernity to the discourse of mission values. In only a few cases can it be explained partly in terms of any explicitly recognised pursuit of pleasure, and the valuing itself would seem to have only a tenuous relationship with the practice of reading or with the assumed material benefits of reading.

The accumulated insights from Chapter 6 seem to allow one affirmative generalisation: for most of the participants reading is a statement, against the constraints placed on them by history and politics, of a modern cosmopolitan identity. By reading they stake their claim to a place in an urban, technological community, make themselves at home in it, orient themselves to it and allay its anxieties by knowing what is going on. The participants' positive endorsement of modernity and their linkage of modernity with reading, mainly in English, is notable. This observation is supported indirectly by Fishman (1987:1), who found after a study of the status of English throughout the Third World, that English was not valued for functional purposes, or for the democratic values which it is sometimes thought to bear, but that it "seemed to represent modern life, popular technology, consumer goods, youth culture and the promise of personal social mobility". It is also supported by Musgrove (1982), who makes a substantial case for the value of a modernizing, western education in the Third World and especially in Africa; he argues that such an education has been experienced as liberating, that there has been too little rather than too much of it, and that the idea of deracination is overplayed. Musgrove's position is open to criticism, but there can be little doubt that he would be strongly backed by the participants in this study.

Finally, the participants' valuing of reading would seem to provide little support for the instrumental understanding of reading which has been noted at various points in this study. This can be seen in the perceptions and uses of reading of the people discussed above. Al-

though reading is thought to be influential in an important and positive way, this influence is not associated with efficiency, productivity, the successful manipulation of power or specific "coping skills". The perceptions, the actual uses of reading, and the responses to reading matter, show very few traces of a narrowly instrumental thinking about reading. Rather, reading can be seen as something embedded in and constitutive of the lived reality of the reader.

While reading is obviously "functional" in many ways, it makes hardly less sense to conceive of reading in instrumental terms than it does to conceive of friendship in instrumental terms. To do so is to misunderstand the meaning of friendship and of reading. The analogy can in fact be extended, since reading, as was suggested at the start of study, while dependent on basic encoding, decoding and sense-making skills, becomes the medium and the site of extended relationships, and once beyond the basics may be understood rather as a relationship than as a goal-directed activity. This "relationship" has in turn considerable implications for societies in which it is common; whether for good or for ill, the extended non-parochial relationships of reading must play a reciprocally constitutive role in the making of a society very different from one in which there is little or no reading.

To deny the instrumental nature of reading is not to say that reading, like friendship, may not be used instrumentally, or that an instrumental use of reading is not appropriate at certain times and in certain contexts. But to limit reading, or the approaches to the

promotion of literacy, to ends such as the ability to read instructions, or the development of "trainability", or for that matter, to a narrow propagandistic view of "conscientization", is an act of conceptual abuse. It is also an intolerable reductionism, going against the richer, freer and indeterminate meaning that reading has in people's lives - even in a restrictive context like that of black workers in South Africa.

7.4 Possible implications of the research for adult education

One of the intentions in undertaking this study was to contribute to the sensitivity and "ecological validity" of possible action in adult education and literacy work. It aimed to inform, not to set up guidelines; there is no direct route from description to prescription, and all that can be done here is to suggest certain directions which action might take.

The study has focused on a literate elite among workers. It is therefore concerned with the broad culture of literacy, the horizons, limitations and problems of the reading world in a black industrial community, and cannot deal with the immediate practical issues involved in basic literacy instruction. However, the accounts of the reading world of black workers suggest that there is a need to develop much more than basic literacy, and indeed that literacy itself will best be advanced if attention is given to enriching and extending the experience and the meaning of reading in the community as a whole.

We have seen in Chapters 4 and 6 a reading world that is full of contradictions, and at the same time a world which offers possibilities for a growth in range and in depth. This is a context pregnant with possibilities for cultural action.

Gault (1981) speaks of policies in Yugoslavia and other East European countries whereby every factory employing over 500 workers is obliged to have a library staffed by a qualified librarian. Petryanov-Sokolov (1986) describes the work of the Russian Society for the Promotion of reading, which has some 17 million members, and functions very substantially through cells formed by factory workers. Reading in these societies may be heavily controlled, but reports on contemporary Soviet society suggest that reading is popular precisely because, even under restriction, it transcends the limits of a highly regulated life. Without recommending the general policies of these closed societies, it is still possible to consider their promotion of reading among workers to be preferable to the factory environments we see in the United States (Heath 1984) and here, which are hostile to reading and language communication, and in which little relief is provided for the communicative wilderness - however well workers may create a responsive culture, whether of resistance or accommodation (Bozzoli 1982).

Attempts are being made on some mines, where the closed compound community facilitates the exercise, to create libraries for the workers. The library or reading room in the factory offers advantages over narrow educational programmes because of its flexibility and the range of

interests and needs that it may satisfy. According to the participants in this study a reading room would be welcomed by workers, more especially if they participated in its design and control, and French (1982) gives some evidence that managements might be favourably pre-disposed to the establishment of reading rooms. However, there can be little doubt that the factory environment, the pressure for productivity, the regimented use of time and competing interests on the part of the workers, would make the use of the reading room difficult. Fouche (1978) and Frylinck (1982) have shown how inadequate the western model of the public library is in the under-developed world, and recommend the use of considerably more active promotional measures. For a factory reading room to work it would have to be staffed by an "activist" librarian (possibly part-time and "circulating"), be managed with imaginative and resourceful adaptations, and be stocked with a wide range of reading matter, including much more ephemera than is usually the case in the conventional public library.

From the study certain needs and possibilities would seem to be clear: the need for education about using books and information resources among all but the most highly educated members of the working community, the need for education in critical awareness of the media, assistance towards growth along individual paths of interest to take the place of the element of contingency in the availability of books, and encouragement to read and understand some of the local writing which might illuminate their lives (without neglecting the strong cosmopolitan reading interest). Above all, perhaps, is the need to introduce more people into this environment who are in a position to talk about

and share reading matter. Some of the "alternative" publishing houses have found the itinerant agent to be an effective means of promoting their wares in black communities, and something like this could be useful in the work place. At the same time, we have seen the commonness of the news stand in the street or the kiosk on the station as sources of reading matter (Summary 15,, and publishers could give thought to developing informal outlets. There is also an enormous need for the publication of much cheaper writing of quality than is currently available (French 1983).

Working with the participants in this study made it clear that there are numbers of potential teachers among workers who would need guidance and support, but who would be likely to be considerably better than the literacy teachers who have been brought into the workplace from the formal education system, with very disappointing results. Another idea stimulated by the research 's that there could be an important place for a workbook which would be a guide to the reading world for workers; this could contain book and media education, provide information on obtaining reading matter from sources which at present are unknown or inaccessible to potential users, and in general broaden the horizons of the reading world.

More than this is perhaps needed. Thompson (1980) argues that liberal, modernist adult education for the working classes in Europe has failed, and that there is a need for an education which would be more stringent and demanding in its development of critical intelligence, and which would be articulated with political action. If she

is right, it might be desirable to give attention to curriculum development which would include the selection and management of appropriate reading matter and the development of critical reading skills well beyond basic literacy within a programme designed to further the interests of workers. However, curriculum development of this kind is only likely to succeed if it is undertaken in recognition of the beliefs and practices, the meaning and valuing of reading which would shape the cultural context of the programme being designed.

7.5 The need for further research

The writing of this study has been accompanied by a sense of uncovering numbers of areas which have either not been researched at all or need further research. The various kinds of studies of reading covered in Chapter 2 are hardly found in South Africa; even in education and library science they are, with a few exceptions, limited to unadventurous approaches (see French 1982, Appendix C). There is nothing like a social history of literacy in South Africa (nor in most other countries). Graff (1985) contains various examples of interesting ways in which this can be approached, and Clammer (1979) provides an example for a study of the arrival and impact of literacy in a non-literate society. Histories of the press are limited, and there would appear to be no studies of the practices and politics of publishing in South Africa.

There is also wide room for sociological approaches to the impact and use of the printed word in South Africa. Work in communications and

media studies is fairly extensive and takes on a variety of forms at different universities, and yet critical and revealing studies of the shaping influence, the contents and semiotics of the mass media and publishing are few, at least in published and accessible form. Critical approaches remain largely speculative or polemical. Even the extensive statistical resources of surveys like the All media and products survey have scarcely been exploited to throw light on trends in the use of the media, and information about reading habits and preferences that might be gleaned from the data of publishers, press or book distributors remain largely unutilized - or are guarded in fragmentary form by the individual agencies. The development of computerized library and booksellers' records promises to yield valuable information. The knowledge of librarians, publishers and booksellers remains to be explored and made accessible. Educational practices in school book selection and prescription, and the effects of these practices, also deserve close study.

This study as a whole shows that literacy cannot be reduced to, or understood in terms of, causes and effects; its impact is bound up with the culture and politics within which it is practised. "Old paradigm" research attempting to measure the effects of literacy has either failed or has appeared to show that literacy is an insignificant agent of change. Apart from contesting the kind of thinking which lies behind such research, the present study suggests in various ways that the impact of literacy, although it cannot be separated from other features of social change, is profound, and that we should seek insight into what literacy means to people rather than into artificially

isolated "outcomes". The approaches used in the present study were not designed to produce findings which might lead directly to implementation, and their value must be judged by the insight which they have created. The use of people's accounts of their own experience of reading offers a perspective on literacy which has not been explored before. It might profitably be refined and extended, particularly to other sectors of the population, so that some basis for comparison would be provided. Even more than this, the creation of endogenous studies of a similar nature, studies undertaken from within the various communities by researchers who are themselves members of those communities, needs encouragement. Action research going beyond the present perceptions and practices of the community - but taking these into account - was mentioned in Chapter 1; a project seeking to promote reading and enhance its meaning, coupling participation with close observation, negotiation and reporting, would extend our practical understanding of reading.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARIES OF INTERVIEWS, READING DIARIES, CHOICE OF READING AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The summaries are presented so that the views of all the participants on each question are brought together on one page. An attempt has been made to typify the participants' opinions, using their own expressions where possible.

Where feasible the information is quantified at the bottom of the page.

Care has been taken to keep the format uniform so that each individual record can be followed through from page to page.

SUMMARY 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Initials	Age	Home Language	Place of origin	Present abode	School- ing in:	Std. com- pleted	Present job
(Factory A: Women)							
PN	43	Zulu/ N.Sotho	Germis- ton	Katle- hong	P.burg Convent	7	Mach. oper. Shop steward
ER	48	N.Sotho/ Zulu	Stander- ton	Katle- hong	P.burg Convent	8	Production controller
CT	36	S.Sotho	Lesotho	Katle- hong	Les.and Z.Rand	7	Quality check
(Factory A: Men)							
SM	40	Zulu/ Swazi	Natal	Soweto	Natal	8	Driver/small delivery
AM	27	Xhosa/ S.Sotho	Bloem- fontein	Katle- hong	Bloem- fontein	10	Dispatch clrk. Shop steward.
WM	40	Xhosa	Transkei	Katle- hong	Trans- kei	6	Mach. oper./ Gen. ndy/man
JS	46	Zulu	Highveld rural	Tem- bisa	Trans- vaal	7	Machine operator
SS	26	Swazi	Swazi- land	Katle- hong(L)	Swazi- land	7	Storeman
(Factory B: Men)							
SD	64	Swazi	Swazi- land	Soweto	Swazi- land	5	Machine operator
WG	53	Zulu/ Swazi	Newcast. Natal	Katle- hong	Adams Miss.(N)	8	Sample maker
AK	34	Zulu	Soweto	Soweto	Soweto	10	Stats. clerk
TM	44	Venda	Sibasa	Katle- hong(L)	Sibasa Venda	7	Production clerk
PM	30	S.Sotho	W. Tvl. (rural)	Katle- hong	W.Tvl./ Katleh.	10	Clerk (general)
CM	30	Zulu	Soweto	Soweto (L)	Soweto (Cath.)	10	Adapts logos
FM	32	Swazi	Nelspr. E. Tvl.	Davey- ton(L)	Daveyton E. Tvl.	10	Clerk accounts
LN	28	Xhosa	Soweto	Soweto (P.)	Soweto	7	Stereo issuer
PS	38	Tsonga N.Sotho	E. Tvl. Homeland	Davey- ton(L)	Eastern Tvl.	9	Personnel officer
PT	51	Zulu	Natal	Soweto	Soweto	6	Manual worker
Analysis:							
M = 39		6 Zulu	5 Urban	9 Katle	10 Bantu	1 Prim.	9 Clerical
		3 Xhosa	13 Rural	hong	Ed.	12 Some	1 Driver
		3 Swazi		6 Sowe.	5 Pre	sec.	3 Semi-
		2 S.Soth.		2 Dton.	Ban-Ed.	5 Comp.	technical
		1 N.Soth.		1 Temb.	3 Indep.	sec.	4 Operators
		1 Venda			country		1 Manual
		1 Tsonga					

Note: L = Lodges with another family.

SUMMARY 2: MAJOR PERSONAL CONCERNS

PN Making a living. "Having our rights" - union work. Children and home life. Church. Expression of frustrated aspirations.

ER Quality of home life. Higher education of children. Sharing good things of life with family (outings). Personal dignity. Church.

CT Desire for a better job. Concern about dropout teenage son. Sense of personal insecurity and frustration.

SM Sociability and standing in the workplace. Maintenance of family.

AM Enjoys responsibility as shop-steward; would like to qualify as personnel officer. Quality of home life. Consumer interests.

JS Quality of home life, maintenance of traditions and education of children. Doing his job well.

SS Consumer of popular reading-matter. Self-image as "bright". Frustrating home circumstances. Apolitical. Hates conflict.

SD "Money! Even God can get in when you've got money." Promoting reasonableness/ being a gentleman. Education of children.

WG Personal dignity and leadership in the workplace. Resolution of conflict. Church. Resentment of forces disrupting community.

AK Promoting tolerance/understanding and quality of life. Self-development in terms of English and general knowledge.

TM Desire to live with family in own home and to own small business. Championing of worker rights regarding immediate issues.

PH Reconciling need to keep job and support parents and siblings with critical political concerns and desire to study further.

CM Advancement through study and technical skills to highest levels of industrial management. Enjoys a "classy" sociability.

PM Home life; would like security and prosperity. The most reticent of the participants, tense, but sees himself as communicator.

LN Full social life around fitness, interpersonal communication and consumption of all the media. Getting enough money to live well.

PS Upwardly mobile. Desire to succeed in business community.

PT Building house for himself in homelands. Divorced, lives alone. Overriding concern with large dependent family and with obtaining full pension benefits. Deep involvement with church.

Note:

For the sake of brevity the concern with helping/advising others and the interests in sport have been omitted. These were almost universal. The commonness of domestic concerns is clear.

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Note:

For the sake of brevity the concern with helping/advising others and the interests in sport have been omitted. These were almost universal. The commonness of domestic concerns is clear.

SUMMARY 3: EXPLANATIONS OF THE ACT OF READING

PN Offers to read and explain every sentence in the vernacular.

ER Offers to demonstrate, cannot explain.

CT Great difficulty explaining. Gives up.

SM " " "You can't understand this if you can't do it."

AM "It's there to people who have been to school." Demonstrates.

WM Speaks of "reading the world", but cannot explain.

JS Offers a precise explanation of alphabet and word construction.

SS "Something you can't understand if you didn't go to school."

SD Explains source of reading in city life. Attempts demonstration.

WG Resorts to broadest generalisations. "It happens in the mind."

AK Evades question by describing very broadly how he would teach it.

TM Struggle to grasp question. "You must go to school to understand."

PM Creates analogy with mountain echo, but does not explain.

CM Offers fairly high order generalisation, no explanation.

FM Evades the question.

LN After a struggle to define, attempts to demonstrate the alphabet.

PS Tries to explain the alphabet.

PT Offers to explain in the letters in the vernacular.

Analysis

3x Offer of demonstration

5x Talk of alphabet

3x Generalized definitions

4x "You have to go to school to understand it."

2x No answer

SUMMARY 4: EXPLANATIONS OF THE USES OF READING

- PN For being "a somebody". Knowing what is happening every day.
Letters home. Having light. Independence, better home.
- ER Adverts, letters, reading the stories of films, learning English.
Reading for qualifications for ability to govern.
- CT To be killed and not knowing what's going on! News.
Learning languages.
- SM Knowledge of what is happening. Not just a story, but to know
what happened long ago. To learn something properly.
- AM Very good. Increasing understanding, vocabulary, sophistication.
For promotion. Views of leaders, old times. So curious to know.
- WM You can't do anything without reading. Something people enjoy.
Workers curious about print. Helps to get a better job.
- JS Privacy and secrecy of communication. Getting to know distant
places. History, our forefathers.
- SS What happened in another country. Contact with family in Swld.
(Letters). Anticipating and understanding troubles.
- SD "Education is taller than a man". Recognising numberplates.
Blindness without. Useful for deaf people. Like a gentleman.
- WG Getting to know how other people live. Enlightenment. Experience.
Empathy. Co-operation. Orientation in modern world.
- AK Attributes own competence to reading. English. Makes you a man.
Develops vocab. Tolerance. Reading is knowledge, it upgrades.
- TM Better mind, make clever, think of future, help others, Pushing
to potential. Knowing what's going on in Sibasa. Letters. Health.
- PM To understand how other people live. Understand your society.
Consumer awareness. Books for history, animal life, other places.
- CM First-hand information ("I was there"). Paper tells you what
is happening around you.
- FM Knowing your situation in life, what the world is
like.
- LN Essence of good life is communication. To increase knowledge,
know what's going on in world
- PS To get places, just for entertainment, to know what's going
on.
- PT Constantly refers to Bible (mainly read at church. Thinks novels
are rubbish (for kids) - too old for them anyway.
- Analysis
- 13x To know what's going on around you
 - 11x To know what it's like elsewhere
 - 10x For enlightenment, knowledge as such
 - 5x To know what happened in the past
 - 5x For status/better job
 - 4x To improve English/language
 - 4x For prescience
 - 4x Independence
 - 1x Power

SUMMARY 5: MEDIA AWARENESS

- PN Newspapers more than news. Vague sense of bias in broadcasting. Strong belief in black access to/ participation in the media.
- ER Enjoys radio and newspapers equally. Doesn't like Ilanga (too dated!). Blacks participate fully in making the media.
- CT Newspaper best way of spreading news. Sees govt. control but censorship in nature of things. Blacks participate equally.
- SM More news on radio. Radio and newspaper equally truthful. Prefers "Citizen", no awareness of its political commitment.
- AM Newspapers more detail and carry advertisements of local interest. Strong black participation in media. Sees bias but not troubled.
- WM Radio and newspapers different but equally good. Newspapers started by whites but now for all to share in.
- JS Radio about the same, but you forget it more easily. Likes Ilanga but doesn't read it because wants to improve English.
- SS Newspapers: you can control when and what you read. They promote conflict. (Prefers fiction.) Radio true because official.
- SD Newspaper and radio for diversity. Both true. Media valuable because they cannot be racially exclusive. Reading's for everyone.
- WG Newspapers for argument, different opinion, change. Radio more given to conflict.
- AK Passionately rejects idea of press being in white interests. To bring blacks to level of whites. Much richer detail than Radio.
- TM Radio and paper the same. Different information. Local papers good for finding out what's happening back home.
- PM Papers broaden your knowledge much more, but radio has the advantage of being in your own language.
- CM More information in paper. Not more truth, more details. Pleasure from reading interesting stories.
- FM Papers and radio equal. Newspapers have more info. Books for practical knowledge, skills.
- LN Aware that press cannot tell everything. Loves T.V. and aware of media bias, but not troubled by this.
- PS Prefers newspapers because he can choose when and what to read: otherwise doesn't see much difference.
- PT Press and radio the same. Press more convenient. As much for blacks as for whites.

Analysis

- 18x Equal participation by blacks
- 13x Newspaper = radio, with some practical differences
- 3x Slight sense of idea of interests/bias
- 1x Strong sense of interests/bias

SUMMARY 6: READING, WORKERS AND THE STRUGGLE

- PN Reading is very important to combat apathy and ignorance.
- ER Illiterate difficult to organise and stupid because there are opportunities to learn. Reading for competence to govern.
- CT Very ambiguous on power and reading. Reading for modernization.
- SM No power without education but this depends on the workers themselves - however, reading is difficult to learn.
- AM Reading for promotion. Necessary for power. Press photos are valuable source of information for illiterate workers.
- WM Reading makes you more clever. Envy and exclusion created by illiteracy. Reading not difficult to achieve.
- JS Illiterate are not stupid. Sees little link between literacy and freedom - not personally interested in the struggle.
- SS Illiterates disadvantaged. With education you can get a piece of the land.
- SD A man can't be taller than education. Reading for knowing you're being paid properly. Illiterate grasp their situation.
- WG Reading to combat ignorance. Opposed to the struggle.
- AK Illiterate don't understand what's going on, are traditionalists. Keen to be involved in promoting reading, but not for struggle.
- TM It is much easier if workers read. Difficult to make illiterate understand. Resistance to modern medicine.
- PM Eager to promote literacy. Value of being able to read the paper: Not to break the law, not to be outsiders.
- CM Complex on the illiterate: Curiosity, inferiority, stubbornness, one track-minded rather than passive.
- FM Workers need to start at school. Struggle reduced to job competence. Illiterate clever, but inarticulate.
- LN Apathy. Illiterate workers difficult to mobilize
- PS Very generalised approval of workers' literacy, but does not identify with the struggle.
- PT It would be easier to work with people if they could read.
- Analysis
- 6x Illiterate apathetic/stubborn/envious
 - 3x Illiterate difficult explain to
 - 4x Illiterate bright but disadvantaged
 - 2x No power without education (not qualified to hold power)

SUMMARY 7: READING WORK, PROSPERITY

- PN Even streetsweepers are going to need to read.
- ER Repeats value for competence to govern, ability to do work properly.
- CT Sees certification as central to progress at work.

- SM You must read to get a better job.
- AM Strongly related to status for promotion.
- WM Reading helps to get a better job
- JS Maybe. Promotion could depend on reading.
- SS Learnt his present job through arithmetic and reading ability.

- SD Reading for applying for and finding work. Newspaper good for knowing where you can get work.
- WG Extremely generalized talk about: reading does not seem to be an issue for the workplace.
- AK Stresses that the environment is hostile to reading, yet sees general benefits for the workplace.
- TM Reading may help to open a business and keep one informed of opportunities. Necessary for working with machines.
- PM Reading helps one to get a better job.
- CM Useful to read advertisements of vacancies. No use learning to read if you are not going to use it in your job.
- FM Reading extends, makes you more clever. Life is dangerous without literacy.
- LN It helps to be able to sign your name and to read letters.
- PS Sees a general need for literacy. Illiterate whites get places at work, blacks don't. Illiteracy thus not the main problem.
- PT You can get along without reading at work. Reading mainly for the Bible.

- Analysis
 - 5x Generally needed
 - 5x Promotion/Better job
 - 1x Certification
 - 1x Running a business/own finances
 - 3x Finding a job
 - 3x Working better

SUMMARY 8: READING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- PN Literacy hasn't changed things - it was the same even in old days. Prefers reading in English; out of touch with S. Sotho print.
- ER Reading in Zulu is for learning English, for Bible and to know history and customs, but rejects traditionalism.
- CT Sees traditionalism as stupid and limiting. All very well to have vernacular literacy, but wants to read other languages.
- SM One reads the vernacular in order to be able to use a dictionary and so learn English. Literacy has no effect on customs.
- AM Traditionalism is opposed to reading, but traditions are failing. Not much value in vernacular reading, except as step to English.
- WM Reading is not a bad influence on customs. Reading in Xhosa is not very useful except for folk history.
- JS Literacy is more truthful than oral communication. Values old customs but sees no conflict with reading. Reading for English.
- SS Traditions cause conflict, reading leads to understanding. Need to save good customs. Vernacular reading for English.
- SD Need to save good and reject bad customs. No conflict with reading. All languages good. Zulu literacy better than Swazi.
- WG Tradition doesn't work nowadays; besides, we know our traditions from books. Vernacular literacy for Bible and other languages.
- AR Reading does not affect traditions. Rejects divisiveness of traditions, wants universal values. Finds Zulu reading difficult.
- TM If you've got manners you've got manners! We learn of traditions from books and radio. Reading Venda good for news from home.
- PM Values tradition, but traditional tales now passed on by books, not story-tellers. Not much in S. Sotho - useful for Eng./Afrik.
- CM Traditions passed on through books. Vernacular useful for letters but English or Afrikaans essential to get benefits of literacy.
- FM In Zulu you can read about life as a whole. Reading does not conflict with customs.
- LN Traditions are irrelevant. Found vernacular reading at school boring.
- PS Not particularly interested in traditions. Vernacular reading is for learning English.
- PT The main thing is to read the Bible, either in the vernacular or in English.

Analysis

- 7x Reject tradition/conflict with literacy
- 5x Some trad OK/no conflict
- 1x Like trad/no conflict
- 9x Mother tongue for English
- 4x Low regard for mother tongue
- 5x Neutral about mother tongue
- 2x Value literacy in mother tongue
- 5x Mother tongue for access to tradition/history

SUMMARY 9: READING BIOGRAPHIES

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- PN Mother was educated, read school books/ homilies to children. Grandmother told stories of Moshesh and vanished family wealth.
- ER Very proud of published family history (Radebe) read aloud by her father together with other history books and newspapers.
- CT Had a disrupted childhood, parents both illiterate, vaguely remembers being told stories by a grandmother.
- SM Remembers being told stories, but much more vividly remembers father reading the newspaper to him.
- AM Grandmother told stories about old times vividly. Father was an extensive newspaper reader/ quizzed his children.
- WM Parents illiterate, remembers being told stories by a grandmother without remembering any detail.
- JS Grandmother told stories. Mother illiterate, father self-taught, enjoyed newspapers, read to him and got him to explain.
- SS Remembers grandmother's stories vividly. Older cousin read to him from schoolbooks.
- SD No reading - illiterate home background. Vaguely remembers being told stories.
- WG Strong literate background in family. Grandfather an itinerant evangelist, aunt a teacher, family records in extended diaries.
- AK Emphatic that his home offered no background for reading.
- TM Mother illiterate, father read Bible at bedtime; too remote to get newspapers. Father read Bible at bedtime. G.mother told stories.
- PM Mother read, grandmother told stories. (Dominance of moral tales, Bible.) Fostered deep interest in reading.
- CM Father read newspapers, mother lovestories. Grandmother told stories but he was not read to.
- FM Childhood remembered as intensely deprived Uncle a Dominee, but only reading in environment school reading by older children.
- LN Deeply valued influence of grandmother (a nurse) who read to him and spoke to him in English.
- PS There were some newspapers and books in the house, but most cherished experience doing bookkeeping for uncle's shop.
- PT An upbringing devoid of literacy and too far away for stories to be remembered, if there were any.

Analysis:

- 11x At least one parent literate
- 13x Told stories by grandmother
- 10x Positive encouragement regarding literacy
- 7x Largely illiterate background
- 10x Remember being read to (newspapers, Bible, schoolbooks)

SUMMARY 10: READING BIOGRAPHIES

SCHOOL

- PN Very positive about reading at school, mentions Julius Caesar, but recalls nothing specific. Associates reading with homilies.
- ER Speaks highly of teachers (nuns) and of Shakespeare, but the one text vividly recalled is the catechism.
- CT Enjoyed school books, recalls with pleasure one about cattle thieving and love, but is otherwise vague.
- SM Liked school and his teachers, but recalls no specific books.
- AV Loved school and teachers. Remembers school readers with delight and detail, especially history and Shakespeare.
- WM Liked school and especially practical work, geography. Cannot remember any books worth speaking of.
- JS Liked school, recalls with pleasure the Oxford Reader and Cry the Beloved Country, text-books. Remembers no Zulu texts.
- SS Great delight remembering school books especially stories (in detail), and the influence of some teachers.
- SD Too long ago. Doesn't remember any reading but liked school.
- WG Enjoyed one of the best mission schools; only reading specifically recalled is Shakespeare (M of V) and Let's be Normal.
- AK The pleasure of reading a revelation in Std 8 through prescription of Cry the Beloved Country and Romeo and Juliet.
- TM Trade school. Good teacher for maths, handwriting. Can't remember any books from school - not a keen reader.
- PM Primary school boring. Delight in the discovery of reading. Remembers especially Winslow Boy and Mayor of Casterbridge.
- CM James H. Chase was a remedy for the monotony of school books. Liked Shakespeare and some Zulu readers.
- FM Strict teacher hard on us. Liked history most and remembers Shakespeare (M of V) with pleasure.
- LN Enjoyed school and reading but nothing stands out as memorable.
- PS Quite liked reading, but doesn't remember anything in particular.
- PT School too far away to remember anything about.

Analysis

- 11x liked teachers/school
- 4x Critical of teaching
- 9x Enjoyed reading, but no specific recall
- 6x Specific enjoyment of one text recalled
- 3x Enjoyment of many texts specifically recalled
- 7x Shakespeare mentioned positively

SUMMARY 11: READING BIOGRAPHIES

ADULT

- PN Reads little, less than her daughters who read to her. Claims to like novels. Bible at bedtime. Husband resented her reading.
- ER Taught husband to read. In spite of strong reading background she recalls no books read and remembered as an adult.
- CT Loves reading: News and politics, but especially love stories and photocomics.

- SM Talks of teaching his children from magazines. Enjoys reading the newspaper.
- AM Compulsive consumer of print - anything that comes his way. Special pleasure in teaching his pre-school child to read.
- WM Not a great reader, enjoys magazines, reads Sowetan nearly every day, would like to read, but struggles with, technical literature.
- JS Particularly enjoys Readers Digest condensed stories (to improve his English. Likes to read from daily paper to his children.
- SS A passionate reader of stories - westerns, love stories - sees these as source of strength for everyday life. Dislikes newspaper.

- SD Despises fiction or thinks it is for children. Reads the newspaper but thinks the Bible is best for life.
- WG Claims to have read Shakespeare as an adult, but now reads no more than the occasional soccer mag and council minutes. Blames TV.
- AK Something missing if he has not read at least one newspaper in a day. Favourite books are his dictionaries, for improving English.
- TM A slow reader, cannot cope easily with The Star, saves the shorter Sowetan for the weekend, reads homelands newsheets and letters.
- PM Reads widely. Apart from newspapers and magazines, enjoys serious literature and adventure, but especially romance. Studying.
- CM Most of reading for professional advancement, but likes light thrillers and romance; especially mentions Mills and Boon.
- FM Reading's not my thing, yet a library member. Reads mainly about sport.
- LN Enjoys thrillers, and treasures a collection of Mad Magazines; reading must compete with enjoyment of videos and fitness.
- PS Enjoys fast stories, especially Hadley-Chase. Reads finance and management magazines.
- PT Bible

SUMMARY 12: CHOICE OF READING

EPHEMERA

- PN Sowetan, Drum (Like a history book), See (When you read love stories it makes you feel young).
- ER WIP (On Union Matters), Learn and Teach (Looks interesting), Bona (Zulu version for brother's young daughter).
- CT See (Mostly happened to me, chance and disappointment) Pace, (For article about pop musician and social success generally).
- SM (Away at time of display.)
-
- AM Sowetan, Frontline (Article on UDF), WIP (Union article) Drum, Weekly Mail (Have't seen it/looks interesting) Frontline ...
- WM Farmer's Weekly (Lots of advice for care of cattle and sheep), Drum (Lots about building), Learn and Teach (Personal interest).
- JS (Away at time of display.)
-
- SS Frontline (Why peace eludes us), Weekly Mail, Learn and Teach (Letter to a friend in jail), Sowetan, Boys' War Comic.
- 3D Bona (In English), True Love, Newsweek (I want to know how the world goes - rain, drought, you know.)
- WG Pace, Soccer (Wants to see how his old team is doing).
-
- AK Readers Digest, Newsweek (I often read it), Financial Mail (To know what's happening in business), Soccer, Frontline.
- TM See (I prefer love to fighting), Pace, Bona, Your Family (So I can show these things at home).
- PM Newsweek, Frontline, Readers Digest, Learn and Teach.
-
- CM Financial Mail (To be up in business).
Readers Digest.
- FM Soccer, Car, Pace, Classic (Thinks it's about music), Thandl.
- LN The Classic/ Newsweek (likes them equally), Mad Magazine (to add to his collection), Frontline, Pace, True Love.
- PS True Love and Soccer (Equal to and better than Pace), Financial Mail (comprehensive on business, also wants article on Mandela).
- PT Bona (Perhaps, but basically thinks magazines trivial, like novels).

Note: Too diverse for analysis

Note: See Appendix B for list of ephemera presented for selection and discussion.

SUMMARY 13: CHOICE OF READING

BOOKS

- PN Julius Caesar. Call me not a man. Baby and child care.
The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom.
- ER Baby and Child Care, Speak English Fluently, Call me not a man.

- CT Julius Caesar, Casey and Co.out it, would need help) Casey and
Co. (sad story), Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, Speak English.
- SM Away

- AM Science and invention, Zulu Kingdom, Call me not a man,
Twelfth Night, Julius Caesar, Speak English Fluently.
- WM Call me not a man, Patchwork, Julius Caesar.

- JS Away

- SS Rogue Gun, Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, China, Science
and Invention (Negative view of specifically African literature.)
- SD The right to learn, AA Road Atlas, My life struggle.

- WG Science and invention, Julius Caesar, Speak English Fluently,
New English Bible.
- AK Hard Times/ Baby and child care, Book of SA Verse, The right
to learn, Call me not a man, Mtshali, AA Road Atlas.
- TM Julius Caesar, Right to Learn, Decision at gunsmoke river,

- PM Call me woman, Forced landing, Casey & Co., Bagley,
New English Bible, God's smuggler, Tender is the night et al.
- CM Bagley, Hadley Chase, Mills and Boon, Stoney the one and
only.
- FM Speak English Fluently/ Zulu Kingdom, My life struggle
Casey & Co, Stoney the one and only.
- LN Right to learn/ Call me woman, Hadley Chase, Casey & Co. Speak
English, My life struggle, Trade Unions, Call me woman, Bagley.
- PS Hadley Chase, Speak English Fluently, Julius Caesar.

- PT New English Bible, The right to learn (seen as a schoolbook).

Note: See Appendix B for list of books presented for selection and
discussion.

SUMMARY 14: READING DIARIES

	Newspapers: Name and frequency	Magazines	Books	Other activities or concerns
PN	Sowetan x2 S Times x1	-	Bible x3 Nan Maynard	Legal doc. from union.
ER	Sowetan x1 (Illness prevents wkend rding.	Jazz Mag?	First Aid manual.	Prod. planning, accts, g.son's hwk.
CT	A newsp. often at lunch.	Mags. at bedtime...		Letter from son.
SM	Cit'zen in general	Magazine	Bible	Delivery instructs. Child's hwk.
AM	Sowetan x3, S. Times x1	Union&socc. mags	Pers. manag. guidebook.	Various (all commercial)
WM	Sowetan x1		Soga's Xhosa history.	Burned newspaper under frozen tap
JS	Sowetan at lunch x6 Mentions City Press			
SS	Dislikes newspapers.	Union mag.	Westerns x3, Bible.	Taxi note, film, Cardex, signs
SD	Sowetan x2		Bible	ID Card, letter, TV, radio general.
WG	(Did not keep diary)	-	-	-
AK	Citizen x3, Star x2, Sowetan x6	True Love		Council agenda, Do it yourself.
TM	Star too diff. Buys Sowetan for wkend.	-	-	Prod. planning
PM	Citizen x1, Sowetan x2, S. Times x1.	-	Maclean, Mar. French.	Race card: sister's hwk.
CM	Sowetan x2, Star x3, S. Times x1	Readers Digest.	Adventure novel.	Instructs. for layouts. TV x6.
FM	Sowetan x2, Star x2		Soccer	TV x2, placard, vacancies, radio
LN	Citizen x1, Sowetan x2.	Scope, Pace.	Black review on repression	New layouts,TV, Notes on Safety.
PS	Sowetan x1, Star x2 S. Times x1.		Hadley Chase	Radio x2
PT	Sowetan x2.		Bible	TV x1 Football
	Analysis: Mention in diaries 32x Sowetan 9x 3ta 7x S. Times 4x Citizen 2x City Press	Any Mag. 10	7x Bible 10x Fiction 4x N/F	17xDocuments 17xWatching TV 4xListening radio 3xChildren's hwk. 8xLetters 2xCinema 6xAds/Signs 1xPlacard
	Several "too tired to read"			

SUBBARY 15: READING PRACTICES*

PN	Well Compared with:		Understand easily in:		Favoured		Where do you		Reasons for reading		Where obtained		Use		Satis.
	Enough	Friends/Educated	Eng	Home language	1st	2nd	read most	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	Library	
PM	Yes	Mora	Same	Yes	Yes	Fic- tion	Bed	General Info.	Pleasure	Cafe, CNA	Thru' children	Yes			
ER	V	M	S	V	V	News	Mags.	General Info.	Work	Street	Never	V			
CT	N	M	S	Some diff.	News	Mags.	Chair	General pleasure	General Info.	Cafe, Friends	Never	V			
SM	V	M	S	V	News	HF	Chair	General Info.	Pleasure	Street, Cafe	Never	V			
AM	V	M	S	V	News	Study	Chair	Work	Pleasure	Street, Friends/Books	Often	V			
WM	N	M	Less	Some diff.	N/F	Fic- tion	Chair	Work/ study	General Info.	Friends, CNA	10x2	N			
JS	V	M	S	V	News	Fic- tion	Chair	General Info.	Pleasure	Street, CNA	Never	N			
SS	V	M	?	V	Fic- tion	-	Chair	General Info.	Pleasure	Cafe, CNA	Never	V			
SD	N	?	L	Abt. 1/2	No	Fav.	Train	Understand others	Some pleasure	Cafe, Street	Never	It's hard			
WG	V	L	L	V	N/F	Mags.	At work	Pleasure	Work	Street, CNA	Never	V			
AK	N	M/L	L	V	News	Mags.	Train	General Info.	Pleasure	Friends	Seldom	N			
TM	N	M/L	L	Some diff.	News	-	Chair	General Info.	-	Street	Never	V			
PM	V	M	M/L	V	N/F	Fic- tion	Chair	General Info.	Study	Street	Seldom	N			
CM	V	M	S	V	Study	Fic- tion	Chair/Train	General Info.	General Info.	CNA	Never/N	used to			
PM	V	S	L	V	News	Mags.	Chair	General Info.	-	CNA	Often	V			
LN	V	S	L	V	Fic- tion	News	Chair	General Info.	General Info.	Friends	Never/N	used to			
PS	V	M	S	V	Mags.	Fic- tion	Chair	Work	General Info.	CNA	Never	V			
PT	V/M	L	L	Diff. Diff.	Bible	Bible	Chair	Work	General Info.	Friends	Never	V			
Analysis															
12xV	11xM	8xS	13xV	13xV	3xV	5xV	14xSt.	10xGen.	5xGen.	14xstreet	13xNov.	11xst			
5xM	2xLess	8xLess	5x	5xDifficulty	8xNov.	8xNov.	2xtrain	4xWork	2xWork	7xFriends	2xOften				

*Note: For clarification see example of questionnaire, Appendix E.

SUMMARY 16: LEISURE PREFERENCES*

	Top choices for leisure			Favourite pursuits (x/x : Pleasure/Frequency)
	1st	2nd	3rd	
PN	Read	Handwork (Sewing)	Radio	Newspaper, Church, Fiction x 10/10; Visits 10/5; Handwork 8/10; Study 8/0
ER	Read	Radio	TV	Newspaper, Church, Housework x 10/10; Solitude 8/4; Visits 7/4; (Fiction 0/0)
CT	TV	Read	Handwork	Handwork 10/10; Solitude 10/7; TV 10/5; Church 10/4; Study 10/0; Newspaper 8/4
SM	TV	Radio	Read	Newspapers, Visits x 10/10; Watching sport 10/8
AM	Read	TV	Fitness	Newspapers, Watch/playing sport, Visits TV x 10/10; Church 10/8.
WM	H.wk.	Read	TV	Handwork 10/10; Watching sport 10/8; Study 10/3; TV 8/8.
JS	Read	TV	Radio	Newspapers, Handwork x 10/10; Visits 8/4; Church 8/4
SS	Read	TV	Radio	Fiction, Solitude x 10/9; N/F 10/7; Church 9/8; Study 8/0
SD	Fit- ness	Read	Radio	TV 10/10; Newspapers, Handwork x 10/8; Church 10/4; Visits 8/4
WG	No- thing	TV/ Radio	Read Books	Church 10/10; Watching sport 10/8; Playing sport 10/0; TV 8/10
AK	Fit- ness	Read Books	TV	Watch/playing sport, newspapers x 10/10; Church 8/8
TM	Read News	-	-	Handwork 10/10; Solitude, Newspapers x 10/8; TV 10/2
PM	Read	TV	Radio	Newspapers, Solitude 10/10; Handwork, Fiction 10/8; Study 10/0
CM	Read	Fitness	TV	TV, Study x 10/10; Visits 10/6; Newspapers 8/10; Church 4/8
FM	Read News	TV	Radio	10/10 for everything except church, fiction and study (10/0)
LN	Fit- ness	Read	TV	10/10 for Watch/playing sport, TV, Newspapers, Handwork and Solitude
PS	Read	TV	Radio	Magazines, Visits, TV x 10/10; Watching sport 10/8; Newspapers 8/10
PT	TV	Read News	-	Church, TV, Watching sport x 10/10; Handwork 10/on leave; Newspapers 8/8

Analysis

10x 6x Read 2x Books
 Read
 3x TV 7x TV 5x TV
 3xFit. 1xFitn. 1xFitn.
 1xHk. 1x H.wrk. 1x H.wrk.
 1xNo. 1x None 2x None
 --- 2x Radio 7x Radio

*Note: For clarification see Questionnaire (Appendix E)

APPENDIX B

BOOKS AND EPHEMERA DISPLAYED FOR SELECTION AND DISCUSSION

BOOKS

Non-fiction relevant to life in South Africa

1. CHRISTIE, Pam. 1985. The right to learn: the struggle for education in South Africa. Johannesburg: Sached/Ravan.
2. GUY, Jeff. 1982. The destruction of the Zulu kingdom: the civil war in Zululand, 1879-1884. Johannesburg: Ravan.
3. KUZWAYO, Ellen. 1985. Call me woman. Johannesburg: Ravan.
4. McCARTHY, W.E.J. (ed.) 1985. Trade unions: selected readings. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (Second edition.)
5. PUDI, Ranko. 1984. The illustrated life of Mahanda. Johannesburg: Skotaville.
6. TOM, Petrus. 1985. My life struggle. Ravan worker series. Johannesburg: Ravan.
7. VAN ONSELEN, Charles. 1984. The small matter of a horse: the life of 'Nongoloza' Mathebula 1867-1948. Johannesburg: Ravan.

Fiction relevant to life in South Africa

8. COPE, Jack and Uys Krige (eds). 1968. The Penguin book of South African verse. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
9. MATSHOBA, Mtutuzeli. 1979. Call me not a man. Johannesburg: Ravan.
10. MOTSISI, Casey 'Kid'. 1978. Casey & Co. Johannesburg: Ravan.
11. MUTLOATSE, Mothobi (ed.) 1980. Forced landing: Africa South: Contemporary writings. Johannesburg: Ravan.
12. MTSHALI, Oswald. 1971. Sounds of a Cowhide Drum: Poems. Johannesburg: Renoster Books.
13. p'BITEK, Okot. 1966 (1974). Song of Lawino: a lament. Nairobi: African Publishing House.
14. POHL, Victor. 1941. Bushveld Adventures. London: Faber.

English classics

15. DICKENS, Charles. 1854 (1966). Hard Times. (On cover: The novel that exposed the savagery and squalor of the Industrial Revolution.) London: Dent.
16. HAYWARD, John (ed.) 1956 (1968). The Penguin Book of English verse. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
17. SCOTT FITZGERALD, F. 1939 (1974). Tender is the Night. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
18. SHAKESPEARE, W. 1623 (1968). Julius Caesar. (ed. J. Dover Wilson.) Cambridge: University Press.
19. SHAKESPEARE, W. (1967). Twelfth Night. London: Longmans (New Swan Shakespeare).

Popular fiction

20. BAGLEY, Desmond. 1977. The Enemy. London: Collins.
21. CLAIR, Daphne. 1982. Pacific pretence. London: Mills & Boon.
22. DAHL, Roald. 1981. George's Marvellous Medicine. Harmondsworth: Puffin. (A book for children.)
23. HADLEY CHASE, James. 1956 (1968). You find him - I'll fix him. London: Panther.
24. MCKINLEY, Brett. (n.d.) Decision at Gunsmoke River and Rogue gun. ? (Big Horn Western).
25. MILLS & BOON (various)

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APPENDIX C

TWO READING BIOGRAPHIES

SS: READING AND REVERIE

Hope, disappointment, escape

SS was born in 1960 in the country near Manzini, Swaziland. His parents separated and remarried, his father coming to live on the reef, and he was taken into the home of an uncle who was a small tobacco farmer, where he was treated as a son.

From his early years he remembers with delight the stories of a grandmother about her early years and about the origins of the Swazi nation. (A tone of warm pleasure enters all of SS's accounts of story tellers.) He and his small cousins would sit around her. He remembers her story of the arrival of the first aeroplane:

She didn't know how to read, but she was used to tell us stories, see. That's why mostly I was interested in history. Because sometimes she used to tell us, like, in her childhood what happened, all things like that. And then we were interested. Like when they first saw an aeroplane, and what they did when they saw those things. (Laughing.) I loved those stories too. I can remember - my grandmother told us they saw an aeroplane, they were very scared. Most of the people some of them they even died, they were running - they ran until they were tired, then when they rested they found they had no more power to get on. They were sitting - they were washing something - next to a dam - and her friend went into the water thinking she'll hide under the water, and then she nearly drowned.

And the story of the Dhlaminis:

Our kings in Swaziland is always one family, and they are Dhlamini... At first all people were one nation, as she told me, and then, because of the fights and everything like that, and their chiefs, that's where they started using their own surnames, like the Dhlaminis... The word "dhla", it's "eat" and then "mini" it's daylight. And then when I asked her why they were Dhlaminis and why were they like big kings, my grandmother told us it's because, long time ago when the fights were very bad, they had flee from... I can say there were one group of Zulu soldiers, and when they were out to fight, they said they didn't like to fight, and they came together and made a story and said, what if we can steal our families and run away from Shaka, 'cause if you didn't fight, Shaka didn't like you - he killed you, 'cause you see, he said you're a coward, you're bringing trouble in his tribe, so he

Author French E

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