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An Investigation into the Teaching of English Literature at Senior Secondary School Level, with a Particular Emphasis on the Reason for Teaching Literature, the Selection of Texts, and Methodology Used.

By David Edwin Robinson

Disclaimer:

I, David Edwin Robinson (Student Number 77 18061) hereby submit this thesis to the School of Education in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand as a submission for examination purposes for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

I assert that the thesis is my own academic work following a process in which I was supervised by Dr Mike Kissack. In producing this thesis I have not engaged in any form of plagiarism, nor have I engaged in any unethical practice that would cast doubt on the acceptability of the academic product.

I assert that this thesis has not been submitted, in part or in total, for examination purposes to any other university.

_____ _____

Signature Date

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Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the teaching of English literature at South African High Schools, particularly in the senior Grades (Grades 10-12) in these institutions.

The questions with which I am concerned are: Why teach English literature? What English literary works should be taught? How should English literature be taught?

There are several elements to these questions, and they are linked to many social and historical considerations. One element is whether, and in what way, English Studies links to broader education matters. Both Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 1997) and Bruce Kimball (Kimball, 1982) locate the study of literature within a conception of liberal education deriving from the ancient world. In addition, both critics look to the study of literature as a subject that provides points of intellectual engagement about the role of the individual within society. There is the sense that the notion of the good citizen is at the centre of all claims about the influence of literature on the human character. (Nussbaum 1997, 9) In addition, Nussbaum makes the point that today's citizen of the USA is part of a multicultural society – and this is equally applicable to South Africa.

The subject English Studies is a relatively new one; the Oxford School is slightly more than 100 years of age, whereas the Cambridge School is somewhat less than this in age. This relative newness is in some ways surprising; the central location of English Studies in British, American and Commonwealth places of learning tends to suggest that the subject is one of great significance, which would imply historical significance and therefore an extensive period during which the discipline has been taught. As will be seen, despite its relative newness, the practitioners of English Studies, particularly at the Cambridge School, approached the subject with commitment and zeal, thus

ensuring that the discipline gained respectability, and ultimately became a central feature of the British education system, and thereafter achieved great significance in academic institutions in which colonial authority still maintained some influence. It is this influence that led to the establishment of English Studies in South African schools and universities.

In considering the establishment and development of English Studies I will consider both British and South African education environments, with brief references to critics in the USA. I will explore the British situation first, because it became established prior to the introduction of English Studies in South Africa, and, as will be seen, directly influenced the establishment and development of the discipline in South Africa. It will become clear, however, that the South African circumstances differed from those in Britain, and therefore the British norms introduced into South Africa would become modified to accommodate these local variations, although the dominant features of the discipline would be easily identifiable as being of British extraction.

As will be seen, the issue of literature is linked to the broader social issue of culture. It is clear that this matter is a point of debate, because matters of culture are conceptualized differently by different schools of intellectual enquiry. As a consequence culture foregrounds issues of debate and possible ambiguity. This ambiguous, contentious matter provides a significant source of intellectual engagement, and presents the potential for the exploration of culture, particularly notions of human expression. Points of engagement in South African education include issues identified in the national Curriculum Statement (NCS), which are: transformation, social justice, inclusivity, and Human Rights (Department of Education, 2003, 4)**.** In the course of this thesis I will make reference to the role of English Studies in addressing these issues; I will make specific reference to these issues in Chapter 6. In leading up to that chapter I will present an historical overview of the development of English Studies as a discipline. I will identify certain socio-historical episodes which had an effect on the British

experience, and then show how this played a role in the development of English Studies in South Africa.

Although there is a significant link between Britain and South Africa in terms of the colonial past, as well as current international relations (South Africa is part of the Commonwealth, and Britain remains a significant economic partner), in many ways the role of English Studies is different in each country. South Africa is an overtly multi-lingual country, in which English plays a less dominant role than in Britain. However, English retains the gloss of being acknowledged as the language of science, business, and a language of international significance, which no other South African language can claim. The role of English in South Africa is made more complex by the association it has with the colonial experience of the country, and therefore it is associated to some extent with oppression. However, the English cultural heritage is also one of liberation; many of the notions of South African democracy are derived to some extent from British socio-political concepts, and authors critical of the apartheid system included Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, and J. M. Coetzee – all of whom wrote in English. These and other examples locate English literature in somewhat difficult terrain, in that the British legacy is both positive and negative. Furthermore, as one of two languages deemed "official languages" during the apartheid era, English is located within a process of the negotiation of power-relations in a way that does not manifest in Britain. The associated literature deriving from the English language is therefore framed by similar notions of negotiated power-relations and issues of identity. A parallel in Britain is, perhaps, Raymond Williams, who regarded himself as Welsh rather than English, and was aware of the problem for Welsh people to maintain cultural significance in a society that tended not to acknowledge the Welsh heritage.

The issue of English Studies, therefore, is not a domain of some neutral issues in which truth is pursued. The contribution of English Studies within an academic environment involves a range of matters that engage with debates about moral issues in society, as

well as providing insights into matters of power. From this perspective it is clear that English Studies is about how literature articulates the world, and is, broadly, concerned with how we should live.

The first question that I have chosen to address (Why Study English Literature?) has been covered briefly thus far, and will be explored in greater detail with regard to both British and South African societies. It will be seen that answers provided depend largely on the theoretical position from which a critic works. For example, the formalist position adopted by many critics from the Cambridge School differs vastly from those who have a Marxist heritage, or are adherents of the Continental Philosophers. In the chapters that follow I will provide insights into these different positions, thereby establishing that the discipline of English Studies is located within more than one theoretical position, and, as a consequence presents us with a scenario of intellectual conflict.

Depending on which theoretical position retains some form of dominance, the selection of literary works and the methodologies associated with English Studies will vary. The selection of texts is significant, because it is partly through this process that an ideology is maintained or challenged. The texts selected for study tend to endorse political positions, or social/cultural perspectives. In addition, the way in which a text is taught can lead to particular insights. It is possible that a text that is selected with the intention of endorsing a political position can be taught in such a way as to undermine that position, if the questions that are asked in the critical reading of the book are of such a nature as to make certain political elements overt, and then to judge these elements. However, it is likely that it is more difficult to read a book in this critical, oppositional manner, when the other social influences might be endorsing the book's tenets. It must be acknowledged that selection of texts for purposes of study is also significant in terms of which texts are, so to speak, de-selected. These texts generally reflect opinions that those in positions of power choose to marginalize.

Certain critical positions subscribe to certain types of reading process; for example, the Cambridge School tends to consider the text through a process of close reading, and does not consider external issues about the text. The Marxist position would inevitably be located within a frame of reference that foregrounds the significance of class conflict and the material conditions of existence. A Lacanian view would be immersed in psychoanalytical thinking. These and other different approaches tend to provide different insights into a text, and this indicates that different methodologies cannot be regarded as equivalent. In addition, these approaches recognise fundamentally different world views, and for each different theoretical position there is a particular way of approaching literature, and recognizing how literature is created and interpreted.

For the most part, then literature is seen as part of something greater than itself, in that it articulates with society in such a way as to provide insights into that society, and, for some theorists, provide the possibility of changing individuals or society, in that by providing insights into society and the self, and the forces that influence society, there is the sense that people are granted a participatory role – their ideas and interpretations can lead to a change in understanding, and a consequent change in behaviour. This concept is at the heart of the National Curriculum Statement (the NCS), and the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement that replaces the NCS (CAPS); the notion of transformation is a significant feature of the curricula.

In the chapters that follow I will explore the manner in which English Studies became a significant subject for tertiary institutions in Britain, and how certain individuals shaped the discipline. In addition, it will become apparent that the British influence in South Africa played a role in establishing the discipline here, but in addition, certain figures in South African academia played a role in altering the content and the methodology of teaching in approaching English literature. The study of English in South Africa, therefore, has its roots in British scholarship, but has become more complex, in a sense, because of the need to accommodate both local and international concerns.

It will become clear that the social context in which a literary text is located plays a role in how that text is viewed/interpreted. The nature of this social context is part of the critical process, in that the way in which a text is approached will depend on the critical/theoretical framework adopted. The various approaches will be critically explored in the chapters that follow.

There are several valuable contributions to academic scholarship in the chapters that follow. These include the following: The thesis engages in an historical overview of the debates involved in the development of English Studies, both in South Africa and internationally. Importantly, the teaching of English is shown to be located within a social situation in which what is taught in schools and universities is not neutral or removed from a social context. Whilst there have been some studies of this nature, none of the preceding studies addressed the debates in the same way, leading up to commentary on and recommendations about the most recent curriculum documents in South African high school education. This thesis therefore extrapolates that which has gone before.

In addition, the thesis addresses three central questions about the teaching of English literature and considers points of articulation between the questions, thereby providing insight into the subject of English Studies in a complex and unique way. The various critical schools which are explored are shown to emphasise particular aspects of literature, for various reasons that will be stated. The values associated with literature and the methodology employed to study literary works provide a genealogical exploration of the discipline, thereby providing insights into education processes relating to the subject.

I will present a detailed background regarding the various critical positions that exist with regard to English Studies. This is a comprehensive account which goes beyond mere description and engages in critical analysis of the various positions. In addition, important questions about South African education are considered, particularly the multilingual nature of South African society and the consequences this has for English Studies as a discipline.

In summary, the Thesis provides an historical perspective about the nature of English Studies, and locates the subject within the South African social milieu, providing insights into why the subject has value and how it should be taught.

Chapter One will be concerned with the initial process in the establishment of English as an academic discipline in Britain. The nature of the subject prior to being introduced into the Ancient Universities (Oxford and Cambridge) will be considered. Thereafter the decision to introduce this subject at Oxford will be explored, and the nature of the initial academic profile at Oxford will be presented. The opinions and contributions of significant initial lecturers and critics in the field (Raleigh and Gordon) will be considered. In addition, the influence of the Colonial Service, the discipline of philology, the role of the Classics, and the Newbolt Committee, will be discussed.

Chapter Two considers the development of the Cambridge School, which was initiated somewhat later than the Oxford School, and was to have a far greater influence than that of the older school. The academics of the Cambridge School would develop a rigorous approach to the interpretation of literary works, and they would identify a limited canon of works worthy of consideration for study, based on a notion of English culture as a reservoir of values. To a large degree this view of English culture would be a conservative one, and modern developments, particularly in the world of technology, would be regarded with mistrust. The theorists whose work is presented in this chapter

include Quiller-Couch, I.A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, and F. R Leavis. The chapter is divided into two sections, with the entire second section being devoted to Leavis's contribution.

Chapter Three provides insight into the work of the theorists who opposed the views expressed by the Oxford and/or Cambridge Schools. These oppositional voices were typically of the Left, and they include such thinkers as William Morris, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Colin McCabe and supporters of the Continental Philosophers. These critics generally presented a view of British society that was fragmented rather than homogenous. There is, therefore, for these critics, no single British cultural experience, but rather a series of cultures associated with different classes or factions in the society. This fragmentation implies the notion of opposition and a power-struggle within British society, and this differs significantly from visions of a homogenous social order.

Chapters Four and Five consider the introduction and development of English Studies in South African society. The influence of the various British schools is explored, and the debate about the possibility of including South African literature for purposes of study in the discipline of English in South African institutions is presented. The chapters mirror to some extent the debates covered in the earlier chapters.

Chapter Six presents Conclusions and Recommendations regarding the reasons for including English Studies in South African High Schools, what texts should be considered for selection for purposes of study in the discipline, and the manner/method to be used to do so. There is also some commentary on the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) that will replace it in the near future.

Chapter One: The Rise of English Studies: The Quest for Respectability

Matthew Arnold and Early Attempts at Defining a Discipline

The acceptance of English Studies as a discipline is dependent on the subject being regarded as having some significance at tertiary academic institutions. In this chapter I will consider the development of the discipline in the United Kingdom from a period in which the academic study of English literature was deemed irrelevant, to a time when the subject had gained some credibility at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The central issue to consider is the evolving status of English Studies during the period from the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century, in which the discipline became acknowledged as being worthy of academic study. Central to this development is the impetus and momentum gained from claims made by various parties with regard to the importance of English Studies, and the surrounding socio-historic circumstances that granted such claims a degree of credence. In addition, the momentum gained would be crucial for the further development of the discipline, which I will cover in the next chapter, in which English as an academic subject became not merely a subject of study, but, for many of its supporters, the most significant subject to be studied at Oxford or Cambridge.

It will become clear in this and subsequent chapters that there was no single route from obscurity to central significance; the way in which the study of English literature became an academic subject was a confluence of several different strands of thought, each of which was championed by its own group of critics, and as a consequence the rise of English Studies is a record of intellectual conflict and dispute.

The discipline of English Studies would gain respectability in a series of steps, culminating in the acceptance of the discipline at Oxford and Cambridge, but prior to this there would be other academic manifestations that approximated aspects of English Studies at other academic institutions. In addition, there were assertions made by a range of commentators about the value of studying English literature, and these assertions would be part of the justification for the establishment of the discipline at the ancient universities. It is, perhaps, not too bold a claim to make that, had the subject not been accepted as an academic discipline at both Oxford and Cambridge, the role of English Studies in British education and that of the Commonwealth, including South Africa, would be vastly different. That the subject was accepted as an academic discipline at these institutions granted the subject a status that would lead to the dissemination of a particular type of thinking, and a particular culture, with associated values, beliefs and protocols.

English is a medium of communication with semantic, syntactic, phonological and morphological features that identify it as a language. However, through human expression, in this case literature, and the resultant intellectual response to this expression, it is much more than this. Human expression provides a community with the possibility of critically engaging with its own culture, including the beliefs, values and concerns that are expressed. This is an opportunity to critique and debate the claims made by the authors, and to critically reflect on the community or society itself. The problem is that many of these engagements lack academic acceptability because the process of intellectual engagement seems to be lacking in rigour, and reflects, perhaps, a response that is whimsical or not located within the processes of an on-going intellectual tradition. The notion of academic respectability includes within it the issues of rigour and scholarship, both of which are represented in the ability to provide an argument that considers details and sequential, logical processes, as well as the idea of an intellectual heritage that shows evidence of intellectual process and refinement. In addition, the subject would have to be about something that mattered – something that

had a social consequence. In a sense there was a concern that academic disciplines should direct us with regard to how we should live – in other words, explore the notion of the good citizen.

The idea that human activity can be influenced by the intellectual engagement of literary criticism implies that this critical process can lead to a form of moral consequence in society. In other words, there is the implication that this type of intellectual endeavour will have consequences in terms of the shaping and development of the human character, and consequently have an effect on society.

I will address the issue of the possibility of literary influence on human activity when I consider the work of Matthew Arnold, below. Arnold was a poet and critic and lived during a time of strong opinions regarding religion and the governance of society. Arnold's father, Thomas, was an established figure in the world of education and public opinion, and he rejected Cardinal John Henry Newman's opinions about the significance of the Catholic Church. However, Thomas Arnold died at a relatively early age, and Matthew's brother, Tom, converted to Catholicism. This placed Matthew Arnold in a position of personal difficulty because of the family rift, and he found himself in a position where he rejected the assertions of Newman, one of his father's enemies. (Machann 1998, 11-12) Arnold dealt with these difficulties by adopting a light-hearted manner of expression, although he tended to address matters of significance. His concern for the development of goodness in society is a reflection of the weighty matters initially expressed by his father, but Arnold's focus tended to be literature rather than religion.

The notion of behavioural change brought about through the reading of texts is located within the claims made by Matthew Arnold about the value of good literature. (Arnold

referred to “poetry” rather than “literature”, but for the purposes of this thesis the terms are inter-changeable). Arnold made the following claim about the effects of literature:

> Good poetry does undoubtedly tend to form the soul and character; it tends to beget a love of beauty and of truth in alliance together; it suggests, however indirectly, high and noble principles of action, and it inspires the emotion so helpful in making principles operative. (Arnold 1888, 183)

Clearly Arnold believes that literature can have a shaping effect on the human character, although Arnold does not state how this is to be achieved. He does not present a reading methodology, but seems to think that the mere reading of a literary work, in any manner, will lead to the desired effect.

Arnold does not define “good” literature, but assumes that the reader of this comment will somehow know what is meant, thereby implying a sense of shared values and taste. In effect, people would be seen as having a shared understanding of what constitutes “good” literature. This, of course, flies in the face of the demands for academic rigour, since so much is assumed. An academic discipline cannot gain credibility on the basis of these assumptions alone; there is a need for greater critical enquiry and also a need for a methodology to use in reading literature. In effect Arnold does not really present any information that supports his claim. He simply believes that what he is asserting is unlikely to be questioned or rejected – it is as if the assertion is self-evidently correct.

There is no academic rigour to this claim out of which it is possible to establish and develop a scholarly discipline. Arnold’s commentary has a certain appeal, in that people who read extensively would, perhaps, like to think that this process is character-building, but there is little in the process that will provide various readers with similar responses. In other words, it is possible that “good” literature can be read in such a way as to provide little insight and little by way of refinement of character. A rigorous

process, however, will provide some form of intellectual engagement that will provide a greater possibility of profound reading, rather than a superficial response. The assumption that merely reading a literary work will lead to a refinement of character is optimistic at best. This is not to say that this cannot happen; there is a possibility that Arnold's claim has some value, but without a more deliberately stated and defined process, it is unlikely that any form of consistency of response can be assumed.

Arnold therefore stands as an important figure, in that he articulated the possibility of readers gaining insight from literature, and thus shaping their characters in a specific manner deriving from these insights. This assertion has significance because it relates to the notion of agency, and the possibility of literature playing a role in directing or influencing human behaviour is an important one.

There is also the implication that literature is, in some way, a storehouse of values, and can act as a point of reference in matters pertaining to morality. The implication is that moral considerations are embodied in the themes of great literature. However, it is not clear what type of reading engagement is necessary to explore these thematic issues. As mentioned above, it is necessary that a methodology be developed in order for this critical exploration to take place.

Arnold's idea of humanity reacting to "good" literature has some value, but he fails to locate this claim in a frame of reference that emphasises scholarship. The notion of scholarship implies a coherent, systematic, critical intellectual engagement that is expressed in writing so that it can be critiqued, and therefore contributes to a shared development of human knowledge and understanding. Arnold's notion of reading "good" literature is too individual, too detached from the scholarly process, and too reliant on insights that might be idiosyncratic, rather than understood within a community of scholarship. In effect, Arnold's position seems to present a reader's response as

acceptable even if it fails to articulate with the literary critical opinions of the day. Arnold's contribution, whilst having some value, would not play any significant role in establishing a systematic process of critical analysis. This matter would be taken further and developed by academics employed in university English Departments, which at the time of Arnold's writing had not been created.

The critic Chris Baldick suggests that Matthew Arnold is the first in a long line of English critics that would ultimately lead to the establishment of English Studies as a discipline. This is true in the sense that Arnold's opinions were the basis for many of the observations made by the critics who followed him, but it is clearly not the case that he was part of an academic literary critical tradition – that would be developed later, starting in the early 20th Century.

My commentary about Arnold has addressed a matter that would provide a difficulty for all future critics, and that is related to the required rigour expected of an academic discipline. It is clear that Arnold believes that "good" literature can have a positive effect on the values that readers hold, and their actions that follow this effect. However, as stated earlier, Arnold does not identify what "good" literature is. In avoiding this matter he is presenting us with something that is intuitive, as well as implying that there are categories of literature in terms of some sort of canon. However, he does not explore this categorization of literature, and later critics such as T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis would attempt to refine this issue, amongst others. Indeed, Leavis would engage in a process of selection that would limit the possible authors and their works that fell into the "good" category to an extremely narrowly-defined group, rejecting the vast majority of authors and their works because of perceived imperfections. Despite this narrowing of selection, Leavis did not achieve universal acknowledgement from his fellow critics. The fact that Arnold chose not to define "good" literature or select a list for study might be regarded as a problem, but even the rigour of Leavis's approach, about which more

will be said in later chapters, did not resolve this matter, although his attempt holds value, in that it involved a type of intellectual engagement that Arnold seemed to ignore.

The notion of intuition in the studying of “good” literature, to which I referred above, is not easily accommodated in the pursuit of academic rigour. Arnold presents a statement about good literature as if we can all agree on the notion of goodness, possibly because he saw all readers as sharing a similar set of values. This implies, firstly, that he sees no need to explore the idea of goodness, and, secondly, that he perceives society as a monolithic entity, devoid of the fragmentation of class, gender, age, and race. For Arnold, it would seem, similar values would be shared across the diverse groupings of British society. Even if Arnold did acknowledge a degree of social diversity in British society, he appears to feel that all literature that is “good” would be recognized as such by all the diverse elements of society, and have a similar consequence for each element – in other words, a good literary text would have a universal significance and effect on society. The issue of the universality of the value of literature is something that is central to the question: What literature should we study? It will become clear that the debate is one which continues today, but with greater levels of complexity and refinement as notions of universally significant literary works become difficult to defend.

One more point must be made regarding issues of academic rigour. Whilst there is a scientific position which holds that academic intellectual research requires measurable results, combined with an attempt to establish universal principles, it must be acknowledged that the nature of the matter of poetry or literature is vastly different from that of physics or chemistry, in that definitions relating to literary works are less precise, and the notion of measurement is only useful up to a point; a Sonnet, for example, has 14 lines of iambic pentameter, and there are various types of rhyme schemes, but this will not facilitate a detailed critical engagement with the substance or themes under consideration. In this sense the notion of measurement is something of a red-herring,

because the reader is left feeling confident about the structure of the Sonnet, but with little knowledge about its greater significance.

Poetic/literary imagery, including the use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language, provides a form of subject matter that is difficult to define with great certainty. This type of usage by authors is, perhaps, deliberately chosen because of its allusiveness (and, in this case, elusiveness, in terms of meaning), thus providing the reader with an experience in which one thing might be stated but many associated things implied, some quite tenuously or obliquely, and some might depend to a greater or lesser degree on the ability of the reader to interpret the author's words in a varied range of ways. This nuanced set of meanings prevents a truly scientific approach to English studies, in that a range of responses could all be regarded as appropriate or correct, and this, for the most part, does not conform to the scientific principles of establishing universal laws through testing and accurate measurement. Because the notions of rigour and precision are central to the ideal of the academic discipline, the processes and subject matter of English Studies did not quite conform to these principles, and therefore the academic status of English Studies was in doubt. As will be seen in the next chapter, the work of I. A .Richards and F. R. Leavis would develop a process of literary exploration that would provide a rigorous basis for the discipline. However, the tension which existed between the sciences and English Studies (which would be located within the general framework of the Humanities) would remain, and would be revisited by C. P. Snow in the so-called Two Cultures Debate, in which Leavis would comment critically on Snow's claims about the rift between the Sciences and the Humanities.

I have considered the matters surrounding central claims in Arnold's work, and will now move on to consider the establishment of Schools of English at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The school at Oxford was established prior to the school at Cambridge. (Baldick, 1983) In addition, whilst there were several individuals that

contributed to the establishment of the Oxford School, one person is generally acknowledged as being the most significant contributor in this regard, and that is John Churton Collins. (Palmer, 1967) However, before considering Collins's contribution, I will first consider other institutions in which a form of English Studies existed prior to the establishment of Schools at the ancient universities. The institutions to which I refer are the Mechanics' Institutes, the Working Men's Colleges, and the Civil Service. In addition, there were institutions dealing with the education of women that offered some form of education in the field of English.

Early Institutional Establishment

I will begin my consideration of these institutions by addressing the Mechanics' Institutes, the Working Men's Colleges, and the Ladies' Educational Institutions. There are several points of interest, including, firstly, that English Studies achieved a degree of acceptance or respectability in the greater British community prior to being adopted by the ancient universities. Secondly, the institutions mentioned were primarily intended to provide a form of professional or vocational training, but English Studies falls outside of this type of consideration, suggesting that there was a different need being addressed in the inclusion of this discipline in those particular institutions. Issues of cultural heritage were perhaps a central concern, and this was driven by student demands. The discipline – if it can be thus labelled in the late 19th Century – was lacking in rigour and scholarship. The need for scholarship, including methodological issues, would be addressed at a later point. It is significant that the discipline had an informal, grass-roots dimension to it, in that the demand for English Studies at this point arose from a working-class environment, in which structured academic protocols were not the order of the day. However, to gain academic respectability it would be necessary for this discipline to be adopted at Oxford and Cambridge, although this would, in a sense, remove the engagement of ordinary people and elevate English Studies to the less accessible, more refined reaches of the intellectual establishment.

The first Mechanics' Institute was established in 1823 (5 years before University College in London), and by 1850 there were 500 of these Institutes. The Institutes underwent a swift evolution in this period. Initially they had been utilitarian in vision, and vocational subjects were offered. However, there was a growing demand for literacy, and the idea of self-improvement became central to these institutes. These ideas pre-dated Matthew Arnold, but they seem to have sprung from the same idea of humanity.

In the 1850s a new form of institution – the Working Men's Colleges – became a feature of education in England. They differed from the Mechanics' Institutes in that they did not focus on vocational and utilitarian issues – instead, they recognized the spirit of humanity, acknowledge moral dimensions of people, and argued in favour of the elevation of human beings through interacting with the thoughts of great minds. The idea that an individual's morals can be influenced by studying literature, and that values and behaviour can be influenced thus, is similar to the ideas expressed earlier by Arnold. However, that this is a notion strongly linked to the concept of a liberal education; more will be stated about this when the Newbolt Committee is considered at a later point in the chapter.

The third new educational institution, which began with the Queen's College for Women, which was founded in 1848, was a system of colleges intended to cater for the educational needs of women. Chris Baldick points out that although these establishments offered English as a course, there was a hidden agenda to this process – women were not allowed to study the classics, and they were therefore forced to take courses in the Modern Languages – thereby reinforcing their role in society, rather than suggesting that they were in the forefront of educational change – and, if they were, it was coincidence. It may be added that this system reiterated the relative positions of the classics and English studies, the former, as always, being deemed superior. It is still

significant to note that the women were involved in engaging with an element of the humanities – their curriculum was therefore not totally utilitarian.

Baldick also comments that the Working Men's Colleges provided the opportunity for men to improve themselves, but he adds that the improvements were in terms of other people's standards. This is conceptually linked to some elements of the classical understanding of liberal education – if the students were to serve society as citizens engaged in socially significant activities, there is a sense that this service is located within a frame of reference that is decided by people other than the students themselves.

At an earlier point I made reference to the contribution of the Civil Service in developing English Studies. Whilst the Civil Service was an institution external from the universities, it is the case that the Civil Service needed to ensure that their administrators were intellectually equipped in a manner befitting a culture regarded by themselves as superior.

Chris Baldick refers to Macaulay on the significance of English literature in the colonies:

> He looked forward, therefore, to the conscious propagation of 'that literature before the light of which impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the banks of the Ganges…. And, wherever British literature spreads, may it be attended by British virtue and British freedom!' (Baldick 1987, 71)

Importantly, Lord Macaulay's statement establishes a sense of the power relations between the colony and the metropolis. It is clear, for Macaulay, that British culture, in

the form of British literature, is superior to that of the colonies; although he refers to the Ganges this could as easily be the Limpopo or the Murray-Darling. British culture is linked to the light of knowledge, and this includes British virtue and British freedom. However, although British virtue and British freedom were located within a liberal conception of society, this selfsame freedom had not yet been extended to include the right of British women to vote, amongst other things. British society would change over time so that it would become more inclusive in terms of civil and political rights. For Macaulay the indigenous people of the colonies were the inheritors and bearers of cruel superstitions, as opposed to the enlightened, scientifically orientated, British community. The image of the light, used by Macaulay, is significant, because it implies learning and knowledge which would banish the intellectual darkness of superstition. At the same time, Macaulay seems unable to recognize that there might exist a light of knowledge in the colonies – different, perhaps, from that of the British, but significant, and equally capable of eliminating the darkness of cruel superstition. This, I believe, is an important point – that colonial cultures could develop their own systems of knowledge, compatible with those of Britain, and yet entirely indigenous.

This issue of the value of the culture, including literary works, of the colonies, is one to which I will return at a later point; when I explore the development of English Studies in South Africa it will be evident that many South African academics initially expressed a belief that the only literature worth studying was that of Britain, and that local, South African works were of little consequence. This echo of Macaulay will be further considered in Chapter Four.

Macaulay's statement is fundamentally nationalistic in character, and, as will be seen, this issue of a national identity and an associated national literature will be a central concern in the debate regarding the significance of teaching literature.

The process of social change is implied in Macaulay's statements, but he does not indicate how the change is to be brought about. If literature is to provide an avenue for people to become free, the manner of the process needs to be established. Macaulay makes no direct statements in this regard, but possibly he is suggesting that, through contact with British literature, which embodies elements of civilized British culture, the reader will encounter civilizing ideas which will provide him/her with the ability to engage with his/her world from a position of greater awareness and knowledge, and thus be empowered. Macaulay probably implied that such a reader, through engaging with British culture, would see the flaws in his/her own culture/society, and reject the philistine world in order to adopt a British-inspired form of existence, and thus become a better citizen.

The implications are that, through the study of a particular form of literature, a particular form of social order and morality can be created and maintained, and thus the various members of that society can benefit. This is, of course, a somewhat simplistic cause-effect understanding of the process of cultural change, and it is fraught with problems because it lacks the recognition of the complexities and subtleties of the society, and presents the notion of social influence as uni-dimensional.

Macaulay's claim is decidedly illiberal, in that it rejects the idea of debate or dialectic, and instead insists on one type of social order – that derived from British culture – as being the best model for all societies. However, it is liberal in the sense that Macaulay believes that the superstitious masses need to be enlightened, and thus become more participative citizens in their society.

In sympathy with Macaulay's opinions, competence in the use of English was regarded as an important element relating to the administration of the Empire, and in 1855 the East India Company established an examination process to determine this competence,

on behalf of the Civil Service. This was the first recorded use of an examination with regard to English as a subject. The examination was concerned with the candidates' ability to memorise and repeat texts, rather than the critical analysis thereof. The examination focused extensively on recall of texts, which raises the matter of how this recall was to contribute to a better administration, and, crucially, better decision making. A Civil Servant faced with a decision regarding administrative process would hardly find advice or answers in Milton or Shakespeare. It is therefore necessary to speculate about the perceived value of such texts in foreign (i.e. non-British Isles) climes. The best answer, perhaps, is that a sense of shared identity and culture could be established through recalling texts deemed significant by London, in a world where London was perceived as the centre. It could be further speculated that the knowing (or not knowing) of such texts could be part of a process of defining parties in a them/us scenario, in which the "us" (Civil Servants and representatives of the colonies) are regarded as superior to "them" (the colonised). Knowledge of "our" texts defines who "we" are, and since the texts are also seen as superior to others, the knowing of these texts defines "us" as superior to "them". It is likely that, in some cases, the indigenous people would have attempted to develop their knowledge of the British texts in order to be more accepted, and to be deemed culturally competent, but it is equally likely that the indigenous people could have rejected the British texts in order to assert their own cultural significance, and thus the texts themselves could become objects around which conflict was based. In this case the texts would be located within a broad socio-cultural terrain, and allegiances and commitments would be drawn in relation to knowledge of those texts. It is clear that, under these circumstances, the reason for studying literature is located beyond the texts themselves.

A further consideration regarding this matter of “them” and “us” is the, perhaps, odd set of circumstances when “them” and “us” become one and the same. If we consider that it was the intention of Macaulay and his followers to establish a system of education which would shape the cruel, superstitious people of the world into something else, the something else to which I refer is a close approximation of the British citizen. This is

also the case with British literature; if Shakespeare's works are truly universal, then they are not just of British culture but of all cultures, and thus the very British essence about which Macaulay is proud becomes a more diverse matter, and other cultures – even the cruel, superstitious cultures – have a point of reference regarding these works. If such an education system were to be entirely successful, then people of British origin would be in the minority when dealing with the products of their own culture. It would seem, then, that there is some difficulty for the British in the shifting of people's perceptions, values, beliefs and behaviours so as to approximate that of Britain; the point at which a level of British equivalence is achieved is the point at which the non-British person becomes a British copy, so to speak, and therefore achieves the possibility of being able to engage in critical activity regarding British cultural artefacts. This process, of course, is not limited to British society – I have simply used them as an example.

The Civil Service and its associated examination system therefore provided a dimension of social acceptance regarding the value of English literature as a subject that would civilise the masses, and set a standard regarding what was worth knowing. It is apparent, then, that this justification for the teaching of English literature was located not so much in the literature itself, but in the social effect it was intended to bring about. Civilising the barbarians – and establishing English literature, and the culture which created it as significant – reflected ideas about identity and social practice, and it is in these qualities that Macaulay and others saw value. No attempt was made to critically engage with the material in order to explore it; instead, it was understood in a narrow nationalistic way.

Although it is clear from the above that English Studies existed in a rudimentary way in several institutions of education – the Working Men's Colleges – and at least one institution of State – the Civil Service – it is also the case that none of these systems provided a sense of a coherent, scholarly discipline. They operated without reference to the notion of academic engagement, and were not orientated to the concept and

process of higher learning. For this to be achieved Oxford and Cambridge universities would have to become involved. Although no single person can claim sole responsibility for the introduction of English Studies to the ancient universities, one man, John Churton Collins, played a significant role in the initial acceptance of the discipline at Oxford University. The establishment of an equivalent department at Cambridge would follow some years later.

The Contribution of John Churton Collins

The following statement is representative of Collins' argument regarding the value of studying English literature. Significantly, he locates literature within the broader frame of reference of culture, and he considers various aspects of culture in terms of its value:

> They need aesthetic culture, that life may not only be brightened, but refined and elevated by sympathetic communion with what is truly beautiful in Art and Literature; they need moral culture, and that on broader lines than when it ran wholly in theological and conventional grooves; they need political culture, instruction, that is to say, in what pertains to their relation to the State, to their duties as citizens; and they need also to be impressed sentimentally by having the presentation in legend and history of rhetoric and patriotic example brought vividly and attractively before them. (Palmer 1965, 81)

There are several elements to the quote that are deserving of commentary. Firstly, Collins response to literature and the value thereof is similar to that of Arnold, in that he sees the studying of literature as a positive thing, even though he presents no evidence regarding this claim. Secondly, he sees literature as contributing to the development of citizenship, which involves the commitment of individuals to the broader community, through the experience of interaction with traditions and values as embodied in the

literature and other cultural expressions. Thirdly, Collins presents no comment or methodology, or specific literary texts to be studied in order to achieve this vision. There is no suggestion of a difference between superficial reading and reading in a critical manner; in addition, there is no suggestion of how to proceed when reading critically. Although literature is located within a cultural sphere, there is no method stated for differentiating different genres of literature – the novels of Dickens are interchangeable with the plays of Shakespeare and the poetry of Pope. Implied within this statement is the need to recognise that the form and content are different aspects of literature.

One dimension of Collins' claim that needs particular consideration is the matter of moral culture, and, as an adjunct, the matter of political culture. The issue of morality is of great significance, because it provides a point of reference regarding a culture's code of ethical principles and values that govern choices and the actions that follow. This matter is strongly linked to the notion of citizenship, and provides an insight into how we are expected to conduct ourselves. By engaging in a critique of these matters through critical analysis of literary works, we are in effect exploring both our own beliefs and values and those of the society of which we are a part. Through this process we are not only establishing how we are to live, but we are also questioning whether society's principles of morality are valid.

The issue of morality, some may argue, is not the sole province of literary criticism. It is possible, and perhaps preferable, to explore issues of morality through the discipline of philosophy. The subject matter of morality is, it must be agreed, comfortably located in the field of philosophy, but there is also the subject of literature, which includes matters such as genre, poetic form, dramatic conventions, and the use of figurative language. Therefore, whilst philosophy can provide an intellectual engagement in the field of morality, this is not sufficient for the study of literature, which, in addition, demands a critical engagement with matters of form and literary heritage. Philosophy, then, is a more focused discipline in which moral issues can be considered, and in which the

development of argument is central. By contrast, in literature the issue of morality may be explored, but within a frame of reference that is located in a broader scenario; morality as presented in literature is often one of many shadings linked to a literary work. A moral issue can frequently be expressed as a literary theme, but literature includes many other matters such as those of plot development, conflict resolution, and the qualities of the characters, and this means that moral issues are part of a layered reading experience rather than a focused matter. The moral culture mentioned by Collins is one aspect of several elements to the study of literature, and for students to engage with this aspect will require methodological guidance; moral issues should not simply be accepted as central features of literature, to be considered without direction or guidance from a teacher or academic mentor. These moral issues are not entirely self-evident, being as they may be presented in a literary form, and therefore requiring some understanding of literary knowledge that supports a literary critical investigation.

A further concern, as mentioned above, is the issue of a political culture. This is associated with the philosophical culture, in that it is related to matters of values and beliefs. However, it is most importantly an issue that addresses power-relations in a society. Again, as was the case with regard to morality, it is clear that a more focused and direct manner of study would be to study political science or a similar discipline. The literary dimensions frame the narrow political elements of any literary work, and, in studying such a work, much more is considered than politics.

Both of these examples are significant because they relate to social matters beyond the narrowness of the literary work as a text. Moral and political issues have a significance in terms of how we live. Moral issues present us with justifications regarding why we act in a particular manner, in terms of what we regard as right and wrong. Matters such as the role of women in society, or crime and punishment, including the issue of the death penalty, can be explored through literature. An example of the former could include any of the several Shakespeare plays in which women dress as men, and conduct

themselves as fully-fledged citizens in a society. Literary works considering aspects of crime and punishment, including the death penalty, may include *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or *A Tale of Two Cities*. In each of these books the system of justice is investigated and the values of each society explored. With regard to the issues of politics, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* are both examples of literature that deal with totalitarianism, and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is a commentary on colonial matters, particularly interpersonal relations in a racially divided society.

From the brief list provided above, it is possible to argue, as Collins does, that literature can provide insights into matters of social import such as philosophical and political issues. At the same time, not all books can be treated equally, which implies that there is a need for a process of selection regarding the texts for study – which Collins fails to supply, and the issue of methodology – how to study the books – is also not mentioned. Academic rigour is not evident in Collins' statement, but there is a suggestion of commitment and fervour in his words.

Matthew Arnold, mentioned earlier in this chapter, wrote to Collins about the matter of establishing an English School at Oxford and expressed the following concerns:

> Given Arnold's considerable posthumous influence on the English studies movement that flourished in the next century, it is interesting to note his lack of enthusiasm for the emerging academic discipline of English literature. In a letter of 1886 to John Churton Collins, who supported the establishment of a chair of English literature at Oxford, Arnold explained that he would be glad to see university students study 'the great works of English literature' and modern languages in conjunction with Greek and Latin.
>
> (Machann 1998, 142)

For Arnold, then, the subject of English literature should be established in a relational way, through connections and links to other more established subjects. This rather muted support for the establishment of a department devoted to the study of English literature reflects the ideas of the time, in that the Classics remain a central feature of the university curriculum in Arnold's opinion.

Collins was successful in lobbying Oxford for a discipline in English Studies. Apart from Collins' request, there were factors within the society that motivated such as decision, and these factors facilitated Collins' success. It is of value to consider these social factors.

Firstly, institutions other than Oxford and Cambridge had already introduced rudimentary courses in the field of English Studies; Oxford and Cambridge were not, therefore, engaging in something entirely new, but instead were possibly reacting to a broad social demand. Secondly, the study of language already existed in the ancient universities in the discipline of philology, which added an element of respectability to a proposal to introduce English Studies. The new discipline would have associations with philology because both included the study of some aspect of language, although philologists tended to concentrate their efforts on historical and/or scientific considerations of language (those aspects that were definable and measurable) whereas the domain of English Studies, while still in need of definition, would cover aspects of literature that invited a more subjective interpretation. Philology held a degree of academic rigour that could lend English Studies a modicum of respectability through association.

The American academic, Gerald Graff, comments on philology as follows:

> The nineteenth century passion for philology 'satisfied the nostalgia for the past, especially the European past and the Middle Ages, and at the same time it met the desire for facts, for accuracy, for imitation of the 'scientific method' which had acquired such overwhelming prestige' in the United States. (Graff 1987, 69)

Whilst Graff is addressing matters in the USA, he associates his ideas about philology with Europe and Britain. His choice of the term 'nostalgia' is an interesting one, in that it suggests a romanticised notion of the past, in which a form of sentimentality textures an historical account. The scientific method suggests a dispassionate, rigorous system, in which a process of accurate weighing and measuring could take place, from within a paradigm in which the claim of objectivity was central. Philology, therefore, contained both a scientific bent and a nostalgic dimension.

Graff adds, however, that the history of the term philology, dating back to Plato, contained within it other oppositional meanings, in that it included detailed linguistic elements, but referred also to more broadly-based issues, beyond the limits of language, including "the whole study of the history of our cultures." (Graff 1987, 69)

The ultimate rejection of philology in Britain and the USA, according to Graff, was derived from this conception of the term that was located within positions that were too oppositional, and somehow too broad to prove effective. Also, academics that were located within a less scientific conception of language study challenged the philologists' position and argued for a less scientific study of literature. Graff refers to two schools of thought as "professionalist" and "generalist", the former valuing a research-based scientific model of language study that was vocationally driven, whereas the latter regarded the study of literature as central and society should therefore "let the great masterpieces of literature teach themselves." (Graff 1987, 86).This second position would be the one favoured by several academics at a later stage, but it would not

entirely satisfy either the adherents of the scientific method, nor some of the other academics, such as those at the Cambridge School – still to be discussed – who would favour a rigorous method that would not follow scientific approaches simply, but would develop those which were suitable to the Humanities. Part of the problem was that the appeal of the scientific approach included the possibility of a neat, almost clinical evaluation of literature, with accurate measurements, and absolute answers, whereas any position that eschewed the empirical approach of science provided an interpretation whose appeal was distinctly lacking in accuracy of measurement, and relied instead on subjective, almost instinctive, valuations. The two positions seem to be incontrovertibly irreconcilable.

There is an additional point about philology which is often put forward as a reason for the discipline to be removed from the curriculum at British institutions, and that is a nationalistic concern. In essence, philology derived from Europe, being particularly associated with scholarship deriving from the Netherlands and Germany (Norton 1995, 406), and, in the wake of World War One, there was a drive towards authentic homegrown British scholarship in British institutions, and a decided wariness regarding ideas strongly associated with Germany. More on this matter will be considered at a later point in this chapter when I address the Newbolt Committee of 1921.

Apart from the two points mentioned above, there was a third point regarding the decision of Oxford University to introduce English Studies. There was a growing sense that the study of classical languages and/or civilization was not providing the intellectual preparation for a fast-developing world, and an alternative or addition was needed. Indeed, some of the concerns had been in evidence for a long time; in the early 19th century a series of articles published in the *Edinburgh Review* asserted that the classics were failing in the role defined for them – as a humanizing influence, and as a central element of liberal education (Mathieson 1975, 18). This classics-based education was limited to the children of the wealthier classes, and thus acted as a divisive element in

British society. The introduction of English Studies provided the opportunity for the ordinary citizen to study something more commonplace, and therefore more accessible, and at the same time not associated with class divisions, since the material could, in essence, reflect something of the national interest in terms of content.

There were also doubts raised with regard to the efficacy of the pedagogy involved in the teaching of classics. The ideal was that students would be directed into an engagement with the ideas of the classical world, and debate with high levels of sophistication the various attitudes, comments, and beliefs expressed therein, thus preparing them for decision-making and policy-making in society. Margaret Mathieson makes the point that the actual teaching methodology was uninspiring, and this predicated against optimal learning conditions:

> The accusation that dominated the criticism directed at universities and schools was that a liberal education had degenerated into the sterile routine of grammar drill and exercise of mere memory. Few pupils, critics argued, reached those heights where their characters would be trained through encounters with great minds of the past. (Mathieson 1975, 19)

A central matter of curriculum efficacy is raised here. In effect, what I am referring to is that, despite the best intentions, and despite having a curriculum that is structured and organized around practices derived from and pertaining to liberal ideals, there appears to be a problem of ensuring that these liberal ideals become part of the fabric of the students' lives, rather than having a superficial impact. Simply because the intention is to educate students in a particular ethos does not mean that this process will successfully achieve the intentions.

Oxford University, Sir Walter Raleigh and the Romantic Imagination

The world of British academia was ready to entertain the possibility of the introduction of a new discipline, on the basis of the concerns expressed above. Oxford University introduced the discipline and Sir Walter Raleigh was appointed as the first Merton Professor of English in 1904 (Raleigh 1928, 104). As the first intellectual leader of the school he would provide the initial guidance regarding the shaping and development of the subject English. He had experience in the field, having taught in two other tertiary institutions prior to the Oxford appointment (Raleigh 1928, viii), but, as will be shown, he was possessed of particular foibles which filtered into the process of directing the development of the discipline; this is likely to be the case in any discipline where the insights and opinions of one individual have great influence. The aspirations of the scientific approach – research that is impersonal, objective and rigorous – were not met in a discipline that could be so dominated by one set of insights, in which personal opinion played a large role. As I have already stated, there is the problem about whether a subject like English literature is entirely suitable to the process of scientific enquiry, but, in addition, there is the personal nature of Raleigh's academic work which is, perhaps, too overtly idiosyncratic.

The following points are central to Raleigh's position regarding the teaching of English literature:

He rejected philology because he felt ill at ease about the application of scientific processes to the study of literature. He was a proponent of the value of studying literature from the Romantic Movement because he valued newness of thought and innovation, and at the same time rejected imitation. In the later period of his career he began to focus on the biographies of authors, rather than on the literary works they had produced.

Raleigh also argued that literature had value from the perspective of reading for enjoyment. As a corollary to this, Raleigh argued that too much analysis kills the experience of reading. From this it is clear that Raleigh saw the value of literature as being personal, rather than general – the idiosyncratic, rather than the universal. By rejecting the universal or the general, Raleigh was critical of the scientific rigour required for academic respectability, emphasising instead what might best be termed intuitive understanding. This intuitive process or response to reading is in conflict with notions of academic rigour because such an intuitive response tends not to fulfil the requirements of clarity of procedure, or systematic analysis, instead almost overtly expressing some sort of obfuscation about how a response to a literary work is formulated. This notion of systematic, rigorous engagement with regard to literature is a problem that is difficult to negotiate.

Raleigh had the following comment about great literature:

> All the great literature of the world has been the attempting of something new... It cannot be understood by those who see in it an established model. (Raleigh 1926, 217)

It is clear here that Raleigh rejects all notions of heritage or tradition, and prefers the possibilities or potentials of newness. It is possible that he might have been reflecting the optimism of the period – a new understanding of the world after World War One – or alternatively he simply wished to associate his thinking with progress. The comment is, however, lacking something in terms of balance – there is no acknowledgement of the past, and a sense of discontinuity in terms of cultural expression. This is problematic, because literature derives from a heritage, however slight, and is located within a socio-historical frame of reference. Later critics from different schools would insist that there is significance in traditional beliefs and values, and emphasise the links between these

and literary works. Still others would emphasise the materialist conception of culture, which is strongly associated with an historical understanding of the world.

The idea of the value of the new, and a disregard of the past, or established traditions, is an aspect of the Romantic view of the world about which the British philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin has expressed this opinion:

> This topic is usually left to the history of literature and the arts. Yet it is a wider force, which for two hundred years has deeply, and indeed decisively, affected European life. The word 'romanticism' is vague, and like most terms of its kind, tends to be too general of use... Since the Greeks, and perhaps long before them, men have believed that to the central questions about the nature and purpose of their lives, and of the world in which they lived, true, objective, universal and eternal answers could be found... The common assumption of the romantics... is that the answers to the great questions are not to be discovered so much as invented... In its extreme Idealistic form it is a vision of the entire world...Hence the new emphasis on the subjective and the ideal rather than the objective and the real. (Berlin 2000, 200-203)

An important aspect of this commentary by Berlin is that it links romanticism to the matter of subjective creativity and interpretation, as opposed to the notion of objective measurement, which would therefore locate romanticism in a position which would reject scientific processes for the most part. Furthermore, because it is linked to the ideal, it moves into the realm of what *might be*, as opposed to the realm of what *is*. Equally importantly, Berlin points out that the scale of the romantic enterprise can be enormous – a vision of an entire world. It is at this point that Berlin identifies a dark aspect of the romantic ideal; the creation of a new world can be dependent on the destruction of the old. (Berlin 2000, 204)

It is clear from the above that the Romantic vision has some aspects to it that are quite appealing, chief of which is the possibility of newness, in the sense of re-visioning, and, perhaps, a recreation of the world. Included in this is the implication of the significance of human ingenuity and a sense of the ability to move beyond an embeddedness in a perhaps staid past, and to move forward with a sense of vigour derived from engaging with new possibilities. However, as Berlin points out, there is a problem inherent in the Romantic position, in that it is implied that, to move forward, one must discard the past. To create new worlds implies a breaking with the old. In effect, this implies a discarding of old values, of previously-held beliefs, and of long-standing traditions. Associated with this idea is the notion of social transformation which is a central feature of the post-apartheid South African constitution. This issue will be considered in greater detail at a later point in the thesis. What is important in Berlin's commentary is that, for the Romantics, social transformation does not require a gentle progress, in which a slow alteration brings about something new – it implies a breaking with tradition so that existing social forces have a limited role to play in the establishment of a new order.

Raleigh's claims have significant consequences for the studying of literature. The discarding of past literary achievements may lead to an inability to appreciate or trace the development of literary and cultural traditions. There is an implied discontinuity of thinking, in that the emphasis on future possibilities seems to be anchored in the present, rather than being informed by the past. There is also the obvious matter that, as time moves inexorably forward, so do the new creations of the present become the artefacts of the past – worthy only of being rejected in the pursuit of the ever newer creation. Raleigh's position, therefore, is a difficult one to advocate in the approach to literature; instead, it is necessary to balance the potentials of the future with the achievements of the past.

As a consequence of his belief, Raleigh placed a high regard on original – if flawed –

literary works. He argued in favour of newness of expression, rather than imitation, as is shown in this statement:

> An author who respects himself is not content if his work is mistaken for another's, even if that other be one of the gods of his idolatry. He would rather write his own signature across faulty work than sink into a copyist of merit. This eternal temper of self-assertion, this spirit of invention, this determination to add something or alter something, is no doubt the principle of life.
>
> (Raleigh 1916, 11)

The problem here is that it is not possible to break entirely with the past. Even the decision to break with the past is dependent on the past – or an interpretation thereof; the spirit of invention takes place within a social context, and that frames the way forward. However, the desire for the idea of added newness, or additional contributions to society, is not something to be disregarded; if humanity has a desire for progress – which is something that is debatable – then the need to be ever more inventive is a consequence of this.

The manner in which literary works should be studied is also of significance, because it is through this process that the insights contained in a text become apparent, and the nature of the issues under consideration becomes clear. Raleigh is often accused of having little or no systematic methodology, and this is reflected in the following statement by David Nicol Smith:

> Whereas the courses of other professors were as a rule systematic treatises... little system was discoverable in Raleigh's... It was one of the few articles of his creed as a professor that too much system kills the study of literature. His true

> function, as he saw it, was not to discuss theories, or to trace influences, or to show developments, so much as to exhibit what was great in great literature. (Raleigh 1928, x)

David Nicol Smith adds that Raleigh was concerned that, in a new school of studies, addressing a new discipline, the supposed lack of method was actually a deliberate policy to alleviate the "fear that organisation and routine would in time reduce it [the methodology] to a rigid pattern". (Raleigh 1928, xiv)

However, in reading the quote above, it becomes apparent that there was a methodology of sorts, in that Raleigh wished to show what was great in great literature, but he did not make it clear how this was to be achieved. He adopted an instinctive approach, often reading to the class from his favourite works; the oral presentation of literature seems to have occupied much of his commitment to lectures. However, there appears not have been much analysis, as opposed to vague appreciation, of the texts. Students therefore listened for enjoyment as much as for understanding. Whether anything was explored in any detail in these sessions is doubtful.

Rather than limiting or restricting students to a narrowly defined discipline, Raleigh encouraged a response that seemed to be as much heart as it was mind – enjoyment was part of the process. However, this reflected a wildly varying response in the students, and was dependant on both his ability to read expressively, and on their innate ability to appreciate the texts. It is also doubtful that any meaningful assessment practices can derive from a curriculum devoid of system/methodology. There is, of course, also a need to bear in mind that there is evidence from authors such as Chris Baldick and Tillyard, that Raleigh became disillusioned with lecturing, and it is possible to speculate that this is reflected in his lack of method.

With the passage of years, Raleigh's academic interests began to shift. He became less committed to the Romantic position (Tillyard 1962, 138-139), and, in addition, he developed an interest in authors' biographies rather than their works. The matter of authors' biographies is of methodological importance. The issue is: If we are to study a literary work, to what extent is it necessary to be aware of the author's life-experience, or, for that matter, the social-historical circumstances surrounding the book? To answer in brief, when reading a literary work, it is of value to have some information about the author and/or the circumstances surrounding the book's creation; this information can assist the reader in interpreting the book.

For example, it is useful to know that E. M. Forster, the author of *A Passage to India*, had actually spent some time there. This information provides us with a reassurance regarding aspects of the novel's authenticity, and this allows the realistic elements of the novel, such as the various social engagements, and the depiction of the trial, as well as the descriptive passages of the landscape, to be accepted and trusted. The novel, however, remains a novel, not a non-fiction account of India, and should be judged as such. Forster also wrote a non-fiction account of his time in India entitled *The Hill of Devi*, and this book contains a different account of an Indian experience. These two texts address similar elements, in that both reflect on the British Colonial Indian experience, but they are essentially different texts, in that one is a fictional account and the other a form of memoir, and each should therefore be treated differently. Reading beyond the text of a fictional work – such as reading biographical information about the author – can provide useful information to be used in interpreting the work. However, it cannot take the place of the work, and the work needs to be treated as a text in and of itself. If authors' biographies become central aspects of literary studies, this focus will shift the fictional literary works away from the centre of the discipline, and this does not direct the discipline in a useful way.

Raleigh's methodology provides a further insight into the value of English Studies, and

that is the value of reading for enjoyment. His behaviour endorses the idea that there is value in reading for pleasure, as is evident in the statement about his reading to the university class. This methodology is vastly at odds with traditional claims of the academic rigour required from a discipline. It involves the individual, rather than the universal, and is deliberately orientated towards an acknowledgement of the subjective rather than attempting to engage in objective critical thought. It is tempting to reject Raleigh's claims immediately, because they fly in the face of traditional academic principles. Indeed, if English Studies were to become recognized as having a significant academic standing, it would have to be on a more rigorous basis than this. It might be argued, however, that the books that provide us with pleasure might, perhaps, reflect our values, and, perhaps, the shared values of our society. In addition we might experience pleasure through the recognition of a particular deftness or skill in the use of language. By reflecting critically on what it is that makes a particular literary work provide us with pleasure, and extrapolating this to personal meaning, it is possible to elevate mere enjoyment to a position of academic credibility. However, without the dimension of critical reflection Raleigh's assertion is academically problematic.

Raleigh, then, contributed several features to the initial development of the discipline at Oxford. He emphasised the value of personal meaning in reading literary works, which located the subject of English Studies within the realm of personal significance. He valued original works, eschewing imitative literature, and committed himself to the Romantic vision of the new, thereby rejecting the value of tradition and accumulated knowledge and scholarship. He did not specifically associate the discipline of English Studies with a particular view of society, and he seems not to have articulated the discipline with other disciplines, this despite having an undergraduate qualification in History; it would be fair to assume that such an undergraduate background would direct an individual's learning into a frame of reference that acknowledged social circumstances and how these affect social change, but this seems not to have been the case.

For Raleigh the discipline of English Studies seems to have been a discrete, separate entity, disconnected from other academic pursuits. At the same time, however, Raleigh acknowledged the significance of the circumstances relating to the authors' own lives, as is evident in his interest in authors' personal histories or biographies. In addition, there is evidence that Raleigh lacked an intense, sustained interest in the study of English literature as a subject – he seems to have become disillusioned with his subject in his later years. (Baldick 1987, 77) These various points are all indicative of a problematic contribution by Raleigh. He did not envision a comprehensive subject and he provided little in terms of systematic methodology. His rejection of a scientific approach in favour of an intuitive approach to English Studies is in itself problematic; the discipline requires a greater degree of academic rigour to be acknowledged within the sphere of the university. For the discipline to develop there was a need for greater debate, greater rigour, and a clearly defined set of texts, or a detailed set of principles from which to identify texts for the purposes of study.

George Gordon and Mere Words

George S. Gordon followed Raleigh as Merton Professor and inherited this rather unsatisfactory state of affairs. Gordon brought his own individual concerns to the discipline, in much the same way as Raleigh had done, and as a consequence the academic engagement that followed was flavoured by these personal matters. The major world event that occurred during Gordon's lifetime, and which was to have an effect on his view of the world, was World War One, which left him somewhat disillusioned about the possibilities of improving the world through intellectual pursuits such as those found in the Humanities, including the study of English literature. Baldick points out that, after the disillusionment of World War One, for Gordon "the futility of literature was not an 'awful suspicion' but almost an axiom… Like Raleigh, Gordon would insist on the primacy of 'things' over 'mere words', and regarded most aspects of his own profession (lecturing especially) with contempt." (Baldick 1987, 104)

Furthermore, according to Baldick, Gordon could understand the working class's distrust of literature – literature, after all, is not everything. (Baldick 1987, 105)

The matter of literature as somehow being of less significance than might have been supposed is an interesting one. At a time when some critics were urging the academic world to adopt English Studies as an intellectual discipline, Gordon was more committed to lived experience than the representation of living that manifested in literature. For Gordon it seemed more important to reflect on life than on literature, because literature was composed of 'mere words'. There is some tension between the world of the material conditions of existence and that of the imagination. It is, of course, necessary to approach this matter with some caution; human beings might very well be creatures of material existence, but they are also creatures of the imagination. It is important that both aspects of humanity be accommodated in the education process. In other words, studying texts allows us to reflect on life as it is, but also life as it might be (an echo, perhaps of Raleigh's Romanticism). There is a need for a point of balance between these two positions; whilst it is true that we live our lives within the frame of material things, our critical intellectual processes (which would include our imaginations) allow us to consider these conditions and experiences, and interpret them, and make decisions about them, and finally act on them. Gordon, it seems, would argue that literature can only engage with the world of the imagination, and that lived experience cannot be reduced to 'mere words'. Whilst there is some truth in this, human reality has incorporated the dimensions of signs and symbols across a range of disciplines, and this representational dimension of human existence cannot be disregarded.

These matters are further explored in the following quote from Gordon's essay *Some Post-War Reflections on Literature*. (Gordon 1950, 177 – 184) He made this comment after stating that there are many references to soldiers in the First World War who carried with them books of various poems, essays and the like:

> I should be the last to throw discredit on these literary devotions, though I was never happy enough to share them. I am one of, I fancy, a considerable number of ex-infantry officers who found, on the contrary, how easy it was, in such scenes and in such company, to live without reading at all… I have sometimes wondered, none the less, how persons bred to reading and the life of books, should for four years on end have done so well without them. The chief reason, I suppose, is that books, in most of their forms, are a kind of shorthand for multiplying experience. If your own experiences are new and full enough, you hardly need books. Literature is so powerful and splendid a thing, it is or can be so entrancing, and reading is so much a habit, that we are in danger of forgetting our natural independence of it… I should like to advocate occasional periods of fasting from all literature, and a more resolute and direct reliance, for imaginative experience, on ourselves. (Gordon 1950, 178)

Here Gordon emphasizes that literature is one dimension of our lives, and a created one at that; he sets literature against the experience of reality, and emphasizes that we should anchor ourselves in the world of experience rather than the imagined world of literature. However, he may be arguing for a world that is too narrow and constrained, in that we need to engage with other minds, in order to critique our experience in a fuller, enriched way. The point here seems to be that we need to use the critical appreciation of literature to enhance our understanding of our lived experience, and, by the same token, our literature can gain significance through this interaction, in that our appreciation of literature can be refined through our experiences.

It seems, then, that Gordon had an understanding of literature that was located within a broad-based experiential framework; in other words, the social circumstances in which literature was contextualised went beyond the literature itself – there were significant aspects to society that had nothing whatsoever to do with literature and the arts. For other commentators, notably F. R. Leavis, who will be discussed in greater detail in a

later chapter, the most central and authentic dimensions of English society would be defined by English culture, of which English literature was the most central and significant element. This difference in conception would lead to the Cambridge School (in which Leavis was a dominant figure for many years) developing a different ethos and methodology from that of Oxford, and would lead to the dominance of the Cambridge School's methodological processes in English literary analysis not only in Britain, but also abroad.

In a previous quote, Baldick makes the point that Gordon could understand the working class's mistrust of literature. This is an important aspect to consider, because the working class is generally the most numerous group in a society. Gordon's commentary reflects an awareness of the schisms in British society that were class-based, and he seems to be acknowledging that different classes have different understandings of and degrees of acceptance of literature. Whilst some people might regard the studying of literature as an essential part of liberal education, the working class, with a limited access to books, and with limited time for reading, might regard literature as a barrier to learning, rather than a facilitator of learning. In addition, the matter of the content of the books to be studied might also play a role in distancing the working class from literary engagement; in many cases books were neither written by nor for the working class, and the possibility of empathetic engagement by this group is therefore much reduced. Any drive towards national unity in education would not be achieved if the working class was to be ignored or marginalized. Literature, as Gordon expresses it in this quote, is defined in a manner that has little to do with the working class. If this definition were to be shifted or broadened – for example, if the writings of working class people were to be included for study, which, perhaps, would shift the nature of our understanding of what literature is, then the working class would be more likely to regard the idea of literature as being representative of their concerns, and agree that studying such material is of value.

George Gordon expressed several opinions about authors of English literature, and, in the following quote, he particularly expressed his admiration for Shakespeare:

> It is common to call Dryden the 'Father of English Criticism.' If you look round the critics of the nineteenth century… you must note that Dryden, and indeed all his contemporaries who wrote criticisms… were critics only as they happened to be authors. Their critiques were prefaces to their own works… Their criticisms, in short, were personal pamphlets, not receptive and appreciative studies.
>
> You will see this best if you will look at their remarks about their predecessors: let us say, about Shakespeare… They even catalogue his faults: and indeed, sometimes they seem to dwell more upon his faults than on his merits. And altogether there is a lack of sublimity about their admiration, and of fervour in their adulation, that seems to argue a certain blindness to the man whom Coleridge so characteristically called 'the divine one, the morning star of poetry and of philosophy.'
>
> When they read Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher, what they looked for was the secret of their power. They were their pupils: we are only their students. They wished to learn how to do it themselves: all we wish to learn is how to admire them discreetly to the best advantage. We read them to be better men: they also read them, no doubt, to be better men… but chiefly to be better dramatists and better poets. (Gordon 1950, 175-176)

This extract is of significance because it locates Shakespeare at the centre of English literary appreciation – a position that remains unchanged in the 21st Century – but it also suggests other authors who are worth studying. Furthermore, it suggests that there is a

heritage in English literature that is worth recognizing, despite Raleigh's conviction of the value of the new. Indeed, it states that the authors who followed Shakespeare and his contemporaries were aware of Shakespeare's superior talents, and tried to emulate him. Gordon therefore sees the English tradition as stretching back to Shakespeare, and modern authors as taking their cue from his works. The Shakespearean influence, in Gordon's opinion, is established and unchallengeable. He makes no comment about Shakespeare's predecessors – no mention is made of Chaucer or earlier texts from the Anglo-Saxon period.

Gordon also makes the comment that has become so frequently associated with English Studies – we read in order to be "better men". The assumption is made that the reading of texts such as Shakespeare's will make us live more moral lives. No suggestion is made about how to read – instead, it is assumed that the mere reading process itself will lead to an inevitable improvement of the reader's moral condition. Gordon also differentiates writers/authors from the ordinary reading public, in that he states that writers will read Shakespeare and others in order to gain a level of proficiency that they themselves do not initially possess. The implication is that writing is a skill that requires ability and insight in order to be effective, and that reading significant authors can provide the basis for recognizing and developing these skills. A further implication is that there is an inherent notion of a canon of worthwhile literary works being suggested here – a reservoir of good writing – from which the reader and other authors can glean insights and proficiencies that direct them to higher order thinking, and greater reflection, than those of the ordinary literary statement. This notion of canon development would become a central theme of what texts to study, and it would imply a selection process, and criteria whereby texts would be judged. These criteria were not a concern of Gordon, who commented on Shakespeare and others as if the society in general would agree about the value of these texts. The notion of a canon, however, also suggests a division regarding texts – those that would be good enough, and those that would not be taught because of some element of the texts that would make them inferior or possibly undesirable.

The notion of text selection, of course, is linked to social values as well as personal opinion. Thus, the idea of taste, as mentioned by Raleigh, might have a role to play here. Raleigh would reject a scientific process for text selection and interpretation, which would result in the role of personal insight and intuition being significantly emphasized. The Cambridge School, as will be seen, developed a more rigorously developed idea of what texts to teach, but they were unable to come up with totally satisfactory answers on this matter. Text selection was based on how the texts reflected and commented on the values that these critics held to be important in English Studies, and this would be based on opinion rather than objective points of reference and measurement, as is the case when matters of values are considered. Even if an attempt was made to be totally scientific about assessing texts, it is apparent that the subject matter – literature – would be ill-suited to this sort of process, because its nature is that of human expression, and by definition it requires exploration and interpretation, and demands a range of opinions rather than a definite answer or judgement. Part of the significance of literature is that it invites discussion/debate, and provides a dimension of ambiguity, internal dissonance, or fracturing within any given work. This is important because it suggests that literature can provide a form of intellectual impetus with regard to significant human questions, such as: “How should we live?” Furthermore, because of the ambiguous nature of literature, there is the possibility of spurring debate without any guarantee of finding final answers.

Gordon’s comments on methodology are couched in similar terms, as is made clear in his inaugural lecture, entitled *The Discipline of Letters*:

> Most of the English scholars whom I have known, whether they admitted it or not, have been suspicious of method, and not very ready to discuss it. They had their own way of working, and were willing to suppose that other men had theirs. There is something of the poet and the solitary in our Englishmen which makes

> them trust and value most that part of their work which method cannot quite explain, the part that comes to them. University seminars of the standard pattern cannot easily be made of this instinctive stuff. The reaping machine is not seen at its best when the harvest is poetry… But we need not be alarmed. Whatever advances we may make in the system, there will always be room for the whimsical Englishman and the older methods. No progress in the organization and machinery of research can ever supersede the single inquirer and the lonely work of the mind. (Gordon 1946, 15)

Here Gordon expresses quite clearly what he thinks of the value of systematic investigation into the study of literature – and it is obvious that his opinion is at odds with that of people who believe in a rigorous method of critical engagement. The intuitive process suggested by Gordon is problematic because it seems to lack a governing scientific principle; the criteria seem vague, the system haphazard or 'whimsical', to use Gordon's expression, and the engagement is by a solitary individual, for whom there is meaning and value, and therefore does not supply a universal truth, but rather individual enlightenment. It does, however, have some appeal, in that there is an individual response, and it seems almost appropriate when dealing with literature. Gordon makes the significant point that the subject matter is poetry (or literature) and that it is not suited to the process of harvesting by machine, so to speak. Later critics such as Richards and Leavis to some extent applied a system of methodology that was structured and systematic – perhaps closer to the idea of harvesting by machine, which in itself is interesting, because Leavis particularly did not approve of products of the machine age. Gordon makes the following claim regarding the lack of method as practiced in British universities at the time:

> I doubt if any other country has produced so many unprofessional scholars, of so much devotion and of so high a quality. That want of system is not to be despised which breeds Gibbons and Malones. (Gordon 1946, 15)

Whilst there is some truth in this, it must also be acknowledged that the scholars mentioned are hardly run-of-the-mill. It is for the ordinary student that a methodology of critical engagement should be developed; the truly great student might achieve greatness without it, although this is by no means certain. Gordon acknowledges this when he makes the following statement:

> They [the students] have outgrown our friendly makeshift of supervision; what almost did for ten will never do for seventy. It is generally agreed that something must be done. We can no longer support by acquiescence a system which invites young men and women to advance knowledge, and having brought them from the ends of the earth, bids them good-day at the door of the Bodleian… There are things which even the born scholar, when he is young, needs to be shown, if for no other reason than to save him time. (Gordon 1946, 13)

Two issues of significance are mentioned here; firstly, the issue of scale. A methodology that functions well with a small number of students may fail to suffice when the number of students is increased. In effect, individual tutoring can work when numbers are small, but lecturing and seminars are more effective in time management when the numbers increase. The second issue is that of the time necessary to achieve academic success. In effect, Gordon is stating that some things simply need to be communicated to students, in order that they have more time to explore and consider more important aspects of learning. This matter is not mentioned by other critics, but it is central to the learning process. Gordon is implying that the best method would be that of solitary study or exploration, with informed direction from a supervisor, and appropriate time-frames for the development of knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, he rejects the notion of scientific principles in the study of literature. Finally, he argues that all students – even the best scholars – require some assistance in order to best use their available time. By this, perhaps, he is suggesting the need for creating a system of

learning support for students, although this idea is not overtly stated or developed. He does, however, also acknowledge that he does not have a final idea about how to accommodate the learning needs of the more than 200 students in the School of English Studies at Oxford. He says simply that something must be done.

The Newbolt Committee, Nationalism and Liberalism

Having considered the early years of the Oxford School I will now move on to address the establishment of the Newbolt Committee, which came into being within a year of the armistice in 1918 (Baldick 1987, 93). The committee's report in 1921 was to have a profound effect on the development of English Studies in Britain. The Committee's recommendations would locate the matter of nationalism as a significant concept and motivator in the establishment of the discipline of English Studies. D. J. Palmer, in his seminal work on the rise of English studies (Palmer 1965), pointed out that long before any formal curriculum was introduced into either schools or universities, there was in England a sense of national pride in literature. During the Elizabethan era there was recognition of poetry that was English in character. This literature was favourably compared with the works of Italian and French writers of the time. Chaucer was regarded as a figure of central significance, a national treasure, and the source of worthwhile poetic enterprise. The manner in which these judgements were reached remains a mystery – no critical practice of the time seems to be recorded; nevertheless, there is evidence in these claims about English poetry that some sort of critical process was being used. This long, erratic and unsystematic process provided the foundations on which the Newbolt Committee could base some of its statements, and served to emphasise the role of nationalistic sentiment in education.

The Committee addressed a matter linked to a concern about education expressed by Lloyd George in September 1918, and quoted by Baldick, thus:

> The most formidable institution we had to fight in Germany was not the arsenals of Krupps or the yards in which they turned out submarines, but the schools of Germany. They were our most formidable competitors in business and our most terrible opponents in war. An educated man is a better worker, a more formidable warrior, and a better citizen. That was only half-comprehended before the war.
>
> (Baldick 1987, 93)

Education, in this speech, is regarded as a utilitarian process – in other words, education is presented as a means-ends process, one in which schooling is seen as predominantly vocational rather than valuable for its own sake. The worker and the warrior, as mentioned by Lloyd George, are figures of specific purpose, and the notion of a generalised, liberal education seems somewhat removed from this idea. Only the notion of a better citizen, mentioned almost as an afterthought, links to the humanising aspect of a liberal education. Lloyd George's focus is on the matter of the war, and in September 1918 this is fully understandable. However, his commentary is not focused on the future – the hoped-for era of peace – that will, perhaps, require people to be educated not simply in terms of vocational skills. His concern is the provision of citizens, via the schools, to address the demands of the society, including the military requirements. One element of his speech links to an already stated matter – the idea of nationalism. There is a perceived need for a national education system that matches or improves on that of Germany; a *them* and *us* scenario is presented, and a sense of competition engendered. Again, in light of the war, this position is not just understandable, it is almost expected. Education here is conceived of purely in utilitarian terms that are associated with knowledge as application – in other words, some sort of vocational knowledge.

In response to the need for a revision of the education system in Britain, four

committees were established between 1918 and 1919; they were to report on the teaching of science, modern languages, classics, and English. The Committee charged with investigating the state of English was chaired by Sir Henry Newbolt, and included Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and J. H. Fowler, both of whom were distinguished academics. The Committee was given the following task:

> To inquire into the position occupied by English [Language and Literature] in the educational system of England, and to advise how its study may best be promoted in schools of all types, including Continuation Schools and in Universities, and other Institutions of Higher Learning, regard being had to:
>
> (1) the requirements of a liberal education
>
> (2) the needs of business, the professions and public services; and,
>
> (3) the relation of English to other studies
>
> (Mathieson 1975, 72)

The first issue is of significance because it addresses the matter of a liberal education. It is significant because it suggests that this matter was a point of great concern, and that the demands of commerce and the professions were not the sole determinants of what should be expected of an education system. Instead, there is a suggestion that English Studies was regarded as being an element of system that would encourage a general form of education, not necessarily vocational. The difficulty with this, however, is that the Newbolt Committee seems not to have extrapolated, in detail, what they meant by a 'liberal education', except that it is regarded as a ‘general’ education.

The second point, above, is of significance because, whilst it is clear that a liberal education (however loosely termed/defined) was a central concern for the Committee, it is also clear that, with regard to the requirements of the education system, the worlds of

business, the professions and the public services still had a role to play. The implication here is that, whilst the Committee regarded a general education as important, there was still a concern that those who had undergone a liberal education should be employable – these people, after all, were not all going to run the country from Westminster, and rely predominantly on their debating skills to make a contribution to society. The role of a vocational element to education cannot be denied; however, the significance thereof seems to have shifted in order to accommodate the general education associated with liberal thinking.

The third aspect considered by the Committee is important because it relates to the way in which English Studies is located within a broader curriculum, and how the subjects relate to one another. The role of classics was downplayed, for example, because it was regarded as divisive, being linked to class-related problems in Britain. At the same time, the Committee felt obliged to recognise the value of the classics; in cases where students were well taught, and were talented and receptive to the subject, the Committee argued that there was no better form of education. This was not, however, the general state of affairs across the nation. By contrast, English Studies was seen to be a unifying discipline, as opposed to the class division associated with classics. The need to develop a national identity was one of the matters that spurred the Committee to make recommendations in favour of English studies. English Studies was therefore championed by the Newbolt Committee because it was regarded, firstly, as central to liberal education in Britain, and, secondly, as important in developing national unity. The following quote provides great insight into the justification of the greater implementation of English studies in the education system, as claimed by the Committee:

> An education of this kind is the greatest benefit that could be conferred on any citizen of a great state, and that the common right to it, the common discipline and enjoyment of it, the common possession of the tastes and associations connected with it, would form a new element of national unity, linking together the

> mental life of all classes by experiences which have hitherto been the experiences of a limited section... If we use English literature as a means of contact with great minds, a channel by which to draw upon their experience with profit and delight, and a bond of sympathy between the members of a human society, we shall succeed, as the best teachers of the classics have often succeeded in their more limited field.
>
> (Mathieson 1975, 74)

It is clear from the above that there is an attempt to include all citizens in this liberal education enterprise – the restatement of the word 'common' confirms that this is the case, as does the reference to national unity. There is an expressed desire to provide an education that spans all classes and connects to the 'great minds', although there is a strong suggestion that these great minds have already been identified as those who have been central to the education 'experiences of a limited section' – in other words, the elite section of society (in this case, almost certainly the wealthy class). The further implication is that the general population will be uplifted, so to speak, through the exposure to the experiences of the aforementioned elite, and that the elite will not have to develop an appreciation of the literature of the ordinary people. In a sense, this is a statement regarding the notion of canon formation, in which identified texts are regarded as central to general education. The focus of this type of education moves away from the experience and concerns of the ordinary citizen, and places the concerns of the elite at the centre of the education system. A similar experience would occur during the period of colonial expansion, in which the literature of the metropolis would be regarded as central to education, and the texts of the colonised would be largely ignored.

It is clear from these examples that a society or a collectivity of nations such as the Commonwealth needs to accept that, if English studies is to be of a general nature, then the society as a whole must be represented in terms of the issues under consideration, and the schisms between elements of the society – for example, class differences or gender differences – need to be acknowledged as part of the matter under

consideration for study. Society is not a homogenous entity and therefore one element of the society cannot claim that its interests are universal. Consequently the purpose of English Studies cannot be a narrow one in which specific interests are supported under the pretext of representing the broad range of issues in the group. In addition, the nature of society is a human creation with change and development as a given condition, and therefore the matters underpinning the justification for the study of English literature are bound to change over time, and in different locales.

As Baldick points out (Baldick 1987, 94), the Newbolt Committee report can be regarded as focusing on two central issues: firstly, a compulsion towards the notion of a national literature, and in effect the notion of Englishness (as opposed to the Germanic aspects of philology); secondly, a recognition of the need for an organized system of education "based upon the native language and literature, which the committee took as its aim." (Baldick 1987, 95) The Committee's recommendations would support the development of the schools of English Studies at both Oxford and Cambridge, both of which were scholarly enterprises in their infancy.

Baldick also makes the point, however, that the Newbolt Committee was overly ambitious in its views of the power and significance of literature:

> It seems that the visionary enthusiasm represented by the manifesto of 1921 had fostered a view of the importance of Culture's mission out of all proportion to its actual or possible social consequences, culminating in a deranged bitterness." (Baldick 1987, 104)

Baldick's point here is one to which I have alluded; individuals or institutions who wish to bring about social change might find reason to pause before assuming that they can achieve this social change through the teaching of literature, or through teaching values

through cultural studies, which would include literature. Whilst these subjects might, and generally do, offer the student the opportunity to critically engage with the values expressed in our society through culture, the manifestation of cultural artefacts, and their qualities, can prevent us from understanding or interpreting in the same way, and we should not, therefore, expect that social change of a simple, broad-based form, can be achieved. One-dimensional social engineering is not the province of literary interpretation, and no system can guarantee that a uniformity of understanding will result from teaching literature to a given group.

The Newbolt Committee did not suggest any specific texts to be studied in the English curriculum. Instead, they presented a broadly stated range of ideas, from primary school to tertiary study, in which general concepts were presented. Themes of nationalism were strongly present, and it can be inferred that the committee believed that texts of British origin were to be included in the teaching of English – as would be expected, since the name of the discipline determines this aspect of the content. Of significance here is the assumption that the Newbolt Committee made regarding the notion of English literature as a unifying force, rather than the divisive element of the Classics, in that the Classics were taught to a select group of students, as opposed to the general population who, it was assumed, would be able to grasp the essence of English literature. One aspect of this assumption is that English literature was perceived as one whole discipline, and that there was no need to consider a range of texts, since all these texts derived from one concept, and held shared values. For the Newbolt Committee, it seems, notions of class difference, amongst other points of conflict, did not apply to the discipline of English Studies, nor did particular schools of thought, such as the Augustan poets, or the Romantic poets, have a more valuable role to play. Thus, all aspects of English literature would appear valid under these conditions; all English texts would have an equivalence.

One issue about which the Newbolt Committee was certain was in the field of English methodology. The Committee believed that it was necessary for English studies to

develop its own methodology, and not to simply copy the methodology of the classics. This is an important point, because it grants English studies a greater degree of autonomy; the discipline would not be seen as simply an extension – or diluted form – of the classics. The notion of a specific teaching and studying methodology associated with this discipline would later lead to a range of arguments about how to teach English studies, and what texts should be studied, and this argument has continued up to the present day. However, despite stating this concern, the Committee did not elaborate on the methodological process it deemed appropriate. In a sense, the Committee was laying down principles, and would leave the development of specific practices to the lecturers in the institutions.

The significance of the Newbolt Committee is, in short, that it endorsed English literature (or English Studies) as a subject, and it also located the education process as a whole within a liberal perspective. The importance of this is that these two aspects of education were given official approval. English Studies was no longer located within Working Men's Colleges and the like – instead, the subject had gained some degree of legitimacy and would be further developed in the ancient universities.

The various institutions and individuals considered in this chapter present an image of English Studies that is somewhat removed from that of the 21st Century condition in which there is a proliferation of text-books, journal articles and conferences addressing the various literary works and theoretical issues that are presented at school and university for study; there is a veritable industry associated with and deriving from English Studies. In the time period covered in detail in this chapter it is clear that the discipline was more haphazard, and more dependent on the opinions of a few people, each of whom seemed to direct the discipline through personal influence rather than an attempt at rigorous systematic intellectual engagement. There would be a development in the direction of the rigorous and the systematic in the years that followed, and certain individuals, at Cambridge rather than Oxford, would provide the intellectual impetus that would ultimately locate English Studies as a core discipline at tertiary institutions, and

provide a methodology whose influence resonates to this day. This series of developments is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two: The Rise of English Studies. The Consolidation of the Discipline

Section 1: The Early Years at Cambridge

Establishing the Cambridge School

The significance of the Cambridge School of English Studies is substantial, so much so, that it is not overstating the case to say that the academics involved in the School established and developed the most influential aspects of the discipline. In the course of this chapter it will become clear that the Cambridge School addressed several matters that were crucial in providing the discipline with academic respectability. These matters included the development of a systematic, rigorous methodology for teaching literature, as well as locating literature within the concept of English culture, and, in addition, establishing a canon of sorts, in that they addressed the issue of selection of literary works for study. Finally, they regarded their subject as important, never relegating it to the status of "mere words". At the same time, it will become clear that the various people involved here did not agree about all the issues they considered and the discipline was, therefore, not the seamless area of study it seemed. The most coherent, complete and significant contribution would be that of F. R. Leavis, although each of his colleagues played a role in contributing to the final conception of English Studies that Leavis presented.

I will consider each of these issues as broad themes, but prior to that I will provide brief details on each of the Cambridge academics. The people I will consider include Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, I. A. Richards, and F. R. Leavis. In addition I will refer to T. S. Eliot, the poet and critic. Eliot was never formally employed at Cambridge University, and never studied there – he was an alumnus of Harvard University and Oxford (Ackroyd 1984), but he developed a sense of collegiality with Richards in particular, although he politely declined Richards offer to take up a post at Cambridge (Ackroyd 1984, 99-100). Because of his friendship with Richards, and his academic affinity and

influence with regard to the Cambridge School, it is acceptable to include Eliot as a member, of sorts, of that school.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch; Establishing the Initial Parameters

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (frequently referred to as “Q”) was one of the most significant academics who contributed to the establishment of the Cambridge School, which was founded in 1917, some years after the Oxford School. The pattern of the development of the discipline at Cambridge mirrors to some extent that of Oxford, but this changed once Richards and Leavis became part of the academic process.

E. M. W Tillyard provides illuminating insights into Quiller-Couch's contribution to the discipline of English studies at Cambridge:

> I have said little of Q so far, because in the matter of reforms of syllabus he was mainly passive. His activities were social or rhetorical. Regulations bored him, and he was content to leave them in other hands. Nor was he willing to submit to that constant attendance at meetings without which a man cannot be an effective routine politician. (Tillyard 1958, 49)

Tillyard adds, however, that Quiller-Couch was a significant figure, despite his lack of interest in administrative matters. His support and presence was crucial to the founding and development of the school; had he taken an oppositional position, the school would in all likelihood have foundered. However, it is clear that this type of personality is not ideally suited to being a driving force in the establishment of a discipline – he seems not to have been bothered by issues relating to the details of an academic department, and

appears to have been comfortable to allow matters to run unattended. In a system that is already well-established it is possible to operate in this manner from time to time, but in a system that has just been established there is the need for greater involvement – both administrative and intellectual – in order to ensure the process achieves a level of success.

With regard to the purpose of teaching English literature at Cambridge, Quiller-Couch made the following statement:

> Now let me repeat that we aim here to train *capacity*, to breed men of a certain intellectual quality rather than to give them, or expect from them, reams of memorised facts and dates. (Quiller-Couch 1929, 179)

It is not clear what Quiller-Couch means in this statement, although he seems to assume that his meaning is obvious. He defines neither the term capacity, nor the idea of “a certain intellectual quality”. This is problematic because there is a need for greater precision in the establishment of a discipline. It is not clear whether his fellow academics would have known what this meant, and it is a statement that cannot be included in academic policy, because it is too vague. In a sense this type of thinking is not too far from Raleigh’s notion of intuitive understanding; neither is useful in providing an academic discipline with respectability. It is clear, however, that he rejects mere memorization of facts, implying that he supports some sort of critical intellectual engagement.

Quiller-Couch addressed a range of issues in his writings/lectures. He makes an unusual reference to the matter of class in a lecture entitled 'On Selection', in the book *On the Art of Reading*, (unusual because it shows an awareness of social

circumstances constraining aspects of living, which did not seem to dominate the writings of the early critics), and there is no doubt that his sympathies lie with the economically dispossessed (Quiller-Couch 1920, 192). Quiller-Couch, therefore, does not locate himself within the frame of reference that regards British society as heterogeneous – he is aware of class differences and forms of fragmentation. Quiller-Couch recognises the inherent injustice in the class system that constrains the possibilities of significant learning, as well as restricting the possibility of acting/agency in the early 20th century. For Quiller-Couch there is not one Britain; there are strata within the society, and the strata are defined in terms of economic power, as well as the potential that each individual has to act with relative freedom within the society. This concern with issues of class would be echoed some years later by the Marxist-inspired critics, although these later critics saw the class issue as an institutionalised difference, whereas Quiller-Couch would not have subscribed to a simple economic framework as a point of reference.

Quiller-Couch expressed opinions about various texts, and, in *Adventures in Criticism*, an essay appears entitled *The Poor Little Penny Dreadful*, in which he considers the impact of bad books on the human character. He refutes the comments made by Arnold about the effect of literature on the human character, rejecting the likelihood of a book playing a determining role. He is in no way condemnatory about Penny Dreadfuls in this regard; he does not regard them as good books, in terms of their style, but he states that it is wrong to blame a text for a reader's bad behaviour. He focuses on a newspaper article in which a youngster, who was a reader of Penny Dreadfuls, had committed matricide. The opinion of the day was that the books had somehow caused this bad behaviour. Quiller-Couch's response is interesting:

> For indeed it is not possible to name any book out of which a perverted mind will not draw food for its disease. The whole fallacy lies in supposing literature the cause of the disease. Evil men are not evil because they read bad books: they

> read bad books because they are evil: and being evil, or diseased, they are quickly able to extract evil or disease from very good books. There is talk of disseminating the works of our best authors at a cheap rate, in the hope that they will drive the Penny Dreadful out of the market. But has good literature at the cheapest rates driven the middle classes from their false gods? And let it be remembered, to the credit of these poor boys, that they do buy their books. The middle classes take *their* poison on hire or exchange.
>
> But perhaps the full enormity of the cant about Penny Dreadfuls can best be appreciated by travelling to and fro for a week between London and Paris and observing the books read by those who travel with first-class tickets. I think a fond belief in Ivanhoe-within-reach-of-all would not long survive that experiment. (Quiller-Couch 1896, 149-150)

This extensive quote has many points of significance. The most striking matter here is that Quiller-Couch regards the issue of character formation, and the motivation to act in a dishonourable (or honourable) way as something generally beyond the influence of books. Instead, he regards people as interpreting books for their own ends – the evil person will find evil in a good book, he is quick to point out. If books have no influence on the human character, either positive or negative, we must ask why we bother to read them. It would seem that Quiller-Couch regards the influence of books on humanity as being superficial – almost superfluous. It is clear that the value of literature is reduced in a world where literary works are framed within an intellectual process that views their influence as limited.

The second aspect of this quote is the recognition of a class-based society. Once again Quiller-Couch shows respect for the poorer people of Britain, suggesting that they might read books of poor style, but that the texts read by the wealthier classes are no better.

Quiller-Couch seems to come to the conclusion that having access to good books will not necessarily lead to enlightenment and a more moral society. This is in opposition to the ideas of Arnold and others, who believed in books smoothing the character, as has been expressed in Chapter One.

Quiller-Couch locates books within a milieu of other contributors to the shaping of character; he argues that a child or young adult (although he did not use this terminology) is influenced by, amongst other things, his/her age, and associated level of maturity, as well as training and definite ideas about right and wrong (presumably from the parents), as well as the influence of a school system, "which means that he is to some extent watched and shielded". (Quiller-Couch 1896, 149) For Quiller-Couch, then, there is reason to look beyond the influence of texts/books on a person's behaviour – there are other social dimensions that contribute to character formation that are probably more significant. It is logical to accept that there are many possible influences on the shaping of the human character. If books are accepted as one such influence, then family values, broader social interactions, and other cultural engagements will also have a role to play. This issue will remain a point of debate throughout this and the following chapters.

Quiller-Couch was aware that Britain was not a homogenous society, and he seemed to have doubts about the notion of generally shared cultural values. Unlike Richards and Leavis, who succeeded him, he seemed not to be optimistic about the transformative power of literature. In this he seemed to be of a similar persuasion to that of Gordon; in essence, literature is merely one element of a greater social milieu, and it is not possible to influence society to a large extent because of this complex and extensive scenario.

Despite these misgivings, it is clear that Quiller-Couch held certain significant opinions. Ian MacKillop (MacKillop, 1995) presents the following picture in terms of Quiller-

Couch's contribution to establishing the Cambridge English tripos.[1] In October 1916, Quiller-Couch began a campaign to change the way in which English was taught at Cambridge:

> At that time English studies at Cambridge was merely 'Section A (English)' of the Modern Languages Tripos. The course required a knowledge of 500 years of literature, with specialization in the eighty-five years from 1700. On top of this work had to be done on writings… from 1200 to 1500 and Chaucer, not to mention the Wessex dialect, with possible questions on the cornet, flute and sackbut. Q remonstrated that 'the whole business of reading English literature in two years, to *know* it in any reputable sense of the word – let alone your learning to write English – is, in short, impossible.' (MacKillop 1995, 56)

Together with colleagues Forbes and Chadwick (an Anglo-Saxon specialist) Quiller-Couch devised the new Cambridge tripos. It included two parts; "Modern and Medieval" and "Early", with two examinations, thus establishing a complete degree in English studies. The modern part emphasized the development of critical engagement, whilst the early part retained an element of philology, though reduced from its previous prominence.

MacKillop presents the following information on the structure of the course and its examinations (this, in fact, was the structure of the examination written by F. R. Leavis in 1921):

[1] MacKillop explains the term in detail. In essence, the tripos was an archaic term referring to an examiner's three-legged stool. At Cambridge the tripos was constituted of two parts – One and Two. A BA degree in Leavis's time (the 1920s) required two parts, but they did not necessarily have to be offered by the same Department. Furthermore, a student could do a degree with two Part One elements, but not with two Part Two elements. At Cambridge, before the English tripos was created, a student could study English under the tripos of Modern and Medieval Languages. The original English tripos had only one part, which was further subdivided into two parts: students therefore had to take one part of another tripos to make up a degree.

ENGLISH LITERATURE: MODERN AND MEDIEVAL

1. Life, Literature and Thought (1350-1603)
2. History of English Literature (1600-)
3. Shakespeare, including passages (some unattributed) for comment, and questions on language, metre, literary history and criticism
4. Special Period of Literature (1789-1870)
5. Special Subject: Tragedy
6. History of Literary Criticism

For each there was a three-hour examination paper, five answers required, two more than was the norm in Britain from about 1970… (MacKillop 1995, 56-57)

The first point addresses how life and literature intersect, relate to one another, and provide mutual insights. The assumption here is that there is an inherent human interest in literature, in that it provides the possibility of critiquing life. It is not clear how this is to be achieved; the assumption seems to be that this connection is obvious.

MacKillop also provides the following examples of examination questions:

> ‘Shakespeare is incarnated uncompromising Feudalism in Literature’ (Walt Whitman). Criticize the validity of this judgement. May Shakespeare be said, of

> his sympathy with the feudal spirit, to incarnate in Coriolanus the vices of its virtues and in Falstaff the virtue of its vices?

And,

> Write short notes on any four of the following dramatists: Calderon, Lope de Vega, Racine, Voltaire, Otway, Kotzebue, Schiller, Alexandre Dumas (*fils*), Sardou, Shaw, Sudermann, Chekhov. (MacKillop 1995, 56-57)

The statement made in the first quote, above, regarding Coriolanus, is of interest. Although Shakespeare has been a central pillar of the English curriculum, Coriolanus is not one of the more commonly-studied plays. The major tragedies – *Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear,* and *Othello*– tend to make up the majority of the academic interest in Shakespeare. Quiller-Couch's question suggests that the students of his era were required to have a broader reading base, but at the same time the type of question being asked is familiar fare to the modern student – in essence, a form of analysis of character and theme. The matters of character and theme are important points, because it is here that matters pertaining to human values, beliefs and actions can be analysed, debated and explored. This is the moral dimension of English literature, and it is this that links to the notion of the good citizen. The student would be required to develop an argument is essay form, which is significantly different from writing short answers to specific questions.

The interesting aspect of the second question, on the dramatists, is twofold: firstly, the dramatists are not all writers in the English language, but it is evident that the examiners wanted to test the breadth of knowledge their students possessed. Secondly, included in the list of dramatists were relatively modern figures, such as Shaw, who was still alive

and writing plays at the time of the examination. The course therefore covered a broad range of works, and remained committed to both the historical and the current (Shakespeare and Shaw) at the time. This is, perhaps, somewhat surprising, because many English departments have been accused of looking backward, and being mired in the past, as well as being narrowly nationalistic in their choice of texts. The course for English study included a system of categorizing according to genres – the question above indicates a focus on dramatists, as opposed to novelists or poets. Clearly these works were regarded as being texts of different types, and were to be treated differently. This seems like a rudimentary observation, but it is central to the process of categorizing and labelling that would be part of the work of the Cambridge School; this type of identification and labelling is a fundamental part of the scientific process and is regarded as being a part of academic rigour.

Despite this aspect of academic rigour, it is clear that the question itself is vague. The requirement to “write short notes” on a range of authors and/or texts does not provide any criteria regarding the nature of these short notes. It is unclear whether there is a requirement of a critical engagement in these notes, or whether they should merely be descriptive. In addition, we can question whether the notes should be literary, in that they consider the written text of the plays, or whether an aspect of the dramatic can be introduced i.e. how the plays should be staged. There is no indication of the need for comparative engagement between the texts. In effect this question requires much more direction if it is to be regarded as expressing critical enquiry.

No theoretical underpinning is apparent in this question. It is clear that theoretical positions and assumptions are seen as unimportant – they need not be stated.

At the point in which Quiller-Couch was writing, and developing the establishment of the tripos, there was no faculty to speak of and no library devoted to English works,

although such a library was set up and developed during the early years of the course. There were initially only three lecturers, one of whom was Quiller-Couch, who were permanent appointees; much of the lecturing was done by temporary appointees who were paid on the basis of each student entering the class paying a fee for that class. (MacKillop 1995, 92) This would suggest a lack of coherent, focused activity. It also suggests idiosyncratic aspects to the presentation of lectures.

Quiller-Couch recommended that students read extensively, and also provided a list of required authors who should be included in the study of English literature. The list included Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Donne, Milton, Dryden, Pope, all of the Romantic poets, and the novels of Dickens, amongst others. The list covers a great range of writing and does not suggest, for example, that the Augustan writers are either more important, or lesser than, the Romantic poets. Quiller-Couch seemed to expect students to read a great number of texts, and to rely on their lectures and their own intellect to make sense of the reading experience. The list is of interest, because it provides a large number of authors and texts, but there is nothing from the United States or from the colonies on the list. Although the major output from these sources was to follow in the second half of the 20th century, books such as *Moby Dick* and *The Story of an African Farm* were already in print. Possibly they were excluded precisely because they had been written in places other than Britain, and Quiller-Couch regarded his course as being not simply English studies in the sense of English language studies, but British-generated English studies. Baldick makes reference to a passage in Quiller-Couch's writing in which he condemns German scholarship as completely unsuited to the preparation of students to read English literature, and he argues further that German speakers' vocal chords are unable to read English poetry. (Baldick 1987, 88) Based on this he would probably not have acknowledge the contributions to English writing that were sourced from anywhere other than the British Isles.

The list of authors chosen by Quiller-Couch is indicative of a need for extensive reading

on the part of the student – the volume of works to be addressed is impressive, even if the focus is narrow. Clearly Quiller-Couch expected enthusiasm and committed engagement from his students. Quiller-Couch was wary of lectures and lecturers dominating the learning process; he believed that universities presented too many lectures, and he argued instead in favour of purposeful reading as a method of learning:

> Listening in lectures is important, but a greater deal of subject matter, expressed in various ways, and allowing students the opportunity to work at their own pace, is achieved through reading. (Quiller-Couch 1929, 176)

It is apparent from the above that Quiller-Couch regards lectures as important only insofar as they direct a student's reading, and provide essential knowledge, although this knowledge is limited in scope. Reading material beyond the focus of the lectures would provide students with a more expansive consideration of the discipline. Whilst the lecturer's input is limited, in terms of time and content, the lecture is significant in that it provides a sense of focus, and directs the students' reading. Without this, the students' reading could be aimless and of little value to the learning process.

The process suggested by Quiller-Couch is of interest because it suggests that the student is, to a large degree, responsible for his/her own learning, through extended reading not covered in lectures. There is the advantage that students progress 'at their own pace', but the disadvantage of the students' rate of progress depending on the commitment of the students to engage in the learning process at an acceptable level, as well as their having an effective self-orientation to making meaning of the reading process. One of the issues here is that Quiller-Couch does not identify a methodology to be followed; the process of reading is left up to the student.

He is also expressing a perennial concern of educators working in a system that uses examinations, questioning whether they are a just and reliable form of student evaluation. In this claim he is undermining not just the examination process, but the institution that administers the examinations – at this point the Civil Service. He is suggesting that the intention of examinations is flawed, and that the process itself is invalid, in that they do not reflect the student's true knowledge and ability. Bearing in mind that these examinations have a role to play in establishing whether a person is fit for public office, or for an administrative position in a social institution, Quiller-Couch's commentary is very critical indeed.

In his book *On the Art of Reading* he addresses a series of topics in lecture format, taking his students through a set of ideas that build on one another. Thus, he introduces the topic of reading, and then considers specific things such as reading the Bible (three lectures) and Children's Reading (two lectures) as well as addressing the need for or purpose of a School of English. For Quiller-Couch it is clear that reading with understanding is an important part of the process of study, although he never addressed the issue of method effectively.

Quiller-Couch adopted a systematic approach to the study of English literature, but he allowed the students to determine much of their own progress and direction of study. His concern about examinations is one that has echoes in the present day, in which a more comprehensive and just system of assessment is considered. At the same time, examinations retain a dimension of significance because they address remembered information, as well as arguments about matters that are regarded as central to a discipline.

Richards and Rigorous Process

During the time that Quiller-Couch was at Cambridge, a new colleague arrived to whom Quiller-Couch would be a mentor. He was I. A. Richards, and he was to have a significant influence on the teaching of English at universities and schools, achieving levels of influence in Britain, the USA, and in far-flung places such as China. Born in Sandbach, Cheshire, in 1893, Richards first attended Cambridge in 1911. (Richards 1922, xxv-xxvi) He began his academic career reading History at Cambridge but he soon tired of it, claiming that it was merely a record of "things which should not have happened." (Richards 1922, xxvi) Instead, after one term, he changed his focus to the Moral Sciences, which largely focused on philosophy, but with a link to the growing field of psychology, which informed a great deal of his thought in subsequent years. Richards' first four papers, published in 1919, were in the field of aesthetics; his work, therefore, is eclectic in origin, although he would narrow his focus to the field of literature and the study of language. It was at Cambridge that Richards became aware of the commentary of Matthew Arnold on culture and literature:

> ... Richards wanted to raise the level of reading so that works of art might exert their formative influence on character... Richards shared Arnold's vision of the power of art to refine one's perception of what is lasting and profound in human life, to liberate potentialities within the self, and to put oneself at the service of the perfection of culture. (Russo 1989, 22)

Once again the idea of literature, or cultural expression, having an influence on the shaping of human character is a claim made with regard to the justification of English Studies. Little evidence is put forward regarding this claim; there is nothing more substantiating than the intuition that coloured Raleigh's thinking, or the vagueness apparent in the claims made by Quiller-Couch regarding human capacity. Richards clearly believes in the transformative power of art/literature, but he provides no insight into how this process is to take place. The terminology here refers to "works of art", which may include literature, but may also include other forms of cultural expression.

There is a link here to Quiller-Couch's idea that literature cannot act alone, but is part of a formative process that includes other social institutions such as family, church and school.

Richards, like Arnold before him, and Leavis after him, regarded the arts as central to reflecting society's values, and part of the purpose of studying/teaching literature would therefore be the consideration of these values, and the transmission of values that were culturally significant, as implied thus:

> The arts are our storehouse of recorded values. They spring from and perpetuate hours in the lives of exceptional people, when their control and command of experience is at its highest, hours when the varying possibilities of existence are most clearly seen and the different activities which may arise are most exquisitely reconciled… Both in the genesis of a work of art, in the creative moment, and in its aspect as a vehicle of communication, reasons can be found for giving to the arts a very important place in the theory of Value.
>
> (Richards 1924, 32)

Richards is focusing on the arts as a reservoir of values. There is probably truth in this, but there must be some doubt about whether the arts are our only storehouse of values, or whether there are values stored in other aspects of human existence. Certainly, in the world of the sciences there is an acknowledged search for truth, and in the world of technology – which is in essence applied science – there is the expression of the need for human control of the conditions of living, through manipulating the environment, and to thereby determine to some extent our degree of physical comfort. Furthermore, in many instances the arts might reflect values, but they might not be the source of those values; thus, in the case of some works of art such as the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel,

the art represents values derived from religion, but it is the religion that is the reservoir of the values. Yet again, in customs and mores within society, the behaviour of the people is dependent on the investment of values. The people may be influenced by the arts, but it is not something to be taken for granted. Some psychologists might very well argue that it is the family, rather than the arts, that is the reservoir of values. The point here is that the location of values within a society is a debated one.

What is of significance in the quote above is that Richards seems to regard the creation of a work of art as something of great skill and craftsmanship, and of something limited to only the few, exceptional beings in our society. He conceives of art as an elite object, in that very few can create it, but as commonplace, in that anybody has the opportunity to appreciate such works. Based on this quote, it would seem that Richards does not acknowledge the ordinary person's creative endeavours as being of artistic worth.

The aspect of the arts that holds special significance in terms of value is twofold: firstly, the arts are a record of social and human concerns, as expressed by people within the context of the society. Secondly, they are a source of ethical engagement, in which moral lessons can be depicted and debated or discussed. As a vehicle, literature provides the reader with the possibility to consider human action and then evaluate or judge it. In effect, the arts provide us with scenarios in which moral choices are presented, and consequences addressed. In Richards' words:

> The arts, if rightly approached, supply the best data available for deciding what experiences are more valuable than others.
>
> (Richards 1924, 33)

This is a contentious claim because it links to the matter of the significance of English

as opposed to, say, philosophy in engaging in debate about matters pertaining to morals and moral behaviour. For Richards, human experience is filtered through artistic expression, and it is this expression which allows us to explore our human condition.

Richards was selective about the value of texts for literary study – in his opinion, some texts were of greater value than others. In particular, he was suspicious of many texts that were produced in the modern world for financial gain, and regarded many of these as appealing to the lowest common denominator of society, and therefore of little moral or intellectual value:

> With the increase of population the problem presented by the gulf between what is preferred by the majority and what is accepted as excellent by the most qualified opinion has become infinitely more serious and appears likely to become threatening in the near future. (Richards 1924, 36)

Richards does not state what he regards as the most qualified opinion, although we can assume that he regards people in this category to draw their values from a similar source; it is of interest to note that he seems to regard the section of society from which we derive our values as being somewhat monolithic – there is no indication of great diversity in his envisioning of society. He seems to think that that which is valuable is derived from the same, fairly narrowly-defined point of reference, and it is inflexibly presented, almost as if it were an observable, universal and unchanging situation. This notion does not accommodate possibilities of social fragmentation on the basis of race, gender, and class. In a sense this is a false representation of society and will, consequently, be rejected by critics who argue in favour of a view that is based on fragmentation or division in society along race, class, gender or other lines. It is of interest that Richards' mentor, Quiller-Couch, seemed to be aware of social divisions, strata, or fragmentation, in a way that is not reflected in Richards' work.

Despite the lack of commentary on class divisions, Richards follows Arnold in that he writes about the majority of the population in conflict with the creators of and keepers of worthwhile values, and of a retreat into a fortress, from where, no doubt, the minority engage in an honourable conflict against the onslaught of the uncouth, philistine mass. The image of the fortress is one of a beleaguered society, and the image is more troubling because the conflict that threatens to ensue is an internal conflict – the barbarians are almost within the gates. This issue about the enlightened few and the philistine mass echoes Arnold's concern about his doubting if the vast majority of people could benefit from the arts. Richards adds the following comment about commercialism:

> …We have not yet fathomed the more sinister potentialities of the cinema and the loud-speaker, and there is some evidence, uncertain and slight, no doubt, that such things as 'best-sellers' (compare *Tarzan* with *She*), magazine verses, mantelpiece pottery, Academy pictures, Music Hall songs, County Council buildings, War Memorials… are descending in merit. Notable exceptions, in which the multitude are better advised than the experts, of course occur sometimes, but not often.
>
> (Richards 1924, 36)

In considering the above quote, we recognise that the majority of the issues/items mentioned are of the modern era. There is a sense that technology, and expanding commercialism are adding to the difficulties in engaging with cultural experiences/artefacts that have real value. The selection is also somewhat odd, in that mantelpiece pottery is bundled together with War Memorials; a strange combination indeed. It would seem that Richards regards everything from ornaments to architecture as a cultural expression that needs to be analysed to establish the values from which it is derived. As will be shown in the next chapter, this is similar to the concerns expressed by William Morris, who considered architecture, furniture and other craft-

based objects as part of cultural experience, although his theoretical position was vastly different.

Richards was concerned about the acceptance or rejection of types of art – he believed that we should reject what he termed bad art. For Richards, in the case of bad art, the value of what is communicated is worthless. However, he differentiated this from what he termed defective art, in which he stated that the communication used is poor, making the establishment of meaning difficult. It is clear, however, that Richards' notion of value and art is located within a broader understanding of values within society. (Richards 1922, xxix) Like Arnold's "good poetry", Richards' notion of bad art needs considerable explanation. In some sense Richards' work is inherently conservative. It would seem that all human expression will be considered from a perspective that is previously established/created, in order to decide whether it is good or bad art. This implies a fixed point of judgement, even if the context of expression and interpretation is changing.

Richards devoted much of his time between the years 1919 and 1929 to developing a methodology for the analysis and criticism of literature. After developing his methodology, which he termed Practical Criticism, his interest in language teaching steadily moved away from literature and he began work on creating a Basic English vocabulary of approximately 850 words, in order to assist citizens of China and Japan with communication in English. He travelled extensively for several years – to China, Japan, Canada and the USA, and lectured on literary topics as well as working in the field of Basic English. He worked in China, with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation, until 1938 (Richards 1922, xlii), and then, with encouragement from T. S. Eliot, accepted a post in the department of English at Harvard University, where he conducted research in the field of English Second Language Learning. I will consider T. S. Eliot's influence and contribution to English Studies more comprehensively later in this chapter.

In developing his methodology, Richards engaged in a process whereby, amongst other things, he explored student's abilities to interpret literature. To facilitate this, he presented his classes with a range of poems on sheets of paper. These pages were distributed to classes for commentary. This implies that the poems themselves were not epic in length, since they were each accommodated on a single sheet of paper. Furthermore, there is evidence that these poems would not be unusual in a list of poems for study in any 20th or 21st Century university English course i.e. they would be accepted as part of the canon.

Unlike Raleigh and Quiller-Couch, Richards was extremely systematic, approaching the subject of literary criticism in a manner approximating that of science, with careful definition of terms, and the stating of precise relationships between the various elements of criticism. Furthermore, in keeping with Arnold's vision of the significance of culture, he saw literature as an element of culture that could make a difference to the conditions of living of the ordinary person. His concern with precision would bring him into conflict with other critics, notably F. R. Leavis, who accused him of being too scientific in his analysis.

Richards was very methodical in his approach to matters of criticism; he defined terms with greater care than his predecessors. For example, he speaks of two elements that constitute a critical statement: (1) the critical part, and (2) the technical part. The former refers to the value of the experience gained through reading the literary work, and the latter refers to the ways and means in which the experience is achieved.

Joan Bennett has the following to say on this matter:

> Among the many valuable achievements of *Principles of Literary Criticism*, as of

> the later *Practical Criticism*, was the provision of verbal tools to insure that we knew what we were talking about. For example, I.A.R. alerted us to the danger of confusing two quite different activities by calling them both "criticism". That term, he suggested, should be confined to evaluative judgments; on the other hand comments upon diction, metre, structure, etc., should be called technical: "All remarks as to the ways and means by which experiences arise or are brought about are technical, but critical remarks are about the values of experiences and the reasons for regarding them as valuable or not valuable." (Bennett 1973, 51)

This detailed and precise definition of terminology is useful, but it has its limits. For example, the notion of what is valuable needs to be defined, and the concept of 'evaluative judgments' is equally in need of clarification. Thus, while Richards engaged in a process of defining and clarifying some terms, the terms he used to do so needed some defining and clarifying themselves.

The importance of this aspect of Richards' work is that he is moving English Studies away from vagueness towards something like precision. In addition, he is critically engaged in analysing and commenting on his own critical process, which is in itself significant. He presents a heightened awareness of the critical process in which he himself is engaged – he is thinking about his own thinking, which is evidence of an ever growing understanding of the literary critical process itself.

Richards had the following to say about the need for greater clarification of the process of criticism:

> Most critical remarks state in an abbreviated form that an object causes certain experiences, and as a rule the form of the statement is such as to suggest that

> the object has been said to possess certain qualities. But often the critic goes further and affirms that the effect in his mind is due to special particular features of the object. In this case he is pointing out something about the object in addition to its effect upon him, and this fuller kind of criticism is what we desire. Before his insight can greatly develop, however, a very clear demarcation between the object, with its features, and his experience, which is the effect of contemplating it, is necessary. The bulk of critical literature is unfortunately made up of examples of their confusion.
>
> (Richards 1924, 22-23)

In this comment it becomes evident that Richards is concerned about elements of experience relating to the field of psychology (the mind of the critic), and also the field of aesthetics (the aspects of the object that have an effect on the perceiver). Again, Richards is careful to divide the experience into various aspects, in order to categorise and consider. He is also clearly interested in defining elements of the object and the observer, so as to establish cause and effect, and to categorise and demarcate features in terms of the effects they have on the observer. This is a form of scientific process, but there is an acceptance that part of the process is the critical engagement in the mind of the observer. The requirement of scientific objectivity is therefore not met, since the reflective dimension of the observer's mind is a dimension of the process, and is clearly a subjective matter. For Richards, then, there is a need for a rigorous process of critical engagement, but he would reject claims that the process is scientific because it fails to meet the criteria of objectivity and universality, among other things. The engagement of the observer's (or reader's) critical faculty is a significant aspect of criticism for Richards, but he does not regard it as a scientific law or rule.

Richards expanded upon his idea about critical remarks in the following manner:

> …Critical remarks are merely a branch of psychological remarks, and no special ethical or metaphysical ideas need be introduced to explain value.
>
> (Richards 1924, 23)

Here is another example of Richards' approach to literary analysis; he locates much of the critical experience within the psychological, rather than the social dimension. He relates the effect of an object to the manner in which the observer's psychology engages with the object. In this claim Richards envisages the reader as a disengaged entity, in the sense that the psychology of the reader establishes the nature of the critical response; the reader is disengaged in the sense that no external ideas are needed – the internal psychology of the reader provides motivation and/or impetus to the response.

Richards' text of great methodological significance was *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment*, in which he presented a detailed account of how to go about interpreting literature, specifically poetry. This book derived from a series of experiments that he conducted in his lectures at the University in 1925:

> Sheets of poems were handed out one week, the attendants were asked to take the poems away with them and write reports on each of the pieces, to be returned, anonymously, the following week. Richards reviewed and lectured on the reports, which he soon called 'protocols'. (Richards 1922, xxxi)

Richards then collaborated with other lecturers in analysing the responses. His collaborators included F. R. Leavis and Mansfield Forbes; the latter had been

instrumental in hiring Richards for his initial appointment at Cambridge, and was regarded as central to establishing the School of English Studies.

In analysing the responses to the thirteen poems, he produced a series of principles regarding the interpretation of poetry (and, by extension, literature in general). The book considers such things as figurative language, sense and feeling, poetic form, irrelevant associations and stock responses, sentimentality and inhibition, and technical presuppositions and critical preconceptions – to name some of the chapter headings. The final section deals with various approaches to remedial teaching. The list is comprehensive and the chapters are detailed.

Richards generated a series of principles for the teaching of texts through this analysis of student responses. Tillyard makes the point that this was not something unique, and that elements of Cambridge had been addressing this type of process for some years, but never with the rigour engaged in by Richards. Furthermore, many lecturers were of the opinion that practical criticism as envisaged by Richards was of value, but they regarded it as primarily of value for examination purposes. (Richards 1922, xxxiii)

As a school student I came in contact with Richards' idea of practical criticism, but I did not know it at the time. In High School I was introduced to the SIFT method of poetry analysis, which will be explored in greater detail below; my teacher did not state that this was part of Richards' methodology – possibly she did not know the name of the originator of this method. Whatever the reason, I remained ignorant of Richards' association with this process until after I had left school. The point here is that this type of methodology can become adopted almost as if it is a given, with no history and no significance beyond itself. In my experience the SIFT method was applied almost as a formula, and nobody seemed to question it.

Richards referred to four types of meaning, and each is associated with one of the letters SIFT; Sense, Intention, Feeling and Tone. (Richards did not refer to them in this order, nor did he use the term SIFT. Instead, he listed them as Sense, Feeling, Tone and Intention.)

The definitions of these words, in Richards's terminology, are:

Sense:

> We speak *to say something*… We use words to direct our hearers' attention upon some state of affairs, to present to them some items for consideration, and to excite in them some thoughts about these items.
>
> (Richards 1929, 181)

Feeling:

> … We also, as a rule, have feelings *about* these items… We have an attitude towards [them], some special direction, bias or accentuation of interest towards [them].
>
> (Richards 1929, 181)

Tone:

> Furthermore, the speaker has ordinarily *an attitude to his listener*… The tone of his utterance reflects his awareness of his relation, his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing.
>
> (Richards 1929, 182)

Intention:

> Finally… there is the speaker's intention, his aim, *conscious or unconscious*, the effect he is endeavouring to promote… Frequently his intention operates through and satisfies itself in a combination of other functions. Yet it has effects not reducible to their effects.
>
> (Richards 1929, 182)

The four elements mentioned above include a range of critical engagements that relate to the reader and writer as cognitive, purposeful beings. Richards' focus on psychology is evident in this work, because he deals with matters such as the unconscious mind. Because of his reliance on subjective dimensions of rational thought, such as the conscious and the unconscious mind, his system of critical engagement does not provide universal and absolute truths. Instead, the system provides the possibility of categorizing experience and intellectual responses, based on individual perceptions and the synthesizing of a range of elements related to the individual reader's mind.

Richards was aware that his system was not an infallible analytical tool, although he had begun work on it in order to provide critics with a more rigorous way of approaching literary texts. However, he provides the reader with a system that allows for individual sensibility to play a role, and this is entirely appropriate. Richards would have shied

away from the notion of a totally scientific approach to literature, because this is not in keeping with the humanistic elements of literature that were the justification for teaching literature at all. The acknowledgement of each individual's unconscious mind is a deliberate move away from the hard sciences into the world of psychology and, to a lesser degree, philosophy. The unconscious mind is a concept that is difficult to define, let alone measure, and the deliberate reference thereto indicates that Richards regards the use of this system as something other than a fool-proof scientific formula for the evaluation of literature. The reference to the unconscious mind reinforces the notion of human variation in literary assessment, and Richards endorses this fracture in the scientific paradigm.

There is, however, the concern that, to use this method effectively, it is necessary to know the details of each element associated with each letter, and to be aware of subtle differences. It is not always easy to establish the author's tone i.e. the attitude towards a listener, because the author might adopt a narrative persona that obscures this. In addition, it is clear that this method was developed to apply to poetry. Whether it is of use in the analysis of, say, novels, is a point of debate – a novel is possibly more complex than a poem, in that many things can occur to many characters in a novel, although the nature of poetic language tends to be laden with images that are less easily decoded than those of a novel. A novel is likely to require a sustained analysis over many pages, so it will tend to produce a more extensive response.

Richards' concern regarding practical criticism led to his producing an organized, systematic method of literary analysis. However, he then moved on to other language-related concerns, and left the development of literary criticism to his colleague, F. R. Leavis.

Of the living poets during Richards' time at Cambridge, he was particularly impressed by the works of T. S. Eliot, and attempted to get Eliot to leave his work at the bank where he was employed, and join the Cambridge School. (Ackroyd 1984, 99-100)Richards was, therefore, not simply concerned about maintaining a heritage through referring to past literary events; he recognized that there were modern authors such as Eliot who had something to contribute in terms of serious literature.

Richards also commented on popular fiction such as the Tarzan series written by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Richards' comment that Rider Haggard's *She* is of greater literary value than the Tarzan novels is interesting in that he sees the latter as merely popular, whereas the former has a greater sense of style, and is better written. In the late 20th and early 21st Century both books are still available, although the status of *Tarzan of the Apes* has improved – it is now available in an edition published by the Modern Library, whose editorial board includes such luminaries as A. S. Byatt, Larry McMurtry and Gore Vidal[2]. During his lifetime, however, Richards would have avoided literature that was somehow too modern, too far-fetched, such as the Tarzan novels, and would have recommended texts that espoused similar values to those he held, although the Rider Haggard stories (*She*, *Allan Quatermain*, and *King Solomon's Mines*, amongst others) also bordered on the far-fetched. Possibly Richards approved of some of the characteristics of many of the characters in these books, who represented examples of British courage, ingenuity and nobility, as well as the power of Western reason when faced with the superstition of the Dark Continent. It must be recognized, however, that Richards committed many years of work to language education in the Far East, suggesting, therefore, that he did not value only that which was derived from Britain, and did not regard foreign lands as barbaric.

In today's world we still read the Tarzan and Rider Haggard texts, but they are filtered through a range of lenses, including that of postcolonial theory, and the books are no

[2] This information is available from many volumes of the Modern Library, an imprint of Random House.

longer regarded simply as good yarns, but are shown to have a dimension to them that presupposes the superiority of the Western intellect. From a liberal perspective, possibly these texts should be studied as expressions of humanity that identify points of debate about our human condition, in order to encourage discussion about these matters.

The significance of Richards as a critic is twofold: (1) he argued that literature should be regarded as important because it is a storehouse of values, and (2) he came up with a method or system of literary analysis that provided the rigorous dimensions that some initial critics of English studies felt were lacking.

T. S. Eliot and Education

I will now turn my attention to T. S. Eliot, another critic who is strongly associated with the Cambridge School, even though he was never a student there, nor was he employed by Cambridge as an academic. Eliot was a product of a rather mixed education – he attended Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Oxford (Ackroyd 1984, 30-58) – this last being as a student at Merton College. His influence on the Cambridge School is best represented by Eliot's Clark Lectures, presented at Cambridge between January and March 1926; his growing recognition in the academic world led one academic to comment that his influence at Cambridge was "paramount". (Ackroyd 1984, 156) His academic domain was not always thus – one of his first positions was as a master at Highgate Junior School, in which he was required to present a broad range of subjects including mental arithmetic, Latin, French, German, drawing and swimming. (Ackroyd 1984, 68) Clearly the notion of a general education was taken to heart by the Governors at this school, and this relatively brief engagement would provide Eliot with material on which to base his observations about education and liberal theory.

Eliot's influence in the academic world was supported by I. A. Richards, who read some of Eliot's work – poetry and criticism – and decided to offer him a position in the Cambridge School. Eliot, who was working for Lloyd's Bank, turned down the offer but established a relationship with the academic world that would lead to him becoming influential in the discipline of English Studies. (Ackroyd 1984, 99-100)

In 1936 Eliot published a collection entitled *Essays Ancient and Modern*, in which he included an essay entitled *Modern Education and the Classics*. In this essay he wrote about three types of education: the liberal, the radical, and the orthodox – this last of which being the theoretical position regarded as most valid by Eliot himself.

The title of this essay suggests a relationship between the classical and modern worlds, and implies difference, but also the possibility of connectedness between the two.

The three education positions identified by Eliot in this essay are significant in themselves. The liberal, the radical, and the orthodox have strong resonances in social institutions such as education. It is interesting that Eliot chooses these labels for the theoretical positions he presents to his reader. In choosing to label the position that he supports as *orthodox*, he grants that position a significance beyond the ordinary. The word orthodox tends to hold within it a sense of authority, of the status quo, of the establishment. Labels of systems in opposition to the orthodox suggest something of the upstart. Eliot would have been aware of this when he chose to label these positions thus.

Eliot comments on the liberal position thus:

> The *liberal* attitude towards education is that with which we are the most familiar. It is apt to maintain the apparently unobjectionable view that education is not a mere acquisition of facts, but a training of the mind as an instrument, to deal with any class of facts, to reason, and to apply the training obtained in one department in dealing with new ones. The inference is drawn that one subject is as good, for education, as another; that the student should follow his own bent, and pursue whatever subject happens most to interest him. (Eliot 1936, 167)

Eliot goes on to state that there is a problem in education if people are allowed to study – and encouraged to study – that which interests them, because they are likely to overspecialize in their chosen fields. For Eliot, therefore, it may be argued that there is a need for broad generalization of learning, followed by specialization.

Eliot therefore sees education as serving a social as well as an individual need, and that this notion of liberal thought is seen to be too focused on individual whims and tastes, rather than on social needs. Furthermore, there is the concern that some subjects are more significant in terms of education than others, and, for Eliot, this notion of the liberal ideal presents subjects as of equal value. It must be noted that this essay was originally presented as a speech to the Classical Club of Harvard University in 1933, and we are left in no doubt as to Eliot's attitude regarding the value of Latin and Greek. He makes the point that students of languages are unable to function effectively if they fail to study classical languages. This sort of argument is, of course, flawed, in that many people are able to express themselves in written and spoken languages without knowing, say, Latin grammar. The insistence on the value of Latin and Greek was probably based more on convention than any logical argument, although this position would be encountered, and restated, by many academics at the birth of the 20th century. Possibly the notion of classical languages as a vehicle for classical thought is at the centre of this type of claim.

Another issue to be considered here is Eliot's choice of the word *training* in relation to university subjects. This word has a range of connotations, one of which is the idea of being prepared for a trade, as opposed to intellectual endeavours. Furthermore, it seems to be linked to a specific purpose, rather than a broad-based conception of knowledge. It is associated with skills acquisition, rather than education in a general sense. Notions of critical engagement and reflection seem far removed from the idea of training.

Eliot's primary negative concern with regard to the liberal notion of education is the problem of students indulging in individual choice. His concern with what he terms *radical* education is stated thus:

> Now while *liberalism* committed the folly of pretending that one subject is as good as another for study, and that Latin and Greek are simply *no better* than a great many others, *radicalism* (the offspring of liberalism) discards this attitude of universal toleration and pronounces Latin and Greek to be subjects of little import. (Eliot 1936, 170)

Eliot adds that, unlike liberalism, radicalism, at least, had been involved in making choices. Thus, there was a form of selection regarding the value of subjects to be taught or learnt, and Eliot regards this as a good thing. He is, of course, imposing a set of values on the world, and arguing in favour of an elite set of subjects. Latin and Greek, he claims, are necessary for a person to become truly educated, and, furthermore, he locates this learning process within a narrowly defined set of religious values. He states:

> … it is only upon readers who wish to see a Christian civilization survive and develop that I am urging the importance of the study of Latin and Greek. (Eliot 1936, 174)

There is an unstated affiliation to a particular world view in this assertion. Firstly, Eliot is selecting Latin and Greek as important, but he ignores other ancient languages of learning, such as Hebrew; his view of the Classical world is restricted to societies in which Latin and Greek had a role to play. Whilst it is true that Latin was the language of the Roman world, and the Roman Empire was extensive, other societies of significance included the Sumerians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians and the Carthaginians, each of which included the development of thriving communities with a range of significant achievements in the fields of science and culture.

The claims made by Eliot with regard to education make it apparent that he believes in the value and significance of tradition, and the classical culture that produced this culture. He superimposes a set of classical virtues on top of what he believes British (or Western) culture to be, and links them all together with a theological binding, so to speak. In this essay he states that there is a choice, based on two “hypotheses about life: the Catholic and the materialistic.”(Eliot 1936, 172)

These two positions are somewhat limited. The reader is inclined to ask whether there are other possibilities. However, in exploring the statement, it becomes clear that Eliot is, in all likelihood, referring to two positions that may be seen to be in opposition to one another. On the one hand there is a world that is linked to the divine, and on the other there is a world in which divine elements have no role to play. It seems that Eliot is concerned that the liberal and radical perspectives, as opposed to the orthodox perspective that he espouses, lack an essential human element – the soul, perhaps – and that they therefore suffer from values sourced in the barbaric, avaricious human world of economic wealth, and the sterile, mechanistic world of scientific endeavour. For Eliot it would seem that the spiritual and the material cannot be reconciled; in other words, they are perpetually in opposition to one another.

In addressing all of his concerns about the human condition, Eliot looked to tradition to supply answers – or, at least, points of reference – as opposed to the shifts away from tradition that he saw in liberalism and radicalism. Eliot expressed his opinion on tradition in several statements, one of which is:

> That there can be no art *greater* than the art which has already been created; there will only be different and necessarily different combinations of the external and the changing forms of art… It should help us to think better of our own time, as not isolated or unique, and remind us that fundamentally our individual problems and duties are the same as they have been for others at any time – and equally our opportunities. (Bantock 1970, 34)

This is in some ways an astonishing claim. The implication is that, in terms of artistic value, each successive attempt fails to achieve the levels of those which have preceded it. If one applies this to the works of Shakespeare, his poetry and plays would be deemed less great than those which preceded them. This is clearly not the case, since Shakespeare is generally acknowledged as the greatest British author.

Eliot does not, however, recommend a blind adherence to tradition. He sees the value of tradition in terms of how individuals engage with it. Eliot claims that tradition involves a sense of history, but also the ability to perceive history in terms of the present. Thus, in a sense, tradition is the fusion of the past and the present in the thoughts and actions of the individual at the present time. The past attains a sort of timelessness, and remains in the present.

It is evident from these ideas that Eliot is not willing to break with the past, although he concedes that tradition contains both good and bad elements.(Bantock 1970, 48) Eliot

recommends that we bring our critical consciousness to bear on tradition, in order to recognize “the best life for us not as a political abstraction, but as a particular people in a particular place.”(Bantock 1970, 48)

What is important here is, firstly, that Eliot has acknowledged that the matter at hand is not simply about the teaching of literature, or Latin and Greek, but is instead really about *how we live*. As such, this is a matter associated with our values, and how these relate to our thoughts and our conduct. The second issue here is that Eliot chooses to remove these elements from a political frame of reference. In doing this, he is trying to separate political matters from matters pertaining to how we live, and this is, of course, unlikely to be achieved. If we are to accept that the matter at hand is about how we live – including our values, our concepts, and our conduct – then the matter is inherently political, in that it will address concerns of power in society.

Eliot’s concerns with education – and those of many commentators – go beyond a simple discussion on poetry or literature; these matters are seen as being central to culture, and thus central to living.

In dealing with the idea of education, Eliot wrote of the liberal view, the radical view, and the orthodox view. It is this final perspective that I will now consider.

I have already alluded to Eliot’s concern that tradition needs to be tempered by the individual consciousness. He saw tradition as a thing of the blood, whereas orthodoxy is a thing of the brain(Bantock 1970, 49), and he valued the idea of co-operation and balance between the two elements. In effect, this was a fusion of thought and feeling. At the same time he located much of his thought within the ambit of religion, and he argued moral positions from a perspective that was founded, to a large extent, on the

idea of original sin. Thus, he was able to acknowledge James Joyce as an orthodox writer, whereas he regarded D. H. Lawrence as a heretic. Joyce's writings are strongly influenced by religious matters. It was Lawrence's focus on human beings as material beings, as opposed to spiritual ones, that led to Eliot labelling him thus. He expressed the opinion that Lawrence disregarded tradition, and was more committed to "the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity." (Bantock 1970, 50) The Inner Light, it may be assumed, is the expression of the individual spirit – in a manner of speaking, it represents something of a liberal perspective, in which the individual is encouraged to engage in freedom of choice.

For Eliot the liberal perspective is an unsatisfactory, almost dangerous, position to foster. He is concerned with individuals pursuing their own interests, almost on the basis of a whim, rather than connecting to a broader social purpose in their intellectual pursuits.

Having considered these various aspects of Eliot's opinions – and it must be emphasized that my consideration has been far from exhaustive – it is perhaps tempting to label him as a conservative. Eliot, however, did not regard the conservative position, as he saw it, as being of great value. He regarded conservatism as problematic, because it had a tendency to petrifaction. For Eliot, tradition was not something located in the past – it was a set of values and principles that were based on great human achievements, but which were of the present, in that they were maintained through human thought and action. Eliot also made the point that tradition was not something that was of necessity good – rather, it provided a set of values and guiding principles. Orthodoxy would provide a way to approach tradition, allowing it to shed what was not useful or morally acceptable.

There is something of a problem about Eliot's approach, in that he seems to rely on tradition to provide a system of values and principles that are, in a sense, almost self-aware, and able to provide the adherents to tradition with the possibility of greater reflectiveness than tradition itself holds. Eliot seems to have a developmental or evolutionary understanding of this process, in that tradition holds the core aspects of what Eliot deems as desirable, but this too can change over time, as tradition takes on a new form when encountering the world of the modern.

Eliot does not write about tradition and other social matters in one essay; he wrote a series of essays over a period of time, and he distanced himself to some degree from some of his writings as his thought evolved.(Bantock 1970, 50)[3] Nevertheless, he saw tradition as a central feature of what was to be valued in British society. His ideas would influence later critics, particularly F. R. Leavis, who would look to tradition as a receptacle of the essence of some form of Englishness that was most to be valued.

In much of the foregoing writing I have alluded to matters regarding liberal thought and education, and I have given some indication of Eliot's position on this matter. In effect, Eliot distrusted liberal thinking because he saw it as benefiting individual thought and freedoms above that of a select group (those who aspired to traditional and orthodox thinking). In a sense Eliot seems to regard the liberal tradition with some suspicion because it involves the satisfying of individual appetites and indulgences.

In the second section of this chapter I will focus on the most influential voice to emerge from the Cambridge School – F. R. Leavis. The critics who preceded him, and whose work has been outlined in this section of the chapter, continued to retain significance because Leavis wrote partly as a response to their work.

[3]Here Bantock is referring to Eliot's *After Strange Gods*. Bantock states"… he later expressed some distaste for it."

However, before moving to a consideration of the work of Leavis, I believe it is appropriate and necessary to consider the work of the New Critics. The New Critics were concerned about the study of literature in much the same way as the Cambridge School was, but, unlike the British scholars, they were located in the USA. Because of the similarity of thinking it is appropriate to consider them now, even though some of what it stated is linked to the work of Leavis, which is reflected in the chapter to follow.

The New Critics

In this review of the history of English literary criticism in the United Kingdom I have focused on the Oxford and Cambridge Schools, with additional references to people such as Arnold, who pre-dated the formation of either of these schools. Whilst my concern had been with British literary criticism, which is appropriate because of the influence of these thinkers on South African literary critical traditions, partly as a result of colonialism, it is important to acknowledge that similar developments were occurring in the United States of America. This American parallel was a group of critics named the New Critics, who became influential in the 1920s and who reached a point of greatest influence in the 1940s and 1950s (Selden et al 2005, 18)

Selden, Widdowson and Procter (2005) comment that, as is the case in so many socially-derived processes, the establishment and development of the New Critics is a complex matter. Three of the aspects of New Criticism which they feel are significant are, firstly: a somewhat conservative view of society, deriving from the Southern States of the USA, and suspicious of the industry and mechanization of the North. This suspicion of industry is a link to ideas expressed by Leavis and others in the United Kingdom, as Selden et al point out:

> Without stretching the point too far, a consanguinity with Arnold, Eliot and, later, Leavis in his opposition to modern ‘inorganic’ civilization may be discerned here. (Selden 2005, 18)

The second point is that New Criticism flourished between the two World Wars. Selden et al assert that this was partly a consequence of the desire to engage in thinking about harmonious material rather than dealing with the burden of the historical content of the wartime circumstances.

The third point is that, during the 1940s and 1950s in the USA, there was a growing number of students at universities and colleges. The ahistorical position advocated by New Criticism in which the central focus was the text, without reference to the social context, was an effective manner of approaching literary study, in that it ignored the diverse social circumstances of the students and instead focused on the material for study.

Whilst the New Critics, like the Cambridge School, tended to focus on material such as poetry, there was an attempt at addressing prose fiction. Mark Schorer was one such critic who engaged in a complex analysis of texts that approximated post-structuralism, in that he addressed issues such as ‘silences’ and ‘play’ in his criticism. (Selden et al 2005, 22)

A central figure of the New Critics, and the person who gave the movement its name, was John Crowe Ransom (18880-1874). As a member of the New Critics group, his influence was substantial:

> By the 1950s or even earlier the New Critical focus on the text itself had become the basic method of literary criticism and of college and university pedagogy. (Leitch et al 2010, 969)

Ransom studied the Classics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, and also studied Greek and Latin literature at Christ Church, Oxford. By the 1920s Ransom was a member of the Fugitive Poets, a group formed in Nashville that rejected the science and industrialization they saw as associated with the northern states of the USA, and instead chose the claimed agrarian heritage and values of the Southern traditions.

From 1939 Ransom became the editor of the *Kenyon Review*. Through this journal he called for teachers and students to concentrate on the technical studies of poetry – the matters that reflect the poet's ability to use language for effect. Ransom did not subscribe to the use of literary history or linguistics in literary criticism, but instead emphasised the need to focus on the text itself. However, this approach led to attacks on the New Critics, chief of which is that, if the text is to be studied in isolation, there was a problem in how such a text could address social issues in a meaningful way. This, of course, is an echo of the problems that beset Leavis and the Cambridge School.

Ransom, in his piece entitled *Criticism Inc.* provided a detailed statement about his view on the nature of criticism, but critics argue that, despite the detail, his perception of criticism is too narrow in focus, and too disengaged from society.

In particular, Ransom rejects three perspectives as flawed criticism:

1. The artist himself. Ransom argues that an artist's engagement with his/her own work is too intuitive and lacks rigorous argumentation.
2. The philosopher. Ransom argues that philosophers are generalists and that literary criticism requires intellectual engagement of a particular type, which include knowledge of the technical effects of literature. It is with regard to this type of specific knowledge that the philosopher is particularly lacking.
3. The university professor. Ransom states that these people are knowledgeable but not critical; they compile literary data but make no attempt at judging it.

(Leitch et al 2010 971)

In addition to the above, Ransom rejects the following six types of thinking:

1. Personal registrations, which Ransom states are "declarations of the effect of the artwork upon the critic as reader." (Leitch et al 2010, 978) In other words, criticism should maintain objectivity.
2. Synopsis and paraphrase, which are not so much a form of criticism as an abstract.
3. Historical studies, including authors' biographies. Ransom regards these as comparative literature and says that these are examples of critically superficial engagements.
4. Linguistics studies, which provide little critical information.
5. Moral studies, which are an element of a greater whole, which is the whole content of the material being studied, and this is the focus of the critic.
6. Other specific topics of study, for example Milton's geography, or Shakespeare's understanding of the law. The business of the critic, says Ransom, is not literary assimilation. (Leitch et al 2010, 980)

These points provide clarity of Ransom's position, but they still pose problems. Whilst

there is little doubt that studying the text is of value, matters that pertain to the author, or to linguistics, can provide insight into the process of literary criticism. The idea of literary study that is isolated from other disciplines is in itself very problematic and not entirely convincing.

The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton is particularly scathing regarding the New Critics, as this statement, in which Eagleton makes reference to both the New Critics and the Cambridge School, indicates:

> Like *Scrutiny*, in other words, New Criticism was the ideology of the uprooted, defensive, intelligentsia who reinvented in literature what they could not locate in reality... The poem was that which could not be paraphrased, expressed on any language other than itself; each of its parts was folded in on the others in a complex organic unity which it would be a kind of blasphemy to violate. (Eagleton 1983, 47)

Eagleton regards Eliot and Richards as part of the New Criticism movement, and adds that Empson, John Crowe Ransom, and Cleanth Brooks were all part of the same group. He therefore sees an intellectual crossover of sorts from Cambridge to the American South. (Eagleton 1983, 46)

I will consider more of Eagleton's opinions in a later chapter, but it is of importance that I establish that the Cambridge School did not emerge out of a type of thinking located in Britain alone. Clearly there are matters of concern that cut across both the USA and the UK, although arguably the Cambridge School had a greater influence on South African thinking because of historical connections.

Chapter Two: The Rise of English Studies. The Consolidation of the Discipline

Section 2: The Contribution of F. R. Leavis

Leavis and Academic Respectability

I will now move on to a consideration of the work of F. R. Leavis, whose work came to be seen as the epitome of the Cambridge School's academic position. At the same time, the influence of Richards will be present, as will that of Quiller-Couch; Richards was to supervise the doctoral work of Queenie Roth (who was to marry Leavis, and collaborate with him), and Quiller-Couch was to supervise the doctoral work of Leavis himself. This interconnectedness of minds and opinions is of importance, because the contributions of these figures cannot be seen in isolation. Furthermore, T. S. Eliot was a friend and intellectual sparring partner, so to speak, of Richards, and he influenced Leavis's thought, and thus we see an incredibly rich source of debate and argument within this group. Unfortunately the debate did not always lead to amicable disagreement, as will be seen.

In many ways Leavis is the most complex and debated figure in the world of 20th century literary criticism and the field of English Studies. He is frequently claimed to be the most important or dominant figure in this discipline, but equally it is acknowledged that he selected and adapted much of other people's work in coming up with a theory and methodology regarding the study of English. Michael Bell makes the following statement in the introduction of his book on Leavis:

> F. R. Leavis was undoubtedly the single most influential figure in twentieth-century English literary criticism. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that 'English' as a modern university subject was shaped very largely by Leavis's

> example, his writings and their influence on successive generations of teachers and students. As a young lecturer at Cambridge, Leavis set out to transform English Studies from a gentleman-amateur pursuit into a discipline of trained critical awareness and high moral vocation. From T.S. Eliot he took the idea of tradition as a highly selective canon of texts whose qualities could only be perceived and preserved through the utmost efforts of applied critical intelligence. From I. A. Richards he derived certain crucial ideas about the nature and specific complexity of poetic language, though rejecting what he saw as the narrow scientific basis of Richards' work. And one could instance William Empson's pioneering S*even Types of Ambiguity*… as having clearly left its mark on his close-reading approach to poetry and his sense of the new insights offered by meticulous verbal analysis. (Bell 1988, vii)

Contained within this statement is part of the difficulty with Leavis; he took from many other critics, and some have argued that he gave less to English Studies than the total of that which he took.

In his introduction to a critical biographical account of Leavis, John Ferns states the following:

> Frank Raymond Leavis (1895-1978) is arguably the greatest English literary critic of the twentieth century, the natural successor to Samuel Johnson and Matthew Arnold. Important, from the beginning, in championing the work of T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence, he developed from the Cambridge English of his undergraduate days a critical method that, growing out of close analysis of literary texts, sought to evaluate the cultural significance of works of literature. Judgment was crucial to Leavis, and his standards high. He was interested in discussing only major writers whose works he considered of sufficient quality. (Ferns 2000, ix)

This quote is significant, because it confirms the heritage in which Leavis located himself; a link in the chain that evolved out of the work of Arnold and Johnson. Furthermore, it confirms, as was stated by Bell, above, that he made use of close analysis – or close reading – as a dominant dimension of methodology. In addition to this, it emphasizes the location of English studies within a cultural dimension – as opposed to the scientific aspect which he ascribed to Richards (although several commentators, including Empson, have insisted that Leavis misinterpreted this aspect of Richards. (Empson 1935, 363)) Perhaps most significant is his attitude towards texts – he evaluated them according to his own notion of quality, and rejected the study of writers who did not meet his standards. Together with Bell's quote, above, we see that Leavis was located within a tradition of theorists/critics, who all provided him with some insights into the nature of criticism and its role in society, yet none of the others was quite as successful as Leavis in drawing the various aspects of criticism together.

In order to understand Leavis's sense of a value system, and why certain points in history seemed to matter to him more than others, it is perhaps necessary to recognise that some aspects of his life experience played a central role in directing his focus/interests in particular directions. For example, most biographies indicate that Leavis spent some time on the Western Front in World War One, where he was a medical orderly on a hospital train; indeed, Hayman's biography begins with a statement about Leavis's voice, which was affected with a "nasal twang… dry and astringent," as a result of gas inhalation during this period. (Hayman 1976, ix) Ferns confirms that the period in which Leavis worked as a medical orderly, ministering to troops at the Somme, Passchendaele and Ypres, amongst other places, affected him for the rest of his life. Ferns also notes that, as a child, he was successful in many endeavours at school, both academically and in the sporting arena, but he was not prepared to join the Officer's Training Corps; from this, and from his decision to be a non-combatant in the war, we can infer that he held to values which are, perhaps, most accurately labelled as pacifist. It is also recorded that Leavis went through the war, from 1915 onwards, with one book

in his possession – the World's Classics edition of John Milton's poems. (Ferns 2000, 3) For a man who is undergoing daily experiences of war to carry a book of poetry in his pocket is to identify the significance of those poems in that man's life.

For Leavis, then, literature of a particular type took on a symbolic nature; symbolic, perhaps, of a better world, and a rejection of the world of war, which included the values of the politicians that drove the war, and the associated mechanical and technological developments that arose as a consequence of the war. Leavis was to express some concern about the industrialization of England, and a move away from the values of a pre-industrial world; no doubt some of his concern was generated by his experiences of the role technology played in making war ever more destructive. By contrast, as was noted in an earlier chapter, Oxford's George Gordon stated that many people in World War One gave up reading entirely; this is at odds with Leavis's behaviour.

The war had interrupted Leavis's initial studying at Cambridge, where he had begun by studying History, much like Raleigh and Richards. On returning to Cambridge in 1919 he initially continued with this subject, but then switched to English. By 1924 he had graduated with a doctorate, supervised by Quiller-Couch, and the following year began offering a course entitled "Literature and Society from the Restoration to the Death of Johnson" at a Cambridge college. (Ferns 2000, xiii)

The title of the first course presented by Leavis reflects his values; he regards literature as being of social significance, and sees it as located within a social and/or cultural context. Furthermore, he traces a lineage of sorts, identifying that which is of value over a period of time, implying the notion of tradition. For the rest of his life this matter of literature and society would play a role. He would be concerned about what sort of literature should be studied, and the influence of literature on society.

His concern about society and its development is reflected in the following statement:

> On the one hand there is the enormous technical complexity of civilization, a complexity that could be dealt with by an answering efficiency of co-ordination… On the other hand, the social and cultural disintegration that has accompanied the development of the inhumanly complex machinery is destroying what should have controlled the working. It is as if society… had lost intelligence, memory, and moral purpose. (Leavis 1943, 22-23)

Here Leavis displays his concern about the development of technology in the modern world; he distrusts the way in which technology has limited the significance of the human dimension of society, and he sees technology as playing a restricting, and indeed destructive, role in the way in which culture is affected. Linked to this breakdown of culture is a similar effect on the values that shape culture. For Leavis this technological advance has negative consequences on the moral dimensions of culture. He sees a tension between the role of technology in society and how it should be mastered and directed; instead of the values of society directing the use of technology, the technology itself is eroding the values of society (it "is destroying what should have controlled the working".) It is not entirely clear how Leavis justifies this assertion. He refers to an earlier period in English history which embodies true Englishness, but how technology is to erode this is not immediately evident. Leavis runs the risk of adopting beliefs that approximate those labelled as conservative by Eliot, and consequently the risk of stagnation.

It is this moral dimension of culture that determines, for Leavis, the significance of English society, in terms of beliefs, codes of behaviour, and expressions. For Leavis, the loss of these things is the loss of the essence of Englishness; furthermore, for Leavis, the essence of Englishness was inextricably bound up in literature.

Leavis defined literature in a narrow sense – in other words, he considered literature to be a particular type of writing, which reflected a particular value system. Amongst other things, he rejected the Romantic poets, thus:

> What they [the Romantic poets] have in common is that they belong to the same age; and in belonging to the same age they have in common something negative: the absence of anything to replace the very positive tradition (literary, and more than literary – hence its strength) that had prevailed until towards the end of the eighteenth century. (*Leavis then identifies this valuable tradition that predated Romanticism as the Augustan tradition*). (Leavis 1952, 185)

Leavis saw the most valuable tradition of English literature as running from Johnson to Arnold, and including writers such as Jane Austen as opposed to the Romantic Poets. He was therefore at odds with critics and academics such as Raleigh, who, as has been shown, admired the Romantic Poets, and the idea of Romanticism, because it had a spirit that was committed to exploration, going beyond narrow bounds of convention, and introducing something new. This newness was a problem for Leavis, because he saw it as replacing something traditional, and in all likelihood more sound, than that which was new. In the quote above he does not give reasons for his claim that the Romantic Poets are something negative, other than his idea that they provide an "absence of anything to replace the very positive tradition" – and it is the notion of tradition that is central here. In addition Leavis seems to regard the Romantic view as one that is impetuous and capricious as opposed to the steadiness of the Augustans. Leavis is looking for some kind of positive continuity of expression of thought. In a sense he is associated with the concerns expressed by T. S. Eliot, when Eliot spoke of orthodoxy. However, Eliot warned against conservatism, which he saw as a movement towards social ossification, or a type of social fossil. Eliot regarded orthodoxy as a social element which would nurture the past but also retain a sense of value for the living, as

opposed to the lifeless fossils of conservatism. Leavis does not explore these matters to the same degree; instead, he focuses on the negative aspects of the new. However, perhaps he might be concerned not so much about the new, as about the sense of the reckless valuing of the new at all costs i.e. the reference made by Isaiah Berlin in an earlier chapter, in which he identifies the dark side of Romanticism; to create something new means a destruction of the old. There appears to be an interminable tension or divergence between the Romantic position and that espoused by Leavis. A point of reconciliation between the positions is unlikely.

Possibly Leavis and Raleigh (or the Romantics) can be accommodated by a slightly different understanding of the Romantic ideal. Instead of destroying or rejecting the past in favour of the new, we should perhaps acknowledge the past in order to develop something new. Balance, I would suggest, is the issue here; the past and the new cannot be regarded as totally disjunctive points i.e. there must be a sense of continuity in any social enterprise, since even an attempt at a total break with that which has gone before is dependent on the past for a point of reference, which is a point I made in an earlier chapter.

This matter is a significant one that deserves something of a greater consideration. If we locate literature within a broader socio-cultural domain, and accept that it has a role to play in shaping human character, attitudes, and behaviour, then this form of social interaction is a justification for including English Studies in a syllabus – through appropriate critical engagement, it is possible to bring about valued social change. However, it is unlikely that this shift of opinions, and values will be uniform. The consequence of this type of engagement could be heightened debate, which is in keeping with the concept of liberal education.

One of the personal difficulties that Leavis experienced was that he was not given a full-

time position at Cambridge University for many years; instead, he was given a series of probationary and/or part-time posts at various colleges, where he was paid per student. As a consequence of this, he was given access to a range of students, and Leavisite thinking began to find a foothold in the colleges with the passage of time. This influence was also felt in academic journals, particularly *Scrutiny*, which Leavis edited for most of its existence, and which he controlled financially for many years. This is similar to the situation which existed around the journal *The Criterion*, which was edited by T. S. Eliot.

In his writing Leavis explored the role of English in schools, universities and society in general. He considered what texts needed to be taught, and he discussed methodologies of teaching and/or engagement with texts.

In considering the value of English studies, in answer to the question "Why an English School?", Leavis commented thus:

> ' Why *English* school?' 'English', because it is a humane school, and the non-specialist intelligence in which the various studies are to find their centre is to be one that gets its own special training in literature. Its special – but not specialist discipline is to be the literary-critical, a discipline of sensibility, judgment and thought. (Leavis 1943, 43)

Here Leavis is locating himself within a school of thought similar to that of Matthew Arnold, as well as being part of the liberal tradition that values a general education. He sees the school as a *humane* school, as a school in which a range of disciplines is to find their centre. In a sense he regards the study of English as central to the establishment of human society, or perhaps a *moral* society. The notion of humaneness is interesting, because it reflects a system of values that is enlightened, that is

sophisticated, and that is civilised. This school, therefore, taps into a system of values that enlightens and civilizes people, and it does it through the reading of the 'correct' literature in the 'correct' manner. For Leavis, this school facilitates moral judgment and thought through encouraging the right type of reflection and critical engagement. In a sense, for Leavis the appropriate literature provides a model of thinking and behaviour within a society. His vision of literature is imposing, because it seems as if matters of philosophy, ethics, law and much more can be subsumed under the topic of English literature in an English School. However, it is also apparent that all of the critics mentioned thus far have a similar claim, but based on somewhat different perspectives of literature and methodology.

Leavis made this further assertion about the role of the English school at university, in which he stated the following purpose:

> It is with restoring to this country an educated public that shall be intelligent, conscious of its responsibility, qualified for it and influential – such a public as might affect decisively the intellectual and spiritual climate in which statesmen and politicians form their ideas, calculate, plan and perform. It conceives the university not merely as a place of learning, research and instruction, but as itself a nucleus (one of a number) of the greater public, the spiritual community the country needs as its mind and conscience. (Leavis 1969, 29-30)

There are several words and ideas that are central to Leavis's concept of the university and the English school. Firstly, he uses the word "restoring", which suggests that there is a quality in the British society of the time that has been lost; something of value that needs to be restored as a central feature of British education. Here we see Leavis looking back in time, to a better society. He sees the role of the education system to provide people with critical abilities, as well as understanding and insight, so that they

can engage in civil society, influence political decisions, and have a heightened awareness of their roles as citizens. He sees universities as having a broad social role, as being part of an environment that is linked to the community. His reference to a "spiritual community" might be a reference to his notion of English society – or England itself – which is dominated by a set of values rooted in the past, and his reference to the country's conscience is a reference to the moral domain.

For Leavis, then, the English school is an essential part of the university, in which critical engagement can take place, and in which a set of values located within an historical understanding of English society can influence students' thinking. However, he does not seem to recognize the perhaps overstated significance of English Studies. He extrapolates English Studies into all branches of the community and links it to governance – one is tempted to remind Leavis that literature is, in some senses, "mere words", as Gordon asserted. For literature to go beyond "mere words" requires the reader(s) to interpret the words and to react to the assertions contained therein. Literature transcends its state of "mere words" when it brings about some human consequence.

Leavis's justification for the study of English lay in his claim that English literature hearkened back to some better world, a pre-industrial world in which English people were exposed to better morals and values. Leavis saw this world almost as an organic entity, removed from the mechanistic world that England had become. In his essay entitled *Literature and Society*, he presents a researched example of just such a society in the USA. He refers to the work of Cecil Sharp, who produced a book entitled *English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Sharp ventured into the area shortly after World War One, and researched the traditions and the values of people in the Appalachian region. He found that much of the society still maintained traditions that were most easily located in the 18th century, and Leavis links the high moral integrity in this society to the works of John Bunyan, and the society which inspired them. He

seems to disregard the fact that the society and its mores was probably unchanged because of a range of issues, not just those of literature, which, after all, is only one dimension of a society's culture. However the assertion regarding the high moral integrity of this society is open to question. In a social grouping aspiring to the values of the 18th Century, there is little doubt that the role of women in society would have been severely restricted, and attitudes towards homosexuality, and racial differences, would be unlikely to be enlightened.

Another difficulty for Leavis and Cecil Sharp is that society is ever evolving – apparently more slowly in the Appalachians than elsewhere – but nevertheless, this sort of change holds within it the implication that an unchanging system of values will probably become ever more ill-suited to the modern world. There is, perhaps, the need for an alternative perspective on literature and how to teach it, that has a different perception of the nature of culture and the role of literature in this aspect of society.

In considering the work of Leavis, particularly with regard to the relationship between the humanities and the sciences, it is necessary to make a brief reference to the "Two Cultures Affair" as it became known. In brief, in 1962 Leavis was invited to give the Richmond Lecture at Downing College; it was to be his final lecture before retirement. (Ferns 2000, xv).In the lecture, entitled "Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow", he challenged Snow's claims in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* – the Sir Robert Rede lecture given at Cambridge in 1959. According to MacKillop:

> It is sometimes thought that the lecture was about… the logic of science set against the logic of art. Actually it was not about science but about scientists and their politics, compared to the social thinking of literary artists… Snow displayed actual hostility to the non-scientific culture… Snow, though a man of letters, was dubious (if cautiously and sorrowfully so) about literature, both literature of the

> British tradition of radical dissent (Ruskin, Morris, Dickens and Lawrence) and the modernists like Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. (MacKillop 1995, 315)

Leavis had a different opinion about this matter, but it was not so much what he said, but how he said it, that caused a reaction. The initial statement he made was as follows:

> If confidence in oneself as a master-mind, qualified by capacity, insight and knowledge to pronounce authoritatively on the frightening problems of our civilization, is genius, then there can be no doubt about Sir Charles Snow's. He has no hesitations. Yet Snow is, in fact, portentously ignorant. (MacKillop 1995, 318)

Leavis continued in his attack, including a joke that Snow's novels were created by an electronic brain called Charlie. (MacKillop 1995, 318)

It is this matter which raises some questions about Leavis; as an academic, he believed that there was a need to maintain a social order informed by a system of values derived from the past – in some ways, his own conception of what the past had been, and not a real historical past. He was regarded as having great insight into texts, but when he encountered ideas with which he did not agree, he seemed to stoop to sniping that is not really in keeping with the expectations of somebody involved in the process of higher learning. As MacKillop points out, some of the Richmond Lecture comments would have been more appropriate to a college club supper.

The topic of the Richmond Lecture is of consequence, because it relates to the way in which the sciences and the humanities conduct their business in society, and the value

that they each have in the process of developing civilization. However, the value of the debate was lost, to some extent, in the scandal that followed the publication of the lecture in *The Spectator.* Over a period of weeks several pages of letters were printed in that publication, either condemning or supporting Leavis.

One important element of the Richmond Lecture was Leavis's notion of the Third Realm; this is the intellectual space between text and critic, in which minds meet in the process of criticism. Ferns describes it thus:

> [It is] the place, neither wholly private nor wholly public, in which individual minds meet in "the collaborative-creative process" of literary criticism. (Ferns 2000, 17)

One point of significance here pertains to a philosophical aspect of learning or knowledge. There is the sense that knowledge is constructed in a shared space of understanding – or exploration. This space is the point at which the text and the critics' minds meet; it is a dialogue between the text (or the author) and the critics or readers. For Leavis, then, the significance of the text, and its meaning, is located in this Third Realm; furthermore, for Leavis, this realm is located within the dimension of language, and the meaning created through the medium of language is a very different idea of meaning from that created in a scientific realm. In this lecture he associated Snow with the ideas of Richards some years earlier – one of Leavis's critical pieces accused Richards of being too scientific in his criticism of Coleridge. Despite holding the view that Snow and Richards were too scientific, and therefore seeing science as something removed from the humanities, Leavis was of the opinion that the difference between him and Snow was not so much about science and literature, as it was about interpretations of history, and how these elements had affected history. This, of course, is a matter of discourse, which is located within the realm of language, which is a matter pertaining to society, since language has a strongly social aspect to it; literature, as one use of

language, is a dimension of culture, which is a social-construct.

The notion of social change and the effect of industrial developments on British society led to Leavis, making the following comment about Matthew Arnold:

> Contemplating, in an earlier phase of it than ours, the advance of industrial civilization, he saw that something new was happening to humanity… It is that which he has in mind when he expresses his fear that England will become a 'greater Holland'… Whether or not the fear of expressing it is fair to Holland, there can be no doubt about the essential nature of the fear… It is that the massive and rapid growth of material civilization, the changes in human habit and the human condition brought about by technological advance, will entail a lapse of that creatively human response to economic fact, to the inescapable exigencies of life, and material circumstance, which a cultural tradition *is* – is, while it remains a living power in the present.
>
> Arnold saw, and said, that to preserve continuity – continuity of cultural consciousness – a more conscious and deliberate use of intelligence was needed than in the past. This is the meaning of the stress he laid upon poetic tradition (literature for him *was* poetry), and of his preoccupation with 'centrality', with defining the idea of 'authority' in matters of taste and judgment, and with standards. (Leavis 1969, 42-43)

This long quote is a restatement of much that has already been said, but it is important because it reflects what Leavis saw that was of value in Arnold, and it shows Arnold's influence. It is of significance that Arnold sees the matter as being of national importance – and that he uses another country (Holland) as a warning. The other

aspect of this statement that is of interest is the use of the word ‘fear’ – Arnold’s fear that England would become a greater Holland, or, to restate the idea, fear that England would lose something of its essence, to be replaced by something less worthy. One of the concerns that would have confronted Leavis, Arnold and others would be the sense of a wasted life; they were pursuing, and advocating the pursuit of, something that was essentially an English cultural ideal, a sense of an English society subscribing to and governed by essentially English values. If this were to become corrupt, or warped in some way, their life’s purpose would be reduced to nothing – or very little significance, and their effort wasted. Furthermore, the world they left behind would be a lesser world, a philistine world, a world, perhaps, falling into anarchy. For Arnold and Leavis the teaching of English at university level was linked to, and derived from, a vision of a particular social order, and it was a desire for this type of order that dominated their purpose in advocating English studies. Chris Baldick makes this clear in his book *The Social Mission of English Criticism*; throughout the book he makes reference to the embeddedness of English literature within a social context. For Baldick, it is apparent that these critics were not presenting the need to study literature within a neutral space; instead, he refers to ideas such as ‘guardianship’ (Baldick 1987, 19), in which English poetry/literature takes on a social dimension – that of guardian of a system of values. Baldick also points out that Arnold regarded the Romantic Movement, and the French Revolution, as events that happened too soon, and were out of place and time, and thus Arnold regarded these events as being premature – they did not know enough, to paraphrase Arnold. (Baldick 1987, 21) This lack of faith in the Romantic Movement is reflected in Leavis’s commentary about the same matters.

The other matter that is noticeable here is the idea of authority and standards in the field of culture. Leavis does not expand on this idea – he leaves us to question what these standards might be, to which he refers. He explores the idea in a negative sense, stating that he does not wish to discuss the idea of standards, but then adds that his notion of standards is linked to the function of criticism in its broadest form. He states that “a critical judgment has the form, ‘This is so, isn’t it?’” (Leavis 1969, 47) His point is

that the reply will lead to a further statement about ‘This’. In essence he does not really answer the unstated question about the nature of standards. It is possible to assume that standards, in Leavis’s opinion, are the result of debate and discussion, and are therefore social constructions, although he does not state this explicitly.

One concern that bothered both Arnold and Leavis was that the majority of the society would probably not subscribe to the vision of England they described, either because they did not care to, or did not have the ability to engage effectively with such a vision. In Leavis’s words, again with regard to Arnold:

> It was the main concern of his life to promote in this country the steps and the process that should create (this being their ideal aim) a class of the educated – a class that could be definable and thought of as essentially and unequivocally that, in dissociation from the idea of social privilege, or social privilege as ordinarily cried out against, detested and prized. (Leavis 1969, 44)

There is little doubt in this passage that Leavis is speaking of some sort of elite, and the trouble that this idea generates is manifold; who are the elite to be? How are they to achieve this position? What are the qualities that they possess, or should possess? These and other questions are problems that are not easily solved, and they are removed from the ideas of those liberal critics who, in the sense of a liberal education as a general education, saw English Studies as central to uplifting the masses.

In contrast with Richards, Leavis was more definite about the texts he valued, as well as those on which he frowned. As was mentioned previously, Leavis rejected the work of the Romantic poets, primarily because they broke with tradition, and failed to acknowledge the literary heritage of Britain. However, as will be shown below, Leavis

offered a more complex understanding of the Romantics towards the end of his career. It is at this point that further comment by Leavis provides us with greater insight into his concerns about the Romantic Poets. In 1959 he published *Revaluation*, in which he revisited a range of topics and commented more extensively on them. In this text he addresses three Romantic Poets: Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats. Leavis states:

> They offer, in their very diverse ways, representative developments of English poetry, and all three count essentially in the poetical atmosphere breathed by poets and critics in the Victorian age. (Leavis 1959, 6)

Leavis identifies Byron as "the great *vulgarisateur*", which can hardly be a position to which we should aspire. By contrast, in his consideration of Wordsworth, he shows approval because the poet is seen to link with the past; "Wordsworth represents – and it is his strength – a continuous development out of the eighteenth century." (Leavis 1959, 8) Thus, Wordsworth links to a heritage and tradition that is significant, and it is on these terms that he is valued. "Shelley represents most nearly in the period… the complete rejection of the past, and he at the same time… represents pre-eminently the divorce between thought and feeling, intelligence and sensibility… Keats… offers some fine illustrations for a discussion of the theme of maturity – maturity, manifested in technique, of feeling in relation to thought, of imagination and desire in relation to actuality." (Leavis 1959, 8)

For Leavis, part of the threat that Shelley presents is linked to the idea of the division of thought and feeling. There was, perhaps, a danger in work that emphasized irrational, emotional aspects of humanity. We see here a concern about breaking or damaging cultural norms.

In Leavis's chapter on Shelley the initial statement suggests that Leavis is addressing Shelley's work not so much on its own terms, but rather because other people have seen fit to praise Shelley's poetry, and it therefore cannot be ignored. (Leavis 1959, 203)

Leavis explores aspects of Shelley's poetry in order to establish what makes him 'unreadable'. Leavis sums him up thus: "… it is impossible to go on reading him at any length with pleasure." (Leavis 1959, 211) He regards his imagery as elusive (he explores several lines of poetry, expressing bewilderment) and disapproves of his tone – the ecstasies and despairs. Leavis expects poetry to be composed of a range of images and ideas that reflect rationality, and which, after exploration, provide a sense of meaning. Shelley, in his opinion, does not accomplish this, achieving instead a sense that emotion-driven writing is the chief result.

The pleasure to which Leavis refers is a sort of intellectual satisfaction, rather than a sense of enjoyment deriving from the emotions. This intellectual pleasure is a consequence of recognizing the logic and system which underpins the interpretive process – it is a recognition of the poet's artistic skill rather than a reflex response. In effect, the pleasure derives from the choice of words, their logical relationship in creating images, the aptness of the images, and the provocation to new insights. This type of pleasure is significantly different from a mere emotional response. In short, Leavis rejects the work of Shelley because it goes against the Augustan tradition that Leavis so admires.

Keats, in Leavis's view, is very different from Shelley, and, in considering Keats's lines about 'globed peonies' he comments thus:

> …the hand is round the peony, luxuriously cupping it. Such tactual effects are notoriously characteristic of Keats, and they express, not merely the voluptuary's

> itch to be fingering, but that strong grasp upon actualities – upon things outside himself, that firm sense of the solid world, which makes Keats so different from Shelley… It is, we may add, by virtue of this strength, which is at once intelligence and character, that Keats never takes his dreams for reality or (even with the Grecian urn to help him) remains lost in them. (Leavis 1959, 261-262)

On reading the lines that Leavis considers from both Shelley and Keats, it is possible to agree with Leavis, but also it is possible to come to a point of difference. He is arguing about details – some might say, the minutiae – of the poems, and the complexity of the images, together with the range of possibilities in the language itself, create difficulties about the likelihood of absolute agreement. Because language itself is not absolutely measurable in terms of effect, Leavis may or may not be right; his argument is always based, to some extent, on interpretation. To some extent, his rejection of Shelley seems more to be about matters such as Shelley's rejection of the past, than with Shelley's poor verse. It is almost as if there is no way in which Leavis can find Shelley's work acceptable – to do so would be to undermine Leavis's understanding of Englishness, and the value system that goes with it. On these grounds it is almost as if Leavis is locked in a cyclical process, in which a position such as that of Shelley is untenable. The problem with this is that Leavis excludes aspects of human expression on the basis of incompatibility with his value system, as if a value system is a fixed position that is almost a phenomenon of nature rather than a human creation.

Leavis seems very concerned about the relationship between the real world and that which is dreamed of, or abstract. He regards Keats as a greater poet than Shelley because his images are somehow more solid, and Keats is shown to return to reality after abstract contemplation. For Leavis, Keats is centred in the real world. It seems, then, that Leavis rejects the aspect of dream-driven aspiration that is frequently associated with Romanticism; the "What if?" dimension of the Romantic ideal. In doing so, he relocates Keats in a category that is not Romantic, arguing that he is grounded in

a real experience, rather than the world of the ideal. Although Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats are all generally regarded as Romantic Poets, Leavis only acknowledges those he admires (Wordsworth and Keats) in a manner that relocates them in terms of categories; Wordsworth is located within a tradition, and Keats is shown to be more of the real world than the ideal. Shelley, whose work he obviously dislikes, he locates within the Romantic frame, along with Byron

Leavis's assertion that Keats's poems are anchored or centred in the real world is of significance for several reasons. On the one hand the real world – that of the senses, to which Leavis alludes in his comment on the peonies – is also the domain of materialism. This world, explored and critiqued by Hoggart and Williams (whose work I will address in later chapters), amongst others, is real in a sense that differs from Leavis's assertion. For these critics the real world includes the various and diverse groupings that constitute society, including the disenfranchised, the poor, the aged, and the illiterate. This is a grittier more complex reality than that found through using the senses to consider peonies. Leavis seems to have forgotten about this aspect of the real world, or perhaps he has chosen to ignore it.

A further consideration is that, as George Gordon pointed out, literature is "mere words". Keats, therefore, is as much a part of the real world as Shelley is – the nature of their literary engagement locates them within an ideal space that is an articulation of a reality. In a sense, then, all literature is somewhat removed from the world, and our consideration of literature is not a consideration of the world at all, but rather a representation or comment thereon.

Despite claiming to be of a particular tradition, and despite rejecting the Romantic notion of value, Leavis was not against newness or innovation in all aspects of literature. His biographers (MacKillop, Ferns, and Hayman), all comment on an episode in 1926 in

which Leavis wished to read Joyce's *Ulysses*, which had been published in France and had been banned in Britain since publication in 1922, and was therefore unavailable. Leavis wished to use the text in his lectures. He approached a Cambridge bookseller to explore the possibility of getting hold of a copy for his personal use. The bookseller enquired about an additional copy for students' use, and this led to the Director of Public Prosecutions writing to the university; as a result, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge interviewed Leavis about the matter. (Ferns 2000, 8)

What is interesting about this episode is that it involves Leavis himself breaking with tradition. Joyce was a renowned experimenter with language and the novel form, and he did not follow the Augustan tradition. Instead, he seems to be more of the Romantic persuasion, in that he asked the question "What if?", and then wrote a response to it. Leavis was also something of a champion of D. H. Lawrence, at a time when his work was not well-received. Again we get a break with tradition, and again we see Leavis engaging in a manner that would perhaps not be expected.

In attempting to understand Leavis and his concern for his subject, it is also useful to recognize that Queenie Leavis was a student of literature at about the time that Leavis was becoming established at Cambridge. Prior to their marriage she was Queenie Roth, a Jewish student at Girton, and a follower of I. A. Richards; Richards supervised her doctoral dissertation. It was during the supervision of the doctoral work that the Leavises and Richards became somewhat oppositional in their views. Queenie Leavis published her doctorate under the title *Fiction and the Reading Public*, although Richards was not fully in agreement about the wisdom of publishing. Relations between the parties broke down, and the problem was exacerbated in 1935 by Leavis writing a critical paper entitled *Dr Richards, Bentham, and Coleridge*, in which he accused Richards of valuing scientific criticism (or scientific viewpoints) too much. (Ferns 2000, 12) An important aspect of Queenie's work is revealed in the title; she referred to *Fiction* as opposed to *Literature*, and it is generally accepted that Leavis shared this view of

writing i.e. that there were good books, that reflected a system of values that were linked to tradition, and that there were books that existed as mere entertainment, and that should not be considered when engaging in serious study. Leavis is explicit about the type of literature that he expects to be read and understood at undergraduate level:

> What, then, worth doing does one assume that undergraduates will be able to do? One assumes that… they will learn what reading is and what thinking is – those intimately associated capacities. By 'reading' and 'thinking' I mean the kinds characterizing the discipline of intelligence that belongs to the field of literary criticism… A student may be said to have got his initiation into 'reading' and 'thinking' by the time he has come to intelligent critical terms with, and made himself, with personal conviction, intelligently articulate about, two or three of the great Shakespearean plays, two or three major novels, and some poems of diverse kind by great poets. (Leavis 1969, 4-5)

The above looks like a fairly traditional list of texts for an English undergraduate course. However, Leavis omits the criteria to establish the qualities of what he regards as 'great' plays, 'major' novels and 'great' poets. This is somewhat problematic, because it is possible that critics will not agree as to the qualities of these texts – thus, in selecting novels, some people might choose Dickens, whilst others will choose Henry James. In a modern South African context, some might choose *Cry, the Beloved Country*, whilst others might prefer *The Life and Times of Michael K*. The point is that the judgment of people is varied, and different choices result. Leavis, however, probably had a particular set of criteria in mind when he made the above statement, but he does not elaborate. In all likelihood he is thinking of major novels such as those written by James, Jane Austen, George Eliot or Conrad – as part of the Great Tradition (although Leavis excluded Austen from his book thus named, because he claimed that she was worthy of a book-length appreciation). In his consideration of Leavis's *The Great Tradition*, Ronald Hayman makes several comments about the selection of these authors. He points out

that, for many readers and critics, Dickens would be the one novelist who would be central to the British Tradition. For Leavis, however, this is not the case; he devotes a limited aspect of the text to Dickens, and considers only one of his works in any detail – *Hard Times* – and Leavis's explanation is as follows:

> That Dickens was a great genius and is permanently among the classics is certain. But the genius was that of a great entertainer, and he had for the most part no profounder responsibility as a creative artist than this description suggests. (Hayman, 1976, 70)

Leavis's comment here seems miserly in spirit, in that he seems to recognize Dickens' genius, but then reinterprets it as a lesser thing. Hayman adds:

> When Leavis concedes that Conrad and Henry James were greatly influenced by Dickens, his exclusion seems all the more remarkable. (Hayman 1976, 70)

In 1970 the Leavises produced a book entitled *Dickens the Novelist,* but this was late in Leavis's career, and seemed a footnote to his major contribution. There were several other authors who were excluded from the Leavis canon, and they included Thackeray and Trollope ("They had 'nothing to offer the reader whose demand goes beyond the "creation of characters" and so on'." (Hayman 1976, 70)); Thomas Hardy; Emily Bronte (whose *Wuthering Heights* struck him as 'a kind of sport'. (Hayman 1976, 70)); Defoe; Richardson, and Sterne who "had been guilty of 'irresponsible (and nasty) trifling'." (Hayman 1976, 69)

In addition to this, Leavis regards English literature as being that which is produced in

England, rather than that which is produced in English. This is somewhat problematic, in the sense that James was born in the USA and only became a British citizen in the final years of his life (he died in 1916, having become a naturalized citizen in 1915), having lived in Europe from 1875. (Wynne-Davies 1989, 632) To what extent James can be regarded as English is therefore a matter of debate. Furthermore, Conrad, whilst writing in English, had his origins in Poland, and became a citizen of Britain in his twenties, and thus expressed himself in writing as a third-language speaker (his second language was French. (Hayman 1976, 70)) There is something of a disjunction between Leavis's concern about traditional English values, and his choice of authors, some of whom were not raised within the tradition he espouses, but came to it when mature in years. He would argue, perhaps, that it was not so much a matter of being raised within the tradition, as embracing the values inherent in the tradition, that made these writers significant in terms of the English heritage. Thus, they were fully English by inclination or attitude, whilst being of other citizenship by birth.

Part of the problem inherent in this type of argument is similar to the difficulty with the problem in the nationalist position held by the Newbolt Committee; there is a sense that Englishness is one thing, rather than many. There is no acknowledgement of class differences, regional interests, gender issues, religious variances, or other aspects of sub-cultures within a broad understanding of English society. This attitude is not helpful in South Africa, with its differences based on language variation, religion, race, class, and region.

There are some further necessary comments to be made regarding Leavis's criticism of Eliot, Conrad and James. Hayman makes the point that Leavis was very selective about his choice of Conrad's texts, ignoring books such as *Lord Jim* (which Hayman regarded as appropriate, because the book was overrated, in his opinion. (Hayman 1976, 71)) Hayman adds that, whilst Leavis's comments are helpful and perceptive, they do not vindicate the claim that Conrad was

> A greater novelist than Flaubert because of the greater range and depth of his interest in humanity and the greater intensity of his moral preoccupation… to appreciate Conrad's 'form' is to take stock of a process of relative valuation conducted by him in the face of life: what do men live by? what can men live by?… The dramatic imagination at work is an intensely moral imagination, the vividness of which is inalienably a judging and a valuing. (Leavis, quoted in Hayman 1976, 71)

Hayman points out that Leavis addresses the novels out of chronological order, and as a consequence he fails to recognize what Hayman deems to be Conrad's main failure – the lack of development as an artist. Hayman sees Conrad as an author who produces works that do not build on his previous achievement. Taken together with Leavis's selection of texts, it is clear that Hayman regards Leavis as presenting an incomplete picture of Conrad as an artist, choosing to ignore certain works and certain deficiencies in his writing. Furthermore, Hayman argues that Conrad had an element of the Romantic in his writing (Hayman 1976, 72) and that Leavis ignored this element of his work; bearing in mind Leavis's distrust of the Romantic spirit, it is not surprising that he acted thus.

In considering Leavis's criticism of the work of George Eliot, Hayman claims that Leavis was strongly influenced by the criticism of Henry James, and further, that Leavis argues that Eliot allows her own concerns to manifest too strongly in the concerns of the characters she creates. (Hayman 1976, 73-74) In addition to this, he argues that Leavis is too superficial about many aspects of Eliot's writing, and that he engages in generalizations. This is an interesting comment on Leavis, who would claim to be engaged in textual analysis in the greatest detail.

When addressing Leavis's commentary on Henry James' work, Hayman makes several comments that have resonance with much that I have considered elsewhere in my thesis; Leavis states of James:

> Essentially he was in quest of an ideal society, an ideal civilization. And English society, he had to recognize as he lived in it, could not after all offer him any sustaining approximation to his ideal. He was also driven back on himself by the realization that his art could appeal only to a tiny minority. (Leavis, quoted in Hayman 1976, 77-78)

Here we see Leavis expressing an idea about a concern that James is said to have, and we recognize that this same concern – the quest for an ideal society – was one of the central issues identified about why we should study literature. In addition to this, we experience an echo of the claims made by several commentators about the lack of possibility of literature having an effect on society, because of the limited number of people who would truly appreciate this work, as opposed to the great number of philistines.

In considering Leavis's claims about authors, it is apparent that there are difficulties with his claims. Firstly, he focuses on a small number of authors, and provides no convincing reasons why these are selected rather than others. Secondly, he selects particular works of these authors, and presents an argument about their relative value. These arguments are also not convincing, in the sense that they ignore certain aspects of the literature. Also, in many senses the claims are simply his interpretations, presented as if they are factual as opposed to opinion. Thirdly, Hayman points out that *The Great Tradition* is essentially a collection of previously published essays written for *Scrutiny*; the only new addition was the introduction. Because of this the criticism lacks a central focus. Hayman states that Leavis would have done better to write a completely new

book that integrated ideas more effectively, rather than collecting previously published material that spanned 6 years of *Scrutiny*.

Before concluding my commentary on Leavis's notion of what should be studied, it is important to acknowledge that, in many ways, Leavis was engaging in an exercise that had not been tackled before; he pointed out in 1932 that criticism of the novel was almost non-existent, and that such criticism was difficult because of the variation in scale between prose and poetry. Because a novel is so much more extensive than the average poem (I assume that he excluded the works of Homer, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and *Beowulf* from consideration), the techniques of practical criticism could be used, but the totality of the writing might not be effectively sampled through the addressing of an isolated passage. (Hayman 1976, 67) Because of this level of complexity and accumulation of words, ideas and images, novels were difficult to interpret and difficult to teach. Leavis's work, in this instance, is therefore important, because he acknowledged the value of teaching/studying novels, and therefore shifted the focus of literary study to include this literary form. Furthermore, he commented on specific works by specific authors, as opposed to the general notion of English literature as recommended by the Newbolt Committee.

One final point has to do with the selection of texts by Leavis. Although he remained active in the academic world until the late 1960s, he did not address critical commentary towards major authors after D. H. Lawrence (if one ignores the Two Cultures affair – although it is difficult to classify C. P. Snow as a great author). As such, he disregarded British authors who included George Orwell, Graham Greene, William Golding, Alan Sillitoe, Evelyn Waugh and Virginia Woolf (he stated, after her suicide, that her only good novel had been *To the Lighthouse*. (Hayman 1976, 62)) Although he acknowledged that America would have an ever-increasing influence on English culture, he disregarded the work of Steinbeck, Faulkner, Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Furthermore, he paid no regard to the works of South African writers such as Sol Plaatje

(whose writings, it must be acknowledged, would probably have been difficult to find in Britain), Alan Paton, and Nadine Gordimer. A consideration of the names mentioned shows the inclusion of several Nobel Prize winners. It seems then that Leavis's focus on a particular collection of novelists is probably too narrow and limited, particularly in the modern world. At the same time, it must be noted that Leavis was writing in a period in which the influence of James, Conrad and Eliot was a very palpable one – Leavis had been born in 1895, a mere 15 years after the death of Eliot, and 21 years and 29 years before the deaths of James and Conrad respectively; in other words, he would have been aware of their significance in the literary world of the time, and would not have had to reach back through time, so to speak, in order to access their writings. Dickens, who died in 1870, would have been accessible to Leavis as 'almost contemporary', but today he is almost 140 years away, and becoming ever more of the past. Ironically, the more recent authors mentioned in the paragraph above remained unacknowledged by Leavis, who seemed to baulk at considering the works of any author writing after World War Two.

With regard to the process of criticism, rather than the object of criticism (the literary work), Leavis has the following to say:

> Criticism is concerned with establishing the poem – or the novel – as an object of common access in what is in some sense a public world so that when we differ about it we are differing about what is sufficiently the same thing to make differing profitable. But the establishing of the poem (or the novel) is the establishing of a value. Any reading of it that takes it *as* a work of art involves an element of implicit valuation. The process, the kind of activity of inner response and discipline, by which we take possession of the created work is essentially the kind of activity that completes itself in a value-judgment. (Leavis 1969, 50)

By locating the text in what is a public world, or domain, Leavis emphasizes the ordinariness of the text, in the sense that it is relatively easily obtainable. Furthermore, by using the word *public*, he excludes the possibility of a private engagement. The issue of the public domain is important because it encourages a process of shared interaction; he points out that differences in opinion can be discussed in such a public forum. Leavis is concerned that the final status of the text be established through critical enquiry, and it is possible that this enquiry is conducted through a process of debate.

He adds that it is the engagement with the text that grants it status as a work of art of not. This engagement, inevitably, is that of the human mind, in terms of debate and discussion about various aspects of the text in the public world. Depending on how the object is judged will determine whether the object is a work of art. Leavis's notion of value, therefore, is located within a public realm of debate, discussion, and rational thought. He does not comment on national or emotional aspects of the process i.e. he does not state that British texts are, perhaps, significant for the development of a British national identity. He is simply concerned with the notion of value in terms of the text itself, and the process involved in declaring the object valuable. Implied herein is the idea of revisiting a text at a later point in time, because his claim locates that which is valuable at a point of reference, or several points of reference, within a social context. The argument determines the value, and the argument might develop or change over time.

Hayman makes the observation that a writer's creativity can be sterilized by uncreative reading, and quotes Leavis thus:

> We can have the poem only by an inner kind of possession; it is 'there' for analysis only in so far as we are responding appropriately to the words on the page. In pointing to them (and there is nothing else to point to) what we are doing is to bring into sharp focus, in turn, this, that and the other detail, juncture or relation in our total response; or… what we are doing is to dwell with a deliberate, considering responsiveness on this, that or the other mode or focal pointing the complete organization that the poem is, in so far as we have it. Analysis is not a dissection of something that is already and passively there. What we call analysis is, of course, a constructive or creative process. It is a more deliberate following-through of that process of creation in response to the poet's words which reading is. (Hayman 1976, 57)

An issue of significance here is that Leavis is concerned with the text – "there is nothing else to point to" – and he rejects other considerations, such as the context of the text, or the writer's biography. For Leavis, meaning is located within the words on the page. He would therefore advocate and support a position that acknowledges the critical exploration of texts in terms of the actual writing. In a sense there is a form of disjunction here, because Leavis also locates criticism in the domain of culture – a bigger, more extensive, perspective than that of the text in isolation. For Leavis part of the value of a text lies in the way in which it articulates with the past. However, in addressing the text, we must consider only the words on the page.

Leavis also states that criticism is an extension of the creative process, which implies that there is some sort of understanding between the reader and the writer. For Leavis this understanding is dependent on the words on the page. However, there is an implication that concepts and ideas are shared through the reading and interpretive process. Leavis does not, however, explore this process in any extensive way.

Leavis's focus on the text means that he addresses reading and critical analysis in a narrowly focused manner. There is the implication that the text is a discretely defined piece, and that associations beyond the text are somehow not necessary, or appropriate. The location of the text within a social milieu is not, therefore, of interest to Leavis. As will be shown in future chapters, this is very different from the critical tradition of other theorists such as the Marxists, who located texts within a class-based understanding of society, and for whom the greater social milieu was significant.

Hayman quotes Leavis in support of this discrete critical process, as follows:

> In dealing with individual poets the rule of the critic is, or should (I think) be, to work as much as possible in terms of particular analysis – analysis of poems or passages, and to say nothing that cannot be related immediately to judgments about producible texts. Observing this rule and practicing this self-denial the critic limits, of course, his freedom; but there are kinds of freedom he should not aspire to, and the discipline, while not preventing his saying anything that he should in the end find himself needing to say, enables him to say it with a force of relevance and an edged economy not otherwise attainable. (Hayman 1976, 49)

Hayman makes the point that Leavis was able to cultivate this discipline – the sharp focus about which he writes – partly because he was engaged in a teaching capacity at Cambridge. The teaching process, it seems, provided the possibility of regular engagement in the critical process. He acknowledged this in his text *Revaluation*, which he dedicated to those with whom he had discussed literature "as a teacher" (Hayman 1976, 50). He accepted that he needed the collaborative human presence in order to achieve his insights into textual criticism and understanding. At the same time, he is clearly aware of the significance of his role as a teacher – the director of the learning process, even though the process involves collaboration. Despite the fact that Leavis

approached the studying of literature in a narrow sense, it is admirable that he was as disciplined in his approach to criticism, and acted almost self-consciously in keeping himself focused on the task at hand. For Leavis there is a sense of the conscious mental application of focused enquiry into the material under consideration. Because of this, he would not allow the introduction of issues not explicitly stated in the text. By addressing more than the text there was the possibility, it would seem, of losing critical focus. Despite the recognition of collaborators, it is clear that Leavis pursued criticism as an intense, focused activity that did not seem to drift off the task at hand in order to engage in anything other than an almost solitary pursuit. However, it is clear that he located this pursuit in a broad social understanding of what is significant in culture. I have already established that Leavis saw English literature as a central – indeed, indispensable – element of English culture. Therefore, despite his narrow focus, there is an implied social engagement. Studying the text is, in terms of this, not an end in itself, but rather part of a larger process to reconnect with an English essence.

To comment further on methodological issues, like many other critics, some of whom have been mentioned in this chapter, Leavis was wary of examinations:

> Candidates were forced to depend on what they could 'scribble in three hours with journalistic facility and that athletic endurance which has nothing to do with the qualities that should properly be tested'. It would be better if they were also invited to submit reviews, written in their own time, of recent fiction, verse and criticism. Altogether there should be less emphasis on the examinations done at the end of each year and more on the individual work done in between. (Hayman 1976, 65)

The concern mentioned above is one that is echoed by many critics and educators – examinations test a small, select aspect of knowledge and they apply a time

prescription that is unjust. Leavis's notion of using a broader perspective of student's work is a valuable one, and is now in common practice – together with examinations – in many tertiary institutions. As will be shown in later chapters, this issue links to some aspects of current assessment practices in South Africa in schools – the rejection of sole reliance on examinations has led to the adoption of the Continuous Assessment (CASS) policy and practices.

Leavis's work was the final element of this stage of development in the School of English Studies at Cambridge. His influence was to be felt for decades after his death, and his claims about the method of studying literature are still debated. In the next chapter I will consider alternative traditions to those established at Oxford and Cambridge, and in chapters that follow I will show how these various critical positions have influenced the work of South African academics.

Chapter Three Challenges to the New Orthodoxy: The Emergence of Cultural Studies

Alternative Views of Society; Matters of Class and Social Schism

The discipline of English Studies as conceptualized by F. R. Leavis was an intellectual phenomenon born of a particular understanding of the world and the location of English Studies within it. Leavis's notion of English culture was one in which he perceived all the parties who constituted British Culture as functioning in a broadly consensual way – in other words, he regarded his notion of English culture as being one about which all English people would agree. The idea of English culture being located in a pre-industrial Britain was, however, problematic, in that it presented English culture as a social phenomenon that was anchored in the past, rather than in the present, or even looking toward the future. This past itself was not something that all English people would agree about, because Leavis chose to ignore the schisms and fragmentation that existed in British society. These fragmentations were located in the material and social conditions of society. In other words, the different classes would present very different views on the way in which the society functioned, and the nature of the pre-industrial past. This class division tended not to be foregrounded by Leavis or the Cambridge School.

Furthermore, the Cambridge School had a notion of culture that derived from a conceptual understanding of literature, not from the material existence of the authors or readers. For the Cambridge School, literature was an expression of a distilled essence of English culture, and as such was removed from matters of society, although there is a paradox in this position because literature was located within and derived from a cultural frame of reference, which is inherently social in nature. In addition, if a discipline like English Studies was to have a social consequence, then it must at some point

intersect with society, rather than being removed therefrom. Indeed, for such a discipline to have social influence, it would have to be inherently socially significant.

A further issue was the nature of the artefacts to be studied. Whilst Leavis reduced the canon to a narrowly-defined list of authors and their works, other critics, it will be seen, located literature within a broader understanding of culture, that included art, architecture, and furniture. These critics therefore perceived culture as a broadly social phenomenon, subject to shifting social processes, and reacting to and relating to these processes over time. Literature would, for these critics, be part of the intellectual and material interplay that developed as a consequence of human interaction. Within this frame of reference there would be the possibility of disagreement, ambiguity, and alternative interpretations. This conception of literary works that are worthy of study accommodates much more variety than Leavis's canon, and the way in which these artefacts can be explored is more diverse.

In terms of the issue of class conflict, critics from schools of thought other than the Cambridge School argued in favour of acknowledging literary works/texts that reflected these social relations. For these critics both literature about the working class and of the working class should be studied, because this would reflect a different perspective – a more authentic perspective, these critics argued – about the nature of English culture and society. A failure to do so would reduce the study of literature in the ancient universities to a discipline of reduced significance, a discipline that was as divisive as the Classics, in that the studying of the canon, as perceived by Leavis, did not serve the interests of all parties in the society – indeed, some would argue that only the interests of the elite would be served, and the vast majority of the population would be required to engage in irrelevant academic pursuits that merely reinforced the status quo, rather than interrogating it.

The critics who held opinions that differed from the Cambridge School fell roughly into three groups; those that existed prior to the work of Leavis (here I include T. H. Green, John Ruskin, and William Morris), those who lived at approximately the same time period as Leavis (Orwell, Hoggart, and Raymond Williams), and those who contributed to the challenge to Cambridge School largely after Leavis had passed away (Eagleton and the influence of the Continental Philosophers). All of these critics fall into a generally leftist position, and several of them are directly influenced by Marxist thought, and make reference to Marx in formulating their thinking.

T. H Green is a significant starting point in the lineage of challenges to the Cambridge School. He was born in 1836, the son of a vicar, and attended Rugby School

> some short time after Thomas Arnold had made it the symbolic citadel of moral uprightness and zeal, of the intellectual stamina and vigorously debated scholarship, for which subsequently the public schools have so unbashfully celebrated themselves. (Inglis 1982, 26)

Inglis's cynicism is reflected in the response of Green, who felt that the school was run on lines approximating anarchy and, furthermore, that much of the academic work was pointless. He proceeded to Balliol, Oxford, where he remained for the rest of his working life, appointed as a Professor of Moral Philosophy. Together with his wife he championed the cause of education for women and their acceptance into Oxford. (Inglis 1982, 27) In addition, he campaigned for a hall of residence for students from underprivileged backgrounds; it is clear from these actions and beliefs that he was aware of the strata and fragmentation in British society, and he attempted to alter the conditions of these students' existence, by providing them with opportunities that would lead to empowerment and greater choices in terms of work and acceptance into more exclusive strata of society.

The important point about Green is that he provides a stark contrast to the optimism of Arnold, in that Arnold believed that the reading of literature could bring about changes in the readers' characters, whereas Green seemed to think that greater value lay in providing students with support in terms of the demands of the material world. Inglis argues that Arnold, unlike Green, over-valued 'the redemptive power of culture." (Inglis 1982, 27) For Green, redemption lay in the realms of the potential to change the material world. The importance of this claim is that it provides an alternative possibility to the observations made by Arnold, and this presents us with the notion of a debate or discussion about this matter.

Ruskin, Morris, and Notions of Work

Inglis identifies John Ruskin and William Morris as two critics whose work addressed similar issues to Green. According to Clutton-Brock(Clutton-Brock, 1914), Ruskin criticized the way in which art was conceptualized by the critics of the day. Firstly, he saw art as deriving from a community, rather than from an individual. Secondly, he addressed a broad range of artistic expressions, from architecture to painting, rather than concentrating on literary texts in isolation. Linguistic, dramatic, visual and aural facets of cultural expression were all part of a shared cultural dimension within one society.(Clutton-Brock 1914, 13-14) Ruskin differs from Arnold, in that Arnold regarded the mass of society as being unable to move substantially beyond their philistine state, whereas Ruskin sees the possibility that all people can be artists. This, of course, is significant in terms of education, because it implies that any form of literature or written expression can be studied. The notion of high art is rejected here, in favour of a broad, peoples' expression. There is the difficulty here that all art is regarded as being of equal value, and artistic skill becomes relegated to a position of insignificance. Leavis's concern that different poets have different abilities, as reflected in his commentary on Shelley and Keats, is implicitly rejected.

There is value in the broadening of the notion of art of cultural expression, in that many aspects of society are recognized as being significant, and there is the sense that culture is both rich and complex. However, the problem here is that all human expression seems to be regarded as equally valuable, and no evidence is provided to convince the reader that this is the case. In addition, whilst we can accept that all people have some dimension of artistic expression inherent in them, the vast majority of people are unable to produce hand-drawn or painted images that are more sophisticated than the images that children draw. In addition, the three-dimensional aspects of sculpture elude an even greater number. The issue of artistic skill seems to be brushed aside by the comment that we can all be artists. There is a tension here that is at the centre of the debate between the Cambridge School and those who would challenge their dominance. The Cambridge School holds that there are a limited number of great works, and that by studying these works through the process of practical criticism, which relies to a large degree on close reading, it is possible for a reader to develop insights about the nature of the world. The opposing claim is that the number of texts should be as broad as possible in order to reflect inter-relationships between different forms of art, and to reflect diversity within a society that is represented incorrectly by the Cambridge School as being uniform in terms of values, amongst other things, and thus empower the reader by providing insights into the hegemony of power.

Ruskin was followed by William Morris, who always regarded the work of Ruskin with a sense of indebtedness.(Thompson 1955, 32) Morris had similar views about art to those of Ruskin:

> Morris himself, however, held that art is everybody's business, whether they are themselves artists or not. And by art he, like Ruskin, did not mean merely pictures or statues. Indeed, he thought little of these compared with all the work of men's hands that used to be beautiful in the past and now is ugly… And at first

> he, being himself a man of action and an artist, merely tried to make beautiful things for himself and others. But gradually he came to see that this single artistic effort of his would avail nothing in a world of ugliness, that all the conditions of our society favoured ugliness and thwarted beauty. (Clutton-Brock 1914, 18-19)

Morris's conception of art differs from that of Leavis, in that he regarded it as broadly stated and experienced by the mass of society. The various genres of art do not place specific emphasis on literature, but locate literature in a relationship with other forms of expression. This is typical of all the leftist critics, in that they see art within a frame of reference that is broadly social and varied in its features. In addition, they see that it has a social purpose, and therefore has a social transformative potential. In order to establish the nature of the transformation, it is important to consider the art of the various social strata in society, particularly the work of the economically lower classes, in order to understand the conditions of existence and the concerns of these people. Labour is an important aspect of Morris's understanding of art and civilization; Clutton-Brock points out that Morris regarded 'joyless labour' as a cause of barbarism.(Clutton-Brock 1914, 21)

The significance of Morris is perhaps located in his concern for the working class, who are not really part of the social conceptions of the Cambridge School, although Leavis did argue that folk songs and other elements of pre-industrial culture were part of the authentic expression of English Values. Leavis's view of the working class was located in an historical perception that lacked authenticity, and it failed to evolve with the times. To assume that these pre-industrial expressions of culture would have significance in the modern world is to reflect an inaccurate understanding of modern British society; society, after all, evolves into something different, not just with the passage of time, but with the change in the material conditions of existence, as well as the human understanding thereof. The issue of class was and is a central feature of British society and needed to be considered, but Leavis did not do this. Morris's reflection of the

dissatisfaction of the working classes is an element that articulates with other Leftist theorists – as well as the avowed liberal concern for the individual – and this therefore locates the debate about what literature we should teach, and the justification for teaching it, and the methodologies to be used in doing so, within an alternative social context. Despite outlining the social context as he did, echoing the concerns of Green, Morris did not develop a complex theory that included a methodology or suggested list of texts to consider. Because of his broad understanding of art, he would probably not have valued the notion of limiting the selection for consideration. There is the equal difficulty, alluded to above, that the range and diversity of artistic works under consideration is too loosely defined, and notions of good art and bad art are not differentiated enough to make the studying of literature and other art forms effective and streamlined. The next two theorists whom I will address, Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, addressed these issues to some degree. As will be seen, Williams became the leftist equivalent of Leavis, in that he produced a complex, comprehensive understanding of literature, located within a cultural space, and focusing in detail on the use of words, almost in the manner of close reading (i.e. practical criticism).

Before considering the work of Williams, I will consider the criticism of Hoggart, George Orwell, and E. P. Thompson.

Hoggart and Social Mobility

Richard Hoggart was born in 1918 into a working class family in Hunslet, an urban area adjoining Leeds.

> He won, against all odds, a scholarship to a local grammar school, a decade before that was made a more general (though never widespread) working class pattern by the 1944 Education Act, but throughout his boyhood until called up to what was indeed a new model Army in 1940, he had to understand his educated

> life in the terms of that other, informal education learned in the customs of sharp, almost demeaning and just about dignified poverty. (Inglis 1982, 160)

Hoggart's educational experience and his life experience provided him with an unusual insight into the issue of class relations. Unlike T. H. Green, who identified the best books as texts worth addressing, Hoggart was aware that the notion of "best books" is one that might need some negotiation. Furthermore, he was also aware of the gap between the various parties' understandings of the significance of literature.

Hoggart's most significant work is *The Uses of Literacy*, published in 1957. The text is interesting for many reasons. The majority of literary critics address their work in terms of the texts on which they are commenting. Hoggart, however, approaches the task differently; he devotes half of the book to a socio-economic consideration and analysis of the lifestyles of the working class. He addresses their material conditions, their culinary practices, their linguistic nuances, and their attitudes, in order to establish the nature of the class with which he is dealing. It is clear that, for Hoggart, there is no single, unified notion of England. The people about whom Hoggart writes are the majority of the population, but they are removed in terms of their conditions of existence from images which are frequently perceived to be iconic. The Queen, Westminster, Shakespeare, and 10 Downing Street seem distant from Hoggart's world. If English Studies is to be part of a curriculum, the justification for inclusion needs to apply to all members of the society. It is clear that the society Hoggart presents, in a book that approximates an anthropological study, has a different set of needs and interests from those of the middle and upper classes.

The opening section of the book reflects Hoggart's concern with class issues. The first chapter is entitled *Who are the Working Class?*and it deals with definitions, and comments on the way in which the working class has been portrayed by a variety of

writers. Hoggart makes the point that the working class figure has been granted a traditional role in British society, something that represents the “salt of the earth” type, but that lacks real identity. He also states that he himself is a product of the working class, and that he struggles to define who these people are. In addition to this, he points out that, whilst the claim at the time of his writing (1957) was that there was no working class group in Britain anymore, in that the economic growth after the war had eliminated the sense of poverty and need in the lowest economic strata of society, this claim itself was debatable. He adds that attitudes are slower to change than economic conditions, so that even if people were relatively well off, they still located themselves in a working class sphere of society through their social rituals, and speech patterns.

Hoggart’s notion of class is significant because it suggests that class has more to it than mere economic wealth. There is a sense of identity that is established through a range of social rituals, beliefs, customs, and manners. Furthermore, these elements of class are generated within the class itself, and shift and evolve into other elements over time. There is a subtlety to the notion of class that is perhaps ignored by many other critics. Certainly Leavis, in his representation of a utopian rural world that is now gone and replaced by an industrial monolith, fails to identify the nuances of the working class. The layered, detailed world of Hoggart has the ring of truth to it, whereas the romanticized representation that Leavis provides appears to be little more than a veneer.

It is into this realm that Hoggart introduces the notion of literature, and he locates the working class literary experience in the sphere of that which is accessible. Magazines and comic books are associated with the class. Hoggart addresses the idea of weekly family magazines, and contrasts them with what he terms “spicy” magazines, which included stories dealing with crime, science fiction, and sex, including stories with titles such as: *Broads Don’t Like Lead*, and *Baby, Here’s Your Corpse*. (Hoggart 1992, 259) These magazines were available at newsagents, bookstores, and at railway station kiosks.

Hoggart links issues of class to the experience of the reading public. One element of his book is entitled “Them and Us” and it presents the division between the classes. The mere mention of this division is significant, in that it identifies that British society lacked the sense of homogeneity that is perhaps alluded to in Leavis’s thought. Leavis was of the opinion that British society was somehow linked to the values espoused in the canon, but that elements of it had become corrupted through the newfangled processes of the Industrial Revolution and the resultant modern world. Hoggart seems to be suggesting that this division between the classes predated the Industrial Revolution. The nature of the division might be emphasised in the modern world, but no amount of reading of the canon would remove the conflict or division. In effect, Hoggart seems to postulate a different world of reading for each class. In terms of the material conditions of the working class, and associated with their level and form of education, the magazines available in kiosks were appropriate reading. For the working class, the works of T. S. Eliot would take on an opacity that the magazines lacked. In the same way, Eliot’s works would assume an intellectual high ground that the magazines could not attain. The conditions in which the working class lived provided, some would say, a barrier to understanding texts from Leavis’s canon, because these conditions did not provide a set of experiences from which the reader could adequately address a given text. This is, in a way, a dangerous position to adopt, because it holds within it the idea that people are not able to extend themselves imaginatively; in other words, our material circumstances so constrain us that we are not able to engage with texts outside of our experience. This is, of course, not the case, although some people’s material circumstances are perhaps more conducive to this happening.

Hoggart addresses his own difficulties as a person who had moved across a demarcation point of class difference, towards the end of the book. He comments on what it is like to be a “scholarship boy”, and states:

> Think of his reading-material, for example: at home he sees strewn around, and reads regularly himself, magazines which are never mentioned at school, which seem not to belong to the world to which the school introduces him; at school he hears about and reads books which are never mentioned at home. When he brings these books into the house they do not take their place with other books which the family are reading, for often there are none or almost none; his books look, rather, like strange tools. (Hoggart 1992, 296)

Hoggart identifies, in this passage, a human response to the process of education, and the upliftment of an individual. We are presented with a case of alienation, reflected in the transition of an individual from one class into another, through the process of education, particularly that of reading, and the role of great literature. It is apparent that, in Hoggart's view, the shift is not easily achieved. He states that the individual ends up in a sort of limbo, in that he belongs to neither class. His lack of material wealth prevents his acceptance into the wealthier classes, and a blunting of "intuition" (Hoggart's terminology) removes him from the working class.

The image I have created is a somewhat bleak one, in that it suggests that social barriers are largely impermeable. Hoggart himself, however, is proof of the converse. He was able to move across the class barriers through the process of education. In doing so he had to take on new patterns of conduct, and he had to leave behind something of his past. It is, of course, problematic to take the experiences of one person and generalize them across a class or society of people. It is also, however, inappropriate to ignore such experiences totally. Social barriers, it seems, are permeable, but at a cost to the individual concerned. There is also the idea that the barriers themselves become less rigid, because the shared experience of reading increases the sense of unity, although the material conditions of existence do not change. In a society undergoing transformation, partly as policy, and partly in an

evolutionary “organic” manner – much like post-apartheid South Africa – there is the difficulty of ignoring this cost to the individual as s/he moves through the social strata.

Hoggart did not set the magazines and other texts read by the working class on the same level as the canon; in his description and analysis of the magazines his tone is somewhat disparaging at times, and one detects a wry sense of amusement at some of the magazines’ content and presentation. These stories therefore fail to reach the literary heights that are generally ascribed to the canon. Hoggart is not totally dismissive of them, however. For example, he refers to the novel *Sanctuary* by William Faulkner, and shows that episodes in this novel are similar to those of the magazines, and therefore both types of story share an element of significance, in that they present a sense of a particular reality on which we can reflect. Hoggart argues that Faulkner’s work is greater than that of the magazines because the action of the novel points towards something more significant in human life. Furthermore, Hoggart argues that the quality of the magazine stories improved over a period of time, thus making them difficult to categorize; they cannot simply be treated as one genre. The important point to be made about Faulkner’s novel is that it is used as a point of social critique – it points beyond itself to achieve significance. The purpose of reading this novel, therefore, is not entirely contained within the novel itself – it has an extended social significance that is established through interaction with the world beyond the text.

Inglis identifies several aspects of Hoggart’s work that make him significant in the study of English literary criticism:

> He was… the first in the conversation of culture as carried on in English since 1945 or so, to treat social life as a literary text, and to revise the valuation of that life then in genteel circulation. He found a cultural theory that spoke only of the depredations of industrial life, the dehumanizing of personal encounters in urban surroundings, the final ruptures in the traditions and continuity which maintain value, identity and a recognizable community of friends and neighbours… He can show… that the working people of industrial England are far more unshakable, independent, vigorous, alive, than old theory had it. (Inglis 1982, 163)

In essence, Hoggart challenged conventional understandings of the working class as stated by literary critics of the time – particularly the Cambridge School – in that he presented a different notion of the working class. Hoggart wrote with authenticity about this group, because he had personal experience of them – deriving, as he did, from this class – and the unconvincing presentation of the working class as envisaged by the Leavises was therefore undermined. More importantly, Hoggart reflected the reality that there was more than one conception of England, and that the society was divided along class lines, as well as others – such as gender and religious affiliation – and that Leavis's notion of English culture was therefore flawed.

Inglis's summing up of Hoggart's critical contribution is worth repeating here:

> In the first place, written and thought about as it was in the border country which is neither everyday life nor academic study… Hoggart has *renamed* the ordinary so that it becomes once again the fabulous. Academic distributions of labour generate their own hierarchies… they uncompromisingly reproduce their own society's class structure. Hoggart's book changed that class structure, and wonderfully moving as it is, moves thoughtful students back into their own historical experience… In forcing the practice of literary criticism through the

> limits of the received tradition and into the texts of a differently felt life, he reforms both the method and the subject-matter of a whole intellectual generation. (Inglis 1982, 168)

In his acknowledgement of the class divisions in British society, Hoggart challenges the opinions of Leavis, but he also provides some insight into the difficulties associated with the Newbolt Committee's vision of a united Britain who were drawn together by a common sense of nationhood. Clearly this notion of a common identity would be hard to achieve in a society divided along class lines.

Orwell and the Complexities of Class in Writing

It is important to acknowledge that Hoggart's work on the texts read by the working class is mirrored, to some extent, in the work of the British author and commentator, George Orwell. In 1940 he published an essay entitled *Boys' Weeklies*, in which he addressed the type of literature intended for boys to read, and published with this audience in mind, in Britain. (Orwell, 1957) Orwell makes several interesting statements about boys' weekly papers. Firstly, he focuses extensively on two of the papers, *Magnet* and *Gem*. It is in the pages of the former that the character Billy Bunter regularly appears. One of Orwell's concerns is that of the language used by the various boys at Greyfriars (the school in which much of the action is set). In addition to this, he also addresses the attitudes expressed by the boys, the clothing they wear, and their actions. Orwell points out that the stories are actually late-Victorian in character, although they are supposedly current (i.e. set in 1940). Furthermore, the language is dated.(Orwell 1957, 179)

The clothing, as represented in the illustrations which accompany the stories, indicates that the Greyfriars uniform is almost identical to that of Eton. In addition to this, attitudes are conservative, and actions such as smoking and drinking are unacceptable. Orwell

makes it clear that a sort of xenophobia exists – and is supported – by the stories. (Orwell 1957, 188)Orwell provides a list of nationalities, and states the stereotypical qualities of each. Thus the Arabs are sinister, and the Negroes are comic, but faithful. It is clear that the stories are intended for an uncritical audience, or alternatively, to endorse existing stereotypes in a given social milieu.

Orwell perceives the stories to have more to them than mere narratives to pass the time. Of the readers, Orwell states:

> …there is being pumped into them the conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with *laissez-faire* capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics, and that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern that will last forever. (Orwell 1957, 200)

For Orwell, then, much of what the working class read was a fiction, possibly deliberately created, to provide the readers with a set of values that would serve capital, and would fail to provide the readers with any sense of the issues in the real world, by ensuring that the readers addressed a set of texts located within a fantasy past, with made-up situations (Orwell states that no school such as Greyfriars ever existed in reality), and unlikely to provide the reader with any opportunity for critical thinking. The reader of this sort of text would, in all likelihood, remain class-bound, and yet content. In effect Orwell is scathing with regard to the creators of these weekly papers, and he questions their intentions.

In a sense Orwell perceives a form of collusion between the publishers and the state, in that the former provide a form of intellectual engagement that approximates a soporific

function with regard to the masses, almost along the lines of Althusserian ideological state apparatus. Through literature the working classes are provided with an involvement with some sort of Cloud Cuckoo Land in which reality is mis-represented and social oppositions, conflicts and fragmentation a merely glossed over. However, we must question whether in fact an entire class of people would be duped thus, or whether at least some of the readers would ask probing, critical questions about the intellectual fodder presented to them in this manner.

Thompson and the Working Class

In his book *The Making of the English Working Class*, E. P Thompson discusses the reading ability of the working classes during the 1820s, and also comments on the reading matter with which they might have been familiar:

> …the first half of the nineteenth century, when the formal education of a great part of the people entailed little more than instruction in the Three Rs, was by no means a period of intellectual atrophy. The towns, and even the villages, hummed with the energy of the autodidact. Given the elementary techniques of literacy, labourers, artisans, shopkeepers and clerks and schoolmasters, proceeded to instruct themselves, severally or in groups. And the books or instructors were very often those sanctioned by reforming opinion. A shoemaker, who had been taught his letters in the Old Testament, would labour through the *Age of Reason*; a schoolmaster, whose education had taken him little further than worthy religious homilies, would attempt Voltaire, Gibbon, Ricardo… (Thompson 1963, 781-782)

This passage is somewhat at odds with the ideas expressed by Hoggart and Orwell, in that the working class of Thompson's world are better informed than Hoggart's and Orwell's, and seem more capable of reading challenging texts. However, Thompson is making claims about a society of at least a century earlier than the period and circumstances addressed by the other critics, and the difference could have been a developmental one. Alternatively, a society such as Britain's could easily accommodate both perspectives – there could be towns and villages where the populace was well-informed, and at the same time there could be elements of the same class who were less so. This is not an argument that can be easily resolved; in any social situation involving enough people there will be exceptions to the rule. The difference in reading levels is interesting because it suggests that there is some fracturing of the working class – the idea that the working class is a homogenous grouping is as flawed as the idea of a homogenous British society.

Thompson has the following to say about literacy levels in Britain during the early nineteenth century:

> To simplify a difficult discussion, we may say that something like two out of every three working men were able to read after some fashion in the early part of the century, although rather fewer could write. As the effect of the Sunday schools and day schools increasingly became felt, as well as the drive for self-improvement among working people themselves, so the number of the illiterate fell, although in the worst child labour areas the fall was delayed. (Thompson 1963, 783)

The number of people in the working class who were able to read is a significant one in that it provided evidence that these people would have been able to empower themselves through reading texts that provided ideas and insights into the human

condition that far exceeded their own material conditions of existence. The possibility of living in a different, more meaningful manner, would have been part of what the reading process would have been about. However, Thompson makes it clear that the reading skills acquired by many of the working class would have been of a rudimentary level, and would have made it difficult if not impossible for readers of this group to have understood sophisticated or abstract concepts that were expressed using particular terminology:

> Ideas and terms were sometimes employed in the early Radical movement which, it is evident, had for some ardent followers a fetishistic rather than rational value. Some of the Pentridge rebels thought that a 'Provisional Government' would ensure a more plentiful supply of 'provisions'; while, in one account of the pitmen of the north-east in 1819, 'Universal Suffrage is understood by many of them to mean universal suffering… "if one member suffers, all must suffer". (Thompson 1963, 783)

The issue here involves the ability to read with knowledge and understanding, and the ability to interpret written expression in a clear and correct manner. The misreading that occurs regarding this type of writing raises some doubts about the ability of these readers to address the works of Voltaire and others mentioned by Thompson, above, with any degree of competence. It also raises a concern about the nature of a curriculum of literature that will provide all members of a population with meaningful and valid reading experiences. On the other hand, possibly this type of literary work – and more complex works – can be effectively read once there is the intervention of a teacher, or informed figure who can explain the more difficult terminology. The ability to read, therefore, is only one of the issues that need to be considered when proposing a canon, as Leavis did. Misreading/misinterpretations are not necessarily restricted to one class. It is entirely possible that a reader from the middle or upper class could also misunderstand "universal suffrage", or a similar term. The issue then is not necessarily

class-based, but rather derived from the ability – or lack of it – to read with understanding. People who have experienced a better quality of education are more likely to read effectively, but this is not always the case.

It is also clear from Thompson's work that the readers located within the working class were addressing issues related to and deriving from their material conditions of existence. This matter will be central to the theoretical concerns of Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, whose work I will address below.

Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism

Raymond Williams, many will agree, is the voice most revered by the critics that provided an alternative perspective to that of Leavis and the Cambridge school. Williams produced an extensive range of texts, as stated by J. P. Ward, who made the points that Williams is difficult to categorise. (Ward 1981, 2) Williams emphasised his Welsh heritage, but "was deeply repelled by what he saw as the extreme narrowness of Welsh non-conformity and chapel life." (Ward 1981, 6) (Williams 1979, 25)

Williams himself comments on the issue of intellectual narrowness associated with rural Welsh life in the text *Politics and Letters. Interviews with the New Left Review*. He reiterates the point that he regarded himself as Welsh rather than British (the word British was too often connected to the idea of Empire), although he had no knowledge of the Welsh language apart from songs learned by heart as a child. The reason for this lack of Welsh knowledge was the consequence of a deliberate Anglicization policy in Britain, about which Williams acknowledges himself as being unaware for much of his early life. (Williams 1979, 25) This imposition of one culture on another – or the

appropriation of one culture by another – would be an issue Williams addressed when he began the writing of his first significant text, *Culture and Society*, in which he would question the manner in which Eliot, Leavis and others had appropriated aspects of British literary culture for their own purposes. The point here is that Williams rejected the notion of neutrality regarding issues of culture, and regarded the work of Leavis and others as having a political dimension, in that they chose to present a particular understanding of British society as valid, and without prejudice, when in fact the presentation was selective and favoured a particular conception of Britain. Williams's own social experience included the fact that his father was a railway signalman and that union matters were part of everyday life for Williams's family.

During William's early years at Cambridge, in the 1930s, *Scrutiny* – the journal steeped in the theory of practical criticism – devoted much of its time to attacking Marxist literary theoretical conceptions. Williams commented on the ineffectual response provided by the Marxists with regard to this matter:

> …the Communist response was to shift the argument on to different ground. We maintained that what was wrong with literature was that it was out of touch with a large majority of the people; it was not written for them and it was not written by them. So the problem was not how to judge literature or respond to a poem, it was how to write a different kind of novel or poem… Questions of literary criticism or literary history largely went by the board… But the negative refusal to engage with major theoretical and practical questions in the discipline of English studies itself was a crucial failure… After the war… we had to engage in literary criticism or history proper and we found we were left with nothing. Meanwhile English studies had matured as a discipline, establishing itself by prolonged specialism and detailed work in field after field, to which Marxists could oppose

> only a precarious handful of works whose contribution to literary study was easily dismissed as reductionism.
>
> (Williams 1979, 45)

In this quote we encounter one of the problems that bedevil Marxist theory, and that is the overarching significance of economics – and the implied reductionism of this perspective. Williams suggests that, in attempting to address literary matters, the Marxist theorists of the 1930s did not address literature so much as avoid it. Literature was interpreted in terms of a greater social dimension and was, in a sense, lost in the debates concerning issues of class, and social dynamics. If we can argue that one of the weaknesses of practical criticism is that it treats texts as human expression removed from social context, the problem with 1930s Marxism was that it treated texts within a frame of reference based on economic contexts, and thus ignored the complexity of the texts. This economic frame of reference provides a hopelessly narrow interpretation of literature. In terms of this understanding of literature, written texts are not fundamentally different from any other form of human expression and their purpose is an economic one. Williams also makes the point that the proponents of practical criticism developed a form of rigorous, scholarly engagement with literature itself, and this allowed them to provide answers to questions that were narrowly focused on the texts themselves, whereas the Marxists were addressing literature as if the texts themselves were, in a sense, somehow secondary.

In *Culture and Society* Williams addressed this matter of the relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, and he emphasized what he regarded as the relative autonomy of the superstructure. In classical Marxism, the base determined/controlled the form and function of the superstructure. In other words, cultural elements were dependent on the economic base for their form and content. This idea was essentially reductionist, and granted the cultural world no autonomy. It was about this matter that cultural materialists differed from classical Marxists. In essence,

cultural materialists argued that the superstructure has relative autonomy. In other words, whilst the economic base is influential in establishing some of the constraints which limit the possibilities that occur at superstructure level, the base does not *determine* the form or content of the superstructure. This is an important consideration, because it ensures that, within the superstructure itself, there is an ebb and flow of social forces which affect the nature of the superstructure, thus providing for the possibility of relatively autonomous cultural evolution.

Williams quotes Engels in support of this conception of the superstructure:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure… also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*.
>
> (Williams 1958, 267)

Williams points out that his initial experience of Cambridge was very much like an extension of school, and he applied himself as he had at school. His first tutor was Lionel Elvin, and he was followed by Tillyard. Neither academic accepted Williams's commitment to Marxism.(Williams 1979, 50-51)

Williams makes it clear that he wrote *Culture and Society* as an oppositional piece to the opinions of Eliot and the Cambridge School. In 1948 Eliot published *Notes towards*

the Definition of Culture, and Williams recognized that this book had great influence on the thinking of literary critics. Williams began addressing the issue of culture, almost from an anthropological perspective. Central to William's claims are the idea of appropriation of concepts/traditions by the Cambridge School, and the notion of challenging the orthodoxies that had executed the appropriation. In addition to this, Williams is concerned about recognizing the tradition(s) which had allowed the generation of, and appreciation of, literature to develop. He states that there is a degree of complexity to this process, and that it was not always acknowledged in terms of literary interpretation as practised by the Cambridge School. In addition to this, Williams is concerned about the usage of terminology, and the selective meanings applied to specific words such as "culture". This concern about effective and appropriate use of terminology would be expressed in a more detailed way in William's book *Keywords*, about which I will write more extensively at a later point in the chapter.

Williams believed that literary matters have a social-political dimension. This is not in agreement with the position favoured by the Cambridge School, in that their main concern was to address the written text, rather than the social dimensions in which it was embedded, although it is clear that Leavis located his literary criticism within a frame of reference that included notions of culture deriving from an understanding of the essence of Englishness. Williams felt that the social elements surrounding and informing a text were integral to the interpretive process. His insistence on the significance of the social context was one element that led to some critics regarding what he wished to practice as something akin to sociology, rather than literary criticism. This claim, however, is somewhat problematic, because all literature is a product of a social environment, and no text is a discrete work that is detached from society. The socially embedded nature of a literary text is problematic in some ways, because it conspires against the notion of a text that is separated out from its social milieu. In addition there is a difficulty in assuming that a literary text can be interpreted as a discrete entity and then assuming that it can have some form of cultural engagement; if the text is removed from a context in order to study it effectively, then the text and the

conclusions drawn from the studying of the text do not articulate well with society, or the social context.

Whilst William's *Culture and Society* was well-received by many critics, his subsequent book, *The Long Revolution*, was rejected by many who regarded it as a corrupted form of sociology (Williams 1979, 134). The issue of the need for literary criticism to be somehow divorced from sociology – or other theoretical perspectives – is somewhat problematic. Various theoretical perspectives inform literary criticism and to expect literary critics to develop ideas in a sort of vacuum, detached from the world and other theories around them, is representative of a poor understanding of how the world is integrated. The value and purpose of a text is dependent on the studying of that text having some consequences in society. Significantly, Williams is seen to be using a form of integrated critical enquiry, in which theories to do with literature and/or society are shown to have application across a range of associated phenomena.

Apart from suggesting that there is a form of integrated knowledge between and within intellectual disciplines, Williams also emphasises the significance of the material world, at the cost to the world of the formalists, who included Leavis in their number. In doing so, Williams emphasises the material world over that of ideas:

> …after all the basic argument of the first chapter of *Long Revolution* is precisely that there is no natural seeing and therefore there cannot be a direct and unmediated contact with reality. On the other hand, in much linguistic theory and a certain kind of semiotics, we are in danger of reaching the opposite point in which the epistemological wholly absorbs the ontological: it is only in the ways of knowing that we exist at all. To formalist friends, of whom I have many, who affect to doubt the very possibility of an external 'referent', it is necessary to recall

> an absolutely founding presumption of materialism: namely that the natural world exists whether anyone signifies it or not.
>
> (Williams 1979, 167)

A further point of significant difference between Williams and the Cambridge School is located in their approach to the meanings of words that have been used in literary works. For purposes of practical criticism, the process of close reading involved paying particular attention to the meaning of words in literature, and to the images and ideas generated through interpreting these words. Williams presented a similar approach, in a sense, in his book entitled *Keywords* published in 1976. The subtitle, *A vocabulary of culture and society*, provides central information about this book. In essence the book presents a series of historical accounts about a select list of words. These words have significance in the realms of cultural materialism and literary criticism, in that they present particular meanings that reflect the nature of power-relations pertaining to word usage:

> I started with the discovery in the fifties that I could understand the contemporary meanings of terms like ‘culture’ much more clearly once I had explored the historical semantics behind them, which was a great surprise to me. It was not an entirely unfamiliar method, of course, because the English course at Cambridge had involved the discussion of certain words like ‘nature ‘ to establish their historical usages; but this was regarded as very much an ancillary to literary appreciation… I felt strongly that a historical semantics was needed as well as structural analyses.
>
> (Williams 1979, 175-176)

The significance here is that there is a dimension of philology to the process identified by Williams, and he also links it to one element of Cambridge tradition, although he argues that there is a need to take the process further. What is also important is that

Williams is addressing the matter in an additive manner, rather than considering the matter from the position of an either/or scenario; he sees the value of the historical semantics as well as the value of structural analyses, rather than arguing that one should supplant the other. This notion of critical engagement that acknowledges a range of positions, rather than rejecting one in favour of the other, is a workable form of eclecticism which reflects the possibility of opposing theoretical positions providing ideas that are complementary.

Williams addresses the notion of language as being located within the social domain, which he regards as being a place in which interests and attempts at dominance are present. Language is the medium of literary expression, and from this we can infer that the conflicts located within the language itself will be introduced into literary texts, making them a site of conflict (Williams 1979, 176).The implication is that social conflict can be explored in terms of literary themes, or, alternatively, in terms of language used. Part of the purpose of studying literature, according to this idea, would be to critically engage with both aspects – literary and linguistic – in order to establish the nature of the social reality – in other words, to make conflict obvious. Importantly, the nature of language, according to Williams, is very different from the "mere words" identified by George Gordon. Indeed, the words used to express literary matters – together with the content of those matters – reflect the nature of socio-cultural relationships, specifically in the field of conflict.

Williams makes the following comments about Leavis:

> This involves the rejection of idealist accounts of language as a common possession – at its best, Leavis's notion of language as a continuous legacy through the ages that carries the finest insights of the community. For while Leavis was right to stress the cultural importance of language, his notion of

> continuity was quite false, since it rested on an abstraction from what were always extraordinary historical transformations and reversals, and then on proposing a single heritage of meanings which were held to sanction particular contemporary values.
>
> (Williams 1979, 176-177)

William's notion of language and literature, and the society that generated these things, is located within an understanding of society as a place of conflict and/or struggle, along class lines for the most part, but also located within an historical dimension that reflects the ebb and flow of the struggle for dominance over time. His view is therefore that of a fractured social context, in which different parties express themselves in terms that are framed by division and difference. The reason for teaching literature, according to this position, is to make the conflicts evident to the reader, to provide a point of debate/discussion. One possibility deriving from this is the idea of social transformation as a result of greater awareness.

According to Williams, there are different and opposing groups/parties in any given social context, and these groups attempt to establish their values – and the expression thereof – as central to the core nature of society. In other words, whilst there may be a range of possible usages, with various meanings and values associated to each usage, particular word usages are favoured by specific groups because these support that group's expression of values. In essence, then, the notion of a neutral use of language is denied. (Williams 1976, 11)

The notion of culture is central to Leavis's argument, and Williams presents an interesting and different understanding of this term. Williams expends some effort on the analysis of the word *culture*, linking it to several different concepts. The first, he states, is a usage such as might have been found in tea shops, "where it seemed the preferred word for a kind of social superiority." (Williams 1976, 12) He also points out that the

word had been used in his own circles as a reference to work in the arts – writing poetry, and working in the theatre. This changed over time:

> What I was now hearing were two different senses, which I could not really get clear: first, in the study of literature, a use of the word to indicate, powerfully but not explicitly, some central formation of values (and *literature* itself had the same kind of emphasis); secondly, in more general discussion, but with what seemed to me very different implications, a use which made it almost equivalent to *society*: a particular *way of life* – 'American culture', 'Japanese culture'.
>
> (Williams 1976, 12)

A central feature of all of this is William's contention that word meaning is more than signification and norms and rules are more than the properties of an abstract process or system. (Williams 1976, 21) In addition, Williams regards the process of word usage as more complex than a simple location of words within a social and historical context – instead, he makes the point that the historical and social process may be contained within the usage of the words, since these elements might be relational.

In essence, then, Williams does not subscribe to a close reading of texts that regards the words of the text as mere signifiers of meaning. Instead, the usage of words – from selection to interpretation – is a process of complex negotiations that are located within, and contribute to, the social context that surrounds the text. The conflicts that exist in society are reflected in, and are a commentary on, the usage of selected words in any given text.

The notion of conflicting ideas about the interpretation of social aspects of criticism is reflected in the essay entitled "One Hundred Years of Culture and Anarchy", included in

Problems in Materialism and Culture. (Williams 1980). In this essay Williams considers the claims made by Matthew Arnold in his text *Culture and Anarchy*, and he shows that the book was written from a perspective that was located within a social milieu that was divided by conflict regarding, amongst other things, the right to vote (Williams 1980, 3). Social conflict was therefore present and central to the society which produced Arnold's work – this work which emphasised uniformity in society, and a shared cultural experience.

Williams suggests that the values and protocols governing our modern society are somehow taken for granted – as if democratic traditions simply extend back into the mists of time, and as if they were not derived from debates regarding the rights of the individual in society. One element of significance regarding this example is that it establishes that what are now ordinary things were once extraordinary, and that the idea of a unified British heritage is one that has severe limitations. The notion of debate is central to the idea of developing democratic values. It is out of conflicting positions that traditions are forged. The traditions that Arnold, Eliot, Leavis and others subscribe to are created from earlier debates, and therefore do not exist in a discrete way, removed from human engagement, but are in essence a part of it.

Williams continues in his criticism by considering various claims put forward by Arnold. Arnold, he points out, presents the working-class man as a 'rioter', and the language used to describe this 'rioter' becomes ever more emotive. (Williams 1980, 6) In essence Arnold claims that the choice facing the British public is to either maintain a set of traditional values or be overwhelmed by the anarchy that is represented in the behaviour of the 'rioter'. (Williams 1980, 6)

Williams summing up of Arnold's position is worth quoting:

> Excellence and humane values on the one hand; discipline and where necessary repression on the other. This, then as now, is a dangerous position: a culmination of the wrong kind of liberalism, just as Mill, as far as he went, was a culmination of liberalism of the most honest kind…
>
> It then matters very much whether those who believe in reason and in informed argument are able, within the noise of confrontation, to go on making the necessary distinctions.
>
> (Williams 1980, 8)

Williams' work makes many references to the working-class as well as specific references to Marxist thought. It is tempting, therefore, to locate Williams solely in the school of Marxism. However, whilst it is clear that he is strongly influenced by Marxist thought, there are reasons why we should not simply regard Williams as a Marxist in the traditional sense; the first reason is the rejection of the base-superstructure model, as dealt with earlier in this chapter. The second is his rejection of "rural idiocy", as if only the urbanized people have the insight and knowledge to challenge the system (Ward 1981, 55-56).

One of Williams' significant intellectual contributions was that he engaged in a critique of the Cambridge School, providing an alternative set of ideas. Terry Eagleton comments thus on Williams' relationship with the Cambridge literary critical world:

> Williams brought together in a new conjecture the two distinctive currents of Cambridge English: close textual analysis on the one hand, 'life' and 'thought' on the other. But what they called 'close reading' or 'attention to language' he called

> historical linguistics, and what they called ‘life and thought’ he called ‘society’ or ‘cultural history’. (Eagleton 1989, 3)

The central issue here is that the Cambridge School and Williams were engaged in similar practices, but acting from different perspectives. The shift in focus was small, but the difference in concern was extensive; Williams regarded himself as being in confrontation with the position developed by Leavis and others, although there were evidently similarities. The differences included the manner in which reading took place; close reading and historical linguistics are not, in fact, the same thing. Close reading involves a consideration of words and their inter-relationships in terms of meanings within texts. Historical linguistics locates the meaning of the word within an historical context, and there is the sense of evolution of meaning, including the possibility of ambiguity. In effect, close reading involves addressing the meaning of words in terms of the focused narrowness of a text, whereas the historical dimension involves process over time. The issue of life and thought is more problematic to consider, because the meaning is somewhat vague; what aspects of life and thought are under consideration? The notion of life and thought does encapsulate a vast element of the human condition, and it is seen as significant. The issue of cultural history introduces a sense of process over time (which is not implied in life and thought, although it may be accommodated in this idea).

Eagleton and Marxist Literary Theory

Terry Eagleton, like Williams, regards the material world as being of great significance in terms of cultural creation. This is in contrast with the formalist position advocated by the Cambridge School. It is significant, however, that the two positions have a point of articulation. By this I mean that the Cambridge School would argue that they have a cultural consequence, which relates to beliefs, values and behaviour, whereas the leftist

position would argue that cultural expression derives to a large extent from the material conditions in which the people exist, and it is through expressing these conditions, and through reacting to the expression, that literature (or any other cultural expression) has value. In the following quote Eagleton makes the point that we need to base our understanding and appreciation of concepts on our experiences in the material world; Eagleton is referring to the death of Williams' father:

> Tragedy for him [Williams] was not the death of princes but the death of his railway signalman father, whom nobody would ever have heard of had it not been for his devoted son. (Eagleton 1989, 7)

This is an important point, in that tragedy – or any other literary concept – should not be removed from our everyday living, so as not to be a distant, disengaged thing of ideas only. It should be located in the material world to provide us with, so to speak, a point of leverage that is experientially relevant. At the same time, however, the notion of tragedy is very much a conceptual one, an intellectual construct that allows us to engage with the world through a range of debates and reflections about how we live. Tragedy, then, is about the death of Williams' father, but it is also about the death of princes. Tragedy might be a point of confluence, where the material world and the world of ideas come together to provide insight into each other. Thus, Williams' father's death is a real occurrence, and has significant emotional and philosophical consequences for Williams himself. The death of Hamlet (or some other prince) provides us with an opportunity to explore the ideas that we have about human mortality and the significance of our lives. The death of Williams' father can be explored through reference to *Hamlet*, and the death of the character can be better understood through personal reference to the death of a parent or significant other. Whilst this might seem a little too glibly put, and the notion of reality mirroring the world of concepts might be too easily achieved, there is room to debate Eagleton's claim. In a sense, then, tragedy is a human invention relating to events such as death or misfortune, and it is a theme in life which we use as a

concept to explore the events. The events become tragic in the labelling process, and we explore the issue of tragedy in considering the events. The significance here is the relation that exists in terms of the events and human conceptions thereof.

Eagleton established himself as a significant critic deriving much of his inspiration from the work of Marx and Williams, and he attacked the Leavisite tradition over a period of time. His 1976 book entitled *Marxism and Literary Criticism* became an essential resource for critics wishing to gain insight into the Marxist perspective of literary criticism. The book has several interesting elements to it, one of which is the introductory section, which provides a biographical description of Marx's life, referring in particular to Marx's interest in, and concern about, cultural issues, including discussing literature and attending the theatre, amongst other things (Eagleton 1976, 1-2). Marx and Engels did not formulate a complete theory of aesthetics, partly because they were engaged in developing a theoretical consideration of economics which they probably regarded as the most central aspect of issues of material concern. However, it is clear from Eagleton's claim that Marx valued the world of cultural expression.

Eagleton clarifies the Marxist view of literary interpretation thus:

> Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the 'social mentality' or ideology of an age. That ideology, in turn, is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class-relations are experienced, legitimized and perpetuated. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity – by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production. (Eagleton 1976, 5-6)

Eagleton's comment is important, because it establishes clearly what the Marxist position is with regard to literary interpretation. Since the creation of texts is a reflection of the class-relations in a given society, the interpretation of texts should mirror this process, exploring class relations, identifying elements of conflict, and providing insights into the dominant ideology of the age. This notion of ideology is a complex one, not simply a reflection of a ruling class's ideas; to fully understand an ideology it is necessary to investigate many elements of class relations that reflect dominance, and an element of this is concerned with the relation of classes to the mode of production.

Eagleton also makes the point that to address an author's psychology is important, but not enough, because individual psychology is a social product (Eagleton 1976, 7). There is a point of debate here, in that the social aspects to individual psychology are framing parameters, but they do not determine how a person is to react; the person's individual psychology will filter the lived experience and interpret it as a position from which to act. Eagleton's view presents a notion of an individual immersed in a broad social frame of reference, and whose actions are constrained by this frame of reference. This is substantially different from the liberal notion of the individual, which grants greater independence of choice to the individual. Eagleton claims that to truly understand an author's work (he uses Conrad's *Nostromo* as an example) the reader needs to be aware of the rest of, in this case, Conrad's fiction. It is of value to be aware of a writer's concerns in terms of the broad sweep of a particular author's work – it is clear that elements of other works can provide insight into the reading of a particular work. However, there is a problem here, which is that we could argue that, using this idea to understand a particular text, we need to read and interpret all of the other works by that text's author, as well as all other works that might have influenced that author, as well as reading historical accounts of the time that provide insight into the social conditions in which the work was produced. Whilst this will no doubt provide great insight into the text, it will require an engagement of a reading process that will span more than a lifetime. At the same time, however, it is acceptable to claim that

developing a sense of an author's works will provide insight into each such work. This is at odds with the Leavisite tradition which would have emphasized focusing on the text, and excluding what might be termed extraneous variables – other texts, biographical details, and sociological enquiries.

Eagleton states that, in a crude Marxist interpretation of literary criticism, literature has a dual nature; firstly, literature can be regarded as nothing but ideology in a certain artistic form. Secondly, and in opposition to this first claim, "so much literature actually challenges the ideological assumptions of its time… Authentic art, as Ernst Fischer argues in his significantly entitled *Art Against Ideology* (1969), always transcends the ideological limits of its time, yielding us insight into the realities which ideology hides from view." (Eagleton 1976, 16) However, Eagleton argues that this case of two opposing positions is too simple, and that we need to acknowledge Althusser's position that art cannot be reduced to ideology:

> However, art does more than just passively reflect that experience. It is held within ideology, but also manages to distance itself from it, to the point where it permits us to 'feel' and 'perceive' the ideology from which it springs… Science gives us conceptual knowledge of a situation; art gives us the experience of that situation, which is equivalent to ideology. (Eagleton 1976, 16-17)

This dual nature of art makes it somewhat difficult to explore, because there is a point of difference and implied ambiguity in the notion of art itself, as both vehicle and critic of ideology. Like Williams before him, Eagleton locates his idea of literature within a broader cultural dimension. In his book *The Idea of Culture* (Eagleton 2000), he addresses culture as a range of matters that share similar characteristics, but also have defining qualities that identify them as different. To be specific, he names chapter one 'Versions of Culture' and names another chapter 'Culture Wars', suggesting difference,

division and opposition within the concept. This matter, then, for Eagleton, is not a simple case of everybody being in agreement about the qualities of culture, nor is there agreement about what should be selected as literary works that should be taught at institutions of education. The notion of cultural difference and variation is an echo of the Culture War debate presented by Gerald Graff, the American academic whose work I referred to earlier with regard to philology. Graff argues in favour of making the debate plain and overt, and thus addressing the issues of difference. Eagleton sees each ideological position as having a particular orientation to the matter of culture, and perhaps acting in such a way as to defend that position, rather than considering the value of other positions.

In essence, then, for Eagleton the idea of literature is that of texts located within a frame of reference that is dominated by conflict, struggle and oppositions. Teaching literature would therefore require that these conflicts be made apparent, so that the reader develops an understanding of the material conditions in which we exist, and thus becomes empowered to address these conditions and possibly challenge or alter them. I have, I realize, compressed Eagleton's position substantially, but, in recognizing the limitations of space, and in keeping with the scope of this chapter, I have chosen to state simply the most central elements of Eagleton's position. Eagleton seems to adhere more to the traditional ideas of Marxist theory than Williams does, in that he refers more directly to the base/superstructure model that dominates those traditional ideas. At the same time, he has a complex understanding of the cultural process that acknowledges the variations possible within the cultural superstructure.

Eagleton rose to significance in the later 1970s, and he continues to provide commentary on matters both cultural and literary; his 1976 book *Marxism and Literary Criticism* was re-issued by Routledge in 2002 with a new preface addressing the post-September 11, 2001 world. Eagleton locates his work in a world that has changed substantially from that of 1976, and comments on a range of economic factors that have

changed society since 1976 – the oil crisis of the 1970s, Thatcherism, and Ronald Reagan (whom Eagleton refers to as: "…a dim-witted third-rate ex-actor of primitive right-wing opinions…"). Despite the changes, Eagleton believes that his book remains significant because "the Marxist critical heritage is a superlatively rich, fertile one; and like any other critical method, it has to be assessed by how much it illuminates works of art, not just by whether its political hopes have been realized in the process." (Eagleton 1976 viii)

The MacCabe Affair and Continental Philosophy

In the late 1970s, the Cambridge School was to witness another challenge to the traditions of the School of English studies, and this episode was played out in the full glare of the media spotlight. The man at the centre of it all was Colin MacCabe, and the MacCabe Affair, as it came to be known, was one element that would lead to academic questioning of the way in which English should be taught.

Colin MacCabe was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in March 1976. At Cambridge the process for becoming a permanently employed lecturer was one in which the prospective person was required to serve a term of five years as an Assistant Lecturer, after which s/he could be appointed in a full time capacity.

It is unclear about all the elements which came into play in this case. It would appear that there was a hint of suspicion regarding MacCabe's intellectual leanings; he had studied in Europe, and made use of Continental Philosophical principles in addressing texts. These principles would have been regarded as oppositional to the dominant school of thought at the time. Central to the debate on the MacCabe affair was MacCabe's book *James Joyce and the Revolution of the World*, published in 1978. The

first chapter is devoted to presenting a theoretical underpinning of the nature of the text, and it is immediately apparent that this book does not conform to the Cambridge School protocols of the day. In essence there are three reasons for this:

1. MacCabe locates his work within the realm of politics, as he makes clear in his first sentence: “The title *James Joyce and the Revolution of the World* presupposes a relation between politics and language…” (MacCabe 1978, 1) This type of thinking would have been anathema to the Cambridge School, who chose to locate the criticism of texts outside of the frames of reference of politics, but preferred a formalist approach.

2. MacCabe presents the notion of the text as a different object/experience to that of the traditional practical criticism reader. The relationship between the reader and the text, according to MacCabe, is one in which the reader is engaged in the practice of reading as a form of labour and transformation:

> The traditional Marxist definition of a practice is a transformation of material through work, and in reading Joyce we are continually forced to work on our discourses in an unceasing transformation of both them and ourselves… Interpretation as the search for meaning must cease when both meaning and interpreter become functions of the traverse of the material of language.
>
> (MacCabe 1978, 2)

3. MacCabe introduces the psycho-linguistic theories of Lacan into the interpretation of texts. The notion of cross referencing literature into other fields of academic endeavour was not an activity pursued by or recommended by Leavis and his followers, so this practice would have raised doubts in Cambridge with regard to the validity of

MacCabe's scholarship. However, I. A. Richards located his own work within the field of psychology, so MacCabe is not unique in terms of crossing disciplinary boundaries.

The nature of MacCabe's commentary was such that it challenged what was traditional in the Cambridge School's intellectual practice. The source of much of MacCabe's work was outside of the British tradition of English studies, in that the Marxist and psychoanalytic ideas of which he spoke were located within the framework of the Continental Philosophers. This led to a radical repositioning of certain conceptual processes. For example, MacCabe's notion of the role of the unconscious mind (id), and its relation to the conscious (ego), and the consequences this has with regard to textual interpretation, was an unusual practice that the Leavisite tradition would not have accepted with equanimity.

For MacCabe, instead of a reader addressing the literary work, in order to establish some truth, he suggested a process in which the reader addressed a text, which seemed to be addressing him/her, and which seemed to have lost a sense of totality as an object. In a sense the text was the stone against which the reader – the blade – would be sharpened. The process was interactive, and included references to the reader's unconscious, as well as his/her conscious mind. This type of process rejected the clear – conscious – address of the methodology of practical criticism, and replaced it with something altogether more complex. Textual interpretation became a slippery process that involved the addressing of – and the retention of – a range of diverse thoughts, some of which were clouded in the vagueness of the unconscious mind. At the same time it was an appealing process, in that the reader was involved in the process of making meaning, as opposed to having meaning thrust upon him/her. Indeed, there was a lack of certainty to it all, but this in itself presented a new truth. MacCabe's ideas could incorporate the possibility of Leavis's thought, but also go so much further. MacCabe's theoretical position was one that admitted ambiguity and subjectivity, and indeed endorsed this thinking.

Raymond Williams and Frank Kermode both supported MacCabe's desire to be granted permanency as a lecturer, but the institution's final decision was not to offer the younger man the lectureship. It became apparent, as the matter surfaced in the public domain, that MacCabe met with all the stated requirements for permanency, but that he had been refused nevertheless. MacCabe moved to a different university where he became a professor, and focused particularly on film texts – those elements of cultural expression treated with some suspicion by Leavis.

The MacCabe Affair showed the public that British universities offered courses in English studies that operated according to restrictive, narrow principles. In the wake of MacCabe, this matter has been addressed and courses have been altered to incorporate many alternative aspects – including the principles of literary study as practiced by the Continental Philosophers.

The issue of the influence of Continental Philosophy – and continental thinking – is addressed by Chris Baldick (Baldick 1996), and he indicates that the MacCabe affair was not the only aspect of continental influence, nor was it the first such manifestation of continental thinking. Prior to MacCabe, events in Europe influenced British thinking:

> After the turmoil of the year 1968, criticism, along with much else in Western intellectual life, became caught up in the conflicts over the politics of culture, of cultural institutions, and of language. From the Parisian epicentre of student revolt, new theoretical vocabularies passed suddenly into the hitherto insulated world of Anglophone literary debate. (Baldick 1996, 161)

Several new ways of considering literary works were introduced in this wave of European influence under the umbrella term Theory, although Baldick also emphasised the fragmented nature of this influence. He points out: “Theory was never an internally harmonious movement, incorporating as it did a number of mutually antagonistic positions.” (Baldick 1996, 162)This in itself would introduce a complex notion of truth, incorporating the idea of pluralities and oppositions, rather than one harmonious, homogenous truth. The notion of diverse truths obviously has consequences for education, because the claims put forward by students will derive from their interpretations of the text, and will depend on their ability to argue logically and soundly in presenting their claims. The exploratory, challenging nature of these European positions was not unified in their concern for literary criticism. Instead there seems to have been an attempt at considering culture as a broad topic, and articulating culture as including literature as an element thereof. In addition to this point, Baldick identifies three major issues in the field of Theory:

> …the primacy of Language, the dethronement of the ‘subject’, and the dissolution of ‘unity’. (Baldick 1996, 162)

Baldick explores each of these issues thus:

> …Language was not an innocent or neutral medium, but saturated with oppressive authority, classifying, labelling and defining the human beings who imagined they were its masters. Perhaps, more importantly in the context of literary criticism, the meaning of a text was not something found through and beyond Language, but something produced entirely *by* Language. (Baldick 1996, 163)

There are echoes here of Williams' *Keywords*, in that language is minutely examined and words themselves are seen as being used ideologically. Inherent in this conception of language is the notion of power-relations within a society. It is also apparent that, in this conception of language, language itself almost plays a role independent of human agency.

Baldick also pointed out that, in terms of French Structuralist principles, derived from the work of Saussure, Language 'constructs' reality through a system of differences. This, of course, raises the questions as to whether literary works reflect reality or construct it:

> The advocates of 'Theory' insisted upon the linguistic construction of reality, and implied that the aesthetic theory and practice of realism in literature was inherently reactionary… Texts fed upon themselves or upon other texts, and thus all writing was a kind of rewriting, whether as parody, as pastiche, as revision, as antipathy, or as allusion. (Baldick 1996, 163)

Representational elements of literature were therefore regarded as not being of great significance, and this would have opposed Leavis and his associates because of their concern with formalism. Furthermore, the notion of texts as revisionary – a kind of rewriting – would have been refuted by Leavis and his followers because of their concern with establishing a canon. For those critics affiliated to the position advocated by 'Theory', the idea of a canon can, at best, be temporary. It is, of course, clear that Williams' position is different from that of the Continental Philosophers, because, although he would have rejected Leavis's canon, he would have addressed the matter of literature from a position that acknowledged class conflicts, which would have emphasised reinterpretation, rather than 'rewriting… as parody' and so on. Baldick makes the point that for Williams "literary realism still had a positive value." (Baldick 1996, 166) In a sense it seems that Leavis is committed to form and Williams is

committed to culture located within a set of material conditions. For the advocates of 'Theory', there is a sense that all is very much more fluid, shifting and negotiated. The very notion of a literary text is difficult to pin down. This unstable notion of a literary text prevents an easy interpretation of meaning and significance.

Baldick points out that there are elements to 'Theory' that affect the way in which the notion of the self is presented. Human autonomy is a mirage. In the field of 'Theory' we no longer speak of the 'self', but instead refer to the 'subject' who is an

> empty grammatical category… which we may occupy without recognizing that it *subjects* us to the higher laws of Language and culture. (Baldick 1996, 164)

This matter arises directly from the role of Language as a categorizing tool, something that defines us and is used to ascribe qualities to us. Defining our 'self' is dependent on the use of language to establish our nature. Our qualities are stated, listed and articulated through Language. Conversely, language is created by people, and only has an essence when people make use of it. However, the rules and protocols of this interaction then frame the interaction, providing both potentials and limits to the interaction.

A further element to consider is the matter Baldick identifies as 'unity'. In terms of the continental influence, the term artistic 'work' is now replaced with the term 'text':

> Now that aesthetic unity was to be interpreted suspiciously as an ideological projection of the repressive conformity required by the modern corporate state, it became, for many critics, a political duty to demonstrate the exact opposite: that

> the apparently unified text was really riven with irreconcilable self-contradictions and fundamental instabilities.
>
> (Baldick 1996, 165)

This, of course, has great ramifications for the notion of a canon. In terms of this set of conceptions, texts are inherently flawed and the notion of a canon becomes more than a little difficult to justify. All texts are regarded as being of equal worth, if they all contain the problematic qualities mentioned in the quote above. All texts are therefore equally deserving of consideration for study, and all should be treated with a degree of suspicion. Instead of limiting the selection of texts to include a very small number of authors, as Leavis did, in his delineation of the canon, this new approach opened up the possibility of studying texts from a wide range of human expressions – novels, songs, and advertising slogans. These texts were addressed more as an anthropological exercise than in terms of the value of the texts themselves.

In his writing about ‘Theory’, Baldick seems to adopt a somewhat tongue in cheek tone, as if he is aware that this critical position, like that of Leavis and others, is a mere point on the scale of literary critical development. It is this matter that is of great significance; in the same way as Leavis’s theory has been challenged and, to some extent, refuted, there is in Baldick the knowledge that each of these theories is a development or extension of thought that preceded it, each an attempt to grasp some obscure truth, or provide a sense of greater enlightenment about the human condition through an investigation into human expression, in the various literary forms that have developed over the years. Each of the theoretical perspectives provides an example of rigour and critical engagement into the discipline itself.

The complexity at the heart of ‘Theory’ is partly a result of the various thinkers who have influenced this position – or set of positions. Baldick mentions Saussure, Foucault,

Lacan, Marx (and the neo-Marxists), Freud and Nietzsche. The complexity that results from all of this is the web of intersections that are perceived by the various critics who have chosen to engage in this form of intellectual endeavour. The diversity and complexity prevent the notion of 'Theory' being elegantly formulated, and ensures that no adherent of 'Theory' will subscribe to all the tenets, which leaves 'Theory' in a position where aspects of its internal dynamics are somewhat irreconcilable.

The influence of Continental Philosophy had far-reaching consequences, and aspects of this set of theoretical principles were acknowledged even in South Africa; in Chapter Five I make reference to the work of Rory Ryan and Susan van Zyl, who addressed Continental Philosophy from a South African perspective. In addition, in *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, which could be regarded as a reference text of general usage, there is a chapter on "Contemporary Approaches to Literature", which includes a section on Leavis, but also sections on Foucault, Lacan, and feminist interpretations of literature. This supports the notion that the Continental Philosophers and others have become established within the critical framework of English Studies.

I now wish to consider, in brief, the work of two critics who have written in the period following 'Theory'. The first critic is somebody who is not entirely of the period since 'Theory', but rather straddles several decades, and continues to write critically about literature. The person to whom I refer is the American academic Harold Bloom, and I will consider specific aspects of his claims below. The second critic is John Carey, and my consideration of his work appears below my consideration of Bloom.

Bloom and the Individual Reader

Harold Bloom is somewhat unusual because he is regarded as both conservative and liberal in his approach to criticism. The conservative element derives from his insistence on the significance of the authors located in the Western canon, and his liberal tendency is located in his view that there is a tension between the so-called “strong poets” (Bloom 1997, 5) and the need or desire for poets or authors to assert themselves. In effect there is an established tradition of poetry and poets, and newer voices trying to create a space for themselves within the establishment, thereby challenging and fracturing tradition. Bloom makes the following statement about this matter:

> In his impossible quest to achieve immortality, the strong poets strives to replace nature with art and previous poems with his own work, thereby declaring himself self-created and the master of his own fate. (Bloom 1997, 5)

Critics of Bloom argue that the poetic heritage in English studies is far less unitary than that presented by Bloom, who regards Shakespeare and Milton as the source authors for all future generations. These critics argue that cultural diversity in our written experience provides a greater range and variation of influences than Bloom is willing to acknowledge, although he replies that these critics are deluded in that the tradition is deeply inscribed in our culture. (Leitch et al 2010,1649)

Bloom acknowledges both Freud and Nietzsche as sources for his theoretical position. (Bloom 1997, 8-9) These two figures challenged much that was conservative and established in critical thinking, and this information suggests that, whilst Bloom is regarded as traditional in his thinking, he is more of an iconoclast than generally acknowledged.

Implied in Bloom's criticism is the notion of "becoming" – the poet and the critic have within them the possibility of agency – they can act within a given social and /or intellectual milieu, and are not merely receivers of culture.

As part of his critical position Bloom refers to what he terms six revisionary ratios. An example of one such revisionary ration is *Tessera*, in which Bloom writes of completion and antithesis. Through the process of shifting the meaning of a precursor's poem, the poet "completes" the meaning and implies that the precursor failed to go far enough. Bloom refers to five further such processes in which the poet engages with the existing poetry, and shifts or misinterprets the meaning so as to create a sense of space for renegotiation in the later poet's own expression. Bloom therefore has a sense of renegotiating meaning, and he implies that cultural expressions are not fixed.

Bloom makes the following comment about reading and literature:

> Ultimately we read … in order to strengthen the self, and to learn its authentic interests… The pleasures of reading are selfish rather than social. You cannot directly improve anyone else's life by reading better or more deeply. I remain skeptical of the traditional social hope that care for others may be stimulated by the growth of the individual imagination. (Bloom 2000, 22)

This passage by Bloom seems to be somewhat bleak in its outlook, in that there is the suggestion that reading – or literature – has no greater social worth than to improve the life of an individual. It is clear, however, that much of what Bloom says makes sense; we do read for our own reasons (generally pleasure is the reason, or alternatively, we read because we are required to do so by a curriculum). There is also the sense that there is discontinuity between the individual's reading habits/choices, and the society

that frames humanity. Bloom is opposed to the position advocated by Arnold, who felt that good poetry can have a positive influence on the reader's character. Instead, Bloom moves away from matters pertaining to the social, and simply regards the reading of books as something that is far more personal, and more selfish.

Bloom adds:

> If there is a function of criticism at the present time, it must be to address itself to the solitary reader, who reads for herself, and not for the interests that supposedly transcend the self.
>
> (Bloom 2000, 23)

This claim is significant because it locates the process of reading outside of the social, although human beings and language itself are social phenomena. The use of the word 'solitary' emphasises the detached nature of this reading process. It is possible, perhaps, to comment that Bloom is addressing something different from the engagement that I have considered in this and previous chapters, in that the other authors I have considered have made reference to the process of academic criticism, and the notion of studying a text, rather than simply reading. However, it is clear that for Bloom he is addressing the process of criticism, because he uses the term in the second quote, above. In essence Bloom cannot think of a reader who engages in the process of reading without critical awareness.

Bloom locates the reader in an environment that is different from the Cambridge School, different from the Marxists, and different from 'Theory'. He considers the reader as an individual, and therefore moves outside of social process, including systems of education. If we read for pleasure, and for individual enlightenment, then schools and

universities probably do not provide us with a learning context in which we can thrive, because these contexts are always directed towards a social frame of reference; we are taught to read as if the texts themselves, and our interpretation thereof, will make a difference in our society.

There is one further element to consider. Bloom makes it clear that our own mortality ensures the development of a canon. (Bloom 1994, 30) If we were immortal it would not matter what we read, because we could get through it all. However, our lives are finite, and this limiting of time frames our choices. If we choose to read one book, it means that there is no time for another to be read. We therefore need to choose the books that will have the greatest value to us and our society. By implication there is a need for a canon, a set of literary works which might be regarded as expressive of our society's values, or constructions of what we regard as worthwhile.

John Carey and the Usefulness of Art

Having briefly considered the opinion of Bloom, I will now address the claims of John Carey, a British academic who addresses a significant question in his book *What Good are the Arts?* (Carey 2005). Whilst much of the book is devoted to a range of arts – music, paintings, and sculpture, the second section considers the role of literature in our society. Carey expresses doubts about the possibility of the arts – in this case literature – being able to bring about social change, or behavioural change:

> It might, in theory, be possible to demonstrate that exposure to certain kinds of art makes people better – or worse. However, evidence for this, though earnestly sought, has to date proved elusive. (Carey 2005, 171)

We have here a similar comment to that made by Bloom, in that it is clear that Carey dismisses claims that studying literature can makes us better people. He does not say that it is not possible, but he argues that there is no evidence, as yet, for this. The ideas of Arnold and others are therefore brought into question – simply saying something is the case, as Arnold did, does not make it so.

However, Carey does not dismiss the value of literature on this basis. Instead, he points out that literature has aspects to it that are valuable. For one thing, literature provides us with an opportunity to engage in criticism, which is an exercise in reason, which in itself is a valuable process. (Carey 2005, 174) For another thing, Carey points out that literature provides us with moral debates, which leads in turn to us questioning moral judgements in our lived experience. (Carey 2005, 181) He considers the work of Jane Austen, Conrad, E. M. Forster and others in establishing the diverse and various ways in which literature addresses moral issues. The significance of all this, of course, is that the reader is drawn into the discussion or process of critical engagement presented by the author, and this is regarded as valuable. There is no specific methodology associated with this process other than using reason i.e. thinking critically.

These last two critics are commenting from a 21st Century perspective, although both worked in the field of literary criticism in the latter half of the 20th century. It would seem that neither is convinced of Arnoldian claims to do with changing the world and the way we live, but, instead, have found other reasons for reading and studying literature. These reasons do echo in the theories of the other critics I have covered, but Bloom's idea of reading as a solitary exercise strikes an unusual chord, even though it has some truth and some appeal.

It is now my intention to provide some concluding and linking comments regarding the central aspects of the topic I have addressed. Over the past three chapters, there have

been a range of opinions expressed by various people, and I need, perhaps, to draw these all together. In this chapter I have covered a range of theorists who expressed different opinions from those expressed by the Cambridge School, or by the Oxford School, or the Newbolt Committee. I will now return to my original three questions (Why study (English) literature? What literature should be studied? How should we study literature?) and consider them in the light of the commentary and criticism expressed by these alternative theorists. In considering the first question, the Cambridge School would have followed the initial position proposed by Matthew Arnold, that literature/poetry shapes human character. The theorists of this chapter have argued that literature is to a large extent a social phenomenon, and that the study of literature has a social and/or cultural dimension; by studying literature we better understand the nature of society and our impulses and actions within the social milieu.

The nature of society for the majority of the critics mentioned in this chapter is one in which material conditions are, if not determining, at least a constraining element, and significantly influential. Literature is derived from this situation, and, in order to understand the function of literature it is important to read in such a way that the conflicts that are inherent in society, and reflected in the literature produced within that society, are made overt, and held up for examination. The greater awareness of the ideological function of culture and how to challenge and question this state of affairs is an important element of literary criticism. For the critics from T. H. Green and Morris, to Williams and Eagleton, it is possible to trace the development of an appreciation of the influence of the material conditions of existence on human expression and interpretation, and this provides insights into how the critical process should be directed.

If we consider the matters pertaining to ‘Theory’, we realise that these critics have a completely different understanding of the nature of the text, and the role of language in constructing our social reality, from those which underpin the position put forward by the Cambridge School. ‘Theory’ might be regarded as an attempt to explore the significance

of texts in terms of their social construction, as well as an attempt to make clear the relational factors pertaining to power, gender, linguistics and other related disciplines that provide the reader with a form of textual anthropology, rather than a formalist approach.

Critics such as Bloom and Carey are different from the others I have considered, in that they do not accept claims that society can be transformed through the studying of literature. Bloom emphasises reading as a solitary activity, and Carey focuses on the ability to develop individual critical abilities.

The differences between theorists are echoed in the issue of the second question regarding what literature we should teach. It is clear that the theorists presented in this chapter believe that a range of voices should be considered – across a range of classes, and derived from various positions of power within society – in order for the value of literature to be realized. The narrowly-defined canon of Leavis is rejected by these theorists because it is regarded as being derived from, and representing concerns pertaining to, a particular element of society which is not fully representative of the British people who are required to read these texts and find meaning in them. In the case of 'Theory', the Leavisite selection of texts is inherently reactionary and to be treated with suspicion. Included in the matter of selection is the idea that texts provide transformational potential. However, Marxist conceptions traditionally require a transformation of the control of the means of production to achieve social transformation. In other words, an economic shift is required to achieve a change in the material conditions of existence. The role of culture in this process is ill-defined.

With regard to the matter of how we should read literature, the theorists in this chapter suggest, amongst other things, that the reader should focus on matters including the text, but should also consider matters that extend beyond the text itself. Whilst not

rejecting the notion of close reading and the SIFT method proposed by the Cambridge School, there is a sense that the text needs to be understood in the context of a social environment. In the case of Morris, Hoggart, Orwell, Williams and Eagleton, the social forces that shape a person's material conditions of existence need to be explored, and this requires considering the text whilst taking into account matters that are outside of the text – in the cases of the theorists mentioned above, the matter will be that of class relations and class conflict. In a sense this shifts the text's significance; although it remains the central element to consider, it is now read from the perspective of a form of immersion within other social elements, each of which comments on and informs the reading process. In this way reading is not simply a literary process, but also a process in which society is critiqued.

For proponents of 'Theory', the text itself needs to be explored from a range of perspectives, as a social construct, and the social forces surrounding the text, contributing to its existence and its meaning, need to be negotiated and understood.

It is clear from all the critical positions expressed in this chapter that the practice of critical enquiry is not something that is achieved and then, so to speak, regarded as complete. The nature of the development of criticism is that it is based on a series of assertions which derive from a series of assumptions and associated evidence, in order to develop an argument. Because of the socio-historical elements that surround the literary critical enterprise, there are range of possible starting points and central assumptions, not all of which are reconcilable. Because of this, the process of critical engagement is an ever-evolving process, driven by theories and arguments that shift as new insights are made apparent. The process of critical development outlined in this chapter is one such example; critics respond to each other, supporting or challenging claims, considering literature from various world views and making judgments from these perspectives. It is inevitable that further literary critical concepts will be developed,

or that alternative approaches will come to be regarded as significant, in a manner reminiscent of Kuhn's scientific revolution.

The important issue here is that the theorists in this chapter presented an alternative to the Cambridge School. They established a possibility of a different form of intellectual engagement, one which posited a different set of world views, which were fundamentally engaged with the intellectual process located within a given social context. This differed significantly from the Cambridge School. The notion of an historical cultural position such as that advocated by Leavis in his conception of a pre-industrial sense of authentic English values is rejected; the set of authentic English values that is asserted by this group is one that reflects social conflict, fragmentation, and dissonance. The authenticity is located in the present material conditions of existence, rather than in a vague concept of a pre-industrial world.

Despite this authenticity the Cambridge School retained a great deal of significance, because their approach to working with literature (close reading) cannot be ignored. The text may provide a point of engagement with the world, but this is achieved through a critical engagement with the text itself. Close reading remains an effective way to explore a literary text. How this exploration is articulated with society is a different issue, and it is here that the Cambridge School encounters a difficulty, in that their focus is perhaps too text bound. The critics presented in this chapter redress this balance.

Chapter Four: English in a Colonial Context – The South African Experience I.

The overview of the development of English Studies thus far has provided insights into the social forces that influenced the establishment of the discipline in Britain, and identified particular matters of significance in the school and university environments. In the next two chapters I will show how the development of English studies in British universities and educational institutions had a subsequent effect on how English studies in South African universities and educational institutions developed. The period from the 1800s to the mid-1970s will be dealt with in this chapter, and the period from the mid-1970s to the end of the apartheid era will be considered in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six I will consider the current situation in South Africa, and make recommendations regarding the way forward.

It is important to note that, whilst there is a perceptible line of influence between the British and South African Schools of English Studies, this influence should not be regarded as being a direct correlation. The British institutions influenced their South African counterparts in a range of ways, some more subtle than others, and it is this range of influences that I wish to present and explore in this and the following chapters.

It will become apparent in the following chapters that there is an inherently and overtly political dimension regarding the teaching of English in a South African context. This is derived to some degree from the colonial circumstances in which English was introduced into the country, and, in addition to this, the educational administrative apparatus that was introduced into South Africa as a consequence of being at different times a colony of both the Netherlands and Great Britain. Part of this chapter will therefore deal with broader issues than the teaching of literature, and will instead present, in some detail, the social and educational milieu in which English literature was

to be taught in colonial times and circumstances. This approach will provide some insights into European attitudes to the colonies, and the attitudes of colonists and the colonized with regard to the metropolis and themselves. In addition, I will identify instances when the British deliberately introduced education policies and practices that were intended both to serve their administration, and to propagate a British ethos in the colony.

An Historical Overview

The history of English studies in South Africa is, in many ways, more complex than that of England. This nation has experienced European colonization which derived, at times, from two different European countries who brought with them two different languages – initially Dutch and thereafter English. The political policies that followed colonization led to fragmentation of the society based, to some extent, on the language groups, as well as, to a larger extent, on racial groupings. These racial groupings and language groupings had some overlap, in that specific races tended to speak and write in specific languages, although this demographic has shifted over time. As a consequence, there is not only one language that reflects the nation, but, instead, several languages, each with a separate history and set of social circumstances, although they are not entirely disconnected, in that they are all used within a shared social environment.

It is an incorrect assumption that, prior to the arrival of European settlers, there was little of significance in South Africa. However, despite the fact that societies already flourished in South Africa, the arrival of European settlers would lead to the establishment and development of an education system such as exists today.

The arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 led to the introduction of a formalized state education system. The underlying reason for this is that the education of children was a fundamental principle of the Dutch state, as a result of the desire for the Protestants to educate every child in religious doctrine. (McKerron 1934, 14)

The education system was rudimentary and poorly functioning at the time that the British took over the administration of the Cape Colony in 1806. The role of English literature – or the lack of it – is reflected in the following statement:

> … at the time of the British occupation… there was not a single bookshop in the country. The only newspaper was the *Government Gazette*, which appeared weekly… There was no other printing press in the country than the one on which this sheet was produced. (McKerron 1934, 17-18)

There were, no doubt, books in the possession of a few, but it can be ascertained from the above that there was a dearth of reading matter available to the average person. Matthew Arnold's idea of poetry shaping a person's character is problematic in this situation because it is clear that good poetry was not freely available, and the possibility of literature having a shaping role on individuals and society requires that it be so. In addition, the lofty ideals of F. R. Leavis would have no foothold in this community, in that close reading and canon formation can only occur when texts are present and/or available. However, the education authorities in South Africa in the years following 1806 were concerned about the poor quality of education, and various Commissions and local committees were established to deal with the matter. The issues under consideration included a lack of funds and the vast areas of control in which the population was thinly spread.

The introduction of a British-styled education in South Africa took place shortly after the British took control of the Cape Colony – and subsequently the whole country – beginning in the 1800s. Peter Randall, in his book *Little England on the Veld* (Randall, 1982) comments on this early education system. Randall emphasises that, although the Dutch had arrived at the Cape and had established a form of government prior to the British, they had not introduced an education system that was anything other than rudimentary. This was not the case under British administration.

The introduction of British-style schooling resulted in two things:

1. English as a medium of instruction led to a form of segregation, as well as establishing English as part of the institution of education. The segregation took the following form: the Dutch settlers (Boers) felt alienated by the English system, and set up their own schools, while the indigenous people were not very well accommodated by the British system, although some were granted an education.

2. The British simply relocated their school system to South Africa. In many cases the buildings themselves were designed in Britain, and furthermore, the curriculum which was introduced was a close approximation of that followed by British schools. An example of this is Diocesan College (Bishops), which closely followed the example set by Winchester in England.

A further contribution from Britain was a school culture which has become accepted as South African – sports such as rugby and cricket, a prefect system, and a particular ethos and a set of rituals pertaining to many schools, which would include the elements of assembly and uniforms.

English-speaking settlers in South Africa were therefore provided with a facsimile of a British system of education in South Africa. For these people, their sense of identity was linked to Britain, and their cultural orientation was British rather than South African. This,

of course, also implied a sense of disjunction, because the environment in which this education system was located was palpably not that of England, and as a consequence a form of renegotiation of school and cultural experience would occur over a period of many years, in which the system would become South African.

British control of the Cape Colony led to an emphasis on the use of English, in that after 1814 extra remuneration was offered to teachers capable of teaching English, such was the concern that English usage should be encouraged. (McKerron 1934, 120) In 1822 Lord Charles Somerset issued a proclamation making English the official language of the colony, and to entrench this policy he recruited six English-speaking teachers from Britain. This practice of importing educators from abroad would continue for decades and establish an attitude which suggested that teachers from abroad were better than their local counterparts. Furthermore, British education practices and philosophies would be imposed on South African schools and universities. The establishment of English as an official language would obviously provide it with a social significance that was denied to other languages.

At the time of the Union of South Africa, the language question was dealt with according to the following principles:

> Both the English and Dutch languages shall be official languages of the Union, and shall be treated on a footing of equality and enjoy equal freedom, rights, and privileges. (McKerron 1934, 127)

The entrenchment of the English language is presented in the statement quoted above, but this in itself is not of the greatest significance. What *is* significant is not the language as such, but its cultural associations and its embeddedness in cultural expressions; these expressions used the language system as a conduit for the imposition of a set of norms and values that would reflect the dominance of particular groups in the organization and administration of the society. In effect, the cultural expressions –

including literature – reflected the social and political relations in the society. A consequence of the imposition of English literature as a part of cultural significance is that, in a postcolonial set of circumstances, English literature is uncomfortably located within the frame of reference of being a part of a previous, oppressive, hegemony.

A further element that is significant relates to the unsophisticated nature of the system introduced by the British. Small numbers of teachers, such as those mentioned, are unlikely to provide the community with learning support of any degree of sophistication. The idea of debate and critical engagement appears not to be part of the process, thus indicating that this system failed to meet the requirements of the British system as envisaged by Leavis and others, although at this time the Cambridge School itself was not yet in existence. However, it is clear that the possibility of developing an approximation of such a School was unlikely in these conditions, in which teachers were few and far between.

The Initial State of Tertiary Education

The tertiary situation in South Africa began in a rudimentary way. In 1829, under British colonial governance, the South African College was founded. English was one of the subjects, but the curriculum and methodology were vague. Memorization of facts was the favoured approach, and the content was derived from British sources.

The demand for a university was based on several issues; there was a need in the colony for professional people, and the growing number of positions in the administration required greater numbers of graduates. Furthermore, the cost of sending students to Europe was prohibitively expensive.

Initially the students who attended the South African College did not conform to our understanding of university students today. Firstly, much of the curriculum was devoted to secondary education, and in 1837 the regulations were amended to exclude students under the age of 10. This age limit seems preposterous in terms of our modern understandings of process regarding access to universities, but it is clear that these processes were absent, or merely becoming established, at this time.

At this point in time lecturers were frequently required to teach across broad and diverse areas of learning; in 1855 a professor was appointed to head the departments of Physical Science and English Studies. The need for appropriate qualifications and specialization did not seem as significant as it is today. Possibly there were no better-qualified people available, and levels of specialization might have been less significant than in the modern era.

An alternative institution was established in 1850 as the Cape Public Service Board, the purpose of which was to examine candidates for the Public Service. This is similar in scope to the Civil Service examination which was presented in Chapter One. Through a variety of incarnations, this Board developed into an examining university. In 1873 the institution was established as the University of the Cape of Good Hope. Located in Cape Town, the university was modelled on the University of London.

In 1916, through the University Act, three universities were created – the University of Cape Town, the University of Stellenbosch, and the University of South Africa, this last of which evolved out of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, mentioned above. These three institutions were followed by others: the University of the Witwatersrand in 1921, and the University of Pretoria (formerly Transvaal University College) in 1930. Potchefstroom University College was established in 1921, and the Engineering and

Commercial classes of a Durban technical college were given university status in 1922. It is of significance that these institutions were founded towards the end of World War One or in its immediate aftermath. The concerns of the Newbolt Commission (of 1921) would have resonated in the policies of these new universities, and from this we can deduce that the idea of liberal education would be part of the founding principles.

This overview of the establishment of South African universities is significant in that these institutions took their lead from the British universities of the time. Furthermore, the debates of the time, such as the issue around classics and the development of English studies in Britain had echoes in South Africa. The British-derived character of the administration would have ensured that English would have a prominent position in South African education, in both the universities and at schools.

The teaching methodology would evolve over the years, and a debate would arise about what should be included in the curriculum. Several figures were central to these matters. In the following pages I will address a selection of these figures, and present the essence of the debate.

South African universities – which would strongly influence what school teachers would learn, and therefore apply – were initially greatly influenced by the appointment of senior lecturing and administrative staff that were British-derived. In essence, then, the universities followed a British curriculum. There were strong links to Britain through the colonial experience, and these people appointed to South African universities from Britain would have brought a British understanding of education to South Africa. Thus the issues of Arnold, Raleigh, and Leavis would dominate English Studies in South Africa, although local critics began to bring their own concerns to the discipline. In the early 20th century it became apparent that local commentators were concerned about the need to include some form of representative South African literary works in the

English studies course. Associated with this was the issue about which works would represent a type of South African canon.

In 1907, Manfred Nathan proposed the following definition for South African literature:

> It must reproduce the local colour and atmosphere of the country and have been written by one who was either born in South Africa or has lived there long enough to become identified with the country as an inhabitant. (Doherty 1989, 126)

It is notable that Nathan's definition addresses the idea of South African literature in extremely broad terms. There is little acknowledgement of the issues of the country, other than a sort of geographical location.

Durrant and Greig

Two of the significant commentators who established much of the practice of English studies in South Africa were Geoffrey Durrant and J.Y.T. Greig, both of whom held sway over English departments at South African Universities. Durrant was born in England, and Greig in Scotland, and they brought with them a British education.[*] This British education and orientation to English Studies would influence the way in which English would be taught in South African universities. However, both academics were aware that the South African situation did not simply correspond with that of Britain, but presented unique features for consideration.

Durrant came to South Africa in 1939, and took up a position as a Senior Lecturer at Stellenbosch University. Following active service during the war, he became Professor

[*] I was fortunate to contact Durrant in late 2003. He was aged 90, and living in Canada. Through e-mail, I was able to discuss some of the matters presented in this chapter.

and Head of the English Department at the University of Natal. Durrant had completed his BA degree at Cambridge, and then did post-graduate work at London University, the University of Tuebingen (Germany), and finally the University of South Africa. He left South Africa for Canada in 1960.

In 1947 Durrant published an article entitled *Notes on the Teaching of Literature* (Durrant, 1947), and it is clear from this brief article – a mere 5 pages in length – that he had engaged with many of the ideas expressed in the previous chapters about the reasons for studying literature, and the methodologies to be used in approaching selected texts. In this article Durrant compared the structure of the degrees addressing the study of literature, and offered by South African universities, with the degree course focusing on literature offered by Cambridge University. He makes the important point that the Cambridge degree was entirely devoted to the study of literature, whereas the South African counterparts included other courses, such as philosophy or history, in order to make up the content of the degree. (Durrant 1947, 3-4) He suggested that, in the South African case, lecturers from the various modules/courses should engage in a form of integrated study, in order to provide the students with a broad understanding of the significance of literature in society. He emphasized, however, that he was in favour of literature being studied as literature, and that the material under investigation would have to be literary texts, not biographical or historical documents relating to texts or authors; literature is not a study of authors, but rather, their work.

Durrant commented that the “barrenness of a study that is rooted in the sandy soil of Germanic Philology needs little demonstration. The discipline that such a study offers is usually the discipline of mechanical learning by rote; and it has no longer much power to stimulate original thought.” (Durrant 1947, 3) This comment is typical of the rejection of philology – it reflects the reaction against German scholarship in the aftermath of military conflict, which has been mentioned elsewhere, and also rejects a mechanical form of literary engagement – in the same way as Leavis and others, such as Greig,

whose work will be more extensively covered later, rejected elements of the Machine Age. Central to this claim is that literature should not be studied in a mechanical way – a rejection, perhaps, of one interpretation of the scientific method.

In a paper entitled *Struggling with the Question of How to Live* (Durrant, 1981), Durrant addresses several issues that are central to the study of English literature – issues that had been commented on by various authors such as Eliot and Leavis some time earlier. Durrant comments thus on matters raised in a conference in Canada:

> We have always known that we could raise our consciousness of nature by looking at a Cezanne, our consciousness of humanity by reading Dickens, and our consciousness of our ethical experience by reading Jane Austen or Henry James. For some reason, however, as the conference report illustrates, it is only in our schools and universities that literature and the arts are treated as if they had no consequences for our personal lives. (Durrant 1981, 26)

He adds that there are various reasons for studying English, and one central reason is the notion of developing literacy. This reason, however, seems less important to Durrant than the ability to make effective judgements – an ability which he argues is to be developed through the teaching of literature. From the above it is clear that Durrant views literary works as texts that are engaged with society, and that reflect our social concerns, and comment on and critique these concerns. They are a point of debate, in that they provide opinions about our moral principles, and invite discussion on these matters.

He makes the following assertion, which has echoes of Arnold, Eliot and Leavis:

> The justification for giving English the priority it enjoys in our educational system was that it could be made into an essentially humane discipline, a source of wisdom and delight, and not only of useful techniques. Yet the energies of many universities have been directed to turning English studies into an ever more studious avoidance of the questions of value that are at the heart of all serious literary works. (Durrant 1981, 27)

Durrant's concern is that the justification for including English in the curriculum should not be because it has some sort of practical application. In addition, despite this lack of practical application, Durrant argues that there is an element to the subject that makes it worthwhile, and this is to do with the matter of values, and how we choose to live. Importantly he grants literature an additional element which relates to the matter of pleasure experienced as a result of reading. This matter is frequently relegated to the margins of human experience, possibly because it is difficult to predict, measure or define with any great certainty, and it is therefore beyond the limits of rigorous, systematic engagement.

Durrant asserts that literature can have an effect on the way in which we make choices, and the basis for those choices in terms of our values. At the same time, however, he cautions against the idea that the mere inclusion of the subject into the curriculum will lead to a more civilized world. He makes the point that people who had studied Shakespeare and Goethe were capable of running the system that administered Auschwitz. Durrant warns against a systematic but merely technical understanding of these author's works:

> One may know a good deal about Shakespeare and Goethe, and still remain untouched by the central human values these authors are concerned with. To have read *King Lear* with an eye to the tragic flaw in the hero, to the dramatic

> conventions of the age, and to the use of blank verse and imagery, is of itself no guarantee that one has come to grips with the problems of personal choices which are insistently posed at every stage of this play. (Durrant 1981, 28)

Durrant is suggesting that there is something more to the reading of a text than the mere interpretation of structural or formal elements. Systematic reading of the text, which might include understanding the genre, the imagery, the structure and the historical circumstances in which the text was written, will not guarantee the recognition by the reader that there is some sort of insight in the text that relates to his/her life. For Durrant the significance of the text in terms of how we choose to live is the central issue. In a sense then it is how we choose to relate to the text that will determine its effectiveness. If we study in a detached manner we can achieve instrumental learning, but the true value of the learning is in its ability to shift our behaviour on moral grounds.

Durrant expresses several opinions about how we should go about teaching. Included in these is this statement regarding the role of the teacher:

> It is to give the work a chance in the mind of his students, to help them quietly over the difficulties of language and historical context, and above all to guide them to a variety of literary works, so that their growing powers of judgement are provided with diverse examples of literary excellence. (Durrant 1981, 33)

It is clear that Durrant is not in favour of imposing a set of opinions on the students' understanding of texts/works. The teacher is a guide, not an absolute authority. It is also clear that Durrant sees the process of education as providing the students with opportunities to engage with the literature, so that the students come to an understanding that is self-developed (with external guidance). The reference to the

students' "growing powers of judgement" is indicative of a need to engage in argument and thereby come to an understanding through an intellectually rigorous critical process, not just passive acceptance. In Durrant's view, there is a need for the students to have a conscious understanding of their interpretations, as is reflected thus:

> The task of the teacher must be not so much to give students ideas about literary works, as to give them unobtrusive help with that attentiveness without which neither the significance nor the value of the work can be perceived. (Durrant 1981, 35)

Effective teaching, in Durrant's opinion, is not an intrusive process; it is a form of engagement in which the teacher directs the students to consider the work and draw conclusions from it. This implies a process of shared insights and responses to a text. However, Durrant is not in favour of too much discussion and debate that is student-based. He argues that many such classes, based on discussion, may lead to students being ready to express opinion about a range of topics, but without the "powers of sensitive comprehension" (Durrant 1981 36). This insight is a caution to those who would be predominantly "student centred" in their teaching; students cannot achieve all the required insights by their own means – they require direction in many aspects of learning. For some, student-driven discussion can, therefore, result in the belief that higher-order thinking is taking place, but the students might be mulling over fairly pedestrian, ordinary matters. The teacher, with years more experience and greater knowledge of the discipline, could/should direct this discussion in order for learning to take place.

In his concluding remarks about this matter, Durrant emphasizes that there is a moral issue at stake in the teaching of literature, because he believes that this has a consequence in terms of the choices that people make:

> The consideration of ethical choices which serious literary works entail may not ensure the making of right choices, but it ought at least to ensure that actions are indeed the result of choice, and are not a mere blind following of the habits and fashions of an alarmingly conformist society. Whether we choose to admit this or not, our educational systems transmit values; and the best defence against unconscious indoctrination is to enable students to experience at first hand the handling of value-judgements by a variety of first rate minds of not one generation only, but of many. And even if we were to abandon in despair the hopes that were once placed in literary studies as central to humane education, it would still be true that the study of poems and novels and plays is both more delightful and more intellectually invigorating than the study of academic literary theory and classification. (Durrant 1981, 38)

This statement by Durrant is important, because it touches on two different elements related to the study of literature. On the one hand we have the notion that there is a need to locate ourselves as readers within a realm of values and choices/decisions that may face us in real life. This ethical issue is significant, because it relates to the way in which we live. On the other hand it is clear that Durrant values literature not only because it is able to provide us with matters relating to ethics, but also because we are provided with the possibility of enjoyment through the process of reading. This dimension of reading – that of personal satisfaction – is an element that I have referred to on other occasions, and it reflects to a large degree the thinking of Harold Bloom. In a sense it is the most important element of literature, because it relates to something that taps into the personal and has significance at a level that is purely individual as opposed to social. As such, each person can find personal enjoyment and meaning in reading – or not, as the case may be – but the difficulty is that this process is difficult to incorporate into an academic discipline, because it is so individualized and may not conform to the notions of rigour that tend to be required in academia. There is, of course, a possibility that various readers may share their sense of enjoyment with

others – a community of pleasure rather than intellectual critical enquiry, and thereby reaffirm this aspect of literature through shared experience.

Doherty (Doherty 1989) states that Durrant was a disciple of Leavis, and that he regarded South African cultural expression as problematic, in that he believed that the study of such expression, including literature, exposed the student to a form of parochialism.

In my correspondence with Durrant, Doherty's statements are not totally supported. Durrant stated that he was supervised by Tillyard and Willey, who "were both bitterly opposed by Leavis." (Durrant, 2003) Furthermore, Durrant adds that he did not attend Leavis's lectures. In addition, he believes that the treatment of Leavis by the university created an unhealthy cult among his followers. Durrant expresses himself bluntly, and it is plain to see that he was not a disciple of Leavis.

With regard to Doherty's assertion that Durrant was concerned about parochialism, Durrant's statement about the validity of text selection is as follows:

> I am proud to say that whatever influence I had on the study of literature in South Africa was directed to ensuring that students paid attention to the best poems etc written in the English language, with of course special attention to South African writers in English. (Durrant, 2003)

Durrant added on another occasion:

> My view was and still is that there are works of universal value that interest and inspire persons of all backgrounds, as Mandela and his friends were sustained by Shakespeare when on Robben Island… As for South African novels studied,

> Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* comes to mind, as well as Alan Paton's works and Nadine Gordimer's early work. Nadine Gordimer told me herself that she regarded her writing as being for the whole English-speaking world, though rooted in Africa… We are all nourished by our original culture and must be true to it; but if we are not careful we can be limited and even imprisoned by it. I remember that one of the greatest liberations of my life was the exhibition of Chinese art at the Royal Academy in 1935; this made me understand that there was a great and rich civilization, sophisticated and subtle, that owed nothing to the Greeks, Romans, English or French. (Durrant, 2003)

It would appear from the above that any statements regarding Durrant's concern about parochialism and his distaste for South African literature are unsupported. I acknowledge, however, that Durrant's expressed position in 2003 may not be the same as his position in the 1950s, and that the evolution of his position is difficult to establish.

It is clear, however, that Durrant believes that there are works of universal significance – in essence, the canon. It is, furthermore, significant that he locates these works in a cross-cultural frame of reference; the Chinese art works, for Durrant, held a specific significance. His experience of these works, however, was a filtered one; some authority in England arranged for the presentation of the works, after a process of selection, and they were presented in a Western context. It is also not clear whether Durrant's appreciation of these works included an *understanding* of the works. Furthermore, Durrant's claim that "we are all nourished by our original culture" is somewhat problematic, because the notion of an "original culture" is not clear. In addition, cultural aspects of society tend to change over time – they are not fixed – so to be true to our original culture suggests a level of constraint that opposes progress. A sense of stagnation permeates such a position.

Durrant's inclusion of South African authors into his department's curriculum is significant. He was obviously not located, in practice, within a Leavisite tradition, in that the authors named did not have significance for Leavis. Durrant does not, unfortunately, state at what point in time his department adopted this policy of including local works for the purpose of study.

During the same time period that Durrant was Head of the English Department at the University of Natal, Greig was his counterpart at the University of the Witwatersrand. Durrant was the external examiner for Greig's department, thus suggesting an agreement regarding the value of literature, as well as agreement regarding selection of texts for study. According to Durrant, Greig shifted his methodology on occasion. Originally concerned with historical issues surrounding texts, he was influenced by academic practice in the USA, and adopted, for a short time, the practice of setting short-answer tests. (Durrant, 2003)

Greig appears to have been influenced by Leavis's concerns with literature as a saviour of society. In 1932 (prior to Durrant's arrival in South Africa) he published *Literature in the Machine Age*. He expressed great concern about the change in society's values:

> In a word, the Machine Age unlike every other form of civilization that the world has known, is stamping out the arts as fast as it can… We decline to believe that the arts are mere entertainment… We decline to believe that the Machine Age… can give us human values greater than the values it is sacrificing by the destruction of the arts. (Greig 1932, 4-5)

These ideas echo those of Leavis, in that there is an implied need for humanity to turn away from the modern world and take refuge in an earlier, better era. It is of significance

to note that Greig is not locating the Machine Age within a scientific frame of reference, and opposing it with the arts (as in C. P. Snow's *The Two Cultures*). Instead, Greig sees the Machine Age as a time of productivity and consumerism, in which the desire to possess things has become a driving force. (Greig 1932, 8)

Greig sees the true writer as one who will revolt against this standardizing of society. Alternatively, he looks into the past, to the time of Shakespeare and others, for significance. Again we experience echoes of Leavis's thought. The parallels between British critical practice (at that time) and those expressed by Greig are marked, although it must be acknowledged that these ideas might have been common to the age. Following World War I, and the Great Depression, in which the modern world was shown to be fallible, and in which human ability to control destiny was shown to be unreliable, thoughts such as those expressed by Greig might have been quite common. The base world of the machine was something to be avoided, and the world of the past, in which Nature held sway, was shown to be appealing. The world of the machines had granted humanity power over Nature, but in doing so they had lost contact with the superior values represented in Nature. There is of course a problem at the root of this type of thinking. Human scientific endeavours led to the development of many things such as motor cars, ships, aeroplanes, and great advances in medical science, amongst other things. Thus, whilst this process moves humanity away from Nature, it also provides people with a higher standard of living. To simply reject science in favour of a more primitive state, close to Nature, is not a way forward. After all, literature itself is not a Natural phenomenon – it is the result of human interaction, human engagement, and human expression. Literature and science both shift the human condition away from a natural state; the consequent change of values and perceptions of life and how it should be lived have little to do with humanity in its natural state. Both processes provide people with the possibility of engaging in an intellectual, critical process regarding the issue of values and how we should live. This is not the sole province of literature.

A somewhat different matter was raised by Greig in a later paper. He considered the nature of South African Literature in English (Greig 1948), and struggled to come to a point of balance on how to define this type of work. Amongst other things he questioned whether a South African writer should be required to be born in South Africa, in which case Thomas Pringle, amongst others, would be excluded. He also felt that the subject matter of a novel, play etc should not be regarded as the defining element for this genre. Greig's concern about this matter is important, because it reflects that he is aware that there are local circumstances that might provide authors with interesting and unique literary expressions, and thus provide insights for the readers of such texts that have little or no equivalent in British literature.

Perhaps most significantly, Greig regarded South African literature in English as a sub-category of the broader category of works in the English language:

> South African writers in English cannot contract out of the English tradition, cannot go their own way independently of writers in England and America and other parts of the English-speaking and English-writing world. They belong to a whole of which South Africa is but a fragment. (Greig 1948, 271)

Greig adds that there are only two South African writers of significance in this larger grouping – Roy Campbell and Olive Schreiner. This orientation to literature has some validity, in the sense that English is a world language and South African literature in English relates to this broader canvas. However, the scale of such a view of literature is not helpful, because, whilst they all share the medium of English as a manner of expression, they address diverse issues that happen to be of local significance and have narrower consequences than those which apply to the whole of the English-speaking world. The important element here is that he has chosen to acknowledge

literature which is local. At the time he had no way of knowing that several South African authors would gain international renown, and that this would lead to an academic acceptance of South African literary works, not just locally, but also abroad. This, of course, would provide a different lens through which to view the established works included in the canon.

Durrant and Greig were notable critics who established much of the initial principles and processes of their respective English departments in South Africa. This initial scholarship would lead to a burgeoning interest in, and debate about, the value of South African English literature in the field of English Studies. Central to this matter would be the conference of 1956, and the work of Guy Butler, who would be both lauded and denounced by different parties because of his advocacy of the studying of South African literature.

In his 1988 article entitled “The Battle for the Books” (Haresnape 1988), Geoffrey Haresnape identifies many points of contention, one of which worth mentioning at this point is that, at the time of the 1956 conference at the University of the Witwatersrand, Philip Segal explored the matter of South African literature and the attempt to include it in the syllabus. He cautioned against this, emphasizing that South African literature in English was part of the tradition of a larger English grouping – much like Greig’s observations – and that to part with this tradition would be unwise. (Haresnape 1988, 46-47) These issues would remain as part of the debate about defining South African literature as a concept – and a subject of educational value. Part of the debate would be a comparative one, in that it would be asked whether it was appropriate to include South African literature in a syllabus at the cost of other, more established, works. Would we drop Jane Austen in order to teach a South African author’s work? Linked to this type of question is the notion of an implied hierarchy of literary works, and this issue derived directly from the work of Leavis and others.

During Durrant's and Greig's time, two other significant figures arose on the South African literary critical landscape. W. H. Gardner taught and conducted research at the University of the Orange Free State, and Guy Butler, mentioned previously, became a dominant force at Rhodes University.

Gardner and Alternatives to Leavis

Gardner's work is best represented in his extensive research conducted in Britain, Europe, and South Africa, and collected into Report Number 9 of the National Council of Social Research. The research took place over a six-month period in 1953 and contains detailed statements about education practices in English Departments both locally and abroad. Included in the report are sample test and examination papers produced by Durrant, Gardner, and Butler. It is clear throughout the report that Leavis's influence is well-established in British literary education practice, and that these influences are strongly represented in South Africa; by page iv of the report, Richard's work is referred to, and the need for practical criticism is established. By page v the following statement is made:

> In the high schools and universities of South Africa the need for intensive and accurate reading has been realized, and the methods of Practical Criticism, as described and demonstrated by Dr I. A. Richards and Dr F. R. Leavis, have to varying degrees been adopted as fundamental training in comprehension, interpretation and literary appreciation. (Gardner 1995, v)

Gardner adds, however, that he needed to explore alternatives to Leavisite training e.g. the use of creative writing as a means of developing critical sensibility. It is clear, therefore, that whilst Leavis was the dominant figure in the teaching of English literature,

he was by no means unchallenged. Gardner is at pains to point out that some critics argued that Leavis's approach left them with a "dead" text after extensive dissection. However, he adds that this *need not* be the outcome. It would appear that part of the Leavisite tradition would be to explore, or discover the meaning of the text, without destroying its essence in the process. There is a need, therefore, for a level of sensitivity to the task at hand. Leavis would possibly argue that his method, if correctly used, would lead to insights which would make the text more "alive" rather than "dead".

Gardner does question the strong emphasis on practical criticism. He states:

> It is a pity that the French method of the expose or explication de texte is not more frequently used in English and South African schools. (Gardner 1955, 4)

This method involves extensive work on the part of a student whose role it is to prepare and present a mini lecture to his/her peers. The lecture is overseen by the teacher, who adds to the presentation, or takes issue with the presenter. The role of the presenter is rotated through the class. This methodology has value because the presenter would be attempting to persuade the class of the value of his/her position, and critical engagement would thus be fostered.

The difficulty with such a method is that students vary in ability and commitment, and a superb, insightful presentation might be followed by a superficial presentation of limited educational value. The teacher in both cases would develop the presentation through critical engagement/direction, so all would not be lost. The value of the engagement is that the students have the opportunity to, so to speak, make the work their own, through active participation. In addition, the notion of intellectual partnership between teacher

and students is emphasized. This process has echoes in the South African curriculum policy documents of the 2000s; student participation is emphasised.

Gardner found that written compositions made up a significant proportion of English classes in Britain. In addition, as is shown below, there is the sense that individual student motivation to succeed is something that cannot be ignored:

> The pupil will attain to a sound and sensitive appreciation of the best literature only in proportion as he is actively interested in mastering some of the arts of composition for himself. (Gardner 1955, 4)

The précis was another form of expression which was admired by teachers, since it dealt with two essential elements – comprehension and expression. These two processes are inherently valuable, in that they reflect the ability to engage in critical thinking and at the same time identify the essence of an argument and express it.

The report covers a great deal of material too vast to be addressed here. Suffice to state that the principles developed by the Cambridge School were dominant, but that a variety of alternatives were proposed, which included the following:

> The appreciation of all literature is largely induced through the teacher's own understanding, sensitive presentation, and quietly infectious enthusiasm. (Gardner 1955, 7)

There are echoes here of Raleigh in that it would seem that methodology is almost irrelevant – in terms of this claim, a teacher would be a success as a result of his/her personal qualities rather than his/her training. This is a problematic position to adopt, since it is dependent on qualities that defy measurement, and vary from one situation to the next. I have a suspicion, however, that many teachers secretly believe that their students' successes are due to their personal qualities rather than an acquired system of thought and practice. The "personal qualities" position appeals, no doubt, to the linking of individual significance in the greater scheme of things – a sort of affirmation of one's purpose. The problem associated with this sort of methodology is that, to some extent, it endorses a cult of personality, in that a good teacher is almost defined as possessing particular qualities rather than following particular processes or methodologies. The nuances of an individual personality will, of course, play a role in any teaching process, and the dimension of enthusiasm and personal energy should not be underrated. However, reliance on this is problematic in terms of methodological systems, since the individual concerned might be of a mercurial nature – good at times, not quite so good at others – and there are therefore no guarantees of consistency of teaching.

Guy Butler and the Significance of English in South Africa

I will now consider the work of Guy Butler, who established himself as a figure of significance in South African English teaching and lecturing. At a conference in the early 1950s at the University of the Witwatersrand, Butler and R. G. Howarth of the University of Cape Town, argued for the inclusion of South African writers into the syllabus. Their suggestion was not well-received although this conference would become a point of significance whenever the topic of including South African literary texts in the English syllabus was discussed.

Howarth emphasized the need for comparative literature, even suggesting the possibility of studying Afrikaans writers as a point of comparison. He recommended that the South African literature component should be one year long – in other words, a sub-section of a course, and not a major or sub-major. The idea of teaching comparative literature would have had several supporters, but they would probably have been located in the world of the European languages – thus, "legitimate" comparative literature would have included the study of texts from France, Italy, Germany, and Russia. These countries could claim a European heritage of similar stature to that of England. South Africa, by contrast, was a mere colony, and the literary heritage was of shorter duration, and comprised of fewer texts. In a sense, it was in all likelihood felt, there were few voices in South Africa that had anything valuable to say. (By this point in time, it must be noted that several significant books had been written by South African authors – examples are: *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner, *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton, *Mhudi* by Sol Plaatje, and other works by black and white writers, including several Afrikaans authors).

In 1958 two articles were published in the journal *English Studies in Africa* which seemed to emphasize the significance of the link between South African and universities and their British counterparts, particularly in the field of English studies. The articles, by C. O. Gardner (Gardner 1958) and Goldman (Goldman 1958) addressed the nature and purpose of the Oxford and Cambridge Schools of English respectively. Gardner commented on the methodology used by Oxford (they favoured the tutorial) and the assessment process (they favoured examinations, which included an oral element). In addition, the syllabus addressed nothing more recent than works from 1830. Gardner summarises the Oxford student of English thus:

> In the foreground, and more important than anything I have been describing, there is of course the Oxford student himself. He works hard and very largely on his own, reads widely, usually has a large number of friends (with whom he

> discusses everything), and comes to his own conclusions. He is by no means a simple prey to the ideas of his tutors or of the English School in general.
>
> (Gardner 1958, 42)

The sense that is created in this essay on the Oxford School is that students are immersed in the learning process, and they are expected to produce many of the crucial elements of learning through a process of critical engagement, both formally in tutorials, and informally in their friendly discussion groups.

Goldman's essay on the Cambridge School owes a great deal to the work of E. M. W. Tillyard, who was in the process of writing *The Muse Unchained*, and who allowed Goldman to quote from sections of the as-yet unpublished book. Much of the content of what is taught at Cambridge is therefore covered in Chapter 2 when I addressed the evolution and development of the Cambridge School. Amongst other things, there is the repeated comment that English in the twentieth century would take the place of the Classics – which had held a position of significance in years past. There is implied in this comment the idea of intellectual development i.e. scholarship at tertiary level provides the possibility of renegotiation of focus and significance.

Despite this Goldman devotes a large portion of the essay to considering the relevance of the study of English when compared to, say, History:

> … in practice the History Faculty has more confidence in the relevance of its discipline to 'the experience of life', to training a 'delicate integrity of intelligence' than the English faculty has. (Goldman 1958, 98)

It is not entirely clear why Goldman would make such an assertion. Possibly he felt that a History Faculty would address moments in time when significant things had happened

– in other words, real events – whereas literature might be regarded as mere fictional musings and opinions. One of the questions asked by various elements of British society at the time addressed the concern of whether the universities such as Oxford and Cambridge were attempting to produce graduates who could make a valid contribution to society at large, or whether they would be producing an educated elite who were addressing only a narrow band of society's concerns.

Goldman's paper addresses crucial issues relating to the significance of the Arts in society, and what the role of the Arts should be. These matters are still being negotiated in universities in South Africa and abroad, and it is unlikely that a final answer will be provided in the near future. Goldman summarises this point by referring to a lack of response from the universities regarding this matter – he states that the pervading silence is very disturbing. (Goldman 1958, 99) The strong influence of the ancient universities at this time is emphasized by the existence of the articles – it was deemed valuable for South African academics to encounter this information.

Guy Butler was in favour of studying South African literature as part of English studies, but he acknowledged that South African writing was less significant than its British counterpart. His reason for wanting to include South African literature as part of a course in English studies was related to the issue of cultural self-awareness. Although English studies was seen to be centrally located in the literary heritage of Britain, there was arguably something unique about the writing of South Africans that struck a chord for South African readers. Butler felt a need for the affirmation of this expression and appreciation of a particular human experience, and this need could not be satisfied through the academic enterprise that comprised English studies as it then stood.

At the same time, Butler seems to accept the idea that South African literature was derivative, as opposed to being original, and therefore not at the centre of the literary

enterprise – although one has to recognize that much of British literature is equally derivative in nature; Shakespeare himself used many stories that had existed in other countries and cultures. Furthermore, one must accept that originality is a difficult – perhaps impossible – thing to achieve at this point in human history. Our cultural expressions point to the past, and are constituted through an accumulation of human thoughts – this is what provides us with our much-prized heritage. New ideas, and especially ideas of colonial origin, are sometimes treated with suspicion, because they seem to deviate from this heritage, and even challenge what are held to be central beliefs and/or concepts.

Butler had an unusual view of English-speaking South Africans, in that he acknowledged that they were associated with a range of classes and backgrounds, although he tended to see certain historical moments as common to all; he made particular reference to the 1820 Settlers and the 1870 gold and diamond mine settlers as a population reservoir for English-speaking South Africans. In essence, then, he saw this group as, firstly, white, and secondly, as having strong links to Britain.

> The English South African… was placed in a dramatic situation between Boer and black in 1820, and that is where he still is: in the middle. (Butler 1964)

Being “in the middle” is an interesting location, because it suggests a difference between the other two points, as well as being an implied point of balance, or alternatively, a bridging point/position. This bridging position also holds within it a notion of power in terms of socio-economic relations, although this is not directly stated. In addition, the notion of being in the middle suggests that the other points are possibly points of extremes, and this can be interpreted in a sociological or political manner.

The attitude of being in the middle, expressed in the 1960s, would shift significantly through the years, as Butler acknowledged the contribution of the greater English-speaking South African community:

> English-speakers, then, have come and are still coming from a variety of national, social, historical and geographical backgrounds and they have intermarried freely with Afrikaners… They have all been reinforced by recruits from Eastern and Western Europe… The Natal Indians are becoming unilingual English-speakers, as are many of the 'Coloured' people and an unknown number of black South Africans. (Butler 1994, 216)

It is clear to see that Butler adopted a more inclusive notion of the English-speaker with the passage of time. Furthermore, his position regarding the value of South African English texts would lead to an ever more inclusive approach in English studies. He did, however, express the following opinion about the qualities of the English-speaker's literary culture:

> English, by virtue of its superb literature and its world affiliations, tends to breed minds which are speculative and sceptical. (Butler 1964)

Butler, therefore, saw English as a tool for social change, in that it encouraged the reader to question the nature of the world and the social order. In this he was addressing the matter of social injustice that permeated all of the fabric of South African society. His criticism, however, was muted in comparison with that which was to follow in the latter part of the 20th Century.

The claim he makes about English and its effects on the mind is not substantiated. There are examples of people such as Leavis who are conservative in their views rather than speculative, and Leavis was a significant voice in the discipline. In addition, as will be shown in the next chapter, English literature can be harnessed to a State's purpose. Literature is a set of human expressions, in this case through the use of language as a written text. However, the way in which such written words are explored can result in speculation or the lack of it. Thus the content and form of the work are only part of the process. The way in which the work is approached, and the circumstances in which it is read, are central issues to consider. The breeding of minds which are speculative and sceptical is not only a product of the text, but also that of the process and situation of reading.

In this chapter I have considered issues relating to the establishment of English as a subject in South African education. I have shown the influence of the colonial authority, but I have also shown the beginnings of a postcolonial context, in which indigenous writings in English begin to play a role in education. This challenge to the notion of the British canon would be made more explicit in the years that followed; this is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: English in a Colonial Context: The South African Experience II

The adoption of the British tradition of English Studies into the South African education system, as expressed in the previous chapter, establishes the substantial influence of the Cambridge School in South Africa. This is clearly indicated in the year programme of the English Department of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1977, in which the novels and plays to be studied included only one African work, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* and no South African works. Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens, D. H. Lawrence, Austen, and Conrad, were all in evidence, providing an approximation of Leavis's Great Tradition. The first general lecture was an introduction to Practical Criticism. Assuming that this English Department was representative of South African universities, there can be no doubt that the Leavisite tradition was firmly established in South Africa.

However, it was shown in the previous chapter that figures such as Butler and Howarth were arguing in favour of the inclusion of local literary works, even if these were only introduced to supplement the selected works of Cambridge School derivation. This opinion would begin to have a greater influence in the field of English Studies in South Africa. In addition, adherents to more radical approaches to literary studies would be influenced by the Marxist and Continental Philosophy positions mention in chapter 3. The fragmentation of South African society along class and racial lines, as well as on the basis of language, would lend itself to intellectual positions that were concerned with economic repression, power-relations, and matters of identity. These positions would consider matters that were overtly political and would use literature as an aspect of cultural expression to raise awareness of inequalities and injustices so as to empower the readers. This is at odds with reading works relating to and/or deriving from Leavis's understanding of a particular conception of a pre-industrial English community. This claimed essence of Englishness would have little relevance for South Africans

experiencing a very different world from that which Leavis envisaged. I will now trace some of the developments that led to this change of perception.

To begin with, I will consider the position expressed by Jean Marquard in 1978, in the introduction to the collection she edited entitled *A Century of South African Short Stories* (Marquard 1978). Marquard has two concerns that seem to be somewhat in conflict with each other. Firstly, she begins her introduction by mentioning the names of several authors whose works she would like to have included in the collection, but was unable to do so, because the authors were banned by the apartheid regime. In adopting this position Marquard locates herself and her collection within an overtly political context. There is little doubt that she is critical of the South African government of the day, and she makes the matter of literature into something that is politically weighted.

At the same time, Marquard makes the following comment:

> My aim has been to present the short story as a distinct genre, in which the writing demands a particular kind of expertise. I believe that South African writing has excelled in this form more than any other. I assume that people are justified at least in demanding entertainment, possibly in looking for aesthetic satisfaction, when they read fiction. I believe that the idea, ardently taken up by many recent champions of Black literature, that in this country art should instruct, enlighten and operate as a signpost to freedom, is ultimately damaging to art since it supposes that the reader's intention as a consumer is identical to the writer's intention as a producer. (Marquard 1978, 11-12)

In this quote Marquard distances herself from the overtly political, which is somewhat at odds with her previous position. It is clear, however, that the dimensions of literary criticism at this time, as they pertain to South African literature in English are

significantly different from those of the Cambridge School and its British-based opponents. Central to the debate in South Africa is the matter of the political landscape of the time, and therefore the issue of race is foregrounded in a way that does not occur in the British tradition. This element of society would be a dominant factor that would need to be addressed or acknowledged in the development of South African literary criticism during the period I have identified, above. It is evident that, despite any claims regarding the value of a text in terms of genre – in other words, a close approximation of Leavis's formalist predisposition – the role of apartheid in South African society cannot be ignored.

Michael Chapman edited *A Century of South African* Poetry (Chapman (ed.), 1981) the companion volume to Marquard's book, but published three years later, in which he expressed similar concerns about the relationship between what he regarded as literary elements and sociological elements of criticism, favouring a focus on the literary, as stated in the quote below:

> *A Century of South African Poetry* contains close on 300 poems by 137 South African English poets and the criteria for selection have been primarily 'literary' rather than 'sociological'. It seems necessary to emphasise this at the start because there is a school of thought which believes that literature written in politically turbulent situations is of value simply for what it says, not for how it is said. While I have not ignored the often far-from-reductive relationship between poetry and historical pressures, I have chosen poems in the first instance for their imaginative qualities: their linguistic inventiveness, their forceful expressiveness. (Chapman (ed.) 1981, 13)

This statement strongly mirrors that of Marquard, in that both authors show an awareness of the social milieu in which the literature is created, and read, and both

have a concern for the literary character of the literature (poetry and short stories) that they address. It seems that both are concerned that the criticism of literature should follow an acknowledgement that the texts are to be addressed as literature, not as sociological artefacts.

Marquard emphasises her concern for the literary elements of the short story in her introduction, writing extensively about a range of theoretical positions and narrative styles. (Marquard 1978, 12-40) At times it seems that she is focusing on short story writing as a form of craft – something that is skill-based and that can be developed, and at the same time is recognizable in terms of style, use of language, and imagery. Located within this literary focus is a thread of what Chapman terms the sociological – references to the social divisions brought about by apartheid, the authenticity of black authors' experiences, and the need to challenge and, perhaps, transcend oppression.

In a later text, *South African English Poetry: A Modern Perspective* (Chapman, 1984), Chapman maintains his position that favours literary over sociological criticism, and makes this comment regarding his selection and interpretation of the poems he has chosen:

> In examining the character of modernity, I have approached the poetry primarily as a literary critic rather than as a literary sociologist…This study is… concerned not so much with causes and origins (although these are not ignored) as with showing the nature of the poetic works and the tactics adopted by poets in their responses to dilemmas in their milieu. More specifically, the purpose is to demonstrate that if the writer's sense of reality changes, then his language alters; that the life and form of the modern imagination emerges not only in the content of literature, but in its texture – in matters of diction, image-making and myth-making. (Chapman 1984, 14)

For Chapman, in this quote, there is a connection between social circumstances ("the writer's sense of reality") and how the writer expresses him/herself in dealing with this reality. He does not seem to regard it as being important that the writer should use his/her language to alter the reality in which he/she is located. In this quote it is almost as if Chapman regards the use of language as somehow discrete from the possible social outcomes of its usage – the literature is somehow removed from the reality, although it is reflective of it. In some ways this ties in with the views expressed by George Gordon, the Professor of English at Oxford in the early 20th Century who emphasised that literature was merely literature and not life and/or experience. It reflected experience but did not take the place of that experience itself.

Despite this, there is a dimension of Chapman's writing in 1981 that reflects something of a concern regarding the social influences of literature. In his introduction, mentioned some paragraphs above, Chapman makes the point that the only regret he had regarding the anthology was that he was unable to publish a poem by Dennis Brutus entitled "Letter 18", from a collection called *Letters to Martha*, because the works of Dennis Brutus had been banned by the government of the time.

The notion of banning is in itself interesting, in that it suggests that the government responsible for the banning regarded the text as subversive, and thus having the power to provide the reader with ideas that could challenge the ideological status quo. This grants significance to the work; it is seen, perhaps, as having some kind of authority that is in conflict with the establishment. In addition, Chapman's choice to mention this banning is significant, because it draws attention to the power relations contained within such an act, and he therefore locates literature and the access to texts within a sociological ambit. The issue of banning a text, and choosing to refer to this condition, are not matters of literary criticism as such, but rather a reflection of the nature of society and the power relations contained therein. On this basis it is clear that, whilst a text might be evaluated in terms of literary criteria, such as imagery, diction, and genre,

there is also a social dimension which has a point of articulation with the literary text, and that is defined perhaps in terms of the historical or socio-economic context in which the text is created and then interpreted. For Chapman and Marquard it is clear that their claims in the late 1970s and early 1980s locate the literary criteria in a position of greater significance than the sociological criteria, although the latter set of criteria are also acknowledged. It is important to note that literary elements are important only if they have a social consequence. In other words, it is the point of articulation with humanity that grants a literary work any significance at all. If there is no human response, by either an individual or a group, then there is no point in the writing at all.

There is one further element in both Chapman's *A Century of South African Poetry* and Marquard's *A Century of South African Short Stories* that bears consideration, and this is that it is clear that earlier concerns expressed by academics regarding both the quantity and the quality of South African literature were, to a large extent, quelled. Both volumes reflect a substantial number of pieces that deserve critical consideration, although neither author claims that there is a South African equivalent of Shakespeare or Dickens. Notwithstanding this, South African literature is regarded by the two editors as being worthy of study at the highest level of intellectual enquiry; the concern about whether this form of literature should be studied, or whether tertiary institutions should simply focus on the British tradition, as was expressed in earlier conferences and papers, is no longer an issue – for these critics it is clear that South African literature has quality and deserves to be recognized. Marquard and Chapman provide an extensive range of South African texts in their chosen genres – short stories and poetry – and their commentary locates these texts within both a local and an international context.

Stephen Gray

It was during this period that another critic, Stephen Gray, produced a significant volume addressing the growth and development of South African literature. Entitled *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (Gray, 1979), Gray's work spanned several centuries and provided detailed information on many works of literature that were linked to or derived from southern Africa.

Despite being a work of significance, Gray's text relegated some elements of pre-colonial literature to a marginal position. For example, the oral tradition of indigenous African societies is located in one chapter, at the end of the book – almost as an appendix – rather than being located along a time-line as is the case with the other chapters, and therefore being positioned at the start of the book. It is interesting to compare the arrangement of Chapman's 1996 text addressing similar matters – he locates the works of the Bushman/San, and the subsequent oral tradition of the Bantu-speaking peoples in the first two chapters of his work. This recognition of the role of the oral tradition is perhaps more to do with the social milieu of the time than any individual prejudices felt by Gray and Chapman as authors – there is a significant difference in the social attitudes of 1979 and 1996 (the years of publication of the two texts).

A significant element of Gray's work is his commentary on Camoens' *The Luciads*, first published in 1675 and sourced in the voyages of Vasco Da Gama. Gray comments extensively on Camoens' representation of Adamastor – a figure derived from Greek mythology. Adamastor represents the debased outcast nature of Africa and all who live there. Adamastor is both a living being and the land itself, and Gray comments thus:

> Adamastor, then, is the home of the old heathens, the numerous unenlightened… tragic because their aspirations toward civilization have failed. (Gray 1979, 26)

This symbol of the failure to achieve civilization is central to the manner in which elements of Africa would come to be judged by the colonial powers, and is associated with the reluctance of South African academics to include South African texts as part of the study of English literature; the failed civilization that Adamastor represents taints the works of any cultural expression associated with such a being or landscape, and they are therefore found wanting. This is expressed by Gray thus:

> The figure of Adamastor is at the root of all subsequent white semiology invented to cope with the African experience: he is menacing and inimical, and seen across a barrier; he belongs to an older but defeated culture, and is likely to sink the new European enlightenment if allowed within its purlieu; although his size is gigantic, his responses are essentially childish and they obey paternalistic directives… he represents heathen sin as well, still to be reclaimed by Christ. (Gray 1979, 27)

There are several aspects to this quote that combine to reflect ideas of difference, inferiority, and inability to accept responsibility – because of a childlike demeanour – that will be a part of the disposition that fuelled the divisions in South African society, as well as engendering the idea of a superior European culture through which South African academics derived canonical works. In a sense, then, Camoens' literary text includes within it the values that would lead to the judgement of other literary texts. A central point to consider in this quote is that Adamastor represents an older culture, but one which is at odds with, and therefore a threat to, the enlightenment. Africa and its people, and their cultural works, are, in terms of this perspective, aligned with a position that is somehow lacking in development – almost an evolutionary throwback.

One aspect of Gray's work that deserves specific acknowledgement is his claim that it is difficult to define the concept of South African literature; many of the writers of the time (1979) were not included in the official national canon, because their works were not compatible with government perspectives. These writers and their works were banned or deliberately marginalized by the South African government. (Gray 1979, 1)

At the same time, however, South African critics were provided with an opportunity that eluded their British counterparts – they could, perhaps, through the power of the written word, and the opinions expressed therein, directly and indirectly challenge the ruling party of the day, and question the moral dimensions of the State's actions, and provide the reader and/or student with notions of ambiguity in a system that invoked a single, infallible authority. By foregrounding the works of black South African authors these critics were able to raise doubts about some of the claims made about indigenous South African people. It is to one of these critics that I will now turn my attention.

Kirkwood and Couzens – Alternative Voices

At a 1974 conference, the papers of which were published under the title *Poetry South Africa*, included presentations from Butler and some newer voices in the debate. Tim Couzens presented a paper on black poetry in Africa, and Mike Kirkwood addressed the idea of the colonizer in South Africa. Furthermore, the whole conference was devoted to South African and African texts. The focus of literature had shifted away from a British identity, although Kirkwood's paper was to address this matter in confrontational terms.

Butler presented a paper on South African poetry from 1930-1960, and, as was his custom, he reflected on Yeats' thinking, and he referred to poems by Keats and Blake,

amongst others. In arguing the value of South African poetry Butler referred overwhelmingly to non-South African poets. It was this tendency that was to be commented on, and more, in the presentation of Mike Kirkwood.

Kirkwood's paper was entitled "The Colonizer: A Critique of the English South African Culture Theory". In this paper Kirkwood specifically challenged the position that literature could be explored within an apolitical space. He commented on Butler's use of language, and argued that Butler's phrasing was that of the colonizer – even though Butler night not have been aware of it – and that a particular hegemony was being maintained through a particular school of thought. In essence Kirkwood was arguing from a critical theory perspective, in that he saw the need for social transformation, and he saw academics like Butler as unintentionally colluding with the powers that be (in this case, with regard to the policy of white domination) in that they emphasized the significance of European cultural expression.

Kirkwood is interesting as a commentator; unlike Butler, who quotes literature, Kirkwood quotes political and cultural commentators such as Engels, Fanon and Memmi. We are left with no doubt as to Kirkwood's concerns – he sees literature as a cultural expression, and this is linked and derived from a socio-political reality. In his terms, Butler fails to perceive this reality because he chooses to avoid a political association with literature.

Kirkwood comments on Butler's apolitical position thus:

> It is not that he is apolitical. 'There are causes,' he tells us, ' and they must be served.' But he appears to believe in a cultural reality adjacent to a political reality which he circumscribes in a way that again seems symptomatic of a

> colonizer's point of view: a reality epitomized by the 'responsible and moral' joining of political parties, voting, entering parliament.

This distancing of culture and politics is problematic, because it is an attempt to address texts out of context. This is ironic, because Butler had argued that the reader should be granted the opportunity to read texts from his/her own context. It would seem, then, that Butler viewed this as a limited context, almost as if the reader should encounter a dimension of the landscape, but not all aspects of the social environment. By contrast Kirkwood locates literature as a dimension of culture, which is located within a broader socio-political reality. The elements of Kirkwood's vision are all interconnected and articulated. In a sentence, Kirkwood sees literature as one possibility for establishing what he terms self-awareness, and thereafter self-transcendence. For Kirkwood, then, literature is about human agency and therefore power, and thus the manner in which texts are selected and taught has a profoundly political dimension. The notion of transformation is located within this type of thinking, and it differs significantly from that of Butler. Kirkwood does not ask about the aesthetic value of a text, nor does he address the English canon as a series of texts. Instead, he questions the values that led to their selection and their imposition on the population of a colonized land. What he is suggesting is that, for the studying of literature to have relevance, historical and social circumstances in which the texts are embedded need to be addressed, and the power relations explored.

The presentation by Kirkwood was controversial because it took a challenging position regarding much of the work that had been done in South Africa over the previous twenty years or so. Furthermore, it was challenging to a government in which political debate of this nature was discouraged, and it suggested that there was a role for English teachers that many might not have been comfortable to adopt. Finally, Kirkwood was regarded by some as having attacked Butler on a personal level, since he began his paper with a

pointed critique of what he termed Butlerism, and also explored Butler's own poetry and heritage in a challenging manner.

Tim Couzens' Doctoral Thesis, entitled *The New African*, addressed the work of the writer H. I. E. Dhlomo. Couzens' thesis was completed approximately one year after Gray's text on Southern African literature was published, but the subject matter was markedly different. Couzens carried out a detailed study of the literary works generated by a forgotten author, and highlighted that which the academic world had tended to ignore, except as a form of anthropological study. In an era when the government wished to present the indigenous people of South Africa as lacking a sophisticated culture, Couzens presented scholarly evidence that the contrary was true.

In 1985 Couzens published a reworked version of his PhD thesis, also entitled *The New African.* (Couzens, 1985) In the preface to this text we encounter a series of statements that provide insight into Couzens' motivation and research process in addressing Dhlomo's work. On the first page of the preface Couzens makes his concern clear:

> The thirties and forties of this century have been neglected decades as regards black South Africans. To bring back the memory of that lost generation is the task of this book and I have attempted to do this through the biography of one of its most representative writers, the first major black South African playwright, Herbert Dhlomo. (Couzens 1985, xi)

From this and other statements it becomes clear that Couzens is concerned about the marginalisation of a large section of the community, in that he addresses the issue of the circumstances in which black writers worked in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Furthermore, he addresses matters of a literary nature in a broad manner. For him, the text is not all that is worthy of study, as can be seen in the following quote:

> It soon became obvious that handling Dhlomo as an isolated figure left innumerable questions unanswered. How did Dhlomo conceive of himself? Where did this conception originate? Who were his political, social and artistic predecessors? What was his class background, the nature of the education system that had moulded him, the thinking of his contemporaries, the set of institutions which were the limits of his world? (Couzens 1985, xi-xii)

The questions that Couzens poses are important, because it becomes clear that his notion of the significance of literature is more extensive than the mere addressing of a text. The text, and the author himself, have a sort of resonance in a broader social framework, and it is this that requires study as much as the text does, if the text is to be seen to have true value. In this Couzens approximates the ideas of Hoggart, who addressed literature in terms of social class and the lived experiences of those readers who were substantially removed from the middle or upper class experience; this was very different from Leavis's reading of a text.

In his reflection on the writing process of the biography, Couzens engages in a form of literary criticism. He is aware of the problems associated with the oral tradition, and he states some of these – the reliance on memory for dates and details being an example. However, he emphasizes the value of the oral tradition in that there is a sense of authentic knowing – "the *feeling* one gets for events, characters or times" (Couzens 1985, xiii) – that goes beyond the impersonal statements made in print in an archive.

The oral tradition is a fluid tradition that reflects a particular literary phenomenon that is located within a temporary social frame. It lacks the absoluteness of the written word, because it exists as a spoken text, but it has the facility of social engagement and a

process of re-assertion and re-creation. The notion of the oral text is possessed by the society in which it is told and re-told, and there is therefore a sense of a lived text. The text itself lacks the fixed specificity of a written text, upon which Practical Criticism depends, because this process requires a detailed examination of each word in relation to the other, and the oral tradition deviates from the permanence that is required for this type of approach. At the same time, it has a vibrant immediacy dependent on deliberate human engagement, and it is immersed in the fabric of society in a manner that is almost symbiotic; the story needs to be told in order to survive as a feature of the society's culture, and the society, in the re-telling, renegotiates values, beliefs and assertions that contribute to a symbolic understanding or affirmation of the society. This re-authoring of the tale cannot be effectively explored through Leavis's approach, because this approach emphasises the notion of a canon, implying a fixed text, or set of texts. Couzens' work therefore provokes the critic into considering an alternative way of conceptualizing and approaching literature.

Couzens also indicates that the authorities in South Africa had little or no regard for black South African writing, in that it was claimed that there was little evidence of it, and the writing that existed was of poor quality (Couzens 1985, xv).

The disregard for black writers' works is an echo of the treatment of South African writers by the academic establishment of the 1950s. Couzens makes a further comment of significance, and that is to state that the black literary world was one located in a state of poverty, and that economic struggle was the situation in which most black writers found themselves. The dominant theme to be expressed, therefore, would be a concern with social injustice deriving from economic repression. There is an undertone here which approximates the work of Raymond Williams and others of the cultural materialist school.

The work of Couzens is markedly different from the work of Gray and Butler. Firstly, he locates black writers at the centre of the research, not on the margins, or as a footnote. He propels a group of writers out of the shadows, and presents them as people whose work is worthy of study, and in doing so he acknowledges Dhlomo and his peers in a way that had not been done before. Secondly, he addresses the matter of the oral tradition, and he acknowledges both its value and its challenges for academic study. Thirdly, he addresses the matter of the social context in which a text is framed, and moves outside of narrow Cambridge School approach to literary study. Finally, he challenges the commonly held view that black South African writers had produced nothing of value.

For Gray and Butler, amongst others, the teaching of English involved addressing the notion of education through a system inherited from the British, and coloured by British experience and values. Couzens does not address the issue of teaching; instead, he simply conducts research into a local writer's works, and shows that they are valuable. The implication, therefore, is that they are worthy of study, and the further implication is that the commonly held belief that black South African culture was somehow debased and of lesser value is unfounded. There is the added implication that black contributions to literature are part of the broader South African literary experience – in other words, whilst, for purposes of academic analysis Couzens considers Dhlomo's writing as a separate entity, it is part of a broader social milieu. The nature of South African literature is therefore shifted to accommodate a broader spectrum of contributors.

Prior to his work on Dhlomo, Couzens wrote the introduction to Heinemann's African Writers Series publication of Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* in 1977. In this piece he comments on the genesis of what is believed to be the first novel written in English by a black African. Couzens points out that although *Mhudi* was first published in 1930, it was probably completed by 1917 (Couzens 1977, 7). Couzens also documents Plaatje's travels to London and North America, and he identifies influences in Plaatje's life, in terms of the

people whom he encounters. Importantly, he indicates Plaatje's interest in Shakespeare, and states that Plaatje translated several Shakespeare plays into "Sechuana" (Setswana). There is, therefore, the irony of a man deriving from a South African society whose works were deemed to be of little value, but who was immersed in both the cultural expressions of his own community as well as those of the British Empire that governed his society.

It becomes apparent that Plaatje had a multi-faceted role in South African public life. He was a novelist, a reporter, a translator, a founder member and representative of the African National Congress (ANC) and a social commentator. For Couzens, all these elements play a role in establishing a frame of reference through which to address Plaatje's literature. Again, we see that Couzens' concern is more broad-based than the narrow focus on the text that defines much of Leavisite thinking. To appreciate a literary text, Couzens seems to be suggesting, the reader needs to appreciate the circumstances in which it was written. There is, perhaps, a need for some biographical information, as well as a sense of historical events surrounding a text, in order to understand the significance of a book. The amount of extra information will depend on the degree to which a reader wishes to engage with a literary work.

It would be inappropriate to see Couzens' work as an attempt to reject the writings of authors from Britain, Europe or America, and to supplant them with African texts. Couzens is stating that African texts are also deserving of being included in the canon. He makes the point that Plaatje himself was favourably impressed by the works of Shakespeare. It is unlikely that Plaatje would have supported any motion to remove Shakespeare from the educational enterprise. However, he would no doubt have favoured a broadening of the limits of the canon to include other texts.

Following the work of Tim Couzens, black South African literature would be regarded as more central to South African culture. Despite this, the theatrical works of H. I. E. Dhlomo are not studied in schools, nor are they presented to audiences around the country – or, if they are, they do not receive the publicity of West End musicals, and therefore remain on the fringes of society. In the years following *The New African*, South Africa would be a country in schism, in which many texts addressed the injustices of apartheid. Writers whose work directly addressed the issues of the time would be seen to be more relevant, perhaps, than the two men whose work Couzens had researched. However, Couzens' significance is not limited to the two writers in question. In 1982 he, together with Essop Patel, edited a collection of poetry written by black writers in the period 1891 – 1991. This collection, entitled *The Return of the Amasi* Bird (Couzens and Patel, 1982), included many poems/poets that had been marginalized by the social conditions in which the black authors of the time were producing works. The following statement from the introduction confirms this:

> The struggles of black writers in South Africa have been long and hard. Almost all of the poems printed here have never been published in book form. The black newspapers for a long time represented the sole outlet for the writers, who seldom got any feedback, and no doubt soon became discouraged. The early poems… are not presented with any exaggerated claim as to their literary merit. We do, however, press a claim for their value as an historical record which can give insight into the changing patterns of black *reaction* through one medium (poetry), and as a body of evidence that black poetry is not a recent phenomenon, neither are all its contemporary themes necessarily new. In considering the early work, though, the word *reaction* seems as appropriate as the word *resistance* is when we come to the poetry of the present. (Couzens and Patel 1982, 1)

This quote makes it clear that there are several dimensions to the notion of literature, and the reasons for studying texts, when viewed from Couzens' perspective. He accepts that the literary value of "the early poems" is perhaps not of the highest order, but he includes the poems on the basis that they have historical value – amongst other

things affirming that the manifestation of poetry in the black community is not a recent phenomenon. This raises the difficulty of what the literary critic should address – is Couzens engaged in a form of historical investigation, or is he dealing with literature? In essence he seems to be dealing with both, and he is using both elements to make a case for the value of these poems. The problem, though, seems to be that there is some difficulty with accepting the literary value of poems that might be included because of their historical significance. This whole issue is related to the reasons for studying literature, and, indeed, what we need to regard as literature. In the same way as the oral tradition challenges our notions of literature, the issue of mediocre writings does the same. Perhaps we should accept that any writing that provides us with some points of interest and/or enlightenment should be acceptable for purposes of study. If such texts facilitate the reader in gaining knowledge into the human condition, surely that is enough.

Couzens remains significant because he provided an insight into literature which had been deemed of no value, and he showed that this was not the case. As such, he provided an impetus which would lead to other commentators addressing black South African writers with an enlightened attitude, and this would lead to a shift in the protocols at tertiary institutions. The consideration of black literature in a rigorous and detailed way provided black literature with academic respectability, much as Leavis and others provided a level of academic respectability with regard to English Studies, when the academic world was skeptical about the venture.

Staffrider and Applied Art

The publication entitled *Staffrider* was a magazine with an editorial team that included Mike Kirkwood, who had at an earlier stage argued against what he termed Butlerism. Chapman addresses the role of *Staffrider* in his 1996 book thus:

> Perhaps the most influential 'radical' contribution was the monthly magazine *Staffrider*, which in March 1978 began to tap the voices of protest and resistance that were emanating from many township writers' associations… With the backing of Ravan Press… Kirkwood as part of an editorial team launched *Staffrider* with a mission that went beyond convincing the 'colonial culture' to extend its Leavisian sets of values beyond the British mainstream to include selected 'good' South African works; the approach of Jack Cope, editor of *Contrast*. Rather, Kirkwood had the idea of creating a forum for a people's community-view of literary expression. Literature – it was stressed – had a small 'l'. The base would be popular rather than elite; the strength would derive from township communities rather than from notions of established culture; the 'autobiography' of experience, in its witness to daily black life rather than the art object of solitary contemplation, would provide the model of value. (Chapman 1996, 370)

Chapman makes the point that *Staffrider* did not provide new opportunities in the field of poetic expression, but the magazine did offer the possibility of the publishing of short stories, thus making a connection to the *Drum* tradition of an earlier era. The editors regarded the various poetic pieces, together with the short stories and criticism, as the opportunity for marginalized voices to be heard.

Chapman adds that the magazine possibly did not achieve its intentions, in that it was probably read by more left-wing intellectuals than by the communities that contributed to the contents of the magazine itself. (Chapman 1996, 371) Despite this the magazine remained true to its intentions of providing the readership with an understanding of the

concept of art in terms of its application – the notion of applied art suggesting that there was a defining dimension of art that was linked to its usage value.

There is a significant point being made by Chapman with regard to the readership of *Staffrider*; the people who read it were from the educated elite, more specifically from within a politically-defined element of the educated elite – left-leaning intellectuals. This raises a question that challenges claims made regarding the possibility of changing society for the better – or changing it at all – through literature. In one sense the problem is that the reading public is relatively small and perhaps not significant. However, they might be people of social or political power, despite their numerical insignificance. Whether literature has the power to sway these readers is a moot point, and arguments on the topic have been presented by Arnold, Eliot, Raleigh, Leavis, and Gordon, amongst others I have considered. It is possible that literature could have significant role to play in the establishment of opinions held by the powerful, although there is no guarantee of this. This requires some reliance on the possibility of a reader developing insights about the human condition as a result of intellectual engagement with a text. This in itself will be partly dependent on the methodology used, but also the interaction between the views expressed in the text with the views held by the reader.

A further problem is that people tend to be attracted to magazines or journals that reflect opinions similar to their own. Left-leaning intellectuals in all likelihood read *Staffrider* because opinions expressed in the publication tended to confirm their opinions, and merely reinforced ideas that were already firmly held. In other words, little transformation resulted from this writing.

Kirkwood himself made several comments about *Staffrider* in his contribution to the magazine entitled *Ten Years of Staffrider 1978-1988* (Oliphant and Vladisavic 1988). Firstly, Kirkwood regards *Staffrider* as a magazine that addressed issues of concern to the underclass – in this case, many ordinary people in South Africa. The magazine was

political in nature, in that members of Ravan Press management had been banned in October 1977 just prior to the period when the magazine first became available (Oliphant and Vladislavic 1988, 3)

This reinforces the notion that the state perceived the cultural domain as having a role to play in politics, and this understanding was reflected in the way in which those groups who were willing to challenge the apartheid state viewed literature – as a possible tool to be used in attacking the apartheid ideology. This is, in some ways, a narrow understanding of literature and/or culture. Literature has many and complex elements to it. The idea of it as a tool for social change suggests a one-dimensional conception of literature.

Kirkwood saw literature as having multiple functions, including a social/political function:

> It happened, at that time in South Africa, that literature became overburdened with a number of other social and political functions. While only a narrow view of literature would exclude these functions from among those literature can perform, it is true that existing literary forms must undergo a considerable development before they begin to be adequate to these “new” functions. (Oliphant and Vladislavic 1988, 3)

Kirkwood does not elaborate on these functions, other than to state that many people found that they could “best participate in the making of a new society, or best pursue their personal aspirations, by *writing*.” (Kirkwood’s italics). (Oliphant and Vladislavic 1988, 3)

For Kirkwood, therefore, there was a need to provide an outlet for the creative aspects of South African society, although the magazine also provided the possibility of critical engagement was well as creative writing. Furthermore, he mentions the magazine seller who advertised the magazine as *Knowledge*, suggesting that, in a society that was intended to keep one element of the population under-informed, the possibility of reading other people's written expressions, and thinking about the opinions expressed therein, provided a sense of knowledge, and from this came power and/or agency. This idea of power acquisition has echoes of both liberal and Marxist ideas; both make use of the idea of providing people with information in order to be more aware of the conditions of their existence – the Marxist critics obviously emphasizing the material conditions – and thus challenge and perhaps alter those conditions of existence.

Kirkwood also refers to forms of writing that do not conform to traditional canonical criteria as literature. Thus he identifies the interview form as a form of literature. It is clear that, for Kirkwood, the notion of authentic human expression is broader in scope than the traditional version of literature, and may hold more value, in that it reflects the opinions and concerns of people, without the protocols of literary traditions. This, of course, is not entirely the case, because there are protocols governing the content and form of interviews, as well as the process of engagement in interviewing. There are echoes here of Couzens' approach to literature in that the interview process and the oral tradition have commonalities of form, and they differ from Leavis's canon.

The importance of publications such as *Staffrider* is that they provide the reader with perspectives on a world that are not known to all citizens of the apartheid state, because of institutionalized social fragmentation and division in such a state; the publication includes the expressions of a range of people, particularly the masses (the underclass mentioned earlier). These expressions bridge the gap between the classes, but, of course, because of the difference between reading and living, it is debatable how effective this sort of expression can be in terms of bringing about social change.

Awareness of the issues does not in itself change those issues, although ignorance will not provide any possibility of change.

Staffrider was part of a series of publications that provided a voice for the disempowered. In this way it legitimized a broader human experience for the purposes of study. In addition, it provided representation of a marginalized group, thereby addressing the issue of social fragmentation. The fragmentation was not alleviated, but awareness of the "other" was established, thus providing the reader with a broader understanding of society.

Orkin and the (Mis)Use of Shakespeare

A literary critic who made a significant impact during the late 1980s, and who continues to play a role in the field of literary criticism today, is Martin Orkin[4]. His book *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* (Orkin, 1987) addressed the thematic and pedagogic methodological concerns of Shakespeare scholarship and teaching in South Africa. The title is arresting, in that it locates Shakespeare, an Elizabethan author whom most critics would regard as the most significant literary figure in the British heritage, as being opposed to a political system that was introduced into South Africa in the mid-20th century. The fact that Shakespeare would never have heard the term 'apartheid' ensures that the title is somewhat odd, to say the least, but Orkin's concerns are more broadly expressed than a one-to-one comparison between the statements of Shakespeare and the statements of the apartheid state.

[4] In 1977, when the writer of this thesis started studying at the University of the Witwatersrand, Martin Orkin was a lecturer in the English Department. I recall that he took a tutorial group of which I was a member, and the text under consideration was Dickens' *Great Expectations*. I found Orkin insightful, but no more so than many other lecturers. I was not aware of any Leftist leanings in the running of the class, or challenges to the South Africa state. I felt that Orkin provided me with a thorough engagement with the text, using traditional practical criticism as a method.

Orkin addresses two central issues about the teaching of Shakespeare in South African schools and universities:

> The first results from the fact that critics and teachers of Shakespeare in South Africa have tended and still tend to model their treatment of the text on traditional Anglo-American approaches… But even within the framework of traditional critical practice South African critics seemed to pay far less attention than their counterparts abroad to so many things – the detail of the meaning in the lines, the poetry, the history from which the plays come… The emergence of new theories about literature developing Marxist, different structuralist, feminist, psychoanalytic or post-structuralist approaches, from the late sixties on, seemed also to be, by and large, ignored. (Orkin 1987, 9)

In effect, Orkin was claiming that the English Departments at South African schools and universities were mired in the past, and had failed to assimilate new thinking. Significantly, Orkin emphasises the influence of the Cambridge School in South Africa, although he accuses the South African institutions of an element of mediocrity in methodology when compared with their more illustrious British counterparts. In addition, he makes the claim that the English departments at South African universities were narrow-minded in that they ignored other theoretical positions. This is not surprising; the influence of the Cambridge School was embedded in English Studies in British and South African universities. Furthermore, the notion of Practical Criticism has a common-sense appeal – in involves paying attention to the words on the page, which is a logical thing to do. The Leftist views to which Orkin refers have a greater complexity to them, in that they require sophisticated knowledge of theory beyond the literary works themselves. In addition, they presented a view of the world that is based in class conflict, and it is likely that South African academics in the field of English Studies did not wish to address this issue, focusing instead on the literary works.

Orkin had the following, second, concern:

> The second difficulty is that students in South African schools and those coming to university were, and still are, products of an educational system which works to legitimate the present South African social order. This system operates relentlessly by demonizing all dissenting expression – political, social and economic – amongst other things by means of censorship, the banning of all political discussion and study in the school classroom and the rigid insistence on textbooks and syllabuses that either perpetuate the ideology of the dominant classes or contribute to their hegemony. Such a system not only deprives students of an awareness of alternatives, but their very capacity to analyse, or to envisage the enabling as well as the limiting possibilities in social, political and economic organization, is also severely repressed. (Orkin 1987, 9-10)

Orkin's concern is that, through the deliberate use of methodologies that are outdated, the apartheid state presented the study of Shakespeare in a manner that suited its purposes. These methodologies prevented the practice of critical engagement and fostered a form of intellectual and behavioural compliance that met the needs of the apartheid state.

This claim is somewhat problematic, in the sense that the texts themselves seem to be regarded as vehicles for political usage, and the content of the texts seems to be ignored or played down. If we are to assume that there is inherent value in the texts – as is suggested by Orkin's title – then it is problematic to assume that this value can be obfuscated through a particular methodology on a scale that denies the possibility of any reader (and the numbers of school and university students and teachers would be substantial) stumbling upon the true value of the text. It is also problematic to assume that teachers would adopt a uniform teaching methodology as servants of the state; whilst some would do so, it is also true that individuals would see beyond this process. After all, Orkin himself – a university lecturer – would claim to have achieved this, so if he could do so, why not others?

Of greater value is Orkin's concern regarding the attempt by the state to manipulate the curriculum to ensure a form of compliance; it is generally accepted in educational theory that there is a so-called "hidden curriculum", and his identification of this with regard to the English syllabus, and particularly Shakespeare, has some validity, although the implication that all teachers simply taught as the state expected is unconvincing; in English methodology classes taught at the University of the Witwatersrand in the late 1980s, there was a deliberate attempt at critical engagement and a questioning of the curriculum and the underlying values. (This claim is based on personal experience, since I was studying at that institution during that time period). In addition, texts such as *The Right to Learn* by Pam Christie were regarded as central to the understanding of the history and development of the curriculum, and students were directed to this text as part of core reading for education. Christie's position is unequivocally critical of the Apartheid State.

In the body of the book *Shakespeare Against Apartheid* Orkin adopts the approach of addressing individual plays, so it follows that there are chapters such as "*Othello* and the 'plain face' of racism", and " Cruelty, *King Lear* and the South African Land Act 1913". He also devotes a chapter to *Hamlet*, and addresses the notion of a People's Shakespeare. He links all of these issues to the notion of power, and makes the following observation:

> In *Hamlet* … the text partly portrays the operation of power by drawing upon Christian discourse, and upon notions of hierarchy and custom. Yet despite the presence of this discourse … the play also portrays a dominant class that is riven with inner conflict and that operates, in order to preserve itself, in ways that are often indifferent to notions of hierarchy or Christianity…
>
> *Othello* even more than *Hamlet*, suggests unease about the operation of power… the play is also disturbingly interrogative about the dominant classes and their use of judicial and administrative apparatus.

> [*King Lear*] scrutinizes directly the capacity of the dominant classes for cruelty and the continued acquisition of wealth, land and property in the assertion of power. (Orkin 1987, 183-184)

These brief selective points about the plays provide an insight into Orkin's concerns. He is proposing a very different reading of Shakespeare from that of the traditional theoretical school he has identified. Notions of power, social division and fragmentation are central themes in his work, and these are seen to have parallels in the modern apartheid society. By failing to foreground these elements of the plays, Orkin argues that traditional English teaching of Shakespeare is complicit in maintaining an intellectual environment that colludes, so to speak, with the Apartheid State. His conclusion is as follows:

> We need to work for the development of readings of the texts that will free them from ruling class appropriation, from their present function as instruments of hegemony. In so doing we may pave the way for a new educational dispensation, a dispensation that will include one day, amongst many other more important things, the emergence, perhaps, of a people's Shakespeare. (Orkin 1987, 184)

The possibility of the use of English to achieve an understanding of the hegemony, and thereby challenge the hegemony is an indication of the possibility of social transformation. It is clear that Orkin is concerned with providing South Africa with an education system that will reject the beliefs and processes of the apartheid state. English Studies is one element of such a system, in which the critical engagements deriving from texts can be affiliated to the social engagements in which the texts are located. In so doing, English Studies justifies itself as a discipline, because it is utilised as a form of social application. The relevance here is relational, in that the text has value only in terms of how it provides insights into, and points of intellectual leverage about, society at large. In a sense this is a manifestation of Leavis's greatest concern – English Studies as an adjunct to sociology.

Two elements are somewhat ironic in his final claim; firstly, he desires that we develop readings of the texts "that will free them from ruling class appropriation", but does not

acknowledge that he is advocating another form of appropriation. In the same way as he regards the ruling class to have appropriated the texts for their purposes, he wishes to appropriate the texts for his purposes – in other words, the texts themselves are simply part of the system that requires negotiation, and have no inherent value.

Orkin rejects what he regards as the traditional South African critical position because it presents what he terms an idealist Shakespeare (Orkin 1981, 181). He argues that this position ignores the social location of the texts and moves to a position claiming universal truths. Orkin is critical of a methodology that locates these truths in the experiences of a handful of individuals. It is clear that he would prefer a methodology that locates the text in a materialist understanding of the world; in a sense, he is correct – his claim has echoes of Gordon's concern about the lack of value of "mere words". Lived experience, framed by material conditions, is the issue for Orkin, and literature can only have value in these terms.

Orkin affiliated himself more directly with the post-colonial theoretical perspective in the book *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* which he co-edited with Ania Loomba. This volume is a collection of essays derived from papers presented at a conference at the University of the Witwatersrand entitled "Shakespeare – Post-Coloniality – Johannesburg, 1996" (Loomba and Orkin 1998, 18). In their introduction the editors make mention of the fact that the conference was not organized by the English Department, but rather by a group of academics whose number included one member of the English Department, suggesting that this consideration of Shakespeare was not acknowledged as being of value by the Department in which Shakespeare would traditionally be located as a central feature of the discipline. The editors' point, perhaps, is to locate the study of Shakespeare within a frame of reference that emphasised division, or at least a difference of opinion. I will address the work of two of the authors in this volume – Nicholas Visser and David Johnson.

Visser's essay is entitled "Shakespeare and Hanekom, *King Lear* and land: A South African perspective". In this essay he comments on and develops the claims made by Orkin in his1987 book, particularly with regard to the issue of power and land ownership. Visser begins by considering the colonization of the Cape as a sort of parallel with *King Lear* in terms of land ownership, control, and dispossession. He makes the claim that through the granting of freehold settlements to 9 Dutch burghers during the administration of Van Riebeeck, the dispossession of the Khoikhoi was initiated (Loomba and Orkin 1998, 206). He then extends this issue in the following manner:

> Among the many things *King Lear* may be said to be 'about', the issue of land – of its control, its ownership, its forms of inhabitation and settlement, its relations to fundamental human needs, its relation crucially to power as well as to powerlessness and poverty – is crucial. (Loomba and Orkin 1998, 206)

There is an obvious truth here, because the play deals with a narrative involving the division of land ownership between King Lear's daughters, and their subsequent treatment of him. There is, however, something problematic about the claim put forward by Visser. Whilst there is a strong association between the play and the issue of land, the play is also located in a domestic milieu, and the issue of trust and responsibility is central to the way in which the play evolves. I am not disregarding Visser's claim, but instead making the point that he is linking the play to one issue, which, while central, does not address the various characters and their concerns adequately. Visser, therefore, is providing worthwhile insights, but is ignoring others, and, in a sense, is bending the text to fit his frame of reference.

Visser addresses historical and political concerns and explores the diction of *King Lear* in terms of the legal dimensions of the language (for example, Cordelia's reference to

“her bond”) as well as the description of the land itself during the allocation of the land to Lear’s daughters.

Visser refers to these examples to provide insights that derive from comments on South African history that reflect the issues in *King Lear*. However, the issues seem to be parallel issues rather than having clear points of intersection. The issue of land ownership is a central feature of the play, as Visser points out. However, the family relationships, together with the figurative blindness (in failing to recognize the true qualities of his daughters) that besets Lear, are perhaps, the most important aspects of the play, and these matters are relegated to the margins.

I accept that the nature of Shakespearean criticism is broad and allows – even encourages – many perspectives. I also accept that Visser’s essay provides interesting insights into a reading of the play in South Africa. However, although we might find wisdom in Shakespeare about the renaming of streets or towns or airports, it all seems a little laboured in its attempt at attaining local relevance. Here Shakespeare is used as a point of access into a concern about land ownership in South Africa.

Orkin’s most recent book on Shakespearean criticism builds on his previous commentary regarding post-colonial perspectives in the discipline. *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (Orkin 2005) explores the relationship between the metropolitan world and that of the colony, and considers how the two environments interact in their reaction to Shakespeare’s work. Orkin makes the point that Shakespeare is an author whose works may be regarded as “travellers to countless and always different locations” (Orkin 2005, 1), and as such these works have crossed the barriers between cultures, spaces and time, thus inviting a range of interpretation by many different groups. This means, amongst other things, that twentieth century (and

twenty-first century) interpretations of Shakespeare are somewhat removed from Shakespeare's world, even if these interpretations are made by critics resident in British institutions, implying therefore that these critics are not too dissimilar in their experience from that of colonized people, or people who have different cultures from those of modern Britain. In a sense Orkin is attempting to create a point of leverage for alternative types of criticism, in that he is suggesting that far from being a national treasure for the British people, there is the possibility that Shakespeare is as alien to them as he is to people from the colonies (and, perhaps, they would be equally alien to him, if he were around to experience modern British culture), and therefore they have no greater claim to understanding Shakespeare than the people of other cultures. Orkin makes the point, however, that a form of intellectual colonialism still exists, in that the metropolis is less than eager to engage in a form of intellectual trade, so to speak, but would prefer to maintain an intellectual hegemony, in which the status quo regarding Shakespearean criticism remains firmly rooted in Britain and the United States. (Orkin 2005, 3) Orkin emphasizes that there is significance in the location of the reader/actor/interpreter when encountering any text, and as such the diverse readership, in diverse international locations, of Shakespearean texts, should be granted a greater role within the ambit of Shakespearean criticism. In a sense Orkin is still searching for a "People's Shakespeare", first mentioned in his 1987 book.

One of the problems with the notion of a People's Shakespeare is that there is a need to recognize that Shakespearean texts are difficult to understand without expert guidance. The language is strange and the meanings obscure for the modern reader. Many of the characters' names are foreign, and the settings – both in terms of location and in terms of historical significance – often require substantial extra information, in order for students to understand their full import. Because of the complexity of the whole Shakespearean enterprise the problem exists that many people simply get things wrong. The most obvious example is from *Romeo and Juliet*, at the point where Juliet asks: "*Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?"* Because they often do not know the real meaning of the word "*wherefore*", the majority of students – as well as the

ordinary man in the street – tend to think that Juliet is asking *where* Romeo is, when in fact she is asking *why* he is Romeo i.e. a Montague, a member of the family with which her own family is constantly feuding. In this case, allowing the opinion of the majority to dominate the interpretation of the play will simply lead to inaccurate readings and/or understandings of the play. The idea of a People's Shakespeare is fraught with difficulty.

It must be acknowledged, however, that there is a different possibility to be considered. It is possible that any student, on reading any text (including Shakespeare, but not limited to this) may have insights that are unique, or uniquely articulated, so as to provide worthwhile knowledge about that text. In this case Orkin's position is to be valued, because it suggests a range of possible interpretations, from a diverse set of perspectives, which could provide insights into the human condition. To reject these insights because they do not emanate from the metropolis would be counter-productive and against the progress of true academic engagement.

Albie Sachs and a Non-Instrumental View of Literature

During the same time as Loomba and Orkin published their text on post-colonial perspectives on Shakespeare, Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly edited a volume entitled *Writing South Africa. Literature, apartheid and democracy, 1970 – 1995*. (Attridge and Jolly 1998) Of particular interest was a chapter entitled *Preparing Ourselves for Freedom*, written by Albie Sachs. This paper was first presented as an ANC in-house seminar on culture in 1989 (Attridge and Jolly 1998, 239).

Sachs makes the unusual decision to move criticism out of its immediate social context and into a more general critical framework. In other words, he chooses to argue that we should not have a parochial critical mindset, and he justifies this claim thus:

> In the first place, it results in an impoverishment of our art. Instead of getting real criticism, we get solidarity criticism. Our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work, it is enough that they be politically correct. The more fists and spears and guns, the better. The range of themes is narrowed down so much that all that is funny or curious or genuinely tragic in the world is excluded. Ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out, and the only conflict permitted is that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future…
>
> But the power of art lies precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions – hence the danger of viewing it as if it were just another kind of missile-firing apparatus…
>
> What are we fighting for, if not the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our sense of fun and capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world? (Attridge and Jolly 1998, 239-240)

The above paragraphs are of interest, and are perhaps surprising, because they suggest a broader understanding of culture than simply regarding culture as another weapon in the struggle against apartheid; and this from a man who was one of apartheid's strongest critics. Not only this, but there is a sense that literature – as a dimension of culture – should reflect something of the light-hearted, as much as of the sombre business of being important, because such a scope of literature can reflect elements of Dickens, Shakespeare and Fielding, as well as limericks and Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, and this range is somehow more representative of the human

than the narrow conceptions of, firstly, Leavis and the Cambridge School, who seemed to eschew the light-hearted, and, secondly, those who believed that all worthwhile literature should be struggle-related, and somehow act as an impetus toward achieving a post-apartheid society. In this passage Sachs liberates the notion of the text from simply acting as a vehicle of ideology and possible social change. Instead he locates the text within a broad human ambit, concerned, on occasion, with things that have nothing to do with politics.

Central to Sachs' claims is the idea that literature (and other cultural expressions) presents a series of ideas or statements that are not necessarily clear cut – these ideas are located within possibilities of ambiguity and contradiction. This notion of ambiguity and/or contradiction presents us with a possibility of debate and critical engagement, and invites the reader/critic to explore, analyse and question the matter being expressed in the writing. Under these conditions, literary works can provide readers with ideas that challenge social mores and values. If we accept this conception of literature then this poses something of a problem for any social system in which the powers that be wish to engage in a form of social engineering, and who therefore control the texts that are read by the populace. For Sachs, this type of attempt at social control is bound to fail, because the texts themselves are derived from, and contain, points of ambiguity and contradiction, and therefore invite debate. In this guise literature is a powerful tool for raising awareness of social injustice.

For much of the remainder of this paper Sachs addresses three elements which he identifies as being important in terms of the ANC's Constitutional Guidelines. These elements are, firstly, the need to recognize the range and diversity of South African cultures, which he states will be defined by people. Secondly, Sachs is concerned with the need to recognize freedom of expression, which is at least partly a reaction to the restrictive policies of the apartheid government, particularly with regard to freedom of expression. Finally, he is concerned with the need to provide access to all in terms of

education – particularly that of the cultural sphere – and he therefore sees culture as having some sort of socially transformative role. It is of interest to note that Sachs' paper is something of a paradox, because his initial position is a move to reject overtly political elements of culture, yet his final position is strongly linked to the ANC's political agenda.

It is important to note that Sachs shares one view with Arnold, Leavis, Orkin and others, and that is that culture is seen as a social element that holds within it the potential to change society as much as reflecting it. Culture is in some respects, then, a mechanism for engaging with human thinking and values, and the resulting behaviour that follows these values. Critical engagement will lead to an enlightened understanding of the nature of human society, how it is constituted, and how to shift this constitution. At the same time Sachs is a rare figure in that he comments on issues such as reading for enjoyment, or writing for the expression of human emotion such as love. In addition, he addresses the notion of dreaming, which is linked to the idea of having a vision about desirable potential outcomes and how to achieve these. Sachs therefore presents a rich understanding of culture, in that he recognizes it as a system of several dimensions; a broad range of human issues are considered.

David Attwell and Black South Africans' Literary Expression

In recent years there have been further critical pieces on the teaching of English in South Africa, one such example being David Attwell's *Rewriting Modernity. Studies in black South African literary history.* In this text Attwell points out, amongst other things, that the orthodox history of black South African literature in English tends to follow a linear pattern in which oppositions/dualities are established between the expressions and experiences of groups based on racial criteria. However, Attwell asserts that the experience of black people in South Africa is far more complex than this, and the written

expression of black writers expresses this high degree of complexity. There is something authentic about the claims that Attwell makes, in that they provide a perspective of people who are far-removed from the stereotypical, and instead are shaded, complex and ambiguous in presentation – a more realistic reflection of these people, as show below:

> Another reflex of the past has been the tendency to assume that there is really only one story to be told about black literary and cultural history: that of the growth of political consciousness… To be sure, that is not a story that I would want to treat lightly. Indeed, to suggest anything other than that writers have always seen their roles as being about promoting the liberation of their people would be to traduce some of the most important claims of the literature. There are, however, problems with this narrative. Firstly, it is uni-dimensional. The literary history shows writers engaged at a number of different levels, not only the obviously political. There are debates about religion, especially the place of black people in Christianity, about the value of written narrative as a way of claiming historical continuity and identity, about art and aesthetics, about gender, about the value of tradition, about the meaning of selfhood, about the social imagination. (Attwell 2005, 9)

Attwell is suggesting a more layered, textured approach to the study of literature that reflects some of the ideas of Sachs in that the notion of social commentary rooted in a sense of conflict and the need for transformation is softened by the inclusion of other matters that pertain to literature. These matters are further alluded to in Attwell's second point of focus, which is to do with the notion of writing and/or literature as an art form, and the implied creative and reflective process that derives from this.

One element of Attwell's work that takes on a particular significance is the introduction of new theoretical perspectives superseding that of the post-colonialists. He locates his concern within the ambit of the theory of *transculturation*, which was first proposed by the somewhat obscure Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. (I refer to him as obscure because much of his work remains untranslated into English). Attwell comments thus on Ortiz's concept:

> Pratt [a critic referred to by Attwell] defines transculturation as the process whereby 'subordinated or marginalized groups select or invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture'… Transculturation… suggests multiple processes, a dialogue in both directions and, most importantly, processes of cultural destruction followed by reconstruction on entirely new terms. (Attwell 2005 17-18).

Attwell makes the point that Ortiz's concept does not fit entirely well with the broad South African scenario, but he states that there is a good fit regarding black South African literature and the print culture. What is important is that he provides us with a somewhat newer critical position from which to engage with literature. No doubt this position will be followed/replaced by another in a Kuhnian manner, as each successive explanation is found wanting. From this we can only conclude that any theoretical position that we adopt at any given point can only be a temporary response to our attempts at understanding reality. In addition, any teaching methods that arise from such a theory must, by definition, be regarded as lacking in final justification, but they must be asserted as valuable and appropriate in terms of what is held to be true at any given point.

Attwell asserts that Ortiz's work is new, and, while this is the case, it has connections to – or echoes of – a range of issues presented in other theories: power-relations as

reflected in terms of multicultural expression and interpretation, the disunity of society, as well as nuances of post-colonial thinking in his theoretical perspective.

These matters are significant in a society that has undergone a change from the discriminatory practices of the past to the freedoms of a democratic process, and the consequent re-evaluation of the various cultural practices, beliefs, values, and the manner in which these are expressed. The relations between these aspects of culture provide a possibility of interrogation of the society, and the possibility of exploring social transformation, as both objective and process. The issue of social transformation as a central feature of the post-1994 education policies will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: South African Education in the Post-Apartheid Era and the Challenge for Literary Education

In previous chapters I have plotted the development of the discipline of English Studies in both Britain and South Africa. I have identified the various social circumstances that have provided a context to frame the establishment of the discipline, and I have identified and commented on a range of critics and their various theoretical positions, and shown how their concepts and arguments have textured the development of English Studies as an academic discipline.

In this chapter and the next it is my intention to address the development of English Studies in post-1994 South African society. In so doing, I will refer to the National

Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Department of Education 2003) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (Department of Basic Education 2011) which replaces it. These documents will provide points of reference regarding curriculum changes since 1994, as well as providing possibilities for interrogation. The curriculum documents provide answers to the three questions: Why study English literature? What literature should we study? How should we study literature? In considering these documents, I will reflect on the nature of the response to these questions, and consider possible alternatives.

I will also consider the writings and commentary of several critics, in particular Nick Taylor and Penny Vinjevold, and explore their concerns relating to the problems of making policy become applied in the learning and teaching environments of schools. As will be shown, Taylor and Vinjevold address matters ranging from teachers as agents to the pedagogical matters that take place in classrooms. I will begin with Taylor and Vinjevold's work based on research conducted in 1999.

This research, published as *Getting Learning Right* (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999) involved groups of research teams across the country and addressed many elements of education in South Africa. Although the document is now more than a decade old, many of the issues raised are still in need of resolution. One paper authored by Nick Taylor in 2008 and to which I will refer in more detail somewhat later, echoes many of the concerns mentioned in this research document, and supports the idea that the points of concern still require resolution. In particular there is a concern regarding the dearth of teachers' subject knowledge.

Taylor and Vinjevold address education from a broad perspective, but this has significance regarding the teaching of literature as well as other subjects and/or topics, so it has value here.

Taylor and Vinjevold point out that the dominant theoretical position informing teacher training during the pre-1994 period was Fundamental Pedagogics, which was prevalent in South African colleges and universities training Black teachers at this time.

> During the apartheid years it [Fundamental Pedagogics] was predominantly associated with the department of Education at the University of South Africa, by far the largest provider of both pre-and in-service education for teachers, and supported by a number of Afrikaans and homeland campuses. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 132)

Fundamental Pedagogics viewed the teacher as the authority, and the methodology provided little by way of analysis or critique. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 132) This type of teaching process produces a false sense of learning because there is a lack of critical thought even though the work is ostensibly done. The type of citizen emerging from such a process is unlikely to engage in questioning of the status quo or to think critically about matters pertaining to alternatives to given scenarios.

Taylor and Vinjevold draw a distinction between teachers who adopt a professional attitude, and emphasise personal responsibility for their pupils' welfare and outcomes, and teachers who adopt a civil service position, in which the state, rather than the individual teacher, takes responsibility for pupils' welfare. Of course, this does place an extra burden on teachers who teach classes that are excessive in number; there is evidence of classes in South Africa that exceed 40 in number, and some instances of 60 or more.

There are echoes of the De Lange Committee of the 1980s in some cases: Taylor and Vinjevold indicate that many teachers have low levels of conceptual knowledge and a poor grasp of subject competence. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 138) This is a crucial matter. Teachers need sufficient subject knowledge in order to teach their subject; this seems self-evident but Taylor and Vinjevold suggest that it is something that is not taken seriously. In addition, conceptual knowledge is lacking, and this implies that teachers are not aware of the significance of their subject in a broader sense; they have not questioned the value of their subject, nor its true nature, nor how it contributes to the individual or society, nor how their subject is connected to other subjects. Instead, they teach almost mechanistically.

Teachers need to have the knowledge and skill that a four year qualification provides. Superficial understanding of their subject conspires against the whole education enterprise. In addition, such a qualification provides philosophical, sociological and historical elements of education for consideration. The subject knowledge is therefore located in a frame of reference that supports learning. In a later paper Taylor points out that, in research covering 1000 schools across four provinces, after four years of intensive training, no teacher could achieve 100% in a text relating to his/her subject knowledge. (Taylor 2008, 12) This raises doubts about the teachers' commitment to self-improvement, because Taylor points out that teachers are not working through the relevant books and learning material required:

> ...[E]ven a desultory reading of the many books available... would take them to higher levels of knowledge than those [achieved]. (Taylor 2008, 12)

The claim that the teachers did not engage in any form of learning, even of a "desultory" kind, suggests that this group has no interest in improving their subject knowledge through work. Taylor's comment is therefore disturbing, in light of the fact that these

same teachers would expect their pupils to show elements of commitment that they themselves evidently lack.

There is also evidence of teachers not providing the possibility of children engaging in discovery, building on prior knowledge, or working in groups. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 42) In addition, “teacher talk” dominates many classes. Teacher talk, however, is not in itself a problem. The nature of the learning interaction in these conditions can still be very fulfilling. An example is given of a teaching monologue in which the children are described as enraptured at the teacher’s story-telling skill and humour, and there is every indication of the children understanding the work covered. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 143-144) A narrow understanding of methodology is counter-productive. The notion of “learner centred” classroom practice has led to a rejection of “teacher talk” – even though there is, as Taylor and Vinjevold indicate, a place for this type of engagement. Clearly the nature of the learning and teaching process should include a range of possibilities.

Although these matters were investigated by Taylor and Vinjevold in 1999, and would therefore seem dated, Taylor revisited these issues in 2008 and showed that they still have relevance. He provides evidence that traditional “chalk and talk” methods are successful in ensuring that work is covered adequately and appropriately. (Taylor 2008, 13) This is not a rejection of the “learner centred” approach that has been championed by many, but rather an acknowledgement that previous methods do also work, and in some cases are more effective than the newer methods. In all cases the role of the teacher, and the roles of the pupils, need to be clearly defined so that they understand what is required and how to proceed.

Taylor and Vinjevold express concern regarding the structure and development of lessons, in that many lessons do not address higher order skills. Many teachers simply

provide information without engaging in critical or analytical processes. In addition, there is a dearth of real world examples, and therefore authentic learning is not evident. Teachers tend to follow a formula in their teaching practices; “teacher discourse remains stolidly in the procedural”. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 148) This all echoes the Fundamental Pedagogics approach mentioned earlier. In addition, this type of approach would not be endorsed or supported by any of the critics mentioned in earlier chapters. Although the Cambridge School, Raymond Williams, and Martin Orkin all approached literature from different perspectives, they all embrace a high degree of critical and analytic process, even though they would tend to disagree about many points. The non-critical approach to teaching, mentioned several times by Taylor and Vinjevold, is a problem for all the theorists mentioned. Such an approach is, in fact, counter-educational; it undermines the basic notion of learning and teaching, because nothing more than superficial learning is encouraged by this approach.

One of the central concerns regarding teaching practice is the poor management of group work. Group work frequently involves teacher disengagement. “No mediation or meaningful support was provided”. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 150) As a consequence, group work in which the group was not monitored could frequently descend into joking or playing or some other non-task-related activity. The “learner centred’ approach of the curriculum has increased the possibility of group work, and, therefore, has resulted in more children drifting off the task than would be expected, and therefore not receiving reinforcement of learning through the teacher’s direction and monitoring.

A further point made by Taylor in 2008 is that the pace of working through the curriculum is painfully slow. There is a sense of progression that lacks urgency; the movement from one topic to the next remains steady and unremarkable. To add to this, there is also the problem that the ideas presented to the pupils tend to be of lower order thinking. (Taylor 2008, 16) If the material and its presentation involved challenging

concepts, and critical thought, then the slower pace would be more understandable, because there is sometimes the need to spend time grappling with ideas. However, this is not the case, according to Taylor, and the slow pace is therefore simply another problem with the teaching, in that it directs learning inappropriately or insufficiently.

Taylor and Vinjevold make the point that policy can only be made manifest through the teachers, who have agency in the teaching and learning situations. “Teachers are the key to interpreting policy visions”. (Taylor and Vinjevold (eds.) 1999, 21) The notion of teachers as agents is significant because it recognises the essential role that teachers play. Documents stating curriculum policy are mere words on paper, but these concepts need to be enacted in a teaching and learning community. The divide between the policy and teaching practice is problematic, because it also suggests that, if the curriculum changes, and new policies are introduced, these too will be doomed to failure at the point of practice. I address this point in my final chapter, in which I discuss the role of the teacher as a professional, as opposed to a civil servant, and I consider the teacher as a figure who can make choices regarding teaching and learning, and who can bring about change as a consequence.

In their 1999 work Taylor and Vinjevold address language matters specifically and devote a chapter to this matter. A central concern is the multilingual aspect of our society, and it is to this that I will now turn my attention. In doing so I will make reference to various critics as well as the problems of language education located within a curriculum that includes structures such as Home language, but does not appear to acknowledge that, in practical terms, the classroom environment is not homogenous.

Prior to the democratic era in South Africa the education system was divided into sections that were racially defined, as well as along provincial lines. (De Lange, 1981) The racial divisions were in keeping with the apartheid principles of the government of the time. Following the 1994 elections a new integrated system of education was introduced and as a consequence students followed a single national system.

Assessments would be standardized; even though there were different examining bodies such as the Independent Examinations Board and the Department of Education, the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12) examinations require the approval of Umalusi, which is the national qualifications authority.

Despite the fact that there is one national curriculum and racially-defined curricula have been rejected, there is still one element of language study that provides a point of differentiation. The curriculum is structured to allow the study of a language as a Home language, or a First (or Second) Additional Language. This differentiation derives in part from the multilingual nature of South African society.

The difference in the curriculum regarding the study of Home Language as opposed to the Additional Languages is a matter of degree. The various elements – oral, writing, literature, and language structure – are all present, but the degree of difficulty of the work is not the same. The nature of the critical engagement required at each level has some similarity, but the work is less demanding in the Additional Language scenario.

The matter of Home Language learning as being of significance is recognized in the NCS, and researchers such as Vinjevold and Taylor have also commented on this. Indeed, the De Lange commission of the 1980s also made reference to the value of Home Language learning; in essence, the research overwhelmingly supports the idea that students should first be competent in studying in their Home Language before learning another language, and, in addition, it is best for students to learn in the Home Language whenever possible. (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, 216)

There is, however, a more significant issue to consider in dealing with the Additional Language scenario. While there is no doubt that these categories have value, the

situation encountered in schools is more complex. In any given classroom situation there is likely to be a mix of language abilities. A class will, in all likelihood, comprise a mix of Home Language and Additional Language students, and these students will be studying in a language medium in which they have varied abilities, therefore making the teaching and learning process more challenging. This is further complicated by the range of abilities within each language grouping. In other words, it should not be assumed that all students who are working in a Home Language classroom are by definition of similar capability simply because they are categorized thus. Furthermore, the most competent First Additional Language students could be more competent than the least competent Home Language students, thus blurring the divisions between the categories.

A further complicating factor is the matter of the medium of instruction; the language of teaching and learning in any given school is determined by the school community. (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, 212) Therefore it is entirely possible that a student will find him/herself in a situation where English is taught as a Home Language and IsiZulu is taught as First Additional Language, even though the student might regard his/her Home Language as IsiZulu, and English as a fourth or fifth language. It is possible that any official languages might be chosen as Home and First Additional languages if the school community deems this acceptable.

This complexity of language competence conspires against any neat solution to the challenges regarding teaching literature in South African English classrooms. The language diversity presents a problem that is not easily resolved. Teachers of English in South African schools must therefore acknowledge that they are unlikely to encounter uniform groups of language learners in their classrooms.

The English language and its associated cultural expressions, including literature, have a significance in South African society that goes beyond the matter of demographics. Heugh points out that English is fifth on the list of Home Languages, in terms of usage, but it is by far the most frequently recorded First Additional language. (Heugh 2007, 205) In addition, English has unusual significance in that the best-selling daily newspaper – The Sowetan – is an English-medium paper. (Heugh 2007, 205) This evidence suggests that English has significance in our society that goes beyond the Home Language group. Furthermore, Mesthrie and Hromnik point out:

> It is generally accepted, meanwhile, that parents, both black and non-black, overwhelmingly prefer English as the language of learning and teaching for their children. (Mesthrie and Hromnik xiv, 2011)

This comment is of interest because, together with the statements from Heugh, it presents English as a sort of linguistic Holy Grail in South African society. Despite this there is no indication of the degree of commitment these people feel regarding the cultural expressions of English. To be able to read, write, and converse in English might be sought after, but there is a great difference between that and choosing to study *King Lear*. In a society in which English as a medium of communication is desired, there is little indication that English literature is equally valued.

Taylor and Vinjevold point out that some parents opposed mother tongue instruction because they regard it as a relic of apartheid, in that the government of that time differentiated pupils according to these labels. Consequently parents are suspicious of this policy, even though scientific research supports the idea of mother tongue education. (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, 220) A final point on this matter is that teachers themselves regard English as a language whose mastery will bring power. (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, 221)

There is one additional point that Taylor and Vinjevold present, and it is the mismatch of abilities between teachers and pupils. The multilingual situation in South Africa results in a range of languages manifesting in a classroom, and the teacher him/herself is part of the diversity. This is made even more problematic in dual-medium schools in which pupils are grouped according to particular language abilities, and, because of the school demographics, one class ends up as homogenous and the other classes end up with mixed language groupings. (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999, 221) The homogenous group tends to perform better, especially if the teacher is an effective communicator in the language of the group. The number of official languages in South Africa suggests that this matter will not be easily resolved. In addition, children who are inclined to adopt English as their medium of communication suffer the difficulty of learning a second language effectively, and also distancing themselves from their family and social grouping, including moving away from values and expectations located within their tradition social grouping. There is an echo here of Hoggart's experience when he moved from an illiterate family situation into a world of literature, and thereby lost some connections to his family.

Taylor and Vinjevold present many issues that are broad matters that apply to the school environment in general, including primary schools and topics such as literacy and numeracy. As such, their material does not directly consider the issues that I have identified in this thesis. However there are several matters that apply to education in general and that have significance for the teaching of literature. If teachers in general seem poorly educated and lacking in subject knowledge, it can be expected that this applied to teachers of English literature. Whilst there are, without doubt, teachers who have subject knowledge that far exceeds the requirements of the subject, there are also many teachers whose knowledge is poor.

If there are, as the evidence suggests, so many English teachers with poor subject knowledge, then all the suggestions and comments made by the critics from Mathew Arnold onwards have little significance in that the level of the higher order thinking required by these critics, and regarded as essential, will not be achieved if the teachers are of such mediocrity that they are unable to direct their pupils in terms of critical thinking about literary texts. Before the teachers are able to engage in producing lessons and material of critical and analytical significance, the teachers first have to be capable of doing this. In other words, their subject knowledge and teaching methods need to be of a higher standard than is indicated in the Taylor and Vinjevold work.

The work of Taylor and Vinjevold is of importance because it identifies the broad issues within which the teaching of English literature at secondary schools takes place. There is a lack of subject knowledge and teaching skill in general, but clearly not all teachers fall into this category. There are obviously well-qualified teachers who are capable, but these contrast strongly with what appears to be the majority. Because of this there is a differential element in teaching, in which some children experience markedly better teaching than others.

Before moving to a detailed consideration of the curriculum documents in the next chapter, I will consider one of the founding principles of the South African curriculum in the post-1994 ERA, namely is social transformation. It is unlikely that effective social transformation can be achieved in a system where teaching knowledge and ability is so uneven, and where so many teachers seem to lack the required competence. At best these teachers can direct a form of mechanistic reading and superficial interpretation of texts, and this falls short of the sophisticated notions of citizenship and cultural exploration that the critics presented in previous chapters have addressed.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Grades R-9), the National Curriculum Statement, and the CAPS document – Underlying Principles

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for the FET derived from the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R-9. The documents share the same broad underpinning concerns, indicating the nature of the envisaged society through stating the nature of the teachers and learners, as well as presenting brief statements about significant social processes such as transformation. There are some differences, however, which include: the movement away from six Learning Outcomes to a shorter list of four. Listening and Speaking, which are presented as separate entities in the RNCS are linked together into one Outcome for the NCS. In addition, the Outcome termed Thinking and Reasoning in the RNCS does not appear in the NCS. It is logical that this should be the case, because Thinking and Reasoning is surely something that occurs in all of the other Outcomes; it is implied in Outcomes such as Listening and Speaking.

Other minor differences include the somewhat higher intellectual demands placed on the pupils in the classes. In addition, there is a sense of progression and development from the RNCS to the NCS – the higher grade levels require greater levels of difficulty, and more complex and more challenging work, and there is the sense that aspects of the NCS are built on existing knowledge gleaned from the RNCS.

The broad dimensions of the NCS include as a central feature the notion of social transformation, and in this case very specifically an attempt to address the social fragmentation brought about by the legacy of apartheid (DoE 2003, 1). This issue derives from the South African constitution of 1996. Other matters of concern in the NCS include human rights, inclusivity, and environmental and social justice, as well as the valuing of indigenous knowledge systems. There are other matters such as the

principles of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), but I will not address these aspects in great detail. Two broad aspects of the Curriculum that deserve some commentary include the Critical Outcomes, and the Developmental Outcomes, which are stated below:

> The Critical Outcomes require learners to be able to:
>
> ■ identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
> ■ work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
> ■ organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
> ■ collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
> ■ communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
> ■ use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
> ■ demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
>
> The Developmental Outcomes require learners to be able to:
>
> ■ reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
> ■ participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
> ■ be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
> ■ explore education and career opportunities; and
> ■ develop entrepreneurial opportunities.
>
> (DoE 2003, 2)

With reference to the Critical Outcomes, it is evident that there is a need for children to work together (bullets 2 and 3) and develop shared engagement and shared responsibility. Bullets 4 and 5 emphasise the need for critical, analytical thought, and also the significance of language. This usage of language is broadly stated in terms of communication – it is at a later point in the NCS that the notion of literature is mentioned.

In the Developmental Outcomes there are two bullets (numbers 2 and 3) that have significance for this thesis. The first of these identifies the need for citizens of a particular quality, and the second refers to cultural and aesthetic elements of our society, which includes literature, as well as art, music, and architecture.

Broadly speaking, the NCS accommodates the matters of this thesis. The notion of citizenship, mentioned above, is addressed by critics from Matthew Arnold to Martin Orkin, but, as was made evident in preceding chapters, the understanding of what constitutes good citizenship varies significantly between the critics. This is linked to the notion of social transformation and the idea of developing a post-apartheid society which eliminates the divisions of the past. There is, however, a sense of idealism in the conception of a society in which previously created schisms have been eliminated in terms of official policy documentation. Prominent divisions that are likely to remain include class, language grouping, religion and gender, amongst other things. These points of difference need to be acknowledged in any consideration of social transformation or citizenship. Part of the difficulty lies in the matter of acknowledging diversity and at the same time emphasizing similarity or unity.

The issue of citizenship is addressed by Martha Nussbaum in her book *Cultivating Humanity*, which was mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis. Nussbaum explores the role of the humanities, including the teaching of literature, as a possibility for addressing

the changing nature of American society, particularly with regard to the various groupings that make up the society. Whilst the USA is ostensibly a democracy, in that adult men and women have the right to vote, Nussbaum comments that the right to vote is important but not sufficient in terms of full participation in a democratic society. It is necessary, as an addition, that citizens should be informed and critically reflective about the choices available to them. This involves an intellectual engagement with values and beliefs held by individuals, or espoused by a society, and an exploration of the conditions of existence of groups who might exist on the margins of society. In both the USA and South Africa these groups have included, at various times, women, people of particular race groups, immigrants, people whose home language is not part of the hegemony, and people of a minority religion. For social transformation to come about, and for full citizenship to be granted to people who fall into these categories, notions of power-relations and agency must shift. To achieve this involves a significant shift in how these groups are viewed by the dominant group, and this will involve a revision of the values and beliefs that establish dominance and subservience.

Reading literature in an analytical way can be part of the process of consideration of values as they are expressed in cultural form, but it is unlikely that this can bring about change on its own.

This issue of transforming a society after a period of social disruption is not unique to South Africa. The Newbolt Committee, mentioned in the earlier chapters of this thesis, dealt with Britain in a post-World War One situation, and identified the need for unifying the nation as a matter of significance. In that case English as a subject of study was seen as a unifying topic, but in South Africa English as an academic discipline is somewhat different because it is a language or discipline that has a mixed legacy; it is a language associated with colonialism, but also the language used by many critics of colonialism, apartheid, and social division to voice their dissent. This somewhat

complex set of social relations is not a central concern regarding the study of English literature in South Africa, but should nevertheless be acknowledged.

Part of the issue about the role of English in South Africa includes Mike Kirkwood's concern with "Butlerism", mentioned in an earlier chapter. Guy Butler regarded English speakers as a group located, so to speak, in the middle of the political spectrum, between the Afrikaner-dominated apartheid government, and the disenfranchised black population. Butler saw English speakers as playing a mediating role in South Africa, and associated the language and culture with a liberal perspective. In doing so he ignored the writers in English who adopted a confrontational position, rather than a mediating one, and who associated themselves by choice with the black population, and who chose to use the language as a form of radical expression, rather than adopting a liberal tone. From this example, which presents the matter briefly, it is apparent that there is no single association of English language and cultural expression in the matter of politics and power-relations in South African society.

English as a colonial phenomenon has some bearing on the Critical Outcome, mentioned above, regarding the valuing of indigenous knowledge in our society. Although English is not an indigenous language, the writings of Paton, Coetzee, Gordimer, Mphahlele, Plaatje and others, are all the products of people born into this society, and choosing, for the most part, South African society as a point of creative and reflective engagement. As such, these writers qualify as expressing indigenous knowledge. However, the literary heritage of these authors includes texts from other countries and therefore there is a connection and articulation beyond the limits of indigenous knowledge. This has significant consequences in terms of text selection for purposes of study, because there is a sense of literary value that is not restricted to local literary expressions. There is a need find a point of balance between the valuing of indigenous knowledge and the narrowness of a parochial mindset.

As can be expected in a document that addresses the broad scope of education in South Africa, there are aspects of the Critical and Developmental Outcomes that consider matters of little significance with regard to English Studies – matters relating to science or entrepreneurial development have little significance in the field of literature, although the issue of scientific knowledge might be useful in addressing the Two Cultures debate. The need for scientific knowledge, and the differences between the sciences and the humanities, provides a point of reflection of some significance, but it is not an essential issue in the study of literature. There is value for students to explore the relationships between the various knowledge systems that human beings have created in order to develop a better understanding for themselves about the nature of epistemology, but it is not a matter of utmost importance.

The Critical and Developmental Outcomes of the NCS therefore provide little in terms of unexpected or unconventional thinking regarding education; students are expected to think critically and analytically about matters pertaining to citizenship, and they are expected to think critically about language issues linked to matters of aesthetics and culture.

The NCS does not provide much in-depth consideration of the various terms and/or concepts presented. For example, the term “culture” is used, but it is not explored in the manner of Raymond Williams in his text *Keywords* (which I have considered in a previous chapter). Instead, the term is used as if it has one generally-accepted meaning, or as if teachers or other language practitioners will read the NCS and broadly interpret the document in the same manner. In a sense the NCS conspires against the very critical and analytical process it claims to support, because the terms used are not interrogated or explained.

The same concern can be expressed about the notions of human rights, inclusivity and social justice. These terms are bracketed together, which is acceptable because they tend to address matters of the same conceptual family. However, the ideas themselves are not presented in any way that goes beyond the most simple/superficial.

Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice

> The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) seeks to promote human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice. All newly-developed Subject Statements are infused with the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. In particular, the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) is sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors.
>
> The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) adopts an inclusive approach by specifying minimum requirements for all learners. It acknowledges that all learners should be able to develop to their full potential provided they receive the necessary support. The intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of learners will be addressed through the design and development of appropriate Learning Programmes and through the use of appropriate assessment instruments. (DoE 2003, 4)

I will briefly address the matter of social justice to provide an example of my concern. Whilst the NCS statement addresses what might be called the gist of social justice, it does not explore the concept to any significant degree. Specifically, no mention is made of the work of John Rawls, nor is there any reference to Robert Nozick, who provided a critique of Rawls' work. I recognise that it is generally the case that policy documents do not make reference to theorists, but in failing to do so there is a consequent superficiality to the statements in the NCS on this topic.

Importantly, if the NCS document is intended to direct teachers, or those who wish to be teachers, into interrogating these underpinning concepts, the assumption is made that either (a) the teachers will interrogate the concepts themselves – which seems unlikely, or (b) the teachers will be directed into such an interrogation either because they explore these issues during their initial training, or as a result of professional teacher development programmes/workshops run by the state or some other authority.

These foundational concepts are significant in that they direct the education process into considering the sort of society to which we aspire. However, there is a gap, so to speak, between coming up with broad ideas about the desired society, and the nature of the literary engagement that will help to being about this society. In addition, Jonathan Jansen, the well-known South African educator and commentator on a broad range of social issues, makes several points about the weaknesses or problems with the OBE curriculum. Firstly, he points out that social transformation through the curriculum is unlikely to succeed. (Jansen 1999, 149) He argues that there are too many elements to classroom interaction to lead to a change in society; the system of order and organization in a classroom is a system in which people function, and this approximates the greater society. This system is unlikely to be transformed, in that order and authority will not be challenged, and therefore transformation on a larger scale is unlikely.

A further point made by Jansen is that there is something undemocratic about a process in which outcomes are set by external authorities before a process of learning is begun; the outcomes are not set by the people involved in the process, but rather by other parties, and this might be anti-democratic. (Jansen 1999, 150) If this is the case, the system itself is not modelling or endorsing notions of democratic process. Teaching concepts such as democracy, as conceptualized and presented in literature, or presented in another way, is not supported by the process of learning. An additional point, and the final one which I will consider here, is that OBE trivializes content. Jansen makes the point that “children do not learn outcomes in a vacuum”. (Jansen 1999, 152) The issue here is that there is a need to consider contexts of learning, and to locate the learning in a context in which that which is learned is not simply something abstract. In

other words, to give an example from literature, the notion of a theme, or a character, is considered in the context of a particular piece of writing, not in an abstract manner. Locating the theme in a piece of written material grants that written material a degree of authenticity or texture that makes it more easily understood, more easily and effectively examined and critiqued, and more easily recalled.

To return to the NCS, there is greater detail in the document at the point where various intentions or outcomes are stated in a structured and sequential manner. The various modalities – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – are all addressed. The studying of literature is located in the Outcome entitled Reading and Viewing, and this will be dealt with in greater detail later in this chapter.

Despite the fact that issues such as social transformation, social justice and inclusivity are addressed in a somewhat superficial or cursory manner, there is arguably some value in including these elements in the curriculum. They remind us of the previous dispensation in which matters of human rights and social justice were decidedly absent. They direct our thinking towards the possibility of creating a better society than the previous one; in the new system children have the possibility of attending school in which lessons are located within a process of addressing the injustices of the past, even though several of the underpinning issues are not explored or presented in any great detail in the NCS.

The difficulty with the NCS at a conceptual level is that it seems to present an image of a society which is unitary, in that there is a sense of one shared set of values, and social division or ambiguity is relegated to a point of insignificance. There is reference to diversity, but it does not engage with the possibility of divergent value systems, and the consequence this has for education. Notions of social transformation are framed in terms of redress regarding the institutionalized discriminatory processes of the past. Because of the nature of apartheid policies, the issue of racial discrimination tends to dominate the matter. However, there is also the matter of discrimination according to class, gender and religion. In attempting to deal with this range of issues relating to

social transformation, the architects of the NCS are constrained by the complexity of the matter at hand, and therefore resort to statements that fail to explore the various topics in a manner that is satisfactory.

In considering the issue of social transformation, it is notable that there is an echo of Romanticism here, and the opinion of Sir Isaiah Berlin has significance. The creation of something new implies the destruction of that which preceded it. The rejection and destruction of apartheid ideology can only be applauded, but there are aspects of the curriculum from that period which reflect content and competencies that are strongly linked to English studies as a discipline. This content includes a range of authors and literary works that can contribute to a nation's education.

Texts that were taught prior to 1994 include *The Crucible*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Animal Farm*, and various Shakespeare works (both plays and poems), amongst others. As Orkin pointed out, it was not so much the inclusion of Shakespeare's plays that were a problem for the critics of apartheid education, but rather the way in which they were taught. In the post-1994 period the texts that were used in the past have significance, and can be included in the curriculum, but the methodology would be required to change. This is an adaptation of Berlin's concern about Romanticism, in that some aspects of change would be introduced, but some elements of the past would remain. Apart from the change in methodology, there would also be a change in the underlying philosophy of how society should be organized. The same texts would be taught to all children across the society, thereby rejecting the institutionalized divisions of the past.

A point of concern regarding the matter of social transformation and the teaching of literature is that not all critics are in agreement about the possibility of social change. Harold Bloom, as has been mentioned before, discards the possibility of social change, and emphasises that reading (and the implied academic study of literature) is a solitary activity, and the possibility of changing society through prescribed reading is negligible. The people who drafted the NCS do not seem to subscribe to this idea; they emphasise

the significance of social change, and the possibility of using education – including the studying of literature – to achieve this.

In this chapter I have considered the broad teaching and learning background to education in South Africa, and I have shown that there is a problem with regard to the teachers in terms of their knowledge and their methodology. In addition, I have explored the underpinning features of the post-1994 curriculum documents. In the next chapter I will explore the documents in greater detail with regard to the teaching of English literature. I will consider the issue of Outcomes as well as exploring the matter of assessment, amongst other things.

Chapter 7: Literary Education and the Curriculum in the Post-1994 Era

In the previous chapter I covered several matters pertaining to education in South Africa in general, as well as matters pertaining to English and multilingualism in South Africa. The issues were located in research conducted in the post-1994 South African society, and some points were made about the lack of teacher knowledge and poor methodology in schools since the democratic era.

In this chapter I will consider the curriculum documents that have emerged since 1994. I will explore several aspects of these documents, with reference to assessment policies and practices, as well as the fundamental ideas underpinning the curriculum. I will make reference to the work of Jonathan Jansen, and Nick Taylor and Penny Vinjevold in my exploration of the curriculum documents.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Grades R-9) and the National Curriculum Statement – English Studies

The NCS considers the teaching of each subject in some detail. In the case of English Studies, there is a series of pages that address the specific nature of the various desired outcomes: Listening and Speaking, Reading and Viewing, Writing and Presenting, and Language. The teaching of literature tends to be located in the outcome of Reading and Viewing, although outcomes such as Writing could also be part of the learning process – for example, a student could be expected to write a response to a question about a literary work. The Outcome Reading and Viewing has a sub-text which states the following: *The learner is able to read and view for understanding and to evaluate critically and respond to a wide range of texts*. This is a broad understanding of the nature of reading, and it emphasises the critical faculty, but does not emphasise the notion of reading for personal enjoyment. The main focus is on analytical or critical intellectual responses.

It must be noted that the outcome of Reading and Viewing is not only conceptualized in terms of the study of literature. The notion of reading is applied to all types of text. Reading literature is therefore regarded as a sub-section of reading in general. Reading could refer to the reading of newspapers, magazines, literature (poetry, prose, and drama), users' guides for appliances, correspondence of a formal or informal nature, recipes – in fact, anything that is a text using writing to communicate. The same is true of viewing; whilst feature films are certainly part of what is studied, the activity of viewing also applies to advertisements, cartoons, and logos – anything using visual elements to communicate.

The study of English literature, therefore, is subsumed under a broader topic, which is somewhat problematic because English studies as conceptualized by all the critics in the previous chapters tends to be focused almost exclusively on literature. The blending of texts in terms of genre and purpose under a general heading Reading and Viewing reduces the significance of literature, even though there is a specific mention made regarding various literary genres on pages 27 and 29 of the NCS document. There is a need to differentiate the types of texts for reading in the curriculum documents so that each is granted a degree of specificity of purpose as well as style and lineage.

With regard to the teaching of Reading and Viewing, I will address matters pertaining to Grade 12, but it should be noted that the Grade 10 and 11 matters are close approximations of those that apply to Grade 12, according to the NCS. In addition, as I have already mentioned, the RNCS has elements to it that provide foundations for the grade levels that follow. The Assessment Standards, which state in bullet form what is expected from students, run from page 24 – 29 of the document with regard to Grades 10-12. They are too detailed to address in their entirety and therefore I will not consider specific examples. Because Reading and Viewing deals with all types of text, not every statement is appropriate for purposes of literary study.

In considering the statement: “analyse the effect of a wide range of figurative, rhetorical and literary devices” (DoE 2003, 25) it is evident that there is a lineage back to the Cambridge School, particularly the work of Richards. The statement supports the process of close reading of the text and the notion of exploring images and use of language to establish meaning. There is reference made only to the text and no concern is expressed regarding the context of the text. The sense of internal referentiality is indicative of the approach of the Cambridge School as well as the American New Critics, although I have indicated at an earlier point that the Cambridge School was not, as is often supposed, entirely disengaged from notions of social or cultural context. However, the Cambridge School did have a tendency to focus on the text to a significant degree, and that is clearly what is intended.

The concern with the use of language in order to generate symbolic meaning implies a close reading of the text and attention to the details of the text. There is value in this because knowledge of the text is a central requirement in the study of English literature. However, there is a need to go somewhat further. It is of little value to be able to identify similes, metaphors and other symbolic or figurative language usages if they are to be regarded as valuable in themselves. In other words, the knowledge that some use of language is a simile because, as is frequently stated by teachers, “it is a comparison using like or as”, is of little significance. Knowing whether some element of language usage is a simile is only part of the engagement. There is a need to explore the meaning in terms of the relationship expressed through the use of like or as, and a need to assess the validity of the usage, and the effect that this usage has on the reader. Mere identification of a type of figurative language usage has little point.

If we consider the issue of figurative language in terms of the effect it has on the reader, there is a consequence that goes beyond the text itself, because the reader brings to the interpretive process a sense of personal history, values, beliefs and knowledge of language based on previous encounters with this type of language usage. Under these conditions the text is located within a social or cultural space that echoes Raymond Williams’ concern with language usage in his book *Keywords*.

The consideration of figurative language is a significant matter, particularly for followers of the Cambridge School. It is in addressing (and assessing) the use of such language that much of a literary work's worth is established. In an earlier chapter I identified Leavis's judgement of Byron, Shelley, and Keats; Leavis deemed Keats the greatest of the three, and he based this judgement essentially on the ability of the poets to create images of significance. Keats' images captured some essence or provoked some insight that the work of Shelley and Byron lacked, in Leavis's opinion, although that will, of course, be located to a large degree in the field of opinion and interpretation. The notion of interpretation includes within it the basis for an argument, in which assertions are made and evidence for these assertions put forward.

The point of addressing the matter of figurative language is therefore of far greater significance than might initially appear to be the case. If a reader is to deal with figurative language in a way that goes beyond mere identification or definition of a particular figure of speech, there is the acknowledgement of the need for a more comprehensive consideration of the implied meaning. This more comprehensive consideration includes the likelihood of developing an argument about the nature of the figurative language, and its effectiveness, and this implies a substantial intellectual engagement.

There is a need to recognise that the application of the NCS will depend on the ability of the teacher to direct the pupils in terms of their intellectual engagement regarding the literature at hand. If the teacher is ill-informed about the material, then the possibility of such a teacher providing appropriate direction to the pupils is likely to be compromised. The teacher's own education and training is therefore a crucial aspect of the process of applying the principles of the NCS in a successful way. Teachers who have rudimentary knowledge and/or skill will provide an education environment that is substantially reduced when compared with optimal levels of delivery. This comment links to the points made by Taylor and Vinjevold in the previous chapter, and emphasises the need for teachers with high levels of subject knowledge and appropriate teaching methods.

Another statement in the Assessment Standards is that the pupils are able to “analyse and explain the socio-political and cultural background of texts”. (DoE 2003, 25) This statement locates the reading process within a broad social frame of reference and therefore provides a set of insights that derive from matters such as groupings according to class, gender and religion. There is value in this approach because the social perspective beyond the text has value. Critics such as Hoggart, Orwell, Williams and Eagleton would argue strongly in favour of this approach, because the texts would therefore not be seen in an ahistoric, neutral dispensation, but instead would articulate with the social context in which they are read, as well as providing insights into the social context in which they were produced. Critical engagement of this nature uses the texts as conduits of information about the society in which they are read or produced. The text provides the possibility of reflection with regard to the understanding of social circumstances, and the associated possibility of change. The problem with this, as has been expressed in previous chapters, is that the literary works become reduced from works of value in themselves, to works which have value because of points of application in society. In this instance the texts become a sort of sociological study rather than literature.

In many instances, however, the socio-political or cultural background to the text provides insight into the text. For example, protest poetry in South Africa was created because of a given social context. Orwell’s *Animal Farm* arose out of a concern regarding the author’s perceptions of social institutions. Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* is a literary work that has aspects that are clearly a comment on human society and the nature of humanity. In these cases, and many others, there is value in the texts because of the insights that they provide. At the same time these insights are expressed in a manner which requires literary interpretation. The expressive manner and the interpretive ability of writer and reader respectively shift the nature of these texts into a realm beyond that of social science.

The matters I have identified and commented on immediately above are echoed in statements from page 27 of the NCS; these points focus on the issues of values and bias.

The matter of values is significant because it informs what we regard as important in society, and how we are likely to behave. By exploring and critically analysing the values of others, or our own values, it is possible for a reader to question his/her own actions, as well as the actions of others. The second matter, bias, is a reflection of how some authors or critics will favour a particular position in their writing, when there is no valid objective reason for such a stance. The ability to identify and explore the notion of bias in the reading process is significant because it provides an insight into power-relations as well as authorial intention. This interpretive process operates at a level that is not superficial and requires analysing a text in a sophisticated way. This requires a form of close reading, in which semantics and syntax are considered, and word usage is interrogated to establish nuances of meaning. A similar matter is the establishing of authorial tone, and this requires great levels of sensitivity to word usage, in order to interpret accurately what the author's expressed attitude is to his/her subject.

The notion of bias is often associated with interpreting political positions expressed in newspapers or other media – bearing in mind that this outcome, Reading and Viewing, includes texts beyond literary works. However, it is not limited to non-literary texts. The ability to detect bias in written expression is a quality that requires critical and analytical competence. Being able to detect bias, and becoming aware of power-relations, allows the reader to make informed decisions. This fosters greater degrees of citizenship in the sense that a citizen would be expected to be reflective, critical, engaged, and informed about processes governing society.

Further matters raised on page 27 of the NCS involve points that address the study of literature in terms of literary features. The various genres are identified: novels/short stories, poetry, and drama. The standard features or aspects of literature are identified,

including plot, conflict, themes, and setting. These are standard issues in that they appear in many textbooks and are generally acknowledged as significant.

The issues of theme and characterisation are of importance because they relate to human actions and personal qualities; for example, themes such as ambition and appearance versus reality occur in *Macbeth*, and the text provides insights into these themes and locates them in the human condition for consideration by readers. These and other themes, therefore, provide us with the possibility of enquiry relating to human attitudes and actions, and they invite judgement of the characters in the situation. This is an important engagement that holds within it inherently moral concerns, and provides us with insights into ourselves and others. The shared humanity of the characters and the readers provides a point of human interaction that leads to the possibility of the reader judging the actions of the characters as good or bad. This moral codification of the characters' behaviour is a model or parallel of our human world, although it can be accepted that the reader can identify the literary world as artificial and human-made, and lacking absolute authenticity. However, even in a world of incomplete authenticity, it is possible to develop an understanding of and empathy for characters.

There is something of a minor problem with the elements or features of literary texts as presented in the NCS and identified above. These features can be taught or addressed in a mechanistic way – teachers could teach these features in a tick-box fashion, making sure that the students have the information that is needed to pass an examination, rather than reading in a more organic way, in which these features are identified so as to illuminate or provide insights into a text. This is not to say that matters like plot and theme are invalid; they are valid, but teachers can direct learning about these matters in a variety of ways, and in some cases there is a mechanistic element to the process of teaching. There should be a critical, analytical approach to the interactions between aspects such as plot, character, theme and setting. An appreciation of the subtleties of these interactions provides a heightened understanding of the literary text. To recognise subtleties requires a high degree of familiarity with the text under consideration.

It is through addressing matters such as themes and characterisation that it is possible to consider matters of social transformation. By considering the themes in a novel or play, it is possible to engage on an intellectual, critical level with matters that have social significance. This process could lead readers to reflect on their own actions/behaviours, or their own beliefs.

It is not credible to accept that students who read a literary work will experience an "Aha" moment and undergo a fundamental change of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour as a result of reading. However, if the reading process is part of institutionalised learning, and the teacher directs the students to consider particular issues, and the issues are elaborated in a situation of learning, in which debate is foregrounded, then it is possible that the issues might have a social consequence, in the sense that at the very least an awareness of the issues has been established. There is no guarantee that any individual reader will react in the same way as another, even if themes and other literary features are addressed rigorously, and as a consequence the role of literature as a facilitator of social change is not entirely convincing in terms of the NCS conceptualisation.

I have covered several aspects of the NCS and will now move on to a consideration of the CAPS document which is part of the NCS revision of 2011. (DoBE 2011)

The CAPS document does not make use of Outcomes as a form of organisation, so the Critical and Developmental Outcomes of the earlier NCS are removed. In their place is a series of Aims, and terminology and concepts similar to the previous NCS document are evident. There is still an emphasis on citizenship, social transformation, and human rights. (DoBE 2011, 4 and 5)

One element that is foregrounded again is the notion of inclusivity. The document envisages a system in which "all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity." (DoBE 2011,

5) Something which is both a barrier to learning and an example of diversity is the range of languages in South African society. English is an official language but it is not the most frequently spoken Home Language. It is, however, the most frequently spoken First Additional Language (Heugh 2007, 205), and English Studies as a discipline is therefore supported in South Africa.

As was the case in the earlier NCS, the teaching/studying of literature is located within a broader spectrum of learning – the matter of Reading and Viewing. Again literature is regarded as being one of several types of text. The lineage of English Studies is obscured as a consequence, bearing in mind that the discipline arose out of a literature-focused curriculum in Britain.

The CAPS Document

The CAPS document follows the NCS in that there is a similar reference made to "Features of texts". (DoBE 2011, 25-27) Plot, theme, characterisation and other features are all presented much as in the previous document.

The main difference between the NCS and the CAPS document occurs on page 12 of the latter document. It is here that several paragraphs entitled "Approaches to teaching literature" are presented. There are several good teaching strategies, such as reading as much of a literary text in class time as is possible, and the value of class discussions and written responses in relation to the literary work.

One contentious issue, however, is the claim, made on page 12, that literary interpretation is essentially a university-level activity. This assertion does not acknowledge that many students in Grades 11 and 12 have developed the critical and analytical skills that will allow them to achieve significant results if granted the opportunity to engage in literary interpretation. In addition, any engagement with a text that requires some sort of intellectually rigorous response is a form of interpretation; answering questions, or discussing the text, is part of this process. In addition, on page

40 of the CAPS document there is information regarding the expected length of literary essays in Grades 10, 11 and 12. What is a literary essay if not a form of literary interpretation? Typically, a literary essay will involve a student writing a response in agreement or disagreement with an assertion posed by the teacher. The essay is dependent on references to the content of the text to support an argument. This is clearly a form of literary interpretation, and this suggests a form of internal dissonance in the CAPS document itself.

A second matter of concern is the rejection of line-by-line analysis, which, the document states, destroys the subtleties of the language usage. Whilst there is some validity in this claim, in that a text should ultimately be regarded as a whole, careful reading often requires a line-by-line analysis. If a teacher were to direct the studying of a metaphysical poet's work without considering the content, not just line-by-line but word-by-word, it is entirely possible – or even likely – that the poem will be poorly understood by the reader. Line-by-line analysis is therefore useful, and at times necessary, in dealing with particular types of texts. It is inappropriate simply to discard the method because it might seem to hold the potential to destroy wholistic meaning.

A guiding principle for the teaching of literature in the CAPS document is that studying literature should be regarded as pleasurable rather than a chore. It is admirable that this aspect of literature study should be mentioned, and it is the case that internally motivated children, who gain pleasure from an activity, are more likely to continue to read once they have completed their formal schooling. However, English Studies is an intellectual discipline and, as a consequence, has weighty and significant elements to it. Purposeful rigorous engagement with a text is an important element of the discipline, and this is an altogether different matter from reading for pleasure (which holds within it the notion of engagement in a leisurely way). Possibly the notion of pleasure can include the sense of intellectual success when grasping a difficult concept, and the sense of development/evolution of self. However, there is within the notion of pleasure the idea of superficial intellectual engagement, and that would not be central to the notion of an academic discipline of any standing. The critics from Arnold to Leavis and

beyond engaged in a process of intellectual rigour and systematic, logical thought in order to establish the discipline as academically acceptable. Whilst it is clear that Raleigh, Quiller-Couch and others enjoyed their literature, the notion of pleasure is too self-involved and too self-serving to be regarded highly in the field of academic endeavour.

The other central feature of the CAPS document is an extensive set of weekly plans that are suggested as a model to indicate sequence and progress in each of the grades for the weeks of the year. The model is merely a guide and not a prescription. Whilst there is value in providing such a model, in that it will act as a guide for inexperienced teachers, or teachers new to the CAPS document, it is not entirely helpful. On several occasions it indicates that the suggested work is “Literary Study”, but provides no further details. Literary study could mean anything from close reading to a written response to a text, to discussing themes, and characters in class. The planning aspect of the CAPS document is therefore strange, in that it is specific (there is work for each week) but it is also vague (the work is not detailed enough).

The main difference between the earlier NCS and the CAPS document is that Outcomes have been discarded. For the rest, however, the document still requires a teacher or group of teachers to interpret it for best classroom usage. The section on “Approaches to teaching literature” provides a series of good ideas, but they are no better than the type of teaching strategy that is covered in English methodology courses at institutions of higher learning.

This brief overview of the NCS and CAPS documents provides an interesting view of the role of teaching literature in South African society. It is clear that the curriculum designers envisage an overtly social role for all elements of education, and they regard social transformation as a paramount issue. Bearing in mind that the curriculum is meant to serve a society that suffered institutionalised discrimination for an extended period of time, this is not an unreasonable concern. However, how this is meant to be achieved in the field of literary education is never quite made evident. There is an

uneasy mix of text-related matters such as close reading, and the need to address matters of a broadly social nature. In addition, I have already voiced my concerns about a system that is mechanistic in approach – in other words, literature is regarded in an instrumental way, in which reading a particular text will bring about a change in a particular way. I have doubts about whether this type of engagement is possible, although I do acknowledge that some element of change can be brought about through raised awareness as a consequence of directed reading of literature.

Nick Taylor (Taylor 2008, 13) comments on the value of a range of styles of teaching. He points out that a mixed methodology to suit a range of circumstances is best. He uses the term palette to suggest the range of styles that can be selected and used. However, the subtle difference in pedagogy styles will depend on the teacher's ability to interpret the requirements of the situation and apply an appropriate manner of teaching. The point here is that no single method will necessarily work in all situations, and effective teaching requires a teacher who is able to alter or vary his/her methodology to suit the situation.

Assessment in the Post-1994 Curriculum Documents

The introduction of the new curriculum in South Africa schooling during the late 1990s, with various revisions in the 2000s, included a revision of the manner in which assessment was conceptualized and practiced. The notion of Continuous Assessment (CASS) introduced a range of assessment practices that had a bearing on school-based assessment. (DoE 2003, 49)The RNCS, NCS and CAPS documents all identify several types of assessment with specific purposes:

Baseline assessment, in which a teacher establishes what the existing level of competence and knowledge is;

Summative assessment, in which competency and knowledge at the end of a learning process is established;

Formative assessment, in which feedback derived from assessment opportunities acts as a monitor and support for learning;

Diagnostic assessment, in which particular conditions affecting learning can be identified – to discover the cause or causes of a learning barrier. (DoE 2003 48)

An additional form of assessment is systemic assessment, in which the assessment system or process is critically explored in order to ensure that it provides the appropriate sought-after information relating to the children's competence.

From the above it is clear that the notion of formative assessment is significant in terms of teaching methodology in that this process is regarded as facilitating learning. (DoE 2003, 48) Such a process would include regular assessment opportunities, and each would provide significant feedback to the student in order to identify points requiring correction and also providing information regarding possibilities of improvement. (Maree and Fraser 2004, 34) The notion of formative assessment includes the idea of several assessment tasks spaced out over the period of the learning process, and the associated feedback or commentary to the student in order to direct the learning process. This type of assessment has value in that it conceptualizes learning as developmental and progressive.

Associated with the notion of CASS is the practice of portfolio work as a form of assessment. Typically portfolios are used to represent a student's achievement over a period of time. This achievement is based on a select number of pieces of work across a range of categories in the subject. The portfolio at Grade 12 level in English contained representative examples of written pieces – creative and transactional writing – as well as other material such as Preliminary Examinations and Tests. The portfolio in English was introduced as a replacement for the examination paper intended to assess creative and transactional writing (Paper III).

The value of the portfolio was that the work assessed was more representative of a student's ability than a single test or examination written at the end of the year. The portfolio provided a range of assessment opportunities and presented an indication of progress of learning over a period of time. However, there were some difficulties associated with portfolios, and they included the need to ensure that some of the work was produced under controlled conditions, where necessary, and the need to ensure equivalent standards between schools. Cluster moderation was one way to ensure that various schools agreed on the allocated marks for a set of assessments, and thereby endorsed the assessment process pertaining to those assessments and those schools.

As part of the process of the new curriculum, rubrics were introduced as instruments of measurement in assessment. In essence a rubric is a grid that identifies criteria for consideration in the assessment of a task. The degree to which a student satisfies the requirements for each criterion is located on the grid in terms of a set of descriptors, and the descriptors are each associated with a mark or a narrow range of marks. (Maree and Fraser 2004, 215)

Rubrics are provided to students before they are assessed, so that they are given the opportunity to understand, in some detail, how they will be assessed. (Maree and Fraser 2004, 216) This provides a more directed task than previously occurred, in that the students are provided with information regarding the criteria against which their performance will be measured.

Rubrics, however, are not without their difficulties. For example, even though there is a descriptor regarding each level of achievement, there is still an interpretation regarding the degree to which the task achieves this level. In concrete terms, one such criterion might be: "The essay sticks to the topic." The degree to which this might be regarded as being achieved will vary from teacher to teacher. In addition, criteria reflecting stylistic

quality in students' writing will also be open to interpretation. As a result, the standardization of assessment practices is unlikely to be achieved through rubrics. Despite this, rubrics have value because they identify criteria for assessment and provide some sense of the level of achievement required for each criterion, and from this a final mark can be established.

Apart from rubrics, which can be used in assessing student writing including literary essays and oral work, there is the possibility of using memoranda as part of assessment. A marking memorandum is frequently used when a series of questions requires specific answers. Although there is a higher degree of specificity of question and response in memoranda than in the case of rubrics, which by their nature tend to be more general, this type of assessment is still open to a degree of interpretation.

The issue of variation in assessment relating to teacher interpretation of students' responses is largely addressed by moderation processes. Moderation can be internal, in that it takes places within a school environment, and involves the members of the English department, or it can be external and involve other schools in the community. In the case of internal moderation a selection of tasks that have already been marked are moderated by the teachers in the department, and the Head of Department oversees the process. External or cluster moderation follows a similar process, in which a selection of tasks from each school are moderated by the teachers from the cluster. The moderation process can also include a selection of tasks being sent to a higher administrative authority for national moderation.

One of the claims frequently made about OBA is that it differs from what is termed the "traditional" system of assessment (Maree and Fraser 2004, 13).There are some problems with this perspective including that there is an implication of assessment as being uniform across the country. However, whilst there were undoubtedly schools

which used an assessment process in which only one assessment opportunity – the final exam – took place, there were also schools that practiced a form of assessment that involved a series of assessments across a range of difficulties, and testing a range of skills. This type of assessment was intended to direct learning during the course of the year. In addition, prior to OBA, marking grids approximating rubrics were used to assess essays of both creative and transactional writing as well as literary work.

One of the major differences that has been introduced in the OBE system, and which has a consequence for assessment, has been the move away from the various grade levels – Higher Grade, Standard Grade, and Lower Grade. These different grade levels had different purposes. Higher Grade subjects tended to prepare a student for tertiary education, whereas the other two required a lower degree of academic ability. For example, Higher Grade students were required to write a literary essay in their final exams, whereas Standard Grade students were required to write responses of approximately three-quarters of a page, and Lower Grade students were required to write responses to short questions. Apart from the length of the essay, the literary essay required a greater level of complex thinking, and the demonstration of greater insights, than the other types of assessment. Significantly, the literary essay required a higher degree of argumentation than the other types of response. This literary essay approximated the requirements of the tertiary level essay, in that the features would include an introduction, body and conclusion, and a position would be adopted relating to the topic. The position would be required to be explored and developed through a series of statements about the text under consideration, and each statement would be supported by evidence taken from the text.

There is no longer a division of subjects into the strata of Higher, Standard, and Lower Grade, although they were part of the initial introduction of the OBE system, and they remained as part of the system into the middle of the first decade of the 21st Century.

The notion of Continuous Assessment (CASS) is not entirely supported by the assessment process in the NCS/CAPS policies. The largest weighting regarding assessment tasks is located in the final examination process. The assessment completed during the year does have significance regarding the final outcome, but this work represents 25% of the final mark, indicating that the system still values the end of year examination(s) as the most significant factor in determining results. The role of the oral assessment is somewhat different, however, because it is regarded as part of the examination process, but takes place during the course of the year. The actual weighting of the marks if therefore somewhat more in favour of the work covered during the year, but the oral mark is still regarded as an examination.

A further point to note is that the curriculum, and the associated assessment process, does not focus narrowly on literature as the sole concern of English. Instead, there is a focus on literature, but also the matters of grammar (language structure and use), writing, and oral work. Despite this broad understanding of the subject, the study of literature is granted a large portion of time, and is regarded as a significant element of the subject.

The Choice of Literary Texts for Study in Grades 10-12

The NCS and CAPS documents provide a rationale for English Studies, and present some matters relating to methodology. There is, however, only a limited indication of the texts to be selected for study; only genres are mentioned: novel, poetry, and drama. The selection of texts for purposes of study at Grade 12 level is made by the Department of Education.

In the years following 1994 the selection of texts for English Studies became standardised. In Gauteng there was a period of more than a decade in which *Macbeth* was taught as the text for drama, and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* was a prose work

that remained on the prescribed list during the same period. These texts have now been replaced, but instead of choosing to introduce fresh material, the selection panel opted to select a choice of one of two plays for the drama text: *Othello* or Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (a rather bizarre set of options, because the plays are not comparable in so many ways, and the notion of a standardized learning experience is doubtful as a consequence). The list of novels from which one is to be selected is: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. It is difficult to understand how this choice came to be made – the texts are from different periods, in different styles, of different lengths, and deal with different matters. Time alone would be a factor in choosing – *Animal Farm* is by far the shortest of the three options, and will be most easily read in class. Apart from being the longest by some margin, Austen's work is also the most demanding in terms of language usage.

Despite claims to recognise the value of indigenous knowledge in the NCS and CAPS documents, there is no South African novel or play included in the list. Obvious possibilities include the works of Gordimer and Coetzee, and other possibilities include Schreiner, Plaatje, Paton, and Galgut, amongst others. If the concern is the need to include more recent works, possibilities include choosing one of the memoirs of Chris van Wyk's childhood in Riverlea – an exploration of the material conditions of the previously disadvantaged, and well-written. Another alternative would be one of South Africa's recent award winners – for example, *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, recipient of the European Union Literary Award. In previous years Gordimer's *July's People* was studied, and in recent years Coetzee's *Disgrace* was an option in the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) list of texts. The IEB has been more innovative than the national body, in that the IEB selects new texts for study every two years. In addition, they provide a choice of either a text from the canon or a more modern text. The practice of changing texts every two years does place a burden on teachers, who have to develop new material for teaching, but there is the advantage of not becoming moribund because of teaching a text as a task of mere repetition.

The principle of introducing alternative texts for study on a regular basis is a good one in

that it will provide teachers with possibilities of new engagements with texts, and foster intellectual and critical development, as well as professional development in terms of innovative material creation. In addition, there should be a text of South African origin on the list. If this does not happen we are in danger of finding ourselves in the situation of Guy Butler in 1956, when he proposed the inclusion of South African Literature in the university curriculum and received a lukewarm response. The debate about the significance of South African literature was resolved years ago, in favour of the inclusion of examples of South African literature for purposes of study in English. There is a need for panel selectors to address this matter and introduce South Africa texts for study in South African schools.

I recognise that the prescribed books do not determine what is to be studied in the earlier grades of the FET – in other words, teachers and/or schools are free to select literary texts for study in these grades, and would therefore have the right to choose South African authors if they so choose. Whilst this goes some way to resolving the difficulty I have mentioned above, it does not do so entirely. There are texts of South African origin that are good enough to be studied at Grade 12 level, the point of exit from High School and often regarded as the year that is most important in terms of providing access to tertiary levels of education, or the world of work. By moving such texts into the lower grade levels we are granting them a less significant status than the prescribed works for Grade 12. Of additional significance is the point made by Taylor and Vinjevold to which I alluded in the previous chapter – many teachers are not well-informed about their own subject, and many English teachers would simply teach what they have taught before, either because they cannot think of new alternatives, or because it is easier to remain in the same cycle of teaching and learning.

There are echoes of Matthew Arnold and the Oxford and Cambridge Schools in the broad understanding of literature as expressed in the NCS and CAPS documents. This is evident in the focus on values and the notion of citizenship – Arnold's claim about good literature bringing about a positive change in the reader is associated with these

ideas. The Romantic notion that initially motivated Raleigh is present in the idea of social transformation.

Most prominently, the influence of the Cambridge School is evident in much that is presented. Whilst Leavis's concern with authentic English culture as located in a pre-industrial world is missing from the documents and would indeed seem out of place, the focus on close reading and the analysis of texts is clearly derived from the world of practical criticism.

The Cultural Materialists and Williams' concerns expressed in *Keywords* also have an influence on the way in which the teaching of literature is conceptualized; this is evident in the concern for literary matters that are framed by the issues of diversity, and the need for social transformation. The notion of social transformation is a central theme throughout the curriculum documents, and is not entirely explored. The notions of social transformation associated with a liberal perspective are different from those associated with a more radical perspective. The Cultural Materialists are more aligned to the latter, in that they source much of their theory from the left.

In light of the claim that social transformation is a central feature of the curriculum, the general appearance of the documentation is surprisingly conservative. The matters of citizenship, and developing knowledge of subject content, would be present in any English Studies curriculum of the previous decades. Matters such as plot, theme, and characterization appear in textbooks dating back to the 1980s. This is not to suggest that matters of this type should not be taught. Instead, I am suggesting that these matters tend to retain a central significance in English Studies irrespective of the system of education that is in place. Essentially, whether a text is being studied in a pre-1994 era or a post-1994 era, certain features of literary texts will remain the same. How these features will relate to society will differ, but matters like plot will generally not vary in

different socio-political situations. The features of a text can be identified and interpreted according to theoretical principles, but the features themselves remain.

The idea of English Studies in South Africa is strongly rooted in the traditions and disciplines that derived from Britain, and there is little indication that this will alter significantly in the near future. There has been an adaptation of British notions of English Studies to suit the local socio-cultural environment, which is entirely appropriate, but the main process of literary critical engagement is clearly derived from the ancient British Universities; the South African process and the British process are clearly of the same family.

The one element that seems different is the matter I have addressed at various points throughout this chapter. The rationale for studying English literature is not entirely the same in the UK and South Africa – broadly speaking, in the former there is a strong sense of national identity and cultural cohesion, whereas in the latter there is a sense of critical engagement to explore power-relations and the possibility of social transformation through culturally defined processes.

English Studies is a subject that provides insight into power-relations, colonialism and hegemony in South African society. It is clear from the material covered in Chapter Four, which dealt with the initial establishment of English Studies in South Africa, that English as a language was imposed on the population in the early 1800s. The language was associated with a range of cultural elements, including the establishment of schools, and later, universities that followed the British model.

However, whilst there is a British heritage of sorts in South Africa, including the literary expressions of Britain, South Africa is not Britain. South African society might share

certain features with its British counterpart, but there is also a great deal of difference in terms of values, customs, rituals, and beliefs– in essence, whilst there is cultural similarity, British culture and South African culture are different things.

In this frame of reference English literature in South Africa has a different significance from that of the UK. There is an intellectual and critical lineage that links to the UK, but there is also a critical heritage deriving from South African intellectual engagement that provides particular insights into texts of British or international extraction, as well as texts of local origin. This process of intellectual engagement is not simple or unidirectional in nature – it is a complex process that crosses cultures and provides points of agreement or difference between and about the constituent parts of culture, and how these shift or become more firmly established through these various interactions.

Whilst South Africa has a literary critical heritage that derives to some extent from Britain, South Africa is not, and should not be, a custodian of British culture. British culture provides some sources of South African culture, but the creative, analytical and critical processes in the former British colony are contributing to the development of an evolving culture. South African literary critical debates are part of this process and should be entered into by the national education authorities, so that the teaching community engages with the teaching of a selection of literary works that reflect both the British heritage and the local cultural environment. I am not proposing a radical overhaul of the list of texts selected for study, nor am I rejecting the existing processes or methods for teaching; instead, I am proposing that the existing texts become part of a somewhat larger pool of texts for teaching literature, and that the South African literary community is well-presented in this selection.

With regard to the notion of social transformation, which is a central feature of the NCS and CAPS documents, there are various points to be made. The injustices of the past, based largely on racial lines, still resonate strongly in South African society, and this is understandable. However, in terms of the work of David Attwell, stated in the previous chapter, black culture and black identity should not be understood in terms of race alone. There are other issues such as gender, religion, and language grouping, and these require acknowledgement if the diversity of black South African culture is to be appropriately conceptualized and explored.

One aspect of this notion that needs consideration is that if South African cultural experiences are to be defined in racial terms ("black culture"), then there is the danger of the notions of racial divisions retaining a high level of significance in South African society. Whilst it would be naïve to assume that all of the cultural spaces in South Africa can meld into one, there is the need to acknowledge something broader or bigger than racial groupings in South African society. This larger space provides the possibility for transcultural engagements, and literary works could be part of this process, and provide insights and points of contention or debate with which the community can grapple. It is unlikely that all parties will agree about all the matters under discussion, but the opportunity to engage in such a process is a refutation of the previous dispensation who denied the value of certain cultural expressions, and marginalized certain voices because of institutional racial discrimination. The larger cultural space I have mentioned is one way in which literary works could be studied in an effort to bring about the desired social transformation.

It is important to acknowledge that the NCS and CAPS documents provide us with an understanding of the education possibilities in FET phase English classes. However, the notion of social transformation is something that will remain in the realm of policy unless actions are taken to realise the policy as lived experience in our society. The people

who are crucial in facilitating this process of policy to reality are the teachers, and it is about them that I will make my concluding comments.

The issues presented in the NCS require a significant level of skill in teaching strategy and subject content knowledge in order to be realized. Teachers who have content knowledge of the subject matter that they are required to teach will provide a more profound, coherent, complex and thought-provoking process of learning. For example, if the text is a Shakespearean play, the ability to cross-reference aspects of the play to other Shakespeare plays may be an advantage, because there is a heightened sense of the connections and allusions in literature, and a greater sense of the author's body of work. Based on this, teachers need to have a substantial knowledge of the subject matter and should probably have two years of English as a university subject (a sub-major) at the very least. Three years would be better, of course, but two years would be acceptable.

In addition to this, there is a need for a course in English methodology, to ensure that student teachers learn various possibilities about how a subject should be taught. Whilst the NCS is useful, in that it mentions things such as plot and conflict, there is a need for more complex knowledge about these terms. A superficial engagement will not promote optimal learning possibilities. Importantly, I believe that part of this methodology process should make reference to the matters I have dealt with throughout this thesis; there should be an acknowledgement of the history of the subject, and an indication of the shaping of the subject through the various social forces at different points in time. In other words, the subject should not be presented as if it exists in a neutral space. In a sense I am suggesting an acknowledgement of Graff's notion of the Culture Wars, and Nussbaum's ideas about how various beliefs and attitudes have shaped behaviours in diverse communities. The importance of the literary work as a text should be emphasised, and the context of the text should also be a central feature of such a course. These various matters will inform student teachers about the complex nature of

the task at hand, and it will empower them in the sense that they will be able to make informed decisions about how to approach the material they wish to teach. Another important point is that teachers who are educated thus will not find themselves bound to one curriculum, so that when the curriculum is modified, as it inevitably will be, these teachers will be able to critique the new/modified curriculum and apply their own knowledge to contribute to its success.

An important matter here relates to the notion of teachers as professionals, as opposed to teachers as civil servants. If teachers are expected to deliver a curriculum simply as a sort of package, and go through a list of tasks to be completed, the subject is treated in an instrumental manner and insight and profundity is lost in the administrative melee. Clearly this sort of engagement does not facilitate learning of any significance and something better is required. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Taylor and Vinjevold have written extensively about the lack of appropriate knowledge and teaching methods in many South African schools. In particular, they comment on the "civil servant" approach that is evident in a large number of teachers, in which the teachers themselves do not take responsibility for their students' learning, but see it as a responsibility of the state.

In addition, there are examples such as this, from Taylor's 2008 publication, that raise matters of concern:

> In only 8% of language classes… were learners seen engaging individually with books. The most common form of reading in these classes consisted of teachers writing 3 or 4 sentences on the board and then leading the reading of these, with children following in chorus. (Taylor 2008, 18)

The above example is from research in Khanyisa, in which the teaching and learning practices of grade 3 classes were studied, so it cannot be claimed to be a true reflection of the FET level, since the grade level is different. However, there is little to suggest that this type of educational engagement will not happen at different grade levels; this type of practice appears to be part of the culture of many schools in South Africa. Based on this information it is clear that the task of teaching and learning English literature in South African schools is fraught with difficulty, and these difficulties are of a different type from those envisaged by the Cambridge School or the New Critics, who seemed to be committed to a process of learning that was essentially an intellectual one, rather than the socio-economic problems that beset South African education.

Despite the example given above, as I have stated before, there are teachers who have the required knowledge and methodology to engage in teaching that reflects critical and higher order learning. In my consideration of the teaching of English literature, it would appear that teachers who are properly educated, in that they have relevant degrees or equivalent qualifications, and who have subject knowledge, as well as knowledge of how to teach, should be granted the opportunity to act professionally and make decisions and judgements about the nature of their teaching in their given situations. Because teachers with the requisite skill levels and subject knowledge levels engage with material, it is acceptable that they use these levels of competence to be effectively involved in the decision-making processes of the various Grade levels. It is entirely acceptable that teachers of Grades 10 and 11 should select the texts to study for the classes they teach. At Grade 12 level it is necessary that all teachers and students work with/through the same texts in order to establish standardised assessment opportunities.

In a situation where the society embraces new democratic freedoms, it is appropriate that teachers with appropriate qualifications and/or experience be granted significant involvement in the decision-making process regarding what and how to teach. These

individuals have knowledge of their specific situations, in terms of school culture, as well as knowledge of their communities, and are therefore able to make informed judgements about how best to create and manage an English studies programme in their own environments. The notion of one curriculum document narrowly prescribing what needs to be studied, and in what order, for an entire nation, is a very restrictive and limiting understanding of education. Instead, the NCS and/or CAPS documents should be regarded as general statements of what should be covered, and the teachers in each specific school should be granted some discretion about how to bring about the desired aims. This will empower teachers and provide them with the space to be creative and critically engaged, and grant them, to some extent, a sense of self-determination regarding the realization of the curriculum.

These final points are of significance because they address the issue of social transformation is a somewhat different manner. Instead of attempting to transform South African schooling through rigid statements of purpose and process, I am suggesting that, by enlisting the participation of teachers who are qualified and experienced, it is possible that the curriculum aims can be more effectively achieved.

The comment I have made above is in keeping with the nature of the society envisaged by the NCS and Caps. The need for social transformation, including the issues of social justice, human rights and inclusivity, can be well served by the inclusion of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers in the decision-making and implementation process of the presentation of English Studies in the South African education system, particularly High Schools.

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