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ENGLISH AND ENGLISHNESS: A CULTURAL
HISTORY OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN BRITISH
HIGHER EDUCATION, 1880-1980

By

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ABSTRACT

It is argued in this thesis that, contrary to much previous work on the subject, the history of English Studies in higher education is not best understood in terms of the emergence of a mature form of academic activity which has since continued to develop through time on the basis of the unity of its object ('English literature') and of its mode of study ('literary criticism'). Instead, this history examines the conditions which allowed the initial emergence, specification and delimitation of the new academic discipline of 'English Language and Literature', and the sequence of subsequent institutional and discursive modifications and transformations which brought about substantial alterations to the field of study.

Through a series of case studies of the English Association, the Newbolt Report, the Review of English Studies, and of the diverse tendencies which have characterised the discipline since the nineteen-forties, it is argued that 'English Studies' must be analysed as an entity not having any single or consistent fixed centre. It is further shown that within the variable discursive and institutional articulations which have characterised English Studies as a field of activity, account must be taken of a much wider range of objects and relations than can be encompassed within 'literature' and 'criticism'; in fact, the discipline is shown to have been just as concerned with, for example, approved modes of communication, and Englishness.

The thesis examines the specific historical conditions under which such objects and issues were brought into mutual relation through the establishment of full academic disciplinary status, the installation of an integrated career structure and professional norms, and the development of a distinctive documentary field, set of professional associations, range of pedagogic activities, and mechanisms for the selection of students.

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INTRODUCTION

The research of which this thesis is the outcome was initiated on the basis of a perceived state of crisis within the academic discipline of English Studies.¹ English was assumed to be a traditional field of academic study of some antiquity, and the crisis was taken to have arisen as a result of challenges to the use of the discipline for undemocratic and inegalitarian purposes. In sum, at the outset the crisis was located at the level of the ideological superstructure which had come to be imposed upon a traditional field of study. The research, thus, began as a project to deconstruct this ideological superstructure by showing how and why historically the study of literary texts had come to be used for ideological purposes. However, a number of problems immediately arose. For a start, the 'traditional' status of English Studies was discovered largely to have been internally constructed within a discipline whose distinctive history reached back no more than a century. Furthermore, crises of one kind or another seemed to have been endemic within the discipline from the start. It also proved impossible to separate out an 'ideological' superstructure which was at some point imposed upon English Studies, since the very conditions of the discipline's existence could not easily be distinguished from ideological operations. In any case it was far from clear what the 'non-ideological' study of literary texts might involve. Even more fundamentally, initial research revealed that 'the study of literary texts' offered a far

from exhaustive description of the nature and contents of English Studies.

At this point the work of Michel Foucault² was drawn upon as the basis for taking the initial methodological step of suspending all the apparent unities associated with English Studies. On this principle, 'English' or 'English Studies' could not be assumed to exhibit in advance of research its essential characteristics as a field of activity. Instead, 'English' might initially be taken as a convenient label for what Foucault calls 'a population of dispersed events',³ whose extent, character and modes of relation it would then be the task of the research to chart. Of course, within (and beyond) the discipline the terms 'English' and 'English Studies' were themselves clearly active components which helped to shape discursive and institutional practices. Indeed, on the basis of active conceptions of the nature of 'English', sets of reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules and institutional forms had historically been established and constantly reproduced. Nonetheless, the initial suspension of given unities immediately released for description and analysis the very processes of unification which had given rise to such active conceptions in the first place. In fact, in the course of the research it soon became clear that 'English' had not always articulated a field of discourse in a singular manner. For example, it was discovered that until the third decade of the present century the new discipline of 'English Language and Literature'

took as its theme a uniform national spirit of which certain approved linguistic and literary modes were assumed to offer a reflection. Subsequently, however, many of the same constitutive elements were rearticulated to sustain and reproduce an autonomous academic field of specialised 'English' scholarship. Much disciplinary activity now came to be concerned with establishing an identifiable body of texts linked to a pantheon of authors. Also, from the 1920s, English began to take as its theme an expressive 'literary' function which was guaranteed and qualified by the exercise of 'critical judgement'. The charting and analysis in detail of the disjunctions and mutations through which the field of articulations known as 'English' had moved over the century since its inception as a discipline of higher education therefore became a central aim of the research.

As Chapter One indicates, such an emphasis on discontinuities and rearticulations proved to be at odds with almost all previous work on the history of the discipline. Commonly, the history of English Studies has been assumed to take the form of a progressive evolution towards increasingly satisfactory modes of critical study of the texts of English literature. This common perception raised the question of whether 'English', when conceived in terms of such an evolutionary history, should be analysed merely as a retrospective label or grouping by means of which the contemporary discipline has deceived itself about its own past. On the evidence provided in this

thesis, this indeed proves to have been the case; at least until the most recent crisis within the discipline released for examination a more complex and contradictory formation. Nonetheless, the accepted view of English in higher education which emerged from the historiographical review was that at a certain point (whether in the 1890s or 1920s) a form of academic activity had been established which then continued to develop through time on the basis of the unity of its object ('English literature') and of its mode of study ('literary criticism'). Against this accepted view, initial research revealed that not all statements on 'English literature' could be included within the field of 'English'. Even more significantly, 'English literature' proved to have been far from the only object addressed within English Studies since, in various articulations, its objects have also included (for example) the English language, national identity and Englishness, human being and quality, approved modes of communication, 'good' writing, and so on. Furthermore, no singular notion of 'literary criticism' could encompass the disciplinary modes of operation which have brought into relation such diverse and dispersed themes as the nature of a national culture, of acceptable linguistic practice, of qualitative education, or indeed of intelligence and taste, professional excellence and methodical scholarship.

The attempt to find a system of coherent concepts which offered a unifying principle for English Studies proved no more satisfactory. Perhaps this is hardly

surprising given the degree of consistent refusal within the discipline of any discussion of theoretical concepts. At the same time, it proved difficult to doubt that English had been characterised by specific ways of knowing and understanding. However (in contrast to the sciences) the discipline has rarely sought to extricate such modes of knowledge from patterns of signification or modes of subjectivity. Thus, the conditions of the unity of English appeared to reside somewhere other than at the level of singular objects, procedures or concepts. It was for this reason that the research came to focus upon the conditions (of formation, existence, coexistence and modification of ways of knowing, signifying and distributing subject positions) which gave rise to the apparent unities within the discipline. As a consequence, the emergence and specification of the 'Englishness' of English was initially prioritised over 'literature' and 'criticism'. This inevitably drew the research right back to the earliest emergence and specification of English as 'a language' and as 'a people'. An account of this work has been offered elsewhere,⁴ but for the present purposes the important feature to identify is what may strictly be described as a wide cultural process of 'Englishing'.⁵ From the sixteenth century a range of activities (cultural, political, economic, institutional) were applied systematically to the construction of the first truly national British ruling class. This involved the 'Englishing' of modes and relations of communication whose authority and delineation were

increasingly distinct from those associated with 'classical' and other 'modern' non-English modes and relations. From the earliest emergence, 'English' thus articulated a field of discursive relations between specific written and verbal practices and a ruling authority which was national (in altering senses) and pedagogically prescriptive. However, it was only with a major rearticulation of this field in the course of the nineteenth century that 'English' eventually came to be constituted as one among a number of new academic disciplines. This is the historical moment with which the present study begins. It will be argued below that, given the extent of the discursive and institutional transformations of this moment, the specific relations which characterised the new discipline represent a major shift from anything which had formerly been articulated as 'English'. In general, then, it is with this emergent field, its constituent elements, its internal and external relations, and its subsequent modifications and transformations, that this thesis is concerned.

Chapter Two shows that, in its emergent state, the relations within this new field must be understood in terms of wider articulations between nationality, education, a conception of English literature specialised to imaginative writing (reflecting the national character), and of the English language expanded to a wider national dimension (approved modes of literacy, both written and verbal). In fact, the invention of the new academic discipline of English Studies is shown to have depended not only upon a complex articulation between these objects, but also the

infusion (in varying degrees) of normative rules associated with art, manliness, personal maturity and responsible leadership, urbanity and general knowledgeability.

Both Chapters Two and Three provide case studies in the delimitation and orientation of the new discipline, which, under the authority of an independent English Association and a department of state (The Board of Education) resulted in the construction of an extremely ambitious and wide-ranging policy programme, the parameters of which are most comprehensively articulated in the Newbolt Report (1921). However, as is detailed in Chapters Four and Five, the internal constitution of English Studies as a professional academic discipline which was established in the interwar period, was determined by a very different set of relations. This will be seen to have involved the progressive separation of the academic discipline from national cultural policy and schooling, lay authorship, publishing and the literary marketplace. Within this altered field of relations, English was able to offer a unique discourse of its own (to which only fully-qualified academic professionals had access) from within legitimated institutional sites and with the support of a specialised documentary field (in the forms of its own learned journals, rather than the earlier pamphleteering of the English Association). Chapter Four provides a detailed analysis of this new documentary field as articulated in the interwar Review of English Studies, the first British professional journal of academic English Studies. The Review is

examined, not as an ideological manifesto or an unfolding 'big book', but rather as a site within which mutual dependencies making up the discursive field of the discipline at this time are available for inspection. The discursive strands within the journal reveal a practical interpenetration between what was learnt and how deductions were made, between what was postulated and accepted as probable, and between scholarly subjectivities, styles of enunciation and the specification and delimitation of acceptable modes of knowledge.

The final Chapter is both longer and more comprehensive, while at the same time more obviously incomplete, than any of the earlier ones. This is the necessary consequence of attempting to encompass all of the major changes within English which have taken place since 1945. Such homogeneity of object, scholarly practice, institutional form, mode of professional communication and association, and personnel (both staff and students) as had previously characterised the discipline, has been dispersed with increasing rapidity across a whole new range of significations, subjectivities and knowledges, under pressures of growth and diversity of academic institutions and career structures, new cultures and literacies, and powerful new political initiatives at the level of education and culture. Under such pressures, English Studies has been subjected to contradictory demands to account for itself in terms of new conceptions of national needs and interests, and to forge new relations between education, culture and

democracy. It has not, however, been possible to give adequate attention to all of the amazingly diverse currents which have been active within and around English, especially since the 1960s, and especially outside the traditional universities.⁶ It is to be hoped that such detailed work will be forthcoming in the near future. However, the present research will have achieved its aims if it has successfully mapped the outlines of a history of a complex field of activity, and made this history available to a discipline which has not previously been notable for confronting its own past.

Finally, it should be added that a research project of this kind would not have been engaged upon without the expectation, or at least hope, that work on the history of English Studies would offer some strategic links with possible futures. Thus, the Conclusion offers an assessment of what is involved in the practical forging of such links, by drawing upon the material analysed within the body of the thesis. This represents an attempt to delineate the questions which this history necessarily raises for any attempt to construct a 'field of action for "English"'.⁷ While no claim is made that the result amounts to some overall strategy for English Studies, the questions raised in the Conclusion are offered on the basis of the assumption that careful account must be taken of the specific history of the discipline if any effective overall strategy is to be developed.

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CHAPTER ONE

ENGLISH IN HISTORY: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Histories of Literature, Literary Criticism, and Literature and Society

The literature which directly and immediately engages with the history of English Studies in higher education is not extensive, and what there is influences the teaching and study of English to no great extent. Indeed, most students are unaware that the institutionalised discipline has a history at all due to the fact that their nearest contact with this history is likely to come in the form of histories of English literature or histories of literary criticism, both of which tend to erase the shaping force of institutionalising processes. Such accounts, in fact, normally operate on the basis of categories generated from the discipline as it currently stands; or, more accurately, from wider discourses which it is largely a function of the discipline to sustain. These histories, then, are unlikely to yield much in the way of an understanding of the social force of the institution of English Studies, especially since histories of literary criticism treat criticism as a largely self-sustained activity of an unchanging human mind. Such an approach leaves little space for any examination of the major discontinuities that have characterised English in history. English literature (or 'English' as it is more commonly glossed) is simply coupled together with criticism as a self-evident source of activities purported to have a unique

cultural value. Literature within this tradition is the primary focus and is effectively treated as a meta-physical essence access to which is provided through the study of selected authors and their associated works (the texts). 'English' in higher education is seen simply as serving this process and, therefore, as a domain whose history can be narrated as a succession of more or less adequate attempts to guide students to read through the criticism and indeed texts in the interest of a direct response to this final essence. A review of this body of work¹ reveals no great contribution to a history of English in higher education. Rather, it stands as documentary evidence for the centrality of 'literary value' for the practice of English at the present time.

Next to the histories of English literature and literary criticism can be placed the histories of 'Men of Letters', of literary cultures, and of the intellectual background to literary traditions.² Here, while little account has been taken of the shifting history of the category 'literature' there is often to be found more sense of writing as an institutionalised activity. Thus while it is still possible to find versions of literary history based on a sense of literature as a vocation practised with lesser or greater skill by 'craftsmen' rather than 'artists', work of this kind tends to operate at an even further remove from English as an institutionalised academic discipline.

Intellectual histories of a 'background' kind (and here I am including studies of literary cultures, and of the relations between literary genres and 'society')³ place something more of an emphasis on literature as one among a number of phenomena within a larger social and cultural context, and often claim that this wider perspective is essential if the specifically literary aspects are to be made comprehensible. While this is of some help in looking at the disciplinary history, this tradition tends to miss out any concern with literature as a set of social institutions, particularly as placed within the national system of education. This is even true of work on English within the ambit of cultural studies.⁴ Thus, although more attention is coming to be given to the process of canon-building in the sustenance of selected values and qualities⁵ (and even as guarantor of 'value' and 'quality' as such), not much work has ventured beyond this canon (or indeed 'behind' it into a longer past in which the canon was yet to be constructed). One major reason for this failure is to be found in the lack of attention given to the historical construction and transmission of national literatures and languages. As will be shown in detail below, English in education has a broader ambience than that revealed in any set of canonised texts. Its efficacy should be identified more generally with institutionalised pedagogic practices whose significance is crucially determined by the processes involved in the transmission of a national language and

literature through a nationalised system of education. It is worth making the latter point here since, despite the fact that the tradition of literature/society work has more to offer the historian of the discipline than the other work mentioned so far, what is not to be found in this body of material is any extensive examination of the categories 'literature' and 'society' of the kind required for anything like an adequate cultural history of English in education to be written.⁶

One can justifiably conclude from reviewing of this work (which is of the type that most directly reaches students of English in higher education itself) that what it most lacks from our point of view is any sense that the discipline has a history or has been comprised of a variable and institutionalised set of pedagogic practices.

Histories of English in Schools

These criticisms cannot be applied with anything like the same intensity to the work to be considered next. Writing and research which has emanated from a concern with the teaching of English in schools shows traces of the very different cultural forces that have distinguished the history of the School from that of the College. In general, histories of English in schools show much greater concern with institutional constraints, and tend to take the more self-conscious pattern of avowed histories of the present in that they address their histories more

directly to present pedagogic and strategic problems. At the same time, this very difference of history and institutional circumstances means that even the most comprehensive and imaginative work that has been produced on this sector has little obvious or immediate bearing on higher education. However, two important areas of exception to this must immediately be identified. In the first place, this work does provide something of a model (or rather a set of models) of what a history of English in education might look like as a history, which instantly places this writing on a more important plane than that already reviewed. And second, the moment or place at which schooling slides into higher education provides a direct area of contact. Histories of English in schools have had to take some account at least of the ways in which the universities (and, more recently, other post-compulsory institutions) have placed constraints on patterns of English teaching, especially by means of the examination system (an influence which is as old as modern English itself, in that it can be traced back to University of London regulations from the 1840s).⁷

The earliest book to attend to such historical issues was published in 1947. Ian A. Gordon includes a useful summary account of the institutional history which gathers together (albeit with little critical commentary) a number of developments having a direct bearing on the present project. Gordon notes the importance of events in Scotland, particularly from the eighteenth century, which

indicate how even then the teaching of English operated as a process of formal socialisation into cultural norms and practices.⁸ Thus, while in Scotland the emphasis was on acculturation into forms and practices characteristic of metropolitan English 'polite' society, the comparable development of the 'English Subjects' in England during the following century operated as a middle-class challenge to a classically-based upper class academic culture.⁹

For Gordon, the latter process was facilitated by the acceptance of the London University Matriculation Examination as a school leaving certificate; one of a number of processes which ensured by the second half of the 19th Century the move of much middle-class schooling towards an emphasis on the 'modern curriculum' based around the English Subjects. Gordon also mentions, if only in passing, the importance of practices used in the schooling of middle-class girls for establishing the study of English Literature at this time; and concludes his brief 'Historical Retrospect' by noting an 'almost complete acceptance of English as a secondary school subject, largely because it was by now a common subject in the universities' by the end of the century.¹⁰ While it may be doubted whether all these developments can legitimately be grouped together as 'English', Gordon's survey provides a more substantial account of the institutional history than anything (or everything) considered in the first section of this chapter.

More recent work shows the influence of changes in the field of educational research subsequent to the publication

of Gordon's book. Over the next couple of decades a dramatic expansion of educational studies - especially in the sociology of education (and including work on the sociology of knowledge, culture and the professions) - has drawn attention to relations between practical pedagogy, teaching strategies and professional ideologies of a wider kind.¹¹ Thus work has begun to focus on the politics of educational knowledge, the nature of the pedagogic relationship, and the influence of changing patterns of personnel intake both at the levels of teachers and pupils. The moves embodied in the orientations of such work are clearly revealed when a comparison is made between work on English in schools of the 1950s and of the 1970s.

A thesis written by K.W.S. Garwood in 1954 on 'The development of the teaching of English in elementary schools from 1830 to 1920 ...' works with what amounts to a Whig view of the history of English in education. The period is seen as one of progressive liberation from the tyrannous shackles of moral instruction in favour of a liberal and unconstricted version of English as 'literature'.¹² The general approach to the subject matter can be summed up as follows:

The dissertation shows that, already, before 1900, inspectors and outstanding teachers had recognised the importance of literature in English teaching, although their view was not widely accepted until about 1920.¹³

This turns out to be a common theme in the histories of English to be considered below. It involves an assumed

correlation between 'English' and 'literature', and even in some accounts an assertion that the 'English' which preceded the achievement of a hegemony by literature was not truly 'English' at all.

In general, Garwood's research offers a number of suggestive details. At the same time it is clear that some issues he touches upon deserve much greater emphasis than they receive, as - for instance - in the case of the progressive specialisation of subject expertise. Garwood quotes the 1901 Code of the Board of Education:-

Teachers are not interested in all subjects alike, and therefore the work of the school may be distributed among the staff so as to assign the instruction in certain subjects to those teachers who have special knowledge of them. The possession of a certificate shows that the teacher has an adequate knowledge of general information, but does not indicate the subjects which he has mastered more completely. He cannot be expected to teach all subjects with the same ability merely because he has a certificate. Subjects like mathematics (including arithmetic), the science of common things, literature, cannot be taught by teachers who have merely a superficial knowledge of them.¹⁴

This passage contains a number of interesting features. First, as Garwood in fact notes, it represents a wide departure from tradition. Indeed, it can be seen as transitional between the older general liberal (Classical) education and the emerging division of academic knowledge into modern professional disciplines. But, further, it points to a certain fluidity of terminology which is also evident in a number of other documents of the period.¹⁵ At the turn of the century the exact nature of the modern

curriculum was only beginning to be established and significant alterations in the uses of the term 'literature' were in progress. I shall consider these changes in greater detail below, but what is important here is Garwood's pointed observation that this Board of Education publication gives evidence of moves to restrict 'general education' to the elementary sector, while at the same time highly specialised modern knowledge is becoming the mark of secondary and higher education. These changes closely coincide with the establishment for the first time of a fully national system of middle-class secondary schools and the consolidation of the whole educational process in terms of clearly-defined and successive stages.¹⁶

Garwood's work takes us up to the 1920s, an important decade in that it was only at this time that English can be said to have been fully established as a specialised discipline at the secondary and higher stages. Garwood's account, though dealing primarily with elementary education, has a wider provenance. His survey tallies substantially with the emphases supplied elsewhere on the 'revolution' in English Studies at Cambridge.¹⁷ At this moment, it is said, the teaching of English was freed from restricting and inappropriate moral influences; literature, and especially poetry, were established as 'civilizing' influences; English was immensely widened in scope; and, finally, the teaching patterns moved from the rote learning of facts to a reliance upon the pupil's/student's own mental powers.¹⁸

So what we have here is not simply a Whig view of the history of English in education, but - more significantly - an account of a 'tireless campaign' by agents of the State (H.M.I.s and Board of Education Officials) to ensure a practical implementation of this version of English throughout the national education system.¹⁹ Garwood's research is therefore useful for its documentation of the installation of an important mythology which has guided English Studies for most of the present century. The elements making up this mythology were fused together during the early decades of the century, and effectively implemented at an institutional level during the inter-war period, and only today have been placed under substantial challenge. One aim of the present study, then, must be to evaluate the import and practical force of the constellation of related meanings which make up this mythology.

The sense of continuity to which this mythology also contributed helps to explain why some writers on English in schools could believe during the 1950s, and even a decade later, that what needed to be said about English had, in fact, been substantially articulated early in the 20th century, if not necessarily totally implemented subsequently.²⁰ Indeed the influential campaign addressed to school teachers of English between the 1930s and the 1960s and organised around the journal The Use of English, was posited on just this assumption.²¹

As I suggested above, it is important to take into account the impact of wider changes in educational studies in the period after Garwood's research project upon work on English in schools. Such changes are clearly in evidence in a 1968 dissertation by W.R.Mullins on the teaching of English in elementary and secondary modern schools between 1860 and 1960.²² The first difference is to be found in the way in which this study is periodised. Moments of transformation are now discovered at about 1900 and 1930. In addition, a certain relativism has replaced the Whig conception of absolute progress. Fundamentally Mullins' periods are as follows: (a) 1860-1900 - the teaching of English is guided by a concern with the inculcation of functional literate skills (reading and writing) which are modelled on exercises associated with Classical language-teaching. (b) This is replaced by a new conception of English in elementary schools from 1900 based upon a belief in the need to transmit a 'cultural heritage', especially by inculcating in pupils a sense of enjoyment and appreciation of 'form' and 'poetic sentiments'.²³ (c) Finally, there is a transition from around 1930 towards a 'cultural enrichment' model of English. As a consequence of this final transition the dependence on form and poetic sentiment falls into disrepute as personal development through 'experience' and 'growth' come to be favoured. The aim now is to 'humanise' the pupil through poetry, as well as increasingly attempting to work from 'the existing culture of the people'.²⁴

The same pattern can be observed in the work of David Shayer which takes 1900 as its starting point.²⁵ Here the early part of the century is seen as characterised by a conflict between an old and a new set of approaches. It is only from the 1920s that English is described as securing an established place within the curriculum at the moment when 'Arnoldian liberalism' triumphs over the 'Revised Code mentality'.²⁶ The final force responsible for the installation of Arnoldian liberalism is seen as the policies of the Board of Education. This is one way in which this research expands on the themes in Mullins' work. Not only does Shayer back up the claim for the centrality of the Board of Education in establishing the parameters of an Arnoldian liberalism (especially through the influential Newbolt Report), he also outlines how the state officials helped to ensure its practical implementation through a programme of publishing Circulars, Handbooks of Suggestions, and a variety of other means. The implication of this extension is that Mullins' distinction between pre and post 1930 periods should be understood in terms of degrees of engagement in the classrooms with over-riding Board of Education policies and recommendations. Indeed, an overall picture is painted in which the period up to, and a little beyond the publication of the Newbolt Report, is characterised by successive attempts at establishing this 'Arnoldian' paradigm, while effective practical consolidation of this approach takes place only from the later 1920s. The

'chorus of laments' at the decline in 'real' grammar teaching at the end of that decade²⁷ seems to signify some degree of success for the new 'humanising' approach.

Taken together, the work of Mullins and Shayer offers a useful general account of the development of English in schools. With the rationalisation of the national system of education which followed in the wake of the 1902 Education Act, a new centrality was given to the 'English Subjects' in Board of Education policy making. This centrality seems also to have involved the installation of what amounts to a new school discipline, 'English'. This new discipline attempted to transmit sentiments said to characterise the 'national heritage' by means of a personal identification with literature. While at first this new discipline was resisted by many teachers and educationalists, by about 1930 (with the continuing support of the Board of Education and according to principles laid down in its own 1921 Report) it had secured an important place within the school curriculum. In fact, English in schools during the 1930s would seem to have embodied to a greater degree than any other of the "modern" disciplines the concern of the Hadow Committee that the curriculum 'be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored'.²⁸

However, the very emphasis on the 'civilizing' influence of English did cause some conflict when it came to questions of the role of formal examinations. The

problem of whether examinations as such were incompatible with the civilizing process is one that has plagued English ever since. Apart from this issue, the other single most controversial area within English seems to be the conflict between the 'cultural heritage' model and the need to connect with the pupils' experience of 'popular culture'.²⁹ This conflict became more marked after the Second World War, and especially from the late 1960s (the very period in which this research was being produced) by which time the Arnoldian paradigm had itself entered a state of crisis.

In the 1970s this crisis was sufficiently acute to affect writings on the history of English in schools. I have already indicated how forms of historiography moved from a Whig to a more relativistic mode after the 1950s under the influence not only of changes in the education system and related approaches to educational research, but also as part of a gathering crisis in English itself. This accelerated movement is evidenced in J.T.Hodgson's 1974 Thesis, 'Changes in English Teaching: Institutionalisation, Transmission and Ideology', the very title of which is indicative of the latest change. Hodgson tries to apply Bernstein's work on the classification and framing of educational knowledge to the history of English in schools using both standard historical sources and survey material of 'leaders of opinion' within English teaching.³⁰ He also draws on an epochal model very similar to those already detailed above. In the period between 1900 and

1930 he postulates that a 'dominant consciousness' was in struggle with a 'counter consciousness'. In some ways this is a new approach to the history in that it shows greater concern with the driving force of conflicts at the level of the consciousness of members of the teaching profession, and indeed of state functionaries. This concern is applied to more recent periods by focussing upon the professional body through its most significant 'opinion leaders' which, although developed in terms of a model of some complexity, is finally reducible to a competition for dominance between two central 'rationales'. This works in the following general manner: up until about 1930 the dominant consciousness is seen as shaped under the leadership of the English Association and the Board of Education. This is articulated in terms of an 'initiation rationale' which takes the school to be an agency of social conservation and socialization to the norms of the 'cultural heritage'. Against this rationale is set a counter consciousness the emphasis within which is upon the 'humanisation of the masses' combined with 'creativity'. However, after 1930 the dominant consciousness is seen as having being modified in the light of this challenge. The result is a new amalgam articulated in terms of a rationale of 'growth'.³¹

While the earlier counter-consciousness is associated with that majority of working English teachers who lack a background in university English Studies; the emergence of the 'growth rationale' indicates the achievement of a

compromise cultural formation with the agents of the dominant consciousness. This compromise formation puts the accent upon 'self-revelation', 'participation' and 'creative adaptation', rather than upon direct socialisation into the norms of the 'cultural heritage'.³² From the 1950s this working compromise is affected by the politicisation of many teachers who begin to attack what is seen as a disregard for the 'children's own culture'. This attack is particularly focused upon the movement associated with The Use of English whose strategy continued to be firmly based upon the earlier compromise. The consequence is a fracturing of the consensus represented by the policies supported by this journal and subsequent attempts at achieving a new synthesis.³³

This account, while sharing some features with other of the approaches outlined above, also adds a number of important new dimensions. It suggests, for example, that weight must be given, not only to official initiatives emanating from the Board of Education (and later the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education and Science), but also to movements of opinion within the profession itself as represented by 'opinion leaders' organised around professional associations, journals and so on. Furthermore, it indicates that patterns of educational knowledge may well be the site for struggles between ideologies of the widest provenance. Finally, Hodgson's research draws attention to the influence of cultural and educational politics upon the discipline,

most notably perhaps since the 1960s, since it clearly indicates that a history of English in education must attend to the political fracturing of the discipline in recent times into a novel diversity of forces each of which is competing for the power to define the nature of the subject. Indeed it has been argued that since the nineteen seventies English in schools has been notorious for lengthy and acrimonious arguments about aims and methods,³⁴ a characteristic which will be shown also to have extended to the tertiary sector.

Margaret Mathieson's 1975 study of the history of English in schools maintains the emphasis on the consciousness of members of the profession as well as adhering to the general periodisation of the other studies. She confirms the recent importance of the politics of teachers and gathers this movement together as 'the New Left in English'. The general impact of this movement is then associated with a diminution among English teachers of the sense of an immanent and inherent value residing in 'Great Literature'.³⁵ From the late 1960s a substantial conflict is recorded between upholders of the Great Tradition as the primary source of (high) cultural value, and those who considered that value must be found in 'ordinary' or working-class culture since any other course involves supporting social inequalities. A practical consequence of this attack on the Great Tradition has been a certain dismantling of the curricular space called 'English' itself.

According to the new alternative strategy, children are expected to learn from the experience provided by themes and projects often addressed to local community issues, a move which represents an almost total break with the high art traditions of English teaching.³⁶ While Mathieson's historical account adds little to the other school-based histories dealt with above, it does put such recent mutations of English ideologies into sharp focus. During the decade up to the middle 1970s, it is argued that the co-existence of a low status profession with ever-increasing practical difficulties (due to pupil resistance) in disseminating 'Arnoldian' culture throughout a largely indifferent society, has led to yet another fusion, this time between Leavisite and Conservative approaches.³⁷ This fusion has provided a common front against dissenters within the discipline who can then be accused of introducing an uncertainty of aim, triviality of content, a neglect of the imagination, and a concentration upon ephemeral issues.³⁸

It is now possible to draw together an outline 'map' based upon all of these, on the whole unconflicting, accounts of the history of English in schools. The composite historical epochal model is structured around a period between the 1930s and the 1960s during which a coherent paradigm for the teaching of English was established out of a dialectic between a dominant (conservative) and a counter (Arnoldian liberal) consciousness. This pedagogic programme had been painstakingly worked for at

the level of state initiatives (in co-operation with the English Association) since the inauguration of the new national system of secondary education during the first decade of the century. At the other end of the epoch a new counter consciousness begins to take shape. Much English is said at this stage to have become 'politicised' (was it ever not?) through an emphasis on everyday experience and working-class culture as opposed to values derived from the Great Tradition. In consequence of this latter development the fusion between the conservative and liberal approaches now takes on the ideological form of a defence of standards of excellence. It will be argued below that this general account provides an extremely useful standpoint from which to examine developments within the higher education sector.

Perspectives from Higher Education

Before turning to the major work on the history of English in higher education, I want to look at a number of somewhat less systematic accounts of the history. These accounts often take the form of incidental remarks rather than notions developed through direct engagement with the problems of writing a history of this kind. On the whole, these are the observations of practising teachers within higher education concerned more with the question of what constitutes an adequate critical practice, or mode of response to literary texts than with the history of their

discipline. It is clear - and this is one important reason why they are considered here - that such writings are themselves fully implicated in the history to which they fleetingly refer, and as such they are useful for understanding major developments within the discipline. In the first place, they give some indication of the degree to which the teaching of English has consistently refused any detailed engagement with the historical conditions of its own possibility or to be grounded in any sense of its own cultural formation. Basic working assumptions have always stood in for any deep historical understanding. The second value of this material is in its relations to key generative and transformational moments within the history that bears on the discipline. The writings are, in general, clustered around moments of crisis and transition within English Studies. The first group of writings is associated with debates surrounding the institutional establishment of English at Oxford at the turn of the present century; while a second distinctive group is related to Board of Education and Cambridge initiatives whose pivotal point is the publication of the Newbolt Report in 1921. The final group arose out of the debates about the 'crisis' in English Studies (indeed in the humanities in general) which have been more or less continuously in evidence across the decades that span the period from the early 1960s right up to the present.

As I have stated, even as a collection this literature does not provide anything amounting to a full-blooded

history. Nonetheless, it does help in the construction of a map of certain basic shared assumptions at given historical conjunctures. Much of the literature from the 1920s onwards, assumes that the academic history of English starts with the foundation of the Cambridge English Tripos; all that went before is seen simply as a pre-history and largely irrelevant for subsequent developments. Controversy has thus tended to be focused on this 'revolutionary' moment as its significance is subjected to a variety of interpretations which nevertheless are formed within a shared problematic.³⁹ Needless to say, earlier writings could be posited on no such assumption and thus go some way towards correcting the Cambridge bias.

During the 1880s Churton Collins (later Professor of English Language and Literature at Birmingham) mounted a campaign for the introduction of Schools of English at Oxford and Cambridge (more specifically the former). That the terms in which this campaign was mounted embodied certain historical perspectives is evident from the contents of his book The Study of English Literature: A Plea for its Recognition and Organization at the Universities. For Collins the study of English Language and Literature had, over the previous few decades, unacceptably been subjected to the narrowing influence of a 'pedantic' philology. Further, at the more literary end of the English spectrum, a tendency towards the opposite evil of 'dilettantism' prevailed.⁴⁰ He concludes that, as a consequence, the introduction of English teaching into

scholastic curricula is now considered by a number of 'eminent authorities' as constituting a failed experiment, since the subject is simply unsuited to the formal teaching process.

The latter argument is interesting in that it reveals to how much thought, restructuring and institutional re-location the 'National Language and Literature' had to be subjected in order to be made fit to occupy what would become a central position within British higher education. Churton Collins was one major figure who took as his task the practical refutation of the claim that English was unsuited for such reconstitution and elevation. Against both pedantic and dilettantist tendencies, he called for the establishment of "English Language and Literature" as a modified and modernised version of Literae Humaniores or Classics. In practice this amounted to supporting a new disciplinary form in which the 'monuments to human genius' could be ranked, or rather re-ranked, so as to take account of the status of the 'national literature' as equal 'in intrinsic merit to the literatures of the ancient world'.⁴¹ For Collins, the institutionalisation of English as philology had interfered with a process which otherwise would have resulted in the renewal of Classical culture from a fully English national perspective. Nonetheless despite his campaign, the English Honours School, which was founded in Oxford during the 1890s did not at first depart significantly from this philological bias.⁴² It was only with the accession of Walter Raleigh to the Merton Chair

in the following decade that a significant movement in the direction advocated by Collins occurred.

On Raleigh's appointment C.H.Firth (one of the most influential figures for the development of the Oxford English School during its early days) presented an expanded, but basically unmodified version of Collins' historical perspective which placed recent events at Oxford within a longer pattern of institutional initiatives.⁴³ Firth associated the early history of English studies with work on Anglo-Saxon, predominantly at Cambridge up to the Restoration and at Oxford thereafter. Although the appointment of a Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1724 had given a limited impetus to the study of Modern Languages (intended for the training of officials and diplomats), it was not until the years between 1850 and 1880 that such language studies advanced to any extent, and - even then - 'reform' emphasised European languages rather than English.⁴⁴ By the 1880s, though, a great demand for English literature had grown up outside the ancient universities and it was as a result of this growth of demand that Oxford finally established an English Honours School.⁴⁵ For Firth, the considerable lack of initial success in attracting male students to the new School was attributable to the association between the study of English and women's education. He concluded that Raleigh's appointment had, however, caused a 'sudden revival' of interest in the subject and its future now looked more secure as a male subject.⁴⁶

Already during the early decades of the present century, then, attention was being devoted in a variety of writings to a number of themes which are pivotal for the history of English in higher education. Most significant of these were claims that the discipline had now reached the stage of full academic maturity through its suitability for a national role, its elevation of literature over philology, and its status as a masculine subject.⁴⁷ As will be seen, the ambitious programme outlined for English in the Newbolt Report had a strong national dimension and assented to the negative assessment of philology made by Collins and Firth. This is not to say, however, that all writings on English articulated these themes in the same manner. For example, a somewhat different account of the historical growth to maturity by English was given in an inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1923 by Raleigh's successor George Gordon.⁴⁸ Gordon attempted to use Raleigh to counteract the proposal by the Newbolt Committee that English be given a central role in state cultural policy. For Gordon the figure of Raleigh is to be associated with the growth of academic English from 'adolescence' to 'manhood' in that Raleigh's appointment signalled a transition from dependence upon histories and commentaries to a discipline which focused attention upon the works themselves. However, the kind of 'manhood' envisaged by Gordon proved to have a great deal in common with an earlier cultural formation: the 'polite society' of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ He disputed that this return to 'polite' academic activity could be made

congruent with a 'missionary' policy of the kind desired by the Newbolt Committee. 'Here in Oxford', he asserted, 'we have plenty to do without saving the state.'⁵⁰ Thus, for Gordon, the history of English was to be seen in terms of scholarship in the, self-effacing, service of 'polite letters' rather than as a mission to reorientate and revivify the national culture. English was developing into a 'house' discipline whose rooms were variously occupied by grammarians, critics, lexicographers and editors.⁵¹ Gordon, therefore, stands in direct line with all those academic English professionals who have been concerned to facilitate polite and scholarly exchanges between members of a 'society' limited to eighteenth-century dimensions as distinct from those who have taken it to be the mission of English to build a 'society' incorporating all classes.

Gordon did not, however, lack a nationalising consciousness when it came to the question of philology's influence upon the development of English Studies. He shared with Collins, Firth and the writers of the Newbolt Report a conception of philological studies as a foreign intrusion into the national development of English:

The War, which broke so many things, cannot be considered as wholly malignant in its consequences if it should prove to have broken our servility to the lower forms of German scholarship, that nightmare of organised boredom by which all grace and simplicity and nature were frightened from our studies.⁵²

However, not all English academics shared this demeaning view of philology. At University College, London

- in many ways the home of academic philological studies since the second half of the previous century - this version of the history of English was strenuously resisted. In another inaugural lecture, R.W.Chambers, speaking at University College, London, in 1925 traced 'the study of the mother tongue on sound philological principles' back to Kemble and Thorpe who had originally propagated the Germanic approaches in Britain.⁵³ For Chambers, philology had been a constitutive feature of English studies since the 1840s, and the major influence not only on the study of Anglo-Saxon but also upon the discipline of English Language and Literature in its formative period. The history is thus recounted through 'leaders' in the study of English Language such as Bosworth, Skeat and Earle. It is a history which culminates in the dominance of English over its 'rival' world-languages, German and Russian, to the extent that English academics are now 'missionaries with all the world for our parish'.⁵⁴ Chambers, therefore, contested the view that this history had been one of bondage to narrowing philological studies, and argued instead that 'philology' was a term which had embraced, not only language, but also literature, archaeology and mythology; indeed, all 'humane studies'.⁵⁵ Rather than taking the shape of a narrow, pedantic, Germanic exercise, the history had been one of work directed towards a 'national biography, the story of the English mind'.⁵⁶

Despite these differing conceptions of English as polite learning, as a nationalising culture in the service

of the State, and as a 'humane' cultural-philological study, a shared set of historical assumptions emerge from this work. All these writings assume that the emergency of English gave general humane studies a national inflection in that approaches emphasising philology, polite literature, or the mother tongue, equally claimed to recover, portray and propagate a sense of the continuity of the national mind and culture. The realigning sense of a buoyant national culture which had become so influential by the late-Victorian period ensured that a strongly-defined view of the nation was systematically applied to the study of selected examples of language and literary texts so as to effectively invent 'English' as an academic discipline. The writings reviewed above can be seen as recording or documenting some of the processes involved in that invention.

I want now to look at some subsequent writings to see whether the evidence suggests any significant alteration in the working assumptions governing the shared sense of the history which has been outlined above. The historiography of the Cambridge 'revolution' of the 1920s and of the Scrutiny movement is dealt with in detail below, but it is worth noting here that the influential Leavisian paradigm has not been governed by any clearly-articulated view of the history of the discipline (the same is not true of a sense of cultural history). F.R. Leavis' own major programmatic essays on English in education were gathered together in 1943 under the title English and the

University: A Sketch for an English School.⁵⁷ Those essays provided a generalised conception of the past which was used to justify a version of the contemporary discipline. As Leavis put it, the need was for a 'directing force' drawing on wisdom 'older than modern civilization' which would 'check and control the blind drive onwards of material and mechanical development, with its human consequences'.⁵⁸ As far as this programme goes, what counts for a specifically institutional history of English was the transformation of Cambridge during the 1920s. According to Leavis this was the moment of the 'emancipation' of literary studies from linguistic grinds and Anglo-Saxon. However, even at Cambridge this account of the history was contested, and indeed from the early days of the Cambridge English Tripos F.L.Lucas, one of the teachers for the Tripos, published an article in 1933 which was explicitly directed against the cultural history presented in Q.D.Leavis' Fiction and the Reading Public.⁵⁹ On the account given by Lucas the inclusion of English Literature within the Mediaeval and Modern Languages Tripos at Cambridge in 1883 had been of little significance since the Tripos was 'itself long regarded by the severe as a frivolous innovation for teaching people to talk to waiters in foreign cafes'.⁶⁰ Ever since then the history of English had consisted of a dialectic between frivolity and seriousness and the changes of the 1920s had simply moved the pendulum too far in the latter direction.⁶¹

In fact, it was not until the second half of the present century that any further major contributions were made to the historiography of English Studies. Within the context of a general reappraisal of the role of higher education in society attention of a new kind was directed to the 'crisis' in English Studies. This new mode of attention has, in fact, continued right up to the present, although the conclusions drawn from analysing this crisis have varied considerably. This attention has been most sharply focused in the writings of Graham Hough (a Fellow of Christ Church, Cambridge). His point of entry into the history was once again Cambridge of the 1920s, but now organised around a newly-assumed centrality for 'criticism'. For the generation growing up in the 1920s, previous criticism seemed 'prehistoric'. A 'new organon' had come into being seemingly with the capacity to extend English (as criticism) to cover 'the whole condition of intellectual health in a society', in the Arnoldian formulation.⁶² According to Hough, this organon had now been shown to be illusory in the light of subsequent revisions of the sense of the past available to English teachers. Thus, it was no longer possible to view comfortably the national past in terms of 'inherited wisdom'; instead, it stood revealed as an economics of privation, of sectarianism, and of nationalism.⁶³ Hough noted elsewhere that even the contemporary revisions of Leavisism associated with Hoggart and Holbrook were running against 'the course of history'.⁶⁴ He saw this history in terms of the demise of the composite

ideal of scholar, gentleman, and Christian engrained in the older conception of an upper-bourgeois literary education. He associated the fact that this Christian-humanist ideal was now battered and worn with the contemporary confusion in literary education, and with the reduction of English simply to one subject among others rather than the core of the humanities.⁶⁵ In line with this broad perspective he considered that English Studies had been subjected to the same constraints as any other single-honours degree, and - more generally - reduced in status because England was no longer the centre of literary creation in the English language.⁶⁶

In 1970 Hough added considerably to this sketch by offering a more detailed account of the historical transformations of English since the beginning of the century.⁶⁷ During the early part of this period English had taken the form of a historical study based upon an assured sense of upper-bourgeois 'national' values. However, after the First World War under conditions where creed, dogma and tradition were all crumbling, a version of the Arnoldian view of poetry had been introduced into English Studies as an organising method which placed the emphasis on 'criticism' rather than 'history'.⁶⁸ For Hough, the work of I.A. Richards was crucial at this juncture since it offered a means of generating an 'open' reading of a multi-form poetic text. This 'poetic text' provided a new centre for English Studies by providing a new authoritative corpus (a kind of extended Biblical text) and a related

theology (criticism). Two assumptions lay behind this new theology. First, that a coherent formation is derivable from the vast heterogeneous body of literature; and second, that criticism can provide access to non-cognitive forms of spiritual illumination. However, by the 1960s this centre had begun to fragment given the impossibility of any longer conceiving of Western Civilization as a continuous and continuing unity.⁶⁹

While this is a very partial, and Cambridge-orientated, account of the history, its value lies in its attempt to correlate developments within English with wider cultural formations. Nor is the account quite as idealist as might appear at first. Hough noted that the ideological changes he identified coincided with major social and educational transformations, most recently with the expansion of the school population and the change in its composition since the 1940s. This had been the moment of the infusion of the new Arnoldianism throughout English Studies under the influence of Leavisism, and of the enthronement of English Literature in the place formerly occupied by Classics at the centre of the humanities. Thus, while the key feature of the Leavisian programme had been 'to claim for the lower bourgeoisie the whole heritage of culture that had formerly been thought of as an upper-bourgeois preserve', this took place in practice precisely in the context of the re-shaping of this heritage according to scholastic imperatives and limited conditions of consumption within universities and schools.⁷⁰ In thus

calling attention to the need for the history of English Studies to be written in terms of institutional, cultural and social transformations as well as changes in 'critical ideologies', Hough's work must be credited with some importance in any review of the literature on approaches to the history of the discipline.

One final perspective can usefully be placed beside the insights provided by Hough since it also carried the marks of its emergence out of a sense of crisis; and, furthermore, attempted to locate this crisis both in historical terms and in relation to the influence of Leavisism. Writing in 1969, Fred Inglis called for the injection of a new militancy into the Leavisian enterprise which would reinvigorate and give direction to a sense of 'Englishness' that was appropriate to contemporary conditions.⁷¹ Six years later Inglis went on to examine some of the historical developments which had led to the current crisis and thus the need for this invigoration; albeit he had now come to the view that the militant Leavisism he had desired could no longer provide a solution to this crisis.⁷² Once again the historical pivot is provided by the First World War. In comparing the Cambridge of Leslie Stephen and Sidgwick and the Oxford of T.H.Green with Oxford and Cambridge after the War, Inglis found in the latter case the absence of any centre to the structure of knowledge. In the event, it was F.R.Leavis within English Studies who provided a vocabulary and a situation for speaking on great moral issues in a common idiom which dispensed with the

blessing of both Church and State.⁷² The Leavisian contribution was to supply an account of consciousness and its formation together with a creditable practical programme. When worked out at the level of curriculum, this programme broke with literary history by providing an agenda for the study of those changes in civilization which produced the modern mind.⁷³ It is worth noting that the 'modern mind' was revealed by Inglis to be a specifically English one, and that the Leavisian project was to recreate this mind within the affective processes of individual pupils and students. He recognised that the 'Englishness' of English teachers historically had come to be identified with their 'work for meaning' in terms of the student's individuality and selfhood. In this manner the world was rendered coterminous with the English self, but in an idiom that did not speak of industrial capitalism, systems of production, indeed ideology or politics at all.⁷⁴ Inglis traced the emergence of this strategic identification from a position of critical dissidence during the 1930s to one of great influence both during and after the Second War. However, he concluded that this 'apolitical' programme of cultural politics was now itself under threat, due to the impossibility any longer of conflating the 'world' and the 'self'. In consequence, by the mid 1970s, English Studies was being forced to find a new way forward which would serve 'neither a merely liberal imagination, nor a cast iron Marxism'.⁷⁵

While the literature reviewed in this section does not offer any significant revision of the periodisation evident within the work previously analysed, it does considerably deepen a sense of the issues that have been at stake during moments of conflict and transformation. It turns out that these have been issues not only of formal knowledge, data, and methodology, but also of feeling and personal meaning, and - indeed - of political and cultural strategy. It is in this light that the most substantive work available on the history of English in higher education will now be examined.

Major Projects

This section will be concerned with work which has taken as its direct object of study (either exclusively, or partially but substantially), the general history of the discipline at the level of higher education. The earliest example is provided by the Newbolt Report of 1921,⁷⁶ of which mention has already been made. Two parts of the Report are of particular concern here: Section II 'Historical Retrospect', and Section VIII 'The Universities'. The Committee was required by the Board of Education to 'enquire into the position occupied by English (language and literature) in the education system of England'. In fact, 'Historical Retrospect' begins with the observation that: 'The "Position of English in the education system of England" has scarcely any history. Of conscious and direct teaching of English the past affords little sign.'⁷⁷

This claim was accurate in that 'English' as the Report defined it in the 'Introduction' was a comparatively recently-constructed entity. On the other hand, its nature proved to be explicable only in terms of a much longer history. 'English' was thus also taken by the Committee to refer to 'the language' which came to be used within the Courts of Law and Parliament in 1362, and which by the end of the 14th century had become 'the King's English'.⁷⁸ However, the writers of the Report drew, for most of their purposes, on a definition of 'English' which was at some remove from this:

English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it. It is itself the English mind, the element in which we live and work.⁷⁹

This latter definition does, of course, show considerable continuity not only with attitudes and practices of an earlier era⁸⁰ but also with those carrying considerable influence in much more recent times (as the review of the work in the previous section above has shown). Stated in the bald manner of the Report, though, the formulation invites the historian of the discipline to investigate the degree to which struggles to produce practical and programmatic definitions for 'English' have also been struggles to define the 'English mind', or an essential 'Englishness'.

Chronologically, The Muse in Chains by Stephen Potter published in 1937 was the next major piece of writing about the history of the discipline as a whole. In many respects this book was a cry of anguish at the direction

taken by English (at least at Oxbridge) since its institutionalisation within the national system of education. While Potter remained convinced that 'English literature' was 'the best of all subjects for education', he nonetheless felt forced by recent developments within the academy to conclude that 'Literature is doomed'.⁸¹

Although the book gives an informative account of historical developments which are outlined elsewhere in this thesis, its special interest here is as a document which records the mutations of English (from one perspective at least) since the publication of the Newbolt Report. Potter identified as the major shift since the late-Victorian period a transition from 'a vision of literature as a progressing organism, with devices always improving and multiplying' which determined to young character of the subject, to a post-Cambridge emphasis on a more systematic or 'scientific' training. However, for Potter 'The question remains, is the scientific attitude ... the right attitude with which to approach the great English writers? And do these great improvements bring about the radical change in the subject which is necessary? Or is it merely a less superficial treatment of externals?'. His own conclusion was that the whole subject has been tied into an 'inextricable knot' due to an overemphasis on both textual formalism (and the related suppression of the author), and, dispiriting sectarian wrangling.⁸² Potter's pessimism is a significant response to the overall mutation of

'English' into a specifically academic study at an ever-increasing distance from the lay world of 'letters'. The book is, in a sense, a product of this increasing dichotomy. In fact, the 'muse' had come not so much to be shackled as to be dismembered, since the tasks set for this mythological patron of literature in the respective academic and lay worlds were no longer fully compatible.

The decade between 1958 and 1968 produced the most substantial crop of writings on the history of English in higher education to date. At either end are the retrospective musings of E.M.W. Tillyard and Basil Willey on the Cambridge 'revolution' and its consequences; while in between are the two most comprehensive histories of the discipline that have so far become available.⁸³

Tillyard provides a pre-history of the Cambridge English Tripos which brings together a list of influential 'Great Men' and a useful collection of assorted details about changes in statutes, curriculum and strands of debate. At the level of this kind of detail, the book helps fill in the sequence of events which lead the discipline of English to take the form it did at Cambridge. Indeed, this sequence helps draw together a number of the racial, philological, and nationalistic elements which form an important part of the genealogy of the discipline.⁸⁴ The book is useful also for its careful (if gossipy) treatment of the paradigm shift that was part of the institutionalising process, and it will be necessary to cover all of this material in detail below. But what needs

to be stated here is that Tillyard's account is of little help in building hypotheses of a larger historical kind. As the book's sub-title suggests, what we are presented with is indeed an 'intimate' account rather than any detailed analysis of the cultural import of the 'revolution'.⁸⁵

It is possible to couple Willey with Tillyard as offering a similarly intimate evocation of Cambridge memories. However, as befits a writer of so many 'background' studies, Willey also discusses the general intellectual context of events at Cambridge and since. In general, Willey confirms that the 'revolution' involved the coming of age of English as a medium suited to transmit values formerly only attainable through Greek and Latin.⁸⁶ Willey's book is also useful in that it provides a detailed account of the sectarian wrangles of the 1930s which so worried Potter (and which are suggestively compared with post-Reformation disputes).⁸⁷ More important, though, is his account of the process of ever-increasing specialisation within the discipline. This led, according to Willey, to the eventual demise of any pretence that the Cambridge English Tripos provided a means of producing finer human beings (at least among the students).⁸⁸ By the 1960s it was apparent that the substantial numbers of students who chose to read for the Tripos were there 'to get a degree with the minimum of effort and so get a job.'⁸⁹ This observation directs the historian's attention to the importance of student perceptions of the discipline, and

indeed to the possibility that such perceptions may well have changed during the post-Second War period to such an extent as to shape the historical development of English Studies. However, it must be admitted that to make this point here is to do some violence to Willey's own emphases. It is a general limitation of both of these books that their 'intimacy' with Cambridge inevitably impoverishes such sociological and cultural vision they provide.

To date two major histories of English in higher education have appeared. The first is a (still-unpublished) thesis written by J.M. Newton under the supervision of F.R. Leavis at Cambridge.⁹⁰ The other, by D.J. Palmer, has its origins in both organisation of research and subject matter at Oxford.⁹¹ Each shows clear traces of its respective conditions of production, but together they provide a formidable amount of detail which I shall be able to summarise here only in the most abbreviated manner. However, this kind of summary is adequate for the present purposes in that the primary aim will be to extract from each its underlying historiographical assumptions.

Newton's account conforms with many of those already reviewed in locating the major shift to contemporary English as taking place after the First World War. Looking back over the period which preceded this shift, he then expresses some surprise at the social emphasis given to the value of a literary education during those 'bad old days'.⁹² It seems that this very sense of distance from those 'bad old days' (which is in fact a product of

the subsequent establishment of the Leavisian paradigm) does allow Newton to provide a substantial account of the variable social functions that had played a part in the 'pre-historic' days, while at the same time erasing any similar insight into the function of the fully-fledged discipline.

Newton's history makes much of the functional origins of the discipline during the 18th century. His account is particularly valuable in locating a number of the central features of what may be called the 'Polite Society' paradigm. Developments in the Scottish Universities around the teaching of Rhetoric are seen as having participated in a self-conscious process of 'civilising' the culture by providing some means whereby Scottish gentlemen could 'purify' their English, and thus facilitate business with Englishmen.⁹³ Rhetoric, furthermore, provided the academic womb in which, during the first half of the 19th century, teachers like Aytoun were enabled to bring the new discipline of English Literature into the world. But it soon becomes clear from Newton's account that the discipline involved rather more than would usually or automatically be encompassed within the 'literary' format. While Rhetoric had been formulated on an achieved model of the cultural forms of English 'Polite Society' as embodied in an Addisonian amalgam of learning and social amusement,⁹⁴ within the newer paradigm an ideology of nationalism was active from the start. As Newton notes, from the time of Aytoun the study of the origins and early history of the

English Language was seen as 'one way in which a nation could protect, or regain, its independent identity'.⁹⁵ Furthermore, a similar ideology is to be seen at work in the text-books used to teach the history of English Literature from the 1840s.⁹⁶

Whether the student was guided in studies that resembled Classics (as in the study of the history of the English Language derived from 'specimen texts'), or in studies of the history of the National Culture (with the aid of textbook histories of literature), there is no indication that for the greater part of the century and into the early decades of our own, any student was ever encouraged to disagree either with texts or with the Professor's lectures.⁹⁷ This helps to explain Newton's historiography of the stages of transition leading from the 'bad old days' to the contemporary paradigm of English Studies. His whole account is ordered according to an overall transformation from a paradigm of 'imitation' to one of 'initiation', with an identifiable transitional moment in between. Up to about 1890 English Language and Literature was a 'knowledge subject', where knowledge of Literature meant 'educated general knowledge'. It was the object of teaching to ensure that the student acquired this knowledge by imitative means.⁹⁸ The great collaborative works, such as the Cambridge History of English Literature, although completed a little later, stand as a monument to this approach.⁹⁹

During the phase of transition between 1890 and 1920 Newton finds evidence that students were encouraged to give more attention to 'actual texts' when reading the literary history. Indeed, the very activity of reading itself came to seem increasingly important. The movement is towards greater concern with the quality of this reading, and with the ways in which the poet's mind may be appropriated by the reader. Enthusiastic praise for the 'great National Classics' was now being replaced by a recognition that specific 'Classics' could be open to question (although the category of classical canon as such was never challenged, nor does Newton attempt to do so).¹⁰⁰ Thus, to the emphasis upon the acquisition of knowledge was added a concern with literary or poetic feeling and enjoyment (although figures like George Saintsbury continued to hold the view that, in its educational form, English Language and Literature should be confined to description rather than judgements of value).¹⁰¹ Despite academics like Saintsbury, however, the trend was towards a concern with the analysis of 'value' and processes of free 'growth' within the individual self.¹⁰²

Newton notes a striking change in Cambridge examinations from 1917 which has more general resonances. The examiners no longer attempted to discover the degree to which the student's mind had been exercised and disciplined through the acquisition of knowledge, but rather whether the student's activity of mind had been directed towards tackling problems. Thus the student was now

expected to question the textbooks as well as learn from them.¹⁰³

For our present purposes two important issues are raised by this account. First, a pattern of periodisation has been reinforced and the constitutive elements of its various epochs filled in: the key moments are seen as: (a) the transition from the Rhetoric of "Polite Society" to a national English linguistic and literary tradition; and (b) from a national tradition to the use of texts of literary 'value' to facilitate personal human growth. Second, it becomes clear that a great deal of what has been at issue in such changes within English Studies has concerned not only specific delineations of knowledge, but also of feeling and enjoyment (or pleasure). Newton's work can be used to provide an elaborately-fashioned epochal map of the general history, transitions between the stages of which are implicitly to be understood in terms of functional shifts. It also directs us towards an examination of the detailed institutional processes involved in those shifts, without providing any theoretical or sociological guidance as to how this might be achieved.

To a great extent D.J.Palmer simply reinforces this same 'stage-map' but his account also expands it in a number of ways.¹⁰⁴ He claims, for example, that the consciousness of a 'national literature' originates during the late 16th rather than the 19th century, a claim which - if accepted - would completely erase the radical transformations both of 'nation' and 'literature' between these

two dates.¹⁰⁵ Palmer also draws attention (in however attenuated a fashion) to moments of cultural struggle and systematic campaigning, as in the instance of Puritan resistances of various kinds during the 17th century, and the culture of Dissent during the century that followed.¹⁰⁶ His emphasis on the moral as much as national fervour associated with the English Language and Literature during much of the first half of the 19th century, and the characterisation of the Wesleyans as the proto-typical cultural missionaries, adds an extra dimension to other accounts and is worthy of some further attention. His discussion of the 'moral' campaign mounted against 'ephemeral' and 'corrupting' reading matter, is one which draws the historian's attention to the exclusions involved in the construction of the National Language and Literature as well as the inclusions.¹⁰⁷ The book is valuable too in indicating that the 'civilizing mission' was at first addressed to the mercantile and only later the working class, and that the former address was facilitated by the inclusion of English literature in the Civil Service, Indian Civil Service, and other public examinations.¹⁰⁸

Thus, Palmer's book places many issues on the historical agenda, while giving little attention to how this agenda has been constructed. By virtue of his concentration on the foundation of the Oxford English School in the 1890s, Palmer's work, however, does provide something of an antidote to the Cambridge bias of so much other writing on the history of the discipline. But the shift

in orientation proves on closer inspection to be less than might be expected. In effect, Palmer merely shifts the transition from the ancient to the modern English paradigm back to the Oxford of Walter Raleigh in the 1900s. This transition rather than the foundation of the English Tripos at Cambridge, is then seen as the moment at which English Studies becomes a fully-developed branch of 'humane learning'.¹⁰⁹ As with Newton, the break into modernity is seen also as a break with social function and with ideology which allows an enormous extension of 'our' being in terms of truth, judgement and expression.¹¹⁰ This is but a part of an overall approach to the history which is posited on the assumption that with the escape of the discipline from the distorting influences of nationalism and class, 'English' came to speak to and for an essential self which it is purported 'we' all share.

This is unfortunate given Palmer's concern that the moves at Oxford during the 1890s both to create a Professorship of English Literature and a Faculty of English be politically placed within a wider academic and institutional context.¹¹¹ As he himself points out, 'English' stood - in the political battle - for one among a number of 'modern' specialised disciplines and as such was used as part of the arsenal which was mobilised against the old College system built around the tutorial teaching of Classics.

Even though Palmer, in a short update of the history towards the end of the book, situates arguments during the

post-1945 period within the wider context of disagreements as to the nature and social role of Universities, this is little more than a nod in the direction of possible sociological understanding of differences that were already beginning to wrack the discipline. Beyond noting the existence of a relationship between the crisis of confidence in the single subject degree and the diversity of views as to what constitutes the proper study of mankind, Palmer has little to offer by way of an explanation of the developing crisis in English Studies.¹¹²

It is interesting that Palmer was attacked for concentrating on debates and statutes rather than on the critical works read and written around the foundation of the English School.¹¹³ Indeed, by 1979 the almost complete installation of the 'criticism' paradigm, meant that the history could once again be rewritten from yet another perspective. Thus, Patrick Parrinder could dismiss as insignificant the cultural and ideological consequences for English of Anglo-American history.¹¹⁴ The discipline is now seen as almost fully autonomous; as a 'critical' and 'literary' discipline properly concerned with the study of 'literary language' at the least, and - at the most - a critical gadfly on the body of the state.¹¹⁵ Parrinder's short account of the history mobilises such 'critical' premises, not to alter the basic periodisation, but to reinterpret the differences between the various stages. For him, 'nothing much' was achieved in academic English before 1900, since criticism was mainly carried by

the periodical press, and the subject only achieved respectability through philology. This would seem to have been a remarkable achievement given that 'philology' as used by Parrinder is excluded from 'English'.¹¹⁶

Parrinder then couples together the Newbolt Report and the foundation of the Cambridge English Tripos as the embodiment of the transition from philology to liberal humanism, and from literature as the province of the preacher and prophet to that of the scientist and the scholar. However, as it turns out what this transition produced was really not a science at all, but a 'pseudo-science' based upon a 'fetishism of the text'.¹¹⁷ Parrinder's argument is addressed not so much to the history of the discipline as to attacking a number of 'critical' schools (from Richards to Eagleton) which have had pretensions to 'science'. As a document of infighting between literary critics it is certainly of some interest. Similarly, as a document of the rise of criticism to the position of the central defining force within English Studies it is worth some attention. However, in other respects it adds little to an understanding of the history of the discipline, and certainly misrepresents its relationship with 'science'.¹¹⁸

It only remains now to give some attention to what are largely contextual accounts of the history, but nonetheless of great value in helping to offset the discipline-centred perspectives of much of the literature that has been reviewed up to now.

Contextual Accounts

In this section the work to be discussed has been divided into three categories: (1) research into the history of academic disciplines other than English; (2) histories of the higher education curriculum as a whole; and (3) accounts of the formation of specific groups of 'intellectuals'.

Of the work on academic disciplines other than English, that on History is of most consequence for the present project. Christopher Parker presents the development of the discipline of History as a sequence of competing paradigms, of which three are seen to have been of greatest significance: History as a vehicle for transmitting liberal and statesmanlike values (the Liberal Paradigm), History as a body of facts (the Content Paradigm), and, finally, History as a method of working (the Method Paradigm).¹¹⁹ It is clear from this account¹²⁰ that (Modern) History - like English Language and Literature - formed but one aspect of a modernising revision of Classical Liberal Education from the mid 19th century. This revision in the case of History amounted to an attempt to provide a number of supplementary forms of instruction, and to this extent, the 'Content' paradigm is simply a systematisation of what had previously been an amorphous amalgam of more or less apochryphal tales of the national past. Like English Language and Literature, from which Modern History was never fully distinguishable until very late in the 19th century (and in schools until the 1920s),

'the identification of a national culture and heritage'¹²⁰
was a function of much major 19th century work.

According to Parker once that work of gathering together selected facts and feelings into a more or less unified sense of a national past had been completed, another paradigm came to compete for precedence over the other two.¹²¹ The general move, then, within History, was from providing a moral and general training for statesmen to offering an apprenticeship in disciplinary method,¹²² a move which parallels the progressive institutional separation of History from English Language and Literature in education.

Unfortunately this Kuhnian 'paradigmatic' history is not noticeably more analytically-orientated than the epochal models discussed above. However, this work on History does suggest a general shift (to be located in the first quarter of the 20th century, at least in its institutional manifestations) from the dominance of a Classical Liberal Education, and then through the addition of various supplementary forms of 'modern' knowledge, and finally to the advance of a specialised - and methodologically technicised - ensemble of relatively-autonomous modern academic disciplines. With this shift went also the progressive establishment of a related system of Faculty and Professorial organisation. In this final stage, the new mode of organisation stood as a practical challenge to the centrality of Classics as the single central source of the qualities of 'liberality'.¹²³

This brief look at the work on an adjacent discipline immediately indicates the value - indeed the necessity - of drawing upon sources outside English if one is to identify the system of distinctions within which 'English' has been delineated as but one among a number of autonomous modern disciplines. Unfortunately, not a great deal has been written on the history of the higher education curriculum as a whole, and one has to turn to an American work by Fredrick Rudolph to find any relevant material.¹²⁴ Of course, many general observations about curricular change are to be found in histories of education, but their very descriptive generality and their unconcern with methodological issues render them of little consequence for the present purposes. In fact, Rudolph's work, by virtue of its novelty of approach to the curriculum, highlights a general absence within Educational Studies (especially in the History of Education). This approach deliberately distances itself from any limited attempt at a history of a purely internal state of learning. Instead it places the curriculum within a broad setting of time and place, and subject to use as an instrument of many purposes.¹²⁵ It might appear, therefore, that Rudolph's work is potentially more directly relevant to the aims of the present research than any other single piece of work reviewed so far. Unfortunately the most that can be extracted from Rudolph's book are a number of general observations. This limitation is imposed, once again, by a failure to engage with issues of a methodol-

ogical and theoretical nature, but the general observations contained in the work are nonetheless of some interest. Rudolph argues that an examination of the history of the American higher education curriculum - where the curriculum is seen as a locus and transmission point for values (involving students, knowledge, teachers and courses) - reveals that the curriculum has been no more rational than the history that made it.¹²⁶ At the same time he argues that curricular history may be seen as a form of general American history. The paradox that follows from these positions suggests a failure to engage with the theoretical dimensions of a history of this kind in a somewhat more direct fashion. The working hypothesis adopted by Rudolph, but not examined by him in any detail, is that the curriculum 'acknowledges' the arrival of successive kinds and classes of student.¹²⁷ At the most general level such 'acknowledgements' have taken two principal curricular forms. First the prescriptive curriculum and, more recently, the elective curriculum, although even the latter form included measures to ensure 'coherence' of choice.¹²⁸ However, as with Willey's work, even such passing references to the presence and influence of student constituencies are to be welcomed.

One British contribution to a history of the curriculum should be mentioned here. In 1964 J.H.Plumb published a short piece whose interest largely derives from its analysis of the contemporary crisis in the humanities, and particularly its attention to the historical relations

between the curriculum and society.¹²⁹ Plumb argues that even as late as the 1940s higher education continued in its function of binding the governing classes together and sustaining the crucial image of 'gentlemanly' qualities and behaviour. This image is seen as consisting of a mixture of humane principles and national pride, and as forged out of the need to prepare gentlemen for political and civil 'service', imperial administration, and legislation.¹³⁰ This notion of the 'gentleman' is of some importance when applied to Rudolph's characterisation of the major pattern of curricular change. It suggests that the really significant general change - of which the move from prescription to election was merely a part - has been a revision of the image, notion, and discourses on the 'gentleman', as articulated in transformations from liberal to specialised forms of education. Certainly the crisis in the humanities is seen by Plumb to have been brought about by threats and challenges to the gentleman/liberal education amalgam from science, modern industrial society and the two World Wars of the 20th century.¹³¹

A more carefully-reasoned analysis of the significance of the figure of the gentleman for education has been made by A.H.Wilkinson.¹³² Wilkinson provides an extremely interesting comparative study of the cultural function of literary education in sustaining the role of the gentleman in England and China. In both cases, gentlemanly education can be seen to have ensured that self-interest was perceived in terms of moral prestige or status, and

that privilege and duty were seen as a single indivisible unity. In practice this cultural ensemble was made pedagogically coherent by playing upon aesthetic emotion. In this manner, public leadership could be conceived of or construed as tasteful and beautiful. The sense of 'harmony' induced by the aesthetic emotion had the effect of binding beauty to virtue and manners to morals.¹³³ Remarkable parallels can, furthermore, be found between these two separate systems of cultural reproduction in terms of semantic history. It seems that the etiquette of Confusian education, or 'Li', had originally referred to rules of religious worship.¹³⁴ This offers a suggestive analogue to the term 'culture' which has been so important in the history of higher education. Also, in both cases, the elite served by this education was distinguished by a national as opposed to a local style; for example, little regional variation of speech was to be found in either class.¹³⁵ Each system emphasised the production of an unspecialised whole man whose personal style betokened a mastery over life's struggles.¹³⁶ There are also important connections between the forms of education and methods of recruiting bureaucratic elites: in both cultures the curriculum and the patterns of examination for entering the Civil Service were subjected to mutual alignment.¹³⁷

All of these themes turn out to have a crucial significance for the history of English in higher education: the relation of this history to the making of a national

ruling class, and of a public domain of Polite Society in which the standardisation of linguistic and literary forms occupied a central role; the use of the 'national language and literature' as a device which brought curricular and examination patterns into mutual alignment; and, finally, there is the significant investment of cultural authority in the image of the gentleman.

An approach of this kind very definitely expands the arena of attention well beyond English as an internal state of learning, and towards a concern with the general relations between education, culture, and power. There are, in fact, two kinds of work which have never failed to emphasise the need for attention to such wider concerns. The first of these - the study of the politics of literacy - I shall consider next; while the second - Marxist studies - is substantial enough to require a section to itself.

Much recent work on 'literacy' has shown how this term - like its close relation 'literature' - must be seen as an ideological construct rather than a simple descriptive term for technical 'skills' necessary for communication (reading, writing, oral, even visual).¹³⁸ The study of literacy, within this tradition, has involved looking at cultural patterns which have determined how particular kinds of practices and styles have come to be constituted as adequate, or literate, forms of communication. In Britain, at least since the late 19th century, the term 'literacy' has always operated in concert with, on the

one hand 'literature' (as qualitative literacy), and, on the other 'illiteracy'. As will be shown in detail below this ensemble of related meanings has constantly been mobilised within discourses on English in higher education; a process which has received little attention in work on the discipline, with odd exceptions here and there. Barry Phillips has argued that models of literacy have been used purportedly to measure individual and collective moral character. On examination, however, the true correlation proves to be between forms of literacy and class position.¹³⁹ While this is not in itself a novel observation, its extension to 'literature' is. Phillips argues - referring to America rather than Britain - that the teaching of the 'English Classics' from early in the 20th century has been seen as providing a necessary antidote to a declining 'literacy'. Although the academic profession has been reluctant to accept this demeaning and utilitarian reduction of its higher talents (which, it may be noted, sharply contrasts with the mysteries of gentlemanly style) the process continues and has even come to incorporate contemporary literature within the same mission.¹⁴⁰

Work of this kind helps to direct the historian of English studies to issues of social function, and of cultural reproduction, in a way which a view from inside the discipline forbids. It is, however, within Marxist approaches that these matters have received their sharpest focus.

Marxist Approaches

It must be admitted at once that much Marxist work falls within the 'internalist' approaches, i.e. as far as the history of the discipline is concerned it conforms to the pattern of concentration upon texts, canons and criticism, rather than upon institutions, cultural formations and social functions. Often this work fails to break with a concern for literary 'value' and simply produces alternative 'readings' of canonical texts in which their capacity to illuminate a conjunctural moment stands in for the direct exercise of critical judgement.¹⁴¹ One American project by John Fekete has diverged from this pattern and directly addressed the history of English in university education within the United States.¹⁴² Unfortunately, however, Fekete presents this history in terms of a sequence of critical paradigms and pays no attention to institutional processes. Instead each successive paradigm is simply discussed in terms of its inadequacy as a totalizing cultural framework when contrasted with Marxism.

Perry Anderson's influential essay, 'Components of the National Culture', is also concerned with totalising frameworks, but in a manner which is of much greater consequence for the present project.¹⁴³ The essay is an attempt to place developments of the modern curriculum within a broad cultural-intellectual history of what Anderson calls 'the national culture'. In Anderson's provocative account this notion of a 'national culture' turns out to be based upon

his critique of the 'reactionary and mystifying university culture' of the late 1960s.¹⁴⁴ Thus the components of this national culture are the various disciplines making up the university curriculum. However, the way Anderson has chosen to characterise this cultural domain has implications for the direction in which his analysis develops. This 'national culture' in many ways takes account of factors that I have already identified under the heading of 'Englishness', i.e. those intellectual characteristics (though I would also wish to take non-intellectual factors into account) which go to make up what may be called the 'English ideology', or the 'English mind'. The set of arguments making up what has been called the 'Anderson-Nairn thesis' are sufficiently important for any history of English Studies to be laid out here.¹⁴⁵

Anderson's attack on this mystifying culture is based on his perception of that culture as an obstacle to revolutionary politics, and as such in need of a Marxist critical analysis.¹⁴⁶ His focus is particularly upon that sector of the curriculum placed between creative arts, on the one side, and science on the other: the sector concerned with fundamental concepts of 'man and society'. Within this domain is to be found a group of disciplines the significance of which resides in the structural relation between its component parts.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the significance of this domain is to be found not only in the structure as such, but in the crucial absences which nonetheless shape it. Thus, for Anderson, the 'whole configuration of British culture' is determined by 'the

void at its centre.¹⁴⁸

Anderson goes on to identify the intellectual history and significance of this void, in the context of a sweeping history of the English route to modern capitalism. While other societies, in response to the rise of working-class movements, and related radical and Marxist views of the world, developed totalizing sociologies, English intellectual culture has followed a different route. The absence of a central totalizing tradition in Britain is explained by the absence of any need for the bourgeoisie to constitute society as a whole in terms of abstract theoretical reflection.¹⁴⁹ The cultural mobilisations and negotiations that followed in the wake of the French Revolution, and in responses to working-class organisation, brought about no direct confrontation between bourgeoisie and aristocracy, but instead a process of cultural fusion between the two classes. This ad hoc cultural condensation rendered unnecessary any major effort at total intellectual and sociological synthesis. Indeed such a synthesis came to seem not so much unnecessary as a positive peril for the new ruling class. The outcome was that the intellectual academic culture which arose during the late 19th century was specifically organised against the possibility of such a subversive totalisation.¹⁵⁰ According to Anderson, after 1900 a number of major 'national' intellectuals were replaced by 'foreigners', most particularly during the immediate post-1918 period. This was the time at which the 'national' momentum came to

be replaced by a systematisation of the refusal of system that had characterised the academic culture until this moment. Thus in place of an emphasis upon the free play of mind, and the refusal of dogma, political doctrine and general ideas, a systematisation of this refusal was set in motion. However, not all of this work of intellectual systematisation was carried out by emigrés. In two specific domains - English and anthropology - a home was found for the totalisations which had elsewhere been displaced.

The version of 'English' with which Anderson was concerned was one which (as the work on schools has implied) was under quite large-scale challenge by the late 1960s. It was, in fact, the literary critical school associated with the name of F.R. Leavis. In Anderson's view, the Leavisian version of English had by that time come to be placed at the centre of the whole humanities' curriculum (a situation unique to Britain).¹⁵¹ The Leavisian literary critical paradigm was also unique in that, more than any other 'component' surveyed by Anderson, it was from the start deeply affected by, or even constructed in direct opposition to, Marxism.¹⁵³ This point will require some more detailed attention below, since if it is to be accepted a very sharp distinction needs to be made between the 'practical criticism' of Richards and related conceptions of English from the 1920s, which it would be difficult to see as a response to Marxism, and the work of the 'Scrutineers' from the 1930s. It also implies a

correlation between the latter approach and the discipline of English as such which requires further substantiation. Nonetheless, there is a final twist to Anderson's account of the Leavisian paradigm. The argument is that this paradigm, in insinuating an overall (anti-Marxist) philosophy of history, turned out by the 1960s to be the one domain capable of generating a 'native' synthetic socialist theory within higher education (i.e. in the work of Raymond Williams).¹⁵⁴

A number of Anderson's arguments have, as a matter of fact, been most productively used by Francis Mulhern in his work on Scrutiny.¹⁵⁵ Although not a study of the discipline of English as such, Mulhern's work examines a wider set of cultural processes which impinge directly upon the disciplinary history. For Mulhern the preconditions for the Scrutiny movement are to be found in that 'irreversible alteration in the social and cultural character of the British intelligentsia' which took place between 1891 and 1931. Whereas prior to this moment a compact Victorian group had enjoyed a cultural monopoly, the early decades of the 20th century saw an undermining of this monopoly through a massive expansion of whole sectors of cultural production and the creation of new ones. This process of cultural expansion resulted in the development of radically different discourses on 'man and society', most notably psychological and (later) Marxist synopses. At Cambridge, the founding of the new English Tripos during the 1920s also represented an attempt at constructing

a new synopsis, but this time, significantly, within the limited confines of a modern academic disciplinary form. Thus, 'interests and capacities that had formerly been deemed the natural property of any cultivated individual were now to become the staple of an academic discipline.'¹⁵⁶ The Scrutiny movement subsequently grew out of this cultural transformation, not - as has sometimes been argued - as the 'bearer of an alternative order' to that embodied in the English Tripos, but out of 'the insistence that the existing order should live by its word.'¹⁵⁷ The intellectual momentum of this movement is analysed by Mulhern through the analogies or homologies it carried with a 'wider band of European thought' which already had been in formation over a couple of decades.¹⁵⁸ The Scrutiny project, thus, amounted to the local formulation of a wider cultural mission whose aim was the 'strict circumvention of positivist reason' in the name of a process of cultural 'recreation'. The Scrutineers collectively, and with great influence, recapitulated the central themes of this major intellectual renewal around the notions of intuition (elan vital), 'recognition' and 'inwardness' (Verstehen), the social function of an elite minority, and the recovery of organic community.¹⁵⁹ In sum, Mulhern argues that the Scrutiny movement (as a collective project and not just the work of a single 'great man' F.R. Leavis, at least in the early years) is to be identified with a mission of providing the English ideology with a new synthetic discourse on 'community'; a mission that was

eagerly received by certain intellectual strata as the charter for their most essential cultural and professional principles:

Scrutiny's objective cultural function was twofold: to mediate the establishment of a new professionally chartered discourse on literature in the national culture; and, in the same process, to mediate the large-scale entry of a new social layer into the national intelligentsia. These were the sources of its dynamism and appeal, and its real historic achievements. 160

Mulhern's study is important for its insistence that English in higher education be located firmly within a broader institutional and cultural history. Furthermore, Mulhern also advances beyond the general formulations of Anderson. His study both broadens the notion of a 'national culture' and offers a more specific purchase on the sphere of the institutionalised intelligentsia, thus enabling the relation between the two to be outlined with greater precision than would have been possible using Anderson's earlier formulations.

Two other kinds of work are available from within Marxist traditions which can, I believe, be of substantial assistance in developing the insights embodied in Mulhern's work even further; and it is, therefore, with an examination of these strands that I shall conclude this review of the literature relevant to the writing of a history of English in higher education. The writings of Raymond Williams take us to one (home-built) threshold of the present project; while the work associated particularly with Renee Balibar in France helps towards a rapprochement

between a most productive Marxist-structuralist tradition and the 'culturalist' perspectives of Williams.¹⁶¹

In a way, all of Raymond Williams' work forms a careful, step by step, almost tortuous, engagement with the key semantic and affective (as well as intellectual) dynamics that have made up that 'English Ideology' which went so far to form the very discipline from which he has mounted a life's work. Indeed, all of his writings reverberate with implications for any student of the cultural mutations of the discipline of English. However, I shall concentrate here only upon a couple of pieces which have taken as their direct object of analysis the discipline itself, although I shall be using these as a means of drawing upon a much wider stream of arguments and conceptualisations. Two major aspects of his work can, then, be seen to bear directly on the present project: the 'keywords' approach, and the concern with the national aspects of the English Language and Literature.¹⁶²

The 'keywords' approach reveals 'literature' as a set of institutions whose history can be approached through a series of semantic shifts, most notably the specialisation of this term to certain 'qualities' in the early part of the present century, and the more recent further specialisation to a condition which is no longer realisable.¹⁶³ Thus 'English literature', from the early 20th century, can be identified first with the enthronement of literary quality at the centre of the discipline, and, later, with establishing that such quality is to be found only in

works of the past. Against this specialising process, Williams places a 'primary definition' of literature as 'discourse by writing'.¹⁶⁴ Although he does not argue the case, such a conception represents a strategic choice in the present as to how the contemporary crisis in English Studies is to be approached, rather than an identification with a more 'authentic' semantic past. From this semantic analysis Williams draws a number of implications which are central to the writing of any history of the discipline. First he points to the need to attend to all of the practices that have made up 'English'.¹⁶⁵ Second, he indicates that English must be placed within a whole cultural process, and thereby he transfers the problems of fundamental definition and theorising from the discipline itself to what he has come to call a 'sociology of culture'. This latter move has involved an engagement (typically un-signalled, or at least referenced only obliquely) with Gramscian notions of cultural hegemony as a moving equilibrium of dynamic forces.¹⁶⁶

But it was only under the impetus of the 'Cambridge crisis' in 1981 that Williams approached the disciplinary issues directly. Somewhat surprisingly he used the 'paradigm' theory of Thomas Kuhn as the basis upon which to identify currently 'dominant' forces within English Studies as distinct from those implying a 'revolutionary' shift of paradigm.¹⁶⁷ Williams usefully establishes the notion of Departments of English as centres of cultural production, especially in the production of practical

conceptions of what 'literature' is supposed to be. For example, one important phase of such redefinition was the Cambridge 'revolution' of the 1920s where literature (as the canon) was redefined as rather than replaced by criticism.¹⁶⁸ More recently, the dominance of criticism within literature has been accompanied by another, and often more potent, specialisation to English Literature.¹⁶⁹ In fact, Williams now recognises this specialisation as having just as long and important a semantic history as 'literature'. At least until the 17th century 'English' was uncertainly allocated to a sense of country and language.¹⁷⁰ The notion of 'national literatures' then developed in Germany from about the 1780s, and stands for a break with the older conception of 'Humane Letters': this is part of a major overall change in ideas of 'the nation' and 'cultural nationality'. By the middle of the 20th century, in contrast, the conception of 'Englishness' derived from the earlier formations of cultural nationality had begun to generate a series of anomalies (in the Kuhnian sense): the question of the nature of Englishness has since that time become ever more critical as it struggled with problems of both traditional identity and contemporary threat. Thus, within the discipline, what is often now being defended is a projection from a body of writing (diversity composed into a national tradition) which is really a celebration, a teaching, and - where possible - an administrative imposition of a mood, temper, style and set of immediate 'principles' in militant opposition to

'theory' and all forms of reasoning.¹⁷¹ The discipline of English in higher education has thus become a redoubt for defending muchwider notions of Englishness and for re-defining as alien both native dissidents and foreigners (especially French cultural and literary theorists).¹⁷² And here he makes an important distinction between the discipline and the wider culture:

It is not, so far as all the English are concerned, how most of them actually feel and think in face of related problems of identity, stress and change. But among what can be called, with precision, traditionally English literary intellectuals, it is not just a profession, it is and has sounded like a calling and a campaign. In its own field it is congruent with much more general reflexes and campaigns of the English ruling class as a whole, whose talk and propagation of 'heritage' have increased in proportion with their practical present failures. ¹⁷³

The implications of questions of nationality and ethnicity for understanding the history of the teaching of national languages and literatures have, in fact, been most fully explored in comparable work on 'French'. Much of the substantive research has been carried out by Renee Balibar and her associates but its general conclusions are most readily accessible in a more theoretical piece by Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey.¹⁷⁴ The general argument is based on a view of the institutionalised system of formal education as an ideological arm of the state, and one in which a central role is given to the production of literary and linguistic forms and practices shaped according to certain 'national' criteria:

There is a 'French' literature because there is a linguistic practice 'French', i.e. a contradictory ensemble making a national tongue, in itself inseparable from an academic or schooling practice, which defines both the conditions for the consumption of literature and the very conditions of its production also. 175

Thus, literary discourse cannot be understood in isolation from the discourses making up the French national tongue, of which literature, in fact, forms a specialised domain. This latter is the domain of 'imaginary French' which, paradoxically, provides a 'disguised place' for the reproduction of simple, ordinary language. For Macherey and Balibar the distinction between imaginary French and ordinary language is coterminate with class boundaries, or rather with different class modes of submission to language. However, although the structural relation is properly to be identified as a submissive one, by virtue of the 'ideological effect' it is experienced and practised as if it were a mastery. Thus, in effect, members of the working class find in reading nothing but that confirmation of their inferiority.¹⁷⁶

This approach may be criticised for its out and out functionalism, especially in its assumption that ideology is produced and consumed with the precision and effectivity of a well-oiled and automatically functioning apparatus of state education. However, for the present purposes this work is valuable in directing attention to two major antagonistic uses of the common language: literary (or 'imaginary') English, within the discipline

of higher education, and ordinary English, each of which can only be fully understood in relation to the other. 'Ordinary' English is, thus, basic only by reason of its unequal relation to literary (or 'cultured') English, since it is only within this relation that ordinary English is itself constituted. It is thus possible to understand ordinary English, not as something akin to a natural phenomenon, but rather as that ensemble of linguistic practices characteristic of the teaching that takes place at the primary level of the education system.¹⁷⁷ The use of literature in schools and higher education, the place of literature in education, is simply the converse of the place of education in literature, since the claim is that the production of this domain of discourse based upon the 'literary effect' is fundamental to the whole operation of the system of state education.¹⁷⁸

The latter is, of course, an immense claim, and it is therefore worth turning to a piece of work which attempts to apply this approach to 'English' within the British national system of education.¹⁷⁹ Tony Davies draws first on the 'keywords' approach of Raymond Williams to reveal a significant shift in the meaning of the term 'literature' at the moment of the founding of the system of state education in Britain during the late 19th century. He then uses the work of Balibar and her associates to argue that 'following the semantic shift in the word itself faced with a crisis of ideological dominance, and unable to resort either to the classics or to a science

increasingly feared as the voice of a soulless materialism, education discovered and therefore created literature as the principal material and object of its institutions and practices'.¹⁸⁰ These late-nineteenth century developments are for Davies intimately tied to the project of establishing 'standard English' as a fully hegemonic mode of discourse, forming the prescriptive basis for pedagogic practices within the ambit of 'English' in education. One result is that literature has been used as the legitimating domain for 'educated' speech. Hegemonic linguistic practices have thus involved the reproduction of authorised modes of discourse grounded in the last analysis in English Literature, a category itself legitimated and defined within the system of institutionalised formal, and national, education. 'Standard English' - or rather the standardised distinctions between ordinary and literary English - reflects the imaginary unity of the social formation as a 'national' organism.¹⁸¹

Obviously, certain work of deconstruction is required on some of the categories used by Davies in this account, and the accusation of functionalism follows quickly in the train of this appropriation of the French work. This is particularly the case in the ascription to 'education' of qualities normally associated with a unified active human (or indeed divine) agent. There are undoubtedly dangers in seeing 'education' as a wilful, scheming, and unified subject which governs the teleology of history. Nevertheless, Davies' work remains suggestive in just the

ways I have noted in reviewing the Macherey and Balibar essay: it requires, at the very least, that the historian of the discipline attend to the force of ethnic, class and cultural-political prescriptive forms in so far as they are embedded in, and perhaps even an essential prerequisite of the discipline of English in higher education.

Conclusions

The first issue to which this review inevitably draws attention is the characteristic disinclination within English in higher education (at least until quite recently) to historicise the discipline. Indeed, a crucial feature of the discipline since the 1920s seems to have been that trans-historical conception of 'literature' around which most work both of a pedagogic and scholarly kind has been organised. The term 'literature', especially when brought into relation with 'criticism', has itself been shaped according to this pattern of refusal of history: the hegemonic form of 'English', as literary criticism, has drawn practical as well as conceptual and pedagogic attention away from concern with the formation of specific literary canons, patterns of production and institutionalisation, and modes of cultural transmission.

The review seems to indicate that the key moment of this refusal should be located in the post-First War period as is signalled, for example, in the emergence of debates on 'literary value' during the 1920s. One object of this history, therefore, must be to attempt to

map out both the 'refusals' and the positive transformations involved in terms of wider socio-cultural discourses. It is evident that such a project can draw most directly upon the school histories, educational studies and sociological and Marxist accounts rather than on writings generated from the nucleus of the discipline. Should the move to literary value, then, be seen as an intentional repression of an earlier history (if indeed intention and repression can properly be placed together in this way)? If so, it was a 'repression' which seems to have removed a sense of the past only to reinstate it in an altered form. Once the cultural forces based upon nationality, ethnicity, class and gender had provided the 'scaffolding' with which to build the new discipline, it appears that the new edifice survived without any direct further recourse to such props. Thus, there remains a case for considering the explanatory value of the account of English Studies as shaped by an unacknowledged locus, or determining absence - at least between the 1920s and the 1960s. This locus is only now being given a name, 'Englishness', a concept which should help to make sense of what have come to be the essential features of the discipline.

The review has revealed that the disposition of cultural forces was somewhat different up to the late nineteenth century, leaving no doubt that what was at issue in the study of the English Language and Literature at that time was the native genius or the English mind. Within

this perspective, the Newbolt Report seems to operate as a transitional document in that it both reiterates that cultural nationalism and begins to mask it: the establishment of the new Cambridge English Tripos marks the achieved transformation. The historian of the discipline is thus invited to account for the new need within English (as opposed to 'the English Language and Literature') to erase all overtly national or masculinist or class-related orientations.

The literature under review provides a number of clues as to the components of the new nucleus of English. These may be gathered together in the assertion that English in higher education has been centrally concerned with rendering only certain cultural coherences thinkable while suppressing others. In theoretical terms, this process may be examined at the level of 'regimes' which at various historical moments amalgamated specific sets of pleasure, knowledge, and feelings.¹⁸² The historiographical evidence points towards a number of locations from which to begin to develop such a perspective. It suggests that English must be understood within the general process of the making, institutionalisation and transmission of a national language and literature since many of its conflicts and characteristic practices have been directly shaped by this underlying process. More accurately, the shape of English has been largely determined by specific contingencies flowing from the establishment of this underlying process within the confines of a formal state education system.

Furthermore, this review has indicated that, at various times, English in education may well have served a variety of socialising functions, particularly in relation to gentlemanly elites, but also at other class and cultural locations. English has functioned, in addition, as a central classifying and certifying agency: its frequent bouts of examination phobia seem to suggest problems with the peculiar requirements and subtleties of cultural certification. It is here that the work on literacies (functional and qualitative) offers invaluable guidelines to the historian of the discipline.

As to the institutionalised forms themselves, any adequate history of the discipline must take account of the wider curriculum and recognise the importance here of wider processes of specialisation and generalisation that have at various moments been active forces. It must also attend to the 'activists', i.e. those agents and agencies which have taken as their task the shaping of the curriculum, and this would include agents of the state, professional associations and other influential personnel (students and staff as well as administrators). At the theoretical level this requires some account of the general relations which have operated between the state, the national culture, the system of formal education and academic professionals.

The only body of work which has consistently engaged with issues of this kind has arisen from the Marxist tradition (broadly conceived). But even here there has

been a tendency to import into the analytical framework a number of the crucial categories which constitute the object of study itself. This is particularly true of conceptions of culture, Englishness and criticism. One result is that historical work bearing on English Studies has tended to conflate one sphere of cultural production (higher education) with the 'national culture' as a whole. This has been further compounded by a failure to recognise that this conception of a 'national culture' carries over many of the orientations and emphases from the sense of an 'English mind' which the discipline of English itself has played such a major role in constructing or at least maintaining. Perhaps this can be at least partly explained by the distortions necessarily introduced by the fairly single-minded engagement with Leavisism, rather than 'English' as a wider and more complex (and contradictory) cultural form. Certainly, Anderson and Mulhern, for example, have provided valuable accounts of some of the conditions of formation and transformation of the Leavisian discourse. Furthermore, it must also be said that the singular emphasis on the urge towards, and repression of, intellectual synthesis cannot adequately illuminate the whole range of strategic conflicts and fragmentary tactical alliances through which the discipline was established and subsequently transformed.

Nonetheless, this work represents a considerable advance upon that which is still commonly confined to the ideological analysis of various schools of criticism.

As will be shown, the analysis of critical work is, at most, only likely to reveal the outlines of a professional ideology rather than the discursive preconditions for the formation of such an ideology. And it is with the latter level of practice and emergence that the historian of English Studies must primarily be concerned. It is for this reason that the account of the discipline offered below will attempt to go beyond the confines of formal structures of 'knowledge' (including criticism) in order to examine more fragmentary and less overtly coherent ways of knowing, and indeed of feeling and signifying. It will be concerned with the level of practice at which initiatives in policy-making and administration, institutional innovations, and pedagogic practice have been worked upon, transformed, resisted, written about, and experienced by various constituencies of staff and students, and thus formed the contradictory history of what has for various conveniences been called 'English Studies'.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGLISH AND THE NATION

The Crisis of Leadership

Between 1880 and 1920 Britain continued to enjoy a large measure of world economic supremacy. While its dominance within international finance was maintained, and even enhanced, the same was not true of industrial production.¹ Though still the world's leading trading nation, controlling 35% of world trade in 1900,² it could no longer be assumed that such dominance would continue as a feature of the natural order into a less certain future. The period is marked by a series of initiatives within the ruling class aimed at a redefinition of leadership qualities which were needed to maintain the overseas empire and to govern at home. They involved spasmodic attempts at boosting advanced teaching and research in science and other fields of 'modern' study, especially as applied to industrial organisation and technological development. More consistently, though, the machinery of an expanded state engaged with general initiatives in the spheres of 'culture', including non-scientific forms of education. On the whole these efforts carried a national emphasis, as a number of educationalists, politicians, philosophers and political theorists searched for new and more efficient ways of building and disseminating a national sense of ancestry, tradition and universal 'free' citizenship. However, the cultural negotiations involved were

problematic since they generated ideological tensions between individualism and the investment of cultural authority in the state. Furthermore, while a revitalised ruling and administering class might be seen to require infusions of men of wealth and leadership from slightly lower social layers, this could prove acceptable only under conditions in which new procedures for educational cultivation had been established.³ While it had become easier for some middle-class men (or their sons) to earn membership of the national ruling culture by Edwardian times, their status as true 'gentlemen' remained equivocal in an atmosphere of continued mistrust of the business community, even if this mistrust was tempered by outbreaks of anxiety over the volatility of the lower orders which it was felt it was the task of their middle-class superiors to defuse.⁴

At the same time, as there were initiatives from above, there was a softening of the ambivalent attitude to aristocratic gentility on the part of those business and industrial groups whose culture had been so well sustained by utilitarianism and political economy during the period of Britain's growth to world economic supremacy. These groups were learning to recognise that much was to be gained from the aristocracy's long experience of government and cultural authority. Thus the period between 1880 and 1920 was marked by a sequence of strategies to combine traditions of aristocratic cultural mystique with utilitarian programmes of industrial and social administration. It was strategies of this kind which brought together

groups united in a concern for 'national efficiency'. Such groups attempted to establish more effective programmes for educating, governing, and mobilising a majority population to serve the British imperial mission at home and abroad.⁵

This mobilisation was built on three main platforms: pacification, classification and cultivation. The working class was seen as the object for colonisation by its cultural superiors in order that 'respectable' members of the class be separated from their 'rough' residue, and the leaders of the class be made fit for a limited role in governing the nation.⁶ In this process any shadows of socialist organisation were to be dispersed by the radiance of a common culture and heritage. However, the nation was organised not only in class terms but also in terms of gender and age-grade. It was conceived as the proper function of the nation's mothers to rear (within families suitably inoculated against any possibility of communism in the home⁸) fine imperial specimens of manhood. Schooling had also a central place in such initiatives. As a crucial feature of their role in cultural reproduction, schools were expected to inculcate in the nation's children a proper sense of patriotic moral responsibility. Insofar as schooling proved too 'mechanical' a procedure for influencing the pupils' subjectivities in the approved manner,⁹ efforts were also made to influence home life in a more direct fashion. This was a tendency which coincided with the elimination of mothers and young children

from employment in the wake of technological innovations which particularly diminished the kinds of work in which traditionally they had participated.¹⁰

In sum, the period is characterised by a number of efforts aimed at generating a revitalised leadership which would effectively combine the 'mechanical' qualities of utilitarianism and political economy with those of the more 'organic' traditions of the aristocracy. In many ways the Settlement movement of the 1880s and 1890s provided test sites for this combination. Here young men (some of whom, such as C.E.Vaughan,¹¹ subsequently were to support the elevation of English within the national system of education) fired by a somewhat secularised 'politics of conscience' engaged in missionary work addressed to the cultural colonisation of the great mass of the excluded population.¹² Deep in the heartland of 'unknown England' that was London's East End, they tested their aura of cultural mystique against the potentially demystifying pressures of the East End world.¹³ It was upon this forcing-ground that those traditional modes of cultural authority, reinforced by an Oxbridge education, could systematically be reworked in such a way as to govern (or professionally administer) a class-divided industrial society.¹⁴

The new modes of official and semi-official supervision and government are best viewed in terms of a general 'collectivist' modification of older patterns of 'individualism'. In attempting to develop a new

collective sense of Englishness, intellectuals and administrators alike applied themselves to what, at an earlier (and, indeed, later) time would have been seen as an 'un-English' and idealist version of the national life. This vision was directly concerned with the governing of an (at least potentially) spiritually organic and mechanically efficient nation. In its more philosophical aspects such intellectual work was addressed to providing a theoretical underpinning for a collectivist social outlook which would be immune equally from the mechanical vulgarities of statism and the revolutionary demands of socialism.¹⁵ It was only in the context of the theoretical work of T.H.Green and Bernard Bosanquet, and of Fabian 'municipal' revisions of the programme of socialism, that William Harcourt, the prominent Liberal politician, could claim in the 1890s that 'we're all socialists now'. The new philosophy of society moved beyond any simple vision of the state as a set of administrative institutions, towards a vision of it as an almost venerable ideal form: a form which claimed to be able to dissolve political struggle in the larger flow of the national way of life, in the name of common culture and common economic interest.¹⁶

At a more practical level, but under the shadow of such an ideal, went the building of a series of administrative layers at the sensitive ideological point between the official state and the mass of the people. It is, indeed, at this very point that the movement to advance

the status of 'English' in education must be situated if its particular history as a cultural and administrative form is to be understood. The advance, or invention, of the new English must thus be examined in the context of a growth in the number of semi-autonomous professions in fields such as public administration and welfare, journalism, publicity and the arts, and of the establishment of national cultural institutions geared to providing a schedule for organising the nation.

From Classics to English

The establishment of the new English involved a major reworking of relationships between cultural forms (that is to say, socially produced patterns of meaning, subjectivity and knowledge) and the operation of institutions of social organisation and administration (in general, formal relations of political power in society). This can be characterised as an ideological process in the strict sense that it successfully established an apparently natural role for the new English within both formal education and the less formal patterns of public and private life. The object here, then, is to provide a description of this process of cultural and ideological transformation.

In 1880 English as an autonomous academic discipline did not exist. Although since the 1820s a chair of English Language and Literature had been established at University College, London, and a handful of similar chairs (usually under the title of 'English and History')

had been added during the intervening decades, such innovations both in their characteristic methods and subject matter reached back to an older tradition of teaching 'Rhetoric', with an added emphasis from the middle of the century on historical and philological studies. The period of real growth and transformation took place after 1880 and coincided with the development of the new 'provincial' college sector outside the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and which set in motion the rise of a number of new departments of 'modern' knowledge. However, by 1920, English in a substantially adapted form when compared with 'English Language and Literature' or 'English and History' had come to be seen by public administrators, politicians, academics and 'men-of-letters' not only as a necessary constituent of a modern national system of education, but even in many cases as its most essential core element.

Such an account is of particular interest today since any adequate understanding of the current operations of English in education must pay attention to historically developing relationships between English and senses of Englishness. While such relationships have now come to be so taken-for-granted as to have been rendered almost invisible (at least until very recently), during the period 1880 to 1920 their articulation around class, gender, age, nationality and ethnicity was much more directly in evidence. It was the ideological work of that moment to institute the relations between English and Englishness as self-evident.

Previously when the term 'English' was used in relation to education it signified one among a number of 'modern' languages whose associated grammar, literature and history occupied only a minor role as an adjunct to classical studies, certainly within the 'higher' sectors. Within 'elementary' education the term covered not only reading and writing but also any other non-classical subjects as were taught. From the 1840s the inferior position of English Language and Literature began to be questioned, mostly by scholars working outside the ancient universities of England,¹⁷ but it was only during the early decades of the present century that English Studies (or, more simply, 'English') in its recognisably modern disciplinary form began to offer an educationally significant challenge to the intellectual and cultural prestige long invested in classics. As MacPherson has argued, the elevation of the vernacular language and literature within higher education was an attempt to sustain the notion of a 'liberal education' in the face of tendencies towards academic specialization on the one hand, and the dwindling popularity of classics on the other. The introduction of the national language and literature at Oxbridge was seen (at least to begin with) as a broadening and rejuvenation of the 'literary' curriculum which would thereby be sustained as a foundation for more specialised study.¹⁸

Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and one of the modernising dons who supported endeavours to extend university education and to attract

men from new social classes to Oxford, considered that,

classical study is getting in some respects worn out, and the plan proposed (the introduction of English Language and Literature at Oxford) would breathe new life into it.¹⁹

One of the signs of the eclipse of classics by English was the foundation in 1907 of the English Association which was to propound very effectively the view that the new discipline had become 'our finest vehicle for a genuine humanistic education' and that 'its importance in this respect was growing with the disappearance of Latin and Greek from the curricula of our schools and universities'.²⁰ However, the eventual transference from the classical curriculum to a modern alternative, and the enhancement of English and Englishness which was one of its major products, drew on the raw materials provided by the scholarly work of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In the process of inventing the new English, these materials were substantially transformed to serve a national and imperial culture. In fact, it was only as a consequence of this earlier work of literary, linguistic and historical categorising that it became possible for a sense of national and vernacular 'ancestry' to challenge the cultural and educational rule of the classical languages and literatures. Arthur Quiller-Couch, in a lecture given while he was Professor of English Literature at Cambridge in 1916, recalled the impact of this challenge on his contemporaries several decades earlier:

Few in this room are old enough to remember the shock of awed surprise which fell upon young minds presented, in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties of the last century with Freeman's Norman Conquest or Green's Short History of the English People; in which as through parting clouds of darkness, we beheld our ancestry, literary as well as political, radiantly legitimised. 21

New Cultural Strategies

We can now attend to some of the specific ways in which such general initiatives were worked through, from an explicitly cultural standpoint. Histories written from within perspectives formed by the modern discipline of English have tended to depend upon aestheticising assumptions about the self-evident value of the discipline as such; i.e. a value directly derived from the purely aesthetic or 'cultural' qualities seen as inherent within the objects of study (authors, texts and traditions). Alternatively, they have treated the development of the discipline against a background of ideas and a general sense of the spirit of the age.²² Furthermore, previous histories of the discipline of English have tended to treat the period 1880 to 1920 as a 'pre-historical' one. I am arguing, in contrast, that modern English was a product shaped by initiatives, strategies and procedures which together represented an attempt to build a renewed system of cultural authority in the years between 1880 and 1920.

The notion of 'degeneracy' is important in this context. Around and within this notion a constant play with gender, nationality, self, age and maturity can be

traced. The esteemed characteristics were those associated with masculinity, activity and concrete statement, personal poise and self-mastery, together with a concern for racial purity or at least racial vigour. Variants of Social Darwinism were used to authorise British competition with other nations, attempts at racial perfectibility, and preferred notions of essential human subjectivity. For example, the idea of advanced education as a process for the 'regeneration of the self' was strongly propounded by modernising Oxbridge dons²³ like Mark Pattison, an influential educationalist and Head of Lincoln College Oxford from 1861. For Pattison the essence of the human self (essential subjectivity) was the passive human subject produced by 'nature'. However, a truly 'liberal' or 'higher' education could inculcate a higher subjectivity which transcended nature by offering experiences, feelings and pleasures that were beyond the mindless routines thought to be engaged in by most of mankind.²⁴ The 'culture' offered by a liberal education could thus control nature by generating a higher form of 'life' - by teaching 'the art to live'.²⁵ This is one indication of the way in which cultural strategies of the time worked through the whole gamut of cultural processes: from patterns of signification and making sense of self and society, through conceptions of the proper modes of gaining experiences, feelings and pleasures, and to more formalised modes of producing knowledge.

This whole cultural ensemble was held together in a

manner which bore a striking resemblance to ways of dealing with statism and socialism, which have been considered above. Collectivist strategies attempted to restrain any tendencies towards statism or socialism by tempering the full rigours of laissez-faire capitalism through a renewal of state and semi-state institutions. In the case of general cultural strategies, the excesses of full-blown conceptions of Social Darwinism were qualified by re-interpreting self-governing natural processes as capable of cultural modification (as in Pattison's scheme). This led to a considerable investment of energy in shaping from above the constituents of the national culture and national character; and to the identification and removal of any tendencies towards degeneration within the national 'body'.

Such procedures played a central part in the construction of the new English. They could not, however, have been sustained without the development of parallel general educational initiatives of unprecedented scope. It is important here, though, not to take the notion of 'education' in any narrow sense since the mission of national education as it operated between 1880 and 1920 encompassed institutions, events and locations well beyond the scope of education as it has since come to be formally conceived. Such education took place not only in schools and colleges, but within the home and at local and national gatherings (as in the case of the National Home Reading Union²⁶); at public galleries and museums; and even within city streets, in the signifying processes

encouraged through the erection of monuments of a national flavour in prominent positions within the urban landscape.²⁷ Nor was the rural landscape omitted from such initiatives: the National Trust was founded in 1895 to secure the permanent preservation of places and buildings of 'beauty' and of 'historic' interest; that is, to sustain the national heritage in its physical and geographical aspects. In 1897 a permanent site for British works of art was established as the National Gallery of Modern Art (the Tate Gallery) at Millbank, London, to display as well as preserve approved works of visual art. Similarly the National Portrait Gallery, which was permanently established in 1896, and the Dictionary of National Biography (1885-1900) stand as counterparts at the level of individual portrayal and biography, to the work of categorisation and charting that went into producing monumental works on the national history, language and literature such as the Cambridge History of English Literature (1907-1916) and the New (later, Oxford) English Dictionary (1884-1928).

Even within more formal patterns of education, initiatives ranged from those which tended increasingly towards the institutionalisation of a national system overseen by the state (Education Acts from 1870 to 1902 and beyond: the formation of School Boards and Education Authorities and a national Board of Education (1899)) to a number of semi-state programmes such as, from the 1870s, the national Extension Movement, the National Council of Adult Schools Association, and later, the Workers'

Education Association. The English Association should also be mentioned here since it showed a considerable overlap of personnel and policies with many of these other initiatives (formal and informal), having particularly close affinities with the National Home Reading Union, the Dictionary of National Biography, and the National Trust, and occupying an interesting position of relative autonomy from the state Board of Education.

The New English

Specific developments within formal education and their relation to the new English can now be given direct attention. The period saw transformations (mooted from the 1850s) of modes of professional academic organisation and administration, teaching, research and publication. In general such transformations involved secularisation as much as professionalisation and operated not only inwards towards the academy but also outwards towards a new constituency: the nation as a whole. A partial eclipse of religious belief in the face of social relations organised around industry, science and technology, led to greater emphases on a 'lay' ministry and pedagogy, and a search, from the mid-nineteenth century, for new tools of a general higher education.²⁸ Oxbridge institutions, though, were slow to respond to such trends and it was only towards the end of the century that calls for the ancient universities to accept a 'national' role began to be heeded. By the turn of the century Oxbridge was beginning to service a

limited amount of social mobility; but, on the whole, middle-class education continued to be catered for elsewhere, increasingly through the extension movement and the 'provincial' colleges.²⁹ The challenge by versions of 'science' to the classical curriculum has been mentioned above but one way of dealing with this challenge should be identified here. This was articulated by the scientist, educationalist and parliamentarian Lyon Playfair at a meeting to publicise the establishment of York College in 1875:

Our universities cannot get hold of our great industrial centres in any permanent way unless they raise them in self-respect and dignity by giving them an intellectual understanding of their vocations ... (They) have not learned that the stronghold of literature should be in the upper classes of society, while the stronghold of science should be in the nation's middle class.³⁰

The 'literature' to which Playfair refers is, of course, classics rather than English literature (which had not yet come to be seen as an adequate instrument of 'culture'). In fact, it was largely through the middle-class and scientific bias of the new provincial colleges that English Language, Literature and History came to serve as a so-called 'poor man's classics', and it was only at the very end of the century that Oxbridge became sufficiently concerned to begin to succumb to the then 'national demand'³¹ for such studies and introduce new 'Schools' and 'Tripos' regulations that would allow the ancient institutions to take a lead in these new areas. Oxbridge, then, was only lifted to the apex of the study of English Language,

Literature and History when it was subjected to the demands for national efficiency and leadership.

The foundation of a national Board of Education signalled the acceptance within the official culture of a need for policies that would coordinate an efficient and fully national system of education, and also allowed the voices of dons who had been calling for a transformation of the traditional curriculum to carry more weight than ever before. But the 'nationalising' tendency within educational policy-making had to move carefully between claims for education as a universal human right and education as a series of differential provisions along class and gender lines. Even working-class challenges tended to move between these two poles. Some attacked the whole notion of disinterested 'liberal education' as such in the name of class-orientated forms, while others supported the system which propagated the sense of a common cultural heritage with the proviso that wider access be established.³² In practice, the constituency to which this national education was addressed remained firmly rooted in differential class provision. Indeed, this division was further accentuated when the distinction between the 'elementary' and 'higher' systems was enhanced by the 1902 Education Act.³³

It was at this moment, and in such a context, that the Board of Education came to see in the ideas of the modernising dons and the version of 'culture' proposed by Matthew Arnold, fruitful potentialities for the curriculum of the state-maintained middle-class secondary schools.

What were still called the 'English subjects' proved particularly attractive here. The 1904 School Regulations refer to 'the group of subjects commonly class "English" and including the English language and literature, Geography and History!'³⁴ In contrast, a Circular of the Board published in 1920, 'The Teaching of English in Secondary Schools', deals with 'English' solely under the headings of 'Literature' and 'Composition'. Literature is introduced as follows: 'Real knowledge and appreciation of Literature come only from first-hand study of the works of great writers. The first thing to be done is to draw up a list of such works to be read in school.' And composition is also indebted to literature:

Composition means arrangements, and English composition is the arrangement, in speaking or writing English, of right words in their right order, so as to convey clearly a consecutive meaning. It thus involves the arrangement, not merely of words, but of the substance of thought which the words are meant to convey. ... Only through composition can pupils acquire effective mastery of the enlarged vocabulary with which they become acquainted through literature, but which remains inert in their minds without the exercise of applying it to the expression of their own thought.³⁵

with the increase of tension between universal education and differential provision, the special qualities of the new English (under the hegemony of English literature) for securing the sense of a common culture while at the same time being suited to differential application across the range of educational sectors, caused the Board to look very kindly on the fledgling discipline and to give a great deal of support to its advancement in schools.³⁶

'English', the, by the first decade of the new century, had come to have a multi-faceted character due to its variation of role within the new provincial colleges, Oxbridge, and the national system of schooling. From the 1850s miscellaneous 'general knowledge' about the language, literature and history had been considered as appropriate content for examining potential recruits to the Civil Service, and especially the Indian Civil Service. By 1875 seventeen examinations were available to schoolboys covering not only the Civil Services, but also the Armed Forces, the Professions and the Universities, in nearly all of which the English subjects were set.³⁷ Thus, at least at this level, the English subjects were already well-established as minimal testing devices for entry into state, semi-state and autonomous professional organisations. The study of language, literature and history was also substantially influenced by the general process of higher academic specialization which took place during the same period. University College, London, and Owen's College, Manchester were the earliest influences in this respect. Here, apart from reliance on the rigours of a large-scale examination system, new areas of modern knowledge were set up as autonomous academic disciplines with a related German-style system of professoriate, administrative hierarchy, and departmental structure, and a commitment to research - none of which was characteristic of the operations of the traditional classical curriculum.³⁸

English Language, Literature and History in the colleges was both similar to and different from these other

modern disciplines; similar in that, like them, it sought to create for itself a solid and autonomous identity; different (especially from the early decades of this century) in that its predominantly classically-trained and often clerical academic proponents increasingly claimed for it a status well beyond that of any mere 'discipline' or 'knowledge subject'. The history of the transition from the 'English Language and Literature', 'English and History', and the 'English subjects' to the simple and all-embracing generic term 'English' is the history of a complex process of cultural extension and elevation. 'English' came to extend its range of operations beyond any disciplinary boundaries to encompass all mental, imaginative and spiritual faculties. In the words of one professor, the object of teaching English literature came to be not the imparting of 'knowledge' but 'the cultivation of the mind, the training of the imagination, and the quickening of the whole spiritual nature.'³⁹ English was elevated through being imbued with the kind of cultural authority previously invested in classics, but now with the addition of a powerful national dimension that yet somehow transcended nationality. Another professor was reported as stating that,

literature should be a means of larger experience - a conning tower or an upper chamber with a view beyond bounds of class, locality, time or country. ... It was clear that literature deepened our sense of the import of nationality by giving the most intense and at the same time most manifold expression of it.⁴⁰

By the early decades of this century English was coming to be called upon to sustain a 'national ideal', which traced back to Matthew Arnold. Its role was to assist in the educational work of transcending 'individual self-interest' by subordinating the 'individual self' to 'common aims':

In his educational outlook [Arnold] was a nationalist. . . . Such an ideal, he believed, could be imparted and maintained by a public system of education. . . . Matthew Arnold's great achievement was that he convinced the younger generation among his readers of the necessity for providing throughout England an abundant supply of public secondary schools for boys and girls, schools which would be intellectually competent, attested by public inspection, and aided both by local authorities and the state. 41

In serving this ideal, one feature which gave the new English its peculiar potency was the cultural mystique endowed upon it by a vision of the qualities seen as inherent in the national literature. This vision was most dramatically evoked by John Bailey at a Conference of the English Association in 1917. Bailey,

related a story of an officer who read the Fairie Queen to his men when they were in a particularly difficult situation. The men did not understand the words, but the poetry had a soothing influence upon them. Nothing better could be said of poetry than that. 42

In order to understand the genesis of this new cultural form, we must examine some other forces of cultural extension and elevation which provided its preconditions. The history of the 'extension movement' illustrates many of the cultural patterns which influenced the emergence of the new English.

The moves for an extended system of university education reached back to the 1840s when it was aimed at providing more qualified candidates for Anglican ordination, but it was very soon transformed into a more lay-oriented mission. The first practical measures of educational extension were instituted during the 1850s and 1860s when London degrees were opened to all who could pass an 'external' examination, but it was only towards the end of the 1860s that an emphasis on the English language, literature and history became an important feature of the process of extension. In the course of the next two decades Oxford and Cambridge became involved in what one of the Cambridge extension lecturers described as an attempt to provide 'University Education for the Whole Nation by an itinerant system connected with the Old Universities.'⁴³ The object of this peripatetic programme from the point of view of Oxbridge was outlined by the Oxford Vice-Chancellor in 1887:

The lecturers whom we send through the country are a kind of missionary; wherever they go they carry on their foreheads the name of the University they represent. To a great majority of those persons with whom they come in contact it is the only opportunity afforded of learning what Oxford means and what is meant by the powers of an Oxford education. ⁴⁴

Of course, what Oxford 'meant' and the source of its 'powers', a classical curriculum taught within an intimate collegiate system, could hardly be extended. The new 'meaning', therefore, that was preached by the missionaries was embodied in a modern subject: the English Language,

Literature and History. The ideal of a complete integration of the cultural mission of the universities with English was to be most clearly articulated in the pages of the Newbolt Report of 1921, "The Teaching of English in England", which is examined in detail in Chapter Three below.⁴⁵ But in earlier days, English was not without rivals. T.H.Green, first chairman of Oxford extension lectures in 1879, favoured a philosophical system which would 'appeal both to the intelligence and to the emotion,' and thereby provide 'a rational view of man and society, a theory neither hedonist nor materialist.'⁴⁶ Even if Philosophy never gained the role Green hoped that it would, Benjamin Jowett was remarkably successful in inculcating his latter-day Platonic guardians at Green's Oxford college, Balliol, with a renewed vision of leadership. Green's own views carried a good deal of influence within another movement of 'extension', the 'settlements' set up from the 1880s in London's East End and other urban areas. The view of citizenship which Green promulgated, and which was supported by Jowett's successor as Master of Balliol, Caird, was influential in forming the social ideals of a generation of politicians, senior Civil Servants (including those within the Board of Education), and influential members of the English Association.

The settlement movement has been mentioned above. The orientation here was more 'collectivist' and it can be seen as a response to socialist challenges to policies based on political economy and philanthropy. The settlement of Toynbee Hall in the East End of London was founded

in 1884 by the Christian socialist Samuel Barnett. The settlement connects with other forms of extension in that it did have an educational aim, but, like Oxford House (another settlement or 'mission' set up in the East End in 1884), it usefully illustrates new initiatives for the renewal of forms of leadership and patterns for social administration upon which the elevation of English largely depended. Barnett saw Toynbee Hall as the potential centre for an East London University; in fact it became, as did the other settlements and extension classes, a centre for members of the middle class.⁴⁷ While Toynbee Hall 'expressed the spirit of Balliol,' Oxford House came out of the more 'missionary' Keble College, Oxford.⁴⁸ Indeed the Federation of Working Men's Clubs set up by Oxford House directly assisted the young Oxford missionary in developing the 'knack of mingling on terms of personal equality with men, while yet by some je ne sais quoi in himself,' preserving 'their freely accorded social homage.'⁴⁹ This was a much the true 'meaning' of Oxford as was any other aspect of the programme of extension. What was at stake was the renovation of modes for achieving freely-given cultural consent to a renewed leadership; a leadership capable of entering the world of 'men' on terms of only apparent equality. The first annual report of the Oxford House mission in 1884 set this programme out most clearly: 'Colonisation by the well-to-do seems indeed the true solution to the East End question, for the problem is, how to make the masses realise their spiritual

and social solidarity with the rest of the capital and the kingdom.' The report goes on to claim that the people could only be taught 'thrift and prudence" by men who would actually associate with them, thereby ensuring that the influence of 'the imperishable youth of Oxford' would 'induce them to face the elementary laws of economics.'⁵⁰

The same ideological pattern is to be found within the imperial, educational and commercial programme for 'national efficiency' which, from the 1890s, drew in a number of prominent figures from the worlds of politics, business and 'letters'.⁵¹ John Gorst, Conservative M.P., intimate of Barnett and one supporter of this programme, captured the emotions that motivated this ideology when speaking at Glasgow University in 1894. In his view the crowding of 'the destitute classes' into the cities had made 'their existence thereby more conspicuous and dangerous,' particularly since they 'already form a substantial part of the population, and possess even now, although they are still ignorant of their full power, great political importance.' The danger was that they might even go beyond 'their lawful power at the polls,' especially if stirred up by "designing persons" and promises of 'social salvation,' and attempt to produce change through 'revolutionary action.'⁵² Barnett himself saw the problem as one of achieving an amicable peace between rich and poor by finding the cultural means of bringing together the 'two nations.'⁵³ R.B.Haldane was another important member of the national efficiency group.

He was also a keen supporter of extension programmes, and future Lord Chancellor in both Liberal and Labour governments. His views show how the proponents of national efficiency linked together a concern for a renewal of leadership qualities with the generation of a cultural mystique through education. In the course of his Rectorial address at Edinburgh in 1907, Haldane asserted that 'when a leader of genius comes forward the people may bow down before him, and surrender their wills, and eagerly obey,' since 'to obey the commanding voice was to rise to a further and wider outlook, and to gain a fresh purpose.' To this end, students must live for their work: 'So only can they make themselves accepted leaders; so only can they aspire to form a part of that priesthood of humanity to whose commands the world will yield obedience.'⁵⁴

The English Association was also founded in 1907 and applied itself to the advancement of the new English within the national culture. One of the principal figures within the Association was to be Henry Newbolt, imperialist poet, celebrant of the mystique of the public school, future chairman of the Board of Education Committee which reported on the state of English in 1921, and - like Haldane - a supporter of the national efficiency group in its aims of planning imperial policy, improving education and recapturing commercial prosperity.⁵⁵

Culture, Society and the English Association

The British, or rather English, institutions with which we have been concerned depended for their authority

upon the direct vitalising force of modes of signifying nationality and imperialism and the mobilisation of related forms of human subjectivity. In effect, within what may precisely be identified as the English pattern of cultural reproduction, 'knowledge' was expected to flow from and follow, rather than direct and shape, the meanings, experiences and pleasures of being 'English'. The newly-potent educational and cultural form that was coming to be called 'English' could thus be made to conform to this general pattern of cultural production more easily than could equally-emergent but explicitly knowledge-based disciplines within scientific, philosophical and sociological fields. Furthermore, if English could operate at the very base of signification and subjectivity, it could claim to shape all those forms of knowledge which existed above. This was implicit in the assumption that English could reach down to the deepest level or stuff that made up the vital centre of lived experience and sensuous meaning - the very 'quick' of life - and thus offer palpable contact with the essential movement of being. With such a cultural form, the development of strategies for educational action and for philosophies of education as a whole could flow from English, rather than the other way around. This, indeed, was the basis upon which the Newbolt Report of 1921 would be constructed. The invention of English should be looked on as the institutionalisation of ways of making sense of the relation between 'culture' and 'society' through the development of a specific pedagogy.

When Raymond Williams began his pioneering work on the culture and society in the 1950s⁵⁶ the terms of the problematic on which he drew were those of the institutional and cultural programme which English had by then become. English had its well-established pantheon of great names and works, modes of response and patterns of meaning and knowledge. While recent work addressed to examining the tradition of debate on culture and society, and education as well, has indeed confirmed the existence of a search for modes of 'Culture' during the second half of the nineteenth century,⁵⁷ the current crisis and renewed attempts to remould English and Englishness have allowed the focus to be shifted to the more general social and cultural forces that were in play during the earlier period.⁵⁸ Once it is accepted that the cultural politics that shaped English are not synonymous with what have come to be taken as qualities and features intrinsic to the discipline itself, English can then be understood in terms of its especial fittedness to more general cultural and educational strategies. Contrary to many previous historical accounts based upon a problematic generated from within the discipline, English is best seen as an invented or constructed cultural form which was a culmination of attempts to produce a truly 'English' theory of society and a prospectus for cultural renewal. In the work of establishing this new form within the national system of education the English Association was a key force.

The Association was set up to promote the maintenance of 'correct use of English, spoken and written,' the

recognition of English as 'an essential element in the national education,' and the discussion of teaching methods and advanced study as well as the correlation of school with university work.⁵⁹ From the beginning, personnel attached to the new Board of Education seem to have been sympathetic to the view of English as the most natural candidate to lead a mission of cultural renewal: at any rate, the English Association from its inception set out to ensure that such was the case. George Saintsbury, Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh, in his presidential address to the A.G.M. of the Scottish branch in 1907, emphasised the importance of bringing the influence of the Association to bear on questions of education when they came before the legislature. In this way the Association 'might really be the means of exercising a not inconsiderable leverage on educational performance and educational arrangements.'⁶⁰ Within a few years firm and formal contacts with the Board of Education had been established. Arthur Acland, the Liberal politician and president of the Association, announced in 1910 that the Board of Education 'would welcome help from us in putting forward a scheme for English teaching in Secondary Schools.'⁶¹ This was confirmed by a statement carried in the next bulletin of the Association:

The Board of Education has now given effect to the intimation conveyed by Mr. Acland and vaguely announced by him at the Annual meeting. They have definitely asked for representatives of the Association to confer with their officers in order to discuss a circular which they are preparing on the teaching of English in secondary schools. In this way, for the first time, the Association obtains official recognition.⁶²

In 1917 the Association was largely responsible for convincing the Board of the need for a Departmental Committee to investigate the state of the teaching of English in England, and to propose plans for future developments. When the Committee was subsequently formed, eight of its fourteen members were from the Association.⁶³ It is best to see the new Association not so much as a pressure-group founded to further the professional interests of teachers of English, but rather as a class-based mobilisation which drew in not only most professors of English Language and Literature, but also like-minded politicians, administrators and 'men-of-letters'. In the person of the (non-academic) Henry Newbolt, who subsequently was to chair the Departmental Committee, it found a figure who could articulate many of the themes to which both the fledgling discipline and the Association itself adhered. Newbolt was quick to express his hostility to the whole notion of formal 'institutions'. When about to become a member of the Association in 1913, he is reported to have remarked that,

Nothing in the world caused him such dismay, such instant feelings of antagonism, as catching sight of any institution whatsoever. ... He was coming inside the English Association with the hope of assuring himself that his own principles were being carried out by it.⁶⁴

As a writer on the early days of the Association subsequently noted, the movement tended to work by modes of informal 'social lubrication'.⁶⁵ Throughout the years up to the publication of the 1921 Report, the Association had a

policy of alternating the occupants of its presidential chair between men-of-letters (such as Saintsbury, Bradley, Ker, Herford and Gosse) and representatives of the official parliamentary culture (including Acland, Balfour, Morley and Asquith). It also at various times gathered into its ambit important figures within general educational administration (e.g. Hadow, Sadler, Barker, Curzon, Mansbridge, and a host of college Heads, Registrars, Provosts and Vice-Chancellors). Perhaps the Association derived its authority from its ability to mobilise such a wide diversity of influential persons on the basis of its anti-institutional stance.

In bringing into relation such personnel, the Association also brought together all of the cultural and institutional themes that have been detailed above. Members of the Association recognised, for example, potential dangers as arising from the loss of aristocratic leadership, and the rise of a cultural market-place, which urgently necessitated the use of literary culture to bring about an apparently spontaneous consent to a regenerated leadership. As one speaker at the A.G.M. of 1909 put it:

The old standards have decayed, the aristocracy no longer take the intellectual lead; men of letters and booksellers are left face to face with a multitude of readers whose intellectual appetites and tastes are emancipated from all direct influence and control. If we look at the state of our imaginative literature, we must observe in it a grossness, even an indecency, of conception, and an inflowing tide of slang and vulgarity and other forms of ugliness which tend to corrupt imagination and barbarize language. These are the inevitable results of leaving the merit of a book to be determined exclusively by market value. ⁶⁶

But it was also recognised that such circumstances called for different strategies within the respective elementary and higher sectors of education. While for elementary pupils the object was to instil a feeling for the grandeur of the national language and literature, within the higher sector it was felt to be necessary to fire the pupils' and students' imaginations: to provide indirect moral inculcation through pleasurable and even joyous responses to literary values.⁶⁷ The Association applied itself to ways of resolving the continuing tension between the utilitarian needs of business and industry and the reinvigoration of a cultural leadership, its avowed objective being to reconcile practical utility, enlightened patriotism and the 'human ideal' in education.⁶⁸ It attempted, in fact, the condensation at a practical and institutional level of what theorists had been attempting to think into existence during the latter part of the previous century: i.e. the establishment of a depoliticised 'Culture' which would bind the disparate interests within the nation into a single organic unity sharing a common heritage. And, as a number of discussions within the Association show, what gave English its peculiar potency for this cultural project was its apparent potential to reach directly to the roots of subjective human response through modes of 'appreciation' as opposed to mere factual instruction in the manner of the earlier English Subjects and English Language, Literature and History. F.W. Moorman, Professor of English Language at Leeds and an active supporter of the W.E.A., told the annual conference in 1914 that the main purpose of the

teaching of English literature was not to impart knowledge, or to 'equip students for the conquest of the world;' indeed, the object was not to 'teach' at all but to 'delight' and, 'for some, to sweeten leisure.'⁶⁹ This should be compared with the substance of the motion moved by P.J.Hartog, Academic Registrar of University College, London, on behalf of the Association at the Federal Conference of Education in 1907:

That the object of the teaching of English should be to develop in pupils the power of thought and expression, and the power of appreciating the content of great literary works, rather than to inculcate a knowledge of grammatical, philological and literary detail.⁷⁰

Such an objective involved establishing what, in practice, were to stand as the proper constituents of the new English, and their relation to each other. The record of debates within the Association reveals the gradual emergence of 'literature' (sometimes used as a synonym for 'poetry') at first as an essential feature of English, and then as its primary constituent. The debate which followed Hartog's motion took the form of a 'heated controversy' over the relative merits of grammar, philology and literary detail as opposed to the contents of great works. But these were not the only oppositions registered within the new English during early debates. There were moments at which an older pattern of connotation held the field of debate and supported a direct opposition between the very terms 'English' (in the sense associated with the 'English Subjects') and 'literature', as when a contributor to a

debate in 1908 distinguished sharply between the teaching of English and literature on the grounds that the latter involved the 'interpretation of life' and was therefore unsuited for teaching to children as opposed to university students.⁷¹ Discussions directed towards the school sectors commonly worked with a tripartite division of English into language, composition or essay writing, and literature;⁷² while, on occasion, 'literature' was conceived as being in polar opposition to language, or composition, or even history.⁷³ C.H. Herford, Professor of English Literature at Manchester, pointed out in 1918 that 'English' or 'English Language and Literature' was 'a loose name for a group of studies differing in educational aim, and in the faculties they appealed to, and those they demanded for successful prosecution.' Nonetheless, these studies had two chief aspects: the science of language and literature, and the medium of a 'broader culture'.⁷⁴ In general, though, there was a clear movement towards substituting for 'English Language and Literature' and the 'English Subjects' the simple all-embracing term 'English', and this went with the assumption of a new focus. English was essentially seen as concerned with the contents of 'great works' and as the medium for transmitting a 'broader culture', which meant establishing a dominant role for literature. The conception of the centrality of literature could be tacitly and uncontroversially assumed in a 1919 bulletin of the Association where the general goal of promoting 'the exact study of our literature which the English Association has at its heart' is simply stated as self-evident.⁷⁵

Of course, the nature of this 'broader culture' that was to be transmitted by means of English required some consideration, if only by attending to imponderable notions like 'poetry', 'form' and 'style'. In 1910, Herbert Grierson, Professor of English Literature at Aberdeen, was reported as affirming that 'Happily we had come to see that the final justification for English Literature was English Literature,' in an address to the Association;⁷⁶ while the Principal of the Glasgow Training College went on to confirm (referring to the role of teachers as moral educationalists) that 'their first aim as English teachers was to teach literature as literature.'⁷⁷ Nonetheless, while the ultimate value of literature was taken to be guaranteed by the poetic vision or form that inhered in it, the very imponderability of this mode of signification rendered it potentially uncontrollable or even subversive. As Macneile Dixon, Professor of English Language and Literature at Glasgow, reiterated on a number of occasions, poetic inspiration tended at times towards 'madness' and was thus in need of the stable guardianship of 'tradition.'⁷⁸ The enthronement of 'literary' or 'poetic' values as the spiritual ruling force within English was completed towards the end of the period, in the wake of two decades of discussion within the Association.⁷⁹ And, indeed, those poetic or literary qualities which stood as the validating centre for the new English (what Newbolt called the 'silent tongue' peculiarly available to the ear of the writer)⁸⁰ were never those of an out-and-out aestheticism.

Many agreed with A.C. Bradley's claim, made in his presidential address of 1912, that while poetry was an end in itself and a source of pleasure, it was also a vehicle for morality.⁸¹ So here was the ultimate source of value in literature as in society: moral authority. The force of this moral authority becomes clearer when discussions within the Association touching specifically upon the pedagogic uses of literature and indeed language are considered. Here the double emphasis upon the need to arrest cultural degeneration and to preserve the national heritage was overridingly in evidence.

For example, the critic and essayist John Bailey was a figure who linked the National Trust with the English Association in his concern equally for the heritage and literary values. Bailey was chairman of the Association from 1912 to 1915, and president in 1925-6. He was also a key figure in the National Trust and chairman of its executive committee between 1912 and 1931. At a meeting of the Association in 1913, Bailey was described by Caroline Spurgeon (the first woman to be appointed to a British university professorship in arts; she was a University of London Professor of English Literature at Bedford College from 1913; and a member of the Newbolt Committee) as 'a treasure keeper' in his role as 'a custodian of some of the greatest and most precious national possessions, England's places of historical interest and beauty.' Had it not been for him and his colleagues at the National Trust many old and historical buildings would have suffered. Now, as chairman of the

English Association, 'he was but widening the sphere of his watchfulness.'⁸² The care which Bailey lavished on his 'treasures' within the National Trust was at least equalled by his work as activist and propagandist for the 'eternal values' of poetry through the Association and in the pages of the Newbolt Report where his contribution to the section on the universities was particularly notable.⁸³ Much of what is included in Section VII, 'The Universities' could easily have come from works published under Bailey's name. There is the statement that 'the reading of English poetry' is 'generally recognised as a rational way of spending time ... a way of educating, of drawing out, the best things in the imagination, the mind and the spirit of anyone, old or young.'⁸⁴ Great works of literature 'stand utterly above any history;' literature is 'an art' rather than science or speculation (philosophy), thus - unlike history or philosophy - great literature is 'never superseded.'⁸⁵ This should be compared with the claim in Bailey's 1926 English Association pamphlet that

there is as much stability in aesthetic judgements as in ethical or political or philosophical or scientific; [and] the reputations of poets and artists are not less but more assured than those of biologists or statesmen or metaphysicians.⁸⁶

He then asks 'how should one recognise authority?' and answers that 'degrees only prove knowledge; look among those who really love art and literature.' He goes on to conclude that:

The artist, if he really is an artist, possesses absolute value which he cannot lose: the man of science, once refuted or superseded, retains no absolute but only an historical importance. ⁸⁷

But the moral authority invested in English literature was not simply 'eternal', it was also resolutely national. Perhaps this was most concisely articulated in the course of the presidential address to the Association by Sidney Lee in 1918. Lee, a key figure not only within the Association since its foundation, but also with the Dictionary of National Biography from its earliest days, in referring to the aims of the English Association suggested 'that English be the constant, the unresting ally and companion of whatever other studies the call of national enlightenment and national efficiency may prescribe. ⁸⁸ One way in which some members of the Association hoped that English in education would help achieve such ends was by addressing itself to countering linguistic perversion.' S.K.Ratcliffe referred in 1909 to the need for the 'preservation, or restoration, of spoken English under the present conditions of rapid degeneration.' He talked of the language going to pieces 'before our eyes,' especially under the influence of the 'debased dialect of the Cockney ... which is spreading from our schools and training-colleges all over the country. In ten years' time the English language will not be worth speaking.' ⁸⁹ A Mr. Shawcross, chairman of the examination board of the N.U.T., offered a contribution to this discussion in much the same vein. He spoke of the

'revolutionary change' in the teaching of English in elementary schools over the previous ten years. He went on (in the words of the bulletin report) to give 'his experience of Manchester children under the old system':

they could parse accurately and analyse poetry, but they spoke the perverted Lancashire dialect of the towns, had a narrow vocabulary, and could not understand diction ... The conditions of the children's home life tended to nullify the efforts of the teacher to instil a little culture ... It was even possible to get children in the slum districts of a great city to love such a poem as Wordsworth's "Daffodils". He wished to put in a plea for the teaching of pure poetry in the primary school. Get a child to love a poem; every word and phrase in it need not be understood at first. The understanding would develop as the child grew older, and a clearer explanation could be given than was possible in earlier years.⁹⁰

Arthur Acland, the then president of the Association, had already stated in his address to this meeting that in the promotion of 'effective use of the English language,' one of the best means was 'to foster a love of English literature.'⁹¹ Thus, English literature was seen by members of the Association as the most effective vehicle for establishing through elementary education acceptable standards of linguistic usage. The goal was to implant 'standard' English forms (linguistic and cultural) by inculcating a 'love' of literature (the most that might be hoped for in the elementary sector).⁹² Within the higher sectors (preparatory, secondary, grammar and public schools; and colleges of various kinds) the aim was much broader. This involved, at the very least, the nullification of any middle-class 'hatred' for learning, and for

its replacement by a taste for the finer stuff of literature; and even, more ambitiously, a 'quickenning' of the whole spiritual nature.⁹³ This strategy for inculcating a general love of literature and for more explicit interventions into the flow of subjective responses, experiences and pleasures, had a great deal in common with the programme for a renewed Liberalism being developed at this time by L.T.Hobhouse:

The heart of Liberalism is the understanding that progress is not a matter of mechanical contrivance, but of the liberation of living spiritual energy. Good mechanism is that which provides the channels wherein such energy can flow unimpeded, unobstructed by its own exuberance of output, vivifying the social structure, expanding and enobling the life of the mind.⁸⁴

Returning to Acland's presidential address of 1909, it is notable that he resumed exactly these themes, but now applied to English literature. In promoting effective of the English language, he claimed, one of the best means was to foster a love of English literature which could be achieved by removing all 'deadening and mechanical influences' thereby inducing 'a hope that the movement [centred upon the English Association] would penetrate the homes of the future.' 'Unless the love of literature was developed in the home, little progress would be made.' he concluded.⁹⁵

This also introduces another aspect of the Association's cultural programme. It is best described as the attempt to propagate a sense of qualitative, as opposed to functional, literacy; a programme directed through the

educational system but aimed, in the final analysis, at home life. As a speaker at the 1913 conference put it, the need was to promote 'that scholarly tone without which even the omniverous reader might yet remain illiterate.'⁹⁶ Since the 'nation' to which the broader cultural mission of the Association was addressed was one of homes, the aim was not so much 'to make the nation feel the grandeur of English literature as such,' as to make 'English literature a matter for education in English homes and schools',⁹⁷ (the words are Montagu Butler's in his presidential address of 1908; he was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a former head of Harrow School).

If the prosecution of a sense of qualitative literacy within the homes of the nation was a fundamental strategy of the Association, in its more ambitious and sophisticated form this strategy aimed at bringing the raw subjectivity of the student or pupil into palpable contact with that very stuff of life considered to inhere within the 'sacred' text. This goal had important consequences for the role given, not only to critical and scholarly commentaries and other incrustations upon the essential text, but also to the teacher: 'In dealing with literature in any full sense, to efface oneself, to stand away, between the child and literature, is the highest and not the easiest of duties which the teacher can undertake.'⁹⁸ Walter Raleigh, Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford, also emphasised this negative role for all intermediaries between text and reader when he

warned of the dangers of any 'immodesty' on the part of the teacher. Teachers of literature must avoid any attempt to become 'living representatives of all the mighty dead.' Instead they must facilitate the proper mode of encounter between reader and text, that of 'falling in love.'⁹⁹ The pleasures of experiencing that 'joyous thing'¹⁰⁰ that was literature were intended to elevate the student into an effective domain where a higher moral tone might be inculcated. As an ultimate, a more elevated sense of 'good form' or 'style' might be attained.¹⁰¹ However, some statements by members of the Association reveal that the effacement required by this procedure was no more than a tactical ploy, since one of the dominant assumptions of moral education was 'that morality was to be made a conscious aim of the teacher, but concealed from the pupils, who were to imbibe the influence from literature as habit or experience.'¹⁰²

The programme of the English Association, and of the emergent discipline of modern English, can thus be seen (at least during the first two decades of this century) as addressed to resolving problems posed for the functioning of 'nationalising' institutions over the previous twenty or so years. In general outline, these problems resulted from trying to bind together into an organic unity wildly disparate social elements and classes. The new English drew on existing discourses and institutions in such a way as to offer a resolution which linked patriotic affection to the pleasures and joys considered to be available

through the medium of the national literature. The programme was part of a wider set of developments which produced more vernacular and secular modes of cultural authority which enabled the spiritual renewal of the dominant ruling bloc at a moment during which older classical modes were no longer suited to addressing all the groups of which this bloc was now composed. The other face of this new form was the one it showed to the mass of the population in an effort to achieve 'spontaneous' consent both to a renewed leadership and to a national mythology. As such, the programme was faced, however, with serious dilemmas. For one thing the attempt to transfer a truly aristocratic sense of je ne sais quoi, or 'style', to the vernacular cultural form in the 'mechanical' context of a much-expanded system of formal education, continued to pose problems throughout the period. For another, the willing and loving submission of the whole population to the seductions of literary culture was, in practice, subject to much resistance 'from below'. And, indeed, both these dilemmas are clearly registered in the Newbolt Report, and would provide grounds for a substantial assault on the programme from the 1930s.¹⁰³

If the summation of the programme for the new English under the leadership of the English Association is to be found in the pages of the Newbolt Report, its publication stands also at the beginning of a process of transformation and revision within the Association itself. While the Report itself added little that was new to the strategies developed by the Association over the previous couple of

decades, it systematised and concretised those strategies into a single developed statement and, in so doing, provided a discursive seal between the Board of Education as a formal state institution and the 'anti-institutional' English Association. Once this had been achieved, little was left for the Association to do. An increasingly professionalised, hierarchised and autonomous set of educational institutions offered little space for the continued influence of a class-based general mobilisation like the English Association. In consequence, during the 1920s the Association lost its former unity of purpose and its mobilising power within the governing and academic cultures. By the following decade it faced a financial crisis and had diverted its energies in two separate directions: it supported scholarship in English (rather than pedagogy), and - in divesting itself of its overt leadership of the mission of educational renewal through English - concentrated on 'the popular diffusion of literary culture.'¹⁰⁴

Conclusions

I have argued that the movement mobilised within and by the English Association drew its energy and force from the apparent capacity of 'English' as a novel cultural form to resolve a number of problems posed for the functioning of national institutions between 1880 and 1920. In one sense, there can be no doubt that total success was achieved, if this is measured in terms of the degree to which the new English came to be established as the core of

the modern curriculum at almost all levels of the national education system from the 1920s; indeed, this is the sort of conclusion that most previous histories of English have encouraged. But since the object of the present cultural history is not simply to plot, from within, the development of an academic discipline, it is necessary to assess successes and failures from a different standpoint. The greatest success which flowed from the movement for the advancement of English in this period was in its effects within the professional classes, and the middle classes as a whole, where the new cultural and pedagogic form prepared the ground for, and subsequently helped to sustain, a renewal of modes of public communication (especially within broadcasting, journalism, the cinema and publicity). But as a mobilising centre addressing the whole nation, the success of English was never other than partial. Nonetheless, in terms of public administration - of the building of administrative layers at sensitive points between the official state and the generalised public - the new English came to occupy a strategically important role. This was notable within the national education system where, from the 1920s, the ensemble of pedagogic practices and knowledges began to be reordered around a 'modern' curriculum centred upon English. This was in marked contrast to the situation in some other European countries where more formally theoretical disciplines came to be placed at the curricular core of the nation. In Britain, however, English has functioned to provide a substitute for any 'theory' of the national life in the form of an imponder-

able base from which the quality of the national life can be assessed. While it has never resolved long-standing tensions between discourses on 'culture', 'science', 'philanthropy' (later transmuted to 'welfare'), and 'national efficiency' (later, 'wealth creation'), it has provided a cultural domain apparently immune to the ravages caused by their continuing conflicts. The sense of 'Englishness' that English has come to signify was apparently so free of any narrow patriotism or overtly nationalist or imperialist politics that any debate about the meaning of the term itself seemed unnecessary until quite recently.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGLISH AND CULTURAL POLICY

In studying the history of an academic discipline such as English, one inevitably seeks evidence which will reveal the discipline's collective identity and offer both a sense of general agency and of the fundamental dynamics underlying its discursive and institutional reproduction. Unfortunately, as has been indicated in the Introduction, in the case of English Studies it is difficult to find the kinds of comprehensive policy statements, manifestos, outlines of common aims and objectives, which might provide such evidence across the whole range of its practical activities. However, two significant possibilities follow from this difficulty.

In the first case, such rare comprehensive statements of policy as are to be found can be taken to offer a hermeneutic key to the most fundamental ideological impulses within the discipline. Thus the history of English Studies can be characterised as an unfolding process leading to a 'realization of the aims of the discipline itself.'¹ Then there is the contrasting possibility that a consistent failure to formulate policies or principles in a manner which is open to critical analysis and public debate may itself be an important contributory factor to the structuring of discourses within the discipline, and thereby to its conditions of reproduction. As in the case of patronage of the arts, it may be that the conditions underlying the reproduction of actual systematic practices

cannot easily be inferred from official statements of policy.² For the purposes of the kind of long term historical analysis attempted here, it has proved best to assume that neither the fundamental conditions of reproduction nor the boundaries of English as a field of cultural activity are known in advance. In fact, 'English' as a concept and set of practices has proved to be both flexible in its extension and in the internal disposition of its constituent parts. Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasise the extent to which English has on occasions proved extremely resistant to fundamental transformation or realignment even in the face of insistent policy pressures. Thus, even at those moments where the business of policy-formulation has been rendered explicit, it is necessary to take into account failures to translate expressed intentions into active practices.³

The present chapter is a case study of such contradictory pressures. The Newbolt Report (1921) has been seen as providing the most comprehensive and authoritative collective manifesto for English ever issued. Equally, the report has been read as revealing the essential features of English as a discipline. However, it will be argued here that only a careful and historically-informed reading can provide evidence which contributes significantly to an understanding both of the fundamental conditions of reproduction of the discipline and of the limits placed upon its discursive flexibility. The object is not to provide some heretofore unrevealed final truth or underlying ideology for this text, but to understand its

discursive organisation within the contradictory pressures of concrete historical circumstances.

Previous writers have largely failed to take into account the obvious fact that we are faced, not with some elaboration of 'critical ideology', but with a government document. As Carole Snee⁴ has pointed out, writers of a Report of this kind have available only certain forms of writing and discursive strategies which are determined partly by their own cultural location and partly by expectations of what a government report should be. Iain Wright has read the Newbolt Report as a manifesto for English teachers in the context of an insecurity regarding their raison d'etre. The Report, both directly and as reworked by I.A.Richards and F.R.Leavis, is seen to have offered a sense of security for providing the emotional satisfaction of a socially-regenerative role. In this manner Newbolt supplied a new role for a new profession, and the teacher of English became a missionary member of the true cultural vanguard of the race. With the rise of the Scrutiny movement, this manifesto was put into practical effect.⁵ According to Margaret Mathieson the Report reinforced the notion that English was a subject which needed special people as its teachers by contributing to the discipline's ideology of social and individual improvement. English thus became one of the chief temples of the human spirit, rather than a limited academic subject, by virtue of what was seen as its unique power to improve character and transform society.⁶ Both Mathieson and Patrick Parrinder

take subsequent developments within Cambridge to have put into practical enactment the essential policies of the Report. For Parrinder the Report and its institutional embodiment represented a defeat of philology by liberal humanism, and a related shift in the role of the professor of literature from scientist and scholar to preacher and prophet.⁷ Finally, in Chris Baldick's more comprehensive account, the Report is considered to have contributed to the development of a system of education centred upon the native language and literature. The Newbolt Report 'became a guiding influence upon the development of English Studies, particularly in schools, but also in the universities through the work of I.A.Richards.'⁸

Apart from the question of the degree and kind of influence ascribed by these writers to the Report (which is considered below pp.172-75), all of these accounts fail to reveal the contradictory currents both within the Newbolt discourse and within the institutional structures which the Report wished to influence. A detailed social, historical and textual analysis of the Report calls into question its characterisation either as the ideological manifesto of a new profession, or as the cornerstone for Cambridge English. Nor can it be understood in terms of the defeat of one system of thought or educational principles by another. Only Baldick comes close to identifying the full cultural and institutional significance of Newbolt, but even here there is no sense of the differences between intentions and outcomes. As the following analysis will show, while the Newbolt Report manifests and seeks to cement in discourse

a broader movement of involvement by the state in cultural policy, many questions remain as to the nature of the actual mechanisms used; questions for which existing accounts of the Report provide few answers. It remains to be established whether the strategy of the Report for constructing a national consciousness through English in education was in fact or in intention addressed to providing a central ideology for English teachers. Certainly the Report must be approached as an active element in the construction of institutions and the formulations of policies. However, as will be shown, neither the forms of institutional and policy initiatives envisaged, nor the actual outcomes of those initiatives, conform with the accounts of the role of the Report in the history of English Studies which have been discussed above.

The detailed analysis of the Newbolt Report given below shows it to have attempted to develop a strategy which would effectively link state concerns with concerns of groups outside its formal ambit. As noted in Chapter Two above, Henry Newbolt himself, in an address to the English Association, had expressed his antipathy to institutions of any kind,⁹ yet both Newbolt and the Association played a crucial role in the preparation of this government report. Indeed, one way of viewing the Newbolt Report is as the outcome of a bestowal by the state upon a civil association the right to report and make recommendations on public policy. Furthermore, the Report represents a familiar tactic through which influential groups

are recruited in the voluntary service of state interests and policies. It is with this conception of the Newbolt Committee in mind that I now wish to examine their Report as a statement of cultural policy in the guise of a proposal for meeting educational requirements by merely technical means.

No less than in the case of arts policy, the relation between English and public policy is a matter of cultural politics.¹⁰ Indeed, the history of public policy on arts, and of the Arts Council of Great Britain, offers real insight into the politics of English in education. In both cases the combined efforts of state functionaries, professionals, and selected volunteers from the 'community' were instrumental in shaping quasi-state institutions and policy initiatives.¹¹ Furthermore, a discourse on 'art' was a central factor for the work of the Newbolt Committee in their attempt to formulate a strategy for national cultural unity. Finally, it is notable that the moment of the Newbolt Report is also that of the establishment of the University Grants Committee as the Quango for university education. If the foundation of the U.G.C. stands as an attempt to relate narrowly-based civil institutions to the concerns of public policy and national agency,¹² the proposals contained in the Newbolt Report represent an attempt to provide for English a similar link with national policy. One other feature of the Quango administrations of cultural policy should be noted since it bears closely on the cultural significance of Newbolt.

This is the Quango's apparent insulation of spheres of cultural policy and administration from two perceived 'dangers': on the one side freedom from the danger of state control can be claimed; while, on the other, democratic accountability and involvement can be avoided.¹³ As will be seen, the Newbolt Report attempts to construct a similar status for English: as 'art' it will be said to transcend narrow state or class interests; while, as 'education' its function will be to refuse and actively combat the influence of majority cultures rather than be democratically responsible to them. Indeed, such a 'quasi-autonomous' status for English in education makes a good deal of sense when the wider strategic and social context of the Report is taken into account.

Plans for setting up the Newbolt Committee were initiated in the course of an unprecedented mobilisation of the whole population to sustain what has been described as the first 'total' war effort.¹⁴ This required the active incorporation of the mass of the population to serve the nation, at the expense of many lives. It was a process which necessarily involved cultural as well as military and civilian social administration to an extent which survived the ending of the war.¹⁵ Indeed, A.J.P. Taylor has argued that after 1918 'concern for the condition of the masses became the dominant theme of domestic politics.'¹⁶ Educational policies were not immune from this tendency in their concern with the proper constituents of a national education system, which while serving to weld the nation

into a coherent unit, would not disturb fundamental economic relations. It should be noted that the members of the Newbolt Committee, like other influential educationists such as Ernest Barker, were concerned not just about the condition of the working class, but just as much with the middle class, and particularly the salaried workers whose numbers were increasing so dramatically after the war.¹⁷ It was on the basis of such national concerns that the Committee attempted to construct a version of English which while serving the state in strategic, institutional and cultural terms, would also appear free from state control because apparently grounded in free individual identity.

The 'Introduction'

The influence of these broad parameters is clear right from the opening of the Report to such an extent that the Committee is prepared to revise its very terms of reference in the light of its wider concerns. They immediately indicate that a strategy for national cultural unity requires the linking of discourses on 'education' and 'the nation', which in turn necessitates an altered conception of 'education' itself:

The inadequate conception of the teaching of English in this country is not a separate defect which can be separately remedied. It is due to a more far-reaching failure - the failure to conceive the full meaning and possibilities of national education as a whole, and that failure again is due to a misunderstanding of the educational values to be found in the different regions of mental activity, and especially to an underestimate of the importance of the English language and literature.¹⁸

(1/4)

Already the proposed new conception of national education has been linked to the teaching of English, the object being to achieve a degree of consonance which effectively eliminates any distinction between them. In fact, English turns out to overwhelm the very concept of education itself in that the overall goal is to provide 'the best use of English as a means of intercourse and of education.' (1/5) This is by no means a minor point since, as will be shown below, the Report sets out a programme for cultural renewal which has implications well beyond the institutional boundaries of formal education. And, crucial to the direction in which the Report develops is the claim that both education and English should be properly conceived as offering guidance in the gaining of experience; experience (as will be seen) which provides a necessary foundation for the development of a free humane identity both at the level of the individual and of society. The successful transfer of such experience from teacher to pupil is taken to require a sense of a 'community of interest' which 'would be felt instinctively and immediately by the pupil', of which

The most valuable for all purposes are those experiences of human relations which are gained by contact with human beings. This contact may take place in the intercourse of the classroom, the playground, the home and the outer world, or solely in the inner world of thought and feeling, through the personal records of action and experience known to us under the form of literature. (4/8)

In subsequent sections of the Report it becomes increasingly evident that, with the single exception of literature, all of these sources of experience are to be

considered as potentially corrupting. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the Committee deplores the actual gulf which separates education from life. One major tactic of the Report is to transcend this paradox by recourse to very particular mobilisations of these deceptively simple terms 'experience' and 'life'. This is achieved by treating highly selective versions of experience and life as if they covered the whole range of experiential processes and forms of living; which, in fact, excludes the normal experiences and lives of the vast majority of the population. The same applies to the Committee's use of the term 'reality' which, when placed in significant opposition to 'convention', refers back to the same selective cultural parameters. The point of this exercise is to limit the terms experience, life, and reality in such a manner as to enable the claim that popular access to all three can only be gained by means of art which, for the purposes of national education effectively means English and especially English literature.

The Report's project here is to establish that English cannot any longer be taken for granted, 'like the air we breathe or the land on which we live.' (14/29) Of course, prior to the initiation of systems and institutions for diffusing a national culture, this is precisely what had been taken for granted within ruling groups. In the discourse mobilised within the Report, though, the use of English 'does not come to all by nature, but is a fine art, and must be taught as a fine art.' (14/21) This claim is made in the context of another significant opposition within

the Report, that between the 'English mind' and 'the public mind'.

English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it. It is itself the English mind, the element in which we live and work. In its full sense it connotes not merely an acquaintance with a certain number of terms, or the power of spelling these terms without gross mistakes. It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves in our native environment.
(14/20)

Set beside this, the public mind is indeed impoverished:

We find that the nature of art and its relation to human life and welfare is not sufficiently understood or appreciated in this country. The prevalence of a low view of art, and especially the art of literature has been a main cause of our defective conception of national education. Hitherto literature has ... suffered in the public mind both misunderstanding and degradation.
(14/20-1)

The notion of art upon which the Report draws is at once so general as to be almost unspecifiable, and so pragmatic as to offer a highly potent means of making practical and discursive links between English and education: 'The writing of English is essentially an art, and the effect of English literature in education is the effect of an art upon the development of human character.' (14/20) English literature, as the art most readily available for education, is seen also as a means of encouraging goodness and strengthening the will, a central factor given the 'vast importance to a nation of moral training.' (9/5)

The Committee considers that 'true education' is most readily and completely available through the works of

English literature, while also emphasising its difference from mere 'book learning'.

Books are not things in themselves, they are merely the instruments through which we hear the voices of those who have known life better than ourselves. (11/16-17)

Furthermore, since 'the common unaided senses of man are not equal to the realisation of the world,' education should provide the means by which the 'dull superficial sight of the multitude' can be 'illuminated and helped to penetrate in the direction of reality.' (11/17)

It should be noted that the domain of 'reality' to which the Report here refers is taken to encompass both the essence of true English cultural and racial identity and of true humanity. In this manner the discourse of the Report seeks to constitute a sense of 'English' which is concordant with all that is considered culturally desirable, valuable and authentic, both from the point of view of society and of the individual. While the Introduction has little to say on language specifically, what is said conforms to this broad sense of English. Language in general is understood as communication and thought, command over which must 'take precedence over all other branches of learning.' However, an important distinction is inserted here between 'the language properly conceived, and perverse forms of speech and thought: among the vast mass of the population, it is certain that if a child is not learning good English, he is learning bad English, and probably bad habits of thought; and some of the mischief done may never afterwards be undone.' (6/10)

Very quickly, though, the Report moves to a much broader and more flexible conception of 'English':

It is probable that no one would be found to dissent from this proposition [the fundamental importance of the teaching of the English language], in which the meaning of the word English is limited to the language itself as a means of communication. The word, however, in our present enquiry, has other and wider meanings, and these must now be brought into consideration. (7/10)

It is soon evident that these other and wider meanings cluster around a specific conception of the national culture. Thus, the Report refers to 'English in the highest sense' as 'the channel for formative culture for all English people, and the medium of the creative art by which all English writers of distinction, whether poets, historians, philosophers, or men of science, have secured for us the power of realising some part of their own experience of life.' (8/12)

There follows a passage in which the extended metaphor of free liberating and fertilising flow situates English literature as the natural and unpolluted source for the most valid native experience and sense of identity:

We are driven, then, in our search for the experience to be found in great art, to enquire whether there is available any similar and sufficient channel of supply which is within reach of all without distinction. We feel that, for an Englishman, to ask this question is at the same time to answer it. To every child in this country, there is one language with which he must necessarily be familiar, and by that, and by that alone he has the power of drawing directly from one of the great literatures of the world. Moreover, if we explore the course of English literature, if we consider from what source its stream has sprung, by what

tributaries it has been fed, and with how rich and full a current it has come down to us, we shall see that it has other advantages not to be found elsewhere. There are mingled in it, as only in the greatest of rivers could be mingled, the fertilising influences flowing down from many countries and from many ages of history. Yet all these have been subdued to form a stream native to our own soil. The flood of diverse human experience which it brings down to our own life and time is in no sense or degree foreign to us, but has become the native experience of men of our own race and culture. (8/13-14)

But those fertile cultural fields which are said to have been generated and sustained by this vitalising flow of truly native experience turn out to be presently inhabited only by a 'limited section' of the society. (10/15) The 'experience of men of our race and culture' in fact stands for the quite narrow culture of which the Report itself forms a part. It is a remarkable feat of cultural self-assertion to claim that such a culture could be taken out to, and disseminated among the 'multitudes', a feat which only the buoyant sense of the self-evident value of imperial colonisation could sustain. As we shall see, however, this sense of cultural vitality later comes to be severely inhibited by fears of social instability. This will be registered, among other ways, by a shift from metaphors of natural flow to metaphors of invasion and veneration. For the moment the writers of the Report consider that their educational programme of cultural diffusion by means of English is 'in no way impossible or visionary since,

an education of this kind is the greatest benefit which could be conferred upon 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 privilege of a limited section. (10/15)

The 'nation' referred to here is one within which social divisions are seen as having purely 'accidental and conventional' causes. (15/21-2) Thus, it is outside the power of industry and commerce to offer a remedy. Although 'commercial enterprise may have a legitimate and desirable object, ... that object cannot claim to be the satisfaction of any of the three great national affections - the love of truth, the love of beauty, and the love of righteousness.' (14/21) As will become clear, this claim is crucial to the development of the Report's strategy, given that the rise of modern industrial society is taken to be a major progenitor of contemporary 'accidental and conventional' social and cultural divisions. Indeed, it is from this base that the Report will go on to conclude that only the state, in its cultural and even spiritual manifestation, is capable of overcoming the forces making for national disunity.

Despite such transmutations, the tasks of spiritualising institutions of state power was to prove to be no simple one. Nonetheless, the Committee considered that the time was now ripe, and the instruments available, for achieving this enormous ambition: 'We have the advantage given us by the necessity of a new departure among rapidly changing conditions, and by the opportunity of avoiding

some causes of past failure.' (10/15) The post-war world seemed ripe for new institutional initiatives of cultural 'extension' drawing equally on the spiritual forces of art, in the form of English, and established traditions of extended state and voluntary public activities.

As to the first of these, the Report simply endorses Board of Education thinking on the educational value of English, and more particularly English literary works.

(16/24) Like the unimpeded flow of the 'native' culture, the spiritual greatness of the literary work is uncontestable:

'the greater the work the more clearly it speaks for itself;'

(16/24) even the teacher of English must bow before the experience of those great minds with which the works offer contact. This would allow a sympathetic bond between members of society to be subjectively sealed. (11/15) And, as to institutional extensions, the culminating sentences of the Introduction propose appropriate measures of mobilisation: 'The enrolment of a fraternity of itinerant preachers on English literature ... would be a step in accord with other movements of the time and with our national tradition of unpaid public service.' (17/25) In fact, the final sentence articulates the crucial link between public policy, national unity, cultural extension and the systematic mobilisation of such public servants:

Nothing would, in our belief, conduce more to the unity and harmony of the nation than a public policy directed to the provision of equal intellectual opportunities for all, and service to this end would be doubly effective if it came voluntarily as from those who have already received their inheritance, and desire

to share with the rest of their countrymen
that in which their life and freedom most
truly consist. (17/26)

When formulated as 'conclusions and recommendations' all of
this is reduced to two policy planks, one for 'our' education
and the other for English:

1. That our national education needs to be perfected by
being scientifically reformulated as a universal,
reasonable, and liberal process of development.
2. That for such an Education, the only basis possible
is English. (348)

In reading the body of the Report it is clear that such a
'refounding' is to involve establishing a programme for
'raising the mass' of the 'general population'. (17/25)

While this is undoubtedly a cultural policy and programme
which is intended to administer to 'national unity', it is
dressed up as a scientific and national response to estab-
lished 'educational' needs.

Interestingly, no mention of national unity is to be
found either within the formal Conclusions and Recommendat-
ions or within the paragraph glosses of the Table of
Contents.

Similarly, the term 'English' is not as inert or
technically neutral as it appears in the Recommendations.
The specific educational practices proposed as 'English'
within the body of the Introduction consist of systematic
training in (a) correct pronunciation and clear articulat-
ion in the sounded speech of Standard English; (b) clear

and correct oral expression and writing in Standard English; and (c) reading both aloud, and for access to information and especially literary experience. (13/19) Of course no explicit justification for choosing such criteria of correctness are stated other than the supposedly inherent qualities flowing from a 'native' linguistic and literary tradition. The English which is, then, to be formulated as the major instrument for achieving the more general policy goals turns out to consist of systematic inculcation of linguistic practices, firmly aligned to a very specific sense of Englishness. Within this programme, what appears in the formal recommendations as an academic or school subject, in fact consists of approved principles and methods for cultural intervention into popular linguistic practices with the overall purpose of generating a subjective attachment to a particular sense of national identity.

'Historical Retrospect'

The centrality for the Committee's conception of English of a particular vision of national identity, is underlined in the following Chapter of the Report. No conclusions or recommendations at all arise directly from this Chapter, as is indeed appropriate for a section which purports simply to offer an objective historical narrative. Within the overall discursive architecture of the Report this narrative functions as the cultural-historical foundation for qualitative judgements of standards of correctness, and for a perception of contemporary cultural crisis.

The Committee begins by expressing surprise that the position of English within the educational system has 'scarcely any history.' (18/27) However, such a revelation could only be surprising in the light of the Committee's own characterisation of 'English' as a discipline of education, dependent in itself upon quite recent social developments (see above Chapter One). However, rather than seeing 'English' as this recently-invented pedagogic and academic regime, the Committee seeks to constitute recent developments as a simple extension to a much longer national history. Indeed, their very syntax encodes English as a self-motivating agent within a historical progression from language to literature: '... by the end of the fourteenth century the English language had definitely asserted itself against the results of the Norman Conquest and later French influences.' No longer a mixture of local dialects, Standard English 'had emerged', and the East Midland dialect 'had now become 'the King's English. Finally, 'through the works of Chaucer it became the literary language of the country.' (20/28)

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Humanist 'revolution' in educational ideas led to a prioritisation of classical literature as the means of providing a liberal education, although this was later considerably transformed into a narrow disciplinary process tied to the maintenance of social distinctions. With the increase in population from the early 19th century, education in this illiberal form was unable to adapt itself 'to the needs of

the new body of persons who turned to it for help.' (41/42)
The consequence was 'chaos resulting from the absence of any broad general basis of education, such as English offers,' (42/43) and from the lack of an English 'compactly enough built to do well in the scramble.' (54/53)

Thus, the whole thrust of what in fact is a much more extended 'retrospect' than has been indicated in this summary, is towards the construction of English as a sufficiently compact cultural instrument with which to re-found the system of education:

It will be noted that in these remarks we have given to 'English' a very wide significance. We have looked upon it almost as convertible with thought, of which we have called it the very stuff and process. We have treated it as a subject, but at the same time a method, the principal method whereby education may achieve its ultimate aim of giving a wide outlook on life. When that aim is kept in view, it will be found that English as a subject should occupy not any place which may happen to be vacant, but the first place; and that English as a method must have entry everywhere. (57/56)

Schools

The next two chapters dealing with schools make immediately apparent the importance of the foregoing historical narrative for the overall project of the Report. Since something called Standard English simply 'emerged', it can be seen legitimately as an apparently neutral linguistic standard upon which to base contemporary educational practices in the name of transmitting 'civilised speech'. (61/60) On this basis also it is legitimate to engage in

combat against the linguistic practices of the working-and lower middle-class cultural environment; or what the Committee sees as the fight against the 'powerful influence of evil habits of speech conducted in home and street.'

(60/59) Similarly, since Standard English simply 'became' the national literary language with Chaucer, all but the most basic reading can be systematically shaped according to literary requirements. Upper- and middle-class schools, in addition to simply transmitting these linguistic forms, are recommended also to use English to sift for literary ability and thus entry into classical studies. In this process the teacher is required to ensure that the pupils do not oppose human interest to ideals of scientific scholarship. (Recommendations 15 and 29)

In this manner, education (with English as its synonym) is to be constituted as a neutral servant of a natural cultural developmental process. It thus becomes a legitimate instrument for cultural intervention within the guidelines of a limited range of available cultural forms. The broader aims of this cultural programme become even clearer when the Committee turns to consider the second of its terms of reference.

Commercial and Industrial Life

A recurring theme within the Report is the inadequacy of any utilitarian or vocational form of education to the task of reconciling educational policy with what is perceived as the national interest. In considering working-

class Elementary Schools, the Committee had already attacked the idea that 'education is exclusively an affair of vocation' since in Europe it had resulted in a lamentable overproduction of superfluous and discontented clerical and professional workers. This had then been related to two other 'delusions': 'the idea that a man who works with his hands ought not to have a humane education, and the idea that when he has got one he cannot continue to work with his hands'. And, furthermore, the first thought of education must be fullness of life not professional success. Indeed, the Committee explicitly state that the whole of their Report is a protest against a utilitarian view of education on the grounds that it is 'equally disastrous for education and for healthy national life.' (60/60-2)

Thus, within the discourse of the Report, utilitarian and vocational education are seen as inadequate vehicles for the effective 'cultural nationalisation' of the working and lower middle classes; and positively dangerous to the extent that they generate unfulfilled cultural and economic expectations. In turning to the manner in which the Report deals specifically with the 'needs of business' it is immediately clear that the requirements of such cultural nationalisation are to be allowed completely to overwhelm the servicing of such needs. In fact, the Committee goes so far as to assert that business and industry have no distinctive educational needs, and is thereby able to collapse Point 2 in its terms of reference ('the needs of business, the professions and the public services') into Point 1 ('the requirements of a

liberal education'). Thus they conclude 'That "the needs of business" are best met by a liberal education.' (Recommendation 30).

Only one other 'Conclusion and Recommendation' is made under the heading 'English in Commercial and Industrial Life':

31. That 'Commercial English' is objectionable to all who have the purity of language at heart, and also unnecessary.

This is in keeping with the Report's overall strategy of elevating selected 'national' cultures forms while delegitimizing all others. It is therefore unsurprising that the Committee feels able to express a strong condemnation of 'Commercial English' without giving any serious consideration to its reasons for being, or its modes of cultural operation.

The general force of the argument is to urge that the needs of employment, and employers, should influence as little as possible overall patterns of national education. Indeed, employers are urged not to interfere with the human being's 'stages of growth' and the requirements of 'an education appropriate to those stages.' (137/133)

The incorporation of a long passage from a Board of Education memo on Evening Schools indicates that the Committee feels itself to be in consonance with the Board's thinking, not only on the inadequacies of vocational education, but also on the value of English as a force for cultural nationalisation. Here 'English' is sufficiently broadly conceived to encompass 'the study of man' - as the Board's memo puts it (141/140) - or, in the Committee's own

words, considered to be as 'wide as the English mind, and as broad as English life.' (140/136) This is yet another presentation of English in education as the proper channel for transmitting the 'story of the English people'; in effect, an imaginative, or even imaginary mode of cultural or sociological study. However, such study has now been tied to a vision of Englishness which is itself insulated from any concern with cultural power and control.

A major feature of the Committee's (and indeed the Board of Education's) automatic correlation of 'English' with 'Englishness' is its provision for dealing with certain 'marginal' cultures. Thus, when drawing on evidence from Wales and Yorkshire which dealt with local as opposed to national forms (i.e. communal traditions of language and dialect, pride of place, manners and customs, speech, song and dance, acting and craftsmanship), the Committee is able to find a place for them within their overall vision of Englishness, by saying: 'We believe it to be in the highest interests of English culture that local patriotism, with all that this entails, should be encouraged.' (144/144-5) Given that 'local patriotism' could, and often did, 'entail' active opposition to the Committee's sense of the English national culture, this statement, at first sight, seems to figure oddly within the discourse of the Report. However, as will be seen, this position is entirely in line with a view of Englishness which identifies it with a non-industrial or pre-industrial past. Given that it is a central goal of the Committee to encourage a public policy on education which

will operate to generate and sustain an organic national culture, the only concrete examples within contemporary popular culture to which they can refer this policy in a favourable manner are those which are sufficiently residual as to be unable to offer more than a minimal oppositional purchase.

In the case of the majority popular culture which the Committee seeks to de-legitimate, the situation is seen very differently. Here the disjuncture between the culture of 'English' and the majority culture is presented in terms of a dangerous gulf between 'the mind of the poet, and that of the young wage-earner.' Here it is not a case of 'encouraging' local cultural development but of attempting to 'wean' people away from such influences as the 'cheap sensational periodicals' which are said to blunt their imagination, and - importantly - cause them to 'recoil from' and perhaps even 'come to dislike literature'. (148/149-50) And, indeed, this is necessarily a serious issue for the Committee given that literature is to be the central instrument for furthering its cultural programme.

Thus it is clear that the Committee's project of combatting the 'diseased' majority cultures, and sustaining a vigorously healthy sense of Englishness, by mobilising literature in education, has little place for serving industrial needs. Their sights are set elsewhere as is shown later when discussing 'some possible dangers in reading.' That this concern with 'dangers' is allied to a culturally interventionist stance rather than the service

of preconceived needs is evident when they state that it will be their 'practical policy' to combat 'the dangers of print' which, while they 'cannot be eliminated, will be more and more easily repelled, as the germs of disease are repelled by vigorous health.' (309/340)

The Universities

The Report engages with policy for the universities in a much more oblique and tentative manner than is the case for schools, or indeed industrial and commercial 'needs'. Despite the recent establishment of a Quango for the universities, the extent of their 'national' role was still a matter of controversy, and for this reason discourses on the national education could not, without some difficulty, be made to co-exist with those on the university curriculum. Thus, the Report considers the universities mainly insofar as their influence could be seen to be reflected back on the school system examinations, and the home. While the university is taken to stand at 'the apex of the educational edifice', (190/195) its position there is sufficiently elevated to cause the writers of the Report in this instance to retreat into a narrow conception of their frame of reference, thereby justifying a refusal to address the work of the universities as a whole. While 'the university is now immensely more important in the education of the nation than it used to be',

With its work as a whole we are not here concerned. The duty of this Committee is confined to considering 'the position of English' in our whole educational system,

which of course includes, and in our reference expressly stated to include its position at the Universities. (190/196-7)

The Committee's position on the nature of the English School within universities is entirely in line with this narrow viewpoint; and the same is true of their approach to examinations and research:

It would be premature, and indeed impertinent, if we were to attempt to lay down in any detail the lines of a perfect 'School' of English. That is a problem for time, experience, and the experiments of many Universities to solve. (193/201)

It is not our function to prescribe examination methods or standards to individual universities. (219/237)

[Regarding the] differentiation between the various stages in the training for research work ... on this matter again it is not our function to make detailed recommendations, but to lay down general principles. (220/239)

In this manner, the discourse of the Report affects simply to offer some general principles for the study and teaching of English. Nonetheless, given the Committee's overall elevation of English, this discourse also implies a radical (if indirectly articulated) reappraisal of the university's role in society and of its curriculum. It is worth remembering this point when we come to consider some responses to the Report. It may be that responses from within the universities were shaped as much by an unwillingness to accept a national role for the universities, as by the Report's unprecedented prioritisation of English Studies.

In fact, the Chapter on the universities concerns itself with uses of English well beyond the boundaries of the English School:

English ... is needed in every Faculty. It is the one subject which for an Englishman has the claim of universality. Without it he cannot attain to full powers either of learning or of teaching in any. We should like it to be officially proclaimed by each university that in all its examinations the quality of the English written or spoken by candidates, especially its lucidity and its fitness to the subject, will carry great weight with examiners. But this is far from all.

In fact the Report immediately makes clear the Committee's view that English involves far more than lucidity and fitness to a specific purpose, in that it is also potentially a powerful force for national cultural enrichment, and even international cultural ascendancy:

English is not merely an indispensable handmaid without whose assistance neither philosopher, nor chemist, nor classical scholar can do his work properly. It is one of the greatest subjects to which a university can call its students. Never was that more so than at this moment when English is nearer than ever before to becoming a universally known language ... Most of this extension of English may be due to political or commercial reasons. But there are higher reasons too. The intrinsic value of our literature is increasingly recognised ... [Furthermore] no Englishman competent to judge doubts that our literature ranks among the two or three greatest in the world; or that it is quite arguable that, if not perhaps the finest, it is the richest of all. Such a possession, once recognised as it now is, no university can afford to neglect. (192/200)

At this point, however, the Committee is faced with the need to overcome a major obstacle to any general acceptance of the higher value of English in the university: the charge of being a 'soft option'.

This is an accusation which affects the whole of our enquiry. If it were made good, it

would go a long way towards providing a justification for denying English the place in our educational system which we demand for it. Above all, it would be fatal to the claims of English at the University stage. (194/202-3)

The problem for the Committee here is that any adequate specification of the 'richness' or 'intrinsic value' of English upon which their claim for its 'greatness' as a subject rests, would require that these terms be subjected to a rigorous critical, historical and sociological analysis. However, such a course of action was rendered literally inconceivable by virtue of the Report's reliance upon a discourse on art to legitimate the centrality to be accorded English within the curriculum. In consequence, the Committee is forced back upon the Classical model, despite the consistent tendency elsewhere in its pages to accord to English an educational validity independent from, and at least equal to, Classics.

An Honours 'School' of English will at least start its candidates on a path which, if followed to the end, leads to such knowledge of English Literature as Bentley or Jebb possessed of Greek. No one who thinks for a moment will suppose that that is a path in which there are no hills to climb. It is clear, then, that the alarm of the 'soft option' may be dismissed as a bogey. (194/204)

When it comes to specifying the fundamental disciplinary components which constitute the actual means of engaging in this 'climb', the Committee selects exegesis, art and history, while at the same time insisting that English Literature should clearly be distinguished from history, and indeed sociology and philosophy. (195/204-5)

It is interesting to note that, in attempting to refute the charge of 'soft option', the Report had already asked: 'Is it a soft option to make oneself master of the political philosophy of Burke?' (194/203) It is clearly implied that it is not. But, when to this implied answer is added the claim that literature stands 'utterly above any history', (195/205) a curious consequence follows. While philosophy and history may be used as part of a tactic for establishing the disciplinary validity of English against the soft option charge, the essence of English is nonetheless taken to inhere in its 'nobler, more eternal and universal element', that very artistic quality which is said to transcend both the historical process and all systems of ideas:

There is a sense - the most important of all - in which Homer and Dante and Milton, Aeschylus and Shakespeare are all of the same age or none. Great literature is only partly the reflection of a particular year or generation: it is also a timeless thing, which can never become old-fashioned or out of date, or depend for its importance upon historical considerations. What does so depend in any of the arts, whether sculpture or painting or poetry, is in truth not great at all. (195/205)

In so mobilising a powerful discourse on art and the 'eternal' qualities of the human spirit to justify the distinctiveness of English, the Report is able to recuperate the very history which it claims to transcend, by recourse to an essentialist and narrowly-based cultural history of the 'English people':

The ideal 'School' of English literature will ... not, for a moment, allow itself to be made into a mere branch of History. It may be true that the story of the English people is best seen in English literature, but English literature contains much more than the story of the English people. (195/205-6)

Of course, the use of a category such as 'the English people' requires some sense not only of what that phrase encompasses, but of what is necessarily excluded from it. As has already been shown, within the discourse of the Report, it excludes not only the majority contemporary culture, but also any sense of former cultural, political or social conflicts or struggles.

This is, then, the framework within which the Report can put forward its major initiative for a policy intervention into English teaching within the university curriculum: i.e. a diminished role for Anglo-Saxon studies. A major factor bearing upon this proposed shift of emphasis is an altered view of the relations between 'Germanic' or 'Teutonic' culture and 'English' culture; an alteration which is related to the recent War and its cultural consequences. Already in discussing the 'extension of English' the Report had noted that 'the conditions created by the war have spread the knowledge of our language over the five continents of the earth.' (192/200) In such circumstances English culture could be linked, within the Report's project, to a stream of life-giving humanistic culture flowing from Greek, Latin and 'Mediterranean' sources; and thus free from the deadening constraints of a Teutonic philology stultified by a narrow attachment to 'hypothetical sound-shiftings in

the primeval German forests.' (203/218) Furthermore, the academic split which the Committee took to be characteristic of nineteenth-century approaches to philology, was traced also to German influences. Here again a vision of a fertile English culture was linked to human freedom and truth and, in this case, placed in opposition to the narrowness of science and the idols of the market-place.

(202/217; 204/220)

In thus presenting English culture as a transcendental essence inhering within an 'organic' national language and a humanistic literary tradition, the goal was to establish for the study of English at the universities a status equivalent to Oxford's Literae Humaniores. This was important because the latter School was taken to represent the highest standards of humane scholarship. Furthermore, classical languages and literatures appeared to be insulated from any possibilities of social, historical or cultural reevaluation, since their very distance from contemporary culture gave them the appearance of unified, organic and completed totalities. It is worth noting that it was not the Committee's objective to assert directly the primacy of English over Classics, but instead to capture for their subject some of the cultural authority invested in classics for an altered social and educational purpose. It was not for English to supplant Classics as a vehicle for elite socialisation. Rather the Report sought to present English as the principal means whereby the universities might engage in, and direct, a much wider mission of national cultural renewal.

The crucial (and previously unnoticed) point is that the English Department was to be elevated, not so much by virtue of its importance within the institution, but because of the role it might be made to occupy in leading, coordinating and sustaining extra-mural initiatives:

In view of the growth of the tutorial class movement and of adult education generally, which carries with it an increasing demand for courses in English literature, the influence and responsibilities of English departments at Universities, especially in the provinces, are likely to be extended considerably in the near future. If these responsibilities be shirked, valuable and important work will either be held up for want of teachers or fall into the hands of those ill qualified to deal with it ... The point, however, we wish to make here is that, from whatever source the teachers are drawn, their work with adult students should be regarded as university work; the Professor of English should make it part of his duties to keep in close touch with them, periodical meetings of the tutors and the Professor, for the interchange of ideas and the discussion of problems should be held - in short that the extension and tutorial classes should be regarded as an integral part of the English Department. (230/248-9)

It has been claimed above that the Report is best understood within more general extensions of state cultural policy and management in its concern with mobilising public activists, within a tradition of voluntary action, to serve the 'community'. It can thus be seen that both in this Chapter and in the closely-related one on Adult Education which follows, the Report addresses English professors and teaching staff not so much as professionals but as responsible public figures; as socially-concerned part-time and even voluntary preachers functioning to disseminate a national culture. As the final paragraph of the Chapter

on the universities makes clear, this 'mission' is seen as extending even beyond the boundaries of England.

Every university must, of course, consider its own needs and resources in making provision for its teaching of English. But it should bear in mind that the subject is one of particular national importance and that ... what is wanted is organisation on a national scale. In any plans for future development of their English departments, university institutions should consider not only their particular or local requirements but the rapidly expanding place of English Studies in the life of this country and indeed of all parts of the English-speaking world.
(231/251)

Adult Education

The term 'mission' is a precise one, especially in the light of a discursive shift which is evident from the very first lines of the next chapter.

We have called the University the apex of the educational edifice. From another point of view it may be called the inner shrine. But around the edifice lies what the mediaeval poet called the 'faire felde full of folke'. Few of the folk pass beyond the outer court of the temple, though all must travel among the highway of life's pilgrimage which runs up to and beyond it. What has English, and especially English literature, for the wayfaring man who misses the scholar's introduction? ... It is a question, we believe, involving grave national issues, and we have given much anxious thought to it.
(232/252)

Two points are worthy of note here. First, that the anxiety-ridden sense of a need for national unity which is ideologically central to the Report finds no place at all in the formal 'Conclusions and Recommendations'. Second, that the extremities both of gloom and zeal are most manifest

when the Committee considers adult education and, especially, working-class attitudes to literary education. Furthermore, the evocation of 'wayfaring' folk instead of the contemporary urban proletariat introduces into the discourse of the Report a sense of Englishness linked to a mythology of mediaeval organic ruralism. It is this mythology which is to offer a means of spiritualising a policy of intervention into the disturbing cultures of modern industrial and commercial society.

However, as has already been mentioned, the task of spiritualising a utilitarian state machine is no easy one. This explains the absence from the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' of any reference to national spiritual unity (or of contemporary challenges to such unity) given that in this section the discourse addresses itself to details of state policy. Much of the body of the Report, in contrast, takes the form of a discourse on the nation rather than the state; indeed, the opening section of the Chapter currently under discussion is sub-titled 'Literature and the Nation'. The goal then is to construct a spiritual unity for the nation, of which the state policy is merely a neutral servant. In this way English, and especially English literature, can be established, not as a strategy for political and cultural intervention, but as a transcendence of political operations.

For if literature be, as we believe ... a fellowship which 'binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it spreads over the whole earth, and over all time,' then the nation of which a considerable portion rejects this means of grace, and despises this great spiritual influence, must assuredly be heading for disaster. (233/252-3)

English, like England, is presented within this discourse as essentially and incontrovertibly a matter of culture without politics, the self-evident and natural servant of a spiritual fellowship embodying all that is true, good and free. This explains why the Chapter on Adult Education is at once the most overtly political in its aims and the most transcendental in its language. It also explains its oscillation between a concern with shrines and pilgrimages, with sanctification and the Holy Ghost, with poetry and the human spirit; and - at the other pole - an anxious and gloomy preoccupation with class antagonism, and with the need to consummate new territorial invasions of dangerously uncolonised cultural spheres. The following passage crystallises most of these concerns:

We have a traditional culture, which comes down to us from the time of the Renaissance, and our literature, which is rich, draws its life-blood therefrom. But the enormous changes in the social life and industrial occupations of the vast majority of our people, changes begun in the sixteenth century and greatly accentuated by the so-called Industrial Revolution, have created a gulf between the world of poetry and that world of everyday life from which we receive our 'habitual impressions'. Here, we believe, lies the root cause of the indifference and hostility towards literature which is the disturbing feature of the situation, as we have explored it. Here too lies our hope; since the time cannot be far distant when the poet ... will invade this vast new territory and so once more bring sanctification and joy into the sphere of common life. (237/258)

It is at the same time stressed, however, that it is not the 'true function of literature' to engage with the contemporary 'social problem'. Instead, while literature

'contributes no specific solution to the social problem it endows the mind with power and sanity.' (235/255) The function for English preferred by the Committee, then, is one of aligning the popular imagination and culture (what is elsewhere called 'the public mind') with a sense of communal identity having sufficient 'sanity' to neutralise not only 'the hostility towards "the culture of capitalism" now prevalent in Bolshevist Russia,' (235/254) but indeed that antagonism to, and contempt for, literature which is said to be found among 'the working classes, especially those belonging to organised labour movements.' (233/252)

It is, of course, clear that the Report does not speak on behalf of working-class culture, but it should also be noted that it distances itself from the culture of the middle class.(cf 236/256-7) Instead, the Report offers a discourse which both addresses and speaks on behalf of what may strictly be identified as 'national intellectuals'. This is the group to whom the writers of the Report themselves belong, as indeed do most of the policy- and decision-makers active within the state apparatuses and its quasi-autonomous and semi-voluntary extensions, especially within the field of education. Not only does the Report address this group, it attempts to consolidate conditions for their functioning as national intellectuals, and to enhance their sense of identity.

This offer of a spiritual identity was considerably enriched through its association with a potent instrument for popular cultural intervention. Their own educational

socialization primarily through classics could not adequately have equipped them for the task of the 'total' administration of a national culture. Indeed, if anything, it had insulated them from urban industrial life. Now they were being offered as the basis for policy, a suitably tailored 'native language' which could be understood as the only common cultural resource of the whole nation, and administered as such. However, the role played by literature in tailoring this common resource meant that it was 'common' only in a highly idiosyncratic sense. According to the mythic cultural history which contributes so much to the discursive architecture of the Report, the 'native language' only achieved cultural maturity through its spontaneous generation of literary art. Thus, 'English culture' could be taken to have been shaped, at least in pre-industrial times, equally by artists and community. While it was obviously impossible to claim that literary art still sprang from the general community, this could be accounted for by the gulf between literature and life caused by the processes of industrialisation. Literary art could then be presented as the only means of determining the properly national cultural qualities within a divided society; a literary art which was the province of the poet rather than the State or any ruling class or group. In fact it is the absence of any territorial invasion by the poet into contemporary culture, which authorises certain interim measures overseen by the State on behalf of the nation.

Within such a discourse national intellectuals need not

see themselves as attempting to impose their own culture orientations upon a majority population. They need not conceive of their practical programme as one of systematic cultural intervention: they were simply making transitional preparations for a reincarnation of the spirit of Poetry:

... the time cannot be far distant when the poet ... will invade this vast new territory, and so once more bring sanctification into the sphere of common life. It is not in man to hasten this consumation. The wind bloweth where it listeth. All we can do here is to draw attention to the existing divorce, and to suggest measures that may lead to reunion. The interim, we feel, belongs chiefly to the professors of English literature. (237-8/258-9)

The passage which follows has commonly been taken as providing a basic for subsequent conceptions of the role and function of professional English teaching. In the context of the Report as a whole, however, it should be understood instead as a call for a systematic strategy of cultural extension by extra-mural means addressed primarily to an adult population, rather than as an internal tactic for English as a discipline.

The rise of modern Universities has accredited an ambassador of poetry to every important capital of industrialism in the country, and upon his shoulders rests a responsibility greater we think than is as yet generally recognised. The Professor of Literature in a University should be - and sometimes is, as we gladly recognise - a missionary in a more real and active sense than any of his colleagues. He has obligations not merely to the students who come to him to read for a degree, but still more towards the teeming population outside the University walls, most of whom have not so much as 'heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.' The fulfilment of these obligations means propaganda work, organisation, and the building up of a staff of assistant missionaries. (238/259)

It has been suggested that this restates Arnold's conception of a group of 'apostles of culture' who disseminate the 'best' that is known and has been thought. In fact, the Report makes clear that it aims at much more. Its objective goes beyond the dissemination of knowledge in recommending an active and intimate engagement within popular subjectivities and forms of signification. The type of cultural intervention envisaged by the Committee involves not just a preaching mission, but also active cultural transformation of a kind which requires a certain degree of 'love', or a liberal and sympathetic attachment not only to 'folk' cultures but even to urban industrial cultures:

The ambassadors of poetry must be humble, they must learn to call nothing common or unclean - not even the local dialect, the clatter of the factory, or the smoky pall of our industrial centres. (238/260)

That there are severe limits to the extent to which such sympathy is to be extended need not be doubted given the Report's general refusal to positively evaluate any culture seen as untouched by literature. In these circumstances the only available solution is to find something 'poetical' even in the life of the 'common people' on the basis of which a sympathetic resonance with the literary tradition may be elicited. This point is made in the Report by quoting Henry Sidgwick's suggestions for propagating the 'noblest' culture and making it prevail:

It can only propagate itself by shedding the light of its sympathy literally; by learning

to love common people and common things,
to feel common interests. Make people
feel that their own poor life is ever so
little, beautiful and poetical; then they
will begin to turn and seek after the
treasures of beauty and poetry outside and
above it. (238/260)

When articulated as a teaching programme for English one of
the most interesting features of this urge to develop a
'common touch', or an affective bond between teachers and
taught, is the centrality to be accorded to popular tastes,
however 'crude and unformed' they might be considered to be.

... the tutor must first of all explore the
minds of his students, their tastes and
prejudices, and build on these. To begin
by throwing the classics of English literature
at their heads is generally to court failure
... The vital thing is to make it obvious
from the outset that literature is alive, that
it is the sublimation of human thought, passion,
feeling, that it is concerned with issues which
are of universal interest, that in short it is
flesh and blood and not stucco ornamentation.
(252/276)

In some sense this mental exploration can be seen as co-
extensive with the work of the other 'social explorers' who,
continuing a tradition from Victorian times sought to
investigate the 'dark continent' or 'jungles' of working-
class life.¹⁹ By the time of the Report such social explor-
ation and documentation had become firmly linked to public
policy and administration, especially in terms of a
'structure of feeling' which Raymond Williams has identified
as 'social conscience'.

... what has most carefully to be defined is
the specific association of what are really
quite unchanged class feelings - a persistent
sense of a quite clear line between an upper

and a lower class - with very strong and effective feelings of sympathy with the lower class as victims. Thus political action is directed towards systematic reform at a ruling-class level ... It is a matter of social conscience to go on explaining and proposing, and at the same time help in organising and educating the victims. 20

But the unique contribution of the discourse of the Report to this 'social conscience' was its offer of English as the instrument of an affective strategy for educating the emotions of the 'victims' so that as individuals they might be raised spiritually above the mass while at the same time remaining excluded from political and economic power and the decision-making processes. It is this which marks the discourse of the Report as distinct from strategies for 'rational' public policy and social administration. The sympathetic link finally envisaged was between the individual subjectivities of members of the popular classes and an 'English culture' or national identity, to be achieved by English as a vehicle for state policy. As the final sentence of the Chapter puts it,

The belief which inspires every paragraph of the present Report is that this much-desired spiritual unity in the nation and the equally necessary uplift in the whole level of the popular imagination can only come through a general acknowledgement of the paramount place which the native speech and literature should occupy in our schools and in the common life of our people. (252/277)

Conclusion

As has been shown, there is little evidence that the Report directly addressed itself to innovations within

university English or even to a renewal or creation of a professional ideology for English teachers. The Committee's discourse constituted English not so much as a professional discipline but as a tool for cultural administration and intervention. However, in also being formulated as the basis for a relatively autonomous system of national education, English was presented as an 'arms-length' mode of administration. In order to achieve such an identity for English, the Committee had to define the 'native' language and literature as interchangeable with English life, while at the same time governed by eternal and unchallengeable classical artistic standards.

It is important to note that this emphasis on a programme of cultural intervention was noted at the time of publication (see below), and furthermore the differential treatment given to schooling and higher education in the Report. In schools the role of English was to be extended substantially especially at the junior stage and in lower-class schools. The clear purpose here was intervention against the 'mental contagion' associated with the pupils' cultural environment, particularly the influences of home and street and of printed matter. (291/338-340) This was to be achieved by inculcating certain approved 'standards' in speech, writing and reading.

For the universities a different mode of intervention was envisaged. It is difficult to find any evidence in the Report of any direct attempt to establish English at the centre or summit of the university curriculum. Instead,

English was prioritised as the principal means of relating the universities to the 'teeming population' outside and to the school system. English thus offered universities the means to fulfil a national role. The English department was to be the centre from which a whole range of educational initiatives would be launched. It is this establishment of the English department as the mobilising centre for cultural interventions which is at the basis of the transformation of university English called for in the Report.

While the discourse of the Report may accurately be described as directed towards such cultural and organisational initiatives, it does not of course follow that the intellectuals it addressed simply fell in with its aims. The Committee's conception of English literature as a 'biography of the English mind' was already generally accepted within the universities. However, the proposed extension from this conception to a sense of English as an instrument for cultural intervention on a national scale was much less consonant with university opinion. While some of the Report's critics merely ignored the interventionist programme and confined themselves to opposing the proposal that Anglo-Saxon be given optional status within English courses (for example W.P.Ker and R.W.Chambers²¹), the response of George Gordon was of more general significance.

Despite the care taken by the Committee to deflect such a charge, Gordon took them as aspiring to place English in the position of ascendancy long occupied by Classics.²²

In contrast, Gordon saw English simply as one of the 'house' disciplines within a university. From such a viewpoint, English was simply a form of 'polite' learning rather than an instrument of national cultural policy. While literature might provide 'delight' and 'instruction', it was not its function to 'save our souls' and 'heal the state'.²³ He even expressed sympathy with that working-class suspicion of literature which had caused the Committee so much anxious thought, and indeed could find no objection to 'that common way of thinking ... which classes English literature with the amusements and relaxations of life.'²⁴

This amounted to a complete refusal of the fundamental terms in which the Committee had conceived of English and its cultural mission. Quite explicitly, Gordon condemned the Report for expecting that English literature should 'save a world in which Government and Christianity have failed.' 'Here at Oxford,' he asserted, 'we have plenty to do without saving the state.'²⁵ In the event, it was Gordon's view rather than that of the Newbolt Committee which prevailed within university English Studies during the interwar period, as will be shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROFESSION OF ACADEMIC ENGLISH

It has been shown how the discourse of the Newbolt Report offered to universities a leadership role within an ambitious programme for intervention into popular cultures and literacies. The Committee's version of 'English' at university level was thus shaped according to the requirement of providing both a centre of mobilisation and a potent pedagogic instrument.

However, as Gordon's response indicated, and as will be shown again below, there was little indication that university schools of English were willing to accept such an instrumental role or cultural identity simply to serve state public policy. During the interwar period, the incipient Quango model of administration was not geared to any effective imposition of a programme of this kind upon the universities, or the schools of English within them. As C.D.Burns remarked in 1924: 'We have ... developed in England a compromise by means of which the educational system is in great part a State system and the standard of education is largely set by universities free from state control.'¹ Thus, despite the formalisation of a system of state subsidy with the foundation of the University Grants Committee, any fears that university autonomy might be lessened were 'considerably allayed by the known attitude of the President of the Board of Education, H.A.L.Fisher, enshrined in his dictum: "The state is, in my opinion, not

competent to direct the work of education and disinterested research which is carried on by the universities."²

During the war, under Lloyd George, a policy had been pursued which combined vigorous prosecution of the war with all-round reconstruction on the home front. Within this context, education was to be given priority as the chief means 'for promoting in social life that equality of condition with which men now faced death on the battlefield.'³ With Fisher's appointment as President of the Board (having a seat in the cabinet) came an undertaking that money would be made available for such post-war reconstruction; and the policy itself was enshrined in legislation to enable the kind of educational expansion within the continuing and adult sectors which had been at the forefront of the Newbolt Committee's deliberations.⁴ In practice, however, such expansion was never enacted, despite the ever-increasing reliance of the universities upon state funds (by 1931 they were receiving slightly over half of their income from this source).⁵

So, while the universities were recognised as having a national role, it was not the one envisaged for them by the Newbolt Committee. Instead, their autonomy as centres of professional learning was enhanced, with only some small limitations. They were expected to recognise the national competitive importance of research and institutional efficiency, as formalised by the introduction of new post-graduate degrees (especially the PhD), and by the standardisation of their administrative, Faculty and Departmental structures.⁶

In consequence, the identity of English Studies during the interwar period was forged, not out of the discourses of the Newbolt Report, but rather in terms of the subject's consolidation as a autonomous academic discipline and learned profession. Furthermore, in becoming fully inserted into the structures of university education, the distance of the discipline from schooling, state policy, continuing and adult education, and indeed lay literary culture, was progressively accentuated. By the time English had situated itself as a centre of learning and teaching at all universities in the early 1930s, its ethos and evaluative criteria were those associated with scholarship, research, and publication, rather than with a programme of national cultural intervention. As will be shown, in this period the community of feeling, aspiration and practice, as well as the conditions for the reproduction of the discipline, involved the negotiation of a completely new set of pressures.

Of these, three should be mentioned here. In the first place it was necessary to establish and constantly confirm an appropriate canon and pantheon as the basis for scholarly work. Then there was the need to construct a professional scholarly stance upon which to build modes of training consistent with the kinds of sensibility which would enable critical evaluation, not only of literature, but of fellow professionals. And, finally, the discipline was required to develop a distinctive orientation to, and difference from, lay literary cultures of

high aestheticism, social poise, and hedonistic impressionism.

It will be seen, therefore, that the history of inter-war English Studies is best written in terms of professional mutations to a logic very different from that envisaged by the Newbolt Committee. It was to be the logic of an 'Englishness' now turned inwards rather than addressed to the 'teeming populace' outside the university. 'English' now became a cultural form primarily concerned with the activities and attitudes of an association of professionals and their acolytes or apprentices. While the professional 'student' of English could continue to draw upon that 'life-giving stream' whose sources and course had been charted by the Committee, this could now only be engaged upon after its filtration by an increasingly mechanical academic apparatus.

Such an apparatus did not of course simply emerge full and complete: its progressive shaping is clear from the evidence of the pages of the Review of English Studies (henceforth Review) which shall now be considered in detail. But first it may be important to observe that readings of this stage of the discipline's history through the spectacles of Scrutiny and Cambridge English may perhaps have invisibilised wider patterns of construction and progressive consolidation. Here it will be argued that all factions within English were faced with similar pressures. For this reason the account will be couched, not so much in terms of battles between an Establishment and a radical

opposition, but in terms of the underlying generative forces which provided a system of productive tensions within the discipline as a whole.

Before the publication of the Newbolt Report, then, 'English' had been shaped according to the ambition to construct a sense of the national past, and to establish a system of national education based upon this disciplinary identity. However, in the interwar period, 'English' in universities was reconstituted as a profession concerned with the certification of modes of access and training, the development of a sense of professional function and instrumentality, and the forging of new relations with the extra-academic world (publicity, journalism, the lay literary world in general) as well as with other departments of academic knowledge.

The 'Review of English Studies'

Like any other field of professional academic activity, English was required to determine what it was not as well as what it was. The circumscription of its professional domain thus involved identifying what it did not speak about and to whom it did not speak. For this reason a history of English Studies in this period requires in turn a detailed investigation of this process of circumscription in its exclusive as well as inclusive aspects. As will be seen, much that was now being excluded from the domain of 'English' had formerly occupied a central position within it.

The Review, founded in 1925, provides crucial evidence for charting this transformation. In many respects it is a source as appropriate to this phase as the English Association and the Newbolt Committee were for the earlier period. From its first issue it identified itself as a coordinating centre for research in English Studies. Indeed, the development of an identity based upon research for the discipline can be seen to have been one of its major functions.

Though published quarterly, it was very different from the traditional quarterly literary journal. Certainly, from the beginning there were clear links with extra-academic initiatives, especially in publishing: its editor for the whole of this period, R.B. McKerrow, was a partner in the publishing firm of Sidgwick and Jackson rather than an academic.⁷ It was only at the end of McKerrow's long tenure in 1940 that the Review was taken over by the Oxford University Press. The personnel of its Advisory Panel⁸ is indicative of the subsequent irrelevance of disputes about the Newbolt Report for subsequent developments within academic English. Newbolt himself was there, as were some other former members of that Committee and some of its major critics. The panel also included a sprinkling of other non-academics, but such extra-academic connections were to prove as increasingly tenuous as was the degree of the Review's continuity with the discourses of the Newbolt Report and issues of public policy.

The contents of the Review usually consisted of about four articles (72 pp), 'Notes and Observations' (3 or so

pages) and something like 44 pp of reviews. Only very occasionally were editorials carried; and other miscellaneous contents included: short notices, lists of books received, obituaries, and at the end of each year a 'roll of honour' listing all successful English graduates by institution and name. In the early years pamphlets were reviewed from time to time, but this practice was soon discontinued. In fact, it is probably accurate to understand this as one feature by which the mode of publication previously very characteristic of the English Association, can be differentiated from the professional journalism of the discipline in its newer, more autonomous academic guise.

It would be difficult to reduce the contents of the Review over this whole range to some kind of collective ideological manifesto, but for reasons different from those discussed above in relation to the Newbolt Report. The very few editorials included were largely confined to discussing technical matters of scholarship, and the Review did not, in general, speak out directly on wider cultural-political issues. In the main, therefore, its ideologies are to be found in the form of its embodied working practices and unquestioned assumptions rather than at the level of manifest policy statements. Its collective identity (perhaps like that of English Studies itself) was structured into its range and mode of cultural production and enunciation.

Language and Cultural Policy

For example, the progressive disengagement from extra-academic concerns, particularly at the level of cultural policy, is best revealed by the Review's approach over this whole period to the study of language. At first, discussions of language provided the predominant occasions for considering wider cultural relations and policies as well as narrow technical issues. Early on a contributor like Allen Mawer could use the occasion of a review of Jespersen to refer to wider social issues. Mawer considers the problem of grammar to be of a crucial contemporary importance which extends beyond the academic world. He therefore favours Jespersen's concern with the development of a grammar appropriate to modern conditions on the grounds of its greater relevance than the question of the nature, origin and development of language. And here there is certainly some continuity with the concerns of the Newbolt Committee since 'upon the right understanding' of contemporary grammar 'must ultimately depend our whole attitude towards what is right and wrong in speech usage.'⁹ Contemporary grammar is in a 'parlous condition' since it remains confined to terms established many centuries ago, and Jespersen is therefore to be praised for a 'conservative' restatement and reinterpretation of old definitions and terminology, rather than attempting like some to start again from scratch.¹⁰ This position is further developed by the same reviewer in the following year when he commends a book for steering happily between 'extreme modernism' and

'ultra conservatism'.¹¹ Interestingly, the latter review contains the only mention of the Newbolt Report to be included in the Review during the whole of the interwar period, and this solely in the context of attributing to the Report responsibility for generating a good deal of subsequent discussion of grammar.

Two interconnected points are worth making here. First, it is through an emphasis on language that the only direct links are made with the work of the Committee. Second, reviews of works on language are the only ones which attend to textbooks in schools rather than universities. Indeed, every issue of the Review contains the statement that 'As a general rule no textbook below University standard can be noticed.' The special, if residual, connection between language and the cultural strategy of the Newbolt Report is further clarified in an article by J.H.G.Grattan, 'On the Anglo-American Cultivation of Standard English'.¹² Here it becomes clear what is at stake in developing a grammar which will provide acceptable criteria for distinguishing 'right' from 'wrong' in linguistic usage: intervention into the culture of the masses. Since writing in English is

no longer confined to persons who speak the King's English or who come under the direct influence of the great writers; the continuity of our literary and linguistic heritage is threatened by the far-reaching influence of the half-educated ... We must give up regarding "good English" as merely a social or literary accomplishment, and ... endeavour by research and by exposition to equip the masses with the ability to exercise a reasoned choice in the employment of language; in other words, ... we must regard the training of the linguistic consciousness as an essential part of primary and secondary as well as University education.¹³

The occasion for this article was an inaugural meeting in June 1927 of the International Council of English, held under the auspices of the Royal Society of Literature, and involving both American and British scholars. The involvement of Americans is significant in that Grattan sees it as important to learn from their country's experience of conquering linguistic 'barbarism' within 'her vast alien immigrant population.'¹⁴ This places his discourse firmly in the domain of public cultural policy and returns us directly to the concerns of the Newbolt Committee, indeed to one of its major areas of anxiety:

Whether the class-consciousness which has hitherto formed the chief force of [linguistic] stability in Great Britain, will continue to influence the masses, has yet to be seen.¹⁵

The fact that Grattan expects broadcasting to play a role in furthering a national linguistic policy is perhaps indicative of the altered place of academic English Studies with the advent of modern mass media. At any rate, whatever the actual role of broadcasting with respect to subsequent linguistic interventions, the Review was never again to engage directly with these issues after 1931. By the end of the interwar period, a very different relationship to conceptions of 'language' had been forged within the Review's pages. In the course of the 1930s language was increasingly considered only in relation to the literary work, no longer to social and cultural policy; a transition to be most notably seen in the reception to be given to the writings of F.W.Bateson (see below p.211).

The orientation to professional research was shifting the journal's emphasis elsewhere in its search for a strong sense of function. Certainly the new sense of function still involved English in questions of 'communication'. However, the forms of communication with which English concerned itself tended increasingly to be addressed to a field much narrower than that of public cultural policy. This development can be seen in one of its aspects by examining the functional emphasis on 'mutual intelligibility' as it emerges in the Review.

Writing about the Society for Pure English the Editor himself considers it important that

all professed speakers of English should use it in the same way rather than that it should be used in any particular way, for correctness and vulgarity are matters of changing fashion, whereas uniformity and mutual intelligibility are not only matters of convenience but actually essential to continuance.¹⁶

But already, the concern was equally with 'literary language' and the desire 'to improve it as an instrument of precision.'¹⁷ Spoken English was to be of less and less concern to the Review, while 'literary language', and especially that of fellow professionals, came to be a constant preoccupation most particularly in the book review pages where any lapses from 'intelligibility' were regularly and severely censured.

In sum, the academic English scholar was becoming less of a public policy maker in aspiration, and more of an arbiter and custodian both of literary language and

literary knowledge. A more detailed and specifically linguistic analysis would be required to do full justice to the mutations of language study within the discipline. Here it must simply be noted that once 'language' within the discipline had been removed from any substantial engagement with public policy, it was situated as one of a number of specialised fields of study within English. The transition from this situation to one in which the autonomous discipline of 'linguistics' was to emerge will be traced here only incidentally.

The Discourse of 'Art'

Another strand which had fed into the cultural policy-making of the Newbolt Committee emerges in an altered form within the Review. In the Report 'art' had been used to legitimate a realm of cultural value in such a manner as to render it equally immune from state interference and democratic accountability. The strategy had been to mobilise this vision of art by means of the missionary work of national (as opposed to state) intellectuals. In contrast, within the Review little recourse is made to a discourse on art except in relation to the poet's or writer's activity. The focus here is much more upon the literary work itself and the 'experience' of the writer which had been invested in it. In this case, 'art' is that which is manifested in unique and harmonious literary works, a harmonious fusion of diverse influences.¹⁸ This is entirely appropriate to a form of academic work which spent much effort in locating

and charting such diverse elements as well as - increasingly - concerning itself with the principles of their harmonious unification within the text.¹⁹ In fact, both the diversity of influences and their fusion through the writer's activity provide constant discursive themes for contributors to the Review. Herbert Grierson, reviewing a book on Swinburne,²⁰ writes of the value and pleasure to be gained from studying the development of a 'great poet's art' in all its phases. 'Art' here signifies the artistry with which the writer transforms available influences and finds an appropriate form of unified expression. The scholar is expected to analyse the artist's 'thought and sensibility', the passing phases of 'style' in the formative period, the influences which 'coloured the artist's work in passing'; especially so 'if in the end that art achieved complete independence and individuality.'

Art is thus approached through a sense of the writer's individuality and independence as taken to be expressed in poetic, and increasingly prose, works. However, contributors to the Review are largely unwilling to go so far as to attempt to specify the nature of artistic quality in general, despite the fact that their own capacity to decide which texts were of sufficient interest in themselves to justify study depended upon recognising such quality.²¹ It is usually assumed that the ineffable in art is beyond the province of the professional academic scholar. For instance, Edith J. Morley writes of the 'inexplicable value' of great poetry, and advances the view that such poetry 'can explain itself only "by existing"

so that in one sense every attempt at an explanation, however worthwhile, is doomed in advance to failure, or, at best, only partial success.'²² Nonetheless, the sense of a need to provide some kind of discourse on literary quality is evident from the earliest issues of the journal. In the very first issue, a publisher's advertisement refers to the 'vexed question' which is raised by the subject addressed in Murry's The Problem of Style.²³ And the Review's pages contain a number of subsequent attempts to 'estimate more surely the intrinsic value of the work' by finding the means to capture its 'spirit and mood.'²⁴ In a similar vein, there are references to a 'new spirit' which is said to have raised 'the standard of literature and taste' in the eighteenth century,²⁵ and to the need to attend to 'particular aspects' of the writer's achievement.²⁶ It is clear, in sum, that writers for the Review felt the need to bring, in Marie St. Clare Byrne's words, 'something real into the nightmare world where "stylistic" evidence flourishes.'²⁷

Such efforts to engage with discourses on quality by means of notions like 'taste' and 'style' may be understood in terms of challenges issuing from the peripheries of the discipline, as well as beyond its boundaries, which called upon the leaders of English Studies to provide an account of 'literary quality' of at least equal force to those being generated outside the Review's pages. While Byrne considered that Caroline Spurgeon's 'imagery analysis' offered a way out of the stylistic nightmare,²⁸ critics of

the English 'establishment' were not so impressed, as Francis Mulhern has noted,

Scrutiny's earliest and most protracted campaign was against the positivism of traditional literary scholarship. The 'value-free' assumptions of conventional academic research were repeatedly challenged by the journal's reviewers, and its conclusions dismissed as inadequate, conformist or simply worthless. Caroline Spurgeon's analyses of Shakespeare's imagery were met with suspicion by R.G.Cox, who insisted that there could be ²⁹ 'no substitute for literary criticism.'

A Humane Profession

For the most part, though, the Review concerned itself more with establishing for English Studies a status similar to that of the humanism of Classical Studies, than with criticism. The range of humane and other qualities most admired is best illustrated by the contents of the few obituaries carried in its pages. William Archer, for example, is remembered for that 'sane and instructed judgement' which 'did much to recover English drama for literature from triviality.'³⁰ As the obituary for Israel Gollancz shows, such 'sanity' when applied to disciplinary practice, involves skilled exposition, and interest in 'the work in hand' rather than in literary criticism.³¹ It is equally illuminating to examine what counts as 'solid achievement' for writers in the Review. Gollancz, for example, is commended not only for his qualities as a teacher, but also for his contributions to the development of institutions such as the British Academy, the Shakespeare

Association, and the Early English Texts Society.³²

Similarly, C.H. Herford, in addition to being described as 'the most accomplished English scholar of his age', is praised for his institutional contribution as 'the successful head of the great school of English at Manchester.'³³

But most interesting of all is the treatment given to Sidney Lee, described in his obituary as biographer, Professor of English, writer on the place of English literature in the modern university, and for thirty years editor of the Dictionary of National Biography.³⁴ The basis for the importance given to these figures by the Review is made clear by Ernest A. Baker in reviewing Lee's work.³⁵ Lee is proposed by Baker as the complete 'humanist' by virtue of his classical scholarship, his faith in beauty and reason, and his exalted hopes of human progress. Lee is thus a complete 'personality', and comparable therefore to those other 'personalities' whose 'transmission' has been the function of the D.N.B. Living persons are not fitted for such transmission, and even the dead must be guaranteed by their 'solid achievement' (political, literary, military or other). On occasion (most notably in the case of Dr. Johnson), 'fine personality may be an achievement in itself.'

A consistent emphasis on character, personality and integrity is to be found within the pages of the Review. Much more energy is expended on providing admirable examples, and springing to the defence of those whose integrity is threatened, than to the elaboration of literary

critical judgements. For example, when comparing Swift to Shaw, the former's 'vastly sounder humanity' is unproblematically asserted by Oliver Elton.³⁶ Elsewhere, 'accusations' and 'charges' against Milton are refuted;³⁷ the degree and nature of Macaulay's 'sincerity' is defended;³⁸ 'worthy and good-natured mediocrities' are dismissed;³⁹ Arnold is rebuked for his 'petulant snobbishness':⁴⁰ the examples could be almost endlessly multiplied.

Three consequences follow from this concern with transmitting and protecting the 'humanity' and 'personality' of great authors. First, textual effects are given only secondary importance: 'style, manner, vocabulary and imagery may be borrowed, but personality is inalienable.'⁴¹ Second, any true scholar is expected to have a capacity to respond to - and indeed share in - these humane qualities. And finally, the professional 'student' of English is actually elevated above authors, at least to the extent that hindsight (like death) enables not only the making of a complete and final assessment, but also the development of a historical understanding which was beyond the comprehension of the historical actors themselves. As McKerrow put it: 'much of what we strive to find out was not and could not be known to those of the period which we study, for it was veiled from them by the life of everyday.'⁴²

The pages of the Review thus reveal a professionally-bounded community of 'humane' scholars addressing each other in terms of a discourse on human quality rooted in the English literary 'tradition'. While this offers a

means of elevating the English scholar's own 'humanity', it also involves a general reduction in the social-cultural ambitions for the discipline when compared with the movement leading to the publication of the Newbolt Report. Now the major objective is to establish the authors' true texts in order to grasp in full what each author 'meant'. Furthermore, the effort of scholarship is directed towards 'exhaustive biography' and 'critical survey', and only in the final (and often deferred) analysis towards a 'detailed examination of particular aspects' of the authors' 'achievement'.⁴³

Professional Specialisation

Increasingly in the course of the interwar period work carried out by the Review tends towards the production of extremely specialised and exclusively academic scholarship. It is interesting to note that earlier on in the period the work of non-academic scholars (such as the Civil Servant E.K.Chambers) plays an important role within the Review. In 1931, Charles J.Sisson, writing of the 'solid foundation' for Shakespeare scholarship laid by Chambers, A.W. Pollard and W.W.Greg, remarks that,

It is a matter of pride to us that we can boast of several scholars, in the first rank, who are not university teachers. None rejoice more in this leaven than the professional scholars themselves. It seems to be a feature almost peculiar to this country, and nothing could be healthier for scholarship.⁴⁴

However, by 1940 the purely professional academic character

of the discipline is much more marked. In that year the Editor is to be found wondering 'whether the fate of 'English Studies' will not eventually be smothered in a kind of woolly and impenetrable fog of wordiness that few or none will be bothered to penetrate.' He is forced to accept, however, that by this stage, most of the readers of the published articles read them 'out of a sense of duty' and 'a wish to keep up with what is being done,' rather than 'because they have any real interest in the subject.'⁴⁵ This trend to professional academic specialisation is confirmed by G.B.Harrison, writing in 1940 on the Review's first fifteen years: 'It will hardly be denied by anyone who looks through the files of the Review that the earlier numbers were more interesting than the later', which he put down to the 'increasing specialisation in English, as in all forms of study.'⁴⁶

We must now consider the phases through which this broad transition came about and its intellectual and ideological implications. In fact, there seem to have been two distinct phases of development, the second of which was ushered in with the final abandonment of all residual concerns with cultural and linguistic policy, and thus indirectly with English in schools. Some remarks made by P.Gurrey in 1931 can serve as an indicator of the closure of the first phase. Referring to the, by now well-established, consensus that grammar should be based upon 'educated' usage rather than some abstract principle of 'correctness', Gurrey is nonetheless unconvinced that any radical change is likely to take place given 'the inability of the leaders

of today to learn, and to their intellectual self-sufficiency.'⁴⁷ In fact, such intellectual self-sufficiency has by then come to characterise English itself as an academic discipline. In future the pages of the Review would carry no further discussion of such general social-cultural issues. Indeed, Gurrey himself was to take such concerns into the school sector rather than academic English Studies.⁴⁸

The Encounter with Modernism

The intellectual self-sufficiency of the discipline also extended to attitudes to contemporary literary production. Prior to the early 1930s this tendency towards insulation and isolation was relatively undeveloped. In the first issue Oliver Elton, like the writers of the Newbolt Report, could simply note 'the paralysis of great literature which has been caused by the world-convulsion, and which seems to have inhibited the largest kinds of poetry.'⁴⁹ However, in 1933 Elton is quoted as claiming that 'the living voice of poetry is loud today, with a youth that is ever renewing.'⁵⁰ By this time the terms 'modernism' and 'modernist' have begun to appear occasionally in the review pages, signalling an at least minimal engagement with contemporary literature, particularly poetry. However, viewed from outside, the increasing insulation of academic English from the lay literary world could appear as discreditable. Certainly this is at the root of what Stephen Potter considered to be the 'dispiriting preconceptions' with which academic English shackled the literary muse.⁵¹

Such criticisms were launched not only from outside university English, as a glance through the pages of Scrutiny amply illustrates. Here again, English Studies was seen as failing to hold true to its proper identity as an educational principle and cultural force. By the mid 1930s internal factions had gathered around Scrutiny in a systematic opposition to the dominant trends represented by the Review. The Review's response to this challenge was an oblique one. Within the review sections attempts began to be made to develop a discourse that was at once professionally autonomous and modernising, critical as well as scholarly. This did not, however, involve offering the voice of the Scrutiny a place within the Review's discursive ensemble. Indeed, no publication by the Leavises, Richards, Empson, or any other of the Cambridge 'revolutionaries' was ever reviewed between the wars.

The relationship of the Review to Scrutiny is initially best approached within the context of the general reception given in the former journal to modernism, and especially to T.S.Eliot. From 1930 some tentative engagement with the difficulties and aims of the modern poet can be found in the review sections.⁵² Nonetheless, a critical essay of Eliot's could be dismissed because it 'says nothing new' three years later.⁵³ On the other hand, A.C.Ward, reviewing a book on The Trend of Modern Poetry, in 1936, notes the impossibility of achieving 'neutrality in the face of the conflict between right and left groups in contemporary poetry', and therefore applauds attempts to

'bring the apparently isolated modernists into the main traditional stream of English poetry.'⁵⁴

The introduction of F.W.Bateson as a regular reviewer from this same issue marks a more consistent and considered attempt at a settlement with modernist literature and criticism. Bateson's own work had been favourably reviewed in 1930 for its combination of research with wit, wisdom and style.⁵⁵ Given his scholarly credentials as a researcher, Bateson, when introduced as a regular reviewer, is in a strong position to deflect attempts to 'discredit' the 'Eliot school' of poetry, by drawing on contemporary critical work such as that of Empson, to explain the new poetry's layers of intelligibility and ambiguity.⁵⁶

Another indirect encounter with the New Criticism can be found in Bateson's review of P.Gurrey's The Appreciation of Poetry. Quite recently, David Shayer has described Gurrey's book as follows:

... his references to Leavis's How to Teach Reading, his quotations from Eliot, Empson and L.C.Knights, and his insistence on a new 'relevant' approach to the poem itself ... [are], if not uncompromisingly 'New Critical', certainly very close to it.⁵⁷

In this light it is notable that, with some reservations, Bateson welcomes this book as indicating the need for some 'new point of view, a new technique.'⁵⁸ A year later Bateson puts forward some solutions of his own. He recommends that the sources of modern poets, such as Auden, should have applied to them the same scholarly apparatus as used for - say - Spencer, so long as Auden's sources

are investigated 'with at least as much thoroughness and intelligence as Spencer's receive.'⁵⁹

The process of settling accounts with modernism, as with the new emphasis on poetic value, can thus be seen as a real if limited one. In fact it was not finally to be completed within English until the post-1945 period, with Bateson once again a prominent influence. To understand the terms in which this settlement was progressively to be forged it is necessary to consider the major critical and scholarly strategies of the whole Review of English Studies programme, of which this incipient settlement was only a small feature.

The 'Review's' Overall Project: A Spiritual Continuum

The major focus at all times within the Review is upon the completion of the historical map of English literature, thereby conserving and protecting its professional plenitude. In fact, the project's main aims and objects are set out in an editorial by R.B.McKerrow carried in the first issue.⁶⁰ The Review is to be devoted to research 'in all departments of its subject.' Such research provides the 'lifeblood of literary history' as long as the focus is on 'new facts' and 'new relations between the old'. However, since there may not be all that many new facts to be discovered (unlike in the physical sciences), a major emphasis should be placed on 'rediscovery', on 'that which has never been rightly interpreted.' This process of interpretation requires the amassing of information about 'great contemporaries, their

lives and their writings.' In order to further examine the significance of McKerrow's comments, it is necessary to move over to the review sections since the only strictly editorial pieces carried were in the first issue (above) and in an issue published in 1940, the year of his death. Already in the 1920s McKerrow takes the view that a 'great period of discovery' is rapidly coming to an end: 'an age of English scholarship is passing, if not already passed.' Scholars can now be considered fortunate if they manage to find 'one unworked field.'⁶¹ Resuming this same theme three years later, McKerrow describes this great period as constituting a 'revolution in literary history' in the course of which everything previously taken as axiomatic has been questioned or disproved. A newer generation of students has been 'looking on the 'facts' that remain from an altogether different angle.' In place of the nineteenth-century sense of a succession of literary historical 'periods', scholars have now revealed a continuum of 'interlocking elements' making it clear that in all times the 'spirit of literature' is one.⁶²

Another early contributor, A.W.Reed, sees it as the task of research to illuminate this spirit:

Literature is illuminated rather than obscured as we come nearer the personality and circumstances of the writer; and provided that at all times our aim is to illuminate literature, we are on the side of the angels. Biography, bibliography and philology wait in attendance on literary appreciation; these four together cover the whole field of literary research.⁶³

Thus early in the period the spiritual continuity of the

field is seen as guaranteed by its pastness and completeness. Scholarship involves attempting to remove all obscurities so as to come as close as possible to this essence. The technical goal is the construction of a critical apparatus which will not upset the underlying harmonious unity of the field, but simply authenticate the available empirical facts and ensure that they are correctly grouped and placed in a proper relationship with each other.

The character of the underlying essence is made clear in H.C.Wyld's account of 'Layamon as an English poet': i.e. the harmonious identity between human character, literary quality and a culture of Englishness. Even though there is in Layamon's Brut no expression of 'religious belief' or 'moral intention', there can be no doubt

that the writer is a man of a high and generous nature, with a true reverence for whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, and rich in every human quality which goes to make a man and a poet. ⁶⁴

For Wyld, Brut exhibits the kind of genuine human feeling which bespeaks a true 'poetical' intention on the writer's part by using a language which 'is not merely the ancient speech of Englishmen' but is also in true succession 'to the old poets of his land', and thus to 'the essential genius of the race'.⁶⁵

Three years later, Edith J.Morley commends Oliver Elton for his 'emphatic' claim that 'our early poetry' mirrors the 'English genius', and that there is 'a true continuity of spirit, as well as of expression, in our poetry.'⁶⁶ In a subsequent review Morley praises another

writer for his 'sanity and reasonableness' in revealing the spiritual continuity of English literature: 'The unbroken line of development in English literature is once more convincingly exhibited to the unbeliever.'⁶⁷

By the mid 1930s, then, the sense of this spiritual continuum had been firmly established as the fundamental precondition underlying all professional work of the kind represented in the Review. Englishness, as a sense of racial or spiritual identity, had come to function as the fundamental stabilising force within the field of professional English Studies, rather than providing the authority for a programme of cultural intervention. By the end of the decade, this Englishness was sufficiently pervasive to imbue equally Anglo-Saxon writings and the novel:

Everything is already unmistakably English. This mere Englishness is usually called Romanticism by those who do not know Anglo-Saxon. ⁶⁸

The English novel, like the English character, is marked by independence and individuality. It cannot, save by strain and artifice, be divided into aesthetic segments or schools of thought. ⁶⁹

Disciplinary Conservation

However, this apparently self-confirming synthesis appeared to be endangered by excessively specialised work, and even by some of the discursive themes through which the professional distance of the discipline from cultural policy and mobilisation had itself previously been confirmed. The varying attractions of discourses on 'science'

is a case in point. In the very first issue, as has already been mentioned, McKerrow places a strong emphasis on 'facts' and the relationship between them. At the same time, he does distinguish the procedures of literary history from those of the 'natural sciences'.⁷⁰ Ifor Evans, however, goes much further: 'if aesthetic criticism is to become a reputable study, as honest and sober as philology, it must develop a method and vocabulary as precise and exacting as those of the physical sciences,' so as to be able 'to describe with an almost mathematical rigidity the content of a poetic creation or an aesthetic theory.'⁷¹ And indeed, in his eyes this seems eminently possible:

There would appear to be no valid reason why poetic achievement should not be analysed by philosophical or even psychological methods. But the critic who undertakes such a task becomes a scientist, and he must shut out the ornaments of speech and persuasive language of the impressionist as dangerous guests in the laboratory of literary dissection.⁷²

In fact, approaches seeming to have a scientific basis are often welcomed by contributors to the Review.

F.E.Hutchinson wishes to see scholars using 'a thoroughly careful apparatus criticus of the text.'⁷³ N.R.Tempest welcomes work which involved the 'scientific analysis' of imagery, words, thought patterns, rhythm, tone patterns and visual devices.⁷⁴ However, from 1934 claims for poetry's transcendence of science begin to find their way into the review sections (for example, science is seen as limited to 'the analytic faculty; while poetry involves the 'instinctive apprehension of the whole').⁷⁵ By 1940

McKerrow himself is said to have come to oppose 'pseudo-scientific' methods.⁷⁶

In considering the period overall, it must be concluded that the pervasive professional discourses within the pages of the Review were not those of science but of Parliament and the Law, and even Medicine. One of the most admired scholars for the Review's contributors is E.K. Chambers, and the terms in which he, and his work, are praised clearly reveal shared assumptions regarding desirable professional attributes. Charles J. Sisson praises Chambers for the comprehensiveness of his collection of 'instances', but also for his 'notable unwillingness to hasten to theory.'⁷⁷ The admired qualities are those, not of the theoretical scientist, but of the conservative and supposedly disinterested professional.

Sir Edmund, in fact, belongs to no School of theory or of experiment, but preserves an independent, if sometimes apparently capricious, judgement against all tides, with a conservative bias. Like the House of Lords, he acts as a brake upon what some may call intrepid progress, and others think foolhardy innovation.⁷⁸

This has much in common with the contemporary conception of the professions as among the most stable elements in society. A.M. Carr-Saunders and P.A. Wilson in The Professions (1933) consider that the professions

inherit, preserve and pass on a tradition ... they engender modes of life, habits of thought and standards of judgement which render them centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution ... The family, the church, and the universities, certain associations of intellectuals, and above all the great professions, stand like rocks against which the waves raised by these forces beat in vain.⁷⁹

There is plenty of evidence in the Review that a professional stance of this kind helped sustain the discursive architecture of English Studies in the interwar period, and especially the disputative and judgemental stance of Parliament and the Law. H. Granville-Barker, reviewing Chambers' work, recognises both the limitations of 'science' ('no art lends itself wholly to scientific methods of criticism and research') and the 'magnanimity of true learning' which 'scorns special pleading, comes charily to conclusions, opens every path by which the reader may reach his own.'⁸⁰ Another contributor considers that the 'proofs' gained from 'careful sifting and weighing of evidence' enable a judgement as to whether or not the scholar is faced with 'a capital crime'.⁸¹ Reviewers even posture at once as barrister and judge:

This concludes the evidence. We have examined Lord Lumley ... but he has so far not only failed to prove a single alibi, [also] on cross-examination his case would seem to have completely broken down. Is he guilty or not guilty? ⁸²

Elsewhere, 'accusations' and 'charges' against Milton are evaluated;⁸³ 'submissions' are put forward ('I submit it is fatal to his case'⁸⁴); authors are 'cleared entirely of a number of grave charges.'⁸⁵

In general, then, the discursive trend is towards establishing approved modes of argument and debate according to Parliamentary and legal criteria rather than submission to the rigours of the scientific proof. And furthermore, provision is made for the professional assessment of forms

of expression appropriate to such forensic procedures, extending even to the subjectivities of fellow scholars. Much is made by the journal's reviewers of the need to eliminate any 'blots' on scholarship such as grammatical slips, errors in construction, or the use of 'tricks' of any kind:

The humanities are ill-served when a scholar allows himself to be well-nigh swamped by his accumulation of facts and the weight of his learning. Literary history, of all things, demands adequate literary treatment.⁸⁶

Techniques of scholarly investigation, and - particularly - modes of 'literary' exposition and expression are tied to perceptions of individual worth, in a manner also quite characteristic of other professions.⁸⁷ The degree of 'humanity' to be attributed to professional colleagues is closely linked to the 'taste and tact' exhibited in their scholarship. A certain Professor Perry is commended for bringing to bear on his subject 'a body of unobtrusive and well-digested learning';⁸⁸ and it is elsewhere observed that 'much harm is done to the study of literature by well-meaning critics who deposit loads of unsifted learning on a favourite poet.'⁸⁹ This is entirely in keeping with George Gordon's previously encountered concern with the need for English scholars to 'digest ... (preferably in concealment) the accumulations of a century' of work, in order to ensure that learning becomes 'once more polite.'⁹⁰ The Review provides ample evidence of the pervasiveness of such an urge throughout the period. As already noted, Vivian de Sola Pinto sums up the qualities required of this

kind of professional scholar as a capacity for 'exact scholarship', an extensive 'knowledge' of language and literature, and -if possible - 'the most perfect taste and tact.'⁹¹ In fact, this is a formula which allows effective discursive 'policing' across a range of modes of signification, forms of knowledge, and indeed subjectivities.

The Limits of Decency

Apart from the threats posed to the spiritual continuum, and to this generalist discourse on professional humane scholarship by excessive specialisation, certain other tendencies could serve to undermine the synthetic unity of interwar English Studies. In the final analysis, neither specialisation, nor 'crude and slovenly workmanship,'⁹² nor technical inadequacies, were seen as the greatest dangers. The real challenge was as much moral as technical.

The nature of this challenge emerges, for example, when Mabel Day warns against any 'cynical treatment' which would deprive the literary work of 'much of its moral appeal.'⁹³ Most undermining of all is any stance which goes even beyond such 'cynicism' and 'passes the limits of decency' - however scholarly the technical procedures may be. Duncan C. Macgregor clearly delineates the boundary beyond which scholarship must not go, in his review of William York Tindall's book on Bunyan.⁹⁴ While recognising Tindall as a 'diligent student', and even 'capable researcher', the work is 'vitiating ... by the author's frankly avowed purpose in writing it, 'i.e. the claim that Bunyan's

writings owe their nature to the social, economic and sectarian conditions of the author, and the literary conventions of a company of mechanicks. It is this 'odd prejudice against his subject' which causes Tindall to move beyond the bounds of 'decency':

What are we to say of a research student who ... [sets] in an ambiguous light the author of one of the greatest books in our language, and one of the greatest religious forces in the life of England?

The only answer given to this question is to evoke the collective opinion of Macaulay, Froude and Mark Rutherford: 'One wonders', writes Macgregor, 'what these men would have thought, and said, about Mr.Tindall.'

Thus by the end of the period, the professional values of English Studies have been rendered synonymous not only with the central moral force of the 'national character' but also with the moral worthiness of the scholar-critic (living or dead). A threat to any one of these is therefore perceived as threatening the others. By the same token, any discourse which seems to offer a generalist synthesis between professional values and a sense of national character and moral worthiness, while also overlooking inhumane specialist tendencies and threats of moral ambiguity, is treated favourably in the Review. Louis B.Wright's Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England is welcomed by C.Bowie Millican on the grounds that it confirms a healthy trend in literary research whereby antiquarian, statistical and editorial work are made to contribute to a broader and more comprehensive 'cultural

synthesis': 'it is the proper evaluation of such information ... that leads to perspective and reveals literature to be both a continuum and a truthful mirror of life.'⁹⁵ Similarly, C.S.Lewis' The Allegory of Love is praised by Kathleen Tillotson for charting the nature and evolution of two 'principles', or fundamental movements of the human mind - romantic love and allegory: 'It is rarely that we meet with a work of literary criticism of such manifest and general importance as this.'⁹⁶

However, any generalist discourse deemed to be insufficiently 'discriminating', such as sociology, is banished from the field of English Studies: 'Literary history here is strictly a branch of sociology. The novels considered are those read by the indiscriminating crowd.'⁹⁷ Of course, one of the grounds upon which the Scrutiny group claimed superiority to the English establishment was their capacity to provide a discourse which could link 'discrimination' to a 'literary sociology' through a close analysis of the language of literary, and other, texts. Within the Review, which was the scholarly organ of this establishment, the capacity to make value discriminations was assumed to arise from the 'taste and tact' associated with gentlemanly breeding, fortified by 'zeal, devotion and learning'⁹⁸ rather than 'critical ingenuity.'⁹⁹ In contrast to this, the voice of Scrutiny represented a new petit-bourgeois presence within professional English Studies whose source of cultural authority derived, not from gentlemanly taste and tact, but from the pulse of their own sensibility;

from their 'intelligent' and 'discriminating' capacity to 'enforce' their value-judgements.¹⁰⁰

Francis Mulhern¹⁰¹ has argued that Scrutiny developed and propagated for the profession of English Studies an ideological framework suited to the maintenance of a talent-governed career structure which eventually came to dominate the profession as a whole. The 'Scrutineers' achieved this in a number of ways. First, they attacked what they saw as the Belletrist and philological establishment within the discipline. Second, they offered a synoptic discourse within a singularly enfeebled and fragmented general intellectual culture. And, finally, they provided a charter and sense of function for petit-bourgeois professionals within the educational sphere, both at school and university levels.

Valuable as this account is, in its necessary emphasis on Scrutiny and Cambridge it tends to obscure a wider perspective covering the full range of cross-currents within English during the interwar period. The 1920s and 1930s are just as notable for resistance to incursions from the peripheries of the discipline, as for the rise of Scrutiny. Nor was this resistance to diminish subsequently in the post-war period, as will be shown in the next chapter. The whole process of incorporation of the Scrutiny discourse within English was perhaps more contradictory than Mulhern suggests. Even before the war, Cambridge English itself was split between 'fairly incompatible traditions' including intellectual history and

moral thought and the critical study of major works.¹⁰² In fact, despite the common characterisation of Cambridge as the home of the Eliot-Richards-Leavis modernist and New Critical 'revolution', it is noteworthy that T.R.Henn, a prominent member of the English faculty, referred in 1933 to 'the vulgarity of most of Eliot's work, all the more pernicious since cloaked by an austere and pseudo-learned style', comments which would have rested easily in the review section of the Review of English Studies. Furthermore, F.L.Lucas would not even allow Eliot's work to be bought for the library at King's.¹⁰³

Lucas also took a view of the Scrutiny movement consistent with the Review's general position on 'value judgements'. Writing in 1933, he describes the New Criticism as 'organised orgies of opinion'. For Lucas 'It is our business to see that those we teach have the knowledge and understanding without which judgements of literature are impossible; their judgements must remain their own affair.'¹⁰⁴

However, even within the Review itself a particular kind of space was offered to modernism, especially in reviews written by Bateson. Interestingly, Bateson describes The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal by F.L.Lucas as 'the table-talk of a man of the world of fine taste and faultless memory.' 'The canons of criticism' which Lucas 'is attempting to enforce are not those of today but of yesterday', particularly when it comes to the work of Eliot. While Lucas is simply unaware of the case for modernism, Bateson takes the contrasting view that

Eliot ... is to our generation very much what Wordsworth was to the Romantic generation: the leader of a new school of poetry which has literally displaced the older poetry.¹⁰⁵

It is even more interesting still to examine the conditions which allowed Bateson to argue so positively in favour of modernism within the Review. Reviewing a book by Bateson in 1935, J.R.Sutherland considers that Bateson has developed 'an approach to literary history that holds ... much promise.' Bateson's work is seen as challenging a view of literature as the product of 'social forces' in favour of an analysis based upon the language poets had to use in any given period. This work holds out the promise of a much wider project:

... one wonders ... whether the suggestions so originally and persuasively outlined here are capable of being worked out in detail by one man. If the linguistic side of our University Schools of English could be persuaded to give rather less of their attention to the roots of the English language and to devote more of it to the leaves it has put forth so abundantly since 1500 there would be far more data for literary scholars like Mr.Bateson to work upon. As things are, he has not only to invent his method, but also do most of the spadework for himself.¹⁰⁶

It is clear that Bateson's emphasis on the continuity and relative autonomy of 'literary language' represented a modernising position compatible with the sense of a cultural continuum which (as has been argued above) characterised the dominant paradigm within English Studies. It was compatible also in that its procedures were much more closely aligned to historical scholarship than to critical evaluation, while at the same time enabling engagement in detailed analyses of literary language.

Towards a New Synthesis

It is now possible to identify more easily the place of modernising and modernist discourses within English Studies of the second half of the 1930s. Francis Mulhern has noted the centrality during the 1930s of 'an intellectual culture led by publishing and associated lay activities.'¹⁰⁷ The prime means of intellectual organisation was the periodical, overshadowed however by the massive shapes of Oxford and Cambridge.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear, though that the Review is best seen in terms of a 'regression towards the traditional pattern that still held in English Studies' as Mulhern elsewhere suggests.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the above account has indicated that the Review was not as 'devotedly philological' as characterised by Mulhern.¹¹⁰ The Review always stood outside that lay literary world, or at least emphasised its academic distinctiveness from it, and is in fact better seen as an enterprise typical of a new phase of academic English which Gross has described as one of 'sombre professionalism':

By the 1920s a mood of sombre professionalism had set in, best exemplified by the founding of the Review of English Studies in 1925. The academic apparatchicks were in full command, and it was too late to change the pattern that had been laid down. ¹¹¹

As has been shown, however, this was a sombre professionalism which was willing to allow some marginal incursions by modernising discourses, so long as the fundamental stability of the professional field was not disturbed.

But it is necessary to look beyond the pages of the Review, and indeed of Scrutiny, in order to note that even in the late 1930s some attempts were being made to synthesise the 'professional' and 'critical' positions. In an inaugural lecture given as New Professor of English Literature at Aberdeen on the 12th October 1938 (the exact date is not without significance, as will be seen), G.L.Bickersteth was at pains to make clear that the time had come to discount 'scientific' discourses as offering an appropriate professional identity for English Studies:

... despite the now fashionable equation of knowledge with 'science', the average undergraduate, whatever his special intellectual bent, still demanded that a university should primarily concern itself with giving him a liberal education. 112

For Bickersteth, such a liberal education can be realised only through 'a first-hand acquaintance with the masterpieces of English literature.'¹¹³ This looks forward to a future phase of professionalism. Much more than in the Review, the concern here is with the quality of service offered to the 'client' or 'consumer'. As such, Bickersteth (following I.A.Richards) favours a literary pedagogy which offers to the student 'a unified state of consciousness' which is 'induced by the impression' received from 'the poem as a whole'.¹¹⁴ The 'main purpose and aim of the study of English literature' is to build 'a constant habit of mind, since the mind when thus disposed, and only when thus disposed, can be truly described as liberally educated.'¹¹⁵ However, 'for more than a

generation' university schools of English have been dominated by 'historical critics' attempting the 'impossible' task of fully recovering 'the meaning imputed to a poem by the author and his contemporaries.' Against this Bickersteth argues for an academic emphasis on the 'living' meaning of literary works.¹¹⁶ Thus the need for a revision of the scientific emphasis: 'the activities of the English department ... make of it ... a university in miniature, a school not of one but many sciences.' But the teacher of English knows that 'experience has proved that science alone' will no longer suffice, especially in a world in which 'scarcely a fortnight ago it was only the imaginative vision of one wise man which saved mankind from the awful catastrophe that threatened them.'¹¹⁷

Despite such wise and imaginative intervention the catastrophic threat was, of course, soon to become a gruesome reality. But even the new 'world-convulsion' did not impede attempts of this kind at building a new professional synthesis within English Studies. If anything, the effort was accelerated - with significant consequences in the aftermath of the war. While most of the strands from which the new synthesis would be woven are already visible before the war, they could only be patterned into a new web within the altered conditions of the university in society, and in the 'national life' of the post-war era.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENGLISH, CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY

The view that the universities should have a more central role in offering the kind of imaginative vision necessary to save 'mankind' from contemporary destructive forces was given an added impetus in the course of the Second World War. As has been noted above, even before the outbreak of the war, Bickersteth had argued that English (if constituted as the university in miniature) was the academic discipline best suited to offer a degree of human wisdom appropriate to such a task. In fact, during the war years such views received their most consistent and sophisticated formulation in the pages of Scrutiny. F.R. Leavis gathered together his contributions to this discussion in his Education and the University¹ which was published in 1943. This book, though most directly concerned with English Studies, touched on many wider educational issues which were to become the subject of considerable debate after the war.

For Leavis, Cambridge English offers a way forward for the discipline as a whole by virtue of its emancipation from 'linguistic grinds' and Anglo-Saxon, but only on condition that it now becomes infused by a 'general discipline' addressed to the growth of 'intelligence and sensibility'.² It is clear that Leavis is less concerned with preserving the continuity of Englishness from Anglo-Saxon times to the immediate present, than with investing English with a new function, that of fostering within a

class of disinterested intellectuals those qualities of wisdom called for by Bickersteth before the war. The strategy is to build upon, but also transform, the cultural authority long invested in the universities, by means of a wide pedagogic programme grounded in English literature. Rather than attempting to define the nature of the 'humane education' thus envisaged, Leavis merely asserts that 'It seems better simply to point to English literature, which is unquestionably and producibly "there", and to suggest that the "literary tradition" that this unquestionable existence justifies us in speaking of might ... be called a vague concept.'³ Of course, as has been shown, neither English nor humane education were 'there' in some simple sense, but had been laboriously constructed over a very long period. Leavis, however, professes to be unworried about any historical or conceptual vagueness, since he is more concerned to mobilise opportunistically the symbolic force of 'cultural tradition' in order to 'check and control the blind drive onwards of material and mechanical development, with its human consequences.'⁴

This perspective is closer to that of the Newbolt Committee than to the guiding impulses of interwar English Studies. Indeed Leavis repudiates such impulses as tending 'to foster a glib superficiality, a "literary culture" too like that of those milieux of which the frequenters cultivate quickness in the uptake, knowingness about the latest market-quotations, and an impressive range of reference, all at the expense of real intelligence and

disinterested understanding or interest in anything but kudos.'⁵ At the same time, it is also clear that Leavis is not concerned with 'extending' English in the manner of Newbolt. What is essentially distinct from the Newbolt strategy is the altered relation to state and public policy. It is not Leavis' goal to produce 'national intellectuals' to serve as state missionaries, but rather a free-floating and critical educated class, membership of which is characterised by a particular kind of mental orientation: 'It is an intelligence so trained that is best fitted to develop into the central kind of mind, the co-ordinating consciousness, capable of performing the function assigned to the class of the educated.'⁶ Professional intellectuals, so trained, could place the symbolic force of the university under the 'guidance' of a deeper 'inclusive and unifying purpose.'⁷

In contrast to the practical consciousness represented by the interwar Review of English Studies, Leavis proposes a definite 'discipline' for English Studies which is generalist, critical rather than empirical in orientation, and thus devoted to developing an intelligence and sensibility very different from that of the forensic lawyer-statesman. He therefore calls for a reformed profession built around a new 'common enterprise' and involving 'wide active co-operation' among its members.⁸ This enterprise is no longer to depend on discourses drawn from outside. Instead, it will possess a unique discourse of its own:

The essential discipline of an English School is the literary-critical; it is a true discipline, only in an English School if anywhere will it be fostered, and it is irreplaceable. It trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence - intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy.⁹

For Leavis, then, the materials of the literary tradition are simply there, and the moral force to be associated with the study of English resides, not in the 'personalities' of great authors, but in the capacity of an intellectual and professional elite¹⁰ to 'respond', that is, to recreate in themselves that evaluative response to cultural change seen as inscribed within the literary tradition. The sense of continuity articulated here is very different from the pre-war 'continuum'. Underlying Leavis' reformed discourse on English is the sense that a major cultural transformation during the seventeenth century is at the root of the subsequent debasing modernising process. The literary tradition is valued insofar as it offers a critical evaluation of this transformation and its consequences. This is why Leavis recommends that students be prescribed a piece of extended work dealing with the process of change by which 'the England of the seventeenth century' became the 'England of today.'¹¹ This student work should study 'in concrete terms' the relations between the economic, political, moral, spiritual, religious and literary strands within English culture, particularly be attending to such 'key-concepts' as order, community, civilization and - most importantly - culture.¹²

In sum, Leavis is proposing that English be transformed into the study of culture based on 'a sense of the subtle ways in which, in a concrete cultural situation, the spiritual and the material are related.'¹³ To this extent he can be seen as supporting a synthesising discourse of the kind that had been increasingly welcomed by the Review of English Studies during the second half of the 1930s. Where it differs from such discourses (those associated with Bateson and Wright, for example) is in Leavis' insistence upon the 'exercise of the sense of value ... controlled by an implicit concern for a total value-judgement,' and based upon 'familiar' literary works, 'the nature and quality of which are immediately obvious.'¹⁴ In the immediate post-war period, this discourse entered into the practical consciousness of many university teachers of English, eventually to such an extent as to significantly transform the conditions of the discipline's reproduction. However, a understanding of how and why this happened requires a frame of reference much wider than one limited to the discipline of English.

The University in a Democracy

Although Leavis' prescriptions were addressed most directly to the situation at Cambridge, their immediate impact was greatest within the newer university institutions. It is particularly instructive, therefore, to give some attention to those institutions which were either freshly conceived in the aftermath of the war, or achieved university status at that time.

In 1946 a Committee at Stoke began planning a curriculum for what would become the University of Keele. A central figure for these deliberations was A.D.Lindsay, Master of Balliol College, Oxford. Lindsay proposed a general foundation course for all students consisting of the study of the 'Heritage of Western Civilization', 'Experimental Science', and 'Modern Democratic Institutions'.¹⁵ Under Ortega's influence, Lindsay placed the central emphasis on 'culture', understood as 'the essential system of ideas governing the world and man, which belong to our time.' Thus, the primary function of the university was considered to be the teaching of 'the great cultural disciplines.'¹⁶

As James Mountford confirms, the stimulus of the war had generated a whole range of books about universities and their function, of which Leavis' was considered to be one of the most important examples. In the context of plans for Keele, Leavis' concern with bringing specialisms into communication was considered to offer a significant contribution to a sense of the function of universities in a 'democratic' society. For Lindsay, 'a democratic nation has to be a well-educated nation,' and this necessitated combining the technical knowledge of the expert with the practical experience and understanding of the 'common life' of the ordinary public. Universities must therefore address directly the difficulties involved in reconciling expert knowledge with democracy.¹⁷

The great attraction of Leavis' discourse, then, is to be found in the possibility it seemed to offer of enacting

such a 'reconciliation' by means of an education which was both culturally synoptic and evaluative. As will be seen, there were contemporary factors which favoured any programme that was sufficiently flexible to contribute to administering the 'common life', and thus able to contribute to a newly-important conception of 'vocational education'. For example, in the newly-founded Universities Quarterly in 1948, the Professor of the Philosophy of Education at University College, London, Louis Arnaud Reid, emphasises the contemporary need for 'a constant rethinking of the ways of education in the humanities.'¹⁸ Without such rethinking, he argues, 'we shall lose our vision as a people, and, as a great people, surely perish, destroying more than ourselves in the process.'¹⁹ For Reid, the current concern with the need to transform university education is related to the growing dependence of the universities on public funds and popular votes. Thus, it has now become necessary to justify and possibly improve arts education by showing how it may increase awareness of 'man' and 'the world'.²⁰ A further factor is 'the present diminishing proportion (in relation to science and technology) of liberally educated persons.'²¹ Indeed, (if medicine and dentistry are excluded) the proportion of students studying for degrees in science and technology did rise from 25.9% to 32.6% between 1938 and 1949, and would rise even further to 40% by the early 1960s. During the whole of this period, arts figures were static at between 43-44%.²²

According to Reid, the 'diminished prestige' of arts education stems from its seeming remoteness and ornament-

ality, in that it produces no very evident tangible results.²³ To remedy this, he suggests that arts education must be shown to be 'vocational', which is to say that arts should be shown to provide education for living, acting, doing, knowing, thinking and enjoying.²⁴ Liberal education, conceived in this 'vocational' manner, would instil a 'habit of enlightened intuitive awareness and wisdom,' thus breeding a sense of respect, flexibility of mind and 'a sense of proportion.'²⁵ Of course, these were qualities very similar to the mental orientations claimed by Leavis to be fostered by his version of English. Indeed, this version of English was now beginning to be justified at some provincial universities on grounds of the kind proposed by Reid.

For example, Vivian de Sola Pinto (a regular contributor to the Review during the 1930s) had come to consider that in the post-war world liberally-educated persons, whether schoolmasters, civil servants, or business administrators should have the capacity to contribute to the revitalisation of a 'soulless bureaucracy', and that the main object of English Studies should therefore be 'the provision of a truly liberal education' for such 'non-specialists'.²⁶ Pinto had been Professor of English at Nottingham since 1938 and oversaw the university's transition to the autonomous degree-giving status which was achieved ten years later. Like Leavis, Pinto sees the pre-war pattern of English Studies as blocking the development of a new conception of English as the centre of

humanistic studies in a modern university. The earlier version of English at Nottingham as 'elegant dabbling in belles-lettres' stiffened by Anglo-Saxon and philology, has now made way for a more Leavisian model: 'My conception of what a School of English should be was considerably clarified by my reading of Dr. Leavis' notable essay entitled 'A Sketch for an English School' in his Education and the University.'²⁷ Furthermore, Pinto drew upon his experience as an external examiner for the Cambridge English Tripos in 1944-5, to develop a model of English for Nottingham which adapted the Cambridge course according to ideas gleaned from Leavis and another 'Scrutineer', L.C. Knights.²⁸ This is very much in line with a wider emphasis on transmitting leadership qualities at Nottingham. As the historian of the university puts it: 'The war had amply proved the value to the community of men and women trained in the university as leaders, scientists and technicians.'²⁹

It is interesting to compare the Nottingham view with that expressed by James Kinsley, the new Professor of English at Swansea, in 1954. At that time, Kinsley took issue with the 'common belief' that English could produce 'a unified human being capable of a ready and successful adjustment to the complex conditions of modern life, happy and with a sense of spiritual well-being.'³⁰ To counter this, Kinsley invokes George Gordon's strictures regarding the Newbolt Committee's exaggeration of the potency of an arts education.³¹ In keeping with Gordon (and, indeed, a dominant impulse within interwar English Studies), he concludes that 'Literature constitutes a body of knowledge to

be studied in and for itself without regard to any educational value it may have ... [since] its being is its own justification.'³² Quite unsurprisingly, given this position, he is insistent that Anglo-Saxon and philology be retained as essential features of English Studies, even in the light of the growth of the discipline: 'Our first responsibility is to our subject, and, as that expands, we must not look for more ingenious methods of selection but for more time to do it justice.'³³

In the changing circumstances of the post-war university such a position would become increasingly untenable. In fact, even the backward-looking Kinsley was forced to amend his views on taking over as Professor at Nottingham in place of Pinto seven years later. He now concedes that the views of English formed in the course of his own education at Edinburgh and Oxford have come to be modified in terms of 'Cambridge' notions. He admits that, while English at Oxford and London had been 'admirable for training editors and literary historians,' it is 'too inflexibly academic' to meet more general contemporary needs. This interwar model of English Studies is 'too 'literary' to justify its central position in modern Arts studies,' or to educate teachers and administrators for 'a changing society.'³⁴

Thus, a number of Professors of English and other influential educationalists were, in the altered post-war educational context, addressing themselves to the issue of the disciplinary revisions required in order to produce 'enlightened' bureaucrats, administrators and teachers.

The influence of L.C.Knights upon Pinto has already been mentioned. Knights, who was Professor of English Literature at Sheffield from 1947 to 1952, shared this same concern, albeit developed along slightly more radical political lines. Writing in 1946, Knights, an editor of Scrutiny in the 1930s, is anxious that English should not avoid 'controversial questions' in the name of 'disinterested knowledge'.³⁵ The discipline should attempt to provide an education which will produce men and women who are not afraid to ask awkward questions, particularly when it comes to matters relating to the 'quality of living', rather than simply fitting people 'into the machinery of society as it exists at present.'³⁶

Knights is opposed to specialist training to a greater extent than the Review writers ever were before the war. For him the 'prevailing intellectual climate' cannot be relied upon to 'complement and complete specialist training'; nor can specialist training offer a 'discipline' suited to developing the sense of 'social responsibility' favoured by Knights.³⁷ The interwar model of English Studies, in its emphasis upon the past, has little to offer on those crucial 'cultural' questions of quality of living, 'human ends as well as means', or on the relations between culture and economic processes.³⁸ In general, then, Knights is concerned that English should enable students to address cultural issues which are of 'more than academic' importance, and have implications for a 'long-range programme for human betterment.'³⁹

It is essential for Knights that the discipline should attempt to relate the past, present, and future on an appropriately scholarly basis. It is notable that the work of R.H.Tawney is taken by him to offer an exemplary model for relating the past to the present on the basis of 'sound scholarship'.⁴⁰ In fact, Tawney himself set out his position on literature in a lecture given to the National Book League in 1949. In common with Knights and other supporters of the new model of English, Tawney considers that 'humane education' requires a synthesising discourse if it is to 'acquire a more synoptic and realistic view of the activities composing the life of society.'⁴¹ However, for Tawney, this work of synthesis is best achieved through 'social history' with literature limited to the role of an 'ally', albeit the 'most powerful' one.⁴² Knights proposed a different mode of synthesis. It is necessary to attempt to see 'the literature of a given period in relation to the economic, social and cultural forms of that period ... and to relate the findings of such study to the needs of the present.'⁴³ The emphasis here is on culture rather than on 'social history'. Like Leavis before him and Raymond Williams at a later date, Knights concentrates attention on certain key words, especially on 'the more important meanings of the word culture.'⁴⁴ However, if English is to be constituted as a truly cultural subject, it must abandon the pre-war approach of 'covering the ground'', and concentrate instead upon improving reading ability and training taste, which in turn requires a

'discipline'. Students of English should be trained, not only in the use of words 'for any and every purpose', they should also be taught the 'discipline of strict literary criticism' since this is 'the only means we have of apprehending those embodied values with sureness and subtlety.'⁴⁵ Literature may only be used as 'evidence' when it has first been assessed 'critically' as literature.⁴⁶

In considering the attractions of this new discourse on culture, it is worth noting that, despite pressures to put a 'vocational' gloss on arts education, the mood of the postwar intelligentsia was in general moving to the right, away from a concern with social issues.⁴⁷ It became a totally conventional posture to bemoan the difficulties involved in living a cultivated existence during a period of poverty and dislocation. This was often expressed in terms of the inevitability of failure, the absurdity of effort, and the necessity of resignation.⁴⁸ Given this mood, there seemed to be much that was positive, radical and energetic in the new English.⁴⁹ D.G. James, Winterstoke Professor of English at Bristol, could urge the recognition that

Education always has been, and always will be, a losing game. We shall get nowhere if we do not acknowledge this. Disillusion of this kind is rightminded, and, in addition, invigorating; it is the only possible antidote to despair, restlessness and languor which are always threatening.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, James could also acknowledge that 'There is no teacher of English in our universities more desirous and more able to make the study of English literature a living power than Dr. Leavis.'⁵¹

Across the political spectrum, there was a shared sense after the war that contemporary civilization was corrupt and mechanical. In 1946 George Orwell writes of the 'reduced state' of contemporary consciousness caused by linguistic debasement and concealment, and thus favouring 'political conformity'.⁵² Similarly, in comparing the contemporary with the Elizabethan world, Tawney argues that 'the imagination of common men [during Elizabeth's reign] worked at times with a spontaneous intensity which an epoch that has starved it finds difficult to grasp.'⁵³ To the extent that it was believed that English Studies could offer the means of breaking through the shackles of such conformity, it could be taken as a progressive force both by the resolutely anti-Marxist Scrutiny and those whose sympathies were of a more socialist orientation.

H.B.Charlton had been Professor of English Literature at Manchester since 1921, and had acted as that university's sponsor for Keele in 1949. By 1950 he has come to the view that 'literature is what emerges from a special use of language and in the end what matters is the extent to which language so used can enlarge mankind's awareness of reality.'⁵⁴ It required only a small step to conclude that the new critical approach offered the best mode of access to such awareness. Even a figure associated with the Review of English Studies since the 1930s, and by 1951 its editor (John Butt, Professor of English at King's College, University of Durham (Newcastle)), favours Leavis' suggestion for studying a 'phase of civilization', such as

the seventeenth century, rather than relying on 'factual information'.⁵⁵ He also notes without disapproval the current popularity of presenting a 'critical judgement' as the text for discussion in English examinations, a novel post-war development.⁵⁶

In general, then, the pressures for vocational relevance, together with attempts to transform English Studies into an antidote to contemporary cultural debasement and conformity, helped to accredit the Leavisian critical approach. The same impulses also helped to instil within the profession the related need to build a 'free-floating' or 'disinterested' intelligentsia and a humanised bureaucracy. On this basis English became more closely attuned to producing individual citizens capable of full and critically evaluative responses, rather than the professional scholars and readers of the pre-war period. At least in intention, and at least at the peripheries of the profession, this represented a mode of accommodation within English Studies to the demands of a 'democratic' order, and to the increased reliance of universities on public funds and popular votes. Of course the response to 'democratic' pressures was a highly modulated one. In practice the new discourse was addressed not to the population at large but to potential members of an elite of 'the educated'. The notion of 'culture' was an important feature within this process of modulation. The emphasis on 'culture' effectively distanced the study of English from wider social and political matters in the name of inculcating a general

evaluative capacity or coordinated intelligence. 'Culture' provided a powerful countervailing force to those by now discredited attempts from the left during the 1930s to introduce 'class' as a category bearing on literature.⁵⁷ Liberty and individual freedom could now be defined in cultural rather than social or political terms as the free play of the human critical and evaluative impulse. The 'mature man' was thus placed at a distance equally from the 'blind' drive of the capitalist market-place and a democratic process defined in quantitative or mechanical terms.

But, uniquely, the new English offered through education unmediated access to what was taken to be the central activity of all human judgement. Thus, in a situation where the contemporary social dynamic was seen as disordered and destructive, the new critical emphasis offered to intellectuals a mirror of their own estrangement and distance from everyday life, while holding up the ideal of a community of feeling and understanding based only upon literary criticism. The ideal was both a modernist and at the same time conservative one. It offered a vision of a recoverable and unfragmented reality, personal integrity and wholeness, a free ontological movement within a world of values. However, 'culture' and 'art' were inherently undemocratic since they stood for processes of feeling, understanding and evaluation that were considered to have become lost to majority cultures and literacies.

The new English also exhibited a considerable excess of ontological security when compared with the anxieties raised for pre-war English by the spectres of cynicism and

ambiguity. English was, as it were, placed fully in the hands of the critic rather than the author, and the author would henceforth be admitted to the pantheon only on condition of a complete and 'first-hand' reevaluation. Thus, the new version of English (often now explicitly distinguished from 'English Language and Literature') offered a sense of ontological security as well as a pedagogic programme, based particularly upon a conception of the self-generating and autonomous value.

Challenges to the New English

Attractive as this new programme was as a response to the requirements of 'relevance', and the need to fight off any incursions by scientific and technological education, it remained nonetheless vulnerable on a number of counts.

The first area of vulnerability was that of scholarship. For example, it has already been noted that James showed some sympathy for Leavis' work; but he also had some reservations regarding the new developments. He considers that English, seen as a form of study rather than the practice of cultivated reading, has still not freed itself from the criticism of lacking intellectual strenuousness.⁵⁸ In such a context, 'literary criticism' is 'viewed with a certain tolerant contempt', not only within the academic world at large but even within English Schools themselves, especially by philologists.⁵⁹ If the dangers of loss of prestige by the discipline are to be averted, not only must new measures such as joint Schools and interdisciplinary

studies be introduced, but the 'catastrophic decline' in the mediaeval side of English Studies must be reversed.⁶⁰

Helen Gardener, writing in 1959, is more concerned about the continued professionalisation of English which has now rendered it a subject closed to all but experts, a condition for which the 'new' as much as the 'historical' critics must be blamed.⁶¹ Gardener, a regular pre-war contributor to the Review, decries a loss of acceptance of English since the 1930s. She sees the discipline as 'once more under heavy fire' to an extent only comparable with the 1890s.⁶² She has no doubt as to the cause of this decline: the pernicious influence of the 'new critics'. Gardener deplores all attempts to train sensibility and taste or to inculcate critical standards and moral attitudes, and calls for a return to the pre-war emphasis on producing 'widely, intelligently and deeply-read scholars.'⁶³

Similarly, in 1958, M.J.Collie accuses 'theoreticians' and 'self-styled humanists' of making 'a cult of their own profession' during the past 15 years by fabricating 'a mysterious, nebulous value as the supreme end of literary study.'⁶⁴ He associates this postwar trend with the devaluation of a proper linguistic and historical discipline capable of searching out 'the meaningfulness of the text in its historical complexity.'⁶⁵ Collie then turns to what can be identified as the second area of vulnerability within the new English, its claims to inculcate a sense of social responsibility. In complete opposition to the position espoused by Knights, Collie sees the new English as freeing

the individual from responsibility.⁶⁶ He accuses the new critics of finding a value in art which falsely claims to give life order and meaning: 'The pursuit of literary value thus becomes the basis of a new morality. "Values" which were at first aesthetic have become didactic.'⁶⁷ The claims for English as an introduction to life are 'unfounded', the 'implicit educational creed in theory mistaken and in practice pernicious.' And, furthermore, in emphasising literary value, the new English serves 'a power that is potentially cohesive in that it binds society into its proper heritage, and at the same time is wholly conservative.'⁶⁸ It is not, argues Collie, the prerogative of English to save civilization. Instead it should address itself to instilling mental discipline, the capacity for argument, and the independent, sensitive and rigorous sifting of evidence.⁶⁹

But perhaps the most celebrated assault of all upon literary intellectuals as a group is made by C.P.Snow in his 1959 Rede Lectures.⁷⁰ On publication it was expected that The Two Cultures might sell between 1,000 and 1,500 copies, whereas in the event it sold over 100,000, resulting in an unprecedented public debate, and eventually culled a reply from Leavis himself.⁷¹ According to Snow, even the rise of modern science and technology has failed to displace the old pattern of training a small elite which characterises English university education. He diagnoses the current situation as one in which the two cultures (literary intellectuals and scientists) have almost ceased

to communicate with each other.⁷² Although it is the traditional culture which continues to manage the Western world, Snow argues, only science can feed that world, create wealth, provide hope for the poor and the sick, and forge the essential links between intellect and practicality which make for a proper wisdom and awareness of moral and social issues.⁷³

In the light of such attacks a number of attempts were made to resolve the problems posed for English, and liberal arts in general, by the need to demonstrate convincingly the social value of a humane education in a liberal democracy. One approach was to attempt to revise the idea of a liberal education so that it might provide guidance as to the proper application of science within society.⁷⁴

Within English itself there was already some awareness of the need to ensure that the discipline could touch the student of science: 'The student of the physical and social sciences is not a disembodied intelligence, and he too can gain much from that purifying of the emotions which is still one of the most valuable gifts of the literary artist to posterity.'⁷⁵ However, on the whole, English teachers at this time were content to defend their discipline on the grounds of its singular capacity to provide those 'human' values upon which the idea of a liberal education depended, and to present science and technology as merely an aspect of that mechanical world against which the 'battle of culture' needed to be pitched.⁷⁶

Had it not been for one other factor, it seems likely that the combined pressures upon English both from inside

and outside the discipline might well have caused it to accommodate itself more directly to the service of 'vocationalism', and 'social responsibility', and thus the needs of interdisciplinary and applied work. This factor was the entry of English into a period of even more bouyant growth, both of student and staff numbers, from the late 1950s. This acceleration of growth lessened the pressure on those areas of vulnerability discussed above and turned attention inwards towards the development and coordination of the discipline itself. This is quite evident from the attempts during the late 1950s and early 1960s to construct a generalist discourse which would encompass both the 'historical' and 'new critical' tendencies within English Studies. Such attempts are no doubt also to be related to desperate calls for guidance such as the following: 'The lack of any central directive, any policy, is everywhere apparent. There seems to be no general agreement on what the study of English is for, in what its discipline, if it has any, consists.'⁷⁷ The writer of this passage, T.R. Barnes, has his own preferred solution which involves submission to the new critical discourse: 'discipline of literary studies consists in the perception of values, or it is nothing.' In his view, the technique of practical criticism should provide 'the basis of advanced English Studies.'⁷⁸ Such a 'resolution' was, of course, no resolution at all, but merely a restatement of the primacy of the new critical approach. However, other contemporaries did propose somewhat more synoptic models.

Writing in 1961, D.S.Brewer attempts to construct 'a

rationale of English Studies' according to the principle that an educated person requires 'a mind versed in the nature and uses of language.'⁷⁹ In contrast to Barnes, Brewer (Professor of English at Birmingham) sees greater synoptic potential in the 'cognitive' rather than evaluative elements of English.⁸⁰ If the discipline is to take advantage of this moment of 'great opportunity for English Studies' and provide the centre for a revival of the Humanities, the first step must be to transcend that 'Fear of the Cognitive' which the new English has fostered.⁸¹ The process of renewal would best be served by a 'reformed rhetoric', a rhetoric 'worthy of the resources, power and potential of the English language' and capable of providing an intellectual method, a theory of discourse, and a general approach to communication in society.⁸² Similarly, James Kinsley, writing in 1963, considers that over the previous couple of years there has been significant growth in the area of linguistics as well as critical theory. His suggestion is that the two be merged to form a 'critical linguistics' as a centre of growth and unification within the discipline.⁸³ While prescriptions of this kind were indicative of a new confidence in linguistic studies, in practice they never managed to achieve a cultural potency comparable with the new criticism.

Other, and more extended, attempts to offer a new foundation for English Studies at this time can be associated with the launching of the journals Essays in Criticism (founded in 1951, just prior to the demise of Scrutiny) and

Critical Quarterly (founded 1958). We shall return to consider the significance of the latter journal below. For the present purpose Essays in Criticism is of more direct significance for examining attempts at disciplinary unification. The new journal was to be principally edited by F.W. Bateson, who announced in a preliminary circular the intention to tread mid-way between Scrutiny and The Review of English Studies.⁸³ The actual outcome has been assessed in the following manner:

In retrospect, what Essays in Criticism seems to have represented was the institutional absorption after the War of the so-called "critical revolution" of the inter-war period, and the professionalisation of what had previously been a more or less oppositional movement within the academy.⁸⁴

In many ways Bateson was the perfect person to oversee a transformation of this kind. As a respected Oxford academic, a socialist, and a regular contributor to the Review since the mid 1930s, he was in touch with the historical and modernist, governing and oppositional strands within the discipline. Furthermore, as will be seen, he had a personal commitment to the forging of an explicit relationship between English, education, culture and the processes of liberal democracy.

In common with some other contributors to Essays in Criticism he had come around to the view that the object of English should be to develop in students a 'trained mind' rather than to produce 'literary critics' or even 'good readers'.⁸⁵ Similarly, Rodway and Roberts consider that 'practical criticism is not a substitute for good sense, but

merely a means of canalising it' towards the training of an 'alert mind'.⁸⁶ In Bateson's own 1959 essay 'Democracy and the Study of English' he outlines the characteristics of the kind of trained mind he envisages, which turn out to be the mental attitudes and orientations most suited to the democratic process. For Bateson the operative principle of democracy is 'a balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities.'⁸⁷ In fact, this might be taken as a most apposite description of his own attempt at building a new consensus for English. Certainly the key objective is to find a means of aligning the discipline with the needs of contemporary society so as to justify claims for the centrality of English within university education. Furthermore, he is attempting to construct a discourse which is impervious to the kinds of attack currently being launched from inside and outside the discipline. His solution to the problem of scholarship is to call for a closer alliance between literary criticism and the historical study of language, to be achieved through the kind of emphasis on literary language which he himself had favoured since the 1930s.⁸⁸ Subsequently he was to make it clear that this is not the language of 'linguistics' but a form of 'pre-verbal' communication.⁸⁹ Access to this pre-verbal communication can be gained through those 'texts of the English classics' which constitute 'the supreme achievement of our race'.⁹⁰ It is important to note that it is on the basis of the self-evident cultural value of these texts that Bateson develops his sense of the wider relationship between culture and democracy.

He seeks to deflect any charges of over-specialisation and methodological inadequacy by means of an appeal to the 'traditional values' of literature and the 'primacy of the text' for English Studies.⁹¹ The test of any methodology or specialised mode of study is the degree to which it illuminates rather than obscures the primary cultural values inherent in literature. These values are assumed to reside in the cultural continuum which Bateson sees as stretching from 1200 to the present.⁹² It is, indeed, from these same constitutive values which are inherent within the culture of this 'blessed isle', that 'the modern concept of democracy' has also arisen.⁹³ Thus, the university can make its most fruitful contribution to democracy through the teaching of an English which places the student in direct touch with the values embodied in the national literature. In the final analysis the specific method is merely a secondary affair, since any method must in the end efface itself:

As the actual words and stylistic devices recede from the reader's consciousness their place is taken by an illusion of actual experience, one which the reader shares without actually being involved in it. An aesthetic distance ... separates the human situation which the reader appears to be contemplating from such a situation in real life. ⁹⁴

Bateson follows Richards, Bickersteth and others in arguing that such experience is psychologically valuable provided that the reader approaches it as 'patient' rather than active interrogator.⁹⁵

Perhaps most important of all, however, is Bateson's treatment of the issue of social responsibility. He is anxious that the student of English should gain a 'representative function'. Of course, if this could be established, English would be rendered relatively invulnerable to attacks of the kind mounted, for example, by Snow and Collie. Indeed, it is interesting that, in arguing that the critic should have 'the feel of the future in his bones', Bateson is repeating the exact formulation used by Snow to characterise the scientist.⁹⁶ The nature of this 'representative function' is best illustrated by considering the kind of student which Bateson wishes university English to produce. The object of a university should be to produce 'democratic individuals'. This necessitates transcending the simple 'imitative' pedagogy of the school.⁹⁷ Democratic individuals require the kind of 'two-fold consciousness' which renders them 'capable of thinking their own thoughts' and 'feeling their own feelings'.⁹⁸ In order to achieve this, students require two qualities: 'self-identification' and 'verification'. The first of these is best achieved through 'criticism' and the second through 'scholarship', while the most effective means of combining them is through the study of English literature.⁹⁹ What is required of the student is the capacity to identify with English: 'Unless an undergraduate can identify himself in some sense with the subject he is studying, he is either reading the wrong School, or has no business to be at university at all.'¹⁰⁰

The reason given for the unique capacity of English to offer a truly democratic education is the peculiar nature of the poetic process:

The way a poet's mind works when he is being most a poet may be taken as the model of the process that operates as democracy in the political field and as education in the psychological field ... A balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities is the operative principle (a) on the public plane in the twofold relationship between majorities and minorities in a democratic state, (b) on the private plane in the twofold self-consciousness that characterises the fully educated person.¹⁰¹

His conclusion is that English, if constituted according to these principles, is the university study not only best suited to produce the truly democratic individual, but the discipline which is 'destined in time to become the educational centre in English-speaking democracies.'¹⁰²

Bateson's views have been outlined in some detail here, not primarily because of their subsequent absorption into disciplinary ideology and practice, but because of the enormity of their ambition to provide a wide-ranging and thorough-going consensual discourse for English Studies. In the event the reception given to this discourse had much in common with that received earlier by the discourse of the Newbolt Report. As in the case of Newbolt, a close analysis reveals, not so much a widespread set of effects, as a complex of contradictory forces. It is in the very breadth of its ambition, ^{THAT} Bateson's discourse illuminates _A all of the major tendencies at work within English as it entered a period of great expansion; just as Newbolt reveals a disposition of forces which were soon to be subject to contraction.

It may be that a discourse like Bateson's which attempted to forge deep linkages between English Studies and democratic processes was an unlikely candidate for acceptance within what has been described by a university teacher active at this time¹⁰³ as the 'foppish, aristocratic atmosphere of the English university of the 1950s.' The important point, though, is that the discourse touches many of the lines of force active within the discipline at that moment, and - despite subsequent transformations of the relationships between English, education, culture and democracy - still active in the 1980s. It is worth briefly summarising what this discourse proposed regarding the nature of English Studies since it will be argued below that anything subsequently seeking recognition as 'English' has had to accommodate itself to, or challenge, all of these propositions either at the level of formal discourse or practical consciousness:

- (a) English is essential to higher education in a democracy (at least in the English-speaking world),
- (b) English studies is the only suitable candidate for the central coordinating role within higher education,
- (c) The study of the classics of English literature provides access to experiences which are of unique psychological value,
- (d) It provides such access because all of these texts share an essential humanising or democratising quality which derives from the values inhering within a continuous cultural tradition,
- (e) The adequate student of English must be capable of achieving a state of unforced receptivity to, or identification with, the texts which make up that tradition,

and

(f) Given such adequacy, the student of English should engage both in critical and historical study built around these classics of English literature.

Lest it be doubted that all of these propositions are still fundamental for English Studies, it is worth observing here (it will be discussed in detail below) that subsequent attempts to abandon any of these propositions have frequently led to accusations of having abandoned 'English' also: the 'Cambridge Crisis' of 1981 provides only the most dramatic example.

English as an Integrated Career Structure

It has been mentioned above that Bateson brought most of these propositions together in a synoptic discourse at the moment when English was about to enter a period of great expansion. The impact upon English of university growth (and, subsequently, growth of non-university higher education) was considerable. On the one hand this expansion offered for the first time a substantial number of teaching posts which together formed a fully-integrated career structure, and on the other it considerably lessened the security of both the 'historical' and 'critical' paradigms for which Bateson had been at such pains to seek some form of mutual accommodation. In the course of the 1960s the boundaries of what counted as 'English' began to expand as more interdisciplinary and joint programmes of study were offered, especially at the new universities and later still at the Polytechnics. However, while the attachment of some younger staff, and many students, began to take the

form of a pragmatic career orientation rather than the earlier 'vocational' approach, such amendments as were made to English from the 1960s were more than matched by retrenchments and revisions of a traditional kind. Nonetheless, during the 1960s and 1970s every single one of the fundamental propositions listed above was subjected to considerable strain and contestation. The overall result has been that, by the 1980s, English exhibited a state of crisis greater in proportion than any by which it had been assailed since its inception as an academic study a century earlier.

By the mid 1960s the number of universities had doubled when compared to twenty years earlier, and the general undergraduate population had quadrupled.¹⁰⁴ Rather than ministering to a small elite, these institutions had now established as their function the 'education of the upper intelligence groups of the nation', selected according to criteria which included being 'good' at English in school.¹⁰⁵ One much-remarked upon feature was the extent to which students now had in mind future career chances. The universities were seen less as 'finishing schools' and more as offering access to a career.¹⁰⁶ In response to this development some teachers of English began to justify the value of their discipline on the grounds that it offered 'an opportunity to discover both an individual identity and social role without premature commitment to a profession.'¹⁰⁷ While it remained possible to cling to a sense of the 'vital ambitions' of the discipline, 'human

and institutional frailties' were seen as likely to inhibit the achievement of such ambitions.¹⁰⁸ Continuing reliance might be placed upon the 'civilizing influence of literature',¹⁰⁹ but teachers were also aware that for many students a degree in English was simply a necessary preliminary to a career in business, commerce, the civil service, teaching, broadcasting or journalism.¹¹⁰ Under such pragmatic pressures, the 'faked response' that was now 'guaranteed in any Art syllabus' became the source of some anxiety¹¹¹ despite all the efforts of those teachers of a new critical persuasion who were now to be found at most English universities.¹¹²

Since the early part of the 1960s the sense that the universities needed to take more seriously their national role, of which Reid had reminded them in 1948, had been somewhat enhanced by the appointment of the Robbins Committee. In fact the minute of appointment had instructed the Committee in 1961 to report on and review the pattern of full-time higher education in Britain 'in the light of national needs and resources'. Although the eventual Report addressed general principles rather than specific disciplinary practices, it did reiterate Reid's point that the 'financial dependence' of the universities made the direction of their development a matter of public interest.¹¹³ While economic competitiveness was now presented as dependent upon the education of the nation's population, the drift of the Report was not purely towards an 'economistic' conclusion, 'culture' being another of its concerns:

(albeit a secondary one): 'Both in general cultural standards and in competitive intellectual power, vigorous action is needed to avert the danger of a serious relative decline in this country's standing.'¹¹⁴ However, within the university sector itself, the Robbins objective of assisting the maintenance of the country's 'standing' by transmitting 'a common culture and common citizenship'¹¹⁵ was seen as problematic given the extent of the expansion taking place in the 1960s. For example, Albert Sloman, Vice-Chancellor of the new University of Essex, while accepting the requirement of serving 'national need', considers that expansion has not been achieved without a 'drop in standards', despite Robbins' claim to the contrary.¹¹⁶ He attributes this decline to the fact that students are now often entering university 'from homes with no tradition of culture or learning.'¹¹⁷ This, in fact, was a view shared by many teachers of English at the time. They would also have agreed with Sloman that, even before Robbins, it had become clear that universities were 'threatened by expanding numbers', and that radical measures were required to avert the dangers of such expansion to 'the traditional conception of a university.'¹¹⁸ John Butt, reviewing developments in English Studies within the new universities in 1963, expresses the fear that adequate teaching and examining 'may be defeated by numbers'.¹¹⁹ D.J. Palmer also argues that, more generally, postwar university expansion and the resulting rise in numbers taking English, has caused an influx of students unprepared for single

subject study into the universities.¹²⁰ Indeed, as early as 1954, James Kinsley notes that 'it is no exaggeration to say that most of our students - Scots, English and Welsh alike - come to us hardly able to construe the English language, and unschooled in the patient, critical reading we require of them.' Furthermore, many of these students 'have not the degree of human sensibility needed for the complete assimilation of a poem.... As teachers ... we cannot give this faculty to those who do not already possess it, as a natural endowment, in the degree which literary criticism demands.'¹²¹

Within the new universities one response to this perception of student 'inadequacy' was to engage in a certain amount of disciplinary 'cross-fertilisation'; and to depend more upon the 'civilizing power' of a few 'great books' considered to have some contemporary 'relevance' than upon a 'professional' approach to English Studies.¹²² At Sussex, David Daiches considers that the acquisition of knowledge must involve 'a world of cultural understanding that is real' for the student. Thus the study of English should allow some room for a 'dispassionate sociologico-cultural study of contemporary Britain.' But even more importantly perhaps, he considers that universities must actively transmit 'some idea of the stature of the English literary achievement' so that students may 'achieve the fullest possible awareness of the human relevance of works of literature.'¹²³ Thus, by the 1960s, English literature could no longer simply be relied upon to spontaneously generate within students a sense of its self-evident value.

Of course, the problem of 'relevance' had long been a familiar one to teachers of English within adult and working-class education. Richard Hoggart, for example, notes in 1951 that the adult tutor is necessarily forced to face challenges to the self-evident value of literature given the types of student involved. His own solution is one which came often to be used subsequently by teachers of English. Instead of viewing his task as that of a missionary to a 'primitive community', Hoggart seeks to encourage the development of what is 'already there'.¹²⁴ However, another response to the issue of 'relevance', and perhaps the more common one within higher education from the 1960s, was to take the degree of 'adequacy' of literary awareness to be the measure of the individual student's 'intelligence' or 'maturity'. Allan Rodway and Mark Roberts, for example, argue that certain authors require 'too mature a taste' to be within the reach of 'any but the exceptional undergraduate.'¹²⁵ By the late 1960s various ways had been developed within English Studies of dealing with the 'inadequacies' which resulted from the dissonances between student attitudes to literary study and teaching based on the elevated canon of great literary texts or 'classics'. Some teachers, in starting from 'what was there', even abandoned the attempt to expose students to 'the best that has been thought and said'. Instead they encouraged students to articulate their own experiences of frustration: 'the feelings which are articulated will point in the end - though the end may never be reached - towards

a position of critical and perhaps revolutionary dissent from the established order of society.'¹²⁶ By this time teachers like Colin Falck feel the need to take account of the increasing distance between literary studies and the most central forms of modern cultural production, by transcending both any simple rejection of students' experience on the grounds of their supposed 'inadequacy', and that 'total contempt' for popular culture identified with Leavis, Denys Thompson and David Holbrook.¹²⁷

During this period it is common to find English teachers expressing a sense of the futility, or at least extreme difficulty, of attempting to influence in the direction of submission to great works of literature, students socialized into a culture of 'affluence'. As early as 1957, the apparent success of capitalism had led Hoggart to perceive a general progression 'towards a culturally "classless" society.'¹²⁸ At the same time, the 'whole way of life' towards which this change seemed to be directed was in conflict with the values of the 'literary tradition' of which most English teachers still considered themselves the guardians. This conflict drew a wide range of responses from within English from the late 1950s and on into the 1970s. Some took the view that it was essential that English be made less 'remote from the living interests of the average adolescent.'¹²⁹ A few even attempted to move literary education in the direction of political 'confrontation'.¹³⁰ Hoggart himself seeks a more interdisciplinary and sociological resolution. At

first he considers that the conflict between literary values and contemporary culture can be resolved in a typically modernist manner, in that literature can be the means of subverting 'conventional' views of life.¹³¹ Later he attempts to move beyond 'purely literary values',¹³² towards more 'organic' studies 'which begin in close cultural reading [of literary texts] and can lead out, in conjunction with other disciplines, into better cultural analysis.'¹³³ Nonetheless, Hoggart emphasises the primary need to 'submit' to works of art, even when they are being used as social documents.¹³⁴ Of course, the sense of the danger to English Studies from viewing literary texts as social, historical or cultural 'documents' reached back at least as far as Newbolt, and every subsequent suggestion that texts be used in such a way rekindled related anxieties.¹³⁵ But the issue was now raised in its sharpest ever form by the wider perception of a 'crisis in the humanities' due to the incapacity of university structures to attune themselves to contemporary cultural and economic needs.¹³⁶ The renewed interest in using literary texts as a means of inculcating the kind of critical competence which could comprehend rather than simply dismiss contemporary culture in all its complex manifestations, was one kind of response to this crisis.

Crisis in the Humanities

The sure sense of the unchallengable humanistic basis for English Studies, upon which for example Bateson's

justification of the value of the English School in a democracy rested, became increasingly difficult to sustain from the 1960s. The end of the 1950s had seen the eclipse of 'the last epoch of the dominance of literary criticism in English culture' and the emergence of cultural styles appropriate to consumer capitalism (qualitatively new kinds of magazine, advertisements, television programmes, and political campaigning, for example).¹³⁷ By 1969, Leavis is to be found expressing his 'sense of the urgent gravity' of the contemporary cultural situation, 'a frightening face of the gravity being the blankness - the inability or refusal to perceive - that characterises our civilization.'¹³⁸

The consequences for English Studies of the reassessment of liberal humanism in the light of the experience of war and the subsequent emergence of the 'affluent society', popular and youth cultures, is initially best examined through George Steiner's 'after Auschwitz' thesis. Reflecting on the extermination of seventy million human beings in recent times, Steiner argues that 'what man has wrought on man ... has affected the writer's primary material - the sum and potential of human behaviour - and it presses on the brain with a new darkness ... We know that some of the men who devised and administered Auschwitz had been trained to read Shakespeare and Goethe, and continued to do so.' For Steiner, this revelation puts into question the 'primary concept of a literary, humanistic culture.'¹³⁹

Introducing the collection of essays on the Crisis in the Humanities in which Steiner's essay appeared in 1964,

J.H.Plumb calls for 'less reverence for tradition and more humility towards the education systems of those two great countries - America and Russia - which have tried to adjust their teaching to the urban, industrial world of the twentieth century.' Graham Hough develops this argument as applied to English Studies by claiming that the Christian-humanist ideal is now worn and battered, with a resulting confusion within literary education. The traditional 'upper-bourgeois literary education' which was addressed to the scholar-gentleman-Christian, has become irrelevant to the contemporary world. Despite all claims to the contrary, English, rather than being at the core of the humanities, has become 'merely one subject among others.'¹⁴¹ Even the attempted revisions of the discipline associated with the Scrutiny programme have failed due to its lack of positive practical goals: 'False ideals are not destroyed merely by seeing through their linguistic dress, but by opposing them with stronger and better ones.'¹⁴² The new critics' belief that 'a new organon, a whole new range of intellectual apparatus, had come into being' has proved to be 'an illusion'. Indeed, criticism's aspiration to deal with 'the whole conditions of intellectual health in a society' has been shown to be misconceived.¹⁴³ All that is left is the 'ideal' of the professional scholar, which is remote both from the 'interests of unprofessional readers' and from all students of literature except the 'brightest'.¹⁴⁴ The current situation is one of chronic 'academic paralysis'. Not only is most pre-modern

literature now culturally remote, but England is no longer the centre of contemporary literary creation in the English language.¹⁴⁵ In sum, it is no longer possible for English Studies to rely upon traditional literary values, given current awareness of a history dominated by privation, sectarianism and nationalism.¹⁴⁶ The future of English Studies depends for its success upon establishing a 'coherent body of knowledge' for the discipline, and attempting to shape imaginatively the new 'teen-age sub-cultural ideal' now being formed.

This kind of critique of the traditional gentlemanly and humanistic, and even new-critical, basis of English became ever more common in the course of the 1960s, and later. For example, the Times Literary Supplement has always been ready (from the point of view of the literary culture of the 'man of letters') to criticise academic English Studies for its increasing distance from the lay literary world. In a 1968 editorial, for instance, it notes the 'present muddled, unsatisfactory situation' within English, and recommends that the discipline finally abandon its claim to provide 'morally nutritive properties' and simply accept that literature is worth studying for 'its own sake'.¹⁴⁷ From within the discipline, Hough agrees in 1970 that the claim that literary culture refines and fertilises the life of its time is now only a 'pious formula' adhered to by academics past middle age.¹⁴⁸ He criticises such an elevated view of English for failing to take into account the postwar expansion of the school

population and the change in its class composition. The parallel process of university expansion and transformation has maintained the isolation of the discipline of English from the wider culture.¹⁴⁹ In any case, the wider culture has itself become a 'non-literary' one, and there can no longer be any question that English will satisfy Leavis' aspiration to establish the discipline as 'conductor of the cultural orchestra'.¹⁵⁰

However, Hough was wrong to write off so easily the force of more traditional views of the nature of English Studies, since even some of the younger academics still found there inspiration in Leavisism:

I am asking for a militancy against all that is hateful in contemporaneity, and for a brave access of energy to build on those things we have which are worth holding ... It is Leavis who has made the essential definitions for us; he, supremely, has given style and direction to our notions of Englishness, culture, intelligence and sensibility, and the stance for combat.¹⁵¹

Nonetheless, it must be admitted that, despite the occasional call for a militant renewal of the Leavisian enterprise, by 1970 every single one of its fundamental ideological props had been subjected to considerable strain. Not all the attacks were, however, launched from the same platform. By the late 1960s, and even more forcefully from the middle 1970s, an alternative 'stance for combat' was most successfully developed.

The Rise of the New Right

In reconsidering Education and the University in 1968, W.W. Robson accepts that liberal education now requires 'apology', given a widespread loss of faith in its relevance, and the fact that the measure of agreement about essential values is now so much less than it was.¹⁵² His solution is the pragmatic one, common at the time, which involves establishing as large and vague a syllabus as possible and which leaves a great deal of optional choice to students.¹⁵³ However, there is another aspect of his position which has more in common with the revisionary as opposed to liberalising tendency within the discipline. This is to be found in Robson's assertion that the concept of 'democracy' is inapplicable to the Arts, since compositional capacity is 'uncommon' and critical appreciation even less so.¹⁵⁴

Writing in 1968 also, C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson recall that Critical Quarterly had been founded in 1958 with the intention of opposing that kind of cultural 'pessimism' associated with the sense of a 'breakdown of classic humanism' of Steiner's 'after Auschwitz' thesis.¹⁵⁵ While Cox and Dyson share in the opposition to Scrutiny's 'negative anti-contemporary' attitudes, the grounds on which they do so are very different from those put forward by Hough, Falck and other critics of Leavisism. For these editors of Critical Quarterly, and from 1969 of the influential Black Papers, 'Great literature helps to keep alive our most subtle and delicate feelings, our capacity for wonder, and our faith in human individuality. The artist contributes

to the vitality of language, to the preservation of the Word in the desert.'¹⁵⁶ There remains here a certain sense of uneasiness in the face of the 'desert' of contemporary culture which reaches back to Dyson's account of the 'younger' universities published in Critical Quarterly almost a decade earlier. Writing in 1959 of the teaching of English in these universities, Dyson expresses a certain pessimism in the light of the powerlessness of 'men of liberal principles' to perform their proper function as guardians of 'civilized values'.¹⁵⁷ If the university is to act as the 'cultural centre for the whole community', with literature as the 'central civilizing force', it needs to be capable of discrediting those students who 'are actually too lazy or incompetent to do an honest day's work.'¹⁵⁸ In actively opposing such laziness and incompetence, the teaching of English should 'heighten respect for individual freedom', and develop loyalty towards 'the finest achievements and possibilities of the race.'¹⁵⁹

Thus, even in 1959, the antidote to pessimism as much as to incompetence involves the imposition of 'physical and mental discipline'¹⁶⁰ capable of countering what another Critical Quarterly contributor calls the 'debilitating hedonism of a "good-time" civilization.'¹⁶¹ During the 1960s this tendency within English Studies developed a consistent right-wing assault on all forms of cultural and educational egalitarianism. The basis of their programme is clearly outlined in an inaugural lecture given by G.H. Bantock at Leicester in 1965. Given the influence

over the cultures and literacies of the majority of the population of an 'unpropitious environment' and 'alternative cultural media', Bantock claims that attempts through education to impose a 'book culture' on this majority merely inflict upon them an unacceptable 'strain'.¹⁶²

In any case, 'the education we provide' is said to produce 'on a considerable section of the population few or no results.'¹⁶³

According to Bantock, because of the nature of the community from which 'this section' springs, they are 'unable to face up to the psychological demands' of 'literate culture'. He proceeds to draw upon Bernstein's work as supporting the view that equality 'is being used to make more difficult any possibility of evolving a system of education adjusted to the varying levels of cultural and mental capacity in our community.'¹⁶⁴

Egalitarians are therefore pronounced guilty of 'sentimentality' for failing to 'accept the complexity of human existence as it actually faces us.'¹⁶⁵ All of this is very much in line with the view of English propounded by Bantock in 1959 when he claims that only the exceptional student is capable of 'assimilating the much more precise and profound experience of the writer to his own only semi-articulate desires and feelings.'¹⁶⁶

It requires only a small further step to argue for the exclusion from English of 'those unfitted to benefit' from studying literature. Indeed, in 1968, T.R.Henn is to be found recommending that at Cambridge the number of students taking English should be cut by 40% on the grounds that many

students tend simply to 'drift' into the discipline. For Henn, 'the delicacy and complexity of the response of the individual, and the crucial importance of the values transmitted, makes any system of mass-instruction pernicious.'¹⁶⁷

These themes were summarised and developed by a whole plethora of writers for the Black Papers between the late 1960s and middle 1970s, with considerable impact on educational debates, and indeed on public policy.¹⁶⁸ The contributors regularly asserted that a university was not a democracy, and that academic study should be reserved for an elite by concentrating attention and opportunity only upon students endowed with 'unusual gifts'. By the late 1970s this avowedly elitist tendency had provided an attractive and powerful rallying-point for those in English Studies who saw it as their function to 'uphold the finest academic and cultural values.' Teachers of this persuasion wished to accept for admission to higher education, and to English Studies, only those students possessing a sufficiently high level of 'qualitative literacy'¹⁶⁹ and sufficiently hard-working and disciplined as well as competitively-motivated to 'benefit' from university education. From this perspective, the capacity to appreciate literary texts had become the measure of the achievement of 'qualitative' as opposed to 'functional' literacy. As M.K.Paffard puts it in 1978 (following Hume): 'Not all men [are] equally qualified by learning or experience to make value judgements about literature or to be called literary critics.'¹⁷⁰ While 'functional literacy' guarantees the

capacity to engage in normal communication within one's given 'culture or group', it does not guarantee the capacity to distinguish between good and bad in literature.¹⁷¹ For Paffard 'to ask whether a piece of writing is 'literature' is to ask whether it is 'good'. Furthermore, the perception of such goodness requires a posture of submission on the part of the student of English: 'His discipline, like that of all disciplines, will lie in a willing submission to a master or masterpiece.' In this manner literature fulfils the need for 'assurances of value from guides we respect.'¹⁷²

Given that, by the 1970s, all of the familiar themes associated with the postwar new-critical programme had been appropriated by the new right to attack the more social-democratic 'egalitarians',¹⁷³ it is perhaps not surprising that some teachers who did not wish to ally themselves to the radical alternatives sought desperately for other revisions of English Studies. For example, George Steiner, although expressing caution regarding any return to Leavis' (and Orwell's) sense of 'linguistic decay' within a generally 'nerveless and vulgarised political society', is nonetheless prepared to reach back even further in his desire 'to develop "genuine" literacies and a language-consensus.'¹⁷⁴ Like the new right he envisages a collapse of postwar social-democratic educational strategies: 'We did not need the Bullock Report to tell us of the disastrous range of sub- and semi-literacies which now harass the school-teacher and which may bring to the edge of

collapse the entire ideal of compulsory and universal education.'¹⁷⁵ On the basis of this perception, Steiner is drawn back to the kind of programme supported by the Newbolt Committee, appropriately perhaps given that the occasion for his pronouncements is his 1977 Presidential Address to the English Association:

Ways must be found ... of giving an evolving mass society a stake in literacy, of bringing those who have never known them, or known them only at the distance of derision, some element at least of the immeasurable strength of the language, a strength at once individual and collective, and some element at least of its history and of its letters. ¹⁷⁶

Fred Inglis, the erstwhile missionary for a renewed Leavisism, seeks his resolution elsewhere. By 1975 he has come to doubt the efficacy of relying upon a sense of 'Englishness' based upon the 'liberal imagination' alone.¹⁷⁷ Inglis now suggests a further revision of the Leavisian paradigm which, while continuing to 'diagnose forms of life and death', will serve a social programme lying somewhere between a 'merely liberal imagination' and a 'cast iron Marxism'.¹⁷⁸ However, the university department of English can no longer be trusted to provide a symbol appropriate to this revised programme. Literary criticism 'can't go it alone' any longer, but should ally itself with other progressive factions both inside and outside educational institutions.¹⁷⁹

Such attempted revisions are indicative of the final collapse of the humanistic sense that English departments might play a central and autonomous role in the transform-

ation of the general 'quality of life' in society. Leavis himself is by now reduced to an expression of gratitude for the letters-page of The Times in 'the world of triumphant modernity, the world of power-centres from which the quantity-addicted machinery of civilization is controlled, directed and exploited' and in which 'literature in the old sense has ceased to matter.'¹⁸⁰ Henceforth the conception of English as a central force for sustaining the national cultural 'heritage' would become largely the property of the right.

The Pluralist Consensus

Apart from the emergence of the new right, there were other factors which contributed to a loss of the sense of cultural centrality within the discipline of English Studies during the 1970s. The establishment within English of a fully integrated career structure encouraged more pragmatic attitudes towards the discipline. In 1972 the Times Literary Supplement carried, over a number of issues, a survey into the state of English in various universities.¹⁸¹ One notable feature to emerge from these reports is the loss, at least among younger academics, of faith in what the TLS Special Correspondent calls the old 'mystical' attitude which insisted on the special power of English to exert some civilizing influence. The teaching of English is now often viewed simply as a desirable job and staff were often motivated more by their desire to pursue a comfortable career than by any wider sense of social function.¹⁸²

As might be expected, the TLS investigation was itself prompted not by any anxiety over the loss of the 'civilizing' impulse, but rather by what was seen as a 'trivialising' or 'pop' orientated tendency within the discipline. The investigation uncovered a tendency among many younger staff and most students to consider any emphasis on 'evaluation' as 'a subjectivist intrusion' upon professional scholarship, or as 'elitist': in turn, this drift had also caused 'a hardening of conservative attitudes.'¹⁸³ In terms of the curriculum, the courses at Oxford, Durham, London and Liverpool had hardly diverged from the 'covering the ground' approach of traditional English Language and Literature, although there was evidence of pressures from a number of students for some form of change. For example, at Liverpool (where Professor Kenneth Allott admitted they were 'fairly conservative' in their teaching), some students - influenced by recent tendencies outside the traditional universities - proposed that literature should be viewed as part of a whole culture; and that seminars on 'contemporary culture' should be introduced which covered Marxist ideas and sociological approaches to literature.¹⁸⁴

Despite the conservatism of these university departments, Keith Brown and Christophe Campos are to be found arguing in 1971 that

An impressive university department might be staffed with the established academics who have lately confessed, in print, to basic doubts about the validity and purpose of English literary studies; and it is hard today to think of any branch of formal literary study that does not reflect something of the same malaise.¹⁸⁵

Brown and Campos conform with the TLS conclusion in doubting that many younger staff see the literature of Britain as its chief contribution to civilization, or that it is possible any longer to cherish the vision of literature teaching reforming the world by making 'corrupt communication unacceptable.'¹⁸⁶ They consider that the decline of such a humanistic orientation is related to the 'quasi-industrialisation' of academic literature departments caused by the growth of higher education, and the related emergence of a career-based imperative to 'publish or perish.'¹⁸⁷ In contrast, another incipient imperative of the 1960s - the encouragement of interdisciplinary work - has had less impact, since the logic of the individual disciplines has survived their superficial linkages.¹⁸⁸

Two further observations by Brown and Campos also confirm the account of general developments within English Studies which has been given above. First, the claim that doubts about the validity and purpose of English Studies are related to a 'wider decline in the general confidence now affecting all traditional literary-oriented culture,'¹⁸⁹ and second, the regularity of the complaint that 'English literature is drowning under the sheer numbers of often insufficiently motivated students choosing to take degrees in the subject.'¹⁹⁰ However, they consider the latter complaint to be based on a fallacy. Rather than signifying any general lack of motivation among undergraduate entrants, the rise in numbers should be understood in terms of the success of English in schools.¹⁹¹ They do not,

however, go on to consider that another important contributory factor may be the fact that success at English in schools had come to stand as the most common measure of examinable 'general intelligence' or 'qualitative literacy' in arts subjects, thus swelling the numbers taking English at 'A' level.

Certainly, during the 1970s students were flooding into English Studies in previously unparalleled numbers across the range of, now relatively diverse, institutions of higher education which spanned the ancient and newer 'civic or provincial' universities, the postwar 'plateglass' universities, and the Polytechnics. It would, therefore, be true to describe the discipline as having achieved an astounding success if such success is to be measured in terms of the establishment of English literature as the central arts subject at 'A' level, and thus at the basis of the constant reproduction of the demand for undergraduate places. Furthermore, at the levels of teaching and research, the discipline was now able to offer wide and attractive career opportunities to its most successful graduates. It is perhaps not surprising that, in such circumstances, the older defensive logics of the discipline, and especially the petit-bourgeois critical consciousness of the Scrutiny tendency, could no longer offer a generally acceptable disciplinary ideology. However, if many academics now felt that overt humanism had been discredited, there was little evidence of any major displacement of the 'classics of English literature' from the centre of disciplinary practice. 'English', especially in the newer

institutions, was becoming a process of overseeing, encouraging and measuring the capacity to write about these classic texts in an interesting, imaginative and knowledgeable manner. It was now finally generally agreed (despite claims to the same effect reaching back to the 1930s and beyond) that the map of literary history was as complete as it was ever likely to become.¹⁹² Thus the production of original approaches to, or interpretations of, the major texts had become the focus for almost all writing by English academics. Indeed, commonly the discipline itself was characterised as 'criticism', and its history seen as a succession of critical paradigms or approaches.¹⁹³

However, it would be mistaken totally to write off on this account the force of humanism, even within the newer institutions. For example, teachers at Polytechnics might no longer cling to a vision of English as the training-ground for a Leavisian elite, and might even accept that 'mass education' was not necessarily incompatible with English Studies, while still insisting that the discipline conformed with the logic of humanism.¹⁹⁴ Raymond Cowell, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Sunderland Polytechnic, while recognising that the experience and function of English 'changes constantly' according to wider currents of ideas on life, literature and culture, continues to maintain that 'its centre holds fast, however, because in the word is involved the wholeness of humanity.'¹⁹⁵ More commonly, perhaps, even where humanism was not directly avowed in Polytechnic teaching, it was often simply displaced into

conceptions of literary texts as 'superb primary sources' or 'remarkable documents of human culture' that were 'intrinsically enjoyable'.¹⁹⁶ The move here is away from the impulse to instil an aura of respect in the presence of the literary text, and towards one which incites or invites a recognition of the classic texts as enjoyable. Thus, English Studies was coming to function as a discipline through which 'literature' was produced as an occasion for pleasure, whether through reading practices or by means of intellectual, imaginative and novel operations upon the selected texts.

Graham Hough is surely only partially accurate when he claims that 'The great attraction of Schools of English in the universities is no longer primarily literature. It is that they are so flexible, so accommodating, especially in some of the newer forms. An able and wayward mind can make almost what it will of them.'¹⁹⁷ The increase in flexibility may be conceded. It must be added though that this flexibility commonly only extended to the horizon bounded by the classic texts, otherwise (as will be seen) the question as to whether the study could be authorised as 'English' was likely to arise, sometimes in quite an explosive form. Whatever degree of flexibility may have been introduced into English Studies, the primacy of the classic texts remained, perhaps in the limiting case the texts of Shakespeare whether justified as illustrating the most 'potent rhetoric of literature',¹⁹⁸ or in terms of 'the imaginative centrality of Shakespeare ... in the pool

of our common experience.'¹⁹⁹ Thus, despite the development since the 1970s of a whole plethora of 'critical' and 'theoretical' approaches to literature, English Studies remained (and remains still) radically inconceivable without those texts which authorise it as an area of English and of literary study, as opposed to anything else. Certainly, it may be admitted that as a consequence of challenges to humanism, the overt force of the national concept within English Studies has been diminished (but far from extinguished), and the space for a new and valuable concern with methodology has been opened up. What has not been substantially deflected, however, is the practical assumption (in teaching, if not in theory) of an unchanging literary essence which is taken to inhere within some or other selection of English texts, irrespective of any introduction of parallel, contextual or complementary studies.²⁰⁰

A consistent theme within English Studies since the 1970s has been the call for a 'methodology' capable of describing and analysing the 'nature of the knowledge specific to English as a discourse,'²⁰¹ or at least offer a 'fully articulated and logically coherent appraisal which could count as indubitable knowledge about a given literary work.'²⁰² Hilda Schiff points out that such a methodology would considerably stabilise the teaching of English in that students could then be expected to 'master' an identifiable body of knowledge.²⁰³ Such calls have not gone unheeded, and they have even encouraged, to however limited an extent, the kind of analysis of the 'modes of operation' whereby English teachers 'pursue their own work',

for which Schiff also calls.²⁰⁴ But more characteristic-
ally the response has been a massive importation into
academic English Studies of theories and methods otherwise
associated with structuralism, linguistics, semiotics,
sociology, Marxism and post-structuralism. However, as
Patrick Parrinder has pointed out, most such approaches -
in their concern with methodology rather than with the aims
and purposes of English Studies - have led to changes in
manners of interpretation rather than in the choice of
texts: they have not led to any significant reconsiderat-
ion of the worth of pursuing the interpretation of texts
as such.²⁰⁵ As Parrinder further indicates,²⁰⁶ the quest-
ion remains as to whether the 'aims of English' can be
formulated other than in terms of humanism, a question
which will be considered below in the Conclusion.

Perhaps one reason for the paucity of attempts to
offer a direct critique of the 'aims of English', is the
tendency within the discipline to avoid overt and detailed
manifestos or statements of aims and objects upon which such
critiques might be based. Only at moments when pressure
has been exerted by groups seeking some radical reorient-
ation of the discipline, or when reorientation has been
fiercely resisted, have manifestos of any substance appear-
ed, most notably Churton Collins' campaign against Oxford
in the 1890s, the Newbolt Report which developed out of the
initiatives of the English Association, the Scrutiny move-
ment, and most recently, the new right. It will be argued
here that the recent emphasis on flexibility has generated
a pluralist consensus within English which represents a

further refusal to articulate an underlying basis and a clear set of aims and principles for the discipline; and that this refusal, when understood in relation to the appropriation by the new right of the residues of the humanist programme, forms a significant characteristic of the continuing crisis in English Studies.

It has already been indicated that the tendency towards greater 'flexibility' within newer forms of English was noted by Graham Hough as early as 1970. Subsequently such flexibility has allowed the emergence of a plurality of approaches to literary study which have been notable for their apparent openness and latitude. Garry Watson, in attacking the new pluralism from a Leavisian perspective, offers two exemplary passages by contemporary academic critics which may serve as illustrations of this trend:

... many of the critics I most admire have taken all the latitude in the world, and have earned the right to such freedom by the extraordinary power of their perceptions, many of them being achieved by critical reverie. ²⁰⁷

... the only works we value enough to call classic are those which, as they demonstrate by surviving, are complex and indeterminate enough to allow us our necessary pluralities. ²⁰⁸

Examples of this kind could be almost endlessly multiplied, but it does not follow that the different methods espoused are really all that different in their fundamental orientations. ²⁰⁹ Even more to the point here is the rarity of defences of the pluralist position as such. It is clear from the general discussion above, that earlier positions were forged out of identifiable institutional and cultural

campaigns and struggles, and indeed the fundamental orientations of pluralism are only rendered explicit in a comparable situation of crisis at the end of the 1970s, by which time the attractions of the new pluralism had long been established. In the early part of the decade the term 'pluralism' regularly cropped up at newer institutions such as the University of East Anglia, and, as was noted by a TLS correspondent, this term was 'invariably meant to signal virtue.'²¹⁰ In fact, 'pluralism' was as much a term for describing institutional arrangements as for emphasising varieties of approach or methodology. As has become the case at a number of other universities and Polytechnics since that time, students at UEA in the early 1970s could build their own pattern of course units in ways which tended to displace the historical chronology of literature associated with 'English Language and Literature'. In this particular case they could choose between the linguistic emphasis of Roger Fowler, Malcolm Bradbury's more sociological inclination, John Broadbent's moral approach, and a host of other technical and comparative orientations. Seminar courses in 1972 included A.E. Dyson on the Victorian novel, Broadbent on 'Death by Water: Poetry and the Other Arts', N.S. Brooke of the later twentieth-century novel, and Angus Wilson on English and French novelists of the nineteenth century.²¹¹

No doubt, at that time, the East Anglia syllabus allowed for greater plurality than at most other universities, but the force of the pluralist emphasis has since proved sufficiently strong to be considered a significant

feature of English in higher education by the end of the decade. Indeed, in 1979 Pat Rogers of the University of Bristol relates the passing of the earlier crisis in English Studies to the rise of the new pluralism: 'There is, thank goodness, no great crisis of confidence in English Studies ... All those anxious and fretful tracts of a decade or so ago - on the frontiers, or the task, or the business, or the identity of criticism - have a slightly comic air today.'²¹² The discipline can now offer 'competing ideologies' and 'alternative brands to sample.' There is no longer any need to ask whether 'the whole discipline of criticism' has a future.²¹³ It is interesting to note, though, that Rogers feels able to identify the factors which anchor this plurality of approaches to a fundamentally literary essence. For Rogers, literature is 'logically prior' to literary study. Thus, whatever approach is to be taken, there is a prior requirement of 'respect for the text' as a human utterance, expressive gesture and aesthetic object.²¹⁴ The goal of the study of English is to enrich 'our appreciation of particular books' rather than to construct 'a psychology of literary response' or develop 'a sociology of literary consumption.'²¹⁵ It is clear that the books in question are those of 'considerable writers', and that to 'study literature' means to concentrate on the texts which, by virtue of 'the special skill of a gifted minority', enshrine 'the most intense experience of the race.' Continuing upon the familiar submissive theme, Rogers asserts that while the apprehension of 'great art in its fullness is a goal none of us can hope fully to attain,'

it remains 'a worthy objective just the same.'²¹⁶

It is clear then, that the rise of pluralism, both interpretative and methodological, has not necessarily displaced the central ideological themes of the past. Indeed, Rogers appears to allow this apparently 'genial ecumenicalism',²¹⁷ to be infused with the priorities of the new right. The ideological boundaries of the whole pluralist enterprise will come into even sharper focus when we consider the 'Cambridge Crisis' below.

The Survival of Practical Humanism

Before proceeding to this, though, it is of some importance to look finally at an aspect of English Studies which is often ignored. It may be that the central significance of modern manifestations of the humanist impulse is to be found at the practical rather than the methodological or theoretical level. Various approaches, theories and methodologies, while providing a focus for professional exchanges between teachers of English, do not necessarily offer a key to an understanding of the reproductive force of day-to-day procedures within the discipline. Barbara Hardy is just one teacher who has pointed out that most literary criticism is intended for other critics, hardly ever for students.²¹⁸ Furthermore, Tony Davies has made the important observation that 'the real effectivity of "literature" as a practice' is to be found in the humdrum activity of English teaching.²¹⁹ However, it would be wrong simply to seek an account of actual practices within 'critical' work.

Instead it is necessary to attend to the 'disjointed and episodic philosophy' which is activated in the course of ordinary teaching.²²⁰

Perhaps this is of particular importance when considering the more informal pedagogies which have played a major part in teaching activity since the late 1960s. Teachers committed to the New Critical paradigm, certainly, have always been concerned with the nature of the exchanges between teachers and students. Some were particularly aware that the wider social, cultural and educational changes of the late 1950s and 1960s called for something other than the classic Leavisian total rejection of the modernising process.

Barbara Hardy takes the view in 1975 that some amendment to practical modes of teaching is needed given that many students find no affinity with the Leavisian critical stance, nor 'share the faith in Englishness and European civilization.' Thus, they are now likely to 'come up and challenge the very life-affirmation for its smugness, complacency, and lack of eloquence.'²²¹ Hardy provides a good example of a wider kind of practical response to a perceived shift of 'taste', and the need to develop forms of English teaching of sufficiently flexibility to be extended beyond the traditional narrow student elite. The response certainly illustrates the transition to a less 'intransitive' pedagogy and more 'interpersonal style': 'Questions are coming up from the students. It is getting harder to stay behind the rostrum and teach without learning.'²²³

Teachers like Hardy were well aware of the need for adaptations of the kind which Davies associates with a wider shift from 'authoritative monologue' to 'open-ended conversation':²²⁴

Let us accept the shifting of taste, and let us show our faith in the Great Tradition by teaching as much as possible of the literature we admire, without worrying too much about canons and with attention to variety rather than moral unity. Let us admit that good taste and proper judgement have to be worked out slowly and painfully and personally, and that it is each man for himself.²²⁵

Tony Davies sees the move towards informal modes of interaction as related to larger institutional transformations. Indeed, the correlation between this kind of development within English and changes within the 'welfare' services is made clear by John Broadbent in his description of the influences bearing upon his teaching practice at the University of East Anglia.²²⁶ Here again there is an attempt at finding more flexible modes of negotiation between the tradition of 'literary culture' and contemporary student experience: 'My motives also included a more protestant kind of regression, to re-establish links between literary culture - cherished and transmitted by an elite of abstract expertise - and experience.' For this reason he 'began to study group behaviour,' and came to the conclusion that 'role-play is in itself interdisciplinary, interactive. I learned about it from another culture, from social workers and counsellors.'²²⁷ According to Broadbent, it is no longer desirable to 'ignore the resources of experience

that students bring to higher education ... it is by activating those resources in the academic arena that we might respond creatively to protest.'²²⁸

That changes of this kind did not necessarily involve any major revision of fundamental principles is also illustrated in Barbara Hardy's reconsideration of Education and the University. Despite her 'depression' regarding the manner in which Leavis 'seems to pass over the problem of the student', she remains,

impressed by his concern for relationships between English Studies and other studies. I am impressed by his emphasis on what he sees as a humane discipline in a society which he says has a technocratic drift. I am impressed by a good deal that he has to say about the nature of the sensibility that one wants to train, and about the delicacy, the integrity, and tact that are involved in the act or art of teaching. ²²⁹

However, she also adjudges Leavis to be representative of an earlier time and place and 'especially academic environment and Englishness,' not least in his 'predelection for an affirmative and constructive voice.'²³⁰ It has now, however, become necessary to introduce some amendments to this approach. She recommends that in early encounters with students, 'formulation' should be deliberately held back, and that the teacher should 'back away' from everything that is not 'tentative and partial'.²³¹

This piece by Hardy is also extremely informative for another reason. In describing her own progression of views, she illuminates many of the major shifts that had occurred within English Studies across the years since the

Second World War. At the beginning of her career she had assumed that teaching should involve 'the distillation of years of scholarship,'²³² and later come to know the 'unholy charm' of the formal analysis of symbol and structure.²³³ But, by the 1960s, she had realised that the teaching of English, whether based upon scholarship or structural analysis (or both) was insufficiently 'life-directed' to fulfil the wider purposes of the Scrutiny-based sense of the critical function. Given that the object is not to produce literary scholars or literary critics, but rather to develop in students a sensibility, intelligence and judgemental capacity such as to provide 'a training for life', a rather different approach is needed.²³⁴ It is now necessary to rely upon forms of pedagogy which activate a 'personal response' through collaborative discussions or seminars modulating between literary texts and lived experience.²³⁵ For Hardy, it is important that the student's relation to English as a discipline should not become an impersonal or technical one. The mode of interaction should be sufficiently alive to 'the complexity of individual response to literature' to transcend all 'generation-gaps and protests'.²³⁶

However, by the early 1970s, even Hardy found herself confronted by 'some unanticipated possibilities of rejecting Lit.Crit.' It seemed now that perhaps 'one could go on talking about human needs and problems, teaching and learning about imagination, even if all the books were burnt.'²³⁷ Of course, the books have not been burnt, but nonetheless

the talking continues in a multitude of seminar situations, and the force of its humanism derives as much from the everyday exchanges (tutorial and seminar) as from formal critical, theoretical or methodological notions. Tony Davies attests to the continuing force even in the 1980s of the 'fluid and contradictory debris of discursive fragments' which surrounds such limp, but nonetheless coercive, questions as 'Well, what do you think of this then?'²³⁸ It seems that what continues largely to hold these fragments together are those practically-embedded assumptions into which Barbara Hardy, in her strict attention to the humdrum interactions rather than the more formal discursive super-structure, offers a degree of insight unusual for writings on English in higher education. Certainly Hardy's account gives weight to Davies' claim that,

the relative informality and openness of literature teaching, its disinclination to impose judgements or dictate pre-given conclusions, itself constitutes a determinate discursive regime, constrained by its own rules, limits and positionalities: a regime that can be characterised as 'liberal' in so far as it imposes itself not by insisting on the positional authority of the teacher, nor by compelling assent to a given and explicit curriculum of knowledge, but by inviting a voluntary recognition of the existence, purpose and value of a 'subject': Literature itself.²³⁹

However, it is surely necessary to agree also with Davies' further observation that, to recognise the underlying force of such relatively informal and open modes of teaching is not necessarily to argue for a return to earlier more authoritative and intransitive modes.²⁴⁰ This is a crucial

point, and one which will therefore be considered further in the Conclusion.

It is worth observing, furthermore, that even a committed liberal humanist teacher like Barbara Hardy found that opportunities to teach 'against the environment' were rare;²⁴¹ perhaps particularly so in that her own College (Birkbeck) worked within the examination-dominated regime of the University of London.²⁴² Even minor amendments of the kind introduced under Quirk and Kermodé at University College in the period when Hardy was writing this account generated misgivings in the other London Colleges. Far from contemplating the burning of books, any amendments which inhibited coverage of 'the whole corpus of English literature' were considered dangerously radical.²⁴³ In fact, on the whole, London - like Oxford - made fewer concessions to the liberal practices of collaborative seminar discussion than did the newer institutions.

The Cambridge Crisis

It was Harold F. Brooks, a colleague of Hardy's at Birkbeck College, who contributed to the debate on English Studies at Cambridge carried by the press and other media early in 1981, by complaining that 'much of the resort to 'isms and 'ologies' amounts to 'duncery', and is thus 'a menace to the commonwealth of letters, and so to civilization.' For the now-retired Brooks, it remains

The paramount duty of a university teacher of literature ... to show his students the ways by which great art creates its effects,

leading them to a finer appreciation and fuller response, and to help them appreciate more fully the authors' insights, so often deeper than our own, [sic] contribute towards our understanding of ourselves, our community, and life itself. 244

It is obvious from this that an academic of Brooks' intellectual formation was in no position to understand the impact made by the new pluralism at Cambridge. While Cambridge had offered little concession to seminar teaching, it had allowed space for the introduction of a plurality of critical approaches and methodologies. But even at Cambridge this had not been plain sailing, as the remarks attributed to Christopher Ricks make clear:

Obviously, no one objects to the presence of structuralists and theorists of film and linguistics in the English faculty. But there is a question of proportion. It is our job to teach and uphold the canon of English literature. 245

The occasion for both of these pronouncements was provided by the 'Cambridge Crisis', which offers an instructive case-study of the practical and institutional boundaries of the spirit of 'genial ecumenicalism' supposedly characteristic of the new pluralism.

By the early 1980s, it had become possible to study modern linguistics, structuralism, semiotics, Marxist theory, post-structuralism, the sociology of literature, various brands of specifically literary theory, and cultural studies in some or other relation to English at a number of Polytechnics and universities.²⁴⁶ Indeed, in May 1981 Colin MacCabe was appointed at the age of 31 as Britain's youngest Professor of English to oversee the progress of this kind

of development (particularly in the direction of film and television studies) at the University of Strathclyde. Like a number of other English Departments and Schools of Humanities within the newer universities and the Polytechnics, Strathclyde had already developed some work in the fields of modern literature and linguistics, and wished to expand research and teaching within other areas of contemporary cultural study.²⁴⁷ MacCabe was appointed to the professorship because he was seen at Strathclyde as 'one of the ablest men of his generation', and as having 'an outstanding record in teaching and research'.²⁴⁸ This appointment brought to an end five months of unprecedented coverage in the media of the condition of English Studies. During its life, the 'MacCabe affair' called forth such novelties as the Sunday 'Heavies' wrestling with Levi-Strauss, a whole range of bluffers' guides to 'structuralism' in the broadcast and print media, and even the ultimate accolade of a Punch cartoon about the capture of 'the Cambridge structuralist'.²⁴⁹

Two features of the 'Cambridge Crisis' are noteworthy here. First is the fact that the same person should be so highly regarded by one English department while being accused of engaging in 'discredited intellectual enquiry' in another;²⁵⁰ and second, that the failure to offer a tenured post to an English teacher at Cambridge should provide the occasion for such unparalleled radio, television, and newspaper coverage of English Studies. A review of this coverage supports the conclusion that the refusal of tenure to MacCabe was related to a sense among Cambridge tradition-

alists that the time had come to mount a strong resistance to further incursions by the tendency MacCabe was thought to support. The objection was not to his mode of teaching, but to his association with intellectual forces which were seen as foreign to the task of 'upholding the canon of English literature'. The resistance was not new, although in this case its impact was dramatic.

In fact, as the THES noted at the time, the dispute leading to this crisis had been simmering away in relative privacy for quite some time.²⁵¹ The genealogy of these developments is significant for understanding recent movements within English Studies. While in 1960 Cambridge English had been still in the process of accommodating traditional canonical scholarship to the revisions of the new criticism, by the end of that decade this process was finally displaced in the name of a pluralism of approaches.²⁵² Leavis had by then retired and, although L.C.Knights had been appointed Regius Professor, the ideal of practical criticism seemed no longer sufficiently strong to provide an adequate focus for 'intellectual and imaginative' work.²⁵³ Students had begun to be exposed to a range of different approaches such as Steiner on comparative literature and linguistics, Raymond Williams on cultural studies, John Holloway on structural analysis, and an assortment of others ranging from traditional historical criticism to contemporary continental theory. The instability of such pluralism was revealed in the 'brawl' which accompanied attempts to amend the paper entitled 'The History and Theory of Literary

Criticism' in 1972.²⁵⁴ A working party comprised of Williams, Holloway and Hough proposed the introduction of a new paper on 'Literary Theory: Selected Topics' which would cover symbol and myth, the language of literature, and literature and Marxism. George Watson, responding to this proposal, asserted that such topics were inappropriate for a course leading to a degree called 'English', and in any case dismissed both Marxism and structuralism as outmoded 'intellectual dinosaurs': 'No doubt a university is the place to study discredited intellectual systems; but we risk derision if we propose them to the exclusion of others.'²⁵⁵ That no final accommodation between these diverse conceptions of the boundaries of English was achieved is clear from the re-emergence of precisely the same arguments, but now within a much wider public domain, in 1981. Watson's remarks in a BBC Radio 4 interview reiterated his views of almost a decade earlier.²⁵⁶ The position remained substantially the same as that described by Raymond Williams at the time of the earlier confrontation: 'The consensus on which the English faculty did its best work ended about the time of Leavis' retirement and a new consensus has yet to be worked out.'²⁵⁷

However, by 1981, in the context of wider cultural and social movements to the right, the proponents of the older conception of English felt strong enough to launch a direct attack on the new pluralism, or, at the very least, to insist that this pluralism be grounded firmly in the study of the 'classics of English literature'. There were particular reasons why this should have happened at

Cambridge. At the newer universities and polytechnics the process of institutional growth had led to a variety of adjustments both in modes of teaching (most notably through the introduction of the seminar) and curriculum (with a more modern and selective emphasis, and the use of the period study). The same had not been true at Cambridge. Even by the 1980s, seminar teaching had found little hold there despite a decreasing proportion of staff to students.²⁵⁷ Indeed both Oxford and Cambridge had become, relatively speaking, seriously understaffed over the previous decade despite the fact that at each university about 900 students were now reading English, three times as many as in 1965.²⁵⁸

In effect, the uneasy pluralist consensus had been pushed into crisis through pressures of growth, and in the process had revealed the political basis of the underlying conflict. However, rather than leading to a debate on the nature and aims and purpose of English Studies, the Cambridge Crisis generated, on the one hand, a defence of pluralism, and, on the other, a retrenchment in the name of the unique value of the English classics. By comparison with the situation in 1972, these disputes now carried a much stronger political and cultural resonance outside the university: while both factions at Cambridge resolutely denied that the crisis was a political one, no such refusal was seriously accepted by the media. At the same time, while it was now impossible to recover any significant sense of the centrality of English within the process of political democracy, the Cambridge Crisis allowed the wider

debates about the 'democratic' process to come into play within English Studies. The situation was now very different from that in the 1950s when defences of the value of the English literary canon could be mounted on the basis of the educational centrality of English Studies, or of its psychological force, or even of its humanism.²⁵⁹ The necessity for submission to greatness had now come to be placed in stark opposition to a scholarly pluralism. The politics of English Studies were revealed in a confrontation between a fundamentally right-wing educational philosophy and a countervailing defence of the need for a plurality of emphasis. That the defence of pluralism was aligned to professional scholarship rather than a clearly formulated politics of education is best exemplified in Stephen Heath's argument for MacCabe's appointment on the grounds of the need to sustain the Cambridge English faculty as the 'greatest in the world'.²⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

This history has shown that, as a field of activity, dispute and discourse, English Studies could be said to have exhibited conditions approaching 'crisis' on more than one occasion prior to the 1981 eruptions associated with Cambridge. Perhaps the most significant feature of the 'Cambridge Crisis', though, was the absence of any defence of English Studies on the grounds of its value to democracy, of the kind proffered by Bateson over twenty years earlier. In this conclusion it will be argued that it is now essential to recover the possibility of defending English Studies on democratic grounds - if it deserves to be defended at all, that is. An analysis of the Cambridge debate, however, raises the question of how such grounds might be marked out, given the nature of the objects central to the discipline as it is currently structured, and the mechanisms through which it is reproduced. It is necessary now to consider whether and to what extent this research might contribute to the defence and, indeed, development of the discipline.

This thesis has shown that English Studies is best understood as an entity not having any single and consistent fixed centre; or, at least, that accounts based upon the assumed centrality of 'literary value' or 'criticism' (for example) offer little access to the discursive and institutional relations which have provided the discipline's conditions of existence, operation and reproduction. It has also shown that the apparently central thematic of

Englishness has resided in specific and variable articulations between the objects generated within these discursive and institutional relations (most notably, 'language', 'literature', 'humanity', 'nationality' and 'education'). Equally, the process through which academic English Studies has established its difference and distinction from other domains of activity (both educational and lay), has been shown to be intimately associated with such articulations. Furthermore, the institutional reproduction of English as an academic field has been shown to have been dependent upon its formal status as an academic discipline, the installation of a fully integrated career structure, the development of a distinctive documentary field, set of professional associations, and range of pedagogic activities; and, finally, upon the construction of mechanisms for the selection of 'clients'. It is therefore necessary to conclude by considering the extent to which these objects and institutional mechanisms can be made compatible with democratic aspirations.

But there is one further factor which has a direct bearing upon the issue of democratisation. This history of English Studies has exposed a field in which a number of previous skirmishes with democracy have taken place. From the start, an important feature of the new discipline was a systematic cultural and educational programme (supported by the English Association and the Board of Education and given the Newbolt Committee's seal of approval) constructed, in the characteristic mode of Victorian 'extension' movements, as a response to pressures for political and economic

changes of a democratic kind. The aspirations to insert English Studies at the sensitive layer between the universities (seen as instruments of state policy) and the general population (the 'nation') were soon recognised and dismissed as the 'slack drums' of the Victorian era. The subsequent development of English Studies up to the Second World War involved a tightening, consolidation and professionalisation of the discipline along the lines of a newly negotiated relationship between the universities and the state; a settlement which explicitly refused any democratic responsibility or direct involvement in national cultural policy-making. However, a new stratum of entrants into the profession continued to show concern, especially from the nineteen-thirties, with the cultural conditions of a democratic society, albeit registered as disquiet at its character as 'mass civilization'. The, at first, marginal, discourse associated with this stratum subsequently provided an important resource within English Studies for reconsidering the issue of cultural responsibility within a democratic society, given pressures to define the contribution which an arts education might be expected to make to the welfare of post-war Britain. After the War this discourse was particularly influential within the newer institutions, and helped to develop within English an orientation towards the production of socially-responsible, humanised and disinterested intellectuals and bureaucrats.

Two further developments from the post-war period are also of continuing importance since they represented attempts at a comprehensive understanding of democracy in its

specifically cultural aspects, and for their concern to move beyond to a notion of a 'free-floating' intelligentsia. The first of these, the 'left-Leavisism' associated with such English academics as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, was subsequently to open out into a fertile movement within and beyond English Studies which provided a base from which to struggle for the democratisation of English and other fields of education.¹ The other, associated with F.W.Bateson, while spawning no such prolific movement, nonetheless engaged directly with a number of themes which are necessarily of central importance for any attempt to democratise the discipline. Here for the first time it was explicitly argued that English Studies, and only English Studies, was essential and central to education in a democracy. It thus became possible to extend the familiar claims for the unique psychological, cultural and humanising value of the study of English according to a novel democratic emphasis, and on the grounds that the essential characteristics of the classic texts of English literature and of the democratic process were one and the same. Significantly, this was not extended further to the student (or 'client') in that a submissive posture continued to be required: indeed, only students capable of such a posture were considered by Bateson to be acceptable for the critical and historical study of English.

Since that moment it has become less and less possible to argue for the necessary social or democratic centrality of the discipline. At the same time, the pressure to make

democracy a central factor within English Studies has become more insistent. Similarly, while claims for the uniquely humanising or democratising force of the English classics as the essential centre of English Studies have become increasingly difficult to sustain, the more recent emphasis upon a plurality of approaches has tended to accentuate the multiple character of the discipline. However, as has been argued above, it would be wrong to assume that the pluralist emphasis has substantially displaced the classic texts. It may be the case, though, that, in moving beyond a single-minded emphasis upon these texts, it has become easier to challenge the expectation that student 'clients' of the profession adopt a submissive posture towards the 'great' works and authors. Perhaps any significantly democratic conception of English Studies would require a transcendence of the expectation that its students, and the mechanisms for selecting them, be imbued with a sense of 'respect' for, 'love' of, or passive submission to literature. Given an alternative expectation of active, inventive and interrogative intellectual challenge, the crucial intellectual issue then would become, not what is so special about literature in some intrinsic sense, but how has 'literature' come about, and how can it be made into something else, something which actively contributes to a democratic culture.

Of course, to single out attempts to engage directly with democratic themes is to ignore the extent to which such impulses were in practice quickly overlaid through processes of growth and expansion within English since the

nineteen-fifties. The, no doubt laudable, search for 'a scale, a grid, a sheet of mental graph paper that could register both Wordsworth and the hunger marches,'² was in fact soon overwhelmed by a search for career advancement, which shifted the discipline away from attempts to conceive of a democratic set of aims for English and towards the production of a highly sophisticated plurality of professional discourses. The rise of the New Right has clearly revealed the incapacity of this pluralistic formation to generate radical democratic alternatives. As it has become increasingly difficult even to locate a basis upon which English Studies might be defended from a non-elitist standpoint (rather than simply being deconstructed as an instance of the operation of a 'dominant ideology'), formerly oppositional voices have become muted. Since the nineteen-seventies the struggle has been largely between an inherently unstable pluralism amenable and accommodating to the 'traditions' of the discipline, and an increasingly combative self-proclaimed elitism. Within this field of forces there has been little space for any conflation between 'English' and 'Democracy' except perhaps at the peripheries where English shades into Cultural and Communication Studies.

But even this does not fully describe the contemporary situation. Wider social changes have inevitably impinged upon the discipline; which is hardly surprising given that the autonomy of English Studies is, after all, only relative - especially in the newer institutions. Since the nineteen-fifties significant shifts within the general

education system as well as within wider cultures have brought about alterations in the 'client' constituencies for English Studies. The effective demise of 'literature' in the old sense has left exposed a residual canon (locked in a sense of pastness) which is no longer in any strong position to resist the active presence of a vibrant system of 'popular' cultural production. It is clear that the multiplicity of contemporary cultures and literacies is no longer amenable to the overall cultural authority of a nationalist-humanism. Indeed, within English Studies the humanistic impulse has become deflected away from the production and maintenance of a disinterested sense of social responsibility and towards the informal nurturing of interactive sensibility. Thus, in the nineteen-eighties, as Graham Hough has observed, 'something quite different from traditional English Studies' has begun to emerge.³ The discipline no longer enjoys conditions of existence which allow it easily to reproduce a 'living continuity.'⁴ English has become merely one subject among others, and like other disciplines is attempting to construct defensible boundaries, whether on the basis of elaborate theoretical frameworks or the preservation of elements of a national 'heritage'. It is now very difficult to find within English Studies any subject position from which to enunciate 'as an Englishman about the culture of his own country, bound to the topics of his discourse by innumerable ties of familiarity and association.'⁵ Nonetheless, at the level of much pedagogic interaction a humanistic practical consciousness remains active, and should perhaps

not go undefended if the only alternative is to be the expectation of a posture of submission. No doubt any conception of cultural democracy requires the fostering of impulses towards non-submissive discursive exchanges, as long as they are not deployed as the means simply of diffusing 'protest'. That practices of this kind have arisen in line with liberal humanism is not in itself a sufficient condition for their dismissal. However, if the desirable qualities associated with such pedagogic practices are to be expanded, it remains as a prior requirement the activation of a new democratic conception of the value of English Studies.

Colin MacCabe has identified the need for the discipline to come to terms with the contemporary fragmentation of tradition and language.⁶ In his view, English Studies should offer the occasion for studying 'forms' across a variety of media, taking account of audiences and contextual relations. This would enable a 'fresh appraisal' of 'language' and 'literature' by opening them out as categories in all their actual diversity. 'Standard English' could then be taught in 'fruitful contrast' with the various idioms and experiences of the students; while 'literature' would become a space in which to examine a range of 'exciting experiments' in language and narrative, whether in science fiction or the thriller, television or film.⁷ However, as this research has shown in some detail, English Studies is a historical formation in which a wider variety of objects than 'language' and 'literature' has been deployed. A principled defence of English thus

requires more than an opening out of these immediate categories. It requires a clear understanding of the conditions of possibility for such unities, and of their articulation with other, less immediately obvious, objects. It is therefore important to deflect current theoretical impulses within the discipline towards a deeper historical and sociological understanding of the actual conditions and mechanisms which underly, reproduce and maintain English Studies in its present form. The resources for such a task are not to be found solely within English itself. There is a continued need for a trans-disciplinary emphasis both in teaching and research which draws upon social theory and analysis across a range of fields of intellectual activity, and indeed upon non-academic cultural fields.⁸ More generally, a clearly delineated 'field of action for "English"' needs to be established in which 'English' is no longer understood simply as a 'subject' constituted by 'a prescribed corpus of knowledge and framed by a dominant point of view.'⁹ Instead, the existing constitution of English Studies must be deconstructed, and other discursive and practical connections forged both inside and outside education.

The analysis of the conditions of possibility for the formation and transformation of the relations of signification, subjectivity and knowledge characteristic of English Studies has been a central focus for this research. It is now necessary to consider the contribution that this analysis might make to the delineation of a field of action

for the discipline. It seems clear from the research that any significant rearticulation of the existing field must involve a radical transformation both of the objects and institutional mechanisms which are maintained by, and in turn maintain, the identity of the discipline. Furthermore, it may now also be clear that it is desirable that any such transformations bring into direct and mutually critical coexistence the discourses on 'culture' and 'democracy'. A principled basis for the defence of English Studies could then be mounted in terms of aspirations for cultural democracy, or equal access to processes of making and transforming significations, subjectivities and knowledges. No doubt it would be best to start with the transformation of existing objects, 'humanity', 'nationality', and 'education' as much as 'language' and 'literature', since current discursive resources are deployed around these objects. Certainly, any major transformation of these objects would require difficult institutional changes, but at least the principle of cultural democracy¹⁰ can be used to suggest some desirable directions of change.

'Language' could be reconstituted as power-infused modes of literacy and communication rather than simply 'the English language'. On this principle English Studies might then be expected to make a contribution to the democratisation of modes of linguistic communication.

'Literature' (and the related object 'art') could be extended so as to provide the means of examining the social relations of cultural production, not only with respect to

conventions of writing, but across the spectrum of practices of signification. However, a more active conception of literature (and art) would be required in order to examine the social force of a range of cultural forms, and investigate the possibilities of democratic and collaborative cultural production. 'Humanity', or human qualities and identities in all their fracturings and differences, could be examined without automatic reference to a single authorised mode of Englishness (although it would be important to examine the historical construction of this mode). No doubt any attempt to relate human identities to democratic processes would require an examination of the deployments of different identities within fields of power, and a recognition of the centrality of gender for such deployments. 'Nationality': in one sense the whole of this research has been about the production of Englishness within a specific discursive formation. It has also illustrated the break-up of that Englishness under pressures of cultural diversification. These, and wider related cultural and social processes, could be examined within an 'English' which carried, at the very least, a British emphasis capable of attending to the renewals as well as breakdowns of English and other ethnic identities. 'Education': English Studies has regularly generated ways of understanding education ranging well beyond the discipline at the level of pedagogic practice as well as objects of study. It seems possible that a fertile conception of education might now be generated which is based upon democratic enablement rather than the accreditation of passive

receptivity. The current need is for a powerful discourse which is capable of articulating positive social values, conceptions of social and communicative 'skills', democratic national interests, and a thorough-going critique of the limitations and strengths of liberal democracy. Many of these transformations of object are, of course, already in progress, but it is perhaps necessary to articulate clearly in the specific context of English Studies a democratic basis for such progressions.¹¹

Finally, it is necessary to return briefly to the institutional mechanisms mentioned above (the academic discipline form, integrated career structure, documentary field, professional associations, practical pedagogies, and 'client' selection devices). In the situation of the middle and late nineteen-eighties there can be little doubt that wider forces are in play which will affect these fundamental conditions of practice for English Studies. Here it is the intention only to raise a number of questions on the basis of a similar democratic critique to that applied to the objects within the discipline. The most difficult to answer perhaps is the following one: Is it desirable to attempt to defend the contribution of English Studies to cultural democracy in terms of its unique characteristics as a discipline? Answers to this question will substantially affect the approach taken to dealing with the career structure, documentary field and professional associations. And while it may be possible to develop the foregoing concerns in the direction of English as a professional domain, the issues raised by practical pedagogies and

selection mechanisms tend to shift the focus towards the 'client' constituencies. Here the questions raised include: To whom should English Studies be addressed (in terms of class, age, gender, ethnicity and locality)? And, according to what modes of address? It has not been the purpose of this Conclusion to provide answers to such questions, but rather to suggest that, on the basis of the research which has been carried out, these seem to be the crucial questions to address. It is hoped, though, that this research may contribute to the development of an informed and principled strategy for English Studies by revealing in detail the bases upon which previous and current unities have been variously constructed, transformed, and maintained, and thereby indicating some crucial directions in which debates about the future of the discipline might most fruitfully proceed.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. See Brian Doyle, 'Against the Tyranny of the Past', Red Letters, No.10, (n.d.[1980]), pp.23-33, and Peter Widdowson'"Literary Value" and the Reconstruction of Criticism', Literature and History, Vol.6, 2 (Autumn, 1980), pp.138-50.
2. The most extensive overall account of this approach is to be found in Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, (London: Tavistock, 1974).
3. ibid, p.22.
4. Doyle, n.d. [1980].
5. See the entry for 'English' in the Oxford English Dictionary, and Raymond Williams, 'Marxism, Structuralism and Literary Analysis', New Left Review, No.129 (Sept/Oct 1981), pp.51-66, especially pp.53-4.
6. The influence of 'public sector' institutions and the Council for National Academic Awards upon the development of English Studies deserves more than the cursory attention it has been given in the present research. Some useful initial emphases are to be found in Elizabeth Owen and John Oakley, '"English" and the Council for National Academic Awards', in Re-Reading English: Essays and Literature and Criticism in Higher Education, ed.Peter Widdowson (London: Methuen, 1970), pp.105-18.
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64. Bulletin, No.19, Feb.1913.
65. Smith, pp.6-7.
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67. See the reports on H.Montagu Butler's speech in Bulletin, No.3 Jan.1908, and W.Boyd's paper on 'The Mental Differences between the Primary and the Secondary Pupil, and their Bearings on the English Teacher's Work', in Bulletin, No.10, Feb.1910.
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CHAPTER THREE: English and Cultural Policy

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6. Mathieson, pp.69-84.
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3. Simon, p.343.
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8. Members of the initial panel were: A.C.Bradley, E.K. Chambers, R.W.Chambers, R.W.Chapman, H.B.Charlton, O.Elton, G.Gordon, W.W.Grey, H.Grierson, C.H.Herford, A.Mawer, E.Morley, H.Newbolt, Allardyce Nicoll, A.W. Pollard, A.N.Reed, E.de Selincourt, P.Simpson, C.Spurgeon, J.Dover Wilson and H.C.Wyld.
9. The Review of English Studies I, 2 (1925), p.223 (hereafter Review); when not identified in the text, the names of individual authors are placed within brackets in the appropriate footnotes.
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11. Review, II,6 (1926), p.242.
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CHAPTER FIVE: English, Culture and Democracy

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CONCLUSION

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