

**THE MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE:  
TEXT, CONTEXT, AND THE  
NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH CURRICULUMS, 1969-1996**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE: TEXT, CONTEXT, AND THE NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH CURRICULUMS, 1969-1996**

This is a study of the New Zealand English curriculums, 1969-1996. The study is organised around three phases of reform: the initial changes made to the teaching of English in the first three years of secondary school; the later reform of the senior-school English syllabus; the more recent development of an integrated national curriculum statement for the teaching of English. These reforms are charted in a narrative fashion, although the thesis does not purport to be a full history of English teaching in the period under review. Instead, the various developments and changes to English teaching in New Zealand secondary schools, during a thirty year period, are contextualised under the interpretative paradigm: the management of knowledge.

It is argued herein that knowledge, and, in this case, the subject English, has been managed - consciously and unconsciously - in the interests of dominant socio-cultural and socio-economic groups. I aver that even alleged progressive developments in the pedagogy of classroom life have been routinised in the curriculum statements. Consequently, there has been an official sanctioning of established or conservative perspectives on the way English language and literature should be taught, thus often denying the emancipatory themes of respect for the human subject and human agency.

My contention is advanced and supported through a careful examination of the curriculum text discourses, and, in several instances, through an examination of the transmission process from the draft statement to the published statement. I am therefore able to argue that the English curriculums must be understood as part of wider social and political processes: the curriculums are produced, managed and reproduced. The

influences of the social environment and, in particular, the ideological struggle between State and society, are to be found in the English teaching discourse. This notion is captured in the subtitle of the study: text and context.

The thesis concludes with a brief, personal reflection on how an English curriculum might be theorised so that it does not impose on students a definition of reality that declares the values and symbols of the social elites. I assert that an understanding of discourse, or the discourses of knowledge, can provide a way forward for the theorising of the subject English.

## INTRODUCTION

This study has its genesis in the concepts that formed the basis of a MEdAdmin degree from Deakin University, Victoria, Australia. Specifically, the concept of “management of knowledge” was explored in Study Guides by Richard Bates (1983, 1986). The degree studies in general, and Bates’ Study Guides in particular, caused me to reflect on teaching in a way that had not been part of my classroom experience to date. At the time, I was teaching in Scotland and had the idea of a doctoral study of the English curriculum in that country. Returning to New Zealand, I refocussed the study to the developments that had taken place in the teaching of English in New Zealand since 1969, though not before giving brief descriptions of the Scottish and New Zealand English curriculums in essays for the MEdAdmin degree. My work on the Scottish curriculum, briefly explored by way of a comparative perspective in Chapter 5 of this thesis, has subsequently been published in another form in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* (1992). And a brief overview of the New Zealand curriculum, 1969-1991, in an essay for Deakin University led to the proposal that was accepted by the University of Canterbury and which has subsequently guided this doctoral thesis.

This study seeks to do two things. First, there is an historical dimension to the thesis. Although it is not a full “history” of secondary school English teaching in New Zealand during the past three decades, nonetheless the account is an historical one: the various stages and developments are charted in a detailed, narrative fashion within the temporal parameters of 1969 and 1996. These dates coincide with significant developments in secondary school English teaching. For in 1969, there began the first review of the New Zealand English syllabus since 1945; and in 1996, the Ministry of Education published a grammar/ language text as a supporting document to the 1994 national English curriculum statement. Both the earlier review and the 1996 text resource are significant curriculum watersheds. Not only do they signal, respectively, the beginning and near-

end\* of a long reform process, but also they represent symbolic moments in that process: in 1969 a bold, new direction for English teaching in New Zealand secondary schools was signalled; in 1996 English teachers were presented with a handbook that, arguably, represented aspects of the very state of English teaching the architects of the 1969 revisions wished to abandon.

Secondly, there is an interpretative dimension to the study: “text” and “context” are explored; the interplay between wider socio-cultural trends and the teaching of English is highlighted; the formulation of English curriculum documents is considered in the light of overarching theoretical perspectives. Linking these two threads - the narrative and the interpretative - is the notion of the “management of knowledge”. Indeed, this study advances the view that the various English curriculums have been managed - consciously and unconsciously - in the interests of dominant socio-cultural and socio-economic groups. That is to say, the theoretical perspectives in which the curriculum texts have been embedded,

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\* A further resource to support the 1994 curriculum statement was published at the end of 1997: Ministry of Education (1997) *Planning and Assessment in English* (Wellington: Learning Media).

and the actual teaching practice in classrooms, have conveyed an outlook on life that has meshed with the outlook of politically and culturally powerful members of society. In short, the English curriculum has been an ideological buttress to, and a reflection of, the interests of the dominant culture. But far from there being a conspiracy “from above”, I seek to demonstrate the often seemingly silent and contradictory forces at work which have made the curriculum what this study alleges it is.

Attempting to explore the nature of these forces has not been as straightforward as might be expected given the recent nature of the reforms charted herein. To the extent that my focus has been on the syllabus texts and the transmission from published discussion papers and drafts to the published text, resource material has been ready at hand. However, two factors have contributed to considerable frustrations in accessing appropriate documents. First, in 1989, the Department of Education became the Ministry of Education. Unbelievably, much material relating to the Department’s activities in curriculum matters was not transferred to the new Ministry. My own correspondence with a Ministry official who, in earlier times was an officer in the Department, has confirmed that much material was simply “taken home” during the transfer of responsibilities (correspondence, Vince Catherwood, 27 January and 23 February 1993; see also *English in Aotearoa* 12, 1990: 55, 57). Secondly, in the 1990s, the Ministry’s in-progress curriculum statements have not been made available for public comment. A letter written to the Curriculum Functions section of the Ministry of Education in March 1993 requesting copies of milestone statements, met with an emphatic “no release” reply (correspondence, Sue Douglas, Acting Senior Manager, 26 March 1993). In the event, I was able to study the material through other sources, but problems of access to Ministry material has certainly impeded the pace of the research process. Of course, this has meant following other trails. Indeed, I have built up extensive files - known hereafter as “author’s files” - from individual English teachers involved in various aspects of the reforms, and from school English Departments throughout the country. These documents - memoranda, discussion papers, facsimiles, submissions - have proved to be

invaluable supplementary material: they have enabled me to chart the curriculum developments, and reflect on the management of knowledge issues that lie behind that process. Some of these documents, and indeed some other sources mentioned in this study, are written anonymously. I have, however, made every effort to identify, by name, those who have made a significant contribution to the reform process or to the debate surrounding the reform.

Finally, by way of introduction, I must make it clear that my focus has been on *curriculum* text and context. This focus has necessarily excluded comment on the New Zealand Qualifications Authority unit standard developments. These developments, in the 1990s, have centred on assessment rather than on curriculum *per se*; and, in any case, at the time of writing, the unit standards for English have not been published.

Thus, this study is written as a contribution to New Zealand curriculum studies in general, and the history of English teaching in particular. More broadly, the thesis also seeks to make a contribution to the study of curriculum as a site of ideological struggle; and it is for this reason that I have incorporated into my thesis a chapter that deals with the teaching of English in Scotland. My purpose in pursuing this comparative approach reflects more than merely a desire to revisit an earlier study of the Scottish curriculum. For as Pinar *et al.* (1995: 792, 831) argue, 'curriculum developments are not sealed air-tight within national boundaries'. Further, 'there are contemporary discourses emerging in the international educational community'. Certainly one such discourse reflects an understanding of curriculum as being ideologically shaped. That is to say, the curriculum 'functions as a system of representations, carrying meanings and ideas that structure the unconscious [*sic*] of students' (Giroux, quoted in Pinar *et al.* 1995: 246). To chart this pattern in Scotland gives additional credence to my contention that the study of a school discipline is very much the study of wider socio-cultural and political processes. I argue that text and context are inextricably linked, and that knowledge has indeed been managed so that it reflects the interests of dominant groups in both contemporary New

Zealand and Scottish society. And it is to these issues I now turn.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE MANAGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE: A THEORETICAL POSITIONING

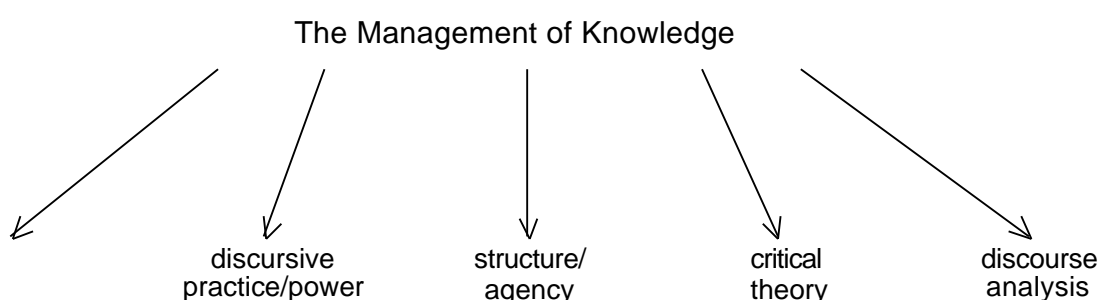
#### Introduction

As a backdrop to this study, I have drawn on the writings of a number of scholars. Their views provide the theoretical underpinning for the analysis which follows. My interest has been in the “management of knowledge” and how these theorists’ writings might touch on this notion rather than on the writings of the theorists *per se*. I should acknowledge, also, that the phrase can be readily subsumed within an overarching curriculum framework. In their book *Understanding Curriculum: an introduction to the study of historical and contemporary discourses*, Pinar *et al.* (1995) refer to several interpretative paradigms or fields which act as frameworks for the contemporary understanding of curriculum studies. One of these frameworks is described by Pinar *et al.* as “political”. ‘Politically oriented curriculum theory’, it is alleged (Pinar *et al.* 1995: 243-244), has as one of its contributions to the study of current educational trends

an almost taken-for-granted view that curriculum can be understood in any comprehensive sense only if it is contextualized socially, economically, and politically. Put simply, curriculum cannot be grasped unless it is viewed in context: “the isolation of curriculum from its multiple, interacting contexts is an absurdity” (Cornbleth 1988: 85). Pinar *et al.* (1995: 244) further note that curriculum theorists working within this framework draw on the ideas of political and social theorists. On the one hand, their ideas include the notion of ‘schools as participating in [the] general system of injustice and suffering’. On the other hand, there is

a visionary element among [such] theorists, as they tend to call for an empowered citizenry capable of altering their circumstances in favour of a more just society. The school in general, and the curriculum in particular, play important roles in both oppression and reform.

My interest, moreover, is not in any paradigmatic framework itself, but rather in a number of key concepts drawn from social and political theorists. I use these concepts, in turn, to inform my specific focus on the management of knowledge. Thus, my theoretical backdrop owes as much, or even more, to the work of general social theory than it does to any specific contemporary conception of curriculum study. For this reason, I refer in this chapter to the looser terms background or backdrop rather than the tighter, more precise terms framework or paradigm or conception. This chapter therefore highlights the following general themes which enable me to view the English curriculums in context:



These general terms and ideas from social theory discourse give meaning to my interpretation of the phrase management of knowledge. Thus, the chapter lays no claim to a detailed, critical study of the writers or movements mentioned herein. Nor does this chapter seek to cover the scholarly ground with respect to a general analysis of the issue. The scholars whose work is discussed have been selected, I confess, on other grounds: these writers, whose positions are known to me, have something to say on the topic, or, at least, their writings touch on the concept central to this study. I have simply made a practical judgement on the use of the scholars' views and the contribution that their respective ideological hegemony works make to the point under discussion. My reading of a particular ideological hegemony before be narrow, quite selective, and to some extent personal; but, like Kenway (1990: 172), I am mindful of the comment made by one of the scholars to be discussed below, Michel Foucault (1981: 4), when, in another context, he proposed:

What I say ought to be taken as "propositions", "game openings" where those who may be interested are invited to join in: they are not meant as dogmatic assertions to be taken or left en bloc.

The intention of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a theoretical undergirding to the narrative which follows, or to provide a series of “propositions” that will make sense of the arguments that are explicated by the narrative.

The notion of the management of knowledge was given some currency several decades ago with the publication of Young’s (1971) edited volume of readings, *Knowledge and Control*. In his contributions to that volume, Young argued that the traditional preoccupations of sociologists of education with the input and output of educational systems had led them to take for granted the ways in which such systems select, organise, and structure knowledge and make it available in a systematically discriminatory fashion (Bates 1983: 15). It was argued (Young 1971: 24) that ‘education is not a product like cars and bread’; instead it is ‘a selection and organisation from the available knowledge of a particular time which involves conscious or unconscious choices’. Thus it is imperative that educators ‘relate these principles of selection and organisation that underly [sic] curricula to their institutional and interactional setting in schools and classrooms and to the wider social structure’. As Bates (1983: 15) observes, this conviction was stated even more strongly by Bernstein (1971: 47):

How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. From this point of view, differences with and changes in the organisation, transmission and evaluation of educational knowledge should be a major area of sociological interest.

Thus, to again quote Bates (1983: 15), ‘[w]hat might be called the management of knowledge became, therefore, a central focus for the work of the new sociologists of education’.

I should also note that in the 1990s the concept of management of knowledge has taken a new turn. That is to say, what is sometimes referred to as new public management, where curriculum development is offered to contract, is very much a feature of the current New Zealand curriculum landscape. The implications for the management

of knowledge within this political environment are significant. And although this aspect is not ignored in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, my primary focus is on the understanding of the term as taken up by the authors of *Knowledge and Control*.

Of course, work on the relationship between knowledge and structures of social, economic, and educational domination, especially as the relationship is expressed through a division of labour dominated by cultural, social and economic elites, did not begin with the publication of Young's book of readings. The nature of this relationship, indeed, has a long historiography stretching back, in modern times, to Marx, and those who were his intellectual successors. In this century, Antonio Gramsci was one who explored these and related issues, and his ideas have proved to be formative in terms of this thesis.

### **Gramsci and ideological hegemony**

As is noted in most accounts of Gramsci (e.g. Boggs 1976, Mouffe (ed.) 1979), it is his theory of hegemony that is the centrepiece to his thought. Hegemony, which Gramsci defined as 'political, intellectual and moral leadership', consists in the capacity of a dominant class to articulate its interests and the interests of other social groups, and to become in that way the leading force of a 'collective will'. Gramsci argued that the middle classes were able to exercise their will and thus create a collective will because the leaders controlled the very definitions of what was considered real, commonsensical and good (Brosio 1985: 222). Hegemony, in this sense, meant that dominant groups could exercise control without the rule of force. Further, Gramsci argued that hegemony was more than merely economic control: it is expressed, also, in ways of thinking and in underlying assumptions held within society. As Ralph Miliband (1989: 139-140) explains:

In any class society those who control the main means of domination and exploitation naturally seek to reduce as much as possible the manifestations of struggle and pressure emanating from below. It may be possible to achieve this by relying almost exclusively on rule by force; but such rule is bound to be very difficult, uncertain and liable to sudden termination ... . Far better, clearly, to 'win the hearts and minds' of as many people in the subordinate population as possible.

Gramsci's legacy to the thinking of the Left, is that the rule of the dominant classes is not to be found in the coerciveness of the State machinery, but in the acceptance by the ruled, subaltern groups of a system of meanings and a habit which serves the interests of the powerful. As Kaye (1991: 67) remarks 'hegemony is a process of ruling ... by persuading the ruled that *the way things are is the way they ought to be* ...'. Thus, a common world view, or 'organic ideology' (Gramsci 1971: 376-377), or a series of ideological principles, is established - elements which are expressive of allied groups and of a national tradition and culture.

In Gramsci's analysis, there is, however, no predetermination of social structures and positions. As Kenway (1990: 177) observes, Gramsci 'emphasizes particularly the dynamic and open nature of class formation and class relations'. Indeed, Gramsci posits a society of different ideological elements from which different classes 'selectively articulate in different ways to produce their own class ideologies' (Jessop 1982: 193). Thus, although there is an ideological hegemony which 'binds together classes and class fractions in dominance and subordination', Gramsci moves beyond the notion that 'each class has its own fixed and closed ideological paradigm' (Kenway 1990: 177). And it is ideology, he argues, that is the foundation upon which the hegemony is sustained - an ideology which may be understood as "philosophy" or even as "common sense"; that is to say, 'accumulated popular knowledge, or the thought which is embodied in everyday living' (Kenway 1990: 177). Ideological domination, in this latter form of common sense, easily evades resistance 'by permeating consciousness itself, becoming embedded in popular beliefs, values, folklore' (Codd 1984: 11). As Boggs (1976, quoted in Codd 1984: 12) has written:

To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalised by the broad masses, it becomes part of 'common sense'; as all ruling elites seek to perpetuate their power, wealth, and status, they necessarily attempt to popularize their own philosophy, culture, morality etc. and render them unchallengeable, part of the natural order of things.

As Codd (1984: 12) observes, 'common-sense knowledge structures mass consciousness in ways that mask and mystify the existing power relations and social arrangements'. Hegemony therefore succeeds 'to the extent that it defines the meaning and limits of [dominant class] pronouncements'. It follows that whatever may be perceived as inadequate about the current social order, it is certainly remediable without any need for major structural change. Thus, by 'positing certain ideas and rules ... hegemony has the effect of distorting both the form and content of discourse amongst those groups in society whose actions may then be interpreted as conflicting with those ideas and rules'. But again, it should be noted that this does not mean the creation of a unified culture - a defined, common purpose and set of beliefs which permeate consciousness. Rather, hegemony means that the dominant class through its 'privileged access' to the culture-producing institutions such as the church, education, and media, is able to '*define* the parameters of legitimate discussion and debate over alternative beliefs, values and world views' (Sallach 1974: 41). An intellectual elite will therefore seek to determine and inform social consciousness on one level, and on another determine and inform public discourse and the public agenda. Pivotal here is how effective the dominant class's intellectuals are in presenting that class's own imperatives, interests and aspirations as universal, as being those of society as a whole (see Kaye 1991: 69-74). And it was precisely this that Gramsci sought to explain: how did the dominant groups make their domination appear as though it were, indeed, the common sense approach and seemingly anchored to a preordained, universal nature of things; how could values be created with such an all-pervasive influence on society?

Before pondering Gramsci's partial answer to this question, and thus relating his argumentation to the theme of this study, it should be noted, first, that it was manifestly

not Gramsci's intention to discard dominant, common-sense ideology altogether; for Gramsci (1971: 344-345) acknowledged that common-sense perspectives were a product of the historical process. As he (1977: 13) noted:

If it is true that universal history is a chain made up of the efforts man [*sic*] has exerted to free himself [*sic*] from privilege, prejudice and idolatry, then it is hard to understand why the proletariat, which seeks to add another link to that chain should not know how and by whom it was preceded, or what advantage it might desire from this knowledge.

Further, Gramsci (1959: 20) asserted that in 'the accumulation of ideas transmitted to us by a millennium of work and thought there are elements which have eternal value, which cannot and must not perish'. The task of philosophy was therefore to understand the difference between 'good sense', that residue of intuitions about life and the world, and 'common sense', that belief that the way things are is the way they ought to be. Moreover, if this were deemed to be the task of philosophy, Gramsci also suggested it was the task of education.

The school curriculum should provide, in Gramsci's analysis, the basis of knowing both "what is" and the means whereby such a reality may be transcended (Mardle 1977, in Codd 1984: 51). Gramsci (1971: 35) asserts that the

individual consciousness of the overwhelming majority of children reflects social and cultural relations which are different from and antagonistic to those which are represented in the school curricula: thus the "certain" of the advanced culture becomes the "true" in the framework of a fossilised and anachronistic culture.

Furthermore, the form of education which a student experiences in a school and which mirrors the wider social patterns 'may conflict with [the student's] conception of his [*sic*] own social existence outside the immediate educational establishment' (Mardle 1977 in Codd 1984: 52). Gramsci (1971: 344 -345) therefore proposes a counter-hegemony:

From our point of view, studying the history and the logic of the various philosophers' philosophies is not enough. At least as a methodological guideline, attention should be drawn to the other parts of the history of philosophy; to the conceptions of the world held by the great masses, to those of the most restricted ruling (or intellectual) groups, and finally to the links between these various cultural complexes and the philosophy of the philosophers.

There is, then, a dialectic at work here: education should promote both traditional and received wisdom; education should enable a student to enter the historical process and change conventional patterns of thought in the interests of those who are ruled by others. Gramsci therefore proposes the act of self-criticism, that 'ability to criticise the particular conceptions of the world held by the active human agent' (Mardle 1977 in Codd 1984: 53). To use Gramsci's (1971: 324) own words:

To criticize one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to a level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is ... .

Gramsci is therefore proposing a view of education grounded firmly in the historical process: transformation of education (and other social institutions and practices) will only occur after a study of a society and period in order to discern what the opportunities are for transformation (Brosio 1985: 221). Transformation will only occur, Gramsci suggests (1971: 88), as a result of a 'war of position', during which the working class should be able, through political and ideological struggle, to disarticulate the systems of alliances of the middle classes, and to create a new popular collective will in which it will be the hegemonic force (see Mouffe 1981: 202).

Gramsci's analysis has clear implications for any study of the management of knowledge. Certainly, what this thesis will explore is Gramsci's contention that ideological hegemony is part of the warp and woof of, in this case, educational or curriculum structures. Throughout the following pages, the text of the English curriculums will be examined (and, at times, the transmission of text into a classroom context) to establish the extent of the hegemony that is present in English teaching practices. My



contention is that, to quote Giroux (1981: 23-24), hegemony 'is rooted in both the meanings and symbols that legitimate dominant interests as well as in the *practices* that structure daily [teaching] experience'. I shall also want to test the functioning of hegemony 'in those practical experiences that need no discourse, the message of which lingers beneath a structural silence'. I shall further want to establish the nature of the intervention in, and control of, the English programmes as the education State has sought to harness the hegemonic resources at its disposal. But I shall also seek to pursue another of Gramsci's contentions; namely that hegemony does not mean that social (or educational) conflicts do not arise. For Gramsci argued that individuals can, and do, act alone and collectively in order to make their own history. He argues (1971: 352) that:

Man [*sic*] does not enter into relations with the natural world just by being himself [*sic*] part of the natural world, but actively, by means of work and technique. Further: these relations are not mechanical. They are active and conscious. They correspond to the greater or lesser degree of understanding that each man [*sic*] has of them.

In other words, Gramsci (1971: 324) posits the existence of human action, or an 'order of struggle'; or to use Williams' words (1977: 112), hegemony 'has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified [because] It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own'. In the context of a thesis which explores the management of knowledge, it is, therefore, important to chart the manner in which the English curriculums' disputes have, or have not, been contained by way of neutralisation, incorporation, marginalisation and suppression. The thesis will want to establish the nature and manner of the success of the ideological hegemony as much as it will allege it has occurred. To appropriate Kaye's (1991: 69) words in a study of history teaching:

it is a question of how successful the dominant class's intellectuals are in shaping and informing collective [values], consciousness and imagination by advancing a vision ... which ratifies and legitimises the contemporary social order and pattern of development and, in effect, the dominance of the dominant class.

Several writers (e.g. Kenway 1990, Kaye 1991) have shown how important

‘intellectuals’ are in Gramsci’s writing. It is the formation of an intellectual elite which facilitates the hegemony. As Gramsci (1971: 334) himself records:

Critical self-consciousness means ... the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not distinguish itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people “specialized” in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.

In the light of this comment, and again in the context of the management of knowledge, this study will investigate the composition of the intellectual elite which has, in my analysis, secured the conformity and consent, or at least the acceptance and accommodation, of teachers of English to a particular, dominant-culture perspective of English teaching. It will be argued that the power of the intellectual elites has been both localised and observable on the one hand, but also diffuse and unconsciously exercised on the other.

Reference to the notion of “power”, introduces a second theorist whose scholarship has been formative in the interpretation that I advance in this thesis; namely, Michel Foucault. Whereas Gramsci can quite clearly be located within a Marxist or neo-Marxist perspective, Foucault is just as clearly outside it. Indeed, Foucault rejects Marxism (Kenway 1990: 172) and he has been described as a scholar of ‘conventional assumptions’ (Quinton 1983: 235), and one who is useful for the agenda of the Right (Kenway 1990: 172, Benton 1984: Chapter 8). And it is his analysis of “discourse” and of “power” that I have found useful in the analysis of the English curriculums that constitute the subject of this thesis.

### **Foucault and discursive practice**

The interconnection of the political and the educational, that is to say between power

and knowledge, is explicated by Foucault in his studies of discursive practices. Foucault argues (1977a, 1979, 1981) that discursive practices are characterised by the delimitation of a field of concerns or ideas (a discourse) coupled with the definition of what is a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge. In other words, in all discourses there is a fixing of the norms and referents for the elaboration of knowledge. Discursive practice therefore implies 'a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices' (1977a: 199). Furthermore, such practices are embodied in the way institutions function, and in the way human beings behave, and even in pedagogical forms which at once impose and maintain the practices. This is not to suggest, however, that discursive practices are not open to modification. The principles of exclusion and choice in discourse are, in fact, susceptible to sustained ideological work and to changes in social relationships and the influence of new ideas. Yet, despite the transformational possibilities which are inherent in discursive practices, there is a system of power which blocks and prohibits and invalidates knowledges which are not in the interests of the dominant social and cultural groups.

This structure and locus of power is not necessarily located within the State, however. Foucault, instead, places an emphasis on understanding the relationship between knowledge and power through concrete and local histories and studies. As he writes (1980: 99), it is important to conduct:

an *ascending* analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been - and continue to be - invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc. by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination.

Foucault's own histories (of madness, imprisonment, sexuality, the human sciences) 'leads him to conclude that there is an intimate relation between the systems of knowledge ("discourses") which codify techniques and practices for the exercise of social control and domination within particular localized contexts' (Harvey 1990:45). Thus, the exercise of power occurs in numerous contexts through the specific discourses rather

than, as some scholars of the Left might argue, through a systematic strategy of class domination.

It follows from such analysis, that any intervention in the systems of knowledge-producing power is an intervention that will occur at localised sites - sites where 'a localized power-discourse prevails' (Harvey 1990: 46). Any successful challenge to regimes of repression must begin, in this view, with localised resistance. Foucault is, therefore, very much a micro-theorist of power: social and cultural power is best understood as manifest in a system of not-necessarily-linked containers or locales. Thus, any reconstitution of power relations is a struggle for control of a discourse of knowledge at the level of a particular institution or situation. As Foucault (1980: 93) suggests:

... in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation and functioning of discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

These discourses of truth accommodate and define the legitimate role of an agent of knowledge; they fix the norms for developing concepts and theories; they 'suppress a plurality of alternative discourses and [reduce] their credibility' (Kenway 1990: 176). Thus, discourses become a code of knowledge - a code that limits the statements and thoughts of an activity or period of time.

Foucault's assertion that power - exercised through discourses - is not substantive, but rather a perspective concept, or 'something which circulates' (Foucault 1980: 98), something which 'penetrates an entire social network' (Foucault 1977a: 207), provides a point of departure in understanding the transmission and adoption of the English curriculum discourses. I shall attempt to show that power is, indeed, something which,

through often subtle mechanisms, puts into circulation discourses, or structures of knowledge, which are, in fact, ideological constructs. Power, in this view, is therefore profound in its impact, though subtle in its penetration; it is 'at once visible and invisible, present and hidden, ubiquitous' (Foucault 1977a: 213). And because power assumes this form, it works in dialectical relationship with knowledge. Indeed, Foucault (1979: 93) writes of 'power-knowledge' to express the relationship. It follows, then, and this will certainly be an argument advanced in these pages, that knowledge implies a certain political conformity in its presentation: certain things are excluded, as the political or institutional informs the content of knowledge and establishes its norms. Thus, because discursive practices not only convey knowledge, but also constitute grounds for knowledge, the State and its institutions are able to manage knowledge and exercise 'disciplinary power' (Foucault 1980: 105), which Foucault defines elsewhere (1977a: 221) as 'a subtle, calculated technology of subjection'.

It is for this reason, that is to say, the reality of disciplinary power, that Foucault argues (1977a: 222) that 'we should not be fooled by the modernized education program [and even] its openness to the real world', because knowledge remains managed in the interests of a continuity of power. Only by a renewed focus on the actor, or to use Foucault's words, 'a "desubjectification" of the will to power' can the disciplinary power of control be resisted. The challenge, therefore, is 'to build upon the open qualities of human discourse, and thereby intervene in the way knowledge is produced' (Harvey 1990: 46). These open qualities, Foucault suggests, reside in the human body itself, for that is the "site" of which all forms of repression through discursive practices are registered. As Harvey (1990: 213) asserts:

The irreducibility (for us) of the human body means that it is only from that site of power that resistance can be mobilized in the struggle to liberate human desire. Space, for Foucault, is a metaphor for a site or container of power which usually constrains but sometimes liberates processes of *Becoming*.

It is the challenge to dominant-culture power through a subject-centred understanding of discourses of knowledge that is implicit in any sympathetic reading of Foucault. There

are, as he points out (1980: 142), 'no relations of power without resistances'. This, too, is something that my study seeks to explore: what has been the nature of the resistances to the dominant-culture discourse as expressed in the English syllabus statements; how successful have these resistances been; have the resistances challenged the power-knowledge relation in non-repressive ways; to what extent has there been a dialectic of contradiction and contestation in the way English has been taught in the face of a prevailing power-discourse in the English curriculum texts? In these ways, therefore, Foucault's work will provide an interpretative paradigm for the specific analysis which follows in this study.

The mention of the themes of resistance, contradiction and contestation serve to introduce another theorist whose writings have proved to be formative in understanding the process of reform to the New Zealand English curriculum during the past three decades: Anthony Giddens. Whereas Foucault is what might be termed a micro-theorist of power, Giddens is very much a macro-social theorist, and his concept of *structuration* seeks to account for broad processes of social and cultural reproduction and transformation. Giddens aims to demonstrate how social structuring is a process of formation, in which human agency and social structures are dialectically related. There are several strands to his theorising that I have found useful in the context of this thesis.

### **Giddens' theory of structuration**

First, and this has been one of Giddens' major contributions to social theory, there has been his appropriation of both the objectivist and subjectivist social paradigms. The objectivist position has tended to give society and social institutions the focus in social analysis, whereas subjectivism gives prominence to the human agent, the purposeful and rationally behaving actor. Giddens has argued (e.g. 1979, 1982, 1987) that the objectivist tradition whereby social and cultural institutions have structural properties

stretching beyond the activities of individual members of society, and the subjectivist tradition where human beings act with intention, each have their attractions.

Notwithstanding these attractions, each also has its shortcomings for failing to recognise the strength in the other paradigm's position. Giddens has suggested (1987: 60), therefore, that in what he has called structuration theory, 'this seeming opposition of perspectives actually disguises a complementarity'. Consequently, he interprets this social theory dualism as a duality, a duality of structure. Thus, he asserts (1982: 30) human agents are 'capable'; that they are capable of 'doing otherwise'; that they are 'able to make a difference in the world, to influence a pre-existing course of events'. He also notes that 'the concept of action is logically involved with that of power: for power, in its broadest sense, is precisely the capability of "making a difference" to a course of events'. However, he further notes that the 'capability of human agents is always *bounded*, or constrained by elements of the institutional contexts in which their action takes place'. Yet, he continues, structural properties of social systems can also be 'enabling' and hence the existence of a 'a duality, in which structure is both the medium and outcome of knowledgeably sustained social practices'. Giddens has proposed, then, a dialectic of structure and agency. On the one hand, agency must be understood in the context of the structural features of day-to-day life. Giddens (1987: 60) writes of this as the 'unfolding of the routines' which constitutes human existence; and as a 'continuity which persists throughout the working life of the individual'. On the other hand, structure must be understood not as an observable framework which imposes itself on individual consciousness, but rather as relations of absences and presences, or even, to use Giddens' words (1987: 61), as an 'absent totality'. The significance of this view of structure is that it does not impose itself as an external constraint to human action, but neither does it deny that structure is the medium of agency. As Giddens writes (1987: 61):

Institutions, or large-scale societies, have structural properties in virtue of the continuity of the actions of their component members. But those members of society are only able to carry out their day-to-day activities in virtue of their capability of instantiating those structural properties.

The application of this dialectic to management of knowledge issues is clearly of benefit. For curriculum reform takes place in the context of a wider institutional and social background, and those who implement the reforms work in tandem with and/or in opposition to the structural features which themselves provide the space for action. One could therefore expect to see what Giddens refers to as a 'dialectic of control' (1981: 63) in the curriculum reform process: there will be both a consciousness of potential curriculum development and change, and constraints placed on the process of reform.

Of course, this interplay between agency and structure is not necessarily an equal one. Certainly within the curriculum reform process, institutional structures and discourses operate to produce practitioner compliance and thus restrict individual agency. Though there is a manifest 'dialectic of control' (Giddens 1981: 63) which exists as actors seek to use resources available to them to influence or even re-capture controlling mechanisms, there remains the "embeddedness" of institutions and the institutional use of sanctions whereby the powerful are able to constrain the range of choices that are available for the less powerful. Giddens (1981: 51ff) refers to this process as the mobilisation of administrative or authoritative resources which, in turn, leads to some regularisation or management of culture and various knowledges; and leads, too, to institutional surveillance functions. As Giddens (1981: 169) notes, there can be no organisation without at least a modicum of supervision of the activities of those subject to administrative power.

Secondly, and relatedly, Giddens has proposed his concept of distanciation to explain how institutions are embedded in time and space. As Watkins (1985: 23) remarks, Giddens shows how institutions:

have become historically sedimented within a particular spatial context. In this sense, within schools or other organisations the majority of the ongoing activities are made up of habitual practices which take place in particular locales in time-place.



Distance is, of course, both a barrier to, and a defence against, human interaction. Thus, Giddens' concept of distanciation is a measure of the degree to which the friction of space has been overcome to accommodate social interaction. To put the concept another way, 'the persistent appropriation of a space by a particular group ... amounts to a *de facto* domination of that space' (Harvey 1990: 222). Transferring this notion to an educational context, and in particular to the context of curriculum reform, one would want to examine not merely the interplay between agency and structure, but also the way curriculum discourse may be grounded within a particular space-time context. The question then becomes, to what extent is the practice of English teaching an 'habitual practice' (Watkins 1985: 23) and thus rather unsusceptible to reform? Giddens (1979: 7-8) suggests that the

sedimentation of institutional forms in long-term processes of social development is an inescapable feature of all types of society ... . Only by grasping this conceptually, rather than repudiating it, can we in fact approach the study of social change at all.

In this sense, as Giddens (1981: 17) notes, the stability of an organisation - and, it might be added, an organisational discourse or curriculum statement - indicates that there is often a close resemblance between how things are organised - or stated - now and the way they were in the past. Where there is in fact change, it is often episodic in nature. The dialectic of agency and structure consists of '“openings” and “closings” in time-space' (Giddens 1981: 41). Change, then, is discontinuous; it is 'punctuated by periodic crises' (Harvey 1990: 230), because organisational forms, or discourses of knowledge, cannot, for reasons already established, easily be changed. With reference to industrial organisations Harvey (1990: 230) makes the following pertinent observation:

The implantation of new systems has either to await the passing of the 'natural' lifetime of the factory and the worker, or to engage in that process of 'creative destruction' which rests on the forced devaluation or destruction of past assets in order to make way for the new.

It is my intention to show in the following pages that change in the way English has

been theorised has been similarly episodic. Certainly there has been some very real consciousness on the part of individuals and groups regarding the potential transformation of traditional English-teaching practices - or even the implantation of an entirely new curriculum structure. As Green (1990: 155-156), following Giddens, notes:

[individuals] are not only structured and positioned by the discourses that traverse them; they also, using the resources available to them in and through the discourses, assert their presence and announce themselves, their *agency*. The process of "subjectification", in the various senses of that word, is never preordained and must in every instance be fought out and struggled over. The task is one of moving *within* structures, *against* structures ... in the course of which the possibility may present itself of moving *beyond* these present limits.

Yet, it will also be argued in this study that there have been rather too many vested interests on the part of the political and intellectual elites for change to have had any marked effects on the way English has been conceptualised or taught. There has not, in Green's words, been too much 'moving beyond' traditional, discursive limits. I shall argue that any 'implantation' of a new structure of English teaching has been constrained by powerful institutional forces, and that those episodes of 'creative destruction' that have occurred during the past three decades, have been appropriated and absorbed by the dominant cultural groups. I will aver, to appropriate Riley's (1983: 415) words, that 'there is a bias for "what has come before", since structures that have been previously drawn upon become part of the stores of knowledge available and are themselves reproduced'. Structuration, therefore, 'gives forth determinate resources that partially reconstitute structures and that tend to endure after their creation' (Zeitzi 1980: 77). Applied to my curriculum study, I shall therefore seek to chart the actual process of action and interaction as it is historically and contextually situated as a means of accounting for the 'bias' and the continuity of curriculum discourse. The subtitle of this thesis, 'text and context', thus becomes very important to the analysis as I pose the key question: what have been the conditions that have governed the continuity of the curriculum discourse, and thus the essential reproduction of earlier curriculum practices? And my approach to this question, at least in general terms, has been informed by the scholarship of the theorists associated with the Institute for Social Research, founded

and affiliated to the University of Frankfurt in 1923 as an independent academy for the Marxist study of society.

### **The Frankfurt scholars**

Questions of “continuity” and “cultural reproduction” are helpfully dealt with, in general terms, by the Frankfurt scholars and the critical theory position they, and others, have adopted. In essence, those who adopt the critical perspective affirm the importance of asking questions which expose the “grammar” of the socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions of the exercise of authority. Thus, critical theorists seek to explain administrative behaviour, for example, in terms of the ideology of the dominant culture which reproduces the social mores valued by the powerful. In other words, critical theory embodies an analysis of cultural function based on what is seen as a politically- and economically-inspired control of the educative process. As a form of engaged practice it therefore calls into question forms of cultural subordination that create inequalities among different groups. Likewise, it rejects educational relations that relegate difference to an object of condemnation and oppression, and it refuses to subordinate the purpose of education to narrowly-defined economic and instrumental considerations. It is necessary, then, to analyse the structures of education - the continuity of practice and the cultural reproduction inherent in such continuity - as *cultural* artifices; that is, as social forms that introduce students to particular ways of life and, in so doing, often marginalise and exclude the voices, histories and experiences of those groups who by virtue of their class, race, ethnicity and gender are not part of the dominant classes.

The critical position thereby equates education, its curriculum and administration, with genuinely participatory, collaborative forms of structure and control; it equates learning with the creation of critical, rather than merely “good” citizens (Giroux 1990: 33). It is, in short, a perspective which links schooling to the imperatives of democracy, and makes

the notion of democratic difference central to the organisation of educational administration, curriculum, and the development of classroom practice.

Such perspectives reflect a Marxist analysis of social relations. However, critical theorists reject Marxism in its classical formulation. For within Marxist theory there has been a focus on structures within the capitalist State and the means whereby power is generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination. More specifically, attention has been drawn to the parallels between structures of social, economic and cultural domination, especially as they are expressed through a division of labour dominated by society's elites (Bates 1983: 26). Classical Marxist theory has maintained that practices of cultural domination, whereby the State and its agents seek to achieve and maintain the compliance of others, is a distinguishing characteristic of capitalist societies. Marxists have generally argued that the means of domination centre around the *allocative* resources of the political economy. Neo-Marxists, or critical theorists, however, have suggested that *cultural* resources are also marshalled by the State to maintain order and control. To merely hold power through control of the structures of society is not enough; it is also necessary to mobilise the authoritative resources (for example administrative power or curriculum statements) to systematically influence large areas of the lives of the subject population. In this view, power is generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination which includes the domination of human beings over the material world *and* over the social world. Society is therefore structurally geared towards the maintenance of capitalist control.

In their work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), written soon after the end of the Second World War, two early figures in the Frankfurt School, Horkheimer and Adorno, argued that the logic that hides behind Enlightenment rationality is, indeed, a logic of domination, oppression and control. The 'revolt of nature, which they posited as the only way out of the impasse, had then to be conceived of as a revolt of human nature against the oppressive power of purely instrumental reason over culture and personality' (Harvey

1990: 13). Such an analysis had been informed by the growth of Nazism and the consequent exile of the Institute to New York. But it had also been informed by the early work of the Frankfurt theorists on the impact of science on twentieth-century thought. In their examination of the thought position of contemporary science (see Jay 1973), it was argued that the ideology of science had, in fact, placed limitations on thought processes within the scientific community. As Horkheimer (1972: 159) observed:

The facts of science and science itself are but segments of the life process of society, and in order to understand the significance of facts or of science generally one must possess the key to the historical situation, the right social theory.

Similar comments were made on the impact of popular culture (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). Indeed, the term 'culture industry' was coined to describe the manner in which culture has inured individuals to a true understanding of the nature of reality. 'In the culture industry', write Horkheimer and Adorno (1972: 131):

imitation ... becomes absolute. Having ceased to be anything but style, it reveals the latter's secret: obedience to the social hierarchy ... . Culture as a common denominator already contains in embryo that schematization and process of cataloging and classification which bring culture within the sphere of administration ... . By subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying men's [sic] senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satisfies the concept of a unified culture ... .

Thus, in the culture industry:

the individual is an illusion not merely because of the standardization of the means of production. He [sic] is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the generality is unquestioned ... freedom to choose an ideology ... everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same ... . The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion ... (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972: 154).

There is, then, to repeat the point made above, a logic of domination, oppression and control which the Frankfurt Institute scholars saw operating within Enlightenment rationality. There exists, to use Jay's (1973: 21) words, in his account of the Frankfurt School, a 'cultural superstructure' which both defines meanings and constrains genuine,

individual freedom - unless it is 'freedom to choose what is always the same'. Thus, what is needed to 'understand the significance of facts', is 'the key to the historical situation, the right social theory' (Horkheimer 1972: 159), or as Adorno (1967 quoted in Giroux 1983: 19) writes, an appreciation of 'the material life-process'. And according to Giroux (1983: 19), this social theory can be found in the Frankfurt theorists' understanding of historical experience and everyday life, and hence their attempts to articulate people's hidden and unfulfilled needs. As Horkheimer (1972: 210-211) himself writes:

Critical thinking is the function neither of the isolated individual nor a sum-total of individuals. Its subject is rather a definite individual in his [*sic*] real relation to other individuals and groups, in his [*sic*] conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationship with the social totality and with nature ... his [*sic*] activity is the construction of the social present.

Horkheimer's conception of human activity as 'the construction of the social present' defines one key component of critical theorists' analyses. There is a goal 'to illustrate the achievements and limitations of the thought positions attained in various fields at various times' (Kemmis and Fitzclarence 1986: 74) with the aim of fostering genuine human emancipation. And this is a notion that has been formative in my thinking about the various New Zealand English-teaching curriculum statements written during the past thirty years. The aim of this study is to expose the 'thought positions' of the text discourses, demonstrating, in the process, that the discourse of curriculum description has had a widespread and powerful effect on the way English teaching is perceived. But more than this, my focus is also on the constraining of a democratic praxis by means of this text discourse. Green's (1990: 156) words are apposite here:

In the case of English teaching, what is required is, firstly a recognition of its character as ideology, and secondly, a concerted attempt, at every level, to seize upon its progressive and utopian elements and organize them into a coherent counter-hegemonic discourse ... teachers may ... amplify the effects of the ideological communication of schooling, or they may work actively against the grain so as to allow for the expression of critical and emancipatory meanings.

To help explicate these two themes of the ideological nature of text discourse, and a progressive re-reading of text discourse, I wish to draw on the insights of two critical

theorists whose perspectives have not been advanced thus far in this chapter:

Habermas and Marcuse. First, Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests can bring light to the general concept of management of knowledge. In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972), Habermas undertakes a study of the propositions and foundations of knowledge. He argues that different types of enquiry are linked with different kinds of human interests. These human interests 'give the search for knowledge and the products of this search quite specific and different characteristic forms' (Kemmis and Fitzclarence 1986: 71). In Habermas's view there are three types of enquiry. The analytic form is empirically based and corresponds to a technical human interest. The practical interest, however, corresponds with the historical-hermeneutic forms of knowledge. Its products are historical or philosophical accounts of social action and human development. Finally, there is the emancipatory interest which corresponds to critically-oriented analysis. The objective of this analysis is to expose the interests that would seek to constrain human freedom; it is an objective which recognises that knowledge is, in fact, ideology; it is an objective which acknowledges that there is a relationship between often-objectified knowledge and human interest. As such, this third type of enquiry is very much directed against the ideal of objectivism and the value-neutrality of thought and action. Indeed, Habermas (1973a: 262-263) argues that modern "rationality" has lost its focus on genuine human emancipation:

In the second half of the 19th century, during the course of the reduction of science to a productive force in industrial society, positivism, historicism, and pragmatism, each in turn, isolate one part of this all encompassing concept of rationality. The hitherto undisputed attempts of the great theories to reflect on the complex of life as a whole is henceforth itself discredited as dogma ... the spontaneity of hope, the art of taking a position, the experience of relevance or indifference, and above all, the response to suffering and oppression, the desire for adult autonomy, the will to emancipation, and the happiness of discovering one's identity - all these are dismissed for all time from the obligating interest of reason.

It is necessary, therefore, to appropriate a critical methodology to both expose the knowledge-power relationships inherent in ideology and to free individuals from the shackles of this ideology. Kemmis and Fitzclarence (1986: 73) have given expression to this imperative of Habermas when they write:

Ideology-critique consists in undertaking enquiries whose aim is to “map” our contemporary historical and social circumstances (either as a general analysis of society and culture or as a specific analysis of one’s own local situation), one might say, and to use the process of mapping not only to identify the key landmarks and symbols in the social territory “out there” ... but also to identify the key landmarks and symbols in the way we understand the world (for example, in the language we use, our values, the significances we place on things, and the forms of social relationship and production through which we interact with the world).

This reflection on Habermas’s critical methodology will provide a theoretical backdrop to the content of this thesis: there will be an attempt to “map” the nature of English curriculum revisions and thus identify the symbols that have given currency to a form of teaching English that is ideological in nature and hegemonic in consequence. It will be argued, however, that subtle forces have been at work to ensure the production and on-going implementation of a dominant-culture English text discourse - something that Habermas helpfully contextualises in his notion of ‘legitimation crisis’ to which I now turn briefly.

Habermas gives attention to what he claims to be the impossibility of administratively maintaining effective structures of control in late capitalist society. The reasons for this claim are not pertinent to the current argument, except to say that with various political and economic crises over recent decades the State, Habermas (1976) argues, has become increasingly preoccupied with the need to re-examine the bases of socio-economic, political, and cultural relationships in order to clarify and redefine new points of control. Habermas argues that such crises create steering problems for the State if it is to maintain control and integration. Thus, the State extends its interests into other areas of civil society. As Habermas (1971: 101) remarks, ‘politics is no longer *only* a phenomenon of the superstructure’, and so there is an ‘administrative processing of cultural tradition ... [and] especially the planning of the curriculum’ (Habermas 1973: 658). There are several consequences of such activity. First, there is public disquiet which ‘weakens the justification potential of traditions that have been forced out of their natural condition’. And once this happens ‘their demands for validity can be stabilized only by



way of discourse'. The curriculum, therefore, to continue this example, is politicised.

Secondly, and relatedly, politicalisation leads to public demands for consultation, participation and recognition of interests. The State

has to consider the generalizable interests of the population as far as necessary to retain mass loyalty and prevent a conflict-ridden withdrawal of legitimation (Habermas 1973: 656-657).

If the State is unable to meet those interests, then, in Habermas's view, there is a 'legitimation crisis'. There are, of course, methods available for the State to minimise the legitimation crisis (Habermas 1973: 657), but, contrariwise, the 'scope for manipulation ... is narrowly delimited, for the cultural system remains peculiarly resistant to administrative control'.

Habermas's observations are certainly relevant in the context of this thesis which will explore the question of the management of knowledge. There is a need to ascertain the level of State involvement in the English curriculum; a need, also, to gauge the level of politicisation of English teaching and the consequent resistances to any administrative processing or control of 'cultural tradition'. Of especial relevance is the dialectic he advances: there is a structure of control, but the cultural system is resistant to that control. There is surely an element of Marxist thought in this dialectic, yet he avoids any sense of an elitist conspiracy that foists a dominant ideology on an unwilling public, or where social systems or institutions maintain and legitimate class divisions and cultural perspectives in a meditated manner. Control, in this view, operates through a complex web of social activities and institutional procedures. The State and its elites do not mechanically determine the ideological positions which are then impressed upon the actions and situations of those who are ruled. Rather, economic and social structures which are part of society's fabric, set limits on the ideologies and understandings that circulate as ways of making sense of the world. Any securing of control is therefore as much indirect as it is direct, as institutions and their discourses impress a definition of reality upon society and thereby limit what is thought throughout the society. Though

systematic, the process of control is not necessarily a deliberate engineering of mass consent to the established order. As Habermas (1973: 659) remarks, 'the state cannot simply take over the cultural system'. He further observes (1973: 657) that:

There is no administrative creation of meaning ... . The acquisition of legitimation is self-destructive as soon as the mode of acquisition is exposed. Thus, there is a systematic limit for attempts at making up for legitimation deficits by means of well aimed manipulation. This limit is the structural dissimilarity between areas of administrative action and cultural tradition.

It is, then, the culture industry as a whole - something endemic to society but arguably increasingly "industrialised" - which specialises in the production and relaying of hegemonic state ideology. Social and cultural change is therefore best understood as a study of the forces of State production as well as the study of society's norms and mores. And in the light of such study and critical analysis, Habermas advances the possibility of forging a transparent, fully communicational society, or consensus community. There is a need, he avows, for 'a communicative ethic which demands discourse over the nature and justification of social realities' (Bates 1985: 34). Habermas (1973: 666) alleges that 'the validity of *all* norms has to be tied to the discursive formation of the will of the people potentially affected'; and the extent to which the curriculum reform process in New Zealand may be seen to reflect this dialectic and 'discursive formation' as a localised case study of Habermas's theorising, is a matter to which I shall give attention in the chapters which follow.

Discursive formation is a matter which Marcuse, also a scholar within the Frankfurt Institute, has addressed. Marcuse was very much a member of what has been described as the Western Marxist tradition. This "tradition" is manifestly not a singular one, yet the theorists who worked within it were all drawn to the same problematic regarding the persistence of industrial capitalism, the consciousness of working people and the possible role of the intellectual in bringing about political and social change (Kaye 1991: 152). In contrast to the classical Marxist formulation, the Western or neo-Marxists placed an emphasis, as we have already seen, on questions of culture and

ideology. The emphasis of these scholars was on critique, 'entailing a deliberate effort at debunking and demystifying the contemporary world' (Kaye 1991: 156). Their concern was the disclosure of the social origins of societal norms, and the consequent disclosure of 'the structures and relations of power, exploitation and oppression which have come to be represented and conceived of as *natural* and inevitable' (Kaye 1991: 156). They were reacting, then, against a notion of positivism which Marcuse (1964: 172) defines in the following way:

Since its first usage ... the term "positivism" has encompassed (1) the validation of cognitive thought by experience of facts; (2) the orientation of cognitive thought to the physical sciences as a model of certainty and exactness; (3) the belief that progress in knowledge depends on this orientation. Consequently, positivism is a struggle against all metaphysics, transcendentalisms, and idealisms as obscurantist and regressive modes of thought.

Against this view of the nature of things, Marcuse proposed a notion of engaged, critical commitment and analysis and remembrance of the patterns of struggle and defeat in the hope of creating a just society. As he notes (1962: 212):

To forget is ... the mental faculty which sustains submissiveness and renunciation. To forget is also to forgive what should not be forgiven if justice and freedom are to prevail. Such forgiveness reproduces the conditions which reproduce injustice and enslavement: to forget past suffering is to forgive the forces that caused it - without defeating those forces ... . Against this surrender to time, the restoration of remembrance to its rights, as a vehicle of liberation, is one of the noblest tasks of thought.

Marcuse (1964: 98) was conscious of the unpopularity of his position, for:

Remembrance of the past may give rise to dangerous insights, and the established society seems to be apprehensive of the subversive contents of memory ... . Memory recalls the terror and the hope but whereas in reality, the former recurs in ever new forms the latter remains hope.

These quotations demonstrate, as much as any, Marcuse's method: the imperative of getting outside the *status quo* in order to analyse and evaluate the whole (Brosio 1985: 362). And in this respect, his analysis of history and culture was similar to that of Adorno and Horkheimer discussed above. As Marcuse (1978: 9) remarks, the 'truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who

established it) to *define* what is *real*. In this rupture ... the fictitious world of art appears as true reality'. As Giroux (1983: 21) has commented on Marcuse's statement, 'in the true spirit of positivist harmony, art becomes simply a mirror of the existing reality and, in doing so, affirms it. Thus, both the memory of a historical truth or the image of a better way of life are rendered impotent ...'.

Marcuse goes further, however. He also argues that the perspective of a dominant rationality is 'embodied in the techniques and forms that shape the messages and discourses of the culture industry' (Giroux 1983: 21). Marcuse (1972: 98-99) observes that:

By becoming components of the aesthetic form, words, sounds, shapes, and colors are insulated against their familiar, ordinary use and function; ... This is the achievement of the *style*, which *is* the poem, the novel, the painting, the composition. The style, embodiment of the aesthetic form, in subjecting reality to another order, subjects it to the "laws of beauty".

True and false, right and wrong, pain and pleasure, calm and violence become aesthetic categories within the framework of the *oeuvre*.

Marcuse's analysis is particularly insightful to the extent that it focuses attention on the conformity and standardisation of cultural expressions. It receives further elaboration in Marcuse's critique of language forms. Starting with 'the chap [*sic*] on the street' (Marcuse 1964: 174) whom, Marcuse notes is important for linguistic analysts because of 'the chumminess of speech' that is revealed, he alleges that the language he [*sic*] speaks is both the 'token of concreteness' and also 'the token of a false concreteness'. As Marcuse remarks:

The language which provides most of the material for the analysis is a purged language, purged not only of its "unorthodox" vocabulary, but also of the means for expressing any other contents than those furnished to the individuals by their society. The linguistic analyst finds this purged language an accomplished fact, and he [*sic*] takes the impoverished language as he [*sic*] finds it, insulating it from that which is not expressed in it although it enters the established universe of discourse as element and factor of meaning.

Marcuse's point is obvious enough: linguistic analysis while purporting to understand

speech as it is spoken, is but a further tool for positivist thought. Marcuse continues:

Paying respect to the prevailing variety of meanings and usages, to the power and common sense of ordinary speech, while blocking (as extraneous material) analysis of what this speech says about the society that speaks it, linguistic philosophy suppresses once more what is continually suppressed in this universe of discourse and behaviour. The authority of philosophy gives its blessing to the forces which *make* this universe. Linguistic analysis abstracts from what ordinary language reveals in speaking as it does - the mutilation of man [*sic*] and nature.

Such analysis, Marcuse suggests, is destructive of philosophic thought, and of critical thought; it aids thinking being 'pressed into the straitjacket of common usage' (Marcuse 1964: 178) and militates against 'ask[ing] and seek[ing] solutions beyond those that are already there'. What is needed, then, is an analysis of language that explicates hidden dimensions of meaning - 'the rule of society over its language' (Marcuse 1964: 179). In Marcuse's view, there needs to be an analysis which exposes the limits which define meaning instead of an analysis which leaves meaning in what he argues to be the repressive context of the established universe of discourse. For in the latter environment, though there may appear to be freedom of thought, such freedom is illusory and bound to dominant culture discourses.

There is much that is relevant in Marcuse's theorising for this study. Although I shall not be undertaking a deconstructive linguistic analysis of the type Marcuse proposes, I shall, nonetheless, seek to establish the reality of a dominant discourse which obscures other positions; a discourse which not only obscures, however, but which also appropriates other discourses within its own. Again, Marcuse's (1964: 192) words will prove formative in the analysis which follows:

Of course, we do not impose on you and your freedom of thought and speech; you may think as you like. But once you speak, you have to communicate your thoughts to us - in our language or in yours. Certainly, you may speak your own language, but it must be translatable, and it will be translated. You may speak poetry - that is all right. We love poetry. But we want to understand your poetry, and we can do so only if we interpret your symbols, metaphors, and images in terms of ordinary language.

These words are particularly relevant in the context of this thesis, for I shall show that

while there have been resistances to the dominant curriculum discourse, these resistances and the language in which they have been framed, have been 'translated' and, in the process, rendered as part of what Marcuse describes as a positivist expression of the nature of things. At other times, resistances have, in fact, been framed within the dominant discourse itself, and hence the continuity of curriculum patterning that I shall argue has been a feature of English teaching for decades. The resistances that there have been, have not, in different words, dissociated themselves from that which they have been opposing. There has been, therefore, an established discourse of curriculum formulation that 'bears the marks of the specific modes of domination, organisation, and manipulation to which the members of a society are subjected' (Marcuse 1964: 193).

### **Giroux, Apple, and discourse theory**

Discourse formulation is a matter to which Henry Giroux, a contemporary educator and critical theorist, has given attention in the 1980s and 1990s. Giroux (1995: 133) has very succinctly stated his position when he avers that 'the act of knowing is integrally related to the power of self-definition, which, in part, necessitates that more diverse histories and narratives be included in the curriculum'. Curriculum discourses, in Giroux's view, too often reflect a 'middle-class, European-American cultural capital that characterizes those who wield the power to secure the authority of the canon and enforce its claims to specific views of history, teaching, and learning'. Drawing on the work of earlier critical theorists, Giroux (1995: 136) claims that:

Schools ... organise knowledge through processes of inclusion and exclusion. Such processes do not exist outside of history, nor are they untouched by the operations of power. Neither the curriculum nor the canon can be understood as expressions of the disinterested search for truth and knowledge ... . What counts as legitimate knowledge, culture, history, and speech can only be understood by interrogating the conditions of exclusion and inclusion in the production, distribution, circulation, and use of power and authority in the classroom.

For Giroux, it therefore becomes important to examine the discourses that underpin

education in an attempt to highlight the values that inform those discourses and consequent ways of working and teaching. To this end, teaching becomes a political activity. Teachers, Giroux (1995: 138) argues, 'must assert their vocation as a political enterprise, without politicizing their students'. Quoting Euben (1994: 14), Giroux advocates:

teach[ing] students how to think in ways that cultivate the capacity for judgement essential to the exercise of power and responsibility by a democratic citizenry ... . A political, as distinct from a politicized education, would encourage students to become better citizens, to challenge those with political and cultural power as well as to honour the critical traditions within the dominant culture that make such a critique possible and intelligible.

Such a critique necessitates an understanding of discourse - in the narrow definition of that word. As Weedon (1987: 21), quoted in Giroux (1990: 25) notes, '[l]anguage is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested'. Thus, it is to language that Giroux points in his attempt to penetrate dominant-culture curriculum discourses. He argues, first, that the type of discourse analysis he proposes is more than textual criticism. Echoing Marcuse, he (1990: 26) states that:

textual criticism has failed to move beyond the boundaries of the book or the screen. Consequently, such analyses not only have become highly academic but also have retreated into a formalism that fails to link their own semiological productions to wider institutional and social practices. By failing to incorporate the complexity of determinations that constitute the cultural, political and economic aspects of the society ... criticism often fails to confront those aspects of hegemonic power that cannot be captured in merely linguistic models.

Giroux's point is that language - words on a page - cannot of itself define meaning. Meaning coheres in a series of 'habits, practices and social relations that constitute what can be called the "thick" side of human life' (Giroux 1990: 27). To use the words in the title of this thesis, *context* as well as *text* is important. Giroux's observations are not unique to him, of course. Similar reflections have been made by Apple (1994: 351):

When we read what might be called the discourses of this state, one of the most significant things we should focus on is the relationship between ... the policy *text* and policy *context* ... the reading of policy texts is not unconstrained. They do not develop in a vacuum, and a variety of exigencies impinge on the processes of interpretation.

Apple suggests that just as important as an analysis of language, is an examination of 'how and by whom texts are produced, what the compromises were that went into forming them, and just as crucially the micropolitics of their reception'. In this view, discourse is mediated through a range of social and cultural expectations, procedures, and ideologies. There are "national filters" through which discourses must pass. It becomes imperative, therefore, to focus on the historical dimensions of discourses, and on the cultural conditions that pertain at the time of discourse production, and on the conceptual positioning that defines the discourse. Certainly this principle articulated by Giroux and Apple is a principle that I seek to follow in this study: the text discourses and the discourse contexts are examined. There is surely a validity in discussing both these aspects, not separately, but in a dialectical relationship: understanding ideology through text or discourse allows one to focus on absences and presences, on patterns and silences; understanding historical and cultural contexts can help to explain the patterns and silences. As Eagleton (1996: 12-13) has noted, the "interior" of language 'is constituted as a ceaseless opening to an "exterior" ... . To inhabit a language is already by that very token to inhabit a good deal more than it ...'.

A second point advanced by Giroux is that discourse, or text, must be seen in the light of counter-text (Giroux 1990: 34). He means by this that discourses are not merely explicated for the knowledge-power relationships that are inherent in them; rather they should be read for their potential to rewrite 'the borders and coordinates of an oppositional cultural politics'. As Giroux (1990: 34-35) claims, this 'is not an abandonment of critique as much as an extension of its possibilities'. Thus, text becomes textuality; text becomes the springboard for the development of 'a position outside the assumptions which concern the text'. Although Giroux advances this notion as part of his project to develop critical *pedagogical* directions for education, the concept is a useful one in the context of this thesis. For if, as I shall argue, there has been only limited recognition in the official English curriculum discourses of non-dominant cultural expressions and experiences, then to what extent have practitioners used the text



discourse to redefine English teaching in emancipatory ways; to what extent have practitioners drawn upon alternative resources as a means of engaging various aspects of the curriculum statements? These questions are valid questions. As Apple (1994: 358) has reminded his readers, discourses - even the discourses of the State - can be examined in the light of their progressive potential:

If policies are compromises - often not only within dominant groups but “forced” on dominant groups because of the action of more progressive social movements - then such documents can be used to open up space for more democratic educational activity.

Grundy (1994: 365) has made a similar point in a different way when she writes that discourse analysis:

provides a framework for critiquing documents on the basis of both the processes of their development and the spaces that the language of the document provides for communicative action, especially for challenge ... challenges both to the “why is it so?” and the “could it be otherwise?” varieties.

Giroux would doubtless take Grundy’s statement and extend it to include the challenge of transformation: what possibilities are there for contestation and for ‘a remapped, reterritorialised’ (Giroux 1990: 34) counter-text in the interests of justice and democracy? Giroux’s point is that discourses must be read with a view to re-articulating the traditions of liberty and justice with a notion of critical democracy. Thus, a counter-discourse can be created from within a dominant-culture discourse; a counter-discourse which embodies both critique and possibility. As Giroux (1990: 52) argues:

educational leaders need a language of imagination, one that both compels and enables them to consider the structure, movement and possibilities in the contemporary order of things as well as how we might act to prevent the barbaric and develop those aspects of public life that point to its best and as yet unrealised possibilities.

And in the pages which follow, I shall certainly be examining the challenge to the official curriculum discourse and the way in which some individuals and groups attempted to use the discourse for other more democratic (or non-democratic) educational activity. Giroux’s writings will clearly provide a helpful backdrop to this dimension of the study.

## Discussion

In its discussion of these theorists, this chapter has been far from ideologically tidy. On the face of it, it could be argued that, the critical theorists notwithstanding, there has been little that brings these scholars together. The analysis has been, at best, a brief and highly selected sketch of these writers' views. There has been no attempt to provide a sustained commentary on their theoretical position; there has been little attempt at locating them within tangential ideological movements: structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction have not even been mentioned. Further, to bring together scholars of such disparate positions could well be seen as reprehensible. Gramsci and the critical theorists represent a broadly Marxist or neo-Marxist tradition; Foucault and Giddens are firmly located outside of that tradition. Poster (1989, Chapter 1) has noted that there is often little in the way of direct interchange of views between those representative of Foucault's perspective and those of the Frankfurt School. Habermas, to take another example, sought to have what we might call the Enlightenment Project come to fruition or fulfilment; that is to say, he looked towards a synthesis of reason and society, a synthesis of scientific truth and progress. In his *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), he outlined a process for the differentiation of science, morality, and art into autonomous spheres. True enlightenment is the fulfilment 'of each of these spheres and their incorporation into the lifeworld, the full development of each sphere and the subsequent transformation of daily life on the basis of that perfection' (Poster 1989: 19). Habermas, as we have seen, looked towards the consensual society. Foucault, on the other hand, regarded truth as a multiplicity. The perspective he articulated 'exult[ed] in the play of diverse meanings, in the continual process of reinterpretation, in the contention of opposing claims' (Poster 1989: 15). For Habermas, history should be interpreted as a set of moral, cognitive, and aesthetic advances; for Foucault, the 'only rule left for the historian ... is to become ... an archaeologist of the past, digging up its remnants ... and assembling them, side by side, in the museum of modern knowledge ...' (Harvey 1990: 55-56). Whereas Habermas is an acknowledged modernist, Foucault can be regarded

as a postmodernist - terms that will be explored in the body of this thesis.

Thus, to bring together such a scattering of voices could be regarded as problematical from an ideological position. However, as Poster has argued, there are similarities in their writings, too. Both the critical theorists and writers such as Giddens and Foucault, provide a critique of domination and power; there is an attempt by all the scholars outlined above to define the relation between theory and context - their theoretical domain is informed by their sociocultural world and *vice versa*; they share an interest in language or discursive practices. Yet, as Poster (1989: 32-33) argues, any attempt to present the differences (or similarities) between critical theorists and writers such as Foucault is necessarily 'fictional ... since the actual relations between the two positions have not been extensively argued'.

My purpose, therefore, is not to attempt any rapprochement between, say, Foucault and Habermas, or Gramsci and Giddens. I acknowledge their different periods and traditions and perspectives. My purpose is, instead, quite narrow and specific: all these writers have provided a theoretical backdrop for my investigations into the management of knowledge. From their own ideological positions they have something to say about the locus of *my* study. They affirm a central preoccupation of this thesis; namely, that the cultural world is socially constructed, and that these constructions have a material impact on the way we perceive that cultural world. Curriculum, therefore, must be understood as part of a wider socio-historical process: it is produced, managed and reproduced. This notion is captured in the subtitle of this thesis: text and context, drawing on Lundgren (1983). In other words, a curriculum statement must be seen 'both as an historical artefact and as an historical force' (Kemmis in Lundgren 1983: 5). Curriculum, then, is both 'shaped by and shaping history'; it 'betrays the influences of the social context, in particular the dynamic struggle between state and society. Curriculum texts are ideological: they bear the traces of the struggle of state and society' (Kemmis in Lundgren 1983: 6).

An understanding of this struggle is central to the analysis which follows, for it is in the subject English where this struggle is, arguably, most clearly manifest. As Goodson and Medway (1990: vii) note, revision of an English curriculum statement involves more 'than the in-house arrangements of a specialist subject community. Attempts to control and define the subject move beyond the subject community because changing English is changing schooling'. As a result of English 'teach[ing] the literacy on which the practice of other subjects is based', other parties, including the State itself, will seek to influence its content and classroom delivery. Goodson and Medway (1990: viii) go so far as to allege that those

who have made English what it is have not only, perhaps not even primarily, been English teachers but have included agencies with purposes quite other than those of the teachers. What has been most significant about particular curricula has often been who they have been taught to (and not been taught to) in what contexts, by whom, with what powers and purposes, and to the exclusion of what and whom.

Thus, the construction of an English curriculum statement assumes an ideological importance perhaps unmatched by other subjects taught within a school. Again, to quote Goodson and Medway (1990: viii):

Versions of English ... have *a/ways* been something more than alternative approaches to competence and knowledge in English language and literature. English has been the means through which powerful groups, especially governments, have sought to achieve ends which were ideological and political and not neutrally "educational". Where other groups with other agendas - including, sometimes, English teachers with their own values and priorities - have resisted, English has been a battleground.

A study of English curriculums - in this case in New Zealand from the late 1960s to the late 1990s - is therefore a study of conflict and of conflict set within wider socio-cultural and political contexts. And to provide me with the theoretical perspectives to examine the nature of this conflict, the conclusions of the theorists discussed above have proved to be formative; but, to repeat, it is only fair to acknowledge that my interest in these scholars is as narrow as has been my analysis of their writings. They say something of relevance either about text or context or the relationship that pertains between them;

they either reflect directly on the management of knowledge, or their work provides an ideological basis for that reflection; they have a theoretical base which provides a springboard for my analysis of the English curriculum in its 'context of formulation' and 'context of realisation' (Lundgren 1983: 13). My reading of these theorists is, consequently, a quite personal and even idiosyncratic reading as they are enjoined in this study of curriculum transmission. But they are enjoined, too, in what I perceive to be their common concern with human emancipation. Admittedly, they seek justice and emancipation within differing conceptions of reality - some within Enlightenment rationality, others outside such rationality. Yet, their respect for the human subject and human agency provides me with theoretical tools with which to explore the emancipatory theme of English curriculum statements and the pedagogy of English teaching. Although much of this interest is implicit in the pages which follow, there is a brief attempt in the final chapter to outline what an English curriculum might include for those who have democratic teaching agendas. And the backdrop for such an exploration has been provided through a reading, however selective, of the scholars who have been surveyed above.

That curriculum statements can serve repressive or emancipatory interests will be made clear in the specific analysis which follows, but it should be noted at this point that such interests are implicit in the definition of curriculum that I shall be following in this thesis. It is a definition that is drawn from Lundgren (1983: 12) where he proposes that curriculum is a selection of contents and goals for social reproduction; an organisation of knowledge and skills; a statement of methodology regarding the teaching of the selected content - how the content is sequenced and controlled. With such a definition, it becomes clear, therefore, how a curriculum statement can reinforce repressive or emancipatory concerns: content is selected, organised and controlled. And it is here that the theorists reviewed above can provide helpful insights as they seek to explore the project of emancipation and the critique of domination. My debt to them will be obvious, although their works will not often be referenced in the historical narrative which will occupy my attention in the

subsequent chapters. Nonetheless, my understanding has been enriched by the conceptions of freedom and agency which such writers have advanced, as indeed it has by their more general conceptions of the relationship between processes of production and reproduction in society. It is to these processes that I now turn as I examine the New Zealand English curriculums, 1969-1996.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NESC REFORMS, 1969-1983

#### Introduction

This chapter will outline the origins and character of the reforms to the junior secondary school English syllabus in New Zealand from 1969-1983. It is not the first academic study of the period. Luran Massey's (1983) analysis covered similar territory but with a manifestly different focus. Massey's approach was a phenomenological one where he sought to explore the relationship between the official curriculum and the actual curriculum; the relationship that exists between 'the ideal world of the curriculum planner [and] the real world of the classroom teacher' (Massey 1983: 46). My approach is different to the extent that my focus is not on participant observation of classroom teaching at all, but rather on an understanding of the text discourse and its management. However, like Massey, I shall focus on the work of the National English Syllabus Committee (NESC) established by the Minister of Education in November 1969 (see Appendix 2) to reform the 1945 English prescription. The history of this Committee (terminated in 1980) and the reform process has been sketched in a Department of Education publication, *Developing a New English Syllabus*. While this pamphlet (1983a: 3) notes that the NESC project arose 'in response to comments from teachers about the shortcomings of the 1945 syllabus', the subsequent plan to make the English course of study 'more relevant to the needs of students' must be seen in a much wider institutional and cultural context. Thus, this chapter will examine the syllabus revisions and also situate them in a wider ideological environment. It will be argued that the NESC reforms can be fruitfully studied as an example of the management of knowledge within the context of a state institutional environment.



## The historical context

The reforms to the teaching of English promoted by the NESC were not unique to New Zealand. The key elements of the syllabus change were, indeed, modelled on a much broader, international movement. To this movement, and especially to its United Kingdom expression, the NESC consciously deferred. It therefore becomes important to outline the nature of the changes promoted by English-teaching theorists in the 1960s.

First, a new model of curriculum reform was promoted by a number of English teachers and curriculum researchers. Two of the leaders (Squire and Britton, in Dixon 1975: vii-viii) of what came to be called the Growth Model of English studies argued that effective curriculum change

begins with a teacher reflecting upon his [*sic*] own experience ... books are important - only less important, in fact, than face-to-face talk among teachers; guidelines, pronouncements, and manifestos come lower down on the list.

To be sure, it was this notion of *experience* that proved to be a key ideological platform of the English curriculum reform process. In his study of a similar process with respect to the teaching of history at school and university levels, Harvey Kaye (1991: 41, 51) argues that the experiential or subjective focus found a foothold with the fragmentation of the social consensus of the post second world war period. Beginning in the 1960s, Kaye asserts that this Anglo-American consensus - which he identifies as the liberal, social-democratic settlement of the 1950s and early 1960s - fell prey to a series of economically- and politically-driven challenges “from below”. These challenges of race, ethnicity, generation, class and gender were, Kaye avers, shaped by the Western Marxist tradition which had long centred on individual agency and the potential impact of individuals as active subjects or agents of change - a claim that I shall discuss in the following chapter. Another scholar, Medway (1990: 28), examining the English curriculum in Britain in this period, contextualises this focus on agency with reference to

‘the phenomenon known as the “Counterculture” which most immediately presents apparent parallels to what was happening in English’. While it is debated whether the relationship between the Counterculture and the Growth Model was a causal one, it can be said, at the very least, the ‘expressive tendencies in education could only have been reinforced by analogous manifestations in the Counterculture ...’ (Medway 1990: 32). This same expressive tendency was given official support in the New Zealand context, too. An editorial in the Department of Education journal, (*Education* (5) 1972: 2-3), outlines the changing educational focus when it is noted that:

A good clue to the main subjects with claims to inclusion in a new core curriculum is to be found in the courses now taught in many schools under such headings as social education, family life education ... . They deal with topics of deep personal concern to teenagers: human relationships in their various settings; themselves as citizens, consumers, and workers; attitudes - their own and those of other people - to current issues of national and international importance.

Certainly, the focus on human experience and agency was at the heart of the English curriculum reforms. Dixon (1975:1) wrote of ‘the need to re-examine the learning process and the meaning to the individual of what he [*sic*] is doing in English lessons’. The emphasis was on the individual as a learner and the ‘mutuality between teacher and taught’ with ‘the child as the final arbiter of his own learning’ (Squire and Britton, in Dixon 1975: xvi). The new definition of English was simply:

the sum total of the planned and unplanned experiences through language by means of which a child gains control of himself and of his [*sic*] relations with the surrounding world (Squire and Britton, in Dixon 1975: xviii).

It is significant, too, that Squire and Britton write of growth through the experience of *language*. Indeed, it was the re-conceptualisation of English around language that was a second identifying feature of the reforms - something that is only understood in the light of the traditional literary focus to which this chapter briefly turns.

For one hundred years the central role of literature in English teaching had gone largely unchallenged. This pivotal place and significance of literature in English-teaching programmes has been explored by a number of writers. Green (1990: 139) summarises

the position of the Left (from whence came the challenge to literature-based teaching programmes), when he writes of ‘the profound complicity of “literature” and “education”, historically and ideologically’. Green argues that literature must be viewed as a cultural commodity and its teaching viewed as a form of cultural politics which is part of a more general hegemonic strategy. That is, literature teaching in its most exclusive form was seen as defending an elite tradition ‘with a dismissive wave to all else’ (Dixon 1975: 122). In such a ‘heritage model’ (Dixon 1975: 1), it was alleged the emphasis was on culture as a given; an ideological expression of high culture with the concomitant temptation to ignore culture as the student may know it: ‘a network of attitudes to experience and personal evaluations that [a student] develops in a living response’. Similarly, Ball *et al.* (1990: 48) trace the origins of literary teaching to the need to establish social order in the face of the ‘fears and panics surrounding the development of the [nineteenth century] city and the emergence of an urban working class mass population’ (Ball *et al.* 1990: 48). At a time of social dislocation, literature was perceived as the means whereby a sense of shared culture could be achieved. Thus, Adam Smith and Matthew Arnold both asserted the civilising value of English literature, and it was within this, liberal, romantic aesthetic that in the second and third quarters of this century the Cambridge scholar, F R Leavis, shaped much of the direction of English teaching.

In his book *Exploding English*, Bernard Bergonzi has shown just how important “Leavisism” was in the development of English studies. It was an influence which he (1990: 54) notes has been especially pervasive in ‘teacher colleges and the books and periodicals devoted to the teaching of English in schools’. Leavis’s views are well known: through the practice of literary criticism moral discrimination was possible; the old civilising values which had all but disappeared could be re-discovered and re-enacted in the process of critical reading. To use Bergonzi’s words of Leavis (1990: 51) ‘whilst literature, and the criticism which was the key to it, remained then all was not lost’. Thus, Leavis sought to instil a mode of critical discrimination which could distinguish

between worthy books and those which constituted a threat to civilisation. He championed the view (Leavis 1986: 212-213) that English was a 'discipline of intelligence', and he was therefore opposed to it being given 'a soft-option flavour'. He feared that if the rigorous and critical approach were abandoned:

there will, in this central realm of intellectual life which ... matters so much for the present and future of our civilization, be no mature notion of possibilities, no currency of intelligent ideas, no trained intelligence, no standards, no morality and no maps ... .

The influence of Leavis and other Cambridge University scholars in the literary-critical tradition was certainly acknowledged in New Zealand (Department of Education 1983b: 4; *English in New Zealand* September 1981: 6). The 1942 *Thomas Report*, upon which the 1945 syllabus was based, reflects this "great book" position when it is noted (1944: 19) that:

[a]s a result of his [*sic*] reading, and the discussions and other activities arising out of it, the pupil's sympathies should be widened and deepened, his [*sic*] perceptions quickened, and his [*sic*] sense of values clarified and corrected; and he [*sic*] should develop the power to discriminate between true and false emotions and between straight and crooked thinking.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the Cambridge tradition in general, and Leavis's ideas in particular, were becoming discredited. A recurring theme in liberal and certainly neo-Marxist writings of the period was the ideological necessity of shifting the emphasis of literature teaching from a selective canon of literary texts and its criticism to larger matters; namely, the problematical nature of literature as a constructed entity and the historical and cultural forms which determine it (Bergonzi 1990: 17). It was asserted that the educational community must begin to see literature as providing ideological support for the interests of the dominant culture.

The notions of "dominant culture" and "dominant interests" were central to the challenge mounted against the established literary perspective. The link that Leavis and his supporters had made between literature and cultural values was fiercely attacked by theorists of the Left. For whose values and standards were the prized literary texts

affirming? Leavis (1986: 178) wrote of concepts such as order, discipline, culture and civilisation, but these emphases were seen by Leavis's detractors and other progressivists (e.g. Williams 1959, 1977) as imposing upon students a definition of reality that declared the values and symbols of the social elites and that actively forged a particular form of consciousness and behaviour. Other voices and values, other interests, were thereby excluded on the basis of a selective and partial canon of literary works. In this way, then, educators could secure much of the ideological space and limit patterns of thought or, to put it differently, not accept as valid other non-dominant patterns of thought that may be expressed in literature outside the accepted canon. To the progressive writers, therefore, literary study in its traditional form had an ideological, even hegemonic, function: it shaped opinion and consent; it formulated and conveyed an outlook on life that meshed with the outlook of politically and culturally powerful members of society. Against this established view of literature, the Growth Model theorists not only proposed a more inclusive canon, but also suggested that the notion "literature" itself take on a new meaning. Thus, literature came to include the students' stories and poems (Dixon 1975: 55), and attention turned from a didactic approach to literary study which 'sap[s] the central enjoyment and satisfaction of the act of reading and responding' (Dixon 1975: 58) to an 'experience to be shared and talked over' (Dixon 1975: 55).

It was this progressive challenge to the criticism that Leavis had defended, and to other forms of traditional English studies, that saw support in the Growth Model paradigm with its focus on *language*. It has been noted above that the Growth Model theorists' understanding of the place of literature worked to very different assumptions to that of the Leavisite tradition. But it is also important to note that the Growth Model provided a different conception of school English studies altogether; a conception that was *language oriented* and which followed the researches of academics at London University's Institute of Education.

The nature of this “English-as-language” school has been well documented. Ball *et al.* (1990: 58) describe this language lobby as seeking:

to shift the canonical tradition from the centre of the stage and replace it with the pupil, the learner. In other words to replace the emphasis on second-hand meaning, in the text, with first-hand meaning, in the daily life and authentic culture of the child.

And it was language that provided the point of access to this authentic culture. To use Dixon’s words (1975: 13) ‘[i]n English, pupils meet to share their encounters with life’ and to do this effectively the focus must be on language development. He argues further (1975: 48) that:

the liberation of pupils from the limits of the teacher’s vision comes through his [*sic*] giving tentativeness and sensitivity to language, qualities that are most likely to be developed if we teachers are on the look-out for emerging interests and preoccupations in the pupils, not merely in ourselves.

Dixon’s vision of language study was, of course, very different from more traditional understandings of language mastery in a course of English. Writing about teachers’ usual role in language teaching, Britton observed (*Ideas* 24, 1973: 2) that they are ‘the guardians of excellence’. Britton argues, however, that this linguistic excellence is best identified with what T. S. Eliot (1948: 24, 48, 108) described as the ‘culture of the few’ - a view of language which in Britton’s view must be challenged. ‘Experience in many schools’, he writes (1975: 5):

has shown that unexpected learning achievements result when a teacher lowers his [*sic*] threshold of acceptance in order to encourage home speech to be freely used ... and linguistic research indicates that what makes speech effective as an instrument of learning has nothing to do with social acceptability (or what many teachers have regarded as the “correctness”) of its formal features.

In Britton’s analysis (1973: 7), language ‘as cultural inheritance’ and language ‘as a means of learning’ are ‘incompatible’. He adds that the belief that one form of language ‘needs protecting from the debasing influence of other forms can no longer withstand the attacks of linguistic scholarship’. Furthermore:

[t]he belief that education best serves a society by selecting for its attention those

individuals most likely to make outstanding contributions to its way of life must be seen to conflict with the view that every group, in a complex relation with other groups, with a larger society, with mankind in general, has cultural needs, resources and potential that constitutes a demand for what education can offer. And it is a demand that focuses above all upon the role of the mother tongue in schools.

Britton's analysis was echoed by others at the forefront of promoting the Growth Model paradigm. Dixon (1975: 77, 81), for example, argued that "correctness" in language is a 'disabling conception' and that

when we taught traditional grammar we could not ... claim to affect language in operation. In fact grammar teachers ... have been among those most guilty of imposing a body of knowledge which never became a guide to action or a point of reference.

Inevitably, and thirdly, the experience-centred model placed the emphasis on students' own constructions of their personal and social worlds without any strong conception of a "body of knowledge" to be actively conveyed. Indeed, Dixon observed (1975: 72) that '[a] body of information had been "thought up" in response to an example of the sciences and the demands of examiners'. Any body of knowledge which did exist was simply 'our hopes of what pupils will discover and build as discussion arises from day to day, not a package to be handed over' (Dixon 1975: 81). The implications for pedagogy within this approach are clear enough: '[l]essons become less preformulated' (Dixon 1975: 33), with a 'flow from a prepared activity to one relatively unforeseen'. For this reason, and with due acknowledgement of the 'dangers of confusion for the teacher' (Dixon 1975: 122), the Growth Model theorists advocated English lessons structured around a 'theme or aspect of human experience' (Dixon 1975: 33) with a much more diffuse range of studies including considerable attention given to drama.

These various strands coalesced rather more formally as an approach or teaching model at the United States Dartmouth Seminar in 1966. Green (1993: 3) refers to this inaugural transatlantic gathering of the international teaching community as a 'key symbolic moment'. Several points of agreement were reached at the Seminar which, in turn, became foundational for the New English. They can be summarised in the

following way (see esp. Dixon 1970, and Muller 1967):

- the urgency of developing classroom approaches stressing the fullest possible involvement of young people in language experiences
- the importance of directing more attention to speaking and listening experiences for all pupils at all levels, particularly those experiences which involve active pupil participation
- the wisdom of providing young people at all levels with significant opportunities for the creative use of language - creative drama, imaginative writing etc.
- the significance of literary experiences in the educative process and the importance of teachers of English reviewing particular selections to determine their appropriateness for reading at different levels.

These emphases made an impact in New Zealand no less than they did in the United Kingdom. The publications of leading theorists - Wilkinson, Doughty, Britton, Thornton, Martin, Rosen, Murray - were distributed at courses and even sent by the Department of Education to school English Departments (author's files). Such material inevitably led to a critical evaluation of the English syllabus as it was taught - a syllabus which by the late 1960s was 25 years old.

The English syllabus for Forms 3-5 dated back to 1945 and resulted from the report from the committee appointed by the Minister of Education in 1942: *The Post-Primary School Curriculum (The Thomas Report)*. With respect to English teaching, the Report (1942: 14-22) gave importance to 'the discipline of a thorough training in competent "communication" English', 'close attention to such things as correct spelling and punctuation', and 'the rich field of English literature'. To be avoided in an English programme were 'the demand for emotive writing [which] produces colourful writing of little value' and any other form of writing 'without any clear purpose' and which may lead to 'self-deception [and therefore] mental and moral suicide'. The publication in 1945 of *The Education (Post-Primary Instruction) Regulations: Syllabuses of Instruction and Prescriptions for the School Certificate Examination* reinforced the *Thomas Report* often quoting directing from it. The aims encompassed 'constant oral and written expression', 'systematic training in the use of the library' and the acquisition of a 'knowledge and appreciation of literature'. The requirements of the actual course necessarily stressed



‘written exercises’, ‘recognition of parts of speech’, ‘knowledge of the development of English literature’, and the ‘[c]onstant attention to good speech’ (1945: 10-12).

With the new developments, and especially as they were being articulated in the United Kingdom, calls were made for a re-assessment of the 1945 syllabus (NESC, *Statement of Aims Draft*, 1972: 3). Thus, in August 1969 a group of teachers, College lecturers and Department officers (see Appendix 1) spent a week examining the syllabus in the light of ‘recent developments in language teaching and the study of language’ (Department of Education, *Guidelines for Revision*, 1970: 1). These *Guidelines* included three formal papers plus 37 ‘shortcomings of the present syllabus’ alongside thoughts on new objectives for, and the content of, English teaching. Later, in 1971, the objectives and the guidelines for revision were published in a different form for both the NESC and for schools’ consideration.

In line with the new emphases, the *Guidelines* paper criticised the 1945 syllabus for its narrow focus. Greater attention should be placed on media studies, original writing, the ‘primacy of oral work’, creative drama, and contemporary literature. Those aspects which should be given less emphasis included routine written exercises, the history of English literature, ‘old hat’ authors, and grammar which ‘[c]an’t be made useful’ (*Guidelines* 1970: 1-3).

The reference to grammar was a significant one (and, as shall be shown in Chapter 4, an area for on-going - often vitriolic - debate). The word “grammar” seemed to represent all that was archaic about the old syllabus and which had to be jettisoned. Writing a paper in the *Guidelines* (1970: 5-20), Warrick Elley, then of the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, observed that ‘the evidence appears overwhelmingly that the benefits of traditional grammar, traditionally taught, are almost entirely academic’. He continued:

It is sad to relate that there is no research evidence which shows that grammar has any appreciable effect on children's writing. Sometimes, indeed, it appears even to have a harmful effect, in that it sets up unrealistic standards in a child's mind, and, it is claimed, takes up valuable class time which could be devoted to writing ... .

To improve a child's writing skills, then, it seems we are best advised to have him [sic] write, and to introduce any labels and principles incidentally, when the need arises.

Of course, there were contrary views on grammar teaching - and Elley himself pointed out in the same *Guidelines* paper that studies suggested that intelligent students 'do apparently learn something from their formal language study which rubs off on their essay work' - and these, as shall be shown in Chapter 4, have continued to be central to the whole debate on the English syllabus. But grammar aside, there were other points in Elley's paper which provided a baseline for the New Zealand reforms.

One of the more significant comments was Elley's statement concerning the 'gaping chasm that has existed between children's expressed interests and the prescribed book lists'. To capture students' attention it was necessary to 'start where they are with magazines, Sunday newspapers, paperbacks and T.V. programmes'. With respect to 'pulpy romances and sexy magazines', Elley commented that though there was little inherently satisfying in them 'they are still reading something, and that's a useful starting point for literature lessons'.

These same issues were taken up by the NESC (Department of Education 1983a: 3). A number of background papers (author's files) were written and distributed to schools - papers which were suggestive of the approach to be adopted in the new syllabus statement. Taken as whole, the papers and the accompanying NESC *Newsletters* were a defence of the centrality of language study. The fourth paper, for example, challenged what the NESC regarded as 'the three traditional language assumptions': that English is a single, clearly defined system of symbols existing independently of the way people actively use language; that the task of the English teacher is to present this single form of language to students and ensure their mastery of it; that the main concern

of the English teacher is written language. And in place of these alleged assumptions, the NESC promoted four very different language-teaching principles: that language is a purposeful activity and must bear some relation to students' sense of being; that guided talking and writing, listening and reading rather than grammatical analysis will assist the growth of good language habits; that language is a symbolisation of experiences - experiences which must be created by the English teacher; that language is governed by conventions, but conventions which change according to time, place, situation and intention.

Clearly, then, the early thinking of the NESC owed something to the broader international movement in new English-teaching theory. The Department of Education never disputed this conscious borrowing (Department of Education 1983a: 5-6). Much of the reformist literature from England and Scotland (and to a lesser degree from North America) was read in New Zealand as evidenced, for example, in the English teachers' journal, *English in New Zealand*, and as acknowledged by the Department of Education's account of the reform process (1983a: 6). Further, the seven background papers referred to above were distillations of the writings of scholars at Birmingham and especially London Universities. A curriculum officer (*English in New Zealand* June 1979: 7) could therefore quite correctly describe the syllabus changes as being 'in line with a world-wide trend in the teaching of English'. In brief, it was a model of teaching which centred on both pedagogical and content-based change. There was a trend away from a formal, structured pedagogy to one which was student-oriented; and a movement from a literary-critical content focus to an emphasis on personalised reading, creativity, production, and the electronic media. The influence of descriptive linguistics was also keenly felt and replaced the traditional classroom preoccupation with grammar teaching. In general terms, English teaching in the late 1960s and early 1970s identified with personal response rather than authorial intent; thematic and life-related language projects rather than technical exercises. Writing of this English reform process (*Education* (4) 1981: 3), a Department of Education official could therefore note that:

It is not for the teacher to tell a student what to do or think; it is for the teacher to arrange events in the classroom so that students can discover for themselves, using their own language, what it is to express their own thoughts, and in their encounters with print or talk, come to understand what someone else has said or written.

The specific changes to the syllabus which followed from the adoption of such a perspective were outlined in the *Statement of Aims* - a document which went through several revisions and was published in its final form in 1983 (Department of Education 1983b). Supporting the *Statement of Aims* was a series of booklets - the last of which was published in 1989 - which sought to provide practical advice on the implementation of the NESC teaching aims and which provoked considerable discussion within and outside the teaching community.

### **Opposition and acceptance**

English teachers did not all give their unanimous support to the NESC proposals. The NESC and Department of Education curriculum officers were expecting criticism. Indeed, one official (*English in New Zealand* June 1973: 3) outlined the conflicts that he believed teachers of English would initially experience. These, he noted, included conflicts between a selected content and utilising the whole environment as a source of learning; between the teacher as fountainhead, and the teacher as a particularly helpful part of the learning environment; between memorising and exercising, and a pedagogy which ensured that learning can be equated with living; between a “show us what you know” attitude, and one which accepts as valid “learning by using language and learning language by using it”; between teaching as the focus of the classroom, and learning as its main *raison d’être*.

In the event, and notwithstanding the results of an early survey (author’s files) which included a degree of support from teachers for the general intent of the syllabus

changes, the curriculum officer's forewarnings quite accurately reflected the contested areas of the NESC reforms. To many teachers the issues of concern were practical: there was too much change in too short a time (*English in New Zealand* July 1975: 4). Others were anxious about the inappropriateness of the physical conditions in, and the resource inadequacies of, schools for the demands of the NESC programme (see especially NESC *Newsletter* No. 2 February 1971: 3). The rigidity of timetables, streamed classes and frequent staff changes were cited as further reasons for reservation (*Education* (9) 1974: 12-14). To yet other teachers, the *Statement of Aims* itself was cause for concern in ideological terms. One critic (*English in New Zealand* September 1973: 43-44) argued that the extreme breadth of the three language aims amounted to a vagueness which raised the legitimate question: 'to what extent is all this English', and prompted the fear that 'the vagueness could lead to English as a separate entity disappear[ing] from the timetable altogether' - a fear not allayed by the NESC itself in suggesting, first, that the name "Language Studies" replace "English" (*Newsletter* No. 2, February 1971: 1) and, secondly, that related arts (of which literature was one) be taught not as separate entities but in an integrated form (*Related Arts in the Secondary School Curriculum*, 1972). Even supporters of the NESC programme could write (*English in New Zealand* Sept. 1981: 8) of 'too much redundancy' in the *Statement of Aims*, and 'this poorly worded, unwanted summation' (*Education* (5) 1980: 35). Politicians (e.g. in *English in New Zealand* July 1978: 38) and University academics (e.g. in *English in New Zealand* July 1981: 15-21) joined in the debate with reservations regarding the NESC philosophy and its attack on the syllabus divisions and clearly defined educational tasks of the 1945 statement. Conscious of such criticisms, the NESC attempted to address these and other concerns in its *Newsletter* No. 3, June 1971, although it was reported the following year that there was still some opposition to 'the direction of change' and 'possible difficulties in putting the suggestions into practice' (*Newsletter* No. 4, August 1972: 4). Even in the mid 1970s the NESC admitted (*Newsletter* No. 6, July 1974: 3) that:

the many qualifications [to teacher support of the Draft syllabus] ... indicate that the Committee must proceed with as much care and concern for the classroom teacher as they [*sic*] have been so far for the student, and his [*sic*] language development.

Though the opposition to the reforms was real and at times intense, by the late 1970s and early 1980s dissent had given way to a genuine measure of acceptance. Indeed, in 1980 the Department of Education could confidently demonstrate (*English in New Zealand* April 1980: 39) that 90% of English teachers found the third draft of the *Statement of Aims* either 'satisfactory or very satisfactory'. And in May 1982, the Minister of Education announced that he had formally approved a new syllabus in English, Forms 3 to 5, based on the NESC *Statement of Aims* (Department of Education 1983a: 14). It is of interest that the Minister, described by one academic as 'pursu[ing] an uncompromising right-wing education policy' (McCulloch 1990: 61), was found to give his approval when the conservative political interest had earlier been critical of NESC. Thus, Ministerial and wider teacher support raise a number of important considerations regarding the essential nature of NESC and its legitimization. In fact, this writer wishes to argue that for all its apparent break with the past, the Growth Model of English teaching as adopted in New Zealand did not represent as sharp a disjunction between the English syllabus of 1945 and that outlined in the *Statement of Aims* and its supporting documents as may at first be imagined. This is by no means an uncontroversial statement given the two decades of reform and development. But it is nevertheless clear that a case can be made for suggesting that the New Zealand Growth Model reforms were contradictory in nature and, to appropriate Green's words (1990: 156), able to be 'captured by the organising logic of the dominant cultural bloc'. To express it differently, and again, following Green (1990: 152), one can advance a case for suggesting that there were 'significant structural and institutional factors' that worked against the adoption of the Growth Model paradigm that the NESC originally envisaged - factors which I shall now explore.

## The examination system

The first reason why the NESC proposals received fairly wide and general approval even from conservative interests was because the external examination of English at School Certificate level was not discarded as the NESC had wished (Department of Education 1983a: 10). Notwithstanding the Department of Education's support of NESC, Growth Model advocates resented the institutional control function exercised by the continuing examination of a subject that had ostensibly moved away from emphasising an examinable product to an emphasis on what was perceived as an unexaminable process. The institutional forces (and especially the School Certificate Examination Board) were strongly criticised for 'calling the curriculum shots' (*English in New Zealand* September 1979: 7). The editor of *English in New Zealand* wrote (July 1975: 5):

it is increasingly obvious that the public examinations have been given a larger lease on life because some University administrators, some employers, some community leaders, some teachers, some Department officials have seen in them a way of setting limitations on the role and character of educational and social change.

Reading the issues of *English in New Zealand* during the 1970s it is clear that these limitations on curriculum reform provoked intense frustration. One writer could therefore comment (July 1975: 29):

It is surely time for English teachers to stand up to the Department and insist that NEXT YEAR the Minister allows schools to follow the NESC syllabus, and frees them from the School Certificate machine ... .

It was a sentiment expressed many times (e.g. NESC *Newsletter* No. 2, February 1971: 5; No. 3, June 1971: 3, 8). It became clear, however, that business and political leaders and it must be said some education officials (*English in New Zealand* September 1981: 11-12) were happy to support the NESC only because the School Certificate examination remained in place. The arguments given in favour of the examination were hardly new. It was alleged (*English in New Zealand* April 1977: 45)

that teachers cannot be trusted, and that examinations were able to establish reliable and valid standards against which individual students could be measured. Not surprisingly, then, as the decade of the 1970s closed, a contributor to the *English in New Zealand* journal could lament the 'partial syllabus reform' (September 1979: 5).

There were, however, signs of a more flexible examination system in the mid 1970s with the trialing of the internal assessment of School Certificate English. The pilot scheme was 'conducted under the aegis of the School Certificate Examination Board' (Department of Education 1983a: 10) and was initially based on twelve schools in 1976 and extended to a further five in 1977. There had been strong support for internal assessment amongst the proponents of the NESC reforms. Indeed, one of the NESC's terms of reference was 'to prepare a School Certificate examination prescription in English' (Department of Education 1983a: 3). It was the committee's intention that a programme of work based on the principles outlined in the Statement of Aims should be internally assessed in the fifth form. External examinations had been questioned at the outset of the reform process (*English in New Zealand* June 1973: 3, 6) and the call for their removal in English can be dated from the very early 1960s (*English in New Zealand* September 1979:4). The NESC argued that because of the wide variety of activities and resources used in the classrooms, and the variety of audiences and purposes for which language will be produced, a wider range of methods of assessment was needed than was available in a written examination. The assessment needed to encompass all the language modes, and not merely reading and writing. It was argued that as language development is a complex and often slow process, assessment should take place over a considerable period of time, and not on one isolated occasion. In any case, as schools began to devise programmes suited to their needs, it became increasingly difficult to set one national external examination which was suitable for all students. Although this move to internal assessment appeared progressive, it was subject to tight controls. The pilot scheme was under the control of the School Certificate Examination Board and monitored by the Department of



Education. After several years of trial, a report on the pilot scheme in fifth form English was presented to the Examination Board in November 1979. The Board thereafter carried out its own evaluation of internal assessment (Department of Education 1983a: 12).

These controls gave cause for disquiet, however. For example, a means' analysis method of moderating schools and, in 1980, the adoption of a moderating reference test - which was a test of reading and writing only - did not meet with unqualified approval of teachers (*English in New Zealand* September 1981: 12). Some schools, and especially the co-educational colleges, alleged that the form of internal assessment which had been adopted was itself ideologically at odds with the NESC reforms. One Head of Department and long-time supporter of the NESC wrote (*Education* 30 (5) 1981: 37):

... we are older, wiser and quieter, too. Our fifth form courses have drawn gradually back towards the orthodox, for we have discovered, come November, our most radical and informal colleagues, have to turn a comment-filled markbook, alive with incisive and useful comments, into cold hard marks, and find arguments to justify their students when the department meets to consider its ranking, to balance this year against the historical data, and the results of the reference testing ... . To some extent, we've become immune to the publicity, the visitors and those members of the department who still think that the "N" in NESC stands for "New", and back off gingerly.

The Head of Department concluded that the system 'quietly and insidiously shapes and negates so much of what we attempt to do in the name of internal assessment in the eighties'. Other reports from schools in the trials (see author's files) were similarly critical. The Fairfield College report, for example, included a lengthy statement on 'the anxiety and insecurity that has been produced' by the examination structure (Internal Assessment for School Certificate, Fairfield College, August 1976: 1).

Department of Education officials were acutely aware of the issues. A curriculum officer at the forefront of the reforms acknowledged (*English in New Zealand* April 1980: 40) 'the extent to which the NESC approach is dependent on internal assessment and the extent to which an external examination inhibits good English teaching'. The Director-

General himself was similarly aware of the tensions but gave rather mixed messages. On the one hand he noted (*English in New Zealand* September 1981: 11) the importance 'of devising tests and other tools of assessment that relate the performance of students to the objectives teachers of English are trying to achieve'. On the other hand, he emphasised the importance of examinable 'standards'. It was a dilemma which one progressive educationalist, Jack Shallcrass, warned may be ineluctably resolved in favour of conservative interests. In an address to the 1982 Conference of the New Zealand Association of Teachers of English, Shallcrass urged (*English in New Zealand* August 1982: 12-14) those 'on the edge of the system' to act as 'change agents' and to adopt 'generous visions', for the signs abounded that the state schools will 'become more competitive, there will be more examining, obedience and conformity will be rewarded, the hierarchies of power will be intensified'.

In the event, Shallcrass's words proved prophetic. Though an increasing number of schools opted for the internal assessment of School Certificate English, the issue has continued to remain one of lively debate into the 1990s. Despite the tight controls on the internal assessment programme, a recent Minister of Education signalled his intention (NZQA 1991a: 7, 9) to examine English and the other core subjects by external means. Lockwood Smith announced in May 1991 that the Government 'intends to rationalise subject options and to provide a clearer focus on the basic subjects of the curriculum'. To this end:

The Government has determined that assessment of the three basic subjects of English, mathematics and science will be offered in one format only for all students. The Government has determined that in the basic subjects, most of the assessment for School Certificate purposes will be conducted by means of external examination.

The notions of control and power as exemplified in the English examination system and to which Shallcrass drew attention in his address, are helpfully contextualised in a more general sense in Foucault's writings as outlined in Chapter 1. Foucault (1979: 220) uses the term 'hierarchical surveillance' to refer to the registration, assessment and classification functions of the State. It is a form of power which Foucault (1982: 781)

labels as ‘government by individualization’ by which he means that individuals become entangled in a system of institutional norms to the extent that their individuality is to be defined in relation to those norms. Thus, an individual is turned into a “subject” as institutional power ‘attaches him [*sic*] to his own identity’. It is the ‘theory of the subject (in the double sense of the word)’, Foucault argues (1977a: 222), that explains ‘why our culture has tenaciously rejected anything that could weaken its hold upon us’.

To apply this analysis to the English syllabus is to see the State examinations exercising some degree of control over the NESC discourse and, as some practitioners argued, actually constraining its implementation. Thus, English teaching even in its “reformed” guise can be seen as acting as ‘an apparatus of moral training “linked to” a highly specific governmental technology and rationality’ (Hunter, in Green 1990: 154). For not only do the examination constraints on the NESC reforms indicate what type of curriculum reform is probable within the context of a bureaucratically organised political structure, but the constraints also illustrate Foucault’s contention that knowledge and power are inseparable concepts. To quote Kenway’s words (1990: 172), ‘forms of power are imbued within knowledge, and ... forms of knowledge are permeated by power relations’. Arguably, the NESC reforms reflected this knowledge-power relationship which at least in part explains the 1982 Ministerial legitimising of the new English syllabus.

### **Economic and political regearing**

While the examination system itself was a key structural factor that militated against the adoption of the more radical aspects of the Growth Model and as a consequence secured its support from conservative interests, there were other important factors in ensuring the NESC reforms were not antithetical to establishment values. It has been noted that the syllabus recommendations of the late 1960s and early 1970s may well

have reflected wider economic and cultural emphases. But in the late 1970s there were very different economic and political circumstances facing New Zealand (Openshaw 1995: 231-247). The very different economic climate was not lost on the editors of *English in New Zealand* and the wider educational interest. It was noted (*English in New Zealand* July 1978: 38), for example, that:

Politicians of several parties have latched onto a tide of right-wing opinion which is disguising its attack upon ... liberal kinds of education ... as a concern that too many students are leaving school illiterate and that schools are neglecting basics ... .

Jack Shallcrass similarly warned (*English in New Zealand* August 1982: 10) against the increasing conservatism and urged English teachers to be alert to the 'imperialism ... of the dominant class'.

It is interesting to observe the Department of Education's reinterpretation of the NESC reforms in the light of the more conservative climate. At the beginning of the reform period, the emphasis from Departmental officials who were involved in the NESC development process was on discontinuity with the traditional approaches to the teaching of English. Thus, the curriculum officer closest to the NESC revisions could note (*Education* (1) 1973: 19) that some of the statements of the 1945 prescription have 'been invalidated by linguistic and educational research'. The 'limited view' of many aspects of the old curriculum was highlighted, and it was averred that the 'fragmentation of what is a natural entity, the language experience of children, is an unsatisfactory feature of some English teaching'. It could therefore be stated positively (*English in New Zealand* June 1973: 2-7) that the new Statement of Aims was 'not content-oriented'. Instead, and unlike the 1945 approach, it emphasised 'skills' and 'relationships'. The shift in emphasis was described as 'fundamental'. Others, too, were to comment (e.g. *English in New Zealand* 1973: 18) on the NESC's 'sharp revision of basic assumptions about language and how it should be learned and taught'.

As the decade of the 1970s progressed, the defence of NESC changed. No longer

were the reforms regarded as discontinuous with the 1945 syllabus statement. Instead, the continuities were highlighted. A Department of Education curriculum officer could therefore note (*Education* (4) 1981: 3):

I believe that it is important to reassert that there is much common ground in the ideas about the teaching of English expressed in the Thomas report [on which the 1945 syllabus was based] and those expressed by the NESC in their successive drafts of the *Statement of Aims*.

New pedagogical directions were acknowledged, but so, too, was the way in which 'the work of the NESC underlines and reinforces' the earlier emphases on reading, writing and speaking.

The Director-General argued similarly. Speaking to English teachers about the final version of the *Statement of Aims*, he stated (*English in New Zealand* September 1981: 8-9) that:

In what it will say about reading, the written uses of language, the place of literature, the central role of the teacher, and the vital importance of each student's personal experience as user of language, there will be some new words for old, but the ideas are familiar, and, by now, well attested. The new features refer not to the objectives teachers of English should seek but to the scope of their work and the way they should go about it ... the teaching objectives remain what they have long been for teachers of English. The writers of the Thomas Report would have said amen to [the NESC language aims].

Thus, whereas in 1973 the NESC reforms were legitimised (*English in New Zealand* June 1973: 7) because the '*Statement of Aims* has attempted to plan for a more distant future', in 1981 the *Statement of Aims* received its legitimisation, partially at least, from alleged similarities to the earlier syllabus statement.

The requirements to absorb teacher and potential Ministerial opposition to the *Statement of Aims* in a more conservative political and cultural context was arguably a factor in the re-statement of intent of the NESC proposals. But it must also be asked how radical the New Zealand Growth Model paradigm really was. Were the Department of Education statements emphasising continuity rather than cleavage a belated realisation of the essential conservatism of the *Statement of Aims*? There can be little doubt that in terms of pedagogy the NESC programme did change classroom patterns. English teaching in the 1970s and 1980s was no longer fragmented into 'the Tuesday (Comprehension), Wednesday (Poetry) type programme' (*Education* (2) 1973: 23). But it is also open to assertion that in its essential substance, English teaching did exhibit a number of continuities with the more traditional paradigm, and was therefore able to be appropriated by conservative interests. Foremost amongst these continuities was the emphasis on literature and its criticism.

### **Literature and its criticism**

It was noted above that the Growth Model worked to very different assumptions about the role of literature in an English-teaching programme. Thus, Green (1990: 149)

suggests that one should ‘not overlook the likelihood that it [was], in part, a strategic decision by the mainstream in the Growth Model theorizing to focus on “writing” rather than “literature”’. He suggests, too, that it was part of a still wider shift from the focus on structure to one on agency as understood in terms of neo-Marxist theory. Consequently, the emphasis of English teaching was on process rather than product; on learning rather than teaching; on creative expression rather than literary criticism. In a number of respects, moreover, the NESC proposals mirrored these new preoccupations. The new modal categories under which English was defined in the *Statement of Aims* did not include “Literature”, but instead “Reading” and “Writing”, and even the receptive reading mode was defined as not merely ‘extracting meaning from the printed word’ but also ‘giving meaning to it’ (Department of Education 1983b: 8).

As has been noted in Chapter 1, however, the balance between structure and agency is by no means always an even one. Institutional structures and discourses, and “commonsense” beliefs operate to produce a certain compliance and thus restrict individual agency. In terms of the Growth Model paradigm, this has often meant that despite the agency-process rhetoric, literature - and by means of its criticism, the maintenance of established mores - has not seriously been challenged. Green (1990: 137) has argued that though in recent decades the Growth Model has dominated in English teaching this ‘has meant neither abandoning the traditional category of “literature” nor mounting a serious challenge to it’.

It is significant, then, that in the NESC reforms literature was still deemed to be central to the new pedagogy. Though literature was excluded from the modal description of English, it did receive its own heading in the *Statement of Aims* document. The entry merits extensive quotation (1983b: 21):

Through literature, students can encounter language in its most complex and varied forms. By exploring these complexities, students can come to know the thoughts, emotions and experiences of people beyond the circle of their immediate knowledge. An experience of life through literature is of great value, for with it can come an

imaginative insight into other people's lives, an extension of the individual's own awareness and a *development of that empathy which is part of the civilising and humanising tradition of literature* (emphasis added).

This is a statement which is very much in accord with the traditional literary teaching emphases of Leavis and, of course, the *Thomas Report* on which the 1945 New Zealand syllabus was based. It should also be noted that it is this very 'humanising tradition' of which Foucault is so critical. 'Humanism', he notes (1977a: 221), 'reinforces social organisation and ... allow[s] society to progress, but along its own lines'. In his view, humanism is suspect because it is responsible for the invention of a series of 'subjected sovereignties'. In short, humanism enables 'our culture ... [to] tenaciously reject anything that could weaken its hold upon us' (1977a: 222).

Other things were also to ensure literature teaching remained a central focus of the NESC teaching programme. The School Certificate Examination Board's control of the fifth form programme, and the literary study inherent in the examination, meant that teachers were adjusting more to pedagogical modifications rather than to radical content changes - although it must be noted that there was a greater range and variety of literature being studied under the NESC banner. Besides, teachers' training revolved predominantly around literature. As Rosen (in Green 1990: 137) has noted, 'the formation of specialist English teachers has been overwhelmingly literary', and this has certainly been true in the University training of New Zealand English teachers.

The influence of the Universities has, in fact, been keenly felt. Academics worked closely with English teachers and what was renamed the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (see especially *English in Aotearoa* 11, May 1990). Roger Robinson, for example, elected at the first NZATE conference in May 1981, was a regional representative on the Association's National Council (*English in Aotearoa* 12, 1990: 56). And Robinson - whose influence has remained into the 1990s as shall be seen in Chapter 3 - was wary of jettisoning the critical approach to literature.



Addressing the first NZATE conference, Robinson (*Teaching English* 1982: 57) argued that:

Nobody responds to what they can't understand and lack the vocabulary to articulate ... . We have a duty to our students' potential for initiation. And we have an equal duty to do our best to pass on the tradition of the most wonderful body of literature any language in the world has ever produced ... we must adhere to the basics of the body of knowledge and the discipline of reading which are implicit in the study of literature.

This was a view which was supported by other academics - including linguists trained in the descriptive and generative paradigms (*Teaching English* 1982: 79-86). 'In the few hours a week that the English teacher has available', wrote one, 'in place of the relevant language of advertising being produced we could have the irrelevant language of fiction being listened to or read'; and the justification for doing this is that 'education should aim to make people not just aware but consciously aware of the world they live in so that they can be rational about it'.

Perhaps of even greater importance than the views of individual academics, however, was the influence of the Universities Entrance Board. The sixth and seventh form prescriptions were, for most of the period under review in this chapter, under the control of the Universities Entrance Board. Although the Board made changes to the senior courses in the 1970s - especially with the introduction of descriptive and socio-linguistic study topics - the prescriptions maintained their traditional literary-critical focus. Some 80% of the current seventh form course requires various degrees of exegetical literary analysis with a 'major author' requirement for the selection of texts (NZQA 1991b: 546). It is possible to argue, moreover, that in teachers' classroom experience the literary focus of the senior form prescriptions had a not inconsiderable impact on the manner of teaching in the junior classes. In practice, then, the alleged hiatus (*English in New Zealand* July 1981: 21) between the NESC *Statement of Aims* and the Universities Entrance Board prescriptions was more in the formulation of the text discourses and the level of literary sophistication rather than expressed as a fundamental disjunction of teaching objectives.

This conclusion is given some substantiation in two surveys of English teachers undertaken in the late 1970 and early 1980s. One noted (*English in New Zealand* September 1979: 20) that teachers had continued to stress the learning of content in English classes. The researcher observed that teachers 'are still concentrating on cognitive areas'. Further, in a second study (*English in New Zealand* July 1981: 23), it was noted 'that for many teachers the contact with NESC has been partial, or fleeting, or both'. It was concluded that 'teachers have modified rather than abandoned old programmes'. It appeared, therefore that there was a question over the coherence of policy statement and classroom practice. However, it is also possible to argue that the survey results indicate the contradictory emphases of the NESC package. In other words, it was possible to maintain conservative, and especially literary-based study, within the more progressive pedagogic framework. Indeed, the NESC reforms could be both appropriated and subjugated in the interests of an established literary perspective. The fact is that literature and its study became *more* rather than *less* important under the NESC reforms. The Committee itself affirmed that a 'student's growth in language and thought can be enhanced by literature' (*Language Development and the Statement of Aims*, NESC, n.d.: 4). Further, it was a matter of fact that 'Literature has come into every unit so far, and will probably occur in most future ones' (NESC *Newsletter*, No. 5, August 1973: 2). Moreover, in a statement which would not have been out of place in the 1945 prescription, the Committee proclaimed (*Newsletter* No. 4, August 1972: 2) that:

Literature can provide a formal experience of a selected view of things, another person's attempt to comprehend or explain his [*sic*] particular world. An encounter with this other world can widen the student's range of emotional and imaginative experience, cultivate a diversity of response and activity, and appeal to his creativity.

It is true that the Committee saw literature being studied 'within the context provided by the language aims of the NESC statement of aims' (*Language Development and the Statement of Aims*, n.d.: 4), but the reality was that literature remained the key structural element in the new teaching programmes. While some school English Departments

may have abandoned the “class set” approach in favour of reading topics, with almost all English Departments extending the range of literature studied, there can be little doubt that English teachers would have agreed with one NESC supporter (*English in New Zealand* September 1973: 15) that ‘we can build almost all our English programme around literature’. Thus the category “literature” and the acceptance of its “givenness”, which many Growth Model theorists had attacked (Ball *et al.* 1990: 58), was never seriously challenged in the New Zealand context.

This lack of challenge is especially relevant in the light of the alleged distinctions between the English-as-literature and English-as-language schools as outlined above. The point has been made that the Growth Model theorists of the so-called London School advocated a model of English teaching in contradistinction to the cultural heritage model of the Cambridge School. But it has also been argued that there were, in fact, inherent continuities between the NESC’s new syllabus statement and earlier practices. The question must therefore be asked to what extent were these two models in reality ideologically dissimilar? Why was the literary tradition of the Cambridge School not successfully challenged by the language focus of the London School?

Ball *et al.* (1990) have argued that the two paradigms were manifestly at odds. However, Green (1993: 4) has suggested that Ball’s understanding ‘obscures various subtleties and important distinctions and discriminations’. Several arguments can be advanced to support Green’s view that the differences between the models should not be pressed. First, though the two schools did emphasise different aspects of English teaching, both embodied the values of liberal ideology; that is, the romantic aesthetic of life-enhancing values, human growth and the potential for human beings to effect change and promote development. Medway (1990: 22) argues, therefore, that it is ‘not surprising to find the two streams merging again’. Secondly, it should be noted that the English-as-language paradigm was itself committed to literary ideology; that same devotion to imaginative literature - albeit differently defined - defended by the Cambridge

School. On this point Dixon (1975: 122) is quite definite, noting that the experienced-centred movement ‘shares the interest in a model based on imaginative literature, though it gives primary emphasis to pupils’ constructions of their personal and social worlds’. Thirdly, Green (1993: 7) suggests that there was a ‘bias of both these camps towards “language”, in the specific sense of the verbal-symbolic medium; that is, a *linguistic bias* in the non-technical sense’. Both schools, in other words, had an ‘expressive-realist’ (Belsey 1980, quoted in Green 1993: 7) understanding of language that I shall discuss in further detail in the following chapter. Green (1993: 8) notes that in both paradigms there was a restriction of human semiosis to verbal language and the lack of attention to a

wider, more inclusive perspective, particularly given the enormous expansion in the nature, scope and significance of new forms of info-communication technology, ranging from computers, through video, film and electronic mail, to television.

Therefore, to note that the new English-teaching emphases were less remote from the Cambridge School than some scholars have suggested, or even to note that there was a measure of ideological congruency between the two paradigms, offers an insight into the inherent continuities with respect to the NESC syllabus reforms and the more traditional practices. Certainly this does not negate the active managing of the new syllabus in the interests of those established views, but it does provide an insight into why the *Statement of Aims* was able to be so managed.

### **NESC and the language focus**

To argue for the “givenness” of literature does, of course, attack the very essence of the NESC reforms which were language based. The nature of the “English-as-language” school has been described in an earlier section of this chapter. Ball *et al.* (1990: 58) describe this language lobby as seeking:

to shift the canonical tradition from the centre of the English stage and replace it with the pupil, the learner. In other words to replace the emphasis on second-hand meaning, in the text, with first-hand meaning, in the daily life and authentic culture of the child.

To the language proponents, then, experience and response became the organising principles of the new English-teaching model. The NESC *Newsletters* and a number of occasional papers all gave experiential language study central place in the new teaching approach (see e.g. *Making Your Language Programme for Forms 3-5*, NESC, October 1974; *Language at Secondary School*, NESC, February 1972; *Language and 'Subject' English*, NESC, September 1973; *Language Development and the Statement of Aims*, NESC, n.d.). A language, response-based programme was defended on a number of grounds. First, it was argued, if response was emphasised students would begin to trust themselves and be secure in their views. Secondly, students would get to know themselves - they would explore why they respond the way they do, and what in them causes a response. Thirdly, students would recognise their own differences from other students. They would recognise that there was diversity in response and that others' responses were also valid. Fourthly, students would come to recognise that there could be common elements in human reactions. In the light of such justifications the NESC therefore noted (*Language and 'Subject' English*, 1973: 2):

So, it means that the teacher must learn to put the students' language to use. If he [sic] does not, he will subordinate that language to the concept of English as a subject (often with literature as a prestigious core and with knowledge *about* language used as a basis for "improving" student language). If the latter situation prevails English often degenerates into practices based upon *assumed* future uses ... rather than on *present* satisfactions, with a syllabus arranged as fragments such as composition, set works, comprehension etc.

The Department of Education was quick to acknowledge its debt to the theorists at London's Institute of Education (Department of Education 1983c: 8). Consequently, the *Statement of Aims* was structured around the insights provided by these theorists. 'Language is at the heart of learning', the *Statement of Aims* begins (1983: 6). It is 'a form of behaviour', 'central to human growth' and 'includes the visual and non-verbal forms of expression which play an important role in the communication of ideas and

attitudes'. The *Statement of Aims* then outlined eight modes of language which were central to the syllabus: the reception modes of listening, reading, watching and viewing, and the production modes of speaking, writing, moving and shaping. Three underlying language aims were also provided. At first reading, then, the document appeared to be a radical departure from established English programmes. But, again, other factors ensured that there was considerable continuity with the older English-teaching practices.

First, response-based arguments were tempered by the views of moderate, even progressive practitioners and academics. A Canterbury University linguist argued strongly for 'a return to more emphasis on reception rather than production' (Kuiper 1982: 84). He continued, noting that the classroom emphasis on production:

fails to take into account that production lags behind reception and that in order to improve production in oral and probably written skills as well, a child needs to hear and read material which will extend his [*sic*] repertoire of [language] formulae and will demonstrate the particular social roles of these formulae.

His comments were echoed by others (*Teaching English* 1982: *passim*). And while it cannot be demonstrated that such views were widely embraced, certainly they gave encouragement to the more traditional practitioners of whom it was well known there were many (*English in New Zealand* July 1981: 23).

Secondly, the *Statement of Aims* itself, though appearing to offer a radically different language-based syllabus, showed a number of continuities with established teaching methodology. Eight modes of language were specified, yet there was guidance regarding those aspects that were to receive especial importance (1983: 9):

Teachers will decide their own priorities and emphases according to their own views and experience, and their assessment of what they should be doing to develop the abilities of their students as effective users of language.

It is vital, however, that listening, speaking, reading and writing form an important part of all language programmes in the secondary school.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing were, of course, the traditional features of the English prescription. The NESC statement was, indeed, very little different from the 1945

*Notes on the Syllabus of Instruction* where it was stated (1945: 6) that the ‘primary aims of teaching English are to develop’:

- The power of expression in speech and writing
- The ability to understand the spoken and written thoughts of others
- The habit of reading for instruction and entertainment.

The *Notes* added a fourth point, namely ‘[t]he faculty of criticism, discrimination, and appreciation’, but as it has already been observed, the NESC syllabus made ample provision for literary-based study. The emphases of reading and writing may have changed, but their importance in the syllabus remained.

There was also continuity with the 1945 *Instructions* in the area of literacy skills. One of the key features of the Language approach was a de-emphasis on the teaching of traditional grammar. The Department of Education’s Resource Book (1983: 14) therefore noted ‘repetitive drills and exercises, with no immediate goal, are unlikely to help learning’. It added, though, that ‘[s]kills such as the use of vocabulary ... are aided by direct teaching’. Again, there was nothing new here. The earlier syllabus (1945: 7) noted that:

Grammar is useful for the general student only in relation to the use of English, written or spoken. No substantial transfer of grammatical knowledge to written and spoken English is proven. Some very successful teachers ... have found by experience that good English is better fostered by extending very widely the time given to reading and writing and oral discussion on the subject matter read, than by systematic training in formal grammar.

Thus, while the *Statement of Aims* and accompanying Resource Books used a new rhetoric, with new learning metaphors and supported the English-as-language philosophy, there were continuities with earlier statements and practices that militated against radical structural change of content and programmes. English teaching, despite the “frills” could therefore still be regarded as “ordinary”; that is, it was able to be accepted (and accepted as important) by parents and teachers and even a conservative Minister of Education. English remained cognitive in its essence. It

continued to be legitimated by a central syllabus document, an examination, definable content with sequence, and accompanying textbooks.

### **Textbook production**

It is one of the ironies of the Growth Model reforms that preplanned units of work and textbook production in support of the new syllabus increased markedly. Far from being less dependent on school texts, which, of course, was at the heart of the reforms, English teachers became more wedded to them. A textbook industry began in New Zealand and Australia which was to have a profound effect on the development of English studies in this country. The NESC itself aided this process with the production of sample units of work which were prepared for various types of schools, ethnic and gender mix, and ability levels (*Making Your Language Programme for Forms 3-5*, NESC, October 1974). In addition, new texts were written. Chief among the New Zealand authors was the late Peter Smart, who, during the reform period taught at Riccarton High School and Christ's College, Christchurch. His texts became foundational for English programmes under the *Statement of Aims*. And it is my contention that the NESC activity in unit production and the texts written by Smart, and also those that appeared in Australia (on which see Boomer, in Green 1988: 23), contributed to the continuity with patterns of English teaching that the NESC was, in fact, charged with changing. In her study of ideology and the production of history textbooks in the United States, Jean Anyon (1979: 362) has argued that the information presented in texts was 'intended to prepare students for participation in political and other institutions of society'. Following Raymond Williams, Anyon suggests that texts - in part through the influence of publishing companies - embrace knowledge constructs which enhance the position of dominant social groups. It was, of course, Williams' thesis that society's powerful groups had the ability to legitimise only certain categories of thought at the expense of others, and that this is an important means by which those groups maintain social



power and control (see Chapter 3 below). In this perspective, texts are a form of authoritative resource which are appropriated, even unconsciously, as a means by which the powerful can exercise control. Within school texts, then, social reality is explored and interpreted in partial ways 'expressing the social priorities of certain political, economic or other groups' (Anyon 1979: 363). It is Anyon's contention that textbooks not only express the dominant groups' ideologies, but also help to form attitudes in support of their social production. Thus, through their use of many of these texts schools are, to use Bordieu's concept, guilty of cultural and symbolic violence. Or, to use Anyon's more measured words:

[t]he conceptual legitimacy conferred by school knowledge on powerful social groups is metabolized into power that is real when members of society in their everyday decisions support - or fail to challenge - prevailing hierarchies ... the textbooks provide an invisible means of soliciting [working class] support, thus preventing their potential disruption of an economic and social system that has not served them well.

To apply Anyon's thesis to English texts written in support of the NESC reforms would be a major study in its own right and beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is of interest to look at several of Smart's texts given their wide, and continuing, use within schools.

In the preface to his Form 5 text, *Let's Learn English in the 1970s: Meaning and Message* (second ed., 1975), Smart attempts to defend what Growth Model theorists regarded as indefensible. Noting that 'freedom is exhausting on everyone', Smart writes:

I know that he [*sic*] who excuses himself too much is supposed to accuse himself, but I'm prepared to risk this, to once again defend the textbook/sourcebook as the primary, central tool of an English teacher. However desirable discovery-pupil-elective programmes may be, and however stimulating thematic units may be, no teacher can sustain for too long the effort needed to keep five classes supplied with material, busy, secure knowing what they are doing and why, fulfilled ... .

The Form 5 text, like others in the series, was certainly a break from conventional English texts in terms of layout and design. Notwithstanding the visual attraction, the text was nonetheless, to use Smart's own words, a 'sourcebook which has a

structure'. And not only so, for the structure was able to be appropriated in a formal and traditional way. The first chapter, for example, was a conventional study of how students might devise a reading programme. A suggested reading list was provided, and the art of reading was, significantly, defined as the 'translation' of an author's words. The aim of reading literature (and other written material) was to ascertain the meaning of words 'that was in their user's mind' (1975: 11). Admittedly, in a subsequent chapter students were informed that '[t]houghtful reading is adding ideas and thoughts of your own' (1975: 77), but, this aside, students were encouraged to read with a view to having:

a clear idea of the *main* thing the writer was trying to say: his [*sic*] conclusions, his point of view, his theme. This will not always be the thing that *interests* you the most. It will be the thing that caused the author to write - his *purpose* (emphasis original, Smart 1975: 111).

Smart's focus was manifestly critical - almost exegetical - and supportive of the position from which the NESC sought to escape. Even the chapters on Media (see esp. 3 and 33) were critical in their orientation and went only some way to a commitment to the study of popular culture itself - a study which Giroux (1990: 36) has argued might help to sanction the perspectives most often associated with various non-dominant cultural groups. In other words, the study of media as cultural constructs - which can be seen to challenge the dominant notion of a common culture - was firmly integrated into a knowledge-based, critically-oriented approach. The function of media within culture and the way in which meanings are constructed or controlled did not feature. Instead, students were asked to contrast characters in a television programme, write an article for a newspaper, and discuss the appeals to various emotions commonly used by advertisers (Smart 1975: 199).

Thus, though Smart's Form 5 text appeared to contrast with traditional English textbooks, in fact the message was strikingly conventional. Listening comprehensions, tests, grammatical exercises, even techniques for improving handwriting featured. And in

the equivalent Form 4 text, *Fourth Form English* (1980: i), there was the self-conscious disclaimer that his decision

in favour of some return to exercise material is not a sign of increasing conservatism, nor a response to any call for back-to-the-basics ... . But there are still things which only a book can do efficiently: these things are what I hope I'm offering you here.

Certainly the section of the book entitled 'Knowledge' and defined as 'a glossary of learnable information relating to language and literature, arranged in chapters, with quizzes to test familiarity with and understanding of that knowledge' (1980: Contents) was in stark contrast with the ideology of English teaching which motivated the Growth Model theorists and, by implication, the NESC. Yet Smart could claim (1975: 1) that his

greatest indebtedness ... is to ... the men and women of the NESC committee whose experience and insights forced all English teachers to reassess what they were doing, why they were doing it, and how it could be done.

What is more, progressive voices, it should be noted, have not been quick to distance themselves from Smart and his contributions to English teaching as evidenced, for example, in the NZATE sponsorship of the Smart Memorial Prize awarded for the best secondary school writing folio in short fiction and poetry (see Canterbury English Teachers' Association Newsletter, June 1994).

It is clear that the Smart texts are what might be called "habit books": despite their appearance and format they did not challenge and therefore did reinforce certain of the traditional teaching emphases. Furthermore, the ease with which they and others like them provided 'the crutch, or the manacles, for the unskilled, the uncertain and the lazy' (Boomer, in Green 1988: 22) lends weight to Anyon's thesis that it is difficult to escape the intellectual traditions and patterns of thought that are part of elite cultural positions. It also suggests that the NESC discourse was not as progressive as its architects had perhaps imagined. Not only was the discourse able to be appropriated by traditional practices, it also became the very means by which conventional understandings were able to be maintained especially as it sanctioned the units and texts described above.

## The discourses of relevance and integration

It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the NESC reform was viewed by its architects and supportive practitioners, in the early period at least, as breaking away from the alleged hardened boundaries of traditional classroom English-teaching practices. It has also been argued that the reforms were able to managed, consciously and unconsciously, in the interests of established perspectives. I have asserted, also, that the *Statement of Aims* and supporting documents themselves, did not, in fact, challenge the taken-for-granted nature of English content and pedagogy. Further support for this latter position can be provided by examining the notions of “relevance” and “integration” which were central to the syllabus changes.

The NESC emphasis on the thematic approach, a more varied choice of literature, and language study can surely be viewed as supporting the notion of “relevance”. It was argued that if English were relevant, that if a student could ‘bring his [*sic*] own experience, both emotional and intellectual, to the classroom’ (*English in New Zealand* June 1973: 3) then students’ language development would be better assisted (Department of Education 1989: 15). Such statements are frequently made in the NESC documents and in teachers’ writings which accompanied the new syllabus statement (e.g. *English in New Zealand* June 1973: 3; September 1973: 7; July 1975: 11; NESC *Newsletter* No. 2, February 1971: 3; No. 3, June 1971:7; *Language at Secondary School*, February 1972: 7). Certainly the question of what was relevant and entertaining and experiential was taken seriously in practice too: individualised worksheets, cartoon-packed resource booklets and various electives and excursions became commonplace. However, the extent to which this emphasis on the relevant and the experiential made genuine, long-term pedagogical and content changes is worthy of examination.

An Australian scholar (Boomer in Green 1988:19) has averred that in his country little permanent change resulted from progressive emphases:

Looking back, I think it was a time when the house of English was redecorated and a few additions were built on. Despite the appearance of change there were, however, no fundamental structural changes. The architects and home owners just became a little more flamboyant and daring. New gadgets and new ways of doing things evolved.

In New Zealand, the Director-General of Education, who had been closely involved in the reform process, argued similarly (*English in New Zealand* September 1981: 8). He even noted that, in his view, the *Statement of Aims* 'will merely echo the sentiments of the Thomas Committee'. Thus, far from making a significant difference to content and methodology, the discourse of relevance seemed to touch the English programmes in schools superficially and, arguably, even structured the experiences of students and teachers in ways that maintained traditional practices and understandings. Though Boomer gives no explanation for the phenomenon he describes, it is important for the argument of this thesis to explore the issue further.

The discourse of relevance had its influential detractors in New Zealand. Several academics who had either been secondary school teachers or who had close acquaintance with the school sector, argued very strongly against a relevant syllabus. Their views were widely disseminated. Relevance, noted one (*Teaching English* 1982: 56), neglected the potential of the students in favour of their immediate capacity to respond:

To assert that a great text ... which had changed people's imaginations for perhaps centuries ... should "not be proceeded with" because it produces no response from one child at one time, is an arrogance, I think, beyond any teacher's misguided efforts to impose their own interpretation. It is individualism fossilised. It is a patronising kind of censorship.

The English teacher, argued another (*Teaching English* 1982: 84):

must opt to teach what is not strictly relevant to the pupil's felt needs. Instead, he [*sic*] must address needs which are perhaps are not felt and what is perhaps relevant at a much more abstract or sophisticated level. For the teacher is not preparing adolescents for the ever present now, but for a future which will demand flexible, adaptable, creative people.

In this view, the relevant is either learned already or will be learned. For this reason, then, 'the English teacher need teach nothing which is relevant to the felt needs of pupils'.

Secondly, it should be noted that the meaning of "relevant" as adopted by the NESC was a very attenuated one. Roger Robinson (1982: 56) maintained that '[r]elevance is a teachers' doctrine, imposed, not a genuine choice of students'. Though the notion was predicated upon the prior belief of meeting *students'* needs (Department of Education 1983b: 5; 1989: 7,11, 13), need, as Giroux (1985: 99) reminds his readers, implies an absence of knowledge or experience. Hence the NESC documents are themselves specific about those things that students be required to learn or do or experience. Under the heading 'students need to', thirty separate requirements are listed (1983b: 13-15). Almost without exception, they are culturally specific experiences which the syllabus writers determined students must acquire so as to develop the quality of their lives. Cultural enrichment and remediation are, therefore, at the basis of the need fulfilment. It should also be noted that the means of establishing these needs and interests (from which it must be remembered "relevant" activities were to be developed) were instrumentally defined (Department of Education 1989: 20):

Such information can be derived from the previous year, Progressive Achievement Test results, and from the language tasks that teachers set students at the beginning of the year.

Teachers should be aware of examination and award requirements, such as prescriptions, and syllabuses. And, of course, they should have at their fingertips, both the English Scheme requirements and lists of the resources available.

Clearly, such a definition of relevance and need merely serves to reinforce both the dominant cultural experiences and, indeed, the traditional manner of teaching and

learning. Boomer (1988: 20) has described the Australian experience similarly. He notes that by the early 1980s 'the ruling ideologies of law and order [had] been re-asserted after some minor aberrations'. In other words, though the "gadgets" may have changed, the vision of English teaching had moved very little. English lessons continued to endorse traditional patterns, expectations and cultural experiences. Far from offering an emancipatory agenda, the discourse of relevance and need fulfilment was very quickly translated into the discourse of cultural integration. In fact, the text discourse of the *Statement of Aims* provided few other options.

This is further evidenced in an examination of the NESC statements regarding cultural difference. The reforms certainly acknowledged the 'cultural diversity of our society [which] make it increasingly important that teachers of English be sensitive to regional, dialectical, or ethnic use of language ...' (Department of Education 1983b: 11).

Programmes of work were therefore to give due attention to literature and language from a 'range of ethnic groups' (Department of Education 1989: 14). The emphasis was, however, on observing and seeking to understand other cultures - their values and traditions - rather than any serious attempt to comprehend culture as a terrain of struggle or to study the relationship between knowledge and cultural power as the following quotations from the *Statement of Aims* (1983b: 14-16) makes clear. Students need to:

- describe and express their emotions through language, and recognise and respond with sensitivity to the feelings of others.
- explore worlds other than their own through literature and their own language production.
- identify and explore through language the ideas and values accepted by their own community.
- understand and appreciate that their attitudes and values, and those of others, are influenced by environment and background.

In all these statements, the notion of cultural difference is understood within a discourse that promotes harmony, equality and respect. In other words, difference becomes meaningful as something to be understood and even resolved within relevant forms of classroom activity: discussion, group work, role plays. In the view of the Department of

Education, 'effective' pedagogy is 'help[ing] students to appreciate their uniqueness as individuals and their contribution and responsibilities to society as a whole'. Teaching programmes were to 'encourage acceptance of, and make provision for the differing social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds of students' (Department of Education 1983b: 16). In short, the appeal is to cultural integration, to concessions and what writers in the sphere of multi-cultural studies variously describe as polite civic humanism and a desirable society.

Though there were new statements on cultural difference, they cohered quite easily with established pedagogy. The adoption of texts by Maori and other minority groups was, in fact, easily subsumed within established classroom routines and made few demands on teachers (*English in New Zealand* July 1981: 23). One English teacher and writer (Gadd 1982: 27- 34) fiercely opposed what he described as a assimilation policy. Though it was 'assimilation with sympathy and good intentions', and 'though the rhetoric, the new cliches, the "in" platitudes of educational talk voiced a multi-cultural sentiment', in fact the Department of Education was providing an 'apartheid organisation of help' with 'an unaltering demand for considerable uniformity among ... the children we teach'. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that issues of bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism as they pertain to the English classroom have received greater attention in more recent years, though, as I shall show in the chapters which follow, they have still been subject to an integrative ideology.

## **Discussion**

This chapter has attempted to expose the contradictory aspects of the NESC reform process. On the one side, there were clear changes to the quite structured pedagogy that characterised English teaching before the late 1960s. The delivery of the English syllabus both in terms of its daily and weekly organisation and in the more student-



centred approach, was in contrast to the pre-reform period. Also, there were additions to the type of activities and resources with which English teachers dealt. The use of the electronic media, in particular, became an accepted and integral part of English teachers' classrooms. But this chapter has suggested, on the other side, that in terms of aims, content and wider structural aspects of the NESC Growth Model, there was far less discontinuity with the past than the architects of the reforms process intended. And their intention, it should be noted, was unambiguous: the 1945 prescription had 'serious omissions and questionable assumptions', its 'many traditional aspects ... [did] not satisfy the personal and social needs of students' (*Statement of Aims Draft*, 1972: 3-4). Reform was imperative.

There are several factors which can help account for the continuity that this chapter has described. First, it has been argued that institutional and cultural constraints tended to blunt the impact of the Growth Model paradigm. The examination system and a literature-based course set bounds on the paradigm's ideology. Additionally there was, to some extent, an active management of the NESC discourse by the institutional and political forces. Secondly, however, this chapter has suggested that the reform process - certainly the text discourse of the *Statement of Aims* - was not only able to be appropriated by conservative elements, but also was itself an agent for the maintenance of more traditional understandings of English teaching. Perhaps this is not surprising, because as Foucault continually reminds his readers, knowledge is conveyed in accordance with the standards of social and cultural conformity. Though a discourse may appear to emphasise new skills and techniques, new understandings, there is always a sense in which it continues to maintain its traditional grounding in dominant cultural positions and expectations. To use Foucault's own words (1977a: 221), knowledge discourses tend to 'be dominated and dissolved in the continuity of power maintained by [the ruling] class ...'.

This is a phenomenon on which Giddens also reflects. In his explorations of social

theory (e.g. 1979: 215-233 and outlined in Chapter 1), Giddens points to the continuities that exist even in profound phases of social transformation. Part of the explanation for these continuities lies in what Giddens calls 'routine action', where such action is saturated by the 'taken for granted'. When routines are established then behaviour 'readily conjoins the basic security system of the actor to the conventions that exist and are drawn upon in interaction with mutual knowledge' (1979: 219). Analysis of this kind is clearly useful in understanding the NESC reform process. Manifestly, English teaching in New Zealand schools at the time of the NESC reforms had been long since routinised. And despite the seemingly progressive nature of the NESC discourse, it really did little to 'de-routinise' (Giddens 1979: 220) accepted structural components of English teaching. In different words, the *Statement of Aims* did not challenge the taken-for-granted nature of much of what had been hitherto accepted English teaching practice. Not only did the NESC rhetoric fail to challenge the English routines in a structural sense, but it also helped to further cement these routines. Thus, it can be argued that English teaching in New Zealand secondary schools still reflects in at least some measure the patterns of thought and behaviour valued by the culturally powerful members of society. The study of the NESC syllabus therefore provides a good example of the concept of cultural politics where knowledge has been managed consciously and unconsciously to produce a distinctly ideological curriculum.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SENIOR SYLLABUS REFORMS, 1986-1992

#### Introduction

It was suggested in the previous chapter that the *Statement of Aims* reflected in its discourse a broader change in society. The 1960s and 1970s represented a significant period of social and economic change. The Growth Model of English teaching mirrored the prevailing conditions and values; and while progressivism has a long tradition, it emerges when cultural and economic conditions allow. As Hartley (1987) has observed, in order to sustain economic expansion, consumption became a preoccupation in the 1960s, and within this outlook progressive education was seen to have relevance. That is, the notions of individual needs and individual differences 'had an affinity with the consumerist needs of an expanding economy ... there was a 'fit' between progressivism and consumerism' (Hartley 1987: 116). The ideology of the Growth Model was, therefore, set in an economic climate which allowed for its expression. Thus Medway (1989: 16) can argue that the cultural environment saw an analogous movement in English studies where '[s]tudents were invited to say and write what they meant and what they wanted to say, and to express thoughts and feelings of their own'. The New Zealand reforms, at least in intent, sought to give some priority to personal expression, response and relevance - changes to English teaching which Green (1993: 3) has described as a 'new politics of subjectivity'. It is the argument of this chapter that the second phase of revision must be similarly contextualised in order to understand the nature of the reforms. That is to say, it is important to understand the congruences between the senior English revisions of the late 1980s and the cultural and economic developments of the wider society. This chapter will therefore seek to explore the changes to the senior syllabus and also the management of those changes in the

context of recent theoretical developments in curriculum studies.

### **The cultural environment of the 1980s**

In a substantially original analysis of English teaching since the 1960s, Green (1993: 6) has argued that the phenomenon of “cultural studies” is ‘a major referent for, and challenge to mainstream developments in English teaching in the post-1960s period’. He argues that a strong case can be made for seeing cultural studies as the major “discipline” currently informing English teaching. By cultural studies Green means the more radical strand that was present even in some formulations of the Growth Model; namely, political awareness, cultural sensitivity and social activism - notions which can be traced to the work of Raymond Williams and which will be analysed further below. In *The Long Revolution* (1961) Williams argued that attention must be given to the social definition of culture - where culture is a description of a particular way of life - and not merely to the usually accepted definitions of the ideal state or process of human development and the way in which human thought and experience are recorded. For Williams, studying the way of life of a society entails a study of those aspects of social life which are not necessarily the idealised aspects. Cultural studies, then, implies the development of critical perspectives on social and economic conditions and the commitment to challenge and to change structures of society that deny genuine participatory democracy. With respect to English teaching, moreover, Simons and Raleigh (1982: 28) have argued that the “English for change” variant of the Growth Model reflected the issues and concerns of the cultural studies movement - although it is also important to emphasise that English as a school subject has a long tradition of social and cultural mission (Donald 1989: 15, Green 1993: 11, Ball *et al.* 1990: 48-49).

Also central to cultural studies is the given of the electronic media. These media, and especially television, with their focus on, and their informing of, popular (as opposed to

an elitist literary) culture, have necessarily had their impact on education. For English teaching, it has meant a pedagogical redirection from a literary-linguistic emphasis to an emphasis on *image* and even to a classroom appropriation of the televisual popular culture itself. Green (1993: 8) has suggested that this image needs to be understood as a new form of social expression and that this, in turn, has enabled English studies to become 'thoroughly embedded in social action' as teaching has become less preoccupied with a literary and abstract rationality and more concerned with the embodied electronic images. As there has been an increasing relocation of ordinary language forms from text to visual image, so there has been 'a radical demystification of the linguistic order', and, inevitably according to Green (1993: 9), 'an unsettling of the established hierarchy of privilege and value' which English has long sought to protect.

There is, at this point, a strong link with the work of contemporary language theorists who have argued that language is replete with philosophical assumptions. It is a perspective most well-known in Derrida's work (1973, 1976, 1978). Describing the dominant current of philosophy as a metaphysics of presence - by which he means the search for meaning - Derrida offers a strategy for textual deconstruction which enables him to identify hidden ideological perspectives. Thus, he focuses on the active resistance of metaphysical concepts and those aspects of a written text which are seemingly peripheral. It is a challenge to the institutionalisation of thought because it is a view which argues that meaning is not fixed, that dominant understandings are not, in fact, codes which are linguistically or ideologically neutral. As Peller (1987: 30) argues, such a perspective challenges:

reason on its own ground and demonstrate[s] that what gets called reason and knowledge is simply a particular way of organizing perception and communication, a way of organizing and categorizing experience that is social and contingent ... .

Thus, the emphasis on the electronic media was seen by cultural studies' theorists as a means whereby speech and image-creation, as opposed to writing, could be privileged and would thus help to legitimate the knowledge that dominant perspectives have

traditionally marginalised or even repudiated. In the electronic age, therefore, English teaching is able to move into different spheres of literary and cultural practice. At the very least, it finds itself embracing pedagogical expressions more sensitive to the aspirations of popular or emergent or oppressed cultural groups within society.

This cultural studies orientation perhaps further explicates an underlying congruency between the so-called Cambridge and London schools that was discussed in Chapter 2. It does so at least to the extent that it demonstrates the essential verbal-symbolic medium through which both schools worked. Certainly both Cambridge and London theorists worked within an expressive-realist understanding of language (Belsey 1980; Green 1993: 7) as opposed to the image-based and sign-based representations of the electronic culture. Instead of making meaning through words (as both schools did), the cultural studies paradigm puts an emphasis on meaning-making through appropriation of the electronic information media.

The cultural studies movement can itself be seen in relation to other social discourses. One such discourse - increasingly part of the cultural and educational debate - is that of postmodernism. And while postmodernism is the subject of a multiplicity of definitions, it will be a contention of this chapter that many of the changes to English teaching in the 1980s (and early 1990s), and in particular the changes to the senior-school English syllabus, can be seen as a response to what are generally regarded as postmodern concerns and conditions. To take note of connections between developments within the New English curriculums and postmodernism is certainly one way of contextualising the former's commitment to notions of process, experience, pleasure and difference (Green 1993: 12). It also helps to explain arguably contradictory aspects of the organisational and assessment culture of the senior syllabus which will be examined in detail below.

### **The concept of postmodernism**

It has been cogently argued by Giroux (1990) that education in the twentieth century has been influenced by the cultural conditions of modernity - a modernity usually understood as the post-Enlightenment period which has emphasised reason, modernisation, development, and the connection between literacy and human freedom. Harvey (1990: 12) has written of the modernist ideals in terms of 'the accumulation of knowledge generated by many individuals working freely and creatively for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life'. Modernism is thus characterised by rational forms of social organisation. Indeed, as Harvey (1990: 27) posits, the:

[e]nlightenment project ... took it as axiomatic that there was only one possible answer to cover every question. From this it followed that the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it right.

The corollary of this understanding of the Enlightenment dream of reason and freedom, at least as argued by Giroux (1990), is that modernism even in its progressive expressions has been informed by an elite sensibility that sets it off from more popular or mass cultural perspectives. In this view, modernism is hegemonic in its orientation and unable to affirm a cultural politics of racial, gender and ethnic difference. By contrast, Giroux has averred that though postmodernism is not a simple rejection of modernism's themes - it can, indeed, be seen as 'a different modulation of [modernism's] themes and categories' (Laclau 1988: 65) - it nevertheless offers to "other worlds" and "other voices" the promise of expression and representation.

In fact, there is no agreed definition of postmodernism, although in his analysis Hinkson (1991:5) asserts that there is widespread understanding that postmodernism refers 'to a general change in the character of social life'. Harvey (1990), similarly, refers to the twentieth century rejection of the modernist preoccupation with universal, eternal, and immutable qualities of humanity. Far from attempting to replace these modernist certitudes, postmodernism is most frequently seen instead as the 'acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity' (Harvey 1990:44) characteristic of the new

‘structure of feeling’ (Harvey 1990: 41) in the late twentieth century.

Thus, postmodernism is set against the totalising thought, or grand narratives, of the previous age - narratives which like Liberalism and Marxism sought to provide an ideological understanding of the world and the nature of social relations. To use Harvey’s words (1990: 44), postmodernism ‘swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is’. While Harvey’s statement is rather more sweeping than other scholars (for example Laclau 1988) may be prepared to allow, nonetheless the literature on postmodernism is in broad agreement that in the late twentieth century there are not the same fixed referents or traditional philosophical moorings. The old orthodoxies are no longer adequate to understand the new technologically conscious world, and no longer adequate to understand and deal with the cultural changes of the closing years of the millennium. Because knowledge is changing and because society’s epistemological foundations are being questioned, meaning cannot be anchored any more in a modernist, teleological view of history. In fact, Yeatman (1990: 12) claims that “telos” is a conceptually empty word. The extent to which these patterns are now pervasive in society has led Jameson (1984) to see postmodernism as simply ‘cultural logic’ - another stage in Western development; the new social dominant.

The important aspect in this understanding of postmodernism is, of course, the emphasis thereby placed on plurality and “otherness”. Foucault (quoted in Harvey 1990: 44) writes of the need ‘to prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems ...’. Given that this is an unmistakable feature of the postmodern phenomenon, it follows that in an educational context there is more recognition in school curricula for minority cultures and for popular culture. To quote Harvey (1990: 48):

The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the pluralistic



stance of postmodernism.

If postmodernism has, therefore, done anything it has been particularly important in acknowledging:

the multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal ... and spatial geographic locations and dislocations (Huysens 1984: 50).

With respect to education in general and curriculum discourse in particular, such a worldview, by means of its celebration of a wider proliferation of discourses and voices, can lead in the direction of increased political action on behalf of the minority voices. A radical restructuring of social life is therefore possible. In this view, rather than negating the modernist concern with public life and democratic provision, education in the postmodern environment provides the grounds on which to deepen and extend such concerns (Giroux 1990: 30).

On the other hand, as Hinkson (1991: 11) and Harvey (1990: 41) have argued, the postmodern climate is also characterised by a change in the relations of production and management. Hinkson contends that once 'postmodernism is related to the communications revolution and it is recognised that this revolution carries with it a new structural space which values flow and openness' then processes of decentring and new market philosophies are 'natural'. Inevitably, there are consequent correspondences between education and the economy. The new postmodern climate which values freedom, openness, responsiveness to change and market specialisation has its educational expression in vocationalism and the production of attitudes and competencies appropriate for an emergent and anticipated post-industrial economy. Ball (1991: 102) has written of the critique of 'narrow, abstract, academic and elitist' forms of curriculum and assessment with an emphasis instead on process, and a co-operative, collective learning milieu - emphases which call the curriculum to postmodern economic and cultural service.

To be sure, these two different and arguably contradictory strands of postmodernism - the suspicion of 'all boundary-fixing and the hidden ways in which we subordinate, exclude and marginalize' (Bernstein in Giroux 1990: 29), and the enterprise, flexible competency emphases - have had their impact on education generally and English teaching specifically. My studies of both changes to New Zealand's educational administrative structures and the specific reform of the Scottish English curriculum from the 1970s to the 1990s, have attempted to highlight the impact. This is so, too, with respect to the New Zealand English syllabus reforms to which attention is now directed.

### **The process of reform**

The senior English syllabus reform process has surely been amongst the most contested of any subject revision in New Zealand's educational history. It has been a process which has seen numerous re-orientations and ministerial interventions. It has led to an arguably hitherto unprecedented public debate on a New Zealand syllabus statement. The story of this debate is interesting in itself, but in addition, the reform process provides a working illustration of the cultural and economic climate outlined earlier in this chapter, and illustrates the central thesis of this study: the active management of knowledge in the interests of established values.

Several factors led the Department, and from 1989 the Ministry, of Education to seek a review of senior-school English teaching. First, as discussed in Chapter 2 above, a new syllabus for English in Forms 3-5 was approved in 1983 after almost fifteen years of curriculum development. Secondly, the abolition of the University Entrance examination in 1986 focused attention on the need for continuity in English programmes at senior levels with what students experienced in junior classes. Thirdly, ministerial reviews of curriculum and assessment in the mid 1980s raised a number of general

curriculum issues 'pertinent to the development of more coherent national guidelines for senior English programmes' (Department of Education 1989: 2). Fourthly, the Universities Entrance Board sought to revise the senior school examination prescriptions. The Department of Education argued that curriculum revision should take place first and hence the establishment of the Syllabus Committee. Accordingly, in August 1986, the Minister of Education approved the establishment of a Forms 6 and 7 English Syllabus Committee with the following terms of reference (Department of Education 1989: 2):

- to review curriculum developments in Form 6 and 7 English
- to develop national syllabus guidelines for sixth and seventh form courses in English, having regard to continuity with the Forms 3-5 English syllabus
- to advise on resources to support the teaching of English in Forms 6 and 7

To take into account the proposals of the ministerial reviews of curriculum and assessment, a committee was formed by Russell Marshall, then Minister of Education, and chaired by an Assistant Director, Curriculum, Department of Education. Serving on the committee were a further 21 members representing the Department, the secondary teachers, the universities, the teachers' colleges, the polytechnics, employer and employee organisations, boards of governors, students, the media and the general community. The members of this committee are listed in Appendix 3.

At its initial meeting, the committee felt the need to seek the views of a group wider than itself on the direction of the syllabus development. It recommended a consultative phase during 1987 (Discussion Papers: An Introduction: 2). To this end it circulated eleven discussion papers on topics felt to be relevant to the teaching of English. These papers were prepared by sub-groups of the committee and responded to one or more of the terms of reference (*English News*, Department of Education, July 1987: 1). Responses to the papers were intended to guide the committee in its work. The following papers were distributed over the subsequent months:

- General Issues
- Gender, Equity and Forms 6 and 7 English
- Linguistic Diversity, Language and Learning

- Media, Technology and English
- Biculturalism and the Language Learner
- Literature
- Evaluation
- English, Work and the Community
- Writing
- Oral Language
- The Study of Language

The processing of the responses by the committee led to the first completed draft syllabus known since as Draft 4 (Department of Education: 1989). This statement was presented to the Minister and copies found their way to, and raised considerable comment in, the print and television media. The subsequent draft, Draft 5, was officially published late in 1989 by what had become the Ministry of Education, and was coolly received by the writers of the earlier statement. Claiming their work had been 'sanitised', the writers argued that the official statement was 'limp, lacking any real inspiration, not reflecting what is being done in schools, bland' (*English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 5).

To review the responses to Draft 5 and to write the final statement, the Ministry of Education called for a public tender, letting the contract to the Christchurch College of Education. Fifteen members of the contract group (see Appendix 4) met for four days, considered the responses to Draft 5 and released their statement in December 1990.

Meanwhile, however, a group of teachers - said to have been predominantly from Auckland (*English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6) - had lobbied the new National Government Minister of Education, Lockwood Smith, arguing that the Drafts hitherto published and, they suspected, the statement being considered by the College of Education contractors, were unsuitable for national English-teaching guidelines (*English in Aotearoa* 22, 1994: 65). The print debate which is discussed below, intensified as the College contract was nearing completion. Into this atmosphere the Minister stepped, issuing a press statement on 15 November 1990 - some two weeks before the College of Education released its draft. In the press release, English teachers learned that the Minister had requested the Ministry of Education to hold all work on the new syllabus 'because of

conflict among teachers about its direction'. A meeting was to be held in mid-December where teachers and Ministry officials would 'come together and thrash this issue out. Because at the end of the day, teachers must feel able to work with the syllabus' (Minister of Education, News Release, November 15, 1990).

Those invited by the Minister to attend the meeting are listed in Appendix 5 and will be discussed further below. Their decision, however, was that the College of Education Draft would be revised by a further group. And it was on the basis of that decision that Professor Roger Robinson, Department of English, Victoria University of Wellington, was contracted to write a new syllabus. Under the terms of his contract, he, in turn, was to consult with a reference group of teachers of English. It should be noted, however, that Robinson's contract had not been advertised and the 19 December Working Party had not been contacted about the new arrangements. News of Robinson's contract broke with its announcement in the *Education Gazette* of 15 July 1991. The Auckland Association of Teachers of English Language (AATEL) immediately passed a resolution (*Broadsheet* Term 2 1991) at its July meeting which stated its concern 'at the perceived secrecy surrounding the selection of the current rewrite group; we have not seen the contract for this process advertised'. The issue was also raised in the press (e.g. *Dominion* 23 July 1991) where individual teachers and Principals were critical of Robinson's appointment and the Minister's own involvement in the curriculum development process. Also criticised was the composition of Robinson's advisory group (see Appendix 6). Of the four teachers on the reference panel, two (Roger Moses and Mike Patterson) were amongst the most vociferous opponents of the draft syllabus with the other two (Di Stewart and Sarah Lees-Jeffries) appointed, by their own admission, 'out of the blue' (AATEL *Broadsheet* Term 2 1991) and with no previous involvement in the syllabus reform. Further, the President of the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English, in a letter to the Minister of Education (*English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6):

express[ed] the concern of the membership of NZATE at his latest moves on the Syllabus especially with the method of selection of the group of six, the appropriateness of their representation of the profession and the community, and their experience in syllabus writing.

Specified in the Robinson contract was the requirement to consult schools, and, in the light of opinions and comments expressed by teachers of English, Principals and school Boards of Trustees, to modify the syllabus as necessary. The Research Section of the Ministry of Education's Research and Statistics Division agreed to carry out this aspect of the consultative process by developing questionnaires for the purpose of surveying opinion, and, subsequently, analysing the data obtained by means of the questionnaire (Ministry of Education, Research and Statistics Division, *Bulletin* No.5, May 1992: 49). Copies of the Robinson Draft syllabus were sent to all secondary schools and other interested parties in mid September 1991. A randomly selected number of schools received copies of the Research Section's questionnaire while all remaining secondary schools had the opportunity to comment by completing a response booklet.

Finally, in 1992 the *Draft Syllabus for Schools: English Forms 6 and 7* was issued by the Ministry of Education. The Preface to the document noted that:

Professor Roger Robinson ... has asked that teachers be thanked for their careful and constructive responses to the September 1991 draft of the syllabus, and wishes to assure them that every comment has been carefully considered by the reference group of Heads of Departments working with him.

Although the strong support expressed for the September 1991 draft syllabus meant that no radical re-writing was necessary, this draft incorporates many of the suggestions made by English teachers and the community.

By the time this Draft had been published, however, other events had overtaken the senior syllabus reform statement. For in 1990, the National Government launched its Achievement Initiative with its emphasis on national curriculum objectives from new entrants to Form 7 level and its consequent review of all national subject syllabuses (*Education Gazette* 71: 20, 16 November 1992: 1-2). The Robinson Draft was therefore reduced to the status of 'being considered as one of the syllabuses, or draft syllabuses,

which will provide a basis for the development of the new Achievement Initiative curriculum statement in English for junior classes to Form 7' (Ministry of Education 1992: 3).

### **The management of the syllabus reform**

The concept of the management of knowledge, or the constitutive interests of knowledge, has been invoked in this thesis to help explain the adjustments to curriculum discourse in a period of reform. Carl Boggs (1976: 39) has written of the 'organising principle' or worldview 'that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization' into different areas of social life. In curriculum terms, Lundgren (1983) has written of this worldview in terms of an often active selection of content and goals, knowledge and skills that are transmitted by syllabus statements. He has called attention to the curriculum code - a code by which syllabus statements are ideologically formed, shaped and implemented. Thus, the dominant forms of school curricula and the ordering of their syllabus discourses reflect, and often transmit, the dominant ideological perspectives in society. In this view, various curricula must be understood as social and historical constructions, and they must be studied in the light of the cultural conditions which inform their discourse.

The previous chapter sought to explain the implementation of the NESC reforms within this framework. The extent to which these observations hold true in the case of the senior English syllabus will now be examined. The process of this reform as narrated above may suggest that there were a series of draft statements progressively refined, sometimes contested, but essentially similar. But it will be noted in the course of this chapter that the final Robinson statement of 1992 bears almost no relation to the March 1989 Draft 4 and the Discussion Papers on which Draft 4 was to some extent based. In content and structure there are minimal similarities. For in general terms the Discussion

Papers reflected many of the themes of the cultural studies paradigm. In other words, the Papers appropriated aspects of the more radical strand of the Growth Model tradition which encouraged political awareness, cultural sensitivity and social activism. The Papers are very much in the “English for change” strand of English teaching. It is important, then, to both specify these features and to see the ways in which they had changed with the publication of the final Robinson Draft.

### **Literature: criticism and response**

The Discussion Papers clearly attempted to challenge the literary-critical method. It has been noted in Chapter 2 that the NESC discourse did little to challenge the traditional approach to literary studies. The Discussion Papers attempted to take the debate on the place of literature in schools beyond that outlined in the *Statement of Aims*. Paper 6, for example, noted that ‘there are a number of key issues and questions [about literature] that must be addressed. Chief among them is whether literature should be a compulsory component of English courses’. Other questions included whether “major authors” should be read; whether film should be classed as literature and experienced in its own right; whether school literature study should be more ethnically inclusive; whether students should be exposed to more New Zealand literature; whether contemporary fiction should replace established literature. The paper also emphasised the importance of *response* as opposed to critical analysis. Quoting an unnamed critic, the paper asserted the sometimes detrimental effect that critical analysis can have on ‘... the excitement, the pleasure of a literary text’. Such analysis, indeed, can be ‘... a variety of rape’.

Unquestionably, the Discussion Paper sought to open up the traditional textuality of literature teaching. The emphasis instead was placed on *experience* and reflects what Hebdige (1986: 82) describes in more general terms as the ‘politics of subjectivity and



utterance ... [and] the fusion of the personal and the political'. It reflected, too, the postmodern discourse with its challenge to the traditional critical perspective where meaning can be fixed and where identity can be established. The Discussion Paper quite clearly mirrored - though perhaps not consciously so - the postmodern view of literature which questions the traditional and alleged hegemonic view of representation where knowledge, truth and reason are governed by literary codes and can be critically established. It criticised, then, the traditional practice where 'students have been encouraged to "objectify" their responses, to stand back from the text and to analyse and interpret literature according to fairly academic criteria'. Instead, it encouraged a 'response [which] includes using language that the student is most comfortable with'.

It is important not to understate the politically charged nature of such discourse. Certainly it helps to explain some teachers' criticism of 'extremism' to the views expressed in the Discussion Paper (*English News* July 1987: 1). Peller (1987: 30) has argued that postmodern discourse generally (and it could be added the postmodern perspective on literature particularly):

demonstrate[s] that what gets called reason and knowledge is simply a particular way of organizing perception and communication, a way of categorizing experience that is social and contingent but whose socially constructed nature and contingency have been suppressed.

A postmodern reading of literature, then, makes its language, representation and meaning problematic. An emphasis on "response", as proposed by the Syllabus Committee, thus problematises literature and highlights subjectivity and, as it shall be argued below, an associated capacity for greater self- and social-determination.

Though there was some disquiet amongst teachers regarding the content of Discussion Paper 6, its thrust was integral to Draft 4. It was stated that '[t]he aims for this syllabus ... suggest new directions for the literature curriculum in New Zealand senior secondary schools' (Department of Education 1989: 12). It also supported:

the significant developments in literary theory over the past two decades. They have raised new questions about the nature of literature itself, about the nature of literary interpretation, and about the relation of literature to language and its social and historical contexts. There is now a clearer understanding that literature will both reflect and be significantly shaped by the environment (Department of Education 1989: 13).

Accordingly, Draft 4 specifies that literature programmes are to be planned so that response, experience and the notion of social and cultural difference are emphasised alongside more traditional explorations of literary genre, structure, content and form.

The contrast between the statements on literature and its teaching in the Discussion Papers and consequent Drafts on the one hand, and the statements in the Robinson Drafts on the other, is considerable. To account for these differences it is important to note, first, Robinson's views on literature teaching in schools - views which had been widely publicised earlier in the 1980s, and views which clearly informed the writing of both of his senior syllabus Drafts.

Robinson's views had been brought to bear on the curriculum earlier in the decade when he had been the University Entrance Board's subject convenor for English (Smart and Taylor 1980: vii), and a council member of the NZATE (*Dominion* 23 July 1991; *English in Aotearoa* 12, 1990: 56). His perspective on literature had been disclosed with his keynote address at the first Conference of the New Zealand Association of Teachers of English held in Wellington in 1981. His paper, "The Place of Literature", was manifestly meant to curb the influence of what he describes as the structuralist approach to literary studies where literature 'is ... not the truth ... but a signifying system, an analysable embodiment of the processes by which we arrive at what we call reality'. The paper, indeed, is an attack on structuralism's 'concentration on the processes of reception by the reader', and it is of incidental interest that he declined an invitation to speak at an Association of University Teachers' gathering so he could deliver this challenge to teachers of English (Robinson 1982:55).

Robinson began his paper by stating that English teachers 'are the creators and guardians of the best, in skills and values and cherished knowledge'. Indeed, he claimed that '[w]ith English teachers lies much of the credit for the fact that we live in a flourishing civilisation'. He then argued that literature teaching is important for several reasons. The study of literature, he alleged, encourages competence in language; it provides access to an understanding of the human condition; through critical analysis, it fosters important values and personal qualities; it leads to a capacity for self-criticism; it fosters a sense of national identity and pride; it fosters racial understanding; and it is a major contributor to good foreign relations. In a thinly-veiled assault on the English-as-language paradigm, Robinson stated that '[t]he place of literature is at the centre of the educational curriculum', and while acknowledging that the criticism practised by Leavis and the Cambridge school was narrow, he argued that it was 'immensely valuable in bringing focus and discipline to our subject'. Furthermore:

[t]o assert that a great text, one which has earned admiration ... which has changed people's imagination for perhaps centuries ... should "not be proceeded with" because it produces no response from one child at one time, is an arrogance, I think, beyond any teachers' misguided efforts to impose their own interpretation. It is individualism fossilised. It is a patronising kind of censorship. Teachers who deny their sixth formers Shakespeare because they consider them not fit for it are perhaps not far from Patricia Bartlett.

Instead, Robinson argued, '[i]f the literature produces no response, then the students have an inalienable right, as young members of our culture, that it should be proceeded with'. Thus, it becomes the English teachers' duty to 'pass on the tradition of the most wonderful body of literature any language in the world has ever produced' and to teach the 'major authors, thus improving the students' own style and content'.

Though Robinson was quick to point out that there was 'more than a touch of elitism' about Leavis and those of his literary persuasion, he was equally certain that *litterateur* Louise Rosenblatt, whose work he commends, was correct to assert that textual response was valid provided that the text was honoured first. After all, Robinson continued, the purpose of reading is 'to activate the actual words of the text and not to

improve meanings for which the text offers no basis' (Robinson 1982: 45-60).

Given these views, it was clear to the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English, that Robinson's draft statement would be very different in focus and scope from the original syllabus document (*English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6). In the event, the Association was correct in its assessment. Robinson's initial paragraphs echo his 1982 paper. He argued (Ministry of Education 1992: 9) that literature enriches the experience of language; that it is a means of exploring human relationships; that its study 'trains [students'] aesthetic sense, their critical faculties, and their insight into historical context'. Literature is a means whereby students can 'develop their confidence, skill, sophistication and enjoyment ...'. Clearly, there had been a narrowing and change of orientation from Draft 4 in 1989 to Robinson's final Draft in 1992. It is a change that can be further explored by comparing the *objectives* of the respective statements. Though not ignoring students' viewpoints, and though not ignoring the need for teachers to teach literature creatively, Robinson nonetheless placed the emphasis on reading 'carefully, closely, sensitively and critically'. Analysis was to be 'supported by reference to the text'. And 'a working knowledge of literary conventions and terms' was stressed - all matters which had either been ignored or went without emphasis in the 1986-1989 period of reform. It is therefore of interest that Robinson, whose views on literature had been well publicised in the 1980s, was awarded the contract to write the new draft statement. But it was not merely the literature statement that underwent change. Other significant changes occurred and to these this chapter now turns.

## **Language and media literacy**

It was noted in Chapter 2 that language study in the NESC discourse was tied closely to verbal language. Commenting more generally on the Growth Model of English teaching (of which the NESC syllabus was a variant), Green (1993: 8) notes '[t]here is

little sense of the need to grasp semiosis in a wider, more inclusive perspective'. By contrast, the cultural studies paradigm and the postmodern discourse in which the paradigm is in part subsumed, gives central place to language conceptualised rather more broadly. In this perspective, language, like literature, is problematical. It is argued that tying human semiosis to the verbal sign is to tie language to a dominant cultural perspective (Kress 1985; Threadgold 1986; Halliday 1978). It is a thesis which implies that language is rather more than a neutral conduit for ideas. It is, indeed, contingent - an expression of the meanings and values of a given culture or institution and therefore unable to transmit ideas and meaning with universal or absolute certainty.

From this view of language flow several corollaries. First, if language is the place where forms of social organisation are defined, necessarily it is also the place where these forms are able to be contested as those who have been subjugated within dominant discourses establish their own voice. Thus, the notion of subjectivity is re-theorised: it challenges the alleged monocentric discursive world of the dominant cultural groups (Yeatman 1990: Chapter 8). Secondly, the understanding of language as socially constructed offers the challenge to move beyond the verbal sign, or textuality, to other semiological codes which perhaps better reflect the less advantaged members of society. Language therefore becomes more than a verbal play, but a whole social semiotic embracing many and varied semiotic systems. For this reason Green (1993: 8) has argued that language study should include 'new forms of information-communication technology, ranging from computers through video, film and electronic mail, to television'. There has been, he continues, 'an over-investment in the verbal sign and its associated forms of abstract rationality'. And, more pertinently with respect to the discussion of the New Zealand syllabus reforms, Green avers that such a view of language 'enables a richer, more expanded and inclusive sense of what might be the province of a reconceptualized English teaching'.

Certainly the 1986-1989 syllabus committee was conscious of such views of language.

There were, in fact, four Discussion Papers which dealt with aspects of language teaching. The key paper was the final of the eleven discussion documents. Whereas most of the Papers had been of modest length (three to four pages), Paper 11 was seven pages of tight script. In its discussion of the meaning of the word “language”, the committee noted that:

[m]ore recently the definition of language has been extended further into the field of semiotics. This involves the study of all sign systems which have meaning, which includes verbal messages, but also visual messages. Notices, advertisements, symbols, signs, clothes, buildings, artefacts - all aspects of social life which have meaning in a social and cultural sense are seen as being part of the legitimate study of language.

The committee then proposed a number of reasons why students should study language. Many of these reasons were located within the emancipatory discourse of agency where language study is seen as fostering a sense of identity, intention and self-determination. Thus, language ‘provides the link between us, our culture and our identity’; it ‘can also help [students] to become aware of how language can influence, control and manipulate’.

Drafts 4 and 5, plus the Christchurch College of Education Draft, appropriate a number of the observations on language that are highlighted in the Discussion Papers. The non-verbal as well as written and spoken forms of language together with situational context are emphasised. Emphasised, too, in all three Drafts is the study of *issues* relating to language which Draft 4 (1989: 11) defines as ‘the study of current issues which involve language in our society and about which there is often controversy’. Consequently, teaching programmes were, amongst other things, to enable students ‘to respond to language issues of personal and social significance’.

Once again, however, the Robinson Drafts alter the focus. Though he retains the four areas of language study specified in all earlier drafts - the descriptive study of language, language change, language in situation and issues relating to language - Robinson

(1992: 11) states that:

[t]he first of these, the descriptive study of language, should be accorded priority. It provides a basis for the other three areas by providing students with the basic understanding of linguistic analysis and terminology that is needed for studies in these areas.

In another departure from earlier drafts, Robinson specifies those concepts and terms deemed by him to be 'important'; namely, pronunciation, word structure, word function, sentence structure and meaning. In short, there was a tightening of the language focus with stress on the verbal sign; the approach was more patterned. The Discussion Paper's emphasis on a more general study of semiotics had been jettisoned. Instead, language in the Robinson Drafts was reconceptualised as 'central to learning and intellectual development' with students studying language 'to come to terms with new learning, to describe what they have learned, and to reflect on their understanding'. Even though language 'as an aspect of social behaviour' was to form part of the syllabus, Robinson defines this as a study of 'its uses and changes'. It is clear, then, that Robinson posits the existence of a relationship between explicit knowledge of the structure of the language and mastery of language in use.

Alongside the cultural studies emphasis on language as social semiotics, is the importance given to media studies with its ability to challenge the notion of a unified, single culture. Media studies, the cultural theorists (e.g. Giroux 1990) argue, provide an opportunity to explore popular culture, to see that culture as a legitimate aspect of the everyday lives of students, and to analyse it as a primary force in shaping the various and often contradictory life-views that students embrace. Popular culture can, therefore, be treated as a distinct object of study within media programmes. Giroux (1990: 36) argues it is a study which when 'informed by postmodern criticism point[s] to ways in which those master narratives based on white, patriarchal and class-specific versions of the world can be challenged and deterritorialised'. In Giroux's view, the study of the media thus opens up the possibility of incorporating into the curriculum a notion of 'border

pedagogy' in which cultural and social practices need no longer be mapped or referenced solely on the basis of the dominant, usually textually-based, model of Western culture. By incorporating media studies into syllabus statements, culture can therefore be seen as operating on multiple levels rather than on the level of a single, unitary and dominant plane.

Given the development of the cultural studies paradigm in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not surprising to see sections on Media Literacy in all Drafts of the senior syllabus.

Discussion Paper 4 addressed the issue of:

those who question whether English teachers should be promoting too vigorously media education and "visual literacy". Literacy in reading and writing is regarded [sic] as the most important outcome of a course in English. Similarly there are those who regard the computer as an unnecessary "frill" and who maintain that "real writing" occurs with the pen in hand.

Not surprisingly, the Discussion Paper defends media studies on the grounds that it enables students to gain an awareness of how words or images influence thought and response, and that it also enables students to think critically about culture. Draft 4 extends the defence by arguing that with media study 'local voices can be heard and local images seen ...'. In other words, the media can itself be seen as a cultural form.

For Robinson (Ministry of Education 1992: 13), however, media literacy 'will be readily maintained by its emphasis on language and on text'. Although his Draft notes that "text" should be defined broadly, the focus is manifestly on 'critical awareness' and on 'an informed awareness' of media processes. The statement therefore goes only some way to a commitment to the study of more popular cultural traditions - a study which it was noted in Chapter 2 might help to legitimise the knowledge most often associated with those disadvantaged groups operating at the periphery of the dominant culture. In other words, the study of the media as discrete cultural forms has in Robinson's Drafts been subsumed into an orthodox, critical, senior syllabus statement. Once again, then, an active management of knowledge can be observed.





## The notion of cultural difference

A further contribution to curriculum theory provided by the cultural studies movement has been in the area of the understanding of the word *culture* itself. Several decades ago, the neo-Marxist scholar Raymond Williams (1961: 57) outlined three general categories in the definition of culture:

There is, first, the “ideal”, in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values ... . Then, second, there is the “documentary”, in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded ... . Finally, third, there is the “social” definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.

As Bates (1986: 6) points out, the third notion is a relatively new one deriving from anthropological and ethnographic studies. Whereas the first two definitions lend themselves to the creation of an ideal of high culture - typified, for example, in the views of Leavis discussed above in Chapter 2 - the third definition leads to the study of culture as an analysis ‘of relationships between elements in the whole way of life ... the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships’ (Williams 1961: 63). In other words, studying the ‘way of life’ of a society entails a study of those aspects of social life which are not the idealised components of cultural expression. The study of popular culture, and of minority cultural groups, therefore became an avenue of enquiry for the cultural studies’ theorists. Attendant upon such study was, inevitably, the notion of cultural politics with its emphasis on the ‘ideological nature of cultural constructions and the part they played in struggles between different groups’ (Bates 1986: 8). The resulting theoretical perspective was therefore capable of providing a framework for the discussion of the dynamics of cultural conflict and change rather than simply emphasising continuities in cultural reproduction.

The work pioneered by Williams has been developed further by those within the cultural studies movement. Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1981: 52), for example, have

focused on the concept of *difference*. Culture is, they claim:

the peculiar and distinctive “way of life” of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in *mores* and customs, in the use of objects and material life. *Culture is the distinctive shapes in which this material and social organisation of life expresses itself* (emphasis added).

According to Clarke *et al.* there is a variety of groups within a society each with a ‘distinctive shape’. These different groups and groupings have different experiences of, and relationships with, the overall social structure. Although there are shared understandings across the variety of social groups, *cultures* are differently ranked, and stand in opposition to one another, in relations of domination and subordination, along the scale of “culture power” (Clarke *et al.* 1981: 54). Inherent in the cultural studies paradigm, therefore, is the need to both take into account and explore ‘the nature and organisation of the relationships and struggles between dominant and subordinate cultures’ (Bates 1986: 11).

In curriculum terms, to work within a cultural studies paradigm is to bring to light the domination and subordination which is inscribed in institutional practices and procedures as evidenced in curriculum texts. Such texts are seen as selectively constituting what is to be counted as real and true and thus determining a politics of inclusion and exclusion (Yeatman 1990: 155). To cultural theorists, the curriculum becomes a key area through which ideological hegemony can be exposed, contested and even overthrown. In this view, once curricula can be located socially and historically, it is possible to shape future curricula directions. A cultural studies perspective therefore seeks to both challenge the institutional and largely dominant knowledge constructions and improve the efficacy of curriculum statements for the less advantaged members of schools.

In terms of English studies generally, Green (1993) has argued that changes to English teaching in the last two decades can be usefully discussed in these terms. He writes (1993: 3) of ‘the return [to English studies] of the repressed and marginalized “Other”

which various commentators have identified as a central feature of recent developments in cultural practice and intellectual inquiry'. Thus, English teaching is to be seen as teaching for critical consciousness and change (Green 1993: 10) which in Hebdige's (1986: 81) words has led to the move 'to dismantle the power of the white, male author as the privileged source of meaning and value'.

There can be little doubt that this theme within the cultural studies movement influenced the senior English syllabus committee. The discourse of difference was certainly to the fore in the Discussion Papers and early Drafts of the syllabus. The committee argued that Forms 6 and 7 students need to be able to 'recognise difference ... and be able to engage with challenges' (Department of Education 1989: 8). The committee outlined several differences that teachers of senior English must recognise in their teaching.

First, there was an emphasis on issues of gender. Here, the syllabus committee was drawing on work done by the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English during the 1980s and which culminated in a NZATE Green Paper, *Balancing the Books: Gender Issues in English Teaching*. The authors of the publication wrote that 'the very success of arguments against sexist stereotyping has created a new obstacle for feminists' (n.d.: 1). They assert that:

[i]f we are to address the educational issues that arise from the persistence in society of sexual inequality (in occupational choice, income, access to power, responsibility for the care and upbringing of children), then we need to speak, once again, of boys and girls. Whether we are investigating "difference" or "discrimination", we cannot afford to pretend that gender is a neutral category in the school or the curriculum.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Discussion Papers, and especially Paper 2, raised the question of English Departments re-examining their choice of literature 'ensuring that it includes works written by women' and works which 'feature a balance of female and male characters'. Draft 4 (Department of Education 1989: 13) highlighted the issue in the following way:

In the past literary criticism has been informed with a male view of the world which regarded women as intellectually inferior. Therefore women were not regarded as major authors. Students need to be aware of this because of the imbalance of men and women authors taught. In the study of all literature teachers can help students to question the presentation of characters and themes in terms of role behaviour.

Statements with similar intent as this quoted example can be found throughout the Draft (1989: 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19, 24, 29, 31). Interestingly, however, the official Ministry of Education Draft of 1989, Draft 5, excluded a number of the references to gender difference recognition - of which the statement quoted above is an example. Another strong statement, however, was re-introduced in the Christchurch College of Education Draft (1990: 15):

Teachers will be aware of the imbalance of men and women authors taught in senior English. This has arisen not because of the quality of work written by women but because of social and historical conditions which affected the publication of women's writing and its acceptance by critics and the public ... .

Yet, once again, in the official Ministry of Education/Robinson Drafts of 1991 and 1992, the discourse of gender difference was expressed rather less strongly: '[b]alance and range should be sought across genres, historical period, gender and national origin' (1992: 9).

Clearly the drafts indicate a politics of discourse. They are very much the textual expression of cultural contestation, and to explore their intertextuality is to explore the interest of the State in the management of controversial issues. That is to say, the text discourse of the official Drafts is written in such a way as to deny the politics of discourse; to deny the politics of contested meaning as Yeatman (1990: 160) has described the genre of state policy writing in general. Thus, the political statement that '[i]t is important that men and boys respect the values of women, learn from them and adopt a new role in an equal partnership' (Department of Education 1989: 4), therefore becomes in the official Draft '[t]his syllabus affirms the voices of women and girls alongside those of men and boys' (Ministry of Education 1989: 4). It can therefore be argued with Yeatman and Beilharz (1987) that a central feature of official policy texts is

the use of language which renders what may be thought of as a contested issue as a self-evident issue. Robinson's statement regarding 'balance' and 'range' is manifestly denying the politics of discourse and, effectively, making the issue of difference invisible.

This avoiding of the notion of difference, or rather the politics of difference, is even more evident with respect to the issue of biculturalism in the English syllabus. A separate Discussion Paper (number 5) on biculturalism and its implications for English teaching was the foundation statement for Draft 4. The Introduction to the Draft (1989: 3) dealt at some length with issues of race and culture: the Treaty of Waitangi and its place in the English syllabus, and the importance of New Zealand literature and especially 'Maori literature written in English and in translation as well as Maori language examples and comparisons - thus encouraging a respect for the Maori voice as well as the Pakeha'. In the official Draft 5, however, references to biculturalism were less obvious. The Treaty of Waitangi was not mentioned, and the 'will include' statements regarding the study of Maori language samples (Department of Education 1989: 11) became statements of 'one approach is' (Ministry of Education 1989: 8). The 'programme should incorporate Maori literature' (Department of Education 1989: 3) became '[p]rogrammes in English should encourage a respect for the Maori voice as well as the Pakeha by including Maori literature' (Ministry of Education 1989: 4). The study of 'the state and status of the Maori language in New Zealand, and problems of translation and interpretation e.g. the Treaty of Waitangi' (Department of Education 1989: 11) became in Draft 5 a study of 'language and cultural identity' (Ministry of Education 1989: 9). Programmes which encouraged students to 'read widely for personal enjoyment ... especially New Zealand literature written by Maori and Pakeha' (Department of Education 1989: 13) became in Draft 5 'read widely for personal enjoyment' (Ministry of Education 1989: 11). The study of *whaikorero*, *whatatauaki*, *waiata* and *haka* which had been specified in Draft 4 (Department of Education 1989: 15) was omitted altogether from Draft 5. And 'how the media is responding to issues raised by the Treaty of Waitangi' (Department of Education 1989: 19) became 'how the media is responding to public issues' (Ministry of

Education 1989: 15).

The College of Education Draft restored many of the Draft 4 emphases. The Treaty of Waitangi, for example, again became central to the syllabus statement (1990: 2), as did comparative descriptions of English and Maori language (1990: 13-14). It should be noted at this point, that available to the contracted College of Education writers was the work of two University of Canterbury linguists who published an article late in 1989 in the *New Zealand English Newsletter* (number 3: 9-12) where they vigorously defended comparative English-Maori language study. Gordon and Carstairs argued that the structure of English can, in a New Zealand context, be helpfully studied with reference to the indigenous language. It is to the students' disadvantage, they note, when an 'English-only approach' is adopted. Instead, students must be shown that the way sentences are organised in English is not the only way they can be organised. Thus:

[i]t makes sense ... to incorporate in to the study of the regularities of English some comparison with the way in which another language or languages operate. This suggestion is reinforced by the practical experience of the many students who have told us that learning a foreign language has helped them to understand the structure of English better.

As Maori is the language of the *tangata whenua*, Gordon and Carstairs suggest that it is the most appropriate language for comparative study, although they were conscious of the opposition that existed to such a position. The call for 'standards of excellence' and the view that such comparative study is nothing more than 'a trendy gesture towards biculturalism' were addressed with a strong defence of the 'excellent academic and linguistic reasons for teaching language through a simple comparative study of Maori and English'. 'Here we have the possibility', they continue, 'of a bicultural approach to language study which can be defended very well on academic grounds'.

Again, however, the official Robinson Drafts managed the bicultural discourse in a rather different way. Certainly, the importance of bicultural understanding was not ignored in the latter, but the specific study of contested issues of biculturalism was not given

prominence. The official drafts, then, democratise the notion of difference. That is, difference is robbed of its Otherness. Difference was acknowledged, but there was little acknowledgement of the *politics of difference*, and of how 'difference is formed, erased and resuscitated within and despite asymmetrical relations of power' (Giroux 1990: 21). The syllabus texts, then, became in the late 1980s and early 1990s a symbol of the politics of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, it could be argued that the syllabus statements provide a good example of what Haraway (1987: 30; see also Yeatman 1990: 155) calls 'language politics'. Haraway notes that '[c]ontests for the meaning of writing are a major form of contemporary political struggle'. The texts under examination provide a very ready example of this language politics - a fixing of the norms and referents which thereby defines and contains knowledge. Inevitably, in this view, there is a system of power which blocks and prohibits and invalidates areas of knowledge which are not in the interests of the dominant social and cultural groups. Knowledge, indeed, remains managed in the interests of a continuity of power. Moreover, where difference is affirmed in the official texts it is done so in a way that removes it from the relations of politics and power. To apply Giroux's words (1990: 21) difference merely 'slips into a theoretically harmless and politically deracinated notion of pastiche'. Thus, whereas in Draft 4 the question of difference was located politically, in the official statements it is affirmed benignly and located outside a true politics of cultural identity.

### **Responses to the draft syllabus**

It has been argued that the official Drafts can be seen as examples of the institutional management of knowledge which ignore a politics of discourse, which deny the politics of contested meaning, which use language in such a way as to democratise, or even render invisible, issues of difference, and which turn politically charged notions into self-evident affirmations. In other words, the formation of *text* betrays the influence of social *context*; the syllabus bears the marks of the struggle with the State and its institutions.



This struggle between syllabus and State had an especially public dimension as the following section will outline. The various Drafts were debated in the print and electronic media, and debated by the public no less than by the English teachers themselves. It was a debate that was particularly energetic within the pages of the lifestyle magazine, *Metro*. The editor began with an editorial in the December 1988 edition in which his own anti-Draft sentiments were clearly expressed - albeit in an understated way. Quoting a Maori student who denied the importance of learning about the indigenous culture and wanting instead 'to learn maths and English and science, things like that. Why can't we just get on with it?', the editor replied: 'Indeed. Welcome to the future ...'. This ignited a long discussion in *Metro*. A lengthy article - again critical of the Draft - appeared in the June 1989 edition followed by several months of correspondence. A further article, 'the death of the english [sic] language', followed in *Metro's* February 1990 issue which, once again, provoked considerable debate. The issue was not ignored in New Zealand's other major monthly magazine, *North and South*, either (see e.g. April 1988, pp. 63-64).

Within this debate the teachers' position was equivocal. Responses to the initial Discussion Papers, for example, showed either 'general' or 'strong' agreement with the priorities outlined by the syllabus committee (author's files). Given the differences between the Discussion Papers (on which Draft 4 was to a large measure based) and the Robinson Draft of 1991, it is therefore of interest to note that the results of the official Ministry of Education survey of teachers' responses indicated that:

[a]ll sections were generally well supported, with between 72% and 96% of respondents either 'fully approving' or 'approving with reservations' each section (*Bulletin* No. 5 1992: 53).

It is true that the survey pointed to reservations from some respondents on particular aspects of the Robinson Draft. For example, 9% of respondents recommended that there should be reference to the Treaty of Waitangi, and 21% of Heads of Departments and 14% of Principals felt there should be 'more', or 'a lot more', Maori/bicultural content.

It is also true that teachers with active links to the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English were vociferous in their opposition to the changes from Draft 4 to the Robinson Draft of 1991 (*English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6; 15, 1991: 12-17). Overall, however, the Ministry's Research Division could report (*Bulletin* No. 5 1992: 60):

the [Robinson] draft syllabus for forms 6 and 7 was generally well received by both principals and the heads of English departments who responded to the questionnaires. All sections were supported at a high level, although for some sections approval was often given along with specific reservations. Although respondents suggested modifications, these were diverse and, consequently, few issues arose very strongly.

It was concluded that because the 'data showed that response to the draft syllabus was largely favourable' there was little question that 'its implementation should be successful'.

It is a matter of some interest, then, why two such different syllabus statements could meet with such a high level of approval between 1986 and 1992. Several reasons can be advanced. First, it must be acknowledged that within the general agreement expressed for the emphases of the Discussion Papers, there were indications of conservative views. For 202 out of 279 respondents, the study of "major authors" in literature classes was deemed to be 'very important'. The study of literature by and about women was evenly split between 'very important', 'important' and 'of some importance'. The development of critical skills in literary study was overwhelmingly supported, whereas the thematic approach to literature was regarded by only 41 respondents as being 'very important'.

Those who had such conservative views were quick to foster the debate on the direction of English teaching as the various drafts were released. And while it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which their campaign was responsible for the extensive modifications by 1992 and a consequent shift in teachers' opinions, certainly the Minister of Education was persuaded by the logic of their arguments (*English in Aotearoa* 22,

1994: 65; *Dominion* 23 July 1991) and the Ministry of Education was acutely aware of the strength of the lobby (*Bulletin* No. 5 May 1992: 49). It is also interesting to note that, as discussed above, two of the four teachers in Robinson's advisory group, Roger Moses and Mike Patterson, had been amongst the most vociferous opponents of the draft syllabus statements.

The opponents' "campaign" operated at several levels. First, there was an appeal to the public in the print media. Much of the inspiration for the letters and statements come from various English Department analyses of the syllabus which were sent as discussion papers to other schools. This was especially the case in Auckland where the Rangitoto College statement of 20 November 1989 (author's files) was typical with its covering letter: 'Dear \_\_\_\_\_. Our views on the draft 6th and 7th form English syllabus are expressed on the following two pages'. Secondly, letters were sent to Ministers of Education and Opposition spokespersons. And it was in partial response to this vigorous correspondence drive that Lockwood Smith issued his press statement late in 1990 which effectively halted the process begun in 1986. Thirdly, longer papers were written and articles published and, in one case, read as a paper at the 1991 New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English conference.

While this was not an organised campaign as such, it was nevertheless vocal and effective in keeping the issue alive in the media. The antagonists had decided at the outset that the syllabus should be debated in public. One Auckland Head of Department wrote (author's files):

By the time the final draft is set it will be too late for parents, students and those teachers who disagree to change things. Now is the time for the issue to be opened for broad public examination and debate.

It might seem to some people that an English syllabus for forms six and seven is very small beer and really a matter for "experts" to argue about. Not so! English ... has always been the subject more than any other in the public education system to carry cultural values. Any specific change in the passing on of those values will affect everyone.

The print strategy also seemingly included “leaking” confidential syllabus working papers and memoranda. One syllabus committee member complained in the Auckland Association of Teachers of English Language *Broadsheet* (Term 3 1990/Term 1 1991) that:

In circulating this document I made it quite clear that it had no official status whatsoever and that anyone releasing it to the media may well be put in an embarrassing situation as it was a consultative document only ... .

However, several teachers present at the meeting seemed not to have heard that warning from me. They wasted no time in contacting the Minister of Education and in writing a series of articles and letters for the media ... .

Significantly, at the meeting called by the Minister on 19 December 1990, the participants were requested not to make the meeting or the new draft a media issue (AATEL *Broadsheet* Term 3 1990/Term 1 1991).

The nature of the criticism operated on several different levels. Some of the hostility was directed at the specifics of the drafts in terms of English-teaching theory and practice. But the debate was also an ideological one with philosophical and religious arguments being used to discredit the syllabus statements; and while it is not possible to precisely differentiate the two strands, they nonetheless provide a helpful division for the purposes of the following analysis.

A number of teachers had strong reservations about the nature of the syllabus's literature and language focus. With respect to literature, the argument developed around the literary-criticism/literary-response cleavage. The Draft, argued one opponent (author's files), is a 'trend-crazed document'. 'It was not', he continued, 'the teacher's place to dismiss *Paradise Lost* as a mere Miltonic “myth”: it was his [*sic*] place to stand as far as possible out of the way so that pupils may understand what Milton is saying'. The Draft's statements were, indeed, 'radically diseased, as it recommends reading for youngsters mainly on the grounds that its writers reflect the compiler's own prejudices'. Further, the traditional literary canon must be taught. Because “good”

literature explores and makes sense of the mystery of the human condition, the traditional selection of texts was the most appropriate literary offering to students. A failure to promote such literature would, it was argued, 'bar today's increasingly diverse and disaffected students from reading the literature that would speak to their own experience'.

In the face of the increased New Zealand literary component in the pre-Robinson drafts, the importance of tradition and continuity with the past was strongly emphasised. One opponent (author's files) noted that as 'history and tradition are fundamental if we are to understand the present [this] is simply a plea for cultural continuity'. A Westlake Girls' High School submission argued similarly. With respect to European literary culture it was averred that 'to prescribe it out of existence is to deny historical and cultural continuity and identity to Europeans'. In another unpublished but widely distributed paper (author's files) the writer was concerned that:

to give a high place to language and literature unique to New Zealand especially for political ends is to give a high place to very little. In no way can it be regarded as a sufficient body of literary knowledge to educate any modern student. New Zealand literature is very recent and derivative and can only be understood after considerable familiarity with older English works. It is difficult to imagine *Foreskin's Lament* shedding very much light on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or anything else, although the reverse would be most revealing.

The writer argued that to isolate New Zealand texts in order to develop understanding of New Zealand's dual heritage is to 'use literature in a corrupt way'. He continued:

One can imagine a situation in the classroom where a [New Zealand] theme is adopted for study. It could be either sexism or racism. Books would be chosen to "enhance" understanding, those that were appropriate to the theme. It takes little imagination to see what that kind of study does to the teaching of literature.

New Zealand literature was also criticised for its narrow range. One of several Rangitoto College statements (author's files) alleged that:

there is not the material which is sufficiently interesting, challenging or excellent ... . A survey of our senior students has shown that they enjoy writers such as Lawrence, Miller, Scott Fitzgerald, and when presented with Hulme or Ihimaera, they have

demanded more challenging material, which also has a broader outlook.

Opponents were well aware of the reasons for the emphasis on Maori literature and literature written by women. It was argued, however, that books chosen because they are deemed socially relevant is no way to increase consciousness of Maori or women's issues. Rather, 'slowly without any established concept of quality a book will be considered worthy because it is popular or worse still indispensable because it reinforces the ideas of a vocal and influential self-appointed educational elite'. The consequences, it was maintained, 'will be to set up the mediocre and doctrinaire as ideal and to enshrine them forever'. As a result, the traditional reason for teaching literature 'will be forgotten and it's [*sic*] humanizing function in schools destroyed' (author's files). Another writer (author's files) commented that to 'select literature on preferential racial grounds would be unsound'. To recommend the specific inclusion of 'Maori' literature 'is insulting and unnecessary. It does not need that recommendation to ensure its inclusion. Literature stands on its own merits'.

As the above comments indicate, the debate was more than just a debate about what books should be in the literary canon. For it was the rationale upon which the syllabus committee worked and with which they wanted to broaden the classroom study of literature that many of the draft's detractors opposed. As one Head of Department wrote (author's files):

[i]f English is to become the property of the social equalizers who identify goodness with sameness we are in real trouble ... . The English teacher, therefore, is forced to teach a particular brand of sociology rather than English.

Thus, the syllabus was criticised for its seeming simplicity: suggesting that 'English teachers can rid society of sexism, racism and ethnocentrism and other ills by giving students the right reading material'.

The syllabus committee and supporters, though, argued that a literary curriculum that

excludes women and minority writers is just as political as a curriculum that includes them. The question, then, was not whether to permit an ideological perspective to inform what is taught but which perspective to choose. Thus, the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English in a statement (n.d.) especially issued in support of the 1990 Christchurch College of Education Draft averred that:

a syllabus which is *not* non-sexist and non-racist, *is* sexist and racist. The most dangerous option of all is to render all races and sexes invisible by neutralising the language, thus completely avoiding the real world altogether.

The Association was therefore calling for literature that could serve as models of what Heilbrun (1988) refers to as alternative life possibilities for those whose “otherness” is marked: women, minorities, the working class. It was, however, an argument that gained little support from the general public and even from magazine and newspaper editors. *Metro*, for example, adopted a particularly hostile stance to the syllabus reforms as it followed the process from its December 1988 issue.

In addition to the debate on the literary canon, the Maori language component in the syllabus was the subject of considerable comment. A school’s submission (author’s files) to the Minister of Education in November 1988 was representative of those teachers with concerns:

Sir, a careful reading of the proposed syllabus will show a conscious hi-jacking of the New Zealand Senior English syllabus by a group of well-intentioned individuals on a committee which imagines itself forward looking ... a careful study of this proposed English syllabus will show that it should be renamed Bi-Cultural Studies ... . You must pardon us if this looks to us like the latest bandwagon for liberal whites to jump aboard.

Others were far less restrained. In response to the English Association claim (n.d.) that language study must reflect ‘the partnerships which exist in our school communities’, one writer (author’s files) argued:

Maori pupils learn English for the same reason that any other pupil learns it: to master English, not to preserve or suck up to Maori ... the right and place of the tangata whenua and the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi have about the same place in

English as has the binomial theorem or the uncertainty principle ... if Maori is dying, it is dying; and whether this is regrettable or not, it is no part of the duty of English teachers to attempt artificial respiration. To claim that not to know Maori is not to be fully literate is to live in a fantasy world.

Finally, with respect to the specific criticisms of the English syllabus, opponents alleged that there was too much emphasis on creative as opposed to critical study. Without appropriate standards based on a critical and didactic model of English teaching:

you might as well allow any pupil whose communication is limited to existential grunts to remain where he [*sic*] is, on the grounds that he has developed his [*sic*] own “style”.

An emphasis on a student's own creativity, another antagonist argued (author's files), 'is the beginning of a new barbarism and a great deal more writing on lavatory walls'.

Of course, the features discussed above were not the only aspects of the syllabus on which there was debate. The various memoranda and papers on the pre-Robinson Drafts were often very detailed and highly technical analyses. There was, indeed, very little common ground between defenders and opponents. The line between debate and vicious attack was often a fine one. A lack of common rhetorical ground upon which to build a constructive interchange meant that dialectic was rare. It is this lack of common ground that is, in fact, one of the more interesting aspects of the controversy.

Fundamentally, opponents and supporters were working from very different ideological positions: the syllabus writers and defenders from a cultural studies paradigm; the syllabus antagonists from the ideology of the educational and moral Right. And it is to the discourse of this latter grouping that the chapter now turns.

## **The educational right**

Kenway (1990: 186) observes that the term 'educational right' is not unproblematic. It 'is not a single, homogenous entity, either socially or ideologically'. But in a detailed



discussion, Kenway isolates two strands or emphases of the thinking of the educational Right. First, she highlights the economic dimension: the value placed on the “market”; the value placed on independent schools; the deleterious impact of State intervention in education; the rights of individuals to cultivate the spirituality of enterprise. Secondly, Kenway suggests that ‘ideas about tradition, authority and hierarchy’ are central to the educational Right’s programme. The notions of education in crisis, declining standards, demoralised teachers, radical Marxist secularists all form part of the Right’s platform. There is a need, it is argued, to return to the traditional form and content of schooling.

In New Zealand, a number of organisations and lobby groups share these broad ideological positions. Certainly taking a lead within the educational Right’s programme, are several conservative, Christian groups which, it should be noted, have been active in the educational politics of ‘basics and frills’ (Snook 1990: 303) since the 1970s. In this context, brief mention should be made of *The New Zealand Education Development Foundation* because of its personnel links with opponents of the various Draft Syllabus statements.

The Foundation’s Council is made up of a number of Christian business people and educators - including two educators, Drs Edwards and Hitchen, from the evangelical Bible College of New Zealand. Editing the Foundation’s Newsletter is Mr Bruce Logan, formerly Head of Department, English, at Orewa College and, since 1993, Director of Curriculum at Middleton Grange School - an independent, evangelical Christian school in Christchurch. The Foundation’s Newsletter, *Cutting Edge*, notes that:

The founders of N.Z.E.D.F. all share a common concern for social and educational direction in New Zealand. They believe that the Christian faith and what it has to offer is being under-valued.

It is the intention of the N.Z.E.D.F. to give substance to the belief that the Christian faith is fully able to present a worldview that is intelligent, coherent, consistent and complete.

Our first concern is education although that demands, if we are to be realistic, an interest in economics, politics, sociology and psychology because they so often

impinge on the educational process.

Logan's educational views are openly paraded in the pages of *Cutting Edge*. '[A]ll teaching and learning', he argues (July 1993: 1-2), 'involves a belief in principles that shape curricula'. A school programme 'must either consciously or even unconsciously grow out of what the shapers of that programme believe about human nature and human destiny'. In Logan's view 'standards' are all important, and standards presuppose a belief structure - a structure in which 'God is the initiator of all knowledge'. And knowledge 'properly perceived leads to a deeper appreciation of our relationship with Him ... [and] a deeply rooted impact on any curriculum'. The importance of this Christian impact on the school curriculum has been the motivating factor in Logan's writing on education since the early 1980s, and it is to his views on the Draft English Syllabus statements this chapter now focuses.

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s Logan more than anyone else became the educational Right's advocate as the debate over the English syllabus Drafts reached the media. He was, indeed, the Right's spokesperson at the 1991 English Association Conference where he gave a paper (untitled - author's files) which attacked the Association, the various Drafts, and the underlying philosophy of education which he believed gave birth to the syllabus documents. Other Logan papers were published as features in newspapers and journals; several more were distributed privately. Given his prominence in the debate his views are worthy of discussion because they highlight not merely aspects of the educational Right's concerns, but also the production of an educational hegemony which led, as has been shown above, to the eventual abandonment of eight years of the senior English syllabus reform process.

By his own admission, Logan's views are derivative. He began his conference paper acknowledging his debt to various authors including 'the usual group of writers familiar to most English teachers'. Curiously, though, amongst his named sources and generally

*not* known to English teachers, were theologians, Christian philosophers and apologists. These sources, as shall be seen, were quite determinative in the position Logan adopted. Certainly the perspective such writers embraced was quite dissimilar to that appropriated by the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English - a point not lost on Logan, who argued that the Association was 'heavily influenced by the language of Marxism'. In support of his contention, Logan quoted from the Association's December 1985 Newsletter:

Many conservative groups in our communities are becoming aware of our existence, especially as we begin to have stronger and more determined policies on such issues as Taha Maori, Sexism, Assessment ... . English teachers need to be radicals, we need to remind ourselves that our tool of language power is emancipatory ... .

To Logan, however, this simply meant the rejection of 'the doctrine of objective value ... without a clear idea of what we are doing'. A focus on students and their interests was of far less significance than a syllabus which reflected so-called universal truths about human nature and human destiny. These truths, centred on the Christian belief 'in a transcendent God expressed specifically in the resurrection of Jesus Christ' - something, which, it is argued, 'has been the dynamic of our culture for a very long time'.

The debate, then, was as much about the nature of knowledge as it was about the nature of the literature included in the syllabus document. For while many of those who opposed the philosophy inherent in the Drafts did not hold Logan's Christian convictions, they could nonetheless give support to epistemological arguments which stressed the importance of history and tradition as an indispensable means of understanding the present. That, of course, is one important Christian claim, but, as Logan intimated, stressing tradition is 'not a plea for the teaching of Christianity' but 'simply a plea for cultural continuity'. Revisionism becomes necessary only if knowledge is seen to be 'relative' and when the past is seen to be 'interpreted by the needs of the present'.

In an earlier (1987) paper, Logan had argued that knowledge was increasingly taking its authority from psychological experimentation, instead of issuing from 'religion, history and philosophy'. It is not therefore surprising that 'change has become the educational norm, and the orthodoxy of our time is not what is true about the world but rather what have psychology, and to some extent sociology, said is true about the child'. He added that it:

is for this developing acceptance of the total relativity of knowledge that we now get a continuous flow of curriculum change in our schools. Because no acceptable and durable authority remains, priorities in the classroom are constantly changing to keep up with educational fashion ... . Very largely narrow-minded lobby groups are using the system to have their own points of view injected into it.

Logan's plea was, indeed, for those key features of the educational Right described above: tradition, authority and hierarchy. In the words of Logan's Christchurch *Press* feature article (February 27 1992), '[w]ith a kind of death wish we have cut ourselves off from the past ... no mention [in education] is made of authority, tradition, morality, responsibility or even society'. In his view it was, then, cause for little surprise that those who opposed the English Association and Draft syllabus statements, that is to say, those 'who believe in enduring intellectual, cultural and moral standards', are 'charged as racist, sexist or more recently homophobic'. Logan continues:

It is a profound misfortune that many of us do not love our children enough to teach them the truth and freedom of human responsibility, and the beauty of those truths which are eternal.

Interestingly, there were echoes of such concerns in the Minister's press statement of 15 December 1990. Traditional literary works, the Minister averred, 'should not be ignored', but, more than this, at stake was a 'fundamental and vitally important educational standard'. It was more than an implication of the press release that 'syllabus imbalance' as the Minister called it, would have wider and deleterious cultural effects.

It is significant that the nature of knowledge became central to the debate on the English Drafts. It has been central to other platforms of the educational Right. Kenway's

Australian study (1990: 197) revealed that the Right:

constructed a regime of truth and, together with key organic intellectuals in the media, developed an apparatus of power-knowledge that sought to establish the boundaries within which 'normal, moral and socially responsible' education is defined and outside of which all else may be regarded as deviant. It has not only assumed the mantle of moral arbiter; it has also, again in conjunction with the media, conducted a programme of surveillance, identifying, and publicly denouncing, and exposing 'deviant' knowledges ... .

The New Zealand debate with respect to the English syllabus raised similar issues.

The knowledge base of the Drafts was indeed declared deviant by the Right. Logan (1991: 6) was concerned that 'students absorb the idea in most classrooms that all knowledge is relative'. Thus, '[t]he belief in the civilised mind has passed us by'.

The work of Foucault is of value in any attempt to understand the positioning of the Right on such issues. For in his study of discursive practices, Foucault has argued that discourse is characterised by the delimitation of the field of concerns or ideas and the definition of what is a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge. That is to say, in all discourses there is a fixing of the norms and referents for the elaboration of knowledge. Discursive practice, therefore, implies 'a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices' (1977a: 199). Further, such practices are embodied in the way institutions function, and in the way human beings behave, and even in pedagogical forms which at once impose and maintain the practices. Though often 'unvoiced and unthought' (Young 1981: 10), the structures of various knowledges are profound in their determinations of realities.

Of course, the interesting aspect of the English syllabus debate is that the form of rationality in which Logan and others worked had such a profound impact on the final outcome of the English revision. Why did this 'regime of truth' (Kenway 1990: 175) become the accepted discourse? The above analysis has attempted to show that this particular regime of truth constituted a *regime of morality* which was able to 'claim its higher status, and at the same time exercise a relationship of power' (Kenway 1990:

176, following Minson 1980). It is, indeed, the question of the relationship between knowledge and this high status morality that defines the debate over the Draft syllabus statements. These statements were seen by the Right as mirroring the rapid decline of transcendental or even just traditional beliefs within society. So-called lasting values were linked in Logan's and others' writing with a very different form of English: classic texts, formal grammar teaching, a technical lexicon. Thus it could be argued that such aspects within a syllabus provide 'a sense of unity and social cohesion' (Rae 1989: 94) and encourage 'punctiliousness in other matters' (Rae, *Observer* 7 February 1982, quoted in Goodson and Medway, 1990: xv). And because of the alleged relationship between tradition and morality '[a]ll ideas of "new" or "scientific" or "modern" moralities must therefore be dismissed as mere confusion of thought' (Logan 1991).

Clearly, then, Logan represented a position, a regime of truth, which sought to mark out the ground on which any assessment of the English syllabus should proceed - ground which sought to support those from the Right who were concerned about the future of society. Thus, English as a 'discipline' was equated with educational excellence and personal development, whereas the Drafts were held up as further examples of the 'uncivilised mind' and the relativistic social malaise characteristic of postmodern and postchristian society. It is of interest, indeed, that Logan embraced the language of modernism. He argued for the appropriation of those alleged universal, eternal and immutable values that, as discussed above, characterised modernist ideology. There was in Logan's view, and in the view of his supporters on the Right, no need to forge a new mythology with respect to what the eternal and immutable might be in the midst of twentieth-century ephemerality. It was, in fact, that very ephemerality which, it was alleged, should provide justification for the continued advocacy of traditional values. It was because of the societal fragmentation that a united code of belief and unified mode of representation must be evident in the English syllabus.

The English syllabus debate, then, was a particularly transparent example of the

discursive practices of which Foucault writes. A debate about the classroom teaching of English was successfully transformed into a debate about respect for authority, standards, social morality and the modernist tradition which, it was argued by the Right, should underpin that morality. The effect of such an appeal was the capture of the debating territory and ultimately the Robinson revision which was clearly in the interests of established values.

## CHAPTER 4

### ENGLISH IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM, 1992-1996

#### Introduction

It was noted in the previous chapter that the senior syllabus statement, issued in 1992 after six years of drafting and debate, had no official status. It was simply one of a number of syllabus documents which was to 'provide a basis for the development of the new Achievement Initiative curriculum statement in English for junior classes to Form 7' (Ministry of Education 1992: 3). The Achievement Initiative was the name given to the National Government's policy of reforming all curriculum statements with an especial focus on learning objectives. Thus, all curriculum documents were to meet the general requirements of teaching and learning as outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* - published in its final form in 1993.

The contract to develop the English curriculum within this Framework was let to the Auckland College of Education. Margaret Bendall, then lecturer in English at the College, was the contract co-ordinator. A policy advisory group, established by the Minister of Education and chaired by Roger Robinson, was to review progress. A further review committee was established by the Ministry of Education. A team of writers and various reference groups of primary, secondary and tertiary teachers were also formed to ensure 'that the statement reflect[ed] the best of English teaching practice in New Zealand' (Ministry of Education 1993a: 5; see Appendix 7).

The Draft statement was finally released in September 1993 after the production of a series of Working Papers (Bendall 1992, 1993). The latter represented progress in the development of the Draft at various stages of the contract process. Fulfilling 'milestone'



requirements the Papers had 'restricted distribution' only (front piece on all Working Papers). These were seen only by members of the various reference groups. Further, only the developers and Ministry officials received copies with an introductory statement written by the leader of the contract team. A request to the Senior Manager, Curriculum Functions, Ministry of Education, for copies of the Working Papers was declined (correspondence 26 March 1993), although I have subsequently received the copies - including those with the introduction - from another source.

Following the release of the Draft statement in September 1993, schools were invited to respond to the proposals and a sample of schools was requested to complete a questionnaire covering: the level of support for the document; how useful aspects of it were; how easy it would be for teachers to come to terms with the curriculum requirements; and the main areas in which support would be needed for teachers to implement the curriculum successfully (*The Education Gazette* 30 September 1994: 19). The 300 submissions, including those from two trials involving sixteen primary and two secondary schools, were analysed by Duthie Consultancy. A rewriting team, led by Barbara Mabbett, a former head of Learning Media, was contracted to produce the final statement which was released in December 1994, and which received ministerial sanction on 23 November 1995 (*The Education Gazette*, 15 December: 5-6).

This chapter seeks to contextualise the curriculum statement. It will be argued that the text discourse illustrates the central thesis of the study: the management of knowledge in favour of dominant cultural interests. It will be established, however, that these dominant perspectives are rather more contradictory than those outlined in earlier chapters and reflect, in turn, the contradictory emphases of the postmodern environment in the 1990s.

## **Postmodernism and flexible accumulation**

Several scholars have noted the connection between postmodern emphases and changing economic imperatives (e.g. Harvey 1990; Hinkson 1991). The stress placed on freedom and flexibility within a postmodern climate has, it is alleged, its economic expression in deregulation, privatisation and a heightened sense of entrepreneurship. Thus, the postmodern market demands a workforce expected to be 'adaptable, flexible, and if necessary geographically mobile' (Harvey 1990: 150). In turn, this 'has put a premium on "smart" and innovative entrepreneurialism aided and abetted by all the accoutrements of swift, decisive and well-informed decision-making' (Harvey 1990: 157). Education has also been affected by such trends. Indeed, Hinkson (1991: 25) argues that the weakening of the modernist traditions in a postmodern society:

leaves government and to some degree educators disposed to play down the significance of those traditions and see education more closely tied to the world of commerce, the corporation, the economy.

Thus, the transformation of the labour market in the postmodern environment - a transformation characterised by such things as flexible work regimes, employment contracts, part-time or temporary or sub-contracted work arrangements - has had its effects on the educational imperatives as defined by the State. Even knowledge itself takes on the postmodern form. As Harvey (1990: 159) notes, in 'a world of quick-changing tastes and needs and flexible production systems', access to new knowledge and discoveries may often bring a competitive advantage. Therefore

[k]nowledge itself becomes a key commodity, to be produced and sold to the highest bidder, under conditions that are themselves increasingly organized on a competitive basis.

Knowledge, Harvey (1990: 160) continues, 'has been increasingly put upon a commercial basis' and he provides the example of universities making the transition from 'guardianship of knowledge and wisdom' to the 'ancillary production of knowledge for corporate capital'. Thus, in education no less than in industry, entrepreneurialism or a competitive individualism appears to have displaced, or be displacing, the alleged

collective norms and values of modernism and certainly its expression in the social democratic educational settlement of the post world war two period.

Certainly the notion of education being more responsive to the “real world” (by which is meant the market economy or what Harvey calls “flexible accumulation”) has been a key theme in political and sometimes educational writing (see, e.g., Crocombe *et al.* 1991). Hinkson (1991: 29) suggests that this theme has been supported by other processes. The notions of ‘learning how to learn’ as opposed to learning particular knowledge, and ‘the teacher as facilitator’ as opposed to the teacher conveying subject knowledge, reflects the transition from modernist to postmodernist emphases. In the postmodern culture, and certainly in the postmodern economy, the idea of the autonomous individual is a central idea. It could be objected, of course, that liberal education has always valued the autonomy that is here being suggested is a feature of postmodernism. However, as Hinkson (1991: 29) intimates, the modern and postmodern notions of autonomy are different:

[r]ather than a path leading to autonomy through stages of development, the new education ... offers autonomy of choice without developmental assumptions outside that of the needs and desires of the individual. In part this is the autonomy of the teacher ... but also most critically it is the autonomy of students to learn what they wish - so long as they learn how to learn.

Hinkson further suggests (1991: 31) that such emphases represent the linking of education to economic effort and confirm the power roles adapted by the intellectual culture and its institutional expression in schools.

One particularly interesting concomitant of the new correspondence between education and the economy is the linkage forged between different groups promoting an educational environment capable of providing enterprising individuals for the enterprise culture. Following Stephen Ball (1991), Kenway *et al.* (1992: 14) write of a new lobby which has developed a critique of abstract and academic curricula and which has formed ‘an ideological alliance with progressivist theories of learning and motivation (a process orientation, co-operation, problem solving, open ended investigation and the

like)'. In this view, educational values have been re-worked. Though liberal in their sentiment, they have been attached to New Right ideology and 'rearticulated by policy makers in accordance with broader state imperatives' (Kenway *et al.* 1992: 15).

Within a New Zealand context, these emphases and this alliance of which Kenway *et al.* write can be illustrated with reference to the so-called Porter Project published as *Upgrading New Zealand's Competitive Advantage* (Crocombe *et al.* 1991). In the chapter on the determinants of national advantage, the report's authors note that:

[i]t is not clear that even educated New Zealanders have the skills necessary to create the levels of national income we aspire to. The relevance of the education provided by our schools and their role in developing economically meaningful skills are important issues. New Zealand's education system has not adequately prepared many New Zealanders to contribute to their own and the nation's economic well-being ... . A national education system that focuses on academic achievement rather than technical, scientific and managerial skills faces serious difficulties in preparing people to compete in an increasingly competitive world (Crocombe *et al.* 1991: 102).

The report writers therefore suggest that the school curriculum must have a 'skill basis', a focus on 'technology' and a 'vocational emphasis'. Such emphases will provide citizens with the 'skills necessary to compete successfully in the global economy'. (Crocombe *et al.* 1991: 103-105). The call, in short, is for an increasingly instrumental educational environment.

In different words, the postmodern cultural and social processes which are lauded by Lyotard (1984; see also Baudrillard 1988) as challenging the tyranny of totalising narratives characteristic of modernity, produce a setting which can be mobilised to restrict the possibility of developing a discourse of public life, or, in educational terms, to restrict the opportunities for reflection on various cultural perspectives. While attempting to celebrate individuality and difference and a radical cultural politics, postmodernism can at the same time be criticised for not extending the democratic values of modernism. For all his sympathetic treatment of postmodernism, Hinkson (1991: 16) is forced to concede that it is open to an interpretation in which it is seen as complicit with the operation of

market forces harmful to the public tradition of participatory democracy in general, and liberal education in particular. Kenway *et al.* (1992: 15 - 16) also see the market as 'one defining feature of postmodernity'. Though observing that not all markets are necessarily postmodern ones, they contend that 'markets require a shift in focus from the collective and the community to the individual, from public service to private service, and from the other to the self'.

It should be noted, however, that the postmodern climate does not exist in a causal relationship with the ideologies of the New Right. Rather, there is an adventitious connection that can be drawn between them; that is to say, a setting or milieu which can give rise to market-oriented or enterprise or instrumental philosophies. Certainly within the current social and cultural context, the old integrative ideologies, the grand narratives, have been marginalised. The weakening of these narratives has meant, positively, that there is greater scope for a greater plurality of cultural positions. The long-sought quest for genuine human emancipation from ideological shackles becomes a possibility. But, negatively, this same narrative weakening is also a factor in a deepening crisis of identity in both a personal and societal sense with postmodernism's seemingly concomitant disintegration into endless differences and identities with no sense of effective agency that could realise genuine emancipation. The contradictory liberation that postmodernism facilitates can therefore be experienced as a legitimisation crisis. The cultural context which provides for a greater sense of actualisation is itself the catalyst for a crisis of self-consciousness. And as Kenway (1990) has demonstrated in an extended case-study, 'confused, disaffected, frustrated and anxious people are particularly responsive to the interpellations of the [New Right] discourse' with its emphasis on freedom, choice, prosperity and progress, and, one might add, the instrumental education that is attendant on such values. Certainly, it is the argument of this chapter that the English curriculum manifests many of these instrumental, market-oriented characteristics, further illustrating the central thesis of this study.



## Contestation and control

*The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, developed between 1990 and 1993, sets the pattern for the development of all national curriculum statements. The statements 'define in more detail the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, and values which are described in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*' (Ministry of Education 1993: 22). Thus, in the English curriculum, three strands have been identified: written language, oral language, visual language. Each strand has been divided into a transmission and reception mode, and within each mode various sub-strands have been identified. In the written language strand, for example, there is "written language: reading" and "written language: writing". Reading has been further divided as personal reading and close reading and linked across eight achievement levels. Writing has been further divided as expressive, poetic and transactional writing and again linked across eight levels of achievement. This process is repeated for oral and visual language strands. In total there are some 20 separate strands/substrands within the English curriculum statement.

The avowed aim of this approach to curriculum development was 'to improve standards in the context of today's and tomorrow's competitive world economy' (*Sunday Times* 19 September 1993). There was a perceived need for 'our education system ... [to] adapt to meet these challenges'. The emphases, therefore, were on improving 'standards' and 'develop[ing] appropriate personal qualities', learning 'to work in co-operative ways, and to participate confidently in a competitive environment'. The need was for 'a work force which is increasingly highly skilled and adaptable, and which has an international and multicultural perspective' (Ministry of Education 1993: 1, 17).

Clearly the Curriculum Framework reflects the demands of the postindustrial economy of the 1990s - demands which have been the subject of considerable discussion from school teachers and university academics. Warwick Elley, has written (*Sunday Times* 19 September 1993):

What could possibly be wrong with a neatly structured curriculum, with clear statements of progressively more difficult standards, to be attained by all pupils? Surely the levels could only provide greater purpose and incentive for pupils to work harder. Surely standards would improve! Alas, no.

Elley pointed to a number of areas where, in his view, the document was flawed. He was joined by a number of other academics and analysts (see, esp., Irwin 1994). And although it is not the purpose of this chapter to critique the Curriculum Framework, it is important to note that the English curriculum statement was required to conform to the approach outlined in the Framework - an approach which the Education Forum (on which see below, p 197) noted was 'mechanistic and utilitarian' and which revealed 'a lack of appreciation of the wider purposes of education as well as its practical and theoretical aspects' (Media Release, 25 May 1994). The extent to which the English statement mirrors this alleged mechanistic structure, the extent to which it reflects the cultural contradictions of the postmodern climate, and the ways in which the text discourse reinforces the ideological interests of the dominant culture, will now be explored.

It should be noted, first, that the English curriculum statement cannot be explained in an ideologically tidy manner. It was argued in Chapter 2 that the NESC *Statement of Aims*, for all its changed focus, did little to alter the underlying understanding of English: it failed to challenge the "taken-for-granted" nature of English and its teaching. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the senior syllabus was consciously and observably managed in the interests of those same routine practices. The latest curriculum statement, however, represents a complex and contradictory amalgam of understandings and approaches, which nonetheless serves the identifiable interests of dominant groups in society.

Many of the growth model learning principles that had formed the basis of the text discourse in the earlier syllabus statements appear again in the statement under review. Indeed, a clear learning theory underpinned the text discourse. In the developers' third draft, this theory was clearly articulated: a socio-cultural perspective on language



teaching was adumbrated. That is, and following the work of Vygotsky whom the authors explicitly name, learning was seen as a social and cultural process. This reference to Vygotsky is significant. Writing in the era of transition from the Tsarist feudalism of Russia to the socialism of the Soviet Union, Vygotsky is best known for his experimental work on how children form various concepts. For reasons not specified by the developers, Vygotsky's work became the basis of 'the learning theory which underpins the curriculum statement' (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 7-8). For Vygotsky (1962: 95ff) the function of school instruction was to create and extend students' zone of potential development as measured by the additional number of problems they can solve when given assistance and clues by an adult. The teachers' job was simply to provide the cues and clues that would help the students over hurdles they were unable to scale by themselves. Thus, ideally, teachers would work with students to solve problems and help with activities that the students were unable to do themselves. Collective projects where students work together, accomplishing together what none would be prepared to accomplish alone, were also recommended. Central to this learning theory were the notions of active learning and knowledge being created in and through social interactions. In this view, a child's development is best seen 'as an apprenticeship to culturally defined forms of expertise' (McNaughton 1994: 24), and cognitive development is not as linear, not as fixed and not as inexorable as theorists such as Piaget had described.

The curriculum developers therefore note (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 7, 8) that the 'roots of [students'] learning are social and cultural'; that '[l]anguage is a set of social practices enabling people to construct meaning'; that 'language provides the means of interacting with others'; that '[l]anguage is the mechanism through which everyone operates control and power over their own lives'; that the 'stronger the control learners have over their language the stronger their control is over their lives and over the environments in which they live'; that '[e]ffective learning occurs when interactions support the learner's performance in ways that are adjustable, temporary and encourage active participation

by the learner'; that 'over time ... students ... architect their own further development'. And while the theory of Vygotsky is not quoted in either the published Draft or in the final statement, these same principles are explicitly stated as those which should give structure to the teaching of English in schools (Ministry of Education 1994a: 10-11). Language programmes which require 'interactive and active participation', and a learning environment 'which encourages creativity and experimentation' were key emphases.

Such emphases are clear re-statements of similar principles in earlier syllabus statements. The contractors could therefore confidently note that the 'teaching and learning contexts ... derive from and build upon earlier national syllabus documents ... the new statement affirms the shared aims and philosophies of language learning expressed in earlier national syllabi' (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 4). The contract co-ordinator similarly stated (Bendall 1994a: 4) that the statement's answer to what it means to be 'fully literate in English ... is the same as the answer given in those faraway NESC days ...'. And although such claims, as I shall demonstrate, cannot be advanced in all areas of structure and content, they were at least justifiable with respect to teaching and learning approaches. The 'draft's consistency with earlier syllabuses' (Bendall 1994a: 5) in this aspect of its text discourse cannot be denied. It is a point, too, that some of the statement's detractors have also been quick to make (see, e.g. Brooke *Press* 6 June 1994: 11; 5 January 1995: 11).

This model of English and language learning does, however, sit rather uneasily with other aspects of the English curriculum. It was noted above that the English statement was to conform to the eight levels of the Curriculum Framework and conform, also, to a series of outcomes-based achievement objectives. On the one hand, then, there was in the minds of the developers a teaching-learning emphasis on 'children's self regulated learning' (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 7), and on the other hand a requirement to set precise and measurable achievement targets. The developers' understanding of the essential ideological disjunction between these two approaches was equivocal. In the

description of the changes to Draft 3 which accompanied the developers' milestone report to the Ministry of Education, it was noted that 'establishing a taxonomy of cognitive skills, allied to a progressively more complex range of language activity, to define the progressive levels' was, in fact, a 'sound principle' (Bendall, 2 October 1992: iii). No attempt is made to explain the relationship between the pre-determined taxonomy and 'children's self regulated learning' and yet, clearly, there was a juxtaposition of a personal growth model of learning with a technicist model of curriculum delivery. In the principal developer's words (Bendall 1994a: 5), the English statement was simply an attempt to 'represent processes in ... an outcome-based statement'. Though admitting that it was 'not an easy task' and that the draft 'reflects a compromise between the cultural heritage model of English learning and teaching and the adult needs [sic] model' (Bendall 1994a: 5, 7), there is little recognition of the ideological cleavage that separates the two perspectives and, as I shall speculate below, the implications for management of knowledge issues. In fact, the project co-ordinator (Bendall 1994a: 10) argued that:

the whole idea of outcomes/goals is consistent with some learning theory, anyway, as is demonstrated by ... principles for better teaching and learning, based on Vygotsky's work in particular.

Further, it was confidently asserted that:

[e]ven using the business-like rhetoric of outputs and accountability, the current revision of curricula provides us with an opportunity to revise the education system to be more inclusive and accessible, and to rid ourselves of an archaic, continuing dependence on the notion that the ability to learn is limited to a particular proportion of those who seek to learn.

The contradictions, though played down or even not fully recognised by the developers, were noted by others of very different ideological positions. Karl Stead (1994: 5), a conservative critic, argued that the curriculum statement was:

lumbered with structures and artificial frameworks of a kind which, it must be assumed, give comfort to the insecure even when they seem needlessly imposed upon reality rather than abstracted from it.

Stuart McNaughton, an educationalist at Auckland University, though not sharing Stead's cultural and educational perspective, argues similarly (1994: 31). He noted that:

[w]ith close specification teachers' ways of building expertise are limited. With close specification the learners' routes to expertise (to say nothing of the nature of that expertise) are closely curtailed.

McNaughton added (1994: 33) that a

view of teaching/learning which compartmentalises, codifies and quantifies; which makes processes lockstep and is riven by short term objectives contributes to commodification. It certainly limits the ways in which teachers and students can be dexterous and adaptable.

And Warwick Elley also argued (1994: 42) that '[t]he whole notion that teachers and students will raise performance levels if they focus on the outcomes is questionable in English'. There was disquiet, too, from teachers unhappy at the close specification of outcomes and levels (e.g. *The Dominion*, 14 December 1994; *The Education Digest*, August 1995; 179). One practitioner (*English in Aotearoa* 26, September 1995: 46) wrote that the approach meant that teachers ran:

the risk of denying their pupils the sorts of learning scaffolds that would enable them to develop the interpretative and critical expertise most educationalists would say [they] are capable of given appropriate texts and contexts.

These comments, though going some way to highlight the essential contradictions of the English statement, still fail to come to terms with the true nature of the ideological disjunction that is present in the text discourse: a personal growth model of English teaching linked with an outcomes-based model. The latter, clearly, is part of the master discourse which informs educational policy in general and curriculum development in particular, in the 1990s. There is, indeed, an unmistakable similarity between the language of the English curriculum and the political and social agenda of the New Right as articulated in New Zealand since the late 1980s. As outlined above, education is increasingly serving the economic imperative of the late twentieth century. Outcome

models, *ipso facto*, share little common ground with process models. As Kenway (1992: 69) has written, in the discourse of the former:

[k]nowledge is to be regarded as an investment which pays off for the individual in a job, for industry in a better trained labour force, and for the nation in economic growth. Education is to be thought of in market terms and the market is to guide educational priorities and funding.

There can be little doubt that the English curriculum can be seen in these “market” terms. McNaughton (1994: 26) writes of the ‘new culture of enterprise, innovation and competition in the curriculum’. Not surprisingly, therefore, the English statement is expressed in the language of the market: achievement targets, goals and outcomes. Though the curriculum’s prolegomena appear to reflect the personal growth model of English teaching, the text discourse itself reflects the competitive qualities of the commodification of knowledge:

[t]he achievement objectives provide the basis for planning programmes and for assessing a student’s language development at any one time. Learning is enhanced when students have clear concepts of their learning goals ... the objectives determine whether the language aims are being achieved, to establish what an individual student can do, and to decide what the next step should be (Ministry of Education 1994a: 19, 20).

McTaggart (1992: 78), writing in an Australian context, argues that the commodification of knowledge and concomitant descriptors of performance are:

imposed by people who know little about education working within an ideological economism with little to recommend and much to condemn about it. These descriptors are also reductionist and simplistic - designed to allow judgement by those who do not understand and do not want to understand how complex and how morally demanding educational work actually is.

In short, the curriculum statement in terms of its structure attempts to marry two ideological positions: growth model theory is set alongside a discourse which promotes language development as a serial progression. The contrast, present throughout the development process, is even more apparent in the published statement. Whereas the developers were obviously reluctant to specify separate achievement objectives at all eight levels and, indeed, only managed to so classify four of the original 33 substrands, the final

Ministry statement had all substrands tied precisely to the eight discrete achievement levels. And for Elley (1994: 41-43), there is an inevitability of dominance of one model over the other once achievement objectives are specified. '[C]hildren's learning', he notes, 'will quickly become a public system of accountability for the media, for the general public and for government agencies to report on the achievement levels of schools'. Additionally, teachers 'will narrow their aims to focus on the readily measurable'.

Support for Elley's perspective is, in fact, provided within the statement itself. For while the document states that the 'primary purpose' of assessment in English 'is to improve students' learning' (thus encouraging 'on-going assessment', 'self-assessment', 'peer assessment' and 'teacher assessment, in which progress and strengths are recognised, difficulties diagnosed, and strategies to overcome them planned'), nonetheless teachers are to evaluate students according to pre-specified levels, 'determin[ing] which level for a particular strand is the "best fit" for each student in terms of consistent performance' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 21). In this way, then, the English curriculum is able to be managed so that it serves the national and international market economy. Certainly education *per se* may become less important than progression through the achievement levels, results and "investment" potential.

To support this understanding of the English curriculum statement, one need only examine what is arguably the developers' major emphasis: the acquisition of skills. It should be noted that 'eight groupings of essential skills' is a central plank of *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education 1993: 17). These eight groupings - said to encompass other important groups of skills such as creative, valuing, and practical life skills - are described as follows:

- communication skills
- numeracy skills
- information skills
- problem-solving skills
- self-management and competitive skills
- social and co-operative skills

- physical skills
- work and study skills

The relationship between these skills and the cultural and economic imperatives of the 1990s as discussed above, is clear enough. Indeed, one of the National Government's key education policies has been the promotion and funding of skills-based training. The *Skill New Zealand* policy, for example, has been promoted as 'a way for people in the workplace to upskill and reskill to meet the needs of a changing economy' (Ministry of Education 1994b: 16). Central to the Government's aims is a 'highly skilled workforce at enterprise and industry level to enhance New Zealand's international competitiveness' and a 'training and qualifications [*sic*] system which is highly responsive to the needs of enterprise and industry', and 'the development of a training culture in New Zealand' (Ministry of Education 1994b: 32). Given such a focus, it is not surprising that the English curriculum statement should emphasise skills over content. Indeed, the contractors argued that '[a]n English language curriculum is essentially skill-based' (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 24), and in the published statement there is an extended commentary on the place of skill development within English studies. The various skills are said to be 'integral', 'essential', 'important' and 'strongly encouraged' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 7).

A focus on skills' acquisition in the new English curriculum is interesting for several reasons. First, it was noted in Chapter 2 that in the 1960s the progressive apologists advocated skills and competencies as a democratic alternative to the mastery of knowledge and content which so characterised elitist pedagogy. From the late 1980s, however, conservative interests have welcomed such a direction as the developers of the English statement vigorously promoted a skills-based pedagogy. The skills-through-English approach has clearly proved to be an equally attractive position to politicians of the Right no less than it has to theorists and practitioners of the Left. There is clear evidence that in the formulation of the English curriculum there is a very visible connection with wider economic and cultural values. Key concerns are: 'full participation in society

and the world of work'; 'solving problems'; 'information-processing technologies'; 'tak[ing] increasing responsibility for [independent] learning' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 7).

To express it in different words, "learning how to learn" is central to the curriculum statement (see McNaughton 1996: 194-196). Teachers are advised that students 'should increasingly take responsibility for their own learning, work independently, and transfer their skills and knowledge to new learning' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 11).

And it can be legitimately argued, I believe, that this emphasis on learning how to learn reflects the postmodern structural shift in the political economy that was discussed earlier in this chapter. The current focus on life-long education, the need for flexible workers able to move from one job to another, the tying of the secondary school to the national economic effort is unmistakable, and something on which I shall comment further in the next chapter.

Also of interest is the new and seemingly contradictory *rapprochement* of Left and Right as both advocate a skills-based English teaching programme. Obversely, those critical of such a pedagogy also represent very broad ideological positions from both Right and Left. Karl Stead (1994: 13) writing a report for the conservative Education Forum, criticises the English statement for:

insist[ing] resolutely on "independent learning" rather than teaching, and on the acquisition of "skills" rather than knowledge. This is an emphasis taken over in the Draft, the language of which seems tortured in its efforts to keep to a minimum any suggestion that a teacher is a person in possession of a body of important knowledge and with authority to impart it.

From the perspective of the Left, Michael Peters and James Marshall (1990: 83), educationalists from Auckland University, are critical of the general trend in New Zealand's education system with respect to 'the collapse of the distinction between "education" and "training" ' and 'an emphasis on vocational education'. Marshall (1992, quoted in Irwin 1994: 13) argues further that '[a]n emphasis on skills takes us down a mealy mouth path that ignores wisdom and intelligent judgement'. And joining both Stead and Peters and Marshall with strong reservations about skills' training in the



curriculum is policy analyst Michael Irwin. Writing for the Education Forum he comments (1994: 12):

[o]ne result of the approach to skills in the curriculum framework could be a reductionist emphasis in teaching that simply seeks to identify particular activities with the development of particular skills without recognising the complex interaction between knowledge and skills. This would lead to a short-term approach to skill acquisition emphasising immediate competency in limited contexts without the knowledge and understandings that should underlie competency in any meaningful sense.

A second point of interest with respect to the emphasis on skill development is the ideological position it represents within English-teaching theory - and herein lies the connection with the commodification of knowledge discussed above. Especially when linked to attainment targets - as is the case in the latest English statement as distinct from the text discourse in NESC *Statement of Aims* - skills serve to reinforce the competencies required by the market and the economy. Ball *et al.* (1990: 77-78) argue that:

[t]he relationship of education to the state is exercised in terms of the state's role in providing the social and technical conditions for the reproduction of capitalism ... . The literacy of skills serves to provide docile and effective workers and acquisitive consumers ... . The attendant pedagogy rests on a strongly behaviourist notion of motivation by reward ... . The students will learn how best to "sell" themselves to prospective employers or clients, the values to be learned draw upon the world of advertising and the competitive market place ... . This carries with it the latter-day ideology of meritocracy, the idea that anyone can succeed, if they are skilful enough; everyone starts out equal.

Similar logic appears to be behind the current call - acknowledged in a supporting curriculum resource (Ministry of Education 1996: vii) - for more grammar teaching. Again, there is a curious juxtaposition here. It is a juxtaposition that I noticed when researching recent English curriculum development in Scotland. In that essay (and see Chapter 5, below), I argued that the English syllabus statements made clear reference to the cultural imperative of extending the range of what is taught to cover some of the demands of the current economic climate. Thus, the emphasis in the Scottish curriculum was on skills and competency-based modules. But, side by side with this focus was a preoccupation with standards and, even more specifically "correct" or "attractive" English.

Indeed, I argued that in the minds of some at least, skills and competencies became linked with grammar teaching. The irony here is that the skills' approach to English teaching advocated in the 1960s was a direct challenge to the traditional focus on grammar teaching. My conclusion was that the Right, though appearing to be progressive in its advocacy of skills, not only had its own economic agenda, but in its linking those skills to grammar lessons, had its own hegemonic social agenda too.

As a number of writers have shown (Goodson and Medway 1990; Walker 1990), the teaching of grammar has consistently reflected a social or political ideology as much as it has attempted to achieve mastery of language conventions. Goodson and Medway (1990: xi) assert that the imposition of "standard English" and the teaching of grammar are two practices by which the State, or powerful groups within it, are able to exercise power. They note that:

[o]n the face of it, the desirability of the teaching of grammar is a technical matter, to be decided in the light of considerations about how children best acquire proficiency and command of the conventions. The argument, however, has never been merely technical. The teaching of grammar has consistently been a plank of social and political programmes of a particular colour, and its aims have gone far beyond the promotion of grammatical knowledge or even of linguistic competence in the population.

Cameron, quoted by Goodson and Medway (1990: xi), argues similarly:

[h]istorically and synchronically, "authority" is the significance grammar has usually had whenever the subject has erupted into public consciousness ... Grammar is meant not as a tool of reflection on one's language but as a means to restore order in place of chaos.

And it is not always *linguistic* chaos which is most relevant. Extraordinary as it may seem, grammar has become a symbol for order and discipline in all spheres of life; it stands for all the traditional rules of conduct which are perceived as being in decline.

In the light of such comments, and my own study of the changing role of grammar teaching in the United Kingdom, it is a matter of some interest to observe the place of grammar within the curriculum statement under review and the debate surrounding the text discourse. It should be noted at the outset, that in the drafting process - a process where the discussion statements were not released to the public and where only the

Ministry received copies with the principal contractor's introduction - the approach to the structural aspects of English language mirrored the approach of the growth model of teaching. The contractors agreed (Bendall, 12 June 1992: 8) that:

[k]nowledge about language, and language analysis, are elements of units which teach and assess a range of other language skills. Language study is not seen as a discrete activity, but as part of a process of thinking about oral language or written language or media language.

Such a statement would not have looked out of place in the earlier NESC *Statement of Aims* or the pre-Robinson senior syllabus drafts. The contractors showed their preference for 'thinking critically about language' to 'knowledge about language' (Bendall, 12 June 1992: 27). In the light of this clear positioning it is therefore all the more significant to chart the changes both in the subsequent drafts and the final statement with respect to the structural aspects of language and its teaching.

The milestone report prepared two months after the above comments, noted that the committee was seeking help 'with the language issues inherent in the rationale and ways of including *knowledge about language* in the curriculum' (emphasis added; Bendall, 3 August 1992: 3). The principal contractor made it clear that the Ministry and various policy advisory groups reading the drafts were concerned that 'knowledge about language could be lost' (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 6). Against these concerns the contractor noted that '[w]e still feel strongly that "knowing about" should not be an objective in itself'. It was argued that the contractors' approach would not result in what the Ministry believed would be 'language awareness as second-class and incidental'. The contractors were firm in their view that 'the objectives should not include knowing about language as an end in itself' (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 7). And yet, in the 2 October 1992 version of the curriculum statement a separate Appendix was provided under the heading: 'Terminology to describe techniques, tools and grammar in the discourse of oral, written and visual language'. There followed 87 terms. The developer was clearly uneasy. A marginal handwritten note reads: 'A brainstorming only. Could it

possibly work ...?' and the introduction to the Draft noted the need 'to edit the knowledge about language appendix'. By July 1993 the developers stated that 'the kind of specific knowledge about language which could be relevant at each level ... will be accorded priority' (Bendall, 9 July 1993: 8), although they were still of the view that knowledge about language should be 'integrated through teaching and learning suggestions, in the process of exploring language' (Bendall, 9 July 1993: 2). And in the contractors' final statement before the release of the Ministry's published Draft, discomfort with highlighting 'mechanics/accuracy/style' was again evident (Bendall, 11 August 1993: 5).

Clearly, then, there was considerable reluctance on the part of the development team to accede to the requests of the Ministry and review groups. Although there was some movement in the direction of language instruction, the contractors remained adamant that such knowledge was not an end in itself; that it should be integrated into the various strands and activities that comprised the study of English. The public and teaching professionals were aware neither of the contractors' views nor of the evident pressure applied by the Ministry. The significance of the statement 'Learning about Language' as it appeared in the Ministry's Draft and subsequently in the final statement was therefore unable to be contextualised by readers of the new curriculum. The statement that '[k]nowledge about language is an area of intrinsic interest, worthy of attention in its own right' and 'expressed in relevant terminology' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 17) stands in stark contrast to the developers' views. It should also be noted that the additional statement in the Draft that 'students must learn about the conventions of formal written English' (Ministry of Education 1993a: 20) was changed in the final statement to the more emphatic 'students must learn the conventions of formal English' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 17). The role of the Ministry in changing the discourse was not lost on the principal developer. Bendall (1994a: 2-3) remarks that the 'complex process of negotiation and compromise ... was not always a comfortable process'. She adds:

I believe that the original team of developers should have been strongly represented during the editing of the draft for production ... .

I think a few of the decisions made during the editing inevitably lacked a full understanding of what was intended, and some changes in language confused several important issues ... . The goodwill and commitment of contracted writers is diminished when they are effectively held responsible for a document revised by others in their absence.

It is therefore unlikely that the developers would have given their complete assent to the curriculum statement's insistence that students develop an understanding of 'text structure' and 'grammar' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 17) - at least in the way it was expressed. And while the growth model notion of language in context had certainly not been discarded, it is evident that there was a change of focus in accord with what Bendall calls (1994a: 5) the 'strong push internationally to return to the teaching and learning of English to a solid foundation of "knowledge about language" '. The nature of this "push" within the New Zealand context and the reasons for it are the issues to which I now turn.

The call for grammar teaching in the early 1990s was common to a number of different interest groups. The public interest in the debate has certainly been fuelled by the feature writing of Agnes-Mary Brooke (on whom see Scalan 1992: 33-39) who became well known in the mid 1980s for her views on appropriate literary texts for senior secondary school study. For Brooke there is an intrinsic relationship between the teaching of grammar and what she refers to as "standards". And it is also clear that by "standards" she means certain values as much as she means a grasp of written conventions. 'Traditional areas of teaching, the minimalising of the teaching of grammar and syntax' have been 'elbow[ed] aside' in favour of 'fashionable socio-political issues'. Indeed the curriculum has been:

hijacked by those wedded to concepts of social engineering, by those who envisaged the use of these subjects to inculcate certain attitudinal values among young New Zealanders, especially in relation to activist issues of gender and sex, to ethnicity, socialism and feminism, to environmental and peace studies.

In Brooke's view, grammar is nothing short of the antidote to such excesses. She is adamant that if grammar is not taught it is inevitable that 'our quality of thinking, of living, is also impoverished' (*Press* 6 June 1994: 11); that tuition in grammar 'provides a better chance for [parents'] offspring'; that a grasp of the conventions of the English language promotes 'discipline' (*Press* 5 January 1995: 11).

Other writers in the country's press made similar comments. A ten page article in *North and South* (June 1993) entitled 'Our Literacy: reading the writing on the wall' called for a reinstatement of grammar to turn the tide of linguistic 'gobbledegook', enable choice of occupation, facilitate 'what you will do with your life, where you will go next and what you want for your children', and reverse the grip television has on society. Several editorials emphasised the social engineering versus grammar teaching theme (*Press*, 7 February 1991; *The Mail*, 9 June 1994: 10; *Star*, 12 October 1994; *Press*, 2 November 1994). In the words of the *Star* leader, it was a choice between 'the basics of grammar [and] a more liberal and self-expressive curriculum'; and for the *Press* editor it was a choice between a 'therapeutic' and 'academic' form of English. Failing to teach grammar 'threatens also to cheat [students] of a fulfilling future' (21 May 1994).

Also prominent in the call for a return to the teaching of grammar has been the Education Forum - to which incidental reference has already been made in this chapter. Formed in 1992 'to contribute to education policy through research and debate on the current issues, structures, and expectations at all levels of New Zealand education', the Education Forum is 'an association of individuals [with membership] drawn from primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of education, together with leaders of industry and commerce'. The principles on which it was founded include a number of priorities articulated by the New Right: healthy competition, adaptability, enterprise, goal setting, discipline, accountability, parental choice, and self-management (*The Education Digest*, April 1993: iii). In addition to commissioning reports, the Education Forum has also been active in publishing - in the quarterly *Education Digest* - collections of articles, extracts

and media reports from within New Zealand and from abroad. And while *The Education Digest* covers a wide range of material, in each issue there have been articles on literacy standards and the debate on grammar teaching. Further, in its specific report on the Draft curriculum, the Education Forum (1994: 1-2, 26) affirmed the importance of grammar and of 'measuring attainments ... in spelling, punctuation [and] vocabulary'.

Politicians argued similarly. The fact that political figures joined the debate on grammar teaching is, in itself, of interest - reinforcing the ideological dimension of English teaching discussed in Chapter 1. Certainly it is very much a feature of the debate in the United Kingdom (Stoop 1992) which has been reported in New Zealand (Gordon 1991). Again, its teaching in this country has been linked more with "standards" and "excellence" than it has with any language-based argumentation. The then Minister of Education, Lockwood Smith, was especially eager to ensure that grammar be emphasised in the English curriculum. Indeed, at the time of the release of the Draft in 1993 Smith announced (*Education Weekly* 11 October 1993: 1) the 'strengthened' place of grammar in English studies, arguing that it was 'essential that students understand English grammar, word meanings, and how to spell accurately'. Smith made similar comments in the *North and South* article referred to above. But perhaps the most interesting of the statements by politicians linking grammar to standards came from another cabinet minister, Simon Upton, whose feature article in the *Press* (27 June 1994: 11) was titled: 'Civility, honesty, grammar - the other skills needed to get ahead'. Upton links 'muddled tenses' and 'manners' aware that '[t]his is a minefield, prey to hijack by snobs and dismissed by progressives', though sure that teaching grammar leads to students who are 'willing, open to instruction and prepared to go the extra mile' - something which he notes is 'a huge advantage in the market place'.

Joining the politicians in the call for grammar teaching has been the moral Right. Issue 13 of *Cutting Edge* (1994: 5), for example, notes that:

[c]areful use of language will enable us to make good moral decisions on strong objective grounds, that is, on the objective criteria of people's rights and dignity and not on my subjective whims and fancies.

Several other articles, though some from Australian publications, brought together in *The Education Digest* (April and November issues 1994) advance similar sentiments.

A fourth group expressing views on the role and significance of grammar teaching have been the educationalists themselves. Though putting distance between them and the arguments of the political and moral Right, they have nonetheless called for a return to a greater understanding of the structure of English language. This has been true even within the ranks of the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (*The Dominion*, 14 December 1995; *English in Aotearoa*, 25, June 1995: 54-55; 26, September 1995: 4-12; *The Education Digest*, August 1995: 179). Indeed, when in late 1993 the Ministry of Education perhaps not surprisingly identified Language as a priority in the development of a series of resources to support the English curriculum statement, the NZATE made a formal registration of interest and was subsequently awarded the development contract (*The Education Gazette*, 1 May 1995: 11; see Appendix 8). The use of academics - first Graham McGregor from the University of Otago and subsequent to his withdrawal Elizabeth Gordon from the University of Canterbury (*English in Aotearoa*, 22, 1994: 29; 24, 1994: 6) - as principal developers was regarded by the Ministry as 'a strength' in the Association's proposal (*NATE News*, November 1993: 1). And though the resource - published in 1996 - covered a range of language-related issues, a specific 'grammar toolbox' was the resource's central focus. In nearly 80 pages, the contractors provide 'a guide to understanding the internal structure of sentences and words, and the related terminology' (Ministry of Education 1996: 25). This approach was defended on the grounds that '[s]tudents are clearly capable of learning and understanding simple grammatical terminology at a very young age. When given frequent exposure, terms become familiar and start to be used' (*English in Aotearoa*, 24, 1994: 10; see also Ministry of Education 1996: 4). The contrast between this statement



and statements made about grammar teaching at the time of the NESC developments is stark.

The concept of this resource has, in fact, been vigorously defended - though rather self-consciously. As Gordon herself has written (1994: 153, 154), 'when teachers see us writing a language resource some are understandably suspicious and ask whether we are not perhaps dancing to the Business Round table's [*sic*] tune'. She argued, however, that suspicion can be seen as 'the product of ignorance and fear' and that 'resistance seems to be especially focussed on the use of technical terms'. Another linguist argued similarly (*English in Aotearoa*, 26, September 1995: 4-12) when he stated that though 'the thought that you might have to teach overtly about the structure of language is a frightening one ... knowledge about language allows you to tackle some matters far more efficiently than you would be able to if you simply had to rely on the non-existent intuitions of the students about formal written English'. Warwick Elley, too, in the 1990s, has been beating the grammar drum, though conscious that it 'may seem strange, coming from one who researched the role of grammar, and found it irrelevant to good writing' (1994: 44; see also Chapter 2 above). But Elley argues that 'there are other reasons for teaching it, and I do believe the pendulum against it swung too far'. Gordon, too, has written (1994: 153) that:

I can see many good reasons why we should know about the structure of our language, and how it is used. For teachers this knowledge is essential if they are going to be able to talk [*sic*] about language in the classroom, and also if they are going to be able to describe their pupils' writing and speaking in a precise and useful way.

Even the President of NZATE wrote approvingly (*English in Aotearoa* 23, 1994: 53) of the:

emphasis in the [curriculum] on the development of a systematic knowledge about the English language, about its structures, its component parts, its functions ... . Never before has such a comprehensive programme for developing understanding of the "grammar" of English been proposed for New Zealand schools.

Though the President's statement was in response to a comment that there was not enough emphasis on grammar in the curriculum document, there is still a certain irony about his words given the reactions of the NZATE to Robinson's changes to the senior syllabus statement (*English in Aotearoa*, 14 1991: 6; 15 1991: 12 - 17) as discussed in the previous chapter. It is also significant that the Ministry's own research project (Ministry of Education 1994c: 46) into teachers' reactions to the Draft curriculum statement concluded that 87.9% of respondents support all or most of the learning about language aims.

In addition to the skills-grammar issue, there were other tensions and contradictions, too - tensions and contradictions which reflect the central thesis of this study. Foremost among them was the title of the curriculum statement. From the outset the developers referred to the document as an *English Language* statement. The Policy Advisory Group was, however, less than happy with the nomenclature and sought what the principal developer calls 'more justification for the term' (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 22).

Though seemingly a small matter, the disagreement on the title of the statement gets to the heart of the wider conflict between progressive and establishment views. It is true that the use of the words *English* and *language* was, in part, an attempt to bring together the primary and secondary perspectives. Primary school teachers have long described themselves as language rather than English teachers (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 38; Bendall 1994a: 6; Bendall 1994b: 25, 26). However, the unpublished introduction to the August 1992 Draft reveals that other issues were also involved. For the use of the word language was as much a statement on the nature of English teaching as it was a means of 'signal[ing] a new curriculum which incorporated the best of primary and secondary practice' (Bendall 1994a: 6). The word language was important to the developers because it referred to the 'wide range of modes of language' and suggested a 'wide range of contexts in which language skills should be developed' (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 40,41). Further, the contract team argued that calling the

document a language statement 'affirms that the new curriculum must be explicit in describing the full range of language skills which make an individual fully literate in English'. 'Language', it was observed, is a word which includes 'learning of transferable skills'. Such a justification is, of course, reminiscent of the growth model of English teaching which is outlined in Chapter 2, and which had as its central concept 'language in operation' (Dixon 1967: 14).

Notwithstanding the developers' insistence on the word language in the title, the Ministry's published Draft and the final statement was called, simply, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. And in an address to a conference sponsored by the Dunedin Curriculum Institute, Bendall (1994a: 6) explained the Ministry's change in these terms: 'the Ministry used the word English, to keep consistency with other language-statements, in Samoan and Mandarin, for example'. But this statement obscures what was, arguably, the key reason for the change to the developers' description of the statement. Because at issue here was a conception of what constitutes English teaching - a matter which was obliquely raised by Bendall in an NZATE conference paper (1994b: 25), when she noted that the Ministry's decision was supported by tertiary commentators who saw the emphasis on language as an attempt to sideline literature. To be sure, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the change in title is partially explicable in these terms.

It should be noted, first, that whereas the NESC document and the senior syllabus statements all mentioned literature and its importance in teaching programmes, the national curriculum statement in its pre-publication draft forms made no specific reference to literature at all. Indeed, the contractors argued that to call the statement English is to link it with 'literature' and 'the universities' own prescription for English as a subject'. This influence was deemed to be 'restrictive' (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 39). In fact, the closest the developers got to even mentioning literature was their statement that a 'wide variety of texts should be used (non-literary, literary, informational, expressive, non-fictional and

fictional)', (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 55). Bendall (1994a: 6) noted elsewhere that the developers were, indeed, 'uncomfortable with the current dominance of literature in programmes which should be meeting the needs of an increasingly wide range of students'. The concern was that literature 'could seem to consist of the largely English canon, written mostly by men, in a gender inclusive curriculum, for all New Zealanders' (1994a: 7). Bendall admits that the developers' model 'was simply not acceptable' to some contributors to the development process. She notes that it 'was important to them that the place of literature was seen as unique, and explicitly protected' (Bendall 1994a: 7).

Not surprisingly, this is what happened. Whereas in the developers' drafts - which, it is stressed again, were not released to the teaching community - literature had no special place, in the Ministry's published Draft a separate section, 'Literary Texts', was included. It was stated (Ministry of Education 1993a: 19) that the curriculum statement 'affirms the importance of literature for literary development, for imaginative development, and for developing personal social, cultural, historical, and national awareness and identity'. It was also noted that school programmes should 'encourage close and careful reading of literary texts and the development of the skills of literary criticism'.

For the contractors this emphasis was unnecessary. It was unnecessary because they were working to a different model of English teaching. Their debt to the NESC statement and the growth model of English teaching on which the NESC was based has been discussed above. But it should also be noted that the developers were following a quite distinct notion of English teaching within the more general growth model (McNaughton 1996: 194-196). Nowhere in the various rationales within the unpublished drafts is this approach named, and in the published comments on their work the developers only twice allude to the framework which guided their work. Commenting on their emphasis on language rather than literature, Bendall (1994b: 26) notes that they drew on new

theories of 'rhetoric' and that 'the rhetorical model of language seemed sensible' (1994a: 7).

The rhetorical model of English teaching is, as Bendall intimates, 'new'. In his accounts of rhetorical theory Richard Andrews (1992, 1994) quotes literary critic Terry Eagleton who argued in 1982 that the aim should be to 'abolish literary criticism and revive rhetoric in its place ... by which I mean the study of ways in which any discourse whatsoever achieves its effects' (Andrews 1994: 39). Andrews himself (1992: 5) defines rhetoric as the 'arts of discourse' and again the emphasis is on *any* discourse. The emphasis, too, is on 'a political conception of language study: one that understands that texts are socially situated' (Andrews 1994: 39). Rhetoric, though appropriating the techniques of linguistic analysis:

goes further than linguistics because it also takes into account the social context and the arts employed in making communication successful within that context (1994: 39).

Thus, the rhetorical perspective is one that is 'multi-voiced' (1994: 40). Language discourse is 'provisional'. Certainly it 'frees ... from convention'. Andrews notes that '[i]f you assumed it was conventional to write essays (monologic essays), you can explore other forms of expression to fulfil the same function'. He notes that '[t]his is a liberating, optimally subversive perspective ...'.

Rhetoric, too, is 'not bound by the written word' (1994: 41). Indeed, it operates in and applies to any semiotic system. In this view any language discourse is 'grist to the educational mill' and a 'rich resource for study and pleasure. It follows that rhetoric 'is aware of power relations and inequalities in discourse situations'. Andrews claims that '[q]uestions of gender, race and class are given sharp focus by rhetoric because rhetoric highlights and is always aware of the particular context of a moment of communication'.

Clearly, there are two key emphases in the rhetorical perspective - emphases which distinguish it from the growth model. Its socio-political dimension with the focus on what Andrews calls 'the acceptance and exploration of difference' reflects the postmodern emphases that were outlined earlier in this study; and its focus on language discourse, *any* language discourse (including that *not* linked to verbal language but rather semiosis in a much wider sense) has the inevitable result, to use Andrew's words, of 'placing language as the more central issue than literature' in English teaching programmes. Andrews' (1994: 44) point is that a rhetorical perspective has

the power to argue the cause of English - against politicians who would like to reduce it to spelling and handwriting, against some curriculum planners who would like to squeeze it out altogether ... .

In the light of this model, the debate - which, it must be admitted, was not a widespread or particularly public debate - on the title of the English curriculum statement takes on wider significance. For this was more than a debate about the difference between primary and secondary terminology; it was a debate, indeed, about the meaning of English as a subject. Those who favoured literature as a central, perhaps *the* central, concern of an English curriculum statement, were clearly alarmed that the title, English language, reflected, in fact, a reality: the absence of a special place for literature. The developers' draft (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 23) affirmed instead that:

[L]earners need to experience a rich and varied language environment to develop the knowledge, skills and imaginative awareness specific to an English Language programme. A wide range of written, spoken and visual texts will enlarge each individual's experience of language and increase the chances for every learner to become involved and interested in their own language learning. In this document, the term "text" describes any language artefact, written, spoken or visual.

The parallels between this statement and Andrews' theory of rhetoric are too close to miss. Against this language emphasis, and especially in relation to the absence of a statement on the centrality of literature, the 'tertiary teachers' (Bendall 1994b: 25) reacted strongly. Robinson's views on the place and importance of literature in an English curriculum statement have been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. It is perhaps significant

that Robinson chaired the Policy Advisory Group and Bendall, in her introduction to the 3 August 1992 Draft (1992: 22), notes that it was the Policy Advisory Group which expressed some disquiet with the title. Other tertiary teachers joined the debate (Bendall 1994a: 6; 1994b: 25), including Stead who, in his report for the Education Forum on the published Draft, argued that 'a sufficient emphasis on literature' was missing. Stead's argumentation (Education Forum 1994: 28-29) was similar to Robinson's:

The crown of English studies ought to be the encounter with literature, which offers the best, richest and most exciting examples of language use, the folk stories of our inherited European culture as well as the tales of our own settler and post-colonial experience - a fund of wisdom, a storehouse of fact, and a range of experience beyond the powers of any one person to live through in many lifetimes. The very best of poetry or fiction exposes readers, as often as they care to open a good book, to the influence of minds and sensibilities finer, more developed, richer, than they are likely to meet more than once or twice, if ever, in real life.

And in a direct attack on the model of English teachers promoted by the developers, Stead argues that:

[i]t is not good enough for an English syllabus to signal vaguely in the direction of this great treasure house, indicating that teachers should show their students around, or tell them where the keys are kept, as and when it seems appropriate and possible.

Any failure to 'trumpet [literature's] worth' would mean, Stead suggested, New Zealand 'resign[ing] itself to becoming an intellectual and cultural backwater'.

This debate between the developers' model on the one hand, and the more established literary model on the other hand, was certainly a heated and protracted debate. Bendall writes of using the word 'language' in the title 'until the bitter end' (1994a: 6), and 'argu[ing] hard' for the retention of their title (1994b: 27), noting that 'the Ministry rejected our strenuous arguments' (1994b: 28). And while, it is true, that the introduction to the published form of the curriculum statement does define 'text' as 'any language event' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 16) and encourages 'the use of a full range of texts representing a wide variety of language functions', the statement nonetheless adds what the developers felt comfortable in leaving out; namely, that 'a focus on literary

criticism will be appropriate for many in the senior secondary school' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 16).

Though there was vigorous debate on the title of the statement, and though the debate clearly reflected the larger debate on the place of literature, it is important to note that other progressive aspects of the curriculum remained. The Ministry officials and various reference groups seemed content that a statement on literature overlies rather than completely replace other concepts in the developers' drafts. Thus, in the final statement there is, indeed, an odd juxtaposition of ideas. The special place afforded to literature therefore stands alongside a separate strand devoted to what is called 'visual language'. The visual element in English was championed by the NESC and the many committees involved in the senior syllabus reforms of the late 1980s, but with the national curriculum statement there is a quite significant new focus.

It was noted in Chapter 3 that the cultural studies paradigm conceptualises language broadly: it is not merely verbal play but a whole social semiotic embracing many and varied semiotic systems. The chapter outlined how the development committees worked within this broader perspective only to have such ideas modified in the Robinson Draft. The contractors who worked on the national curriculum statement also adopted the inclusive view of language. This was hardly surprising given the rhetorical model of teaching which informed their writing, for as Andrews (1992: 11) states 'the closest [approach] to a rhetorical perspective is that of English as "cultural studies" '. In the drafts, language was manifestly not seen as having a linguistic bias; rather *image* was also deemed to be part of language. This signals a shift in the teaching of English - a shift sanctioned by the Minister, and the Ministry in both its published Draft and final statement.

Throughout the drafting process the developers maintained a constant position (Bendall, 2 October 1992: 32-33):



In the contemporary world, learners encounter words in the company of images as often as they encounter words in isolation. To understand language and communication today, learners must add new skills in interpreting and using visual language to the reading and writing skills of the past. They need to learn about visual language, how to read signs and symbols and engage in the processes through which we make meaning from visual representations.

Although the Ministry's final statement used different words, the intent was very much the same (1994a: 39):

The study of visual language, which draws on semiotics, provides an understanding of the ways in which visual and verbal elements are combined to produce particular meanings and effects. It involves the interpretation of dramatic conventions, signs, symbols, and symbolic elements of visual language.

Perhaps noting the Policy Advisory Group's caution about the 'need for a language emphasis' within the visual strand (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 7), the Ministry's statement added that '[w]ithin the English curriculum, the study of visual language focuses on forms of communication which directly incorporate words or have a direct relevance to linguistics' (1994a: 39). Notwithstanding this qualification, the official statement was a significant departure from any other published description of English studies. Writing in a more generalised context, Green (1993: 8) highlights the shift when he writes that:

it is useful to see the concept of image as signifying a potentially decisive shift in English teaching, in important respects developing out of but also emphatically transcending mainstream New English perspectives on language and popular culture, and in the process - importantly - redefining the relationship between them. This means moving away from what can be seen as an over-investment in the verbal sign and its associated forms of abstract rationality and decontextualization, so as to draw more upon the body as a medium of communication and expression, as well as the embodied, incarnate, multimedia signs and images of electronic culture.

To be sure, there were strong protests against the emphasis on visual language. Stead (Education Forum 1994: 6) suggested that emphasising visual language - an 'unhelpful metaphor' and 'a deliberate misuse of language' - is a particularly poignant example of the 'confusion which has seriously damaged the teaching of English in New Zealand at the secondary level'. Similarly, Agnes-Mary Brooke (*Press* 5 January 1995: 11; see also *The Dominion*, 1 February 1994, and 27 May 1994, reprinted in *The Education Digest*, November 1994: 85-86) argued that the focus on image 'could too readily provide

diversionary substitutes for requiring students to read the best writers and revisiting genuine standards of literacy'. Yet, the two most influential figures in the earlier reform process, Robinson and the Minister of Education, Smith, both of whom doubted the value of the original statements on visual literacy in the earlier senior syllabus drafts, argued *for* the emphasis. Though Robinson was doubtless party to the Policy Advisory Group's recommendation on strengthening the language focus, he nonetheless averred (*The Dominion*, 22 February 1994) that the visual literacy component of the English curriculum 'deals demandingly with many aspects of modern communications'. Further, he supported the 'use of visual language technologies to organise and communicate information'. Smith, similarly, supported the emphasis. Giving attention to 'modern technologies' and 'media images' was deemed to be an appropriate focus. And in a statement that stands in contrast to his views on the earlier senior syllabus, Smith was quoted (*The Education Weekly* 11 October 1993: 1-2) as saying, '[f]rom an early age, students will have access to a wider range of language styles than is the case in all schools now'.

It was further reported that:

Dr Smith said they will learn to appreciate that different styles of language are used in different contexts. The different contexts will include everything from the most traditional formal letter to electronic messages; from literature of established critical reputation: to a scientific report; from literature in dusty times to literature on an electronic screen.

In private conversation (11 July 1994), Lockwood Smith, the Minister of Education, simply argued that because visual imagery was such a pervasive aspect of our social and cultural environment, he was now persuaded that it was an appropriate dimension for study within the English curriculum.

Detractors, like Stead, accounted for this support (*The Dominion*, 22 March 1994) in terms of Smith's and Robinson's involvement in the development process:

The draft syllabus which Professor Robinson defends is one which I am convinced he would be appalled by if he came upon it having had no involvement in its making and no sense of there being thanks due for small mercies.

Stead's statement cannot be altogether dismissed. Robinson's defence of the curriculum, entitled *Bearing the English Standard* (*The Dominion*, 22 February 1994), was vigorous: 'the most demanding and substantial English programme ever put forward for New Zealand schools'; 'it incorporates the best from all points of view in a pluralist approach'; 'it is the work of a network of "reference groups", chosen from outstanding English teachers ... the final version could, just possible, be a world leader'. Of course, notwithstanding Robinson's and Smith's involvement, it was equally possible that they simply appreciated the unchallengeable nature of image in late twentieth century culture. Writing of this reality, McRobbie (1986: 111) argues that:

[s]ymbolically the image has assumed a contemporary dominance. It is no longer possible to talk about the image and reality, media and society. Each has become so deeply intertwined that it is difficult to draw the line between the two.

McRobbie (1986: 115) adds that:

[t]here is no going back. For populations transfixed on images which are themselves a reality, there is no return to a mode of representation which politicizes in a straightforward, "worthwhile" way ... .

There is evidence, within the curriculum document, that this was the developers' and the Ministry's view. In the introduction to the visual language strand (Ministry of Education 1994a: 39), the curriculum statement advances the position that students are being confronted with 'increasingly global systems of communication'. It is quite possible that it had become Robinson's and Smith's position as well. Though not justified in terms of the theory of English teaching, and most certainly not in terms of the theory adopted by the contractors, support from the Minister and the Chair of the Policy Advisory Group fell into the hands of the developers who were clearly very certain about why visual language should be studied.

This official sanctioning of so-called progressive aspects of English teaching is seen in other parts of the curriculum statement, too. It was noted in Chapter 3, for example, that in the official re-statements of the senior syllabus cultural difference was democratised - something that was especially evident with respect to the issue of biculturalism in English studies. In the national curriculum statement, however, biculturalism in general and the incorporation of Maori literature and language in particular, were unambiguously central to the statement's focus. The emphases of the various committees that developed the senior syllabus only to be sanitised by the Robinson committee and Ministry officials, were re-instated not only by the contracted developers but by the Ministry itself.

In the published statement (1994a: 14) teachers are specifically directed:

Programmes must be planned so that Maori students are able to achieve confidence and excellence in English ... teachers are to be knowledgeable about Maori culture ... . Maori knowledge is [to be] affirmed and respected in the classroom ... programmes [are to be] relevant to Maori students ... teachers should include Maori perspectives. New Zealand texts, including those by Maori authors and about Maori, should form a significant part of the wide range of texts that students will explore.

The notion of difference is affirmed in other areas, too. The needs of students from language backgrounds other than English and Maori are highlighted, as are learners with special needs. And in the statement on the gender-inclusive curriculum (1994a: 13), the specific needs of girls and boys are outlined. The statement was sufficiently strong for Stead (Education Forum 1994: 17) to condemn it for attempting:

[t]o turn the teaching of English suddenly and crudely into an instrument of social policy, without any precise knowledge or agreement either of *what* is the state of affairs that is to be changed, or *how* the change might best be brought about.

Whatever one might think of Stead's analysis of the Ministry's inclusive statement on gender issues in English teaching, certainly he was correct to write of the 'sudden' change, because in no previous statement - including, of course, the senior syllabus published three years earlier - were the needs of girls and women so explicitly stated.

The national curriculum not only emphasised 'equitable access to resources' and 'equitable outcomes', but also the selection of texts which reflect 'the achievements, interests, and perspectives of girls, women, boys, and men'. In response, the Education Forum (1994: 17) made the point similar to that made by the various dominant interests at the time of the senior syllabus reforms:

[t]o balance the choice of texts as between male and female authors ... is to misrepresent literary history, since for whatever reasons (and they belong to the study of social history) women writers were relatively few prior to the twentieth century. That it is fashionable to deplore this fact does not alter it, nor to supply a shortfall of good pre-twentieth century texts by women.

The Education Forum clearly believed there was something new or 'sudden' here. Although it was manifestly not new in terms of the process behind successive syllabus and curriculum statements, nonetheless it was a departure with respect to *published* statements. For whereas the Ministry's 1992 syllabus affirmed the importance of 'balance and range' (1992: 9), the 1994 curriculum was more directive in its comments.

It remains to ask, and answer, the question why in the interim these changes of emphasis had become less contentious; why the Ministry felt comfortable in the mid 1990s in making statements it was reluctant to sanction in the late 1980s and early 1990s? It is certainly possible to argue that New Zealand society in the 1990s has been experiencing the effects of an increasingly postmodern cultural and political climate - the key tenets of which have been outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study. Certainly within education generally there has been increased awareness of the needs of minority groups and of the importance of affirming what postmodern theorists refer to as "otherness". The Government's own statement in its document *Education for the 21st Century* (Ministry of Education 1994b: 34) exemplifies this awareness:

An important role of government is to create an educational environment in which the benefits of education are available to all through fair systems of access.

The Treaty of Waitangi, the changing roles of women and men, the growing proportion of our population from Pacific Island nations, our social and cultural diversity, and the

increasing inclusion in our communities of people with disabilities have made us aware of barriers to participation and success in education which need to be removed.

It has been noted in these pages, however, that postmodern themes can also serve very conservative causes. Though attempting to celebrate individuality and difference and a radical cultural politics, postmodernism can at the same time be criticised for not extending the democratic values of modernism. This, indeed, is Harvey's argument. He contends (1990: 113) that 'in its concern for difference ... for the complexity and nuances of interest, cultures, places, and the like, it exercises a positive influence'. Harvey continues:

[t]he meta-languages, meta-theories, and meta-narratives of modernism (particularly in its later manifestations) did tend to gloss over important differences, and failed to pay attention to important disjunctions and details.

Yet, equally central to Harvey's thesis (1990: 117) is that while postmodern thinking opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices it also:

shuts off those other voices from access to more conventional sources of power by ghettoizing them within an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities, colonized peoples, the unemployed, youth etc.) in a world of top-sided power relations.

Harvey's conclusion is that the 'rhetoric of postmodernism is dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power'. In this view, postmodernism is little more than a banal form of political correctness or something which, to again use Harvey's words (1990:1 17), 'comes dangerously close to complicity with the aestheticizing of politics ...'. And following Harvey's argument, I wish to advance the contention that the marked changes to the English curriculum discourse in its affirmation of difference reflect more a political correctness than a genuine attempt to link knowledge and democratic commitment. In support of this view it is necessary to return to the contractors' drafts of the national curriculum statement.

In the contractors' drafts there was a definite political commitment with respect to what constitutes English studies. They affirm, for example (Bendall, 3 August 1992: 44), that 'language and culture ... are closely related'; that 'personal identity, an understanding of the culture which supports that sense of identity and the ability to use language are interrelated'; that '[a] learner's personal identity, self confidence and ability to use language are interrelated'. Throughout the drafting process, the contractors also included a section entitled 'The relationship between English Language and Power' (e.g. Bendall, 3 August 1992: 46, 47). Here the emphasis was on coming to terms with 'the ways in which language persuades, shapes understanding, creates personal, social and cultural identity, and constructs images of the world'. The focus was on 'empower[ing] individuals as they try to make sense of and shape their world'; enabling students to 'think critically about the relationship between language, power and their world'; encouraging students to 'become aware of how language can be used to condition, persuade and manipulate'.

Significantly, these references and the sub-headings under which they were grouped were eliminated in both the Ministry's Draft and the final, published, statement. The conception of English teaching as a political and cultural practice that encouraged critical debate and radical disagreement was no longer stressed. The developers argued that central to any notion of English studies was the relationship between authority and teaching on the one hand, and knowledge and power on the other. To appropriate the words of Giroux (1995: 136), the contractors were committed to a view of teaching 'premised on making choices about the production and use of knowledge as well as helping students understand the links that mutually inform the relationship between schooling and the larger society'. Certainly there was a commitment within the rationale of the various drafts to students engaging with larger social issues and understanding language as a means to thinking critically about those issues. In the Ministry's statements, however, this political aspect was no longer present. Though the form of words remained, the "otherness" was indeed 'opaque' (Harvey 1990: 117) because it

was divorced from the concept of power relations. There is little notion of the political dimension of the school as a site and English teaching as a practice. Instead, with the apparent specificity of the Ministry's 'language game' (Harvey 1990: 117), there is an avoidance of the realities of the very "otherness" the document purports to affirm. Once again, then, there has been an observable management of knowledge as the Ministry revised the contractors' discourse.

Thus, the national curriculum statement is a document replete with contradictions - contradictions which indicate it is mimetic of the tensions in the postmodern environment. On the one side, there is a link with the growth model and cultural studies paradigm that formed part of earlier attempts to reform the English curriculum. On the other side, there is an unmistakable accommodation with market forces which puts the statement firmly in the track of an entrepreneurial culture that is the hallmark of reactionary neoconservatism (Harvey 1990: 116). The contradictions, though, are readily explicable for they reflect the various perspectives of those who seek - consciously or unconsciously - to ensure that what counts as legitimate knowledge within an English curriculum does not challenge dominant social and cultural structures and hierarchies. To be sure, the curriculum is 'pluralist' in approach (Robinson, *The Dominion*, 22 February 1994). But the elements selected from within the pluralist positions support the teaching of received knowledge rather than transforming it in the interests of social growth or change. In this case, and in contrast to the reform of the senior syllabus in the late 1980s and early 1990s, any management of knowledge has been as much unconscious as it has been active, but nonetheless there is little in the curriculum which supports an on-going process of negotiation among different groups over the relationship between knowledge and power. And what an English curriculum might look like which does this is the question to which the thesis turns in Chapter 6.



## CHAPTER 5

### A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN SCOTLAND, 1970s-1990s

#### Introduction

The central thesis of this study of curriculum reform is that knowledge - understood here as what constitutes the study of the subject English in secondary schools - is managed, both consciously and unconsciously, in a hegemonic fashion. Derived in particular from the thought of Gramsci, hegemony refers to a relationship between socio-cultural groups in which the dominant group secures the conformity and consent, or at least, the acceptance and accommodation, of non-dominant groups to an established perspective. In this examination of curriculum change and development, I have argued that the ideological hegemony of the education establishment is clearly manifest. As Kaye (1991: 67) has written:

hegemony is a process of ruling not simply through force and coercion ... but as much as possible, by persuading the ruled that *the way things are is the way they ought to be*.

In the case of the English curriculum over the last 30 years - the period covered by this thesis - the ideas of the dominant intellectual group have been made the dominant ideas. Certainly those ideas have changed according to cultural and economic imperatives, but nonetheless the preceding chapters have demonstrated that the educational establishment has been able to 'define the parameters of legitimate discussion and debate over alternative beliefs, values and world views' (Sallach 1974: 41; quoted in Kaye 1991: 69). I have sought to show that although at times there have been contradictory threads running through the reforms, and although there has been an 'order of struggle' (Kaye 1991: 72) where there has been dispute and (minimal)

negotiation, the imperatives of the political and cultural elites have become embedded in the curriculum statements.

The phrase “political and cultural elites” has been carefully chosen, because English as a discipline - arguably more than any other discipline - has been the subject of unparalleled national public debate and political comment. This thesis has shown how public figures, including successive ministers of education, have become involved in the reform process. The reform of the English curriculum has been debated in Parliament and in *The National Business Review* (e.g. 16 December 1994) no less than it has been debated by practitioners and academics.

That there has been this “political” dimension to English studies in this country is a matter of interest, though not a matter of surprise. Goodson and Medway (1990: viii-ix) have argued that English has been a political battleground ‘continuously since mass schooling began’. The reason for the state’s interest in English is, Goodson and Medway claim, partly functional: ‘the demand of both administration and the economy require a literate population’. But English has also been:

relevant to the desire of states to determine how people perceive themselves, what they desire and fear, how they comport themselves within the structure of roles in the society, who they regard as ‘us’ and who as ‘them’ and how they regard the state itself. English, in other words, has more than other subjects in state schools been a medium of popular surveillance and socialization.

Thus, the political debate in New Zealand must be seen historically. It should also be viewed comparatively: it has its contemporary parallels in other countries, too. To highlight this fact, that is, to provide a comparative perspective to the conclusions of this thesis, and also to provide the springboard for a more theoretical analysis of what I regard to be an appropriate focus for the teaching of English, this study now turns to an examination of the ideology, politics and power in the teaching of English in Scotland. Scotland has been chosen because the study of English teaching in that country has not been documented in the way that a number of scholars have examined the situation

in England and Wales (e.g. Medway 1990) - despite, as will be shown, the quite bald political capture of the curriculum in Scotland. It is also an educational environment with which I am familiar, in which I have worked, about which I have written (Stoop 1992), and from which the idea of this thesis developed.

## Ideology, politics and power

Until the 1960s the English curriculum in Scotland was based on the liberal, civilising, romantic aesthetic of English teaching. A 1952 Scottish Education Department publication (quoted in Stoop 1992: 358) reflects this “great book” position when it is noted that:

... the main aim in teaching literature is not so much the imparting of information as the inculcation of a liberal culture ... . One of the distinctive functions of literature is to develop and refine emotional experience. As selected for schools, therefore, it should arouse no unworthy emotions.

The neo-Marxist challenge to established teaching practices saw support in the revision of the English curriculum in Scotland in the mid-1960s. Subsequent to the establishment of the Central Committee on English in 1966, the formal, structured, literary-critical approach was replaced by an emphasis on creativity, personalised reading and modern texts. The influence of linguistics was keenly felt and replaced the traditional Scottish preoccupation with grammar teaching. Thematic and life-related language and literary projects replaced the former commitment to technical appraisal. In general terms, there was a movement from criticism to response, from authorial intent to cultural relevance.

During the past two decades, however, new forces have been at work to reformulate the practices of English teaching in Scotland. There have been conscious attempts to reappropriate aspects of the critical tradition. At the same time there has been a reaffirmation - a strengthening even - of the student-centred pedagogy that has so characterised the progressive or growth model of English teaching. Both emphases, I would argue, are consistent with a much broader trend in Scottish, and wider British, culture. And both emphases can be clearly evidenced in official publications from Government's educational agencies and also from the pages of the Scottish Teachers' Journal, *Teaching English*. It is particularly instructive to survey the volumes of this

journal. Founded initially as a newsletter in 1968, *Teaching English* enjoyed an international reputation until publication ceased in 1989 when official support was withdrawn. It was established with clear intentions: 'to report upon, evaluate, modify, improve and challenge practice and orthodox ideas' (*Teaching English* 20 (1) 1986: 4). In brief, *Teaching English* was a key means of diffusing the new ideology. During the 1980s, however, there were increasingly vociferous contrary voices alongside the more established apologetic for the personal growth model of teaching English. Indeed, by the mid-1970s (which was earlier than in New Zealand) the progressivist tide showed signs of turning towards a more conservative approach to English teaching. There were teachers, college instructors, university academics and Conservative Government spokespersons and ministers who were affirming a modified Leavisite view of literature and its criticism.

Two influential instructors at Edinburgh's Moray House College of Education published articles in *Teaching English* in the mid-1970s (reprinted together in 20 (3) 1987) urging a reassessment of the prevailing literary progressivism. 'For some time', writes one (6 (3) 1973: 18-22):

at conferences of English teachers, at in-service courses and in casual conversations with colleagues, there have been signs that there is disquiet at the way in which English departments in schools have committed themselves to twentieth-century literature... . The Arts student who goes up to university without some knowledge of the literature, and *pari passu* the culture, of our recent past is at some disadvantage.

Interestingly, the writer notes the importance of the culture mediated through the 'great book' tradition and the reproductive element inherent in such tradition. Indeed, it is argued that:

... without knowledge of the past, thinking about present beliefs and values is not likely to be too successful and that experience of past writings is an effective way of achieving such *stabilising knowledge* [emphasis added].

Modern literature, it is further suggested, is not distinguished for its ability 'to achieve some sense of purpose and compassion or even staying power and happy wit'. The writer

then invokes 'the belief in Divine Order which appears in various forms from Chaucer to Browning' as an example of 'that order and inspiration in past writing'. In short, what was needed was to 'move beyond the world of ordinary concern'.

Significantly, the article centres around the cultural mores of order, meaning and stability rather than around the great books' literary merits *per se*. It is a position which reflects what Lamm (1969: 166) has called the 'moulding' pattern of curriculum discourse whereby given cultural patterns are internalised 'until their autonomous functioning within the culture is ensured'. Far from being an isolated opinion, others who were in the position of influencing teaching practice were to echo these comments in subsequent editions of *Teaching English* (e.g. 7 (1) 1973: 16-20, 9 (3) 1976: 7-11, 16 (1) 1982: 3-15, 19 (1) 1985: 9-12).

From the mid-1970s there was disquiet, too, in official circles. The then just-retired Principal Examiner of Higher Grade English lamented the demise 'of the old time-table of great books', and the lack of critical appraisal in the examination literature answers (*Teaching English* 9 (3) 1976 : 9-12). He noted that:

... too many of the answers in the examination are weak sloppy affairs in which any critical response is entirely absent ... one has to look for a long time for an answer that goes back to the text to nail evidence for whatever argument is being put forward.

For too long, he adds, teachers have 'done poems, plays and novels rather than teaching poetry, drama and fiction'. Moreover, 'literature is not sociology and should not be treated as such'. It is not without surprise, perhaps, that the writer noted in a subsequent *Teaching English* editorial (21 (3) 1989: 3) his admiration for the writings of Leavis.

Academics were to add their support to such views. It was imperative, wrote one (*Teaching English* 16 (1) 1982: 9), that there be provision of 'set texts of a decent literary standard studied for exegesis and comment'. Another (18 (3) 1985: 29) called for the

reintroduction of a 'technical lexicon' in secondary school literary teaching. Such a lexicon would give students certainty in 'a largely impressionistic value system', the accurate use of such analytic terms providing for students a 'purchase on the text, like crampons on an icefall'. It is a position, too, supported with some vigour by a recent Scottish Minister of Education (*The Times Scottish Educational Supplement* 30 March 1990: A1 & 2, Scottish Educational Department 1990: i-ii).

It is important to note the extent to which officials of the Education Department and Examination Board took cognisance of such views and the consequent departures from some of the more contested features of the progressivist approach of the 1960s and 1970s. The former Principal Examiner of English, quoted above, could note with approbation (*Teaching English* 9 (3) 1976: 10) the more 'frequent instructions in [Higher Grade] questions to concentrate ... on form, tone, language and other features'. And, although there has been recognition of the controversial nature of the change (*Teaching English* 18 (3) 1985: ii), linguistic and literary terms and concepts have been introduced. Perhaps of more especial note, after having been narrowly rejected in earlier discussions (*Teaching English* 14 (3) 1981: 4-9, 16 (1) 1982: 7, 18 (3) 1985: ii), texts have been prescribed for study. This was justified by the chairperson of the committee undertaking the revision in terms of the 'valuable contexts of the kind of close reading that will allow students to develop the necessary competencies' and because it 'will offer opportunity for introducing a variety of texts, including examples of pre-twentieth-century literature' (*Teaching English* 18 (3) 1985: ii).

These and other changes have not been accepted with equanimity by the teaching profession. While the *public* opposition by teachers has been muted, there was within schools an apparent 'uniform antipathy expressed towards the narrowness of the selection and the texts themselves' (*Teaching English* 19 (1) 1985: 12). Furthermore, a cold, 'real world' approach to literary studies has been detected and roundly criticised by

one critic claiming to speak for others (*TSES* 19 January 1990: 20). He alleges that in the revised Higher Grade examination students are:

... confronted by a gobbet, that sterile drill abandoned years ago ... . It is now curiously appropriate for these ... times, in which literature must be seen to have a use. There is nothing like a gobbet to give literature a bogus functionality derived from its usefulness for passing exams.

The very fact of examining English at all has been decried by another practitioner (*TSES* 16 February 1990: 4) as a 'Calvinist exercise in stress'. There have been, nevertheless, seemingly progressive additions to the senior English literature courses as well. The so-called 'intellectual monetarism' of the Conservative Government had generated some fears that Media Studies would go unsupported (*Teaching English* 20 (3) 1987: 60, see also 15 (3) 1982: 7, 18 (3) 1985: 6). In the event, the Media Studies option in the senior literature examinations has been formalised. It is significant to note, however, the rationale and orientation of the media component. The chairperson of the Higher Grade revision committee described the content of the media as 'essentially language', adding that 'to study their visual and auditory codes can contribute to an understanding of narrative processes'. The study of media is thus seen to be a 'valuable extension of textual approaches' (*Teaching English* 18 (3) 1985: ii-iii).

It should be noted that in the final arrangement documents there has been a not inconsiderable extension of the scope of the courses to cover, for example, the functions of media within culture and the way in which meanings are constructed or controlled. These developments notwithstanding, the focus is still manifestly technical and goes only some way to a commitment to the study of popular culture itself - a study which Giroux (1990: 36), as noted above in Chapter 2, has argued might help to legitimise the knowledge most often associated with the margins and periphery of the dominant culture. In other words, the study of media as cultural forms - which for progressive theorists challenges the dominant notion of a unified single culture whose levels can be



discriminated and evaluated - has been firmly integrated into a knowledge-based, technically oriented senior curriculum.

A second area of development on which there has been official restatement is the commitment to the literature (and language) of Scottish culture. Brief rationales have been given in the senior curriculum descriptions, but an extended commentary is provided in a Scottish Education Department document (1990: 22). The notion of textual diversity, which in the 1960s was central to the changes in English teaching programmes, and which has long been affirmed by teachers of English in Scotland (Gatherer n.d: 9), has been given unequivocal support by the authors of the publication:

Scottish writing, and writing about Scotland should permeate the curriculum ... . Scottish texts should be actively sought and used in classrooms ... . It should be a central aim of Scottish schools to help their pupils understand that the common experiences, activities, history and artefacts of the people of Scotland constitute an identifiable and distinctive culture, worthy of transmission and study.

There is in this official statement a clear commitment to expressions of Scottish culture which are not necessarily the dominant ones. Yet, even this widely supported feature has been subject to the shaping of the prevailing conservative ideology. The Scottish Minister of Education urged caution. He emphasised instead (SED 1990: i) 'that priority must be given to teaching every child standard English' with the 'finest prose and poetry' being taught. It is clearly a very sensitive matter for the Conservative Right - a problem shared, too, by the Scottish BBC television network (TSES 7 September 1990: R27) - reluctant to risk adding to simmering sectarianism and growing nationalistic fervour in Scotland. But given the groundswell of practitioner opinion which affirms the Scottish literary dimension it is unlikely much heed will be given to any ministerial concerns. In fact, it was in response to strong lobbying that the Secretary of State belatedly agreed in January 1990 to include Gaelic as one of the languages available for study in the compulsory curriculum. In this case, however, the electoral motivation was transparent (TSES 26 January 1990: 2).

Another strong emphasis within the past decade has been the skills approach within English studies at secondary level. As already noted in this study, in the 1960s the progressive apologists advocated skills and competencies as a democratic alternative to the mastery of knowledge and content which characterised the so-called elitist pedagogy. In the 1980s, however, Conservative Government ministers and spokespersons welcomed such a direction as educational officials vigorously promoted a skills-based pedagogy. As has been the case in New Zealand, the training that English studies offers has, arguably, proved to be an equally attractive position to Right-wing politicians no less than it has to theorists of the Left.

A number of articles in *Teaching English* refer to the cultural imperative of extending the range of what is taught to cover some of the demands of industrialised society (e.g. 13 (3) 1980: 4, 16 (1) 1982: 9-11). The introduction into the English curriculum of competency-based modules and flexible-learning packages administered by the Scottish Vocational Education Council and the Open Learning Consortium respectively, has further cemented this pedagogic emphasis. And in an interesting turn, in the minds of some at least, skills and competencies have become linked to 'standards' and 'correct' or 'attractive' English (e.g. *Teaching English* 21 (2) 1988: 3, 19 (3) 1986: 26-29). Again, there has been ministerial intervention. In the Foreword to a Scottish Education Department's (1990) Working Paper on English Language, the then Minister wrote:

I would have preferred the report to have expressed with greater strength and conviction the need, not just to achieving an awareness or gain an understanding of language, but also to learn about it. I would have welcomed too a recognition of the importance of training the mind and memory. I consider it important to emphasize that pupils must develop the facility to communicate information, written and oral, in English that is clear, concise and grammatically correct ... . A concern for accuracy and a knowledge of the grammar, punctuation and spelling of English are therefore things which schools must seek to implant in all pupils.

As has already been discussed in this study, the teaching of grammar has consistently reflected a political ideology as much as it has attempted to achieve mastery of language conventions. Thus, the Minister's *Foreword* stresses the importance of order,

of personal discipline, and the traditional values and rules of conduct. Ball *et al.* (1990: 77) argue that similar emphases in England are causally related to particular 'competencies required by the market and the economy'. They suggest, indeed, that stressing 'correct' forms of expression and presentation of self serve 'to provide docile and effective workers'. Certainly in a general sense it can be asserted that in industrial democracies structural changes in education often occur in response to economic growth or dislocation. In the context of vocational education in Scotland, Hartley (1987) has made this point with some force. Yet, recent statements from the Scottish Education Department also provide some support for the more specific assertions made by Ball *et al.*

Such support is evidenced in a strong statement which underscores the importance of teaching personal presentation, and even handwriting skills, in at least the early years of secondary English (SED 1990: 49). Further, teachers are required to 'point out the positive effects of careful and imaginative layout and presentation' (SED 1990: 52). Other indications of socialisation into a market-oriented economy can be evidenced in the terminology that is increasingly being used in English curricula publications from the Education Department, the Examination Board and the Vocational Council. English curricula in Scotland are now described in terms of assessment items, levels of achievement, learning outcomes and grade-related criteria. 'Targets', too, are specified not just 'to help the teacher to plan what might be achieved in any particular learning activity' but also to 'provide a set of co-ordinates with which the teacher can chart a pupil's progress as a learner of language' (SED 1990: 8). The language is unmistakably technicist, and serves to heighten the notions of acquisitiveness, motivation and reward characteristic of New Right thinking as outlined in Chapter 4. There is, therefore, evidence to suggest that in the *formulation* of the English curriculum there is a very visible connection with wider economic and cultural values.

It is important to ask, moreover, if the 'context of realisation' (Lundgren 1983: 13) has been influenced by the official descriptions of English studies. To what extent is the English curriculum in Scotland ideological in the way it is taken up? In other words, to what extent do classroom practices cohere with the ideology of the curriculum statements? At first examination, classroom practices remain unchanged. The arrangement documents themselves are very clear about the pedagogic processes that are to characterise secondary school language and literature programmes. Though there have been clear calls by some teachers for a more visible, instructional pedagogy (e.g. *Teaching English* 17 (1) 1983: 22-23, 15 (2) 1982: 26), the teaching approach is manifestly still student-centred by official specification. The arrangement papers stress the importance of a co-operative, collective learning milieu with the fifth- and sixth-year courses 'greatly increas[ing] the emphasis on developing the ability to study independently' (*Teaching English* 18 (3) 1985: ii).

What has changed, however, is the justification for the progressive pedagogy. In the earlier period, student-centred teaching methods focused on individual differentiation, personal growth, "personality" even. Education for life was to the fore. In the 1980s and into the 1990s, though, the emphasis is on disciplined purpose, interpersonal communication, and "character". Education for work is the new legitimising concept. Instead of the earlier commitment to 'pleasure, creativity, purposefulness' and a classroom 'atmosphere of permissiveness' (SED 1967: 11), the commitment is now to developing in students the ability to be self-sufficient. The student now 'chooses', 'negotiates' and 'collaborates' (SEB 1987b: 4), and personal development is linked less with discovery, personal response and democratic difference than it is with the ability 'to cope with the requirements of adult life' and 'to sustain a measure of self-reliance and autonomy' (SEB 1987a: 4). Though in form the pedagogy is progressive, the discourse has changed. It is a discourse which calls the curriculum to economic and cultural service. To apply Giroux's words (1990: 27), 'it is the discourse of uneasy harmony,

one that smooths over the conflicts and contradictions of everyday life with an appeal to ... character development'.

Nevertheless, there has been a 'dialectic of control' (Giddens 1981: 63) that has accompanied the revision process. Within curriculum areas more generally, the technicist notion of education has certainly had its detractors. The Church of Scotland has been strident in its opposition to current trends (*TSES* 25 May 1990: A3). Leading Scottish academics have also urged caution. One has noted that a 'more impersonal, technicist learning environment will further disadvantage those groups it is hoped will be most helped by it', adding that teacher marginalisation is a possible concomitant of competency based modular curriculum packages (Jonathan 1987: 91; see also *TSES* 22 June 1990: 2, 4). And despite official disclaimers to the contrary (SEB 1987a: 11), it has been averred by one practitioner and supported by others (*TSES* 19 January 1990: 20) that:

... the crucial failing in the new philosophy ... is that the teacher who teaches from the inside is simply not allowed to get on with the job of teaching: there is too much else to do ... . The highly structured system is a grid that comes down over all of us, trapping all alike.

Any official recognition or acceptance of such views is, of course, doubtful at a time when, as one educationalist has pointed out (Hartley, *TSES* 22 June 1990: 2, 4), the 'market and individual entrepreneurship are the key concepts which frame this education policy'. Besides, he continues, 'the Scottish education community is beginning to tire of responding ... when many suspect that their responses are merely "noted" and shelved'.

## Discussion

It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that English perhaps even more than other subject areas, has an intimate relation to questions of politics and power. In this

section I have attempted to show that the English curriculum in Scotland, no less than in New Zealand, in both the contexts of formulation and realisation, is indeed embedded in much wider cultural perspectives. The 1980s and 1990s saw new forces at work to reformulate the subject's content and pedagogy. I have noted that there are contradictory aspects to the revisions. On the one side there has been a nostalgia amongst some practitioners for the form of English teaching that characterised the pre-reform era. Reflecting on this time, the last editor of *Teaching English* wrote (21 (3) 1989: 3):

I am sure that much is fairer and better than it used to be but I miss the raffishness of it all, the jumble-sale jackets in a world of suits, the wonderful chaos in the classroom, all dust and Dostoevsky.

It has been suggested, too, that more is involved here than mere nostalgia. There have been conscious attempts by education officials to halt certain emphases of the growth model of English teaching that was adopted in Scottish schools during the 1960s and 1970s. There have been moves to impose an external structure on the curriculum with a concomitant ordering of the content, and even an alleged disciplining of teachers (*TSES* 19 January 1990: 20, 22 June 1990: 9). Ministerial intervention in the curriculum has not gone unnoticed (*TSES* 30 March 1990: A2). Indeed, a recent Minister of Education saw the need to specify the percentage of class time that should be spent on language studies (*SED* 1990: ii).

Though there have been these influences and shifts of direction, there has been on the other side a reaffirmation of Scotland's commitment to a progressive pedagogy. I have argued, however, that the wider cultural context can provide a plausible explanation for the adoption of student-centred teaching methods even by the Conservative Right. Certainly the English curriculum packages developed by the central educational institutions have their pedagogy explicitly grounded in social and economic issues and conditions.

This is not to suggest, of course, that teachers and other interested parties have universally favoured the adoption of an English curriculum consistent with the trends outlined above. Manifestly this is not so. It has been shown that a dialectic of contradiction and contestation has accompanied the revision process. It is of interest to note, nevertheless, that there has been little *public* comment on the most recent revisions from teachers themselves. There has been some press debate (*TSES* 19 January 1990-16 February 1990, 30 March 1990: 1), but the classroom practitioners have been largely compliant and even accused of a 'quiescent approbation' (*Teaching English* 19 (1) 1985: 12). Certainly there can be little question over the formulation of an increasingly technicist curriculum which is in clear accord with what has been the national ideology of the Conservative Right. There has been a greater intervention in and control of the English programmes as the State has sought to harness the authoritative resources at its disposal. And while there is a clear dialectic of control which functions within the curriculum revision process, as, indeed, has been the case in New Zealand, the coincidence of the values of the political elites and those of the educational institutions is such that any opposition has been easily absorbed. Thus, the secondary school English curriculum in Scotland can be fruitfully studied as an example of the interconnection of political and educational purposes, thereby underscoring my contention that the subject English is especially vulnerable to capture by dominant interest groups. For not only does the English curriculum in Scotland illustrate what type of curriculum reform is probable within the context of a conservative and bureaucratically organised political structure, it explicates the actual process of ideological hegemony where persuasion from above and consent from below have shaped a distinctly ideological curriculum.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

If, as this study alleges, the English curriculums in New Zealand (and Scotland) have been managed in the interests of dominant groups and perspectives, it should also be noted that this has not been without debate - sometimes vociferous; usually muted. Those who wrote the national curriculum statement, for example, both worked against, and at times incorporated aspects of, alternative versions of the subject. Of course, alternative versions of the subject have lacked institutional power and, ironically, as I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, these versions - or, more correctly, threads within them - have, to appropriate Peim's words (1993: 174), 'often found themselves in the contradictory position of colluding with that which they oppose'. Indeed, the essential similarity between the growth model and more traditional teaching practices was something upon which I reflected in earlier sections of this thesis. Peim (1993: 174) makes the point in an elegant way when, in a British context, he notes that progressive approaches to writing were bound up with:

restricted ideas about what it means to be effectively literate. Language practices - whether thoroughly mechanistic or ostentatiously creative - were embedded in a strictly qualified notion of effective literacy, a notion that - whatever else it was - was denuded of history, sociology and cultural theory.

Peim (1993:175) further observes that when:

elements of the creative English teaching fraternity discovered an (albeit partially) social reading of the meaning of the subject and saw that the models it operated were disadvantaging the already marginalized students whose class background or ethnic origin excluded them from educational success, aspects of both approaches were adopted in an attempt to equip disadvantaged students either with a purchase on standard forms and/or to grant them the freedom to freely express themselves in their own languages, unconstrained by false notions of the correct.

Significantly, though, Peim suggests, '[t]he negotiation of this tricky territory ... was never truly theorized nor effectively managed'. Manifestly this has been true in New Zealand.



Those who drafted the national curriculum statement, despite drawing on a rhetorical theoretical perspective, never adequately grounded their curriculum in a substantive theoretical position. It was, therefore, not difficult for Ministry of Education officials to re-work their programme into the technicist statement that is now the official English curriculum for New Zealand schools.

I would agree with Peim (1993: 175) that notwithstanding - in New Zealand's case - three decades of reform:

English [is] still dominated - at the level of ideas, and overwhelmingly at the level of practice - by a conceptual framework that consort[s] unhappily with social analysis and cultural critique.

That the English curriculum has been able to be managed according to the interests of dominant social and ethnic groups is therefore not surprising, for even liberal practices of English have depoliticised its constituent elements and have thus become aligned with conservative values and positions. My analysis of the notion of difference in Chapter 4, for example, attests to the veracity of this point. Thus, established interests - and especially, in the 1990s, New Right interests - have both set the agenda of reform and intervened in the reform process.

English, as a school subject, therefore, has remained 'broadly and structurally ... unchanged' (Peim 1993: 175). That there has been institutional intervention to preserve the essential givenness of the English curriculum is not completely surprising in the light of the theoretical framework guiding this study. I argued in Chapter 1 that knowledge is managed, consciously and unconsciously, through control of discourses; or rather, that there are discursive practices which set limits on pedagogical practice. Such practices are characterised by the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of parameters for the elaboration of ideas. As Foucault (1977a: 199-200) notes, discursive practices are not merely ways of *producing* discourse. They are embodied in processes and patterns and pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them. My study shows that there have, indeed, been established perspectives and structures to which English curriculum content has conformed. As

Foucault (1977a: 220) has remarked, it is 'not specific processes that have been excluded from knowledge, but a certain kind of knowledge' - knowledge in which 'there is never a word about the actual problems of life'; knowledge that is 'easily assimilated into official knowledge'. In the light of this analysis, I assert there is a need within the English-teaching community to both understand how the English curriculums have been managed, and to promote what the critical theorists, as discussed in Chapter 1, called the project of emancipation: a critique of ideological power and domination. As Poster (1989: 3) remarks, critical theory:

sustains an effort to theorize the present as a moment between the past and the future, thus holding up a historicizing mirror to society, one that compels a recognition of the transitory and fallible nature of society, one that insists that what is can be disassembled and improved considerably.

With implications for my own perspective on appropriate theorising for the teaching of English, Poster (1989: 3) adds that critical theory:

goes against the grain of a legitimating process endemic to power formations, a discursive mechanism through which the finitude of institutions is naturalized and universalized. Critical theory is a disruptive counterforce to the inscription on the face of social practices which says "Do not tamper with me for I am good, just, and eternal".

Far from being an adventitious preoccupation of this study, my focus on text discourse has demonstrated quite clearly that the English curriculums have been 'naturalized' and 'universalized'. Text discourse has, as the Frankfurt scholars purported, an inextricable link with its cultural context. Further, it provides an understanding of the mechanisms of domination of that context. As Peim (1993: 39) has argued, discourses 'have powerful determining force ... exert[ing] control ... over what gets written, how it gets written, and, equally, over what and how things get read and interpreted'.

In the above chapters, I have sought to demonstrate that curriculum texts can only be understood as part of a broader context; a context of institutional discourse where the "rules" of the discourse, though often unstated, are nonetheless persuasive. Certainly the discourse has been dependent on the, perhaps, concealed presence or exertion of

power as the State and its agents have set discourse boundaries. The result has been that the definition of what constitutes English has indeed enjoyed a 'naturalized' status. The official definitions have, to a greater rather than a lesser extent, been assumed to belong to the order of things; to the way things are. Thus, in Chapter 2, I contended that the NESC discourse did little to challenge or "de-routinise" the accepted structural components of English teaching. In Chapter 3, I demonstrated how the discourse of the educational Right was able to successfully displace a discourse which, in part, sought to challenge established conventions. Throughout Chapter 4, I argued that although there are aspects of the national curriculum statement which appear to be progressive, they in fact serve more technicist interests; that they support the teaching of received knowledge rather than transforming it with emancipatory intent. Finally, in Chapter 5, I advanced the view that what has happened in New Zealand, has occurred in Scotland as well: there has been a process of ideological hegemony where the English curriculum reflects the perspectives of the political and social elites.

It has also been my argument that, following Giddens, a dialectic of control has been evident in the course of three decades of reform. Though the English curriculums have been bounded by discursive controls, these controls have also been disputed or contended. And yet, the opposition that there has been, has not been able to effectively challenge the curriculum revisions, and at least in part this has been because the revisions have incorporated aspects of more progressive English-teaching practice. That this is so can be demonstrated by the support given to the English curriculum statement by the NZATE - the very association that vehemently defended the original drafts of the senior syllabus revisions which stand so starkly against the new national curriculum. One of the current NZATE Council members can therefore claim (*English in Aotearoa* 26, September 1995: 44) that when the curriculum was first released '[i]t was, in general, welcomed by English teachers. It appeared to endorse the best of current English teaching practice in a number of ways ...'. These words recall those of Kaye (1991: 46) when, in a different context, he argues that in 'capitalist hegemony ... the popular stance

is apparently one of pragmatic acceptance and accommodation ...'. Indeed, the lack of theoretical underpinning to English curriculum reform in New Zealand has meant that statements which appear to follow progressive thinking but which are, in fact, integrated into a technicist document, can lead to expressions of general acceptance as that noted in the English teachers' journal.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of a scant theoretical base to English curriculum reform is the manner in which the debate has taken place. What debate there has been has occurred in simple binary terms. Thus, language has been set against literature; the great books have been set against contemporary fiction. And this assessment of the reform process in New Zealand is true also of the process in Scotland. A syllabus which therefore incorporates the insights of linguistics and broadens the notion of "text" (as the national curriculum statement certainly does) thus appears progressive!

The debate over the form of the literary canon is a particularly good example of this binary thinking, for it has tended to be viewed in simple hegemony versus process terms. Thus, the hegemonists, like Agnes-Mary Brooke, believe that there is a standard against which subversives work to broaden the way the world is viewed. Those who advocate a process view, on the other hand, wish to see more works by people of colour, women, people from different, non-dominant cultural perspectives. Moreover, it is argued that a literary curriculum or canon that excludes women, minority, third world and Maori writers is just as political as a curriculum that includes them. The question, then, is not whether to permit politics to inform what is taught but rather which politics to choose. The debate is thus couched in terms of excellence versus diversity, standards versus representation, truth versus cultural relativity. Brooke can therefore aver that students are now receiving inferior educations because, in response to pressure from feminist and revisionist critics, schools are replacing classical works of literature with works by women writers and minority writers.

It is this binary, bi-polar conception that has fuelled so much of the debate that this thesis has charted. Because the discussion has taken place in these terms it has been possible for the intellectual and cultural elites to stamp their mark on the English curriculum as they have sought to allay fears with respect to a too-liberal or progressive approach to teaching this subject. However, it is this approach - seeing the different perspectives of English teaching in an essentially oppositional manner - that I wish to challenge as I pose the question that this study begs: how might an English curriculum be theorised so that it does not impose on students a definition of reality that declares the values and symbols of the social elites and that actively forges a particular form of consciousness and behaviour?

Central to my answer to this question is Anyon's observation (1994: 119) that within postmodern or poststructural criticism 'conceptual categories that are thought to be discrete and in opposition to each other ... are in actuality not in opposition but are definitionally interdependent'. This dialectical reasoning is, of course, a key tenet of critical theorising as outlined in Chapter 1 and, I believe, speaks to issues that this study has outlined. I would claim, therefore, that the question that should be asked is not so much which texts should be included in an English curriculum, but rather how should the texts that are included be read? As Mitchell (1990 : 48) has noted in the context of the literary canon debate:

[w]hat is wrong with ... education today really has nothing to do with what books are read, or should be read, or could be read. The problem is that people are not thinking critically or thinking at all.

This is a sentiment with which Kaye (1991: 156), in his study of historical research and history teaching, would also agree. The emphasis, he argues, should be on 'critique': that 'deliberate effort at debunking and demystifying the contemporary world', which he adds, involves 'unveiling and revealing the *social* origins of the present ...'. Kaye (1991: 163), asserts, even, that it is important 'to *critically* appropriate [the New Right's] projects, including the re-development of coherent syntheses and "narratives" '.

With obvious implications for English teaching in general and the nature of the literary canon in particular, Kaye sets his case against a binary or oppositional perspective when he supports the redemption of the 'classical' notion of education. It is not, he believes, a question of 'replacing the old "elitist" stories with new "populist" ones'. Rather, there should be a 'critical appropriation of the "traditions of Western Civilization" and their rearticulation within the narratives we would develop'. And instead of seeing the elite stories as 'heritage' they need to be viewed as 'inheritances', though certainly not rejected altogether. To support this dialectic - especially against 'the more nihilistic currents of postmodernism' - Kaye (1991: 166) quotes Gramsci whose thought was outlined in the introduction to this study:

In the accumulation of ideas transmitted to us by a millennium of work and thought there are elements which have eternal value, which cannot and must not perish.

According to Kaye (1991: 166), the challenge with respect to these ideas, is that 'of taking them up ... making them glow with the new light'. In this view, then, a critical or deconstructive reading of text is more important than the texts themselves.

The theorising which undergirds Kaye's agenda for the teaching of history has its attractions for the theorising of the teaching of English as well. For I would like to advance the view that more important than transforming the canon and tinkering with the content of what is taught, is transforming how the canon is read and how English is approached pedagogically. Significantly, there is very little in the way of pedagogical direction, let alone theorising, in the many New Zealand English-teaching documents that have been written in the past three decades; and what theorising that has taken place has - not surprisingly given the conclusions of this study - been ignored in the official restatements of draft curriculum statements. The transmission of the text from draft to publication in the most recent curriculum development is a case in point. In the October 1992 version of the developer's statement (1992: 26), the following comment was made:

Students need to think about how each text constructs a view of the world, shapes understanding and creates personal, social, cultural and national identity. When learners think critically about the meaning of a given text they consider the values and viewpoint of the creator of the text and the social or historical background against which the text was created. They question the relevance and truth of the text in terms of their own understanding of the world.

Even this attenuated pedagogical comment was, however, ignored by the Ministry officials as the curriculum was prepared for publication. The notions of dialectic and criticism in the sense of the words as used by Kaye and other writers of the Left are entirely absent. In different language, the notion of “re-vision” (Rich 1979) - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new direction - is manifestly not a pedagogical direction that is advanced in the curriculum statement. There is nothing that requires teachers to examine the cultural assumptions in which English studies are immersed. The point is, surely, not to discard the writings of the past, and even other aspects of more traditional English-teaching practice, but rather to know them in a different way, from a different perspective, so that unexamined cultural assumptions are brought to consciousness.

This is, of course, not to trivialise the content of what should be taught in English classes. But the text and content selection should not overshadow the need to develop the processes of critical thinking. As Green (1993: 11) observes, even the more radical versions of English teaching are linked to an ‘arguably limited understanding of culture and society ... consistent with the larger cultural logic that informs Western capitalist societies ...’. Thus, what is needed is a “critical pedagogy” to help theorise the subject - something rather more robust than the curriculum statement’s bald description of relating language and literature ‘to personal, social, cultural, political, and historical contexts’ (Ministry of Education 1994a: 36).

There are several models of what such a critical pedagogy might look like in practice (Scholes 1985, Giroux 1990, Green 1993, Peim 1993). But one of the difficulties for

English teachers is the inaccessibility of these models as a means of informing teaching - that is to say, classroom - practice. Indeed, this is a criticism which Anyon (1994) makes of much writing with an emancipatory intent. She argues - correctly in my view - that such writing can all too easily valorise theoretical discourse at the expense of practical, concrete suggestions. For a discourse to be useful, Anyon suggests (1994: 129), it 'must be capable of enactment'; it 'will identify direct actions to be taken'. With the exception of Peim, there is, arguably, little in the above models that meets Anyon's criteria for genuinely practical, emancipatory teaching strategies; little that would help the teacher in, say, a Form 6 English class to reclaim and reaffirm the most critical and democratic aspects of the subject as currently defined by official specification.

So, then, what might a Form 6 programme of English studies look like? To answer this question, I shall draw on the writing of one of the theorists referred to above - Nick Peim. Peim's (1993) book *Critical Theory and the English Teacher: Transforming the subject* merits the close attention of practitioners concerned with issues such as democracy and equality. A study of these issues would therefore frame the proposed Form 6 programme of study. The overarching concept would be the relationship between English and democracy. Inevitably, this would involve some understanding of the concepts central to the study of this thesis. This could be seen as posing problems of understanding for 16 year old students, but as Peim (1993: 213) notes:

[i]f the vocabulary of poststructuralist theory ... is thought to be alien and longworded, it's no more alien and difficult to get hold of to the general constituency of students than the vocabulary of established response to literature, or the vocabulary of geography, or of nineteenth century novels, or of maths [sic] and chemistry.

In fact, as I shall briefly illustrate below, an understanding of "discourse" or the "discourses of knowledge" would, at this level, provide most of the theoretical background with which students would need to be equipped. That is to say, students would need to understand discourse as a theory of particular language practices and their social or



institutional contexts - how they define texts, promote meanings and construct fields of knowledge.

Secondly, and again I lift a statement from Peim (1993: 215) and reapply it in this context of programme design, '[g]ender, race and class as issues express a powerful critique of English, but also provide a basis for considerable extension of its scope'. These themes of gender, race, and class would thus provide the structure for the year's study. Though related through the overarching concept of "difference", they would be handled discretely to give a topical form to the course of study and provide for variation of content and methodology. Clearly, the ideas of reappraisal and redefinition - or "re-vision" - would be paramount in the teaching of these themes. The pedagogical direction - which I have argued has been lacking in the reforms charted in the pages of this thesis - would be provided in relation to the democratic values that the study of these themes, *ipso facto*, demands. As Peim (1993: 211) avers, the emancipatory theory associated with poststructuralism has demonstrated that:

fundamental habits of thought ... are not in any absolute sense identical with the truth of things ... [indeed] we see the world and construct meanings within the limits of a general system of thought and perception that is culturally dominant ... .

Through the identified themes, therefore, the pedagogical focus would be to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of the dominant perspectives, encouraging students to understand that:

all forms of thinking, all forms of expression are bound up with and determined by specific ways of perceiving the world, particular ways of thinking about the world (Peim 1993: 211).

Thirdly, and in order to achieve this end, the questions one asks about selected content become more important than the selection itself. It is certainly envisaged that such a course would study a number of the so-called "classics". Indeed, once it is realised that the historical process brings new discourses of knowledge into being, then coming to terms with the themes of a nineteenth century Eliot or Dickens novel could advance the

course of democratic understanding and commitment as well as a Lessing novel seeking to overturn traditional, dominant social and cultural perspectives. Thus, far from abandoning the traditional canon, a student armed with an appropriate discourse of knowledge can strengthen her democratic commitment by studying Austen as well as she can by studying a work of literature more akin to twentieth century critical, democratic notions. And this is the key point: a grasp of discourse can obviate the need to throw out the old in favour of the new. As Peim (1993: 212) rightly notes, discourses:

provide a means for understanding different aspects of the world ... bring new ideas, terms and ways of perceiving things into existence ... construct identities and manoeuvre meanings ... [illuminate issues] of power and ideology.

In this view, a novel by Austen therefore becomes an “inheritance” rather than “heritage”. The novelist is both understood in context and critically appropriated within a critical or democratic discourse - for example, the discourse of social and sexual power. It is a case - to repeat the words of Kaye quoted above - of making old words glow with new light.

This discourse of social and sexual power, to explicate the theme a little more, would raise several key issues - issues all related to the overarching structure of the proposed Form 6 English programme. The motifs of “man as subject” and “women as object”, and the assessment of traditional roles and new alternatives arise naturally from the study. Further, the question of the relationship between gender and language is relevant. A teacher may therefore want to look closely at what Virginia Woolf once called “a woman’s sentence”, or a woman’s way of saying something. Lamenting the omnipresence of the man’s sentence, Woolf sought to highlight the differences in style between male and female writers (Mitchell 1990: 39). What, then, of the images in an Austen novel? To what extent does her writing reflect the masculine model of writing current in her time? To what extent does the writing of contemporary feminist writers reflect different values?

To emphasise the point again, within the structure of discourses of knowledge, text selection is not the issue; although I would argue with Kaye (1991) that there are good reasons why teachers should not merely replace the old, so-called elitist stories with new populist ones. For it is possible, as Siebert (1990: 84) notes, to cultivate student interest in “marginal”, silent, unrepresented experience in our society through the study of traditional texts. In an extended case study, Siebert argues that Mark Twain’s stories are ‘bold attempts to legitimise the language and culture of rural Americans living beyond the “sivilized” borders of the East’. Within a discourse of difference it is surely instructive for Form 6 students to experience something of the workings of oppression in another culture, such as those narrated by Twain, and to use those as a springboard for reflection on current issues - issues dealt with at length by New Zealand Maori writers.

Discourses of knowledge can also legitimise other areas of study in a Form 6 class. Conceptualised within such a discourse, the themes of race and class can be explored similarly, and provide the backdrop for a rich language study. For critics like Agnes-Mary Brooke, the teaching of English grammar should assume importance because a knowledge of it leads to “correct” forms of written and spoken language. Certainly, a Form 6 programme would incorporate the conventions of standard syntax, but if they are taught within the discourse of grammatical structure - the cognitive framework which governs our understanding of language - then learning the conventions so that one’s writing and speaking is widely understood and appreciated, will not carry with it a marginalisation of dialect-speaking groups or people from non-dominant socio-economic strata - groups whose language is “grammatical” albeit in a non-conventional way. Such an understanding of language and grammar is far less likely within the context of English examination assessment criteria, for example. Rather, it is the discourse theory of linguistics or semiotics that ‘is capable of addressing the changing nature of languages within specific historical and social conditions’ (Peim 1993: 211).

These themes of gender, race, and class understood within discourses of knowledge also imply greater inclusivity in terms of source material or “texts” for study. For discourse theory ‘makes alternative positions explicit’; it ‘proposes redefinitions by examining existing ideas and practices’ (Peim 1993: 210, 212). Thus, English teachers would use texts which sharpen awareness and which lead to students ‘refusing to be content with what is established simply because it is established, or because it works’. As Peim (1993: 213) further notes, it is ‘anti-intellectual and anti-theoretical’ to treat popular texts or entertainments as ‘trivial’, for such an attitude ‘avoids asking questions of the familiar and established’. Thus, popular culture and ‘everyday discourses’ can help advance democratic values no less than the traditional canon and specialised discourses.

I am aware that my approach may well be regarded as merely “sitting on the fence” - a fundamentally conservative approach wrapped up in the technical language of discourse theory. But far from adopting a “something old, something new” methodology, I am, instead, attempting to embrace what Eagleton (1996: 25) has described as the ‘dialectical habit of mind’. To some progressive theorists of English teaching, the approach may seem to consort rather too cosily with the hegemonist outlook so roundly criticised in the pages of this study. I would prefer that readers regard the method as thinking about both sides of contradiction simultaneously (Eagleton 1996: 25). It is important to oppose a hegemonist approach to the teaching of English as it has so obviously marginalised a democratic agenda; and yet some radical theorists, or postmodern theorists, may also have little to contribute to the debate. As Eagleton (1996: 25-26) remarks:

for all its talk of difference, plurality, heterogeneity, postmodern theory often operates with quite rigid binary oppositions, with “difference”, “plurality” and allied terms lined up bravely on one side of the theoretical fence as unequivocally positive, and whatever their antithesis might be (unity, identity, totality, universality) ranged balefully on the other.

Eagleton’s concern with respect to such a theoretical position is that it is ‘animated by a critical spirit’ and that it can be as ‘exclusive and censorious as the orthodoxies it

opposes'. A dialectical view, however, and certainly one which advances democratic values, 'involves privileging the interests of the people as a whole over the interests of anti-social power-groups' (Eagleton 1996: 26, 94). And it is this emphasis on democratic values, and the pedagogical focus that is implied in the support of those values through discourses of knowledge, that should frame a Form 6 or, indeed, any other secondary school English programme. Herein lies a way forward for the theorising of English in the late 1990s, for it preserves the idea of the common culture - which Gramsci advocated so strongly - but allows teachers and students to themselves fashion that culture.

It is, of course, a great irony that so much has been written about the content of English studies and so little on the pedagogical theorising of the subject that is helpful to practitioners with democratic agendas. Within the New Zealand context the focus has been 'the redevelopment of the English curriculum ... as part of a broad initiative aimed at improving primary and secondary school student achievement' (Ministry of Education 1994a: 5). That this has been done without even an attempt to forge a consensus on the pedagogy central to meeting this aim is nothing less than extraordinary. It may appear that with the publication of the English curriculum statement, that 30 years of syllabus and curriculum debate are over. However, given the inadequate pedagogical direction, for those English teachers who have not lost sight of a subject which espouses truly democratic values, the debate is surely only just beginning.

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Graham C Stoop

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### Members of the conference to examine the Forms 5-7 English syllabus, August 1969:

L C Allen	Hamilton Boys' High School
P B Andrews	Mahurangi College
R R Bach	Hamilton Girls' High School
J C Barrett-Lennard	Napier Girls' High School
G S Clarihew	Penrose High School
M Entwisle	Otago Girls' High School
R W Fletcher	Burnside High School
A W Gilchrist	Linwood High School
P R Goddard	University of Canterbury
H G M Henderson	Hutt Valley High School
O J Holland	St Cuthbert's College
J G Johnson	Hillary College
G R McDonald	Curriculum Development Unit
J E McHardy	Greymouth High School
N B Matheson	Nelson College
R B O'Brien	Wainuiomata College
J R Osborn	Secondary Inspectorate
K A Rae	Thames High School
R F Read	Hamilton Teachers' College
P M Sleeman	Onslow College
G A Taylor	Horowhenua College
R J C Warren	Taupo-nui-a-Tia College
N R Woods	Glenfield College

Source: Department of Education (1970), *English Syllabus Forms 3-5: Guidelines for Revision* (Wellington: Department of Education), 2.



## APPENDIX 2

### National English Syllabus Committee, November 1969:

#### Chair

H A Reeves                      Superintendent of Curriculum Development

#### Director

R G Aitken                      Curriculum Officer (English)

#### Post Primary Teachers' Association

W J Fletcher	Christchurch Teachers' College
N B Matheson	Nelson College
Charmaine Pountney	Secondary Teachers' College, Auckland
W E Jeffery	Dunstan High School

#### Independent Schools

Joan Holland	St Cuthbert's College
Sister Anne O'Rourke	Baradene College

#### Department of Education

P V Goodwin  
A D Morrison  
G R McDonald  
J R Osborn  
D Rathbone

Source: Department of Education, *NESC Newsletter*, February 1971: 6. A number of others served on the Committee throughout the 1970s and until the termination of the NESC in October 1980 - see Department of Education (1983a: 2).

## APPENDIX 3

### Forms 6 and 7 English Syllabus Committee, August 1986:

Vince Catherwood	Assistant Director, Curriculum Development
Ray Hollis	Education Officer, English
Jenny Buist	McAuley High School
Jane Johnson	Logan Park High School
Gordon Ogilvie	St Andrew's College
Richard Corballis	University of Canterbury
Terry Sturm	University of Auckland
Hazel Bamford	Manakau Technical Institute
Stuart Middleton	Auckland College of Education
Paul Howe	Department of Education
Isobel Rose	Mt Roskill Grammar School
Victor Mokaraka	Hato Petera College
Arapera Blank	Glenfield College
Helen Paske	<i>New Zealand Listener</i>
Sharon Crosbie	Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand
Philip Tremewan	Newspapers in Education
Elody Rathgen	Christchurch Teachers' College
Margaret Henderson	Porirua College
Mary Lythe	NZ Secondary School Boards' Association
Lynda Sissons	Trade Union Education Authority
Tilly Laufiso	National Youth Council

Source: Correspondence, 11 September 1991, Vince Catherwood, Senior Manager, Curriculum Functions, Ministry of Education.

## APPENDIX 4

### Christchurch College of Education Review Committee, 1990:

Elody Rathgen	Christchurch College of Education
Phil Coogan	Northcote College
Mary Lythe	School Trustees' Association representative
Isobel Rose	Mt Roskill Grammar School
Noeline Wright	NZATE representative
Russell Aitken	Waiopahu College
Laurie Bauer	Victoria University of Wellington
David Philips	NZCER representative
George Rasmussen	Tangata Whenua and Pacific Islands representative
Richard Corballis	University of Canterbury
Pauline Scanlan	English Adviser, Christchurch College of Education
Ruth Zanker	Christchurch Polytechnic
Elizabeth Welch	Queen's High School
David Tapp	Riccarton High School
Paul Howe	Tangata Whenua representative

Source: *English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6.

## APPENDIX 5

### The Minister of Education's Review Committee, December 1990:

Roger Moses	Mahurangi College
Bruce Logan	Orewa College
Pamela Laird	Westlake Girls' High School
Ken Chamberlain	Nga Tapuwae College
Hillary Lamb	Queen Margaret College
Ngaire Hoben	Seddon High School
Janice Campbell	Wellington East Girls' College
Bill Lennox	Selwyn College
Marian Hobbs	Avonside Girls' High School
Ewen Holstein	Christchurch Boys' High School
Charles Croot	Kaikorai Valley High School
Carol Lloyd	Rangitoto College
Roger Robinson	Victoria University of Wellington
Tony Deverson	University of Canterbury
Judine Ladbrook	Auckland College of Education
Vince Catherwood	Ministry of Education
Caryl Hamer	Ministry of Education
Mike Chester	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
David Wood	Ministry of Education
Shona Hearn	Post Primary Teachers' Association

Source: Correspondence, 11 September 1991, Vince Catherwood, Senior Manager, Curriculum Functions, Ministry of Education.

## APPENDIX 6

### Professor Roger Robinson's Reference Group, 1991:

Roger Robinson	Victoria University of Wellington
Roger Moses	Mahurangi College
Tony Deverson	University of Canterbury
Mike Patterson	Rangitoto College
Sarah Lees-Jeffries	Christchurch Girls' High School
Di Stewart	Queen's High School

Source: *English in Aotearoa* 14, 1991: 6.

## APPENDIX 7

### Achievement Initiative in English Contractors, 1992-1993:

Margaret Bendall	Auckland College of Education
Paul Green (1992)	St Kentigern College
Paul Howe	University of Waikato
Kuni Jenkins	University of Auckland
Rema Leitch	Gleniti School
Mary McDonald	Halfway Bush School
Di Stewart	Queen's High School
David Tapp	Riccarton High School
Adrienne Waghorn	Wellington College of Education
Catherine Wasmuth	Upper Hutt College
Norma Gibbs	Mangere Bridge School
Gael Richardson	St Thomas's School

Source: *Draft Statement Achievement Initiative*, 1992.

## APPENDIX 8

### Writers of *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers*, 1994-1996:

#### Contractor

New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English

#### Principal Writer

Elizabeth Gordon                      University of Canterbury

#### Project Co-ordinator

Ewen Holstein                      Christchurch Boys' High School

#### Writing Team

Sheena Hervey                      Dunedin College of Education  
Rema Leitch                      Orari School

#### Adviser

Stuart Middleton                      President, NZATE

Source: Ministry of Education (1996), *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers* (Wellington: Learning Media), vii.