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A NARRATIVE CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL TEXTS IN EDUCATION

by

John Thomas Walker

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1979

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS (EDUCATION)

in the Faculty

of

Education

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A NARRATIVE CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL TEXTS IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Practical texts addressed to teachers and administrators occupy a special place in the educational canon. Neither scholarly works nor popular literature, these texts typically claim to draw on research for the purpose of better informing and guiding practice. But they rarely articulate the relationship between such practically oriented research and a theory of education; for that matter, they often even fail to document their basis in research. This thesis asks: to what extent do practical texts express an implicit theory of education and how can that theory be made evident? It seeks to derive the answer from the texts themselves--through an analysis of their formal prose characteristics.

The practical texts selected for this study vary both in their degree of theoretical explicitness and in their orientation to school practice. Least theoretically explicit are the texts that prescribe practice: examined here are a basal reader, *Our School*, and its accompanying teacher's guide; and an extensive selection of schoolhouse planning manuals. More theoretical--and descriptive rather than prescriptive--are two ethnographies of schooling, *Ways with Words* and *Learning to Labour*.

The above selection of texts approaches schooling from the perspectives of activity (teaching children to read), space (the schoolhouse) and time (lived experience). A fourth perspective,

that of knowledge, is approached by a consideration of an entirely different kind of 'practical' text, Walter Benjamin's *Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater*.

The general theoretical frame for a narrative-critical reading of non-fiction prose is established in Chapter 2's review of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and Hayden White's critique of historiographical styles. The reading procedure adopted here is a simplified synthesis of the notational criteria used by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse*, by Roland Barthes in *S/Z* and by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*. These three approaches are complementary in that they address the unity of the text (Genette), the plurality of its structures of signification (Barthes), and the relation of the particular text to texts in general (Bakhtin).

This thesis concludes that narrative-critical reading can be a useful device for explicating the theoretical presuppositions of practical educational texts.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Hurtling unseen, hundreds of miles from the earth, a polished metal sphere the size of a beach ball passed over the world's continents and oceans one day last week.

-*Time*, October 14, 1957

This thesis is about discourse form in education. Form both enables and censors discourse: legitimizing what can be said and understood; prohibiting the unauthorized as 'incomprehensible', 'unspeakable'. The dialectic of form cannot be overcome by separating forms of discourse into discrete classes of enabling forms and censoring forms, because censorship itself enables discourse. The dialectic of censorship and authorization cannot be overcome; what is said arises out of the condition of its unspeakability.

The purpose of this introduction is to tell the story of how a particular piece of investigation came about, and of what it intends to accomplish. The motivation for the investigation came from a practical dilemma about theoretical reflection. That is also to say that it did not derive from a specific body of theoretical discourse about practice. While working on a school board administrative staff, the author was formally prohibited from communicating his reflections on educational practice to

other members of the administration staff. The paradox which confronted the author was, roughly: how is it determined that a particular kind of discourse is or isn't appropriate to a given situation? One of the ways of approaching this question involves looking at those discourses which receive official sanction or are generally adopted within an area of practice. What can't be said then receives some negative definition--never entirely adequate--from what *can*. The question remains: *how* to 'look' at the received discourses of practice.

Educational theory has been characterized by Paul Hirst as a "domain of practical theory, concerned with formulating and justifying principles of action for a range of practical activities."¹ He distinguishes practical theory from pure theoretical knowledge, asserting that the latter is concerned with explanation not the guidance of practice. Although he sees educational theory as deriving theoretical knowledge from sociology, psychology, philosophy and history, Hirst himself rejects the notion that the theoretical knowledge of the disciplines can be immediately appealed to for the justification of practical principles. Rather, he advocates that rational educational practice should start from an articulation and critique of the actual rules and principles embodied by current practice.² Hirst makes clear how tenuous such an inquiry into actual practice is likely to be. He underlines his awareness of

¹Paul Hirst, *Educational Theory and its Foundation Disciplines* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 3.

²Hirst, p. 16.

the non-propositional character of much practice by making successive references to Gilbert Ryle's distinction between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how', Michael Oakshott's distinction between technical and practical knowledge, and Michael Polanyi's emphasis on "the tacit element in all human undertakings".³

In calling for a consideration of current practice, Hirst specifies that this would necessarily entail examination of the concepts, categories, actions and activities of practitioners--including individuals, schools and institutions. Hirst supposes that "The best methodology for the development of educational practice is . . . in large part an empirical matter."⁴ But much would be overlooked if practices were to be observed without discussing with the practitioners the subjective meanings of those practices. As Habermas points out, there is a difference between measurement in the physical sciences and the need for critical social science to understand meaning. For the latter, "The paradigm is no longer the observation but the dialogue."⁵

A second objection to Hirst's immediate concern with the practitioner arises regarding the way that educational practice is documented. Although educational practice may sometimes entail immediate theoretical reflection, formal investigation into practice always requires some kind of documentary mediation. Each kind of documentation presents its own special

³Hirst, pp. 10-14.

⁴Hirst, pp. 20-21.

⁵Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1973), p. 11.

problems with regard to completeness, objectivity and generalizability--regardless of whether that documentation originates from the practitioner's own records, journals and reflections; or whether it is compiled by a second party through observations, interviews and questionnaires. It is always already as text, or at least as coded notations, that the concepts, categories, actions and activities of practitioners are presented for analysis. The theorist of educational practice thus confronts a preliminary task largely analogous to that of the historian: how to order and select from the documentary field.

The question of how the historical documentary field ought to be ordered has occasioned, in historiography, a debate between advocates of a 'nomological-deductive' model of historical explanation and proponents of a narrativist model. The former position comprehends events in terms of their conformity to general laws of causality, while the latter insists on the irreducible contingency of history, and seeks to explain events in terms of how they constitute a story of a particular kind. Each of these two positions acknowledge different kinds of historical documentation as significant. The historiographical debate has implications for a theory of educational practice on at least two levels. First, it raises the question of the adequacy of either the nomological-deductive or narrative model for explaining educational practice. Secondly, it illuminates the issue of how different kinds of documentation of practice correspond to different explanatory

models.

Narrative analysis has generated a variety of studies within education. Richard Angelo has analyzed histories of education⁶ and a "cross section of the writing on schooling--from avowedly social science, through memoir to the philosophical."⁷ In this work, Angelo has relied extensively on Hayden White's characterization of the narrative paradigms used by historiographers. Philip Wexler has called for an ideological critique of school knowledge that would be substantially narrative critical,

The first level of analysis is the study of representational bias, class-specific narratives, which are naturalized as History, Science, Literature and Truth. The second level requires a digging out of the concepts which order and stand behind specific representations. These concepts constitute a social theory of class consciousness and can be seen as the textual functions of history, totality, exploitation, class and contradiction which comprise the curriculum story. Third, an analysis of school knowledge as ideology or reification--to examine whether and how production is hidden, underlined or made possible by the school text.⁸

Some of the kind of work that Wexler advocates has been done by Joel Taxel in his criticism of the way in which children's

⁶ Richard Angelo, "Ironies of the Romance with Irony," Paper presented to the joint meeting of the Canadian History of Education Association and the History of Education Society (October, 1983); "Reading Histories of American Education," Unpublished paper, University of Kentucky (n.d.); "A Sense of Occasion," Unpublished paper, University of Kentucky (n.d.).

⁷ Richard Angelo, "Myth, Educational Theory and the Figurative Imagination," *Philosophy of Education*, 34, Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society (1978), 227-238.

⁸ Philip Wexler, "Structure, Text and Subject," in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education*, ed. Michael Apple, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 290.

fiction about the American Revolution is dominated by selected, conservative interpretations.⁹ Taxel maintains that the selected interpretations are reinforced by the novels' simplistic narrative structures and formulaic use of the rite of passage motif. These novels, he concludes, "legitimate an image of America as a society free of deeply rooted social conflict."¹⁰ James Palermo has argued, from a structuralist narrative critique of John Dewey's "History for the Educator", that, "In practice, his historical pedagogy becomes a cultural myth that legitimates the status quo."¹¹ Ethnographers, such as Shirley Brice Heath and Paul Willis, work with an explicit awareness of the cultural centrality of narrative; each acknowledges the problems that arise in the narrative presentation of their own work.

Within education, as in most practical fields, there is a specialized literature of practical manuals and guides. These texts may be provisionally defined as 'practical texts' to the extent that their potential audience recognizes them as such. Practical texts in education would normally include things like the teachers' manuals that accompany textbooks, but they can also include more highly descriptive and theoretical texts--such as school ethnographies--to the extent that practitioners

⁹Joel Taxel, "The American Revolution in Children's Fiction," *Research in the Teaching of English*, 17, 1 (Feb. 1983), 61-82.

¹⁰Taxel, p. 80.

¹¹James Palermo, "Dewey on Teaching History: Decoding the Myth," *Philosophy of Education* 42, Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society (1986), 221-234.

perceive those texts to be relevant to practice. One of the premises of this thesis, following Hayden White, is that these practical texts appeal to their particular publics on a "pretheoretical, and specifically linguistic, level of consciousness."¹² The question thus arises: what characteristics of these practical texts *as text* recommend them to a particular public of educational practitioners?

The purpose of this thesis is to examine to what extent an analysis of the formal narrative characteristics of practical texts in education can make explicit practical texts' relationship to educational theory and practice.

The selection of practical texts for analysis here was initially circumstantial. The author's previous employment as a school facilities planning assistant afforded a familiarity with, and interest in, the school building planning literature. His concern for the ethical and political aspects of education led, via Susan Buck-Morss' article, "Walter Benjamin's Revolutionary Pedagogy", to Benjamin's "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theatre".¹³ Discussions with Professor Suzanne de Castell concerning literacy and school ethnography have drawn the author's attention to Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*, Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words*, and to the *Our School* basal reader and teacher's guide.

¹² Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 429.

¹³ Susan Buck-Morss, "Walter Benjamin: Revolutionary Writer," *New Left Review*, No. 128 (July-August, 1981), 50-75, and No. 129 (September-October, 1981), 77-95.

The theoretical justification for the narrative critique of practical texts will be presented in Chapter 2's review of Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics. Ricoeur's extensive philosophical investigation of text, particularly of narrative, supports the position--crucial to this thesis--that narrative is a fundamental condition of human experience and as such provides the indispensable ground for any scientific explanation of human action. Conversely, it is the function of explanation to permit the reader or hearer to continue to follow a narrative at those points where its further course of development is unusual, difficult or otherwise indeterminable from what had been given so far.

Narrative criticism of expository texts remains today a fairly unconventional procedure within the human sciences. One of the most comprehensive attempts to elucidate the narrative strategies of non-fiction prose has been undertaken by Hayden White. He has proposed a typology of historiographical styles which allows him to compare major contributions from apparently disparate branches of historiography and philosophy of history in terms of their modes of emplotment, argument and ideological implication. White's typology is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The method employed for the analysis of practical texts involved identifying some structural and formal features of the texts; features that have been theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette. Structural features of the

texts have been coded according to categories proposed by Barthes and Genette. Identification of the genres of the practical texts was by analogy with some of the generic distinctions proposed by Bakhtin. This coding of texts facilitated a rereading informed by more explicit awareness of the texts' narrative constitution; the texts were reread, then, as particular kinds of stories.

In the course of selecting and analyzing these texts a series of patterns seemed to emerge, relating the four groups of texts. First, in terms of the perspective of a particular agent: the teacher and the teacher's guide, the administrator and the planning guide, the student and the ethnography, the revolutionary collective and the children's theater. Second, in terms of an aspect of the total school situation: activity in the case of the teacher's guide, space in the planning books, time in the ethnographies, reflection in the children's theater. Finally, in terms of dramatic modes: romantic, comic, ironic and tragic. These affinities clearly have something to do with Hayden White's typology of style, but at the same time they suggest a complex of educational practice which may well be irreducible to any one or two of its terms.

CHAPTER II

ACTION, UNDERSTANDING AND THE MODEL OF THE TEXT

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to the human sciences is grounded in his hypothesis that procedures similar to those developed by hermeneutics for interpreting texts can be used to interpret human actions. He argues that meaningful human action shares with text some of the features--with respect to time, circumstance and agency--that distinguish text qua text from discourse in general, including speech.¹ These distinctions concern the way that text's enduring quality separates it from the author's intention, the time of its utterance, its immediate circumstances and the presence of the interlocuter. Aspects of his approach have been developed in numerous articles and books, three of which will be reviewed in this section.

Educational practices can be said to be *coherent* actions. That is, they are not simply a random pile of events and movements, but rather are bound together by some sort of aim, procedure or set of principles. It is these aims, procedures or principles that permit us to say that given practices are 'meaningful' as *educational* practices. But this leads us to a kind of circular justification of aims by practices and practices by aims (or procedures or principles). Ricoeur's use of the text as a model for action does not lead out of this

¹Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text," in *Hermeneutics and Human Science*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 197.

circularity. It does, however, make the circular relation productive for interpretation by securely anchoring the analysis of action in the conditions of time, circumstance and human agency--the latter from the perspective of both the production and the reception of the action.

In "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text", Ricoeur considers the main features that distinguish text from discourse in general, and maintains that these same features prevail in meaningful action--these features are, in effect, the criteria of an action's enduring significance. His argument that text can be seen as paradigmatic for action is the basis for the attempt, in this thesis, to seek to understand educational practice through an interpretation of practical texts.

In a second article, "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections Among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action and Theory of History", Ricoeur takes issue with positivism's methodological monism, and with the methodological dualism of tradition hermeneutics--the distinction between *erklären* and *verstehen*.² He argues that explanation and understanding are not two separable modes of scientific inquiry, but that they function interdependently: understanding, which Ricoeur defines as narratively constituted, establishes the

²Paul Ricoeur, "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections Among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action and Theory of History", in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

condition of intelligibility of any scientific explanation, and explanation permits the continued following of a narrative. The decision made in this thesis to examine primarily the narrative contexts in which arguments about practice are presented follows Ricoeur's insistence on a dialectic of understanding and explanation.

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur extends his discussion of the relations between actions, texts and comprehension.³ Here, he explores the operations by which narratives--fictional and historical--enable human comprehension of actions which are extended in time. Ricoeur's conclusions that the narrative configurations of history and fiction rely on a common cultural tradition support the approach, adopted in this thesis, of 'borrowing' procedures of narrative criticism that were originally developed for the study of fiction.

Also reviewed in this section is Hayden White's *Metahistory*, a comprehensive attempt to develop a typology of historiographic styles organized around the function of emplotment.⁴ His work is significant for its exploration of what understanding might be brought to ostensibly expository non-fiction discourse by a consideration of their generic narrative characteristics. White's typology of styles provided the initial paradigm for the analysis of texts undertaken in this thesis.

³Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vols. I and II, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁴Hayden White, *Metahistory*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

The Model of the Text

In "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text", Ricoeur expounds a hypothesis that meaningful action can be understood and interpreted according to the model of the text.⁵ In order for a hermeneutical analysis of actions to constitute an appropriate methodology for the social sciences, meaningful action would have to display at least some of the features of a text. Ricoeur therefore examines the features that distinguish text from spoken discourse and asks whether these features are not also constitutive of meaningful action. Ricoeur's distinction between spoken and written discourse draws on the features that distinguish acts of discourse from the general system of language. He outlines four areas of difference: temporality, authorial intention, reference and address. Each of these areas of difference correlate with features of action that distinguish action as 'meaningful'.⁶

Temporally, spoken discourse is fleeting, and written discourse is fixed. Ricoeur adopts, from Austin's and Searle's speech act theory, the distinction between the propositional content, illocutionary force and perlocutionary act of an utterance. He argues that these three levels of the speech act can be recorded to a different degree.⁷ Propositional content lends itself to the greatest degree of material fixation through

⁵Ricoeur, 1981, pp. 197-221.

⁶Ricoeur, 1981, p. 198.

⁷Ricoeur, 1981, pp. 199-202.

lexical, grammatical, and syntactical elements. Illocutionary force is also expressed to some extent by grammar and this permits its partial fixation. However he notes that in spoken discourse the illocutionary force may be expressed through gestures and other non-articulated forms. Thus it is not as fixable as propositional content. Finally he claims that the perlocutionary act is the least fixable of all three levels, in this respect the most characteristic of speech as distinct from writing. Ricoeur also recognizes as inscribable, those aspects of the speech act that are codified to the extent that they can be identified and reidentified as having the same meaning and hence can be abstracted from the occasion of their utterance. Hence the distinction between spoken and written discourse is not exhausted in the permanence of the latter.

Ricoeur maintains that action, in order to become an object of science, must be fixed by a process similar to the fixing of discourse in writing; the consequences of an action must endure if it is to be considered meaningful.⁸ Activities and performances are themselves fleeting, but they do not constitute the objects of social scientific inquiry. It is only when the propositional content of an action can be detached from the conditions of its enactment that it can be studied.

A second trait which, for Ricoeur, distinguishes written and spoken discourse is the separation of the meaning of the text

⁸Ricoeur, 1981, pp. 203-206.

from the author's intention.⁹ In dialogue, the speaker's intention is paramount and can be invoked through clarifications and rebuttals. The speaker is considered to be entitled to revoke and amend previous statements if their apparent reception does not conform to his intention. The text, by removing the utterance from the situation of its enunciation, becomes autonomous from the intentions of the author and its sense can only be restored by interpretation. In writing, the author cannot rescue his intended meaning for a reader who misunderstands or fails to comprehend. In speech, the speaker is able both to provide interpretive cues through gesture, intonation and delivery, and also is present to monitor and respond to the audience's reception of the message.

Meaningful action also develops consequences separate from the intentions of its agent. The consequences of an action endure into a time and circumstances that the agent could not have anticipated, and in which the agent is not present to react or modify his or her action by subsequent actions.

Third, the text is removed from a common situation in which reference to the time, place and surrounding objects can be ostensive.¹⁰ The world designated by the text is not the present one of the speech situation but a world projected by the text. In text, the reader and the author share no common situation. Thus the text constitutes its own world of symbolic dimensions

⁹Ricoeur, 1981, pp. 206-207.

¹⁰Ricoeur, 1981, pp. 207-208.

through the ensemble of its references. The text's *non-ostensive* reference is ultimately to the world of text in general. Similarly, what distinguishes action as meaningful is its importance beyond its relevance to the immediate situation. That importance might concern either the repeatability of the action in other circumstances or its relevance to all circumstances.

The fourth trait distinguishing spoken and written discourse is the condition of address.¹¹ While speech is addressed to someone present, text is addressed, hypothetically, to anyone who knows how to read. Similarly, the meaning of the meaningful action is something that is addressed to history rather than to any immediately present person.

An analogy may be drawn between the conditions specified by Ricoeur for meaningful actions and the conditions that might be expected to apply to educational practice. First, it may be assumed that education prepares the individual for activities subsequent to the time of the educational practice; that is, it ought to have enduring consequences. Secondly, these consequences will be manifested in the actions, thoughts or expressions of the (former) student in circumstances the teacher could not have entirely anticipated, and beyond the capability of the teacher to intervene to restore his or her original intention. Third, it should be clear that in order for educational practice to be meaningful, it would have to refer to circumstances outside the ostensive ones of the classroom.

¹¹Ricoeur, 1981, p. 208.

Finally, educational practice can be distinguished from the personal interaction of the teacher and the student. Such practice, in principle, can be said to be addressed not just to a particular pupil, but to anyone seeking instruction in the matter at hand.

Explanation and Understanding

Ricoeur credits the analogy between text and action with enabling a "fresh approach to the question of the relation between *erklären* (explanation) and *verstehen* (understanding, comprehension) in the human sciences."¹² The model of the text permits an objectification of human actions, separating them from the intentions of their agents. For Ricoeur, this enables both explanation and understanding of the actions to proceed strictly in terms of their semiotic systems, without reference to events occurring at another level of actuality.¹³ On the side of the movement from understanding to explanation, Ricoeur credits an interpretive process of construing or guessing meanings, then validating them argumentatively. Such validation would involve explaining actions in terms of the agent's 'actual' motivations or intentions, but rather a reconstruction that relies on the documentation of the text. Ricoeur compares the validation of construed meanings to the process of juridical

¹²Ricoeur, 1981, p. 209.

¹³Ricoeur, 1981, p. 210.

reasoning, with the exception that no final, irrevocable judgement can be rendered in either literary criticism or the social sciences.¹⁴

On the side of the movement from explanation to understanding, Ricoeur entertains the alternative possibilities of an immediate or a suspended grasping of meaning. In many cases, reference to an agent's motivation is sufficient to explain an action and make it comprehensible. But such immediate comprehension can also be suspended in order to search for 'deeper' meanings, more profound motivations. Ricoeur illustrates suspended comprehension with the example of the structuralist study of myth, as undertaken by Levi-Strauss. Ricoeur argues that either immediate or suspended understanding of actions proceeds from explanation through the latter's reference to motives that can themselves be understood by the interpreter. Ricoeur insists that the suspended grasping of reference must ultimately come to terms with what he calls the "aporias of existence". Social structures, like myths, are "attempts to cope with existential perplexities, human predicaments and deep rooted conflicts."¹⁵

In his essay, "Explanation and Understanding: On Some Remarkable Connections among the Theory of the Text, Theory of Action and Theory of History", Ricoeur returns to the issue of the distinction between explanation and understanding. He states

¹⁴Ricoeur, 1981, p.215.

¹⁵Ricoeur, 1981, p. 220,

the goal of this essay to be: "to call into question the dichotomy which assigns to the two terms 'explanation' and 'understanding' two distinct epistemological fields which refer, respectively, to two irreducible modes of being".¹⁶ In effect he challenges both positivist methodological monism, which insists that methods of experimental observation and quantification are the standards of all scientific rigor; and methodological dualism, claiming that the methods of the human sciences are unique to them.

Ricoeur's model of explanation and understanding is a dialectical one, posing explanation and understanding as relative moments of a complex process of interpretation. He affirms that explanation is the sole moment in which method prevails in this dialectic. But understanding is the non-methodic moment which "precedes, accompanies, closes, and thus *envelops* explanation."¹⁷ His discussion seeks to show that the theory of the text and the theory of action converge in such a way as to make text a good model for action and action a good referent for text.¹⁸ This convergence is finally confirmed in the theory of history in as much as history is both a "type of *story*" and is "about *actions*".¹⁹ Ricoeur links the ability to understand history to the prior competence in following a story. But this competence is conversely always limited--its extension

¹⁶Ricoeur, 1978, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷Ricoeur, 1978, p. 165

¹⁸Ricoeur, 1978, p. 160.

¹⁹Ricoeur, 1978, p 161

is mediated by explanation. Hence his conclusion that explanation in history is not autonomous, rather it prolongs the competence to follow a story by helping to correct expectations when the precondition of understanding fails.

Returning again to the analogy between meaningful action and educational practice, the functions of explanation and understanding in educational practice may be clarified by Ricoeur's analysis. The key to appropriating his analysis to the study of educational practice is the contention that any account of actions is inherently an *historical* account. Thus, the competence for understanding educational practice may itself be referred to the general competence for following a story.

Educational practice is extended in time, with consequences separated from initial instructional actions. What makes sense of this practice is the practitioner's ability to view it as like a recognizable kind of story. To the extent that a practitioner's initial 'guess' doesn't fit all the contingencies of the actual, developing instructional circumstances, explanation can function to reorient and extend his or her understanding. Ricoeur's emphasis on the non-autonomous nature of explanation draws attention to the importance of narrative understanding as a prior moment in the dialectic of understanding and explanation. Thus, the study of educational practice may be properly concerned with the question of how narratives of educational practice are constituted.

Time and Narrative

Ricoeur's investigation of narrative in *Time and Narrative* seeks to affirm the reliance of historiographic and fictional narratives on common modes of configuration, and to examine the different truth claims of the two narrative modes. As he maintains, "What is ultimately at stake in the case of the structural identity of the narrative function as well as in that of the truth claim of every narrative work, is the temporal character of human experience."²⁰

Ricoeur approaches his discussion of narrative configuration, in Part I, from two independent directions: through St. Augustine's meditations on the aporias of the experience of time, and Aristotle's analysis of the poetics of the plot. Ricoeur relates the two discourses through their mutual concern with the concordance and discordance of experience. For Augustine, the discordance of temporal experience rends the concordance of presence. For Aristotle, the discordance, established in the course of dramatic peripetia is mended by the concordance of the plot.

Augustine, in chapter 11 of his *Confessions* considers the enigma of the threefold structure of the present.²¹ The past is experienced as a present of the past in memory; the future as a present of the future in expectation. The present abides in

²⁰Ricoeur, 1984, p. 3.

²¹Ricoeur, 1984, p. 13.

attention.

In order to attempt to answer the enigma of what it is we measure when we measure the passage of time, Augustine traces the passage of an event from expectation through present attention into memory. Augustine's solution to the enigma of the measurement of time is that we measure the distention of the soul.²² This establishes the supreme enigma that finds the soul distended from its engagement in expectation, attention and memory. Ricoeur notes the value of this enigma, declaring that, "it is to this enigma of the speculation on time that the poetic act of emplotment replies."²³ The reply of Aristotle's poetics does not resolve the enigma, rather it puts it to work, "by producing an inverted figure of discordance and concordance."²⁴

Ricoeur's theory of narrative composition proceeds from a discussion of Aristotle's definition of *muthos* as an organization of events which is complete, whole and of an appropriate magnitude.²⁵ Ricoeur's review of these characteristics emphasizes the role that probability, necessity, and universality have in determining a plot's intelligibility.²⁶ The inclusion of discordance in the plot's grasping together is provided for by the reversals: *peripeteia*.

²²Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 15-16.

²³Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 21-22.

²⁴Ricoeur, 1984, p. 22.

²⁵Ricoeur, 1984, p. 38.

²⁶Ricoeur, 1984, p. 40.

(change in fortune), anagnorisis (recognition) and pathos (suffering)--which characterize the complex plot. In effect, the most unexpected changes of fortune are made to seem necessary and probable by the composition of the plot. Ricoeur stresses that this probability is a 'persuasive' one, formed at the intersection of the work and the audience. Thus, in the representation of action, intelligibility of unexpected change rests on cultural expectations rather than logical criteria.²⁷

Ricoeur joins together his separate studies of emplotment and the aporias of time through a threefold analysis of mimesis, distinguishing prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.²⁸ What he calls mimesis, amounts to a pre-understanding of the world of action.²⁹ He claims that this prefiguration of the world corresponds structurally, symbolically and temporally with narrative understanding. Structurally, our prefiguration of the world of action and of narrative both presuppose familiarity with terms designating "agents, goals, means, circumstances, help, hostility, co-operation, conflict, success, failure, etc."³⁰

Mimesis₂ is designated as the realm of discursive narrative configuration.³¹ Ricoeur views mimesis₂ as mediating between the

²⁷Ricoeur, 1984, p. 42.

²⁸Ricoeur, 1984, p. 52.

²⁹Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 54-64.

³⁰Ricoeur, 1984, p. 55.

³¹Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 64-70.

-prefiguring activity of mimesis₁, and the *refiguring* of experience that is a function of mimesis₂. Mimesis₂ is the site of emplotment and here Ricoeur elaborates on the varieties of mediation carried out by the plot. The plot mediates between individual events in a story and the story as a whole. It brings together heterogenous structural factors such as, "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results."³² Finally, it mediates between episodic and configurational dimensions of time. The mediation of the plot permits the realization of the story as both a linear succession of events and a meaningful whole.

Finally, Ricoeur discusses mimesis₃ as a refiguring event in which the world of the text and the world of the reader intersect.³³ This refiguring ultimately has consequences in two directions. In one direction a world of reference beyond the text is opened up by the text. Yet the work itself is only completed by the reader and hence is conditioned by the reader's expectations and capacities for following the story.

Ricoeur distinguishes four classes of issues that emerge from his three-fold analysis of mimesis. These concern the circularity of the mimetic scheme³⁴, the role of the act of reading in fusing the three stages of mimesis³⁵, the

³²Ricoeur, 1984, p. 65.

³³Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 70-87.

³⁴Ricoeur, 1984, p. 71.

³⁵Ricoeur, 1984, p. 76.

relationship between narrativity and reference³⁶, and the enduring aporia of the phenomenology of time.³⁷ It is the third set of issues that bear directly on the present thesis. The referential function of narrative is both simplified as a consequence of the narrative prefiguration of the world of action, and made more complex in that narrative works refer to two classes of literature, historiographical and fictional. The problems posed by the co-existence of history and fiction concern on the one hand the actuality of history's reference and on the other hand the reciprocity of 'borrowing' between history and fiction. Fiction borrows its illusion of reality from history while history borrows fiction's resources for configuring the temporality of human action.

The Narrative Critique of Historiography

In Part II of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur discusses the issue of narrative as it pertains to the writing of history. He discusses, at length, the arguments both for and against narrative history--reviewing first, "the eclipse of narrative" represented in the French *Annalistes*' methodological concern with the historical *longue durée*, and in the Anglo-American historians' epistemological concern with the covering law model proposed by Karl Hempel. Secondly, Ricoeur reviews the 'defenses' of narrative history presented in the work of W.H.

³⁶Ricoeur, 1984, p. 77.

³⁷Ricoeur, 1984, p. 82.

Dray, G.H. von Wright, Arthur Danto, W.B. Gallie, Louis O. Mink, Hayden White, and Paul Veyne. Of White's contribution to the analysis of narrative in historiography, Ricoeur remarks, "The procedures of emplotment which I earlier set forth in terms of mimesis, are for the first time assigned to the narrative structure of history writing in the work of Hayden White."³⁸

In his *Metahistory*, White makes a comprehensive attempt to establish the conditions under which the procedures of literary criticism might be brought to bear on non-fiction prose discourse. The object of his study is the historical work which he conceives as mediating between, "The *historical field*, the unprocessed *historical record*, other *historical accounts* and an *audience*."³⁹ Thus his view is that the work is unequivocally *rhetorical*. White dismisses the question of the 'realism' of an historical work as a diversion. Realism becomes relevant not to a work's "fidelity to the facts" but to its effective strategy of persuasion--ultimately something that is not entirely intrinsic to the work, but that relies on the predisposition of an audience. What is intrinsic to the text is its status as a "verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse."⁴⁰ White points out that the validity of prose discourse cannot be appropriately assessed strictly in terms of its factual accuracy and logical consistency because:

The discourse is intended to *constitute* the ground

³⁸Ricoeur, 1984, p. 161.

³⁹White, 1974, p. 5.

⁴⁰White, 1974. p. ix.

whereon to decide *what shall count as a fact* in the matters under consideration and to determine *what mode of comprehension* is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted.⁴¹

In place of tests of fact and logic, White proposes a formal typology of historiographical styles, and a 'tropology' to characterize the preconceptual strategies with which a given historian will order the historical field.

White's scheme for interpreting texts involves identifying the mode by which an author organizes and presents three aspects of the work: plot, argument and ideological implication. The positions occupied in each of these modes White has borrowed from Northrop Frye, Stephen Pepper and Karl Mannheim.

Frye's typology of generic emplotment recognizes the principal categories of Comedy, Romance, Tragedy and Irony, which he calls *mythoi*.⁴² White acknowledges that the four basic plot types do not exhaust the literary possibilities. He argues, however, that this typology is useful for analysis of historiographical styles precisely because the historian is "inclined to emplot his stories in the most conventional forms. . . precisely because he is not 'telling the story for its own sake'."⁴³ White elaborates on Romance as a drama of redemption in which good triumphs over evil. In Romance, an initial fall from grace is ultimately overcome through the hero's quest.

⁴¹ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 3.

⁴² White, 1974, p. 7-11.

⁴³ White, 1974, p. 8.

Satire presents a reversal of the transcendence presented in Romance. In Satire the main character remains a captive of the world, unable to overcome evil and death. Both Comedy and Tragedy permit at least a partial release from the fallen condition of the world. Reconciliation, as an at least temporary triumph, is held out as the hope of Comedy. While Tragedy represents a terrible fate for its protagonist, nevertheless it holds out *for the spectators* the prospect of a gain in consciousness about the laws governing human existence.

Stephen C. Pepper has similarly designated four basic 'world hypotheses': Formism, Mechanism, Contextualism and Organicism.⁴⁴ For each of these he proposes a root metaphor and lists its unique categories. He characterizes the hypotheses according to whether they are synthetic (Organicism and Contextualism) or analytic (Formism and Mechanism); integrative (Organicism and Mechanism) or dispersive (Formism and Contextualism). Pepper argues that certain affinities exist between pairs of the four hypotheses that account for hybrid varieties. According to White's summary, the Formist mode of explanation is primarily concerned to stress the uniqueness of the objects in the historical field.⁴⁵ The Formist historian would specify what makes a given event, circumstance or person distinctive from apparently similar events.

⁴⁴White, 1974, p. 11.

⁴⁵White, 1974, p. 15.

Both Organicism and Mechanicism are considered to be integrative, in that they attempt to situate an historical object in relation to larger processes of which it is a part. Organicism posits the larger process in terms of an end or goal toward which the process tends.⁴⁶ White notes Ranke as an example of an Organicist historian who would consciously resist specifying a goal to the historical process as a whole, but instead seeks to determine those "intermediary integrative structures such as the 'folk', the 'nation' or the 'culture' that tacitly appeal to an integrating purpose." A Mechanistic explanation is held to seek out causal laws that govern the operation of events.⁴⁷ Rather than seeing process determined by goals, the Mechanicist treats outcomes as regulated by apprehensible historical processes.

The explanatory principle of Contextualism is one of relative integration.⁴⁸ Contextualism seeks to relate the isolated phenomena of history to trends and to the general characteristics of a period. Influences, convergences and contexts of a specific event are identified without thereby asserting any overall goal nor any inevitable causal regularity.

A third four-fold scheme used by White is Karl Mannheim's schematization of utopian ideologies.⁴⁹ The ideological

⁴⁶White, 1974, p. 16.

⁴⁷White, 1974, p. 17.

⁴⁸White, 1974, p. 17.

⁴⁹White, 1974, p. 22.

positions vary according to their attitude towards political change and the time orientation that such change ought to take. Each of these positions is cognitively responsible in the sense that they claim the authority of reason and are tacitly committed to public discussion with other positions. These ideologies Mannheim designates as Anarchist, Liberal, Conservative and Socialist/Communist. The ideologies, varieties of utopian mentality, arise out of particular historical conditions of social classes. Each represents an attitude toward historical time.⁵⁰ The Anarchist utopia reflects an apocalyptic perception of time--projected out of a "remote past of natural-human innocence"--in which social transformation is immanent. For the Liberal, the utopian future is a remote, unattainable ideal which is nevertheless approachable through incremental reform. The utopian present, the Conservative's 'best of all possible worlds', accrues its value from the preservation of the treasures and achievements of the past. The Socialist/Communist utopia integrates elements of each of the former utopias. The Socialist utopia arises out of a present that is determined by the past, as in the Conservative vision, yet it projects a future of social transformation and redemption.

White uses these schemes of emplotment, argument and ideological implication to identify the styles of nineteenth century historians and philosophers of history.⁵¹ He addresses

⁵⁰White, 1974, p. 25.

⁵¹White, 1974, p. 29.

historiographical style in terms of the way that a given historian or philosopher of history will incline toward a specific combination of modes of emplotment, argument, and ideology. White suggests that there are 'elective affinities' between certain of the modes: between Comedy, Organicism and Conservativism; between Romance, Formism and Anarchism; between Tragedy, Mechanicism and Socialism; and between Irony, Contextualism and Liberalism. These affinities or consonance between the modes, White understands as revealing a writer's preconceptions about the nature of the historical field. The historian will be looking for certain kinds of configurations, and furthermore is likely to find the kinds he or she is looking for. The implication that White draws from his survey of historical writing in light of these affinities is that the more subtle, perceptive writing 'breaks the mold' and establishes a more complex dialectical tension between modes.

In addition to his typology of historiographic styles, White proposes a *tropology*, which seeks to categorize the ways that a historian might *figuratively* preconceive the objects in the historical field. White's tropology distinguishes the four classical rhetorical tropes--Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche, and Irony--in terms of the way they specify similarities in a difference (and implicitly differences in a similarity). For example Metonymy specifies the part/whole relationship in a way that assigns meaningful priority to the parts which can be assembled mechanically to comprise a whole. By contrast, Synecdoche specifies the qualitative identity of the parts to

the whole so that the parts can be said to represent the whole. White proposes his tropology both as an explanation for the identified 'affinities' between the modes of emplotment, argument and ideological implication, and as an indicator of the grounding of these conceptual choices in a preconceptual, essentially linguistic, medium.

White uses his typology of historiographical styles to characterize a variety of 19th century works, both of historiography and philosophy of history. One important claim that he makes for his approach is that it permits a comparative discussion of works that otherwise might seem too disparate in their epistemological orientation. This latter claim also makes his approach of interest to the analyst of educational practice, wherein professional specialization of practitioners may at first discourage comparative consideration of the varieties of texts and practices.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The method used for this study is essentially a dialogue between the author, the practical texts analyzed and the discussions of categories and procedures contained in a number of texts concerned with narratological method: *Metahistory* by Hayden White, *The Dialogic Imagination* by Mikhail Bakhtin, *S/Z* by Roland Barthes and *Narrative Discourse* by Gérard Genette. Paul Ricoeur, in Part III of *Time and Narrative* (Vol. II), engages a broad discussion of narrative analyses of fiction--in order, firstly, to extend his discussion of narrative configuration beyond the limitations of the aristotelean notion of plot, and, secondly, to explore the fictional resources for the representation of temporal experience. This thesis accepts the methodological implications of Ricoeur's review of narrative literary theory--particularly regarding the structural identity between fiction and historical writing--while limiting consideration of some of that discussion's refinements and technical disputes, which may be more germane to consideration of works at the frontiers of artistic literary expression.

An initial analysis was made, using White's typology of emplotment, explanation and ideological implication, of five of the texts studied here: *Our School Teachers' Manual*, *Learning to Labour*, *Planning America's School Buildings*, *Planning Functional School Buildings*, and *Schools*. Two problems emerged from this preliminary investigation: (1) The teachers' manual and the

three planning manuals fit White's categories too well. That is, there seemed to be no 'disaffinities' between mode of emplotment, argument and ideology. (2) *Learning to Labour* was unstable in its emplotment. If the ethnographer's perspective was granted privilege, it could be read as a Tragic Irony. However, if the perspective of the student group studied was given priority, it would have to be read as an Ironic Comedy.

The response to these problems was to first of all specify in more detail the structural features of the texts, using as models the schemes of structural narrative analysis suggested by Barthes and Genette. And secondly to refer to Bakhtin's typology of the novel for a more flexible concept of genre than Frye's.

In *S/Z*, Barthes uses five code terms that identify different ways of signifying a world external to the text.¹ These codes he calls hermeneutic, semantic, symbolic, proairetic, and reference. *Hermeneutic* codes pose a question or enigma and either hold it in suspense, compound it or resolve it. *Semantic* codes operate through connotation. They are thus indirect and cumulative in their signification. Barthes emphasizes the polysemy of connotation as a characteristic of the classical 'readerly' text.

The body provides the privileged *symbolic* object. It is the body that perceives objects in the world; the body which acts, and which interacts with the world and other bodies. It

¹Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

functions as a unity that can be explored: (1) rhetorically, in terms of its relativity, (2) poetically, in terms of its creation and creativity and (3) economically, in terms of its equivalence and exchange. *Proairetic* codes identify conventional sequences of action that form the core of a narrative plot. Actions announced in the first term of a series have effects or consequences that the reader can often anticipate because the sequence follows a more or less familiar pattern. *Reference* codes supply cultural knowledge that bestow a kind of authority on the text. This cultural knowledge is not necessarily new information for the reader, as its function is not primarily to inform, but to identify the text with common opinions about reality.

Barthes, then, identifies codes of signification (all of his codes are, he remarks, codes of *reference*). The codes constitute multiple points of entry into the world from the text and back from the world into the text. The 'world' that Barthes is talking about is a world already constituted by other texts--hence the predictability of the chains of actions, the redundancy of the codes of cultural knowledge.

Genette identifies five features that focus on "the relationship between the narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, and (to the extent that they are inscribed in the narrative discourse) between story and narrating."² Thus these categories highlight the internal unity of the narration.

²Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p.29.

Genette specifies these features under the general headings of temporal order, duration, frequency, mood and voice.

Temporal *order* compares the order in which events are presented in the text with their 'actual' order in the story. Two principal kinds of anachrony are noted by Genette under temporal order: analepsis or retrospective, and prolepsis or anticipation. Genette also distinguishes internal and external anachronisms; the internal varieties concern events which have been already or will be narrated in the text. Genette defines *duration* in terms of the relationship between the length of time imputed to the story's events and the number of pages or lines taken up by the narrative. He identifies the major modifications of duration as: summary, pause, ellipsis and scene. The classical relationship of summary to scene is one of dramatic intensification. Narrative *frequency* is expressed by the ratio between the number of times an event occurs and the number of times it is mentioned in the narrative. The range of possibilities includes: "narrating once what happened once", "narrating *n* times what happened *n* times", "narrating *n* times what happened once", and "narrating one time what happened *n* times". Genette identifies the first two frequencies as singulative; the third, repeating narrative, and the fourth, iterative.

Included in *mood* are the distinctions between mimetic and diegetic representation, and the variations in point of view that Genette calls focalizations. A non-focalized narrative

would present the narrator's knowledge as superior to that of the characters. Internal focalization equates the narrator's knowledge with one of the character's. External focalization is an 'objective' outsider's view, inferior in knowledge to the characters'. Genette resists the reduction of *voice* to a matter of first or third person. Instead he emphasizes such factors as the narrative level, the time of narrating and the function of the 'narratee'.

Bakhtin has richly suggested the generic significance of "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships . . . artistically expressed in literature."³ The images that relate time and space in a literary work together constitute a collective image that Bakhtin calls the 'chronotope'. Bakhtin defines the novel genre by distinguishing it from epic in the following ways:

(1) its stylistic three-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-linguaged consciousness realized in the novel; (2) the radical change it effects in the temporal coordinates of the literary image; (3) the new zone opened up by the novel for structuring literary images, namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openedness.⁴

The practical texts analyzed were first read through for general sense, and to isolate initiating, terminating and transitional sections. These sections were photocopied to allow notation directly on the text. Coding was carried out in terms

³Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 84.

⁴Bakhtin, 1981, P. 11.

of the structural features specified by Genette and Barthes. The coding enabled identification of regularities in the texts and facilitated a re-reading in which the narrative structural features remained explicit. In the subsequent re-readings, particular attention was paid to the composite image of time and space presented in the texts.

CHAPTER IV

QUEST FOR READINESS

"To read what was never written." Such reading is the most ancient: reading before all languages, from the entrails, the stars or dances.¹

Teachers' guides to basal reading programs were first introduced in the 1930's, and by the 1950's became an obligatory part of any North American reading textbook series.² According to Luke, the guides reflected a general movement toward standardized and centralized control over teaching practice.³ For twenty years, the Sheldon Basic Reading Series was a widely adopted grade one to eight reading program published by Allyn and Bacon.⁴ A discarded copy of the series' primer and its teachers' manual was obtained from Hollyburn School in West Vancouver. The teachers' manual to the primer systematically describes the series and the primer, outlines the basic principles of the program, and provides supporting bibliographies, word lists and diagnostic tests.

The authors claim that the series is based on the "most conclusive and pertinent research in the psychology of learning

¹Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty", *One Way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979), pp. 162-163.

²Allan Luke, "Dick and Jane in Canada: A Critical Analysis of the Literacy Curriculum in British Columbia Elementary Schools 1945-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1986), pp. 209-210.

³Luke, pp. 208-209.

⁴Robert Aukerman, *The Basal Reader Approach to Reading* (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1981), p. 21.

and in the fields of reading instruction, child development, and personality growth."⁵ However there are two conflicting theories of reading at work in *Our School*. The first--by which the progress of the first grade children is to be assessed--posits a one to one to one correspondence between the written word, the spoken word and the concept. Children are expected to reproduce verbatim the words printed in the primer. Reading comprehension is presumed to be indicated by the ability to retell in proper sequence the events and objects presented in the text. But a second theory of reading underlies the way the teacher is instructed to read the reading 'readiness' of her pupils. This second kind of reading seeks deviations rather than conformities. Then, it translates the meaningful 'errors' into a different, quantitative, system of signification.

The Primer

The *Our School* primer is remarkably uniform in its story structures.⁶ The primer is divided into four units containing five, six, seven and eight stories respectively. Each unit develops a theme: going off to school, having pets at school, school routines and personnel, and a field trip to the farm. Each unit culminates in a happy celebration. Twenty of the twenty-six stories end with a 'funny surprise'. The remaining

⁵William D. Sheldon, et al., *Our School Teachers' Manual* (Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1963), p. 1.

⁶William D. Sheldon, et al., *Our School* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1960).

six stories suspend an ending and serve to develop the overall theme of their unit. Three of the stories with suspended endings occur at the beginning of the last unit.

The text of the primer is predominantly mimetic dialogue. The first unit is almost entirely in dialogue, and there is a gradual increase in diegetic narration until the second to last story of the final unit, "A New Friend"--which is entirely diegetic narration. The dialogue of the stories is almost exclusively in the present tense, with a high proportion of imperatives. Conversely, the diegetic narration is almost entirely in the past tense.

The narration is externally focalized, that is, it only reports on observable behaviors and speech. The one exception, where the narration displays privileged access to the feelings or motivations of a character, is in the "A New Friend" story. There is no variation through the text of narrative level. This final uniformity is confirmed by the avoidance of past tense in the dialogue--characters command, exclaim, greet, inquire, and respond; they do not recount.

The concept of identification is central to the authors' theory of child reading development. As the teachers' manual assures, "First graders will be able to identify with Bill and Linda as they leave for school."⁷ Episodes occur in what can be called 'just like' time and 'just like' space. The characters are boys and girls who are purportedly similar to real first

⁷ Sheldon, 1963, p. 69.

grade children in their activities and interests. The characters go to a school 'just like' the one where the actual first grade children are taking their instruction. The narrative duration is almost entirely 'scenic'. The teachers' manual suggests that activities be planned to co-ordinate with story book activities so that discussions can relate the stories to these experiences.⁸ In effect, real time is to be made over to heighten the similarity with the 'just like' time of the stories.

The authors, themselves, become so convinced by their own image of identification, that in one passage they alternate and then confound reference to two different orders of characters: story-book and 'real'. Moreover one of the crossed references is not simply ambiguous but it contradicts its own system of reference:

As in the readiness books and the three pre-primers, the stories in the primer, *Our School* extend the horizons and experiences of first grade children. The book is divided into four units, each of which deals with a phase of school life that leads the children into a continually expanding world of people and events. The stories continue to bridge the distance between the home and the school, but the activities of the story-book children now center around what takes place in the school. Thus, the children are stimulated to broaden their outlook. New personalities are met and new projects are undertaken by the children ... They are given an opportunity to explore the school environment through reading about typical, humorous incidents in the schoolroom; they share the experience and identify with the boys and girls in the book.⁹

⁸Sheldon, 1963, p. 77.

⁹Sheldon, 1963, p. 25.

The Manual

Two texts share the same title *Our School*. This title is typographically featured on the front cover and title page of the teachers' manual, while the caption "Teachers' Manual" is presented in reduced type, set off above and to the left of 'Our School'. The duplication of the title reaffirms a strategy of duplication that proceeds from the books' title to the place where the book will be used and to the fictional place in the text. Stories from the primer are repeatedly summarized and retold in slightly more mature language in the manual. For example, the story "Ricky Comes to School" is summarized on page 25 as: "One day Ricky is invited to attend the big school where he meets the school personnel and is shown around by his brother and sister."¹⁰ On page 69, the following summary is given:

The last story in the unit, 'Ricky Comes to School,' will serve to orient the readers to *this* school as a whole. The various centers of activity--corridors, gymnasium, cafeteria, classroom--and some of the school personnel--principal, custodian, school nurse--are described here.¹¹

Finally, this summary on page 95:

Linda and Bill take Ricky to school with them. They introduce him to the principal, the nurse and the custodian. They show him the gymnasium, the cafeteria, and their own classroom. Ricky enjoys his visit and his tour, in spite of the fact that Bill says, "Not now," each time Ricky wants to stop and enjoy the area he is seeing. Finally, when the children invite him to participate in the classroom activities, Ricky turns the tables on them. "Not now!" he says, and settles down to

¹⁰Sheldon, 1963, p. 25.

¹¹Sheldon, 1963, p. 69.

play with the toys he brought to school.¹²

The teacher is even encouraged (instructed?) to point to a picture of a school in the primer and ask, "Whose school do you think this is?"

Diagnostic testing is the pivot of the Sheldon Basic Reader Program. The 'findings of research' alluded to in Part I lead up to the diagnostic section and the orchestration of classroom activities in Part III proceeds from it. The diagnostic testing room is a controlled environment in contrast to the ordinary happy, noisy bustle of the classroom depicted in the primer stories. The tests are "administered in a quiet room with plenty of light, where each child can see and hear adequately."¹³ This careful attention to comfort suggests a solemn, perhaps ritual atmosphere for testing. The ritual aspect is reinforced by the emphasis on an exact attention to procedure, "Teachers should acquaint themselves thoroughly with the following procedures for administering the tests. The directions should be followed carefully ..."¹⁴

The solemnity is called for because of the relationship of readiness to research. Research is the repeatedly invoked authority for the manual's discussion of the stages and signs of readiness. Research, 'conclusive and pertinent' as it might be, is never actually cited; it is only alluded to. Tucked in

¹²Sheldon, 1963, p. 95.

¹³Sheldon, 1963, p. 43.

¹⁴Sheldon, 1963, p. 43.

amongst a bewildering assortment of lists of skills and stages are the insistent reminders about, "These findings ..."¹⁵, "Studies have shown ..."¹⁶ and "Research has established ..."¹⁷ When the teacher conducts diagnostic testing, she is momentarily transformed into the vicar of research. The manual impresses on the teacher the profound change in status attendant with the role change. The discourse of research is 'authoritative' in Bakhtin's sense:

The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is *prior* discourse. . . It is given (it sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain.¹⁸

Diagnostic testing thus initiates the teacher into the mysteries of research, but must at the same time reaffirm the *distance* between the teacher's everyday activity and the diagnostic test.

Diagnostic testing involves evaluating a child's ability to either read aloud from a text or retell, in her own words, a story read silently. The procedures involved in the test merit close attention. In the oral reading test, the teacher pays careful attention to the words enunciated by the child. Each word recognition error, omitted word, substitution, hesitation, mispronunciation, repetition, and misplaced phrasing is noted by

¹⁵Sheldon, 1963, p. 1.

¹⁶Sheldon, 1963, p. 3.

¹⁷Sheldon, 1963, p. 27.

¹⁸Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342.

the teacher on a scoring sheet. While the child is presumed to be reading *conformities* between text and oral language, the teacher is reading *deviations* between the child's actual reading and an ideal reading. In coding these deviations by type and number, the teacher translates them to a different level of meaning. This other level of meaning could be said to be allegorical in that the purpose of such a diagnostic *reading* of the child is to disclose an attribute of the child that is 'hidden'--the child's reading *readiness*. The implications of this allegorical, diagnostic reading--and its contrast with the literalist assumptions about the child's reading--are quickly closed off in the teachers' manual by the quantification of results:

The child's instructional level is attained when he can read orally without making more than one word recognition error per 20 words, and when he can read without symptoms of anxiety and insecurity. He should be able to answer correctly three out of four comprehension questions(75%) and recall approximately(75%) of the material he has read.

Two theories of reading have been established: one for the children and one for the teacher. Both require an initial auditory and visual discrimination, both require the identification of context and configuration clues, and each requires a kind of translation.

For the children the theory of reading requires that the translation be a precise oral rendering of the written text. The model for this rendering is the representation of sounds by letters, the combination of letters into words and the

arrangement of words into larger units of meaning. For the learning reader, an orderly sequence of equivalents is established that ultimately leads to the textbook equivalence of the world of the text and the real world.

The teacher's diagnostic reading obeys a different law, that of deviation. Instead of agreements between sounds and letters the teacher is looking for deviations between printed text and read text. The diagnostic reading requires a notation of the omissions, substitutions, repetitions, hesitations and transpositions that occur between the master text and the reading performance. Rather than precisely transcribing these deviations, the teacher is required to systematically recode them. Instead of smaller elements accumulating into larger units of meaning, the teacher is instructed to solicit meaning in the fragmented errors broken off from the whole performance. This diagnostic reading approaches a critical theory of reading except that it is abruptly terminated and converted, through the quantification of the coded errors, into a standard of exclusion. Instead of inquiring into the child's own meanings, that which could be significant in a child's misreading is simply counted (or *discounted*) and driven out.

Simon Says

In the prescriptive Part III, the reader enters the world of the classroom. In contrast to the primer, in the teacher's manual it is not a present classroom but a classroom projected

into the near future. The imperative mood of Part III would ordinarily be fantastic in a narrative, signifying the extra-diegetic entry of the narrative into the real world. Two possible but fantastic readings must be rejected in order to arrive at a normal reading. First, if the text were to be read as an ordinary narrative description or representation, the sense would be disrupted by the fact that the commands are addressed to no character in the text. Nor could the assumption be held that the direct commands are addressed to the teacher at the moment she is teaching in the classroom. If this were so the teacher would be simultaneously executing the commands and reading them off. The teacher would need to hold a copy of the primer in one hand and a copy of the teacher's manual and a piece of chalk in the other. For example, she is instructed to, "Show a copy of *Our School* to the children. Comment, 'This is our new book ... ' As you say the word 'school', write it on the chalkboard."¹⁹ The 'normal' reading of the text would have to disallow the two literalist readings and project the time of the 'story' slightly in the future of the narration. This could be called a narrative of rehearsal. The time of actual performance of the acts commanded would thus be projected forward to a time after completion of reading.

The instructions to the teacher, if they are to make sense, must defeat the literality of the 'identical' chronotope. Commands in the teachers' manual are issued in the present tense, but they are framed, extra-diegetically, in the near

¹⁹Sheldon, 1963, p. 67.

future. Recall that in the primer, dialogue was inevitably present tense, but framed in the near past. This juxtaposition of frames places the teacher at an advantage, slightly ahead of the class.

2+2

Two books with one title, two theories of reading, two chronotopes in the teachers' manual (the authoritative research past and the fantasy classroom future), finally two distinct species of numbering are encountered in *Our School*: the sequential and the additive. These species of numbering are featured respectively in *Our School* as the stages of reading readiness development and the quantification of errors. These two kinds of numbering are represented in two kinds of lists: the chronicle and the collection. A discussion of *Our School* would not be complete without some attention to its proliferation of numbered lists. No less than thirty-two numbered lists appear in the sixty-six pages of Parts I & II. Part IV is entirely a list: the "cumulative vocabulary list". Following is a list of the lists in Parts I & II of *Our School* (Key: kind of items listed [kind of list: number of items listed]):

1. objectives (chronicle: 8)
2. methods (chronicle: 5)
3. methods (collection: 5)
4. skills (chronicle: 6)
5. methods (collection: 4)
6. skills (mixed: 14)
7. skills (collection: 5)
8. methods (collection: 6)

9. reasons (collection: 2)
10. skills and attitudes (collection: 7)
11. skills (mixed: 15)
12. stories (collection: 5)
13. objectives (mixed: 9)
14. objectives (collection: 3)
15. methods (chronicle: 5)
16. methods (collection: 4)
17. reasons (collection: 3)
18. methods (chronicle: 6)
19. methods (chronicle: 8)
20. skills (collection: 7)
21. methods (collection: 4)
22. objectives (collection: 3)
23. children (collection: 4)
24. skills (collection: 4)
25. errors (collection: 6)
26. methods (collection: 4)
27. methods (chronicle: 4)
28. methods (chronicle: 4)
29. methods (collection: 3)
30. methods (collection: 22)
31. methods (collection: 10)
32. skills (collection: 3)

Twenty-one of the lists are collections, eight are chronicles and four mix the elements of chronicle and collection. There is something faintly desperate about this insistent listing. It is as if the authors hoped that all the diverse findings of research about skills and methods and objectives would somehow just literally *add up*. There is also something distinctly *generic* about the compulsive inventorying. Roland Barthes discusses the *blazon*:

as a genre, the blazon expresses the belief that a complete inventory can reproduce a total body, as if the extremity of enumeration could devise a new category, that of totality: description is then subject to a kind of enumerative erethism: it accumulates in order to totalize, multiplies fetishes in order to obtain a total defetishized body. . . .²⁰

²⁰Barthes, p. 114.

Conclusion

Two basic images of time and space are presented in the *Our School Teachers' Manual*. The first is the distant authoritative world of the research academy. Its pronouncements are unquestionable--"conclusive and pertinent." The second image is the next-day fantasy that rehearses for the teacher the drama of following instructions. The significant disjunction between the two images is mediated by the procedure of diagnostic testing, where, in a place ritually set off from everyday activity, the teacher participates in a practice derived from research methods.

The manual functions as a kind of charm for the teacher, granting her relative superiority by rehearsing for her the next day's activities. The quest for reading readiness is thus emplotted as a romance of the teacher. The teacher embarks on a perilous journey through the dark forest of research 'findings'. She encounters and slays errors in the decisive diagnostic contest. Finally she returns to the classroom where her superior knowledge of what will happen next reveals her identity as, "the teacher".

The authors' argument about the nature of literacy learning is dispersive. They analyze the process of learning to read by naming and categorizing its component skills, methods of instruction and objectives. For the limited case of the child's learning to read, the manual might be characterized

ideologically as 'Anarchistic'. However this limited anarchism, is contained and cancelled by the larger context of a hierarchy of kinds of reading. In effect, the child's readiness to read is represented as immanent, however it is subordinant to the teacher's superior and already established diagnostic reading.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL HOUSE: A SPACE TO TEACH

"When that shuttle lifts off," Reagan told his politely applauding audience, "all of America will be reminded of the crucial role teachers and educators play in the life of our nation. I can't think of a better lesson for our children, and our country."

-*New York Times*, August 28, 1984.

Then an adult in the balcony--no one was sure who--realized that the flash was not the separation of a booster rocket, and yelled, "Shut up, everyone!" A silence descended in time for the students, teachers and administrators at the school where that teacher, Christa McAuliffe, had taught for three years to hear the announcer report, "The vehicle has exploded."

-*New York Times*, January 29, 1986.

In this section a selection of school building manuals is examined. A cross section of texts was made in order to check for generic similarities produced during a representative period--the school building boom of the 1950's--and, to explore the historical development of the genre. Three of the manuals were publications of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), in 1949, 1960 and 1967 respectively. One of those three, *Planning America's School Buildings*, shares with *Schools* and *Planning Functional School Buildings* the typical features of the 1950's manuals.¹ Produced by the AASA's School Building Commission, it shares an institutional origin with an

¹Merle L. Sumption and Jack L. Landes, *Planning Functional School Buildings* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957); Lawrence B. Perkins and Walter D. Cocking, *Schools* (New York: Reinhold, 1949); AASA School Building Commission, *Planning America's School Buildings* (Washington: American Association of School Administrators, 1960).

earlier manual, *American School Buildings*, and a later one, *Schools for America*--both also produced by the same association.²

Chronologically the manuals can be grouped into the following periods: (1) Pre-World War I: *Modern School Houses*--Aimed for an audience of architects, *Modern School Houses* is the most realist and technicist of the manuals.³ It presents an image of planning that involves applying contemporary standards and principles to achieve a reliable, standardized product. (2) Depression: *American School Buildings* and *The Planning and Construction of School Buildings*--Although published after World War II, *American School Buildings* shares with *The Planning and Construction of School Buildings* a primary concern for financial thrift and efficiency.⁴ *American School Buildings* also differs from the 1950's books in its assumption of a long term trend of enrolment decline. (3) 1950's Building Boom: *Planning America's School Buildings*, *Planning Functional School Buildings* and *Schools*--These three manuals share images of dynamic urban growth. They embed their planning advice within a narrative that memorializes the status quo of American

²AASA Commission on American School Buildings, *American School Buildings* (Washington: American Association of School Administrators, 1949); AASA Commission on School Buildings, *Schools for America* (Washington: American Association of School Administrators, 1967).

³A.D.F. Hamlin, *Modern School Houses* (New York: Swetland Publishing Co., 1910).

⁴Guy Montrose Whipple, ed., *The Planning and Construction of School Buildings* (Bloomington: Ill., Public School Publishing Co., 1934).

society, linking it to an epic national past. (4) Late 1960's: *Schools for America*--This last text extends the mythicizing tendency of the 1950's manuals into a magical realm beyond human comprehension.

In a planning report of the Vancouver Schools Building Committee, dated June, 1944, the committee documented its study method as commencing with the formation of a "Bibliography Committee" followed by weeks of "extensive general reading", then "more intensive research into individual fields".⁵ Among the entries in the committee's bibliography is one text examined here, *The Planning and Construction of School Buildings*. In addition, many of the items in the bibliography correlate with bibliography entries in another text studied here, *American School Buildings*.

The committee report begins with a brief opening essay, touching on many of the themes common to both earlier and later planning manuals: the central role of schools in a democratic society, the educational aim of developing the individual child, the need to fit the school building to the school's program and philosophy, the rapid changes inherent in today's society, the obsolescence of traditional educational methods and architecture, the need for flexibility in accommodating a progressive educational program, and the urgency of planning for an uncertain future in order to avoid financial waste.⁶ The bulk

⁵Vancouver School Board, *Report of the Elementary Schools Building Committee* (June, 1944), p. 1.

⁶Vancouver School Board, p. 5.

of the report concerns detailed technical specifications for such things as site selection, mechanical services, floor plan layouts, and specifications for furniture and equipment.

Planning for Growth

The discourse of the 1950's planning manuals exhibits a number of generic features that may be specified. Urban growth and change are represented as inevitable. But the processes of uncontrolled urban growth are not directly examined; they are held to be natural. The school planner is not expected to inquire into the social and economic processes underway, but to respond to them. An exalted national traditional past is invoked; an abstract future is projected as a vantage point from which contemporary accomplishments can be glorified and memorially fused with the epic past. Simplistic oppositions are posed between the modern and the obsolete; the forward looking and the unprepared; the sensibly guided and the chaotically spontaneous. Framed narratives are presented in the form of cautionary tales or ironic stories of the follies of the recent past. The texts depict an implied reader--the school superintendent--as a wise, patient, moderate, compassionate counselor. It is not difficult to detect the planning manuals' narrative borrowing from fiction; their stock plots seem calculated for easy recognition.

Each of the 1950's manuals represent 'growth'--whether urban, technological, economic or personal--as an inexorable,

spontaneous process. The growth metaphor subtly unites the task of the planner with a model of the educational process; the planner responds to enrolment growth, the educator responds to child development. Growth can have both positive and negative connotations in the planning literature. It is positively associated with life, prosperity and abundance; it also threatens disorder and decay. In order to avoid the latter threat, the manuals insist on the channeling, the containment, of growth.

Planning America's School Buildings initial metaphor, "From These Roots", launches a discussion of "a vigorously growing, dynamic society."⁷ Growth images are generated syntactically throughout the book by sentences that hinge together monstrous chains of dependant clauses:

If the educational program never changed; if the culture were static and scientists had ceased probing into the unknown; if inventors had gone on a long holiday and discoveries and innovations were at a standstill; if population mobility had ceased and the birth rate had become a constant factor; (etc.)⁸

This image of societal organic growth is fused with the explicit growth analogy for the learning process;

The school environment may be likened to conditions conducive to growth of a flowering plant in a garden. If the soil is mellow and fertile; if the seed bed is well prepared; if the sun is warm and penetrating; if the rains come at the right time; if the gardener has a "green thumb," really knows his business, derives a genuine satisfaction from his work, and takes pride in his accomplishments--the plant will be healthy, growth will be vigorous, and flowers and fruits will be

⁷AASA, 1960, p. 2.

⁸AASA, 1960, p. 5.

abundant.⁹

Planning Functional School Buildings emphasizes the need for a school plan to be flexible so that it can adjust to meet developing conditions. Its portrayal of failure to plan, and plan flexibly is presented in a cautionary tale of a small "midwestern city":

This community entered an era of rapid growth and territorial expansion at the close of World War II. In the space of ten years, it grew from a sedate prairie community of 18,000 to a bustling industrial city of almost twice that size.¹⁰

This view of urban growth naturalizes the historical processes, financial decisions and population movements it portrays. The image of the growing city is further elaborated in the story in terms of its board of education's 'vulnerability' and 'yielding' to unseemly pressures. A symbolic complex of 'nature', 'femininity', and 'weakness' is here invoked to uphold the protective *male* tutelage of the school planner.

Schools does not rely so heavily on the justifying metaphor of growth, asserting only its inevitability, "Death and Taxes are not the only sure things. There's another: steady, unremitting growth in school population."¹¹ This difference in emphasis might be explained by the earlier publication date of *Schools*--before the sustained nature of post-war birth increases could have been noted.

⁹AASA, 1960, p. 23.

¹⁰Sumption and Landes, p. 1.

¹¹Perkins and Cocking, p. 40.

Thomas Jefferson Memorial High School

The planning manuals of the 1950's subscribe to an epic version of American educational heritage that represents time in relation to a closed image of a glorious national past. Mikhail Bakhtin says of epic and its representation of time:

Whatever its origins, the epic as it has come down to us is an absolutely completed and finished generic form, whose constitutive feature is the transferal of the world it describes to an absolute past of national beginnings and peak times. The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category. In the epic world view, "beginning", "first", "founder", "ancestor", "that which occurred earlier" and so forth are not merely temporal categories but *valorized* temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree.¹²

It is not simply that epic only represents the distant past, Bakhtin points out that contemporary time can be represented in the epic--although not for its own sake, "an image is created for descendents, and this image is projected on to their sublime and distant horizon."¹³

Planning America's School Buildings features the epic in its first chapter, "From These Roots". The school is portrayed as the 'material expression' of American culture, "with its roots deeply embedded in the past, the school building is a symbol of the ideals of a free, self-governing people."¹⁴ *Planning America's School Buildings* explicitly builds the epic memorializing theme in its chapter title and first two

¹²Bakhtin, 1981, p. 13.

¹³Bakhtin, 1981, p. 19.

¹⁴AASA, 1960, p. 1.

paragraphs. The first paragraph extols the school house as the paragon of American tradition and culture; the second introduces the future perspective from which contemporary accomplishments will be remembered:

With a look toward the future, the school building reflects the ambitions, the hopes, the aspirations and the dreams of a people that is striving to move forward and upward to a way of life that is better, fuller, richer and more rewarding than that which it now knows.¹⁵

The function of the future in these lines is to gratefully remember the successful strivings when it looks upon the school building as the embodiment of those strivings. The rhetorical excess of the following passage is typical of the memorializing theme of the planning manuals:

The principles of freedom which motivated and moved men to action during the formative years of this nation were clearly stated by the Founding Fathers. Wisely they turned to public education as a guarantee that these principles would endure--would be understood, accepted, and translated into a guide for the day-to-day activities of free people. Over the years, great leaders in education have fought battle after battle to bring into existence a system of free public education. The values which these people believed to be essential to a democratic society can well be reviewed as a point of departure in planning, and, at the same time, careful thought and consideration must be given to conditions prevailing at the present time ...¹⁶

Planning Functional School Buildings arrives at its version of the epic national past by way of a detour through an utterly abstract future and present. 'Looking ahead' is the positively valued term alternatively expressed as foresight, providing,

¹⁵AASA, 1960, p. 1.

¹⁶AASA, 1960, p. 25.

prediction, and long range programming.¹⁷ Opposed to 'looking ahead' is a cluster of negative terms: misfortune, lack, error, inadequacy, inconvenience and vulnerability. Thematically, *Planning Functional School Buildings* can be restated as the proverb: plan now to avoid future distress. This unmediated opposition makes more urgent the dilemma of how in fact the future can be foreseen. But, although *Planning Functional School Buildings* repeatedly invokes the future, its actual representation of a future is extremely abstract. The future is imagined as the negative possibility of avoiding regret. The admonitory emphasis to planning can be seen in this rationale for careful consideration of the community's needs:

It is even more important that the needs of the community be just as closely studied [as the needs of a family] before the school building is planned. The head of the family may readily dispose of the house if it is found unsuitable or if the family decides to move to another community. On the other hand, the school building does not lend itself to similar disposal. It is a permanent investment which ordinarily must serve the community for many years.¹⁸

A void is constructed in the text that is filled by displacing the anxiety about the future onto a thorough inventory of the present. 'Looking ahead' is enacted as 'looking around'. The abstractness with which the future is figured is unrelieved in *Planning Functional School Buildings'* image of the present.

The text's narrative strategy for representing the individual, community, nation and world is a crude hierarchical

¹⁷Sumption and Landes, p. xiii.

¹⁸Sumption and Landes, p. 32.

containerization:

It must never be forgotten, however, that each community exists in a broader context which includes the state, the nation, and, more recently recognized, the world itself. . . The citizen of the community is also a citizen of the state and the nation and, whether we like it or not, a citizen of the world. . . In the final analysis, to be a good citizen of the community, one must also be a good citizen of his state, his country, and the world. . .¹⁹

Some anxiety about the concreteness of this ritual procedure is evident as the text compulsively and repeatedly ascends and descends through it. The national tradition to which memory of the present is to be fused is presented as immutable law cut off from any possible contact with everyday experience. Terms such as 'democracy' and 'culture' are presented as both intrinsically meaningful and unalterable:

As a democracy, we subscribe to certain educational goals which are inherent in our culture . . . certain goals are already established, the very fact that we live in a democracy commits the school to the maintenance and strengthening of the beliefs, allegiances, and practices that characterize democracy as a way of life.²⁰

As in the two other 1950's manuals, *Schools* presents an image of the epic national past that both inspires and reifies the public educational enterprise:

But there were people in the young republic who had fought for freedom because they impudently believed they could govern themselves. They also fought for public education because they impudently believed their children deserved a chance to learn. They dared to be forward-goers.²¹

¹⁹Sumption and Landes, p. 43.

²⁰Sumption and Landes, pp. 52-53.

²¹Perkins and Cocking, p. 18.

Schools actually presents a more populist image of the ~~the~~ epic past. The past is linked to the present through a dramatization, in the prologue and epilogue, of a town meeting. The words quoted above are attributed to one of the fictional characters in the melodrama--Mr. Shaw, the school district superintendent. The melodrama is focalized through the character of the elderly school building committee chairman. Two central changes of narrative level are introduced in the melodrama through Mr. Shaw's soliloquy and the old chairman's daydreams. The populist epic past is constructed by linking the town meeting tradition with Mr. Shaw's direct valorized account, cited above, and viewing this relationship through the perspective of the venerated patriarch character.

Progressive Irony

In contrast to the reverence with which the planning manuals contemplate the distant past, the recent past is disparaged. This ironization of the recent past also serves as a polemic on behalf of 'progress'. Past educational methods are disparaged, and progressive education, flexible building design and program planning are extolled. *Schools* and *Planning America's School Buildings* explicitly endorse the progressive education project method, *Planning Functional School Buildings* does so implicitly by the goals it includes as exemplary.

Ironizing an image of a static recent past, *Planning America's School Buildings* invokes what it derides as the

traditional image of the school as a series of rooms, each containing 30 desks, "we would not need to break with this stereotype if we believed that learning is limited to listening to the teacher, studying textbooks and then reciting ..." ²² To this static image of passive learning, it contrasts a hyperbolic account of the dynamism of modern American society. It is, notably an image of society limited to the top of the hierarchy:

Scientists are feverishly at work planning electronic and atomic developments; military leaders are experimenting with new weapons and devices for defense; physicians and surgeons are searching for new ways to combat disease; sociologists and statisticians are plotting and projecting population curves that extend upward and upward to new heights; planning divisions of industrial organizations are at work on blueprints for new factories and new products; and government officials are striving to anticipate the problems that will have to be faced in the years immediately ahead. ²³

Preparation of students to participate in this 'dynamic' society requires *flexible* space, according to the manual.

Planning Functional School Buildings is more restrained than either *Planning America's School Buildings* or *Schools* in disparaging the old fashioned ways, "It is not unusual to see an educational program whose goals are embedded in the traditions of many years standing, functional school buildings are not likely to be built with such an educational program as a guide." ²⁴ *Planning Functional School Buildings* embeds its ironization of inadequate planning within a second narrative level. Two cautionary tales highlight the book's main themes of

²²AASA, 1960, p. 33.

²³AASA, 1960, p. 5.

²⁴Sumption and Landes, p. 53.

providing for the future and organizing community participation. Each tale is of unrelenting disaster. The first story is introduced as "a good example of what may happen in the case of a school system which fails to develop a long range plan".²⁵ The second story illustrates the point that, "very serious repercussions are likely to attend an improperly organized or unguided," attempt at community participation.²⁶ In each story sad consequences accumulate after failures to follow the proper planning procedures. Elsewhere, earlier attempts to carry out school surveys are ironized as crude, lacking in systematic recommendations, and failing to develop a clear future building program.²⁷ In effect, the survey suggestions contained in *Planning Functional School Buildings* are valorized by asserting their superiority to earlier methods.

In addition to ironizing, "the cistern type," of traditional education, *Schools* ridicules the recent past's architectural fads and foibles: "fashionable borrowing from the Greeks and Romans", "putting on a party dress of Victorian jig saw gingerbread", "monuments remembered only by pigeons" and so on.²⁸ According to *Schools'* chronicle, appropriate thinking about school house design began sometime in the 1930's, coinciding with the spread of progressive educational methods, "One of the early notable attempts to build a school for the

²⁵Sumption and Landes, p. 1.

²⁶Sumption and Landes, p. 22.

²⁷Sumption and Landes, pp. 3-4.

²⁸Perkins and Cocking, p. 233.

pupil", was Ansonia High School, designed in 1935.

The Superintendent in the Text

Planning manuals are directed at a specific audience: primarily school district superintendents; secondly, professional and lay people who could be persuaded to share the superintendent's perspective. *Planning America's School Buildings* was commissioned by a school administrators' association. According to the foreword, it is, "filled with dozens of specific suggestions to superintendents (particularly the inexperienced), staff members and school boards ..."²⁹

Planning Functional School Buildings nominally addresses, "all of those interested in and responsible for the subject herein discussed."³⁰ However it is the school superintendent who is identified as the 'logical person' to organize the framework for carrying out the extensive community survey, goals definition and building program.³¹ *Planning Functional School Buildings* pursues here a dual strategy of enlistment: community members and school personnel are enlisted in support of a building plan through their participation in promulgating it; the district superintendent is enlisted into the community participation process through the emphasis on his essential guiding role. It is consistently from the superintendent's

²⁹AASA, 1960, p. iv.

³⁰Sumption and Landes, p. xiii.

³¹Sumption and Landes, p. 160.

guiding perspective that *Planning Functional School Buildings* represents the planning process.

Schools signals its address to superintendents through the character of 'Mr. Shaw' in the melodramatic prologue and epilogue. Mr. Shaw's speech portrays him as a practical, down-to-earth man.³² He is a man of modest but uplifting vision and deep attachment to the community he serves. He is a modern progressive thinker who holds dear the traditional values of his nation. He recognizes the diversity of interest and opinion in the community, and has faith in the power of reason and neighborliness to resolve conflicts for the good of all. Mr. Shaw does not conceal his modestly superior cultural sophistication--as his allusions to "Mr. Somerset Maugham" attest. He certainly wishes to distance himself from the philistinism of "The Daily Blat", but he is careful that his codes of cultural reference emphasize the universally familiar: Thomas Jefferson, "that flash over Hiroshima", rising school costs.

The Good Old Days

Modern School Houses, published in 1910, provides an informative contrast to the generic 1950's planning books. Appeal is not made to an epic national tradition, rather an evolutionary march of civilizations situates the current planning moment. Egypt, Greece, Rome, the middle ages are

³²Perkins and Cocking, 1957, pp. 15-18.

admired with regard to their, "imperishable constructional remains".³³ As earlier times are symbolized by their ruins, science expresses the spirit of the modern age. *Modern School Houses* is addressed to architects rather than superintendents. While the 1950's books run to hyperbole in emphasizing the importance of the school superintendent's planning mission, *Modern School Houses* states its purpose modestly. It maintains that, "The data for the designing of public school buildings have been more completely standardized than for any other type of structure, except the American public library."³⁴ This standardization, *Modern School Houses* points out, "make the problem of school design comparatively easy for the architect, so far as general plan and form are concerned."³⁵ The architect is advised to attend to the detail and execution of the structure. As far as planning for future school needs, "The determining factors in the size and style of the school building are the site, the appropriation and the number and grade of the pupils to be accommodated."³⁶

Modern School Houses conforms with a number of the generic features of school planning books: acknowledging the symbolic importance of the school for the community, scorning the failure of the recent past to live up to currently accepted standards, and lauding the modern progressive attitudes that have finally

³³Hamlin, p. vii.

³⁴Hamlin, p. 3.

³⁵Hamlin, p. 3-4.

³⁶Hamlin, p. 1.

come to prevail. No less conservative than its 1950's counterparts, *Modern School Houses* dispenses with the panegyrics to an epic past, and unanxiously presumes the technical superiority of modern standardization.

The Planning and Construction of School Buildings and *American School Buildings* are not presented in a unified narrative as are the 1950's manuals. Rather they appear as edited collections of technical articles. Each of these volumes was published as a Yearbook; their statements of aims are remarkably similar:

In this Yearbook the attempt is made to trace the steps in ["the true processes of planning and adapting the structure to meet definite needs"] and to bring to light principles, practices and associated data.³⁷

This Yearbook aims to review the principles and the processes that are basic in planning and providing the school plant facilities required to operate a modern school program for the growth of American youth.³⁸

Despite the similarity of these two statements, the selected articles cluster around different themes. Some overlap occurs in the mutual attention to matters of thrift and administrative control, but the earlier book almost entirely attends to the administrative relations among various professional fields: educational, architectural, financial and construction. *American School Buildings* focuses more on technical aspects of school building design: service facilities, materials, equipment, and lighting. These two books approach the same problem from two

³⁷Whipple, p. 4.

³⁸AASA, 1949., p. 9.

different directions--the problem is securing administrative control over professional technical service. This common concern is disclosed when *American School Buildings* interjects within an article on lighting and color, "The educator will not hope to master the vocabulary of the lighting engineer, but it will help to have at least a partial understanding of a few of the technical terms used most often."³⁹

Conversely *The Planning and Construction of School Buildings* provides detailed checklists of technical aspects of building design for use in contracting and monitoring professional services. Each book attempts to address a tension that arises out of the division of professional technical labor. School authorities are wary of relinquishing control of the design process to architects and engineers. They are constrained by their own specialization from actually performing the technical services themselves. So, they seek to institute an entire structure of *redundant* technical knowledge.

The model for such a redundant structure of technical knowledge is Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management. Braverman cites its principles: 1. "dissociation of the labor process from the skills of the worker." 2. "separation of conception from execution--systemization of the labor process by gathering knowledge which workers already possess." 3. "use of a monopoly of skilled knowledge to control each step of the labor process

³⁹AASA, 1949, p. 219.

and its mode of execution."⁴⁰

The image of time projected by these narratives is that of the working day. It is a radically abstract time; time without qualities. Or, time whose sole quality is its commensurability--its exchange value. The watchwords of this image of time are efficiency, thrift, economy. The action occurs in the chronotope of the workplace. The workplace is variously figured as an administrative office, building site or the functioning school itself, suggestively referred to as the school *plant*. The language of the working day and the workplace extends to the conception of the activity of the school child, "The aim of school lighting is to produce the conditions under which the visual tasks of the school day can be done efficiently, in comfort and with the least output of strain and effort."⁴¹, ". . . seeing is work, and not just eye work either."⁴², "Merely to add footcandles without taking ... other

⁴⁰Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 112-119. The problem with adopting a Taylorist model for controlling technical professional labor is that here it operates on an already systematized and specialized labor process. Whereas the Taylorist system allows for locating technical control of the labor process *outside of the labor process*, it relocates it in the function of technical expertise. The duplication of technical expertise *itself* is economically absurd; however, politically it opens up a profound and sinister articulation of the technical professional labor process. Profound, because it enables a vast expansion of the technical professional labor force. Sinister because it makes each single technical professional employee expendable, and thus leaves the entire system unaccountable. (There can be no accountability of *systems*, only of *persons*.)

⁴¹AASA, 1949, pp. 217-218.

⁴²AASA, 1949, p. 217.

steps may actually bring more discomfort rather than greater comfort to *the pupil's all day job of seeing.*"³ Not surprisingly this language embraces every other relationship and activity described: that of the superintendent, the architect, teacher, consultant, and school board member. Such explicit figuring of the school as a workplace is in itself unremarkable. It only acquires its resonance when juxtaposed with the decidedly memorializing and symbolizing images of the later, 1950's, school building planning manuals. Still, some residue of the forthright Taylorism remains in the later manuals; as in this image--from *Planning America's School Buildings*--of the principles of school and supermarket planning:

There is a similarity of approach necessary to the planning of both a school and a food market, in that the function to be performed by the school--the job to be done in the food store--must be projected in a bold pattern, analyzed on the basis of principles, and broken down into operating procedures.⁴

The Future is Now

The last of the school planning manuals studied is *Schools for America*. This bizarre specimen 'casts off' any conceivable human scale of time or space. Its opening paragraph sweeps from the infinite immensity of the universe to the inconceivable subatomic micro-world and back to the universe--its very beginning in time!--in three sentences:

As man casts off the bonds of earthbound knowledge and

³AASA, 1949, p. 219.

⁴AASA, 1960, p. 33.

soars to new intellectual heights, he must unlearn as well as learn. Only yesterday, the atom was thought to be immutable unit of matter; now it has been split, with consequences both fearful and wonderful. And learned scholars, considering strange rays of light, again dispute a question once believed settled--the very origin of the universe.⁴⁵

Again, the second chapter begins with an image of disorienting scale, this time in regard to population:

There are three billion people on the earth today. Unless present population trends change substantially this number will double by the year 2000 ... [Scholars look ahead] to the time when the earth may have a population of 50 billion persons.⁴⁶

This exaggeration of scale, entirely unreferenced to the human body or any perceivable object, picks up where the distanced unchangable epic past leaves off. This is no longer simply an extremely valorized realm of human time; this image of time cancels humanity. And it does so, strangely enough, by coupling scientific technology with a magical view of the universe, and thereby uncoupling technology from human agency. The extreme ideological distortion inherent in *Schools for America's* image of time and space is confirmed by its image of black people:

The difficulty of the educational problem in large city school systems has been accentuated by the preponderance of Negroes in immigration. As they have come in increasing numbers from the agricultural South to take heavy jobs in city factories, technology is doing away with the jobs they came to fill. Lacking the skills required for ready employment in business and industry, many are left stranded and bitter in the city ghetto.⁴⁷

In three successive sentences this text dehumanizes black people, portraying them as an 'immigrating preponderance'; it

⁴⁵AASA, 1967, p. 1.

⁴⁶AASA, 1967, p. 11.

⁴⁷AASA, 1967, p. 17.

naturalizes class relations as 'technology'; and it blames the victims--the root cause of their 'bitterness' is not racism or exploitation, it their own 'lack of skills'. But blatant racism is not unique to *Schools for America*. Its predecessor publication, *Planning America's School Buildings* adroitly avoided any mention of the planning consequences of school desegregation at a time when desegregation was the major issue confronting U.S. school authorities.⁴⁸

Conclusion

The American literature of school planning can be said to be conservatively utopian in that it projects contemporary American society as ideal with few improvements needed. The memorializing narratives locate the basic principles of society beyond change or questioning in an epic national past. The ironization of the recent past and the positive assessment of progress lend a Comedic undertone to this epic emplotment. A perceivable strategy emerges for achieving the few trivial adjustments desired: the entire status quo is to be reconstructed in an exhaustive inventory to serve as the basis for farsighted projection of more of the same. The images of the person, of the community, of the school that emerge from the planning books are inert and lifeless, they are also elitist, sexist and racist. The character of the school superintendent is exalted by a

⁴⁸e.g., 5 out of 8 pages dealing with U.S. Education and Schools in the 1959 *New York Times Index* specifically index stories on racial desegregation. (*New York Times Index* 47 [New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1959], p. 311-319).

portraying *him* as the guardian of the values of the epic past.

The root metaphor of organic growth naturalizes the social and economic processes affecting school district planning. This growth is pictured as inherently positive, bringing prosperity and new life. But growth has the potential for disorder; the task of the school district superintendent to channel growth in the proper direction. It is interesting to note that while these manuals, particularly after 1960, insist upon the need for architectural 'flexibility' and modernism in school buildings, they frame their narratives in an archaic, fixed and *inflexible* form.

CHAPTER VI

LEARNING WAYS TO LABOUR WITH WORDS

The texts examined so far, the basal reader teachers' manual and the school building planning manuals, have prescribed standardized suggestions for guiding practice. This next section examines two school ethnographies, *Ways with Words* by Shirley Brice Heath, and *Learning to Labour* by Paul Willis, which approach practice in a different and critical way. These ethnographies are also intimately concerned with guiding practice, as each of the authors makes clear in opening and concluding sections. Willis announces his objective of making the arguments of his book, "accessible to audiences of social scientists, practitioners and general readers."¹ At the conclusion to his book, he includes a section in which he considers, "the implications of this research for the practical/political level and for the two regions most clearly involved with the concerns of this study: vocational guidance and education for disaffected youth."² Heath also makes explicit her address to an audience of practitioners, "learning researchers, non-academics and academics alike. At the top of the list of such researchers are those teachers at all levels of the curriculum who constantly search out new ways of learning about themselves and their students."³

¹Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour*, (Hampshire, England: Gower Publishing, 1977), p. vii.

²Willis, p. 185.

³Shirley Brice Heath, *Ways with Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Broadly, both Heath and Willis criticize the school for not meeting the needs of significant groups of students. Heath seeks to "bridge" the differences between the cultural ways of the students and that of the school; Willis ponders practices that, in his estimation, might ultimately lead to radical structural change in society at large. Each, in pursuing a variety of ethnographic research, investigates the aspects of student home or peer group culture which could be their unacknowledged strengths or unrecognized weaknesses.

The two school ethnographers, then, address practice through an effort to better understand both school and non-school *practices*. The discourse of the ethnographers is also different from that found in the teachers' manual and in the school building planning manuals. While the latter relied on the authority of the epic past or the sacrosanct research laboratory, the school ethnographies display a complex, *novelistic* development of character, time and place.

The Story of Roadville and Trackton

Shirley Brice Heath invites the reader of *Ways with Words* to view her book as, "an unfinished story, in which the characters are real people whose lives go on beyond the decade covered in this book ..."⁴ Indeed, central to her book is a concern for story form as a way of meaning; the crucial transition between

³(cont'd) University Press, 1983), p. 13.

⁴Heath, p. 13.

her account of communities and her discussion of classroom responses is occupied by a discussion and classification of communities' and childrens' oral narratives.

Ways with Words surveys a set of domestic learning and teaching experiences that culminate in the ability to produce and enjoy a limited range of story genres. For the Roadville or Trackton children who are the subjects of the book, the processes described as 'learning how to talk' or 'teaching how to talk' are substantially completed by the time a child can competently produce the kinds of narrative valued in his or her respective community. In Chapter 5, on oral traditions, Heath classifies the kinds of narratives valued in each of the two communities. Here, she pays particular attention to those narrative forms that her informants themselves call stories. These self-nominated stories share an entertainment value within the Roadville and Trackton communities. Although the methods of attaining social cohesion vary between the two communities, the stories function in each as occasions for affirming group attitudes and for displaying individual virtuosity with the group verbal codes.

Heath distinguishes between self-nominated 'stories' and narratives that residents do not call stories. For the Roadville people, a story is a truthful account of a personal incident--one which illustrates and reinforces a commonly held moral principle.⁵ These stories are thus true in the sense of

⁵Heath, p. 153.

drawing on actual experience--and, in the sense of conforming to some transcendental 'Truth'. Narratives that fail to conform to these truth criteria are thus disparaged as lies, idle talk, or gossip. Heath reports that Trackton residents recognize as stories only creatively enhanced and exaggerated accounts based on personal incidents. Here too, other types of narrative--Heath lists the formulaic story, the retold story, and the factual report--are usually not referred to as 'stories'.⁶

In Chapter 5, Heath specifies seven kinds of stories: the Roadville 'piece of truth', the Trackton 'talking junk', the lie, gossip, retold story, formulaic story and the factual report. Only the first two are recognized as stories by the tellers, and, Heath points out, their definitions would clash across community lines; what would be accepted as a story to Trackton residents would appear to Roadvillers as a lie. Furthermore, Heath's informal classification system designates as stories narrative events that residents would not so designate. She thus establishes a shifting taxonomy that projects three distinct perspectives: Heath's, Roadville's, and Trackton's. Elsewhere in the book, Heath extends this classification by incorporating the perspective of the school and the townspeople (these two are relatively homogeneous). The main contributions of the school are the story-book fiction and the objectively analyzed, abstract account.

⁶Heath, p. 188.

These kinds of stories are subject to extensive further specification based on source (e.g., Biblical, historiographic, popular media or personal memory), mode of presentation (e.g., introduction of theme, introduction of main character, development of main character's qualities, etc.) or function (e.g., group cohesion, identity assertion, school performance etc.). In summary, Heath's taxonomy ultimately establishes the meaningful context of a story in regard to four variables: identity of the narrator, source of narrative, form, and social intention. With a shift of perspective, any of these variables can be revalued, thereby converting the *meaning* of the story. With her emphasis on translating meaning from context to context, it seems that Heath assumes a correspondence between meaning and appropriate context. The task for understanding then is to reconstruct original meaningful contexts in order to 'get at' meaning itself.

Communities' Story/Ethnographer's Story

Ways with Words is structured as a narrative bounded by a prologue and epilogue metacommentary. According to the common practice of "setting up a rhetorical hierarchy between the two parts of the tale"⁷, the reader may understand *Ways with Words* as the story of how the children of two communities, Roadville and Trackton, come to produce particular kinds of stories--some explicitly acknowledged as stories, others not--and what happens

⁷Barthes, p. 90.

to them when they go off to school.

The story is set in the Piedmont region of the Southeastern USA. Heath provides some historical and geographical background for the region and the particular localities. After an extensive account of how children in the two communities learn or are taught to talk, and of the kinds of stories children eventually learn to tell, Heath moves on to a discussion of the culture of the townspeople and the school. When the children enter the world of school, they find new circumstances that don't embrace the 'ways with words' they had learned at home. In effect this transition presents a challenge to the children's identity in as much as that identity is bound up in story telling activities. Heath emphasizes the discrepancy between school and home stories and the effect that these differences have on children's performance in school.

It is tempting at this point to read *Ways with Words* as a romantic enchantment of the child. The transition from home to school marks this enchantment under the spell of an alien discourse. The consequences of this enchantment are dire:

After initial years of success, Roadville children fall behind, and by junior high, most are simply waiting out school's end or their sixteenth birthday, the legal age for leaving school ... Trackton students fall quickly into a pattern of failure, yet all about them they hear that they can never get ahead without a high school diploma ... Trackton students drift through school hoping to escape with the valued piece of paper ...⁸

Reading *Ways with Words* as a romance of the child establishes the expectation of a disenchantment which will correspond to and

⁸Heath, p. 349.

undo the initial enchantment of the transition to school. The text does not disappoint the conventional reading expectation. The last chapter, "Learners as Ethnographers", presents just such a disenchantment as the children, helped by their ethnographically enlightened teachers, learn to translate between their own home acquired ways of making meaning and the narrative requirements of the school:

Their teachers' new ways of linking familiar strategies of knowing to unfamiliar classroom content and tasks resulted in success at a variety of levels: test scores, self-concept, interest in attending school, interaction with adults in their own communities, and attitudes toward what it was that school was all about.⁹

Tempting as such a romantic reading may be, it only evades some of the larger and structurally explicit issues of the text. The titles of the two parts of the main text signal the incongruity of the romantic reading. In the titles, the principal character is unambiguously identified as the ethnographer: "Ethnographer Learning" and "Ethnographer Doing". Although this is a story *in which* children are enchanted by unfamiliar school ways and subsequently disenchanting, it is not simply the story *of* this enchantment/disenchantment.

Heath's prologue and epilogue are more explicit in outlining this as the *ethnographer's* story. Even here, though, there is an evasion concerning who the main characters of the story are, "the characters are real people whose lives go on beyond the decade covered in this book ... the children, their community

⁹Heath, p. 342.

members and their townspeople teachers."¹⁰ In the previous paragraph Heath states, "In Part I of the book, the reader moves with me, the ethnographer, as unobtrusively as possible ..."¹¹ and then, "In Part II ... I as ethnographer have become a major actor in the translation of social reality that occurred in the classrooms described here."¹² The text equivocates here on the issue of who the main character of *Ways with Words* is. Heath herself announces the dual nature of the book, but for her that dual nature resides wholly in the shift from observation in Part I to intervention in Part II. The equivocation is heightened in the 'main' text where the parts are titled in terms of the ethnographer's activity but the narrative voice shifts to third person and the text makes rare reference to the ethnographer herself.¹³

Returning to the prologue, the reader finds a series of statements that initiate the ethnographer's story: "I was a part-time instructor in anthropology and linguistics at a state university which had an excellent local reputation for teacher training."¹⁴ The narrator establishes her credentials and her strategic location, crucial to effecting a synthesis of

¹⁰Heath, p. 13.

¹¹Heath, p. 12.

¹²Heath, pp. 12-13.

¹³There are notable exceptions to this, most interesting is the Trackton text on page 87 where Heath records and transcribes her own extensive participation in a conversation.

¹⁴Heath, p. 1.

ethnography and teaching; at the same time she declares her *provisional* academic status. "Though I did not then set out to do so, my next years were to be spent recording and interpreting the language learning habits of the children of Roadville and Trackton."¹⁵ The narrator introduces the element of *chance* in the initiation of the narrative sequence; this is an important conventional element in an adventure story. "My entry into these specific communities came through a naturally occurring chain of events."¹⁶ Here the narrator asserts and establishes the 'reality' of her story--she projects the antithesis: natural/contrived. "I had grown up in a rural Piedmont area in a neighboring state . . ."¹⁷ The narrator refers to her personal past; thus asserting the *authenticity* of her account. "I had been a daily part of such cultural ways."¹⁸ A *sympathetic* relation between narrator and cultural ways is asserted--one might even say that a microcosmic relation between narrator and narration is claimed. "These shared experiences and unconscious habits of interaction eased my transition into both Trackton and Roadville."¹⁹ Here the text validates 'unconscious' as a term equivalent to 'natural', hence the compound opposition: natural=unconscious/contrived=conscious.

¹⁵Heath, p. 3.

¹⁶Heath, p. 5.

¹⁷Heath, p. 5.

¹⁸Heath, p. 5.

¹⁹Heath, p. 5.

What emerges in the prologue, then, is the development of an image of the ethnographer as a *medium* in both the occult and communications senses of the term. Conventionally a medium is not simply once and for all a medium but must undergo a transformation, a metamorphosis, into the medium state. This metamorphosis is marked in the text by a shift of narrative voice between the prologue and the first chapter.

Heath explains that she took pains to be unobtrusive while conducting her ethnographic research, "as far as possible I tried not to use any of the items in the communities in way unfamiliar to them. I spent many hours cooking, chopping wood, gardening, sewing, and minding children by the rules of the communities."²⁰ A striking omission in this list is "telling stories". Did the ethnographer 'unobtrusively' refrain from sharing in precisely that activity central to her study and analyzed by her as socially constitutive? What becomes hidden in all this unobtrusiveness is Heath's own identity as ethnographer. As well, Heath stresses her special efforts to protect the privacy of the community residents. Once again the occult theme must be reckoned with: in revealing the ways of the people she observes, Heath discloses that which constitutes their identities, but for just this reason she is anxious to conceal their identity. Occult knowledge is conventionally that which must be concealed in order to be revealed; it then must be reconcealed even as it is being revealed--that is, it must be *mystified*. Yet another theme is developed by Heath's assertion

²⁰Heath, p. 8.

of her status as a Piedmont native, her concern for the privacy of her informants, and her explicit naming of an audience of researchers, both teachers and academics, for the book. This final theme concerns the suspicion of the 'outsider'.

Insider/Outsider

Heath sets down a cinematic rhythm in "The Piedmont" which is repeated through "In Roadville" and "In Trackton". In each section, the text approaches the location first from a distance; a sketchy historical reference accompanies a zoom in to a location close up which resolves into a more detailed historical treatment. The transitional description, both historical and geographical, always focuses on a road, "wagons moved along roads which after a rain could entrap wagon and horse or oxen in a mire of red or grayish clay ..."²¹, "only Dura Street goes all the way down to Roadville. It meanders down the hill and parallels the gully before it peters out into a dirt road ..."²², "Hardly more than a good stone's throw from the renovated downtown center of Gateway is a dirt road which drops sharply off a little used residential street ..."²³ Thus the text frames a metaphorical complex which echoes from the title, *Ways with Words*; to the names of the two communities, Roadville and Trackton, to the *nature* of the Piedmont ("easier to settle in

²¹Heath, pp.19-20.

²²Heath, p. 30.

²³Heath, pp. 47-48.

then to pass through."²⁴), and finally to the aspirations and prospects of the people: 'the road ahead', 'the way ahead'. And ultimately, what *Ways with Words* advocates is the *bridging* of the different ways of meaning of home and school.

The central story begins with a picturesque description of the Piedmont. A distant vantage point is established from which the 'outsider' can survey, all at once, stands of timber, fields of clay, sky, textile mills, foothills, rivers, railways and towns--in short, the totality of the Piedmont. But the very name 'Piedmont' is offered to the reader as a mark of exclusion. The term is, "used by outsiders and newcomers to the region, but never by local residents."²⁵ The Piedmont story obeys a naive convention: the story begins at the beginning of the day. A rising sun slowly burns off the early morning fog. Although fog might be a typical climatic feature of this region, it conventionally emphasizes the initial 'obscurity' of things, and it establishes a contrast between the transitoriness of the fog and the enduring permanence of the landscape. As the sun burns off the fog, the local people awake from their habitual, cyclical sleep and the reader begins to emerge from his/her 'sleep' of ignorance. The poetic function of this awakening day is reinforced later in the text when, at the end of the In Roadville section, Heath reprises the sun shining on the mills (this time with connotations of evening), "Meanwhile, in their own homes with their parents, the good meals and the talk of the

²⁴Heath, p. 20.

²⁵Heath, p. 19.

future go on, the winter gardens grow, mothers attentively sew new dresses for the school dance, and the sun shines on the chimneys of the mill."²⁶ Here, unmistakably, themes of the succession of generations, the vegetative cycle, and a sublimated image of sexual awakening are linked with the solar cycle and ultimately the cycle of the narrative itself. Here we also have a device of closure that anticipates Heath's later discussion of a Trackton child's story-poem, "Lem poetically balances his opening and closing in an *inclusio* beginning 'Way/Far/Now/' and ending 'Far/Now/'. The effect is one of closure, but there is no clear-cut announcement of closure."²⁷

The elements outlined above evidence some of the generic affinities that *Ways with Words* has with what Mikhail Bakhtin calls, "the adventure novel of everyday life".²⁸ The hero in this type of novel is an observer of everyday life, who as a result of a fortuitous transformation is positioned to enter into everyday life as a 'third person'. The hero may have a provisional or peripheral status in society, and be setting out to build a career. An element of chance introduces the hero into the realm of private everyday life; this chance, however, is subordinated to the personal initiative of the hero. Finally, the course of the story corresponds to the actual course of the hero's travels; the travels, in turn are governed by a definite sequence of development.

²⁶Heath, p. 47.

²⁷Heath, p. 171.

²⁸Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 111-129.

The hero relates to the observed private life as a non-participant in that life. He or she may play an extremely humble role in common life, as a subordinate to common serving people. Bakhtin describes the social role played by Lucius in *The Golden Ass*, "As an ass, a beast of burden, he descends to the very depths of common life, life among muleteers, hauling a millstone for the miller, serving a gardener, a soldier, a cook, a baker."²⁹ But this humble role also functions to permit the hero to unobtrusively observe the events of private life:

The position of an ass is a particularly convenient one for observing the secrets of everyday life. The presence of an ass embarrasses no one, all open up completely. "And in my oppressive life only one consolation remained to me: to indulge that curiosity which is my native bent, since people never took my presence into consideration and talked and acted as freely as they wished".³⁰

The problem of representation addressed by the novel of everyday life is defined by Bakhtin as, "the contradiction between the public nature of the literary form and the private nature of its content."³¹ Obviously, a correlated problem poses itself for the school/community ethnographer. This is the contradiction between the public activity of the school and the private realm of the child's language socialization.

At this point it is important to note a crucial apparent disjunction between Heath's image of everyday life and Bakhtin's description of the genre. Bakhtin stresses the non-organic,

²⁹Bakhtin, 1981, p. 121.

³⁰Bakhtin, 1981, p. 122.

³¹Bakhtin, 1981, p. 123.

non-cyclical nature of everyday time in the adventure novel of everyday life. He asserts, "First and foremost, novelistic time is thoroughly cut off from nature and from natural and mythological cycles."³² Heath's explicit employment of cyclical themes has already been noted: the co-ordination of the story's opening with the rising sun, the reprise of the sun in connection with images of generational continuity and seasonal gardens, and the stylistic closure. Heath's cyclical references can also be seen, however, as thematic counterpoints to a dominant depiction of time that is, after all, "scattered, ~~fragmented~~, deprived of essential connections"³³. Her 'mythic' time is thus only tenuously achieved by an inversion of an inversion; it is not mere mythical time, but self-consciously *mythical* time. Eventually, in the narrative, this mythicized time breaks down during the epilogue section on "The future of home, school and work". Perhaps the fact that the sun shone on *the chimney of the mill*--an unorganic, even infernal image--should be seen as anticipating *both* Lem's *inclusio* and a final, absurd fragmentation.

The close linkage of adventure time to the metamorphosis of the main character receives detailed analysis in Bakhtin's discussion. He attributes the images of metamorphosis and identity to the storehouse of traditional folklore. This image in folklore concretely represents the idea of transformation.³⁴

³² Bakhtin, 1981, p. 128.

³³ Bakhtin, 1981, p. 128.

³⁴ Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 111-113.

In the novel which Bakhtin presents as the model of the everyday adventure novel, Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, the metamorphosis of the hero is occasioned by a cycle of guilt, punishment, redemption and blessedness.³⁵ The hero initiates the cycle through an act of his own reckless curiosity and lust, but at this point chance intervenes to propel the character on his way.

It is not difficult to imagine a positive reformulation of this negative act of initiation. Instead of guilt proceeding from an impetuous sinful act, the positive version could substitute the socially committed curiosity of the reformer or "learning researcher". The positively revalued cycle could be expressed as: commitment--field observation--practical intervention--blessedness. In light of the academic placement of Heath's story, blessedness might alternatively be expressed as satisfaction over improved student achievement or as tenure. The important characteristics of the cycle remain: primary initiation coming from the personality of the hero, chance intervening to set off a chain of events, the particular sequence of events governed by a principle of development.

Bakhtin says that this novel type "fuses the course of an individual's life with his actual spatial course or road--that is, with his wanderings."³⁶ This fusion of an individualized time with a familiarized place is accomplished by the metaphorical image of the road. The chronotope (Bakhtin uses the

³⁵Bakhtin, 1981, p. 116.

³⁶Bakhtin, 1981, p. 120.

technical term 'chronotope' to express and emphasize the connectedness of images of time and space in the novel) of the road is appropriate for meetings of people of varied social backgrounds, for "portraying events governed by chance" and for expressing the progress along a particular course of an individual's or a community's life. He argues for the folkloric derivation of the chronotope and its importance for the history of the novel:

The path itself extends through familiar, native territory, in which there is nothing exotic, alien or strange. Thus a unique novelistic chronotope is created, one that has played an enormous role in the history of the genre. At its heart is folklore ... One can even go as far as to say that in folklore a road is almost never merely a road, but always suggests the whole, or a portion of, "a path of life".³⁷

Heath certainly fuses the time of her ethnographic field study with the places of 'Roadville' and 'Trackton'. The theme of 'integration' of people of different races and different cultural backgrounds is fundamental. Furthermore she is concerned to show a development of these communities in transition. Thus her road metaphors lie entirely within the tradition of the genre.

Crucial to the novel of everyday life is the aspect of spying and eavesdropping on private life; activities which reveal private human nature and make it public:

The quintessentially private life that entered the novel at this time was, by its very nature and as opposed to public life, *closed*. In essence one could only *spy* and *eavesdrop* on it. The literature of private life is essentially a literature of snooping about, of

³⁷Bakhtin, 1981, p. 120.

overhearing "how others live."³⁸

In *The Golden Ass*, "Everyday life is the nether world, the grave, where the sun does not shine, where there is no starry firmament. For this reason everyday life is presented to us as the underside of real life."³⁹ But in Roadville the sun shines on the chimneys of the mill. This might be read as an inversion of the netherworld motif. It is notable that alcoholism, violence, and infidelity--precisely the themes of a 'lowlife' image--are treated peripherally in *Ways with Words*. To be sure those aspects of life are mentioned but they are not explored as culturally functional. Also significant is the treatment of the converse of sin, religiosity. Heath recognizes Christian religion as central to the Trackton and Roadville residents 'ways with words' and devotes extensive discussion to this aspect of their lives. In this connection, Bakhtin includes early Christianity as one of the cultic lines of development of the idea of metamorphosis.⁴⁰ Sin is functional as the initiating moment of the cycle of guilt, punishment, redemption and blessedness, hence its displacement to peripheral status in *Ways with Words* is perplexing. Sin provides the subject of Heath's informant's discourse (Roadville's moral stories would appear to conform with the guilt cycle), but it is never directly represented in the book. This, of course, raises questions of the ethnographer's tact and discretion, which, although entirely

³⁸ Bakhtin, 1981, p. 123.

³⁹ Bakhtin, 1981, p. 128.

⁴⁰ Bakhtin, 1981, p. 112.

understandable on a personal level, could amount to ethnographic *self-censorship*.⁴¹

The End (Only Fooling)

Although the central story of *Ways with Words* ends happily, the reader discovers in the book's epilogue that, "In the Piedmont today, the methods used by these teachers have all but disappeared."⁴² The bottom drops out. A carefully sustained 355 page development, a path, is absurdly evaporated. Ethnographic methods of instruction, painstakingly adopted and enthusiastically endorsed by teachers are suddenly abandoned in the wake of bureaucratic retrenchment in the schools. This section, "The future of home, school, and work", marks the return of the ethnographer in two senses. The narrative reverts to first person voice, and it tells of Heath's return to the Piedmont in late 1981 to follow up on the subject communities. Thus, the reader is presented with essentially three images of the ethnographer: first as the part time lecturer, then the unobtrusive ethnographer and finally as the disengaged 'follow up' interviewer. This is in keeping with Bakhtin's discussion of the everyday life novel:

In the crisis-type of portrayal we see only one or two moments that decide the fate of a man's life and determine its entire disposition. In keeping with this principle, the novel provides us with two or three

⁴¹Heath insists, however, that her subject communities were *actually* as upstanding as she portrayed them (personal conversation with the author).

⁴²Heath, p. 356.

different images of the same individual, images that have been disjoined and rejoined through his crisis and rebirths.⁴³

Heath's discussion of why teachers abandoned the ethnographic methods seems disjointed. Anecdotes of teacher despair are interspersed with unformed intimations that things are different now, "'a lack of faith in the schools'"⁴⁴, "crises [that seem] more abstract and embroiled in distant legal controversies."⁴⁵ These leave an image of befuddled teachers at odds with the earlier descriptions of dedication and resolve. The "unobtrusiveness" of Heath's intervention is also thrown into question by teachers' accounts of the catalytic effect of her presence. Heath's withdrawal from the scene seems to have left the teachers vulnerable to virtually uncontested capitulation to 'external forces'. Heath doesn't dwell on this seemingly inexplicable collapse. Instead, the epilogue shifts to update the lives of the Roadville and Trackton residents. Cycles of everyday life go on as before, but now there is an undertone of exhaustion, "These days the oldtimers talk little of the future."⁴⁶ Nor is there any sense of identity derived from a communally shared past, "They find ... stories of the Depression, Reconstruction, and the days of slavery as fictional as any other facts of history from the remote past."⁴⁷ Thus an

⁴³Bakhtin, 1981, p. 115.

⁴⁴Heath, p. 356.

⁴⁵Heath, p. 357.

⁴⁶Heath, p. 360.

⁴⁷Heath, p.361.

image of profound re-enchantment replaces the provisional happy ending of Chapter Nine. No longer an enchantment of innocence, subject to an uplifting resolution, the characters now drift through an eternal present, bereft of any genuine memory or authentic hope for the future. Throughout this section, the image of dispersal returns, in the accounts of children moving away, of oldtimers dying and being soon forgotten. Ways of talking remain: "proverbs, stories, morals, talking junk, and group negotiation of the meaning of written materials will not pass rapidly."⁴⁸ But now these ways of talking are portrayed as a residue of meaning rather than a reservoir of meaningfulness.

The Irony of Empathy

Heath winds up her epilogue by stressing, in her second to last paragraph, the strictly local character of an ethnographic intervention. But, lest the reader draw any conclusions about the general efficacy of an ethnographic pedagogy, she warns, "in different times and places, the challenges are different and the resources and possibilities not the same."⁴⁹ In the final paragraph, Heath anticipates and discounts the inevitable objection that a radical critic would offer to her exclusive concern with localized practices. "It is easy", she counters, "to claim that a radical restructuring of society or the system of education is needed for the kind of cultural bridging

⁴⁸Heath, p. 367.

⁴⁹Heath, p. 369.

reported in this book to be large scale and continuous."⁵⁰ By announcing the ease with which such a claim can be made, Heath at once acknowledges it as a 'temptation' arising logically from her recounted experience, but at the same time dismisses the practicality of the claim. That which is "easy to say", the folk wisdom of the expression implies, is *not* easy to do: "easier said than done." With this expression, Heath ironizes the inevitable radical critique that the ethnographic intervention is predictably doomed.

Heath's irony, directed at radicals, is uncharacteristic. In almost all other instances, she exhibits a systematic and unrelieved empathy. This empathy extends even to the expressions of racism by the Roadville whites, the internecine snobbism of some of the Trackton residents, the self-satisfied banalities of the townspeople, the blundering 'standard criteria referenced' pettiness of school officialdom. For Heath, each expression is portrayed as understandable within the context of the respective community's own patterns of constructing meaning. If these patterns are ultimately destructive or restricting, Heath usually withholds criticism (one very interesting exception to this is her criticism of Roadville's consumerism, "The resentment and frustration that in all unconsciousness they build for themselves are never expressed in a call for decreased spending, only a push for increased work."⁵¹). Two instances where irony does shade Heath's discourse deal with radical

⁵⁰Heath, p. 369.

⁵¹Heath, p. 41.

education critics. The "easy to claim" remark is one of them. The other is in a footnote discussion of the radical critique that schooling reproduces a class society,

Repeatedly--and with more abstractions than linguistic or cultural data--these critics argue that the preschool language socialization patterns of the middle class ensure their preparedness in the knowledge and skills of symbolic manipulation of language required for school success.⁵²

The irony, for Heath, is that the radical's 'abstractions' exhibit precisely those middle class skills of symbolic manipulation. Heath contrasts these abstractions with the 'concreteness' of "linguistic or cultural data".

Heath's general aversion to irony and her reversion to it in dealing with potential radical criticisms of her work point to one of the most problematic aspects of the enterprise to read *Ways with Words* as an "adventure novel of everyday life". How does one reconcile Heath's predominantly *empathetic* tone with the everyday adventure novel's characteristic irony? One possible response is to view empathy as an inversion of irony, an attempt to move beyond the stale impasse of critical superiority. Ultimately such an inversion of irony is an itself an ironization, as becomes evident when Heath addresses those consummate ironists, the radical critics.

The limitations of the everyday adventure novel, as Bakhtin outlines them, might be recalled for their relevance to the ethnographic discourse. Although it was able to reveal social heterogeneity, the adventure novel of everyday life was unable

⁵²Heath, p. 398.

to conceptualize social contradictions. Thus the only movement, the only transformation that this genre could portray was that of the isolated individual, "The individual changes and undergoes metamorphosis completely independently of the world; the world itself remains unchanged."⁵³ In light of Heath's description of teaching practices in the Piedmont today, this seems a more apt a summary of the 'moral' to Heath's story than her own concluding assurances. She speculates that ethnographic "bridging skills needed for teachers and students *as individuals* to make changes which were for them radical," (emphasis added) could somehow, "point to ways these cultural brokers between communities and classrooms can perhaps be the beginning of larger changes."⁵⁴

Self Damnation

In *Learning to Labour*, Paul Willis tracks the final school year of a group of working class young English males he calls the 'lads'. He outlines the oppositional nature of their peer group culture, detailing their strategies for avoiding class, their attitudes in and toward school, and the activities that they themselves value. The image of the lads' culture which he presents is informal and oriented around creating diversion from the (to them) unrelieved tedium of the school.

⁵³Bakhtin, 1981, p. 119.

⁵⁴Heath, p. 369.

Willis begins his account with a discussion of elements of the lads' culture; the order in which events happened in the lads' story, however, can be distinguished from the order in which Willis narrates it. For the lads, their entry into the peer group culture comes after the first years of secondary school. The boys are reported to have entered secondary school with no strong peer group attachments. Their first years are spent as school conformists (called 'ear'oles' because they are always listening to school authorities), like most other beginning students.⁵⁵ Eventually the lads form into an exclusive peer group and begin to engage in the counter-school activities that Willis documents, "The essence of being 'one of the lads' lies within the group ... Joining the counter-school culture means joining a group, and enjoying it means being with the group."⁵⁶ The cultural patterns that develop within the lads' group, in Willis' analysis, prepares them for shop floor culture even as it guides them into bleak factory jobs. Willis presents *Learning to Labour's* guiding questions as, "How working class kids get working class jobs" and "why do they let themselves."⁵⁷

The image of 'self damnation' is conspicuous in *Learning to Labour*. This image first occurs in the introduction:

—In the sense, therefore, that I argue that it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power

⁵⁵Willis, p. 60.

⁵⁶Willis, p. 22.

⁵⁷Willis, p. 1.

we may say that there is an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism. However this damnation is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance."⁵⁸

Willis explicitly ties his argument about cultural reproduction of the working class to the employment of self-damnation.

Willis maintains that the lads oppose the official authority of the school in a way that demonstrates a superior understanding of their own working class destiny, and the illusory nature of the school's promises of social mobility. However it is precisely these creative insights, which he calls 'penetrations', that condemn the lads, "it is in the form of creative penetrations that cultures live their own damnation and that, for instance, a good section of the working class kids condemn themselves to a future in manual work."⁵⁹ Willis' ethnography extended only into their first year of work, so his statements about the lads' self-damnation must be read as conjectures about the future. In fact, the account of the lads at the end of that first year shows them fairly content with their existence. Willis is mindful to point out that such contentment is illusory:

Though the Hammertown lads are, in September, 1976, still flushed with the intensity of movement and having money, we may hazard a guess that disillusion is not far away ... no matter what the severity of disillusion amongst the lads as they get older, their passage is to all intents and purposes irreversible ... there is a double kind of entrapment in what might then be seen ...

⁵⁸Willis, p. 3.

⁵⁹Willis, p. 174.

as the prison of the workshop."⁶⁰

Self-damnation is, of course, a theological rather than a social scientific term. Willis employs a different terminology, of 'penetrations' and 'limitations', when he presents his analysis of the relation between working class culture, ideology and social reproduction of class relations. The analysis, though, specifically excludes the subjective experience that Willis says he is seeking to document. That 'experience' is indeed elusive; what Willis insists is self-damnation is evident neither in the lads' observable actions, as Willis has recorded them, nor in their own reports.

Willis portrays the everyday reality of factory labor as brutalizing, despairing, unpleasant, entrapping, treacherous, dominated. Indeed, it is a classic description of Hell. But the anecdotes that Willis presents to support his infernal image are too mild. For example, a middle aged shop floor worker recalls a trip to the zoo during which his father was sprayed with water by a gorilla. Willis deploys the tale as an allegory of working class despair:

'That's life, we don't grow up at the same time, and when you've learnt, it's too late. It's the same with these kids comin' in the factory, every time they think it's great ... You'll never change it, it's the same with everything, comin' to work, getting married, anything, you name it.'⁶¹

In terms of everything that Willis reports about the lads and their working class families, his image of self-damnation must

⁶⁰Willis, p. 107.

⁶¹Willis, p. 108.

remain an enigma. This enigma is to some extent sustained by the 'naturalistic illusion' (as Willis, himself calls it) of the ethnographic narrative. The key to the image of self-damnation can be found in the relationship of the ethnographer/narrator to his narration.

Fusion of Fate

In the preceding discussion of *Ways with Words*, Bakhtin's analysis of the cycle of guilt, punishment, redemption and blessedness was introduced. An inversion of this cycle--a cycle of dāmnation--can help to explain the image of self-damnation in *Learning to Labour*. The inverted cycle begins with the lads' entry into secondary school; at this point they are innocents. The cycle proceeds through their affiliation with the peer group to the oppositional expression that Willis calls 'critical penetrations'--insights into their own likely working future and into the unkept promises of the school. The first three moments in this inverted cycle reverse the signs of the cycle of guilt: innocence reverses guilt, affiliation reverses punishment (banishment), estrangement from authority reverses redemption. The pairing of damnation and blessedness thus follows an established narrative logic. However, this analogy between the cycle of guilt and blessedness in *Ways with Words* and the cycle of innocence and damnation in *Learning to Labour* requires the qualification that the first cycle refers to the course of development of the main character's life, not the peripheral

characters'.

It was noted that in *Ways with Words*, the ethnographer is transformed while the world remains unchanged. The image of the lads' self-damnation introduces a crucial genre distinction between *Ways with Words* and *Learning to Labour*. In the latter book, the fate of the ethnographer is fused with the historical fate of the working class lads. Again relying on Mikhail Bakhtin's historical survey of the novel, a parallel can be noted between Willis' book and the type of Bildungsroman which Bakhtin calls the "realistic novel of emergence".⁶² In this type of novel, "human emergence is of a different nature. It is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges--along with the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself."⁶³

The ethnographer's cycle of innocence-damnation, parallel to that for the lads, can be reconstructed from the text. Willis' disclaimer of romanticizing the working class may be taken as a clue to the first moment of the cycle:

A romantic view of working class cultural forms asserts that they are experimenting in some way with the future ... there is no way in which such imaginings can promise what they offer or give what they promise. It is quite wrong to picture working class culture or consciousness optimistically as the vanguard in the grand march towards rationality and socialism.⁶⁴

This renunciation of romanticism posits a naive revolutionary

⁶²Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 24.

⁶³Bakhtin, 1986, p. 23.

⁶⁴Willis, p. 122.

hope from which Willis clearly wishes to distinguish his own present position. Whether or not Willis *himself* formerly held this romantic view is not important. The revolutionary romantic position structurally occupies a 'prior' or initial position in the narrative logic. The analogy with the lads is clear. They start out secondary school as 'ear'oles' along with everyone else, but come to reject and feel superior to the 'ear'oles'. For Willis, this renunciation leads to a structuralist Marxist affiliation, expressed in the terminology of Willis' analysis.⁶⁵

What Willis terms 'penetrations' for the lads is paralleled by Willis' structuralist analytical imperative to, "plunge beneath the surface of ethnography in a more interpretive mode".⁶⁶ This 'plunge' is, for Willis, an entry into the netherworld. Willis uses the term himself, "Every move must be considered in relation to its context and likely circles of effectiveness within the netherworld ... of cultural reproduction and the main world of social class relationships."⁶⁷ This analytical plunge is one that presupposes no resurrection:

We cannot now naively return to discrete cultural forms and independent cultural initiatives to yield a full and properly effective programme for vocational guidance and the schooling of the disaffected working class.

⁶⁵Willis also 'affiliates' in two other directions: methodologically with ethnography and existentially with the lads he is 'participant-observing'. This divided loyalty may explain some of the stylistic aberrations of the text.

⁶⁶Willis, p. 119.

⁶⁷Willis, p. 179.

Interventions and reforms will pass through all the circles of unintention, contradiction and cultural reproduction in relation to structural factors which have been identified in this book."⁶⁸

Thus the politically committed practitioner is placed in the same, "circles of unintention, contradiction and cultural reproduction" as are the lads by their counter-school culture.

In his section dealing with ideology, Willis provides the only plausible definition of self-damnation. But he does it in connection with a discussion of the middle class:

The very existence and consciousness of the middle class is deeply integrated into that structure which gives it dominance. There are none who believe so well as those who oppress as honest men. What kind of bourgeoisie is it that does not in some way believe its own legitimations. That would be the denial of themselves. It would be the solution of a problem of which they were the main puzzle. It would invite self-destruction as the next logical move.⁶⁹

It is precisely the radical intellectual, represented in *Learning to Labour* by Willis, who cannot believe in "his own class's legitimations". The radical intellectual dreams the romance of a liberating working class culture and thus prepares the ironic hell of his/her own disillusionment. Willis' task in the final section of his book, "Monday Morning and the Millennium" could well be described as seeking a way to live on *after* self-denial and self-destruction.

⁶⁸Willis p. 186.

⁶⁹Willis, p. 123.

Monday Mourning and the Millennium

The final chapter 'Monday Morning and the Millennium' hints that the central dilemma of *Learning to Labour* is not so much, "why do working class kids let themselves get working class jobs." But is rather: "what is a radical teacher to do after awakening from his romantic revolutionary fantasies?" Willis rejects the gloomy implications of a "purist structuralist immobilizing reductionist tautology".⁷⁰ Instead he counsels a practice which faces the daily difficulty of helping a recalcitrant working class student clientele while at the same time realizing that such help may in the long run perpetuate the structures of domination. While he enjoins against, "contracting out of the messy business of day to day problems,"⁷¹ Willis is unable to seize on any redemptive potential in the everyday. Instead he offers a catalogue of suggestions that amounts to calling on the committed teacher to become more sensitive to the cultural meanings of his/her working class students.

The chapter's last lines are paradoxical, "This may not be the Millennium but it could be Monday morning. Monday morning need not imply an endless succession of the *same* Monday mornings."⁷² The reference to the Millennium once again ironizes the utopian fantasies of radicals; Monday morning opposes a determined realism to that romanticism. But, what makes any

⁷⁰Willis, p. 185.

⁷¹Willis, p. 186.

⁷²Willis, p. 192.

Monday morning a 'Monday morning' is the implicit claim that it is similar to all other Monday mornings. Willis' use of the Monday morning motif recalls an earlier image of hopeless, repetitive time:

The factories are filled on Monday morning, and on every Monday morning, with workers displaying the necessary apparent gradations between mental and manual capacity and corresponding attitudes necessary to maintain, within broad limits, the present structure of class and production.⁷³

The image that he uses to define the repetitive Hell of factory work, he finally submits as an image of politically committed teaching practice.

The Third Reading

In the preface to *Learning to Labour*, Willis expressed his intention to make the arguments of the book "accessible to audiences of social scientists, practitioners and general readers".⁷⁴ Two specialized readings are mentioned:

"practitioners may be most interested in Part I and the conclusion; social theorists in Part II". Willis does not specify what parts 'general readers' may be most interested in; but the appendix indicates a third reading. In the appendix, Willis presents a transcript of a discussion with the lads of an earlier draft of the book. This appendix is a self-critical moment that denounces the inherent naturalism and conservatism of the participant observer ethnographic account. It even goes

⁷³Willis, p. 174.

⁷⁴Willis, p. vii.

so far as to acknowledge the futility of its self denunciation.

The reading of *Learning to Labour* described in the appendix hinges on deleting Willis' conceptual apparatus:

Bill: The bits about us were simple enough.

John: It's the bits in between.

Joey: Well, I started to read it, I started at the very beginning, y'know I was gonna read as much as I could, then I just packed it in, just started readin' the parts about us and then little bits in the middle (...)

Spanksy: The parts what you wrote about us, I read those, but it was, y'know, the parts what actually were actually describing the book like I didn't ...⁷⁵

When the 'bits in between' are systematically deleted, the surviving text contains a high proportion of direct representation of speech. The lad's reading of *Learning to Labour* highlights a tension between their own collective, immediate speech and the isolated, institutionalized practice of the text. Elsewhere, Willis dramatizes the opposition of speaking and text as one of living and death:

The central thing about the working class culture of the shop floor is that, despite harsh conditions and external direction, people do look for meaning and impose frameworks ... they thread through the *dead* experience of work a *living* culture which is far from a simple reflex of defeat. This is the same fundamental taking hold of an alienating situation that one finds in counter school culture and its attempt to weave a tapestry of interest and diversion through the *dry institutional text*."⁷⁶ (emphasis added)

Willis also draws on working class lore to illustrate the antipathy of the speaking collective to the closed book of the

⁷⁵Willis, p. 195.

⁷⁶Willis, p. 52

text, "The shopfloor abounds with apocryphal (!) stories about the idiocy of purely theoretical knowledge."⁷⁷ He cites as one such story a worker's fable about a 'chap' who sends away for a book about everything but is unable to open the wooden crate it arrives in.

The lads openly express their reticence toward the written word:

PW: What's the last time you've done some writing?

Will: When we done some writing?

Fuzz: Oh are, last time was in careers, 'cos I writ 'yes' on a piece of paper, that broke me heart.

PW: Why did it break your heart?

Fuzz: I mean to write, cos' I was going to try and go through the term without writing anything. 'Cos since we've cum back, I ain't dun nothing [it was half way through term].⁷⁸

On the other hand talking is discussed as the core of the lads group culture, "Talking, at least on their own patch and in their own way, comes very naturally to 'the lads':

PW: So what stops you being bored?

Joey: Talking, we could talk forever, when we get together, it's talk, talk, talk.⁷⁹

Willis reworks the theme of class alienation into one of the cultural alienation of the spoken and written word. The working class lads are portrayed as orally superior to both their conformist peers and to their erstwhile superior school

⁷⁷Willis, p. 56.

⁷⁸Willis, p. 27.

⁷⁹Willis, p. 33.

authorities. The lads are described by work supervisors as "more likable because they have 'something to say for themselves'."⁸⁰ By contrast the head of the secondary school is described by a worker as conversationally incompetent, "The headmaster irritated me ... I was standing there, and I was 'im. I thought, 'Aye, aye, he's talking to hisself; you know wa'nt talking to me."⁸¹

Reading *Learning to Labour* as a story of an oral/literate struggle highlights Willis' frequent allusion to and evaluations of the verbal skills of his informants. Joey, for example, is a "lad of considerable insight and expressive power".⁸² Joey's father, a foundry worker, talks, "In an inarticulate way, but perhaps all the more convincingly for that."⁸³ The lads' opposition to authority is "easily verbalised" by them.⁸⁴ Even so, eventually the lads' oral facility leads them to a "strangled muted celebration of masculinity in labour power".⁸⁵

In framing class antagonisms in terms of an oral/literate struggle, Willis implicates his own text. Interestingly, he does so explicitly in the appendix:

The ethnographic account is a supremely ex post facto product of the actual uncertainty of life. There

⁸⁰Willis, p. 110.

⁸¹Willis, p. 73.

⁸²Willis, p. 16.

⁸³Willis, p. 52.

⁸⁴Willis, p. 11.

⁸⁵Willis, p. 174.

develops, unwilling, a false unity which asks, 'What follows next?' 'How did it end?' 'What makes sense of it?'. The subjects stand too square in their self-referenced world. The method is also patronising and condescending--is it possible to imagine the ethnographic account upwards in a class society?⁸⁶

The issue of the representation of living speech is crucial both to ethnography and to the novel. According to Bakhtin, "The fundamental condition, that which makes a novel a novel, that which is responsible for its stylistic uniqueness, is the *speaking person and his discourse*."⁸⁷ The discourse of the speaking person can be incorporated into the novel by either direct or indirect discourse, by description of the speaking situation or by parodic modification of the author's discourse to reflect the other's speech.⁸⁸ Whatever its mode of representation, it is always "double voiced", that is, it simultaneously presents, indirectly, the author's intention toward a particular world view, and, directly, the character's view.⁸⁹ This double voicedness establishes an internal dialogue between the two discourses.⁹⁰

Dialogization appears both thematically and artistically in *Ways with Words*. A particularly intriguing instance of dialogization concerns Trackton text V, Dovie Lou's story. Heath presents this transcript in her chapter on oral traditions. She

⁸⁶Willis, p. 194.

⁸⁷Bakhtin, 1981, p. 332.

⁸⁸Bakhtin, 1981, p. 303.

⁸⁹Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324.

⁹⁰Bakhtin, 1981, p. 326.

observes that, "Perhaps the most characteristic feature of story-telling by (Trackton) adults is the dramatic use of dialogue."⁹¹ When Dovie Lou dialogizes 'Henning's old lady's' speech and shifts to an "exaggerated Standard English of the Channel Two reporter" to do so, Heath's text both presents and compounds dialogization,

But dat ol' woman, she ak like she some Channel Two reporter or sump'n:

"P.B. Evans was seen today on the corner of Center and Main Street. He hadda bottle in each hip pocket, and one under his London Fog hat..."⁹²

Heath goes on to analyze Dovie Lou's story, pointing out motivations and strategies. She stresses the divergence between Dovie Lou's creative reconstruction and the 'true facts' of the story,

Dovie Lou's story is based on fact. Henning's wife had said something to Dovie Lou about her man being out with another woman, But beyond this basis in fact, Dovie Lou's story is highly creative, and she ranges far from the true facts to tell a story which extols her strengths and announces her faith in her ultimate victory over both her wayward man and her wayward neighbor."⁹³

Conclusion

The ethnographies studied here mark a notable break with the static genres of the teachers' manual and the planning manuals. Representations of time, place and character are contemporary

⁹¹Heath, p. 168.

⁹²Heath, p. 169.

⁹³Heath, p. 169.

and realistic. The discourse of the speaking person is integrated into each of the texts both thematically and artistically. These characteristics suggest the classification of *Ways with Words* and *Learning to Labour* as novelistic.

The ideological implication of each of these works is Liberal. In spite of Willis' Marxist footnotes, his text shares with Heath's a view that precludes any possibility of radical social change in the foreseeable future. Instead, incremental local improvements in teacher practice are recommended. Heath's more optimistic tone in *Ways with Words* is sustained by the divergence of the course of the ethnographer's life from the life of the community residents. Willis' pessimistic tone indicates a more politically radical insight into social and economic structures.

Finally, both Heath's and Willis' explanatory modes are primarily concerned with elucidating the contexts of cultural activity. Each strives to show that their informants' actions and ways of meaning make sense within their own peer group or local community, even when the consequences in a larger context may be school failure or being stuck in dead-end jobs.

CHAPTER VII

PROLETARIAN CHILDREN'S THEATER

But who would trust a cane wielder who proclaimed the mastery of children by adults to be the purpose of education?¹

Walter Benjamin's "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater" was written in 1927 in collaboration with Asja Lacis. Lacis was, at the time, a director of a Moscow children's theater program, concerned with the social rehabilitation of war orphans. In part, the essay theorizes the practice of that existing program. But it also proposes that the experimental practice be generalized to form the basis of the education system for children between the ages of four and fourteen. Benjamin's program envisions the theater as the adequate frame in which early polytechnical education could occur. The proposed theater is improvisational; performances are to be constructed from a careful observation, and technical re-interpretation of the children's spontaneous gestures.

Benjamin divides his essay along self-consciously theatrical lines: a prologue, a pattern of tension, a pattern of release. But the allusion to a classical theatrical structure serve to establish expectations which are subverted by the text. In the same fashion, the children's theater borrows its frame from the theater only in order to turn it upside down. The educational part of the theater, *for the children*, comes during the period of preparation. The performances themselves are, "incidental;

¹Benjamin, 1979, p. 104.

one could say that they come about as an oversight, almost as a practical joke of the children who one day interrupt their studies in this way, studies which in principle are never completed."² The performance is educational for the adults and the theater director; for the children it is a pause, a recess.

The keys to this educational enterprise are its reciprocity between adults and children, and its political forthrightness. Benjamin's program everywhere disappoints the expectation that education is something that is done *by* adults *to* children in their (the children's) best interest.

The English translation of the program consumes a mere five journal pages. It is not a text for those who complacently believe that they already know how to read. Benjamin's own description of arriving in Moscow applies, "The instant one arrives, the childhood stage begins. On the thick sheet ice of the streets, walking has to be relearned."³ *Reading* has to be relearned on the sheet ice of Benjamin's prose. One does not march across it, briskly, confidently, absent mindedly. There is thus another sense in which the essay is a practical educational text unlike any of the others discussed previously: it shatters the complicit assumption that practical texts should be immediately comprehensible to an adult of average reading attention and motivation. This is not because of any arcane

²Walter Benjamin, "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater," trans. Susan Buck-Morss, *Performance 5* (March/April 1973), p. 29.

³Benjamin, 1979, p. 179.

jargon or obscure reference. The difficulty of the essay resides in its profusion of unexpected images: the new generation is heralded as "dangerous", concern for educational method is dismissed as "laziness", the responsible adult in the program is to exercise no moral influence, and the culminating performances of the children's theater are to come about *almost* as a practical joke. It should be stressed that this is no comical sketch or mere exercise in outraging conventional opinion. The program outlines a lucid, concise and profoundly ethical educational enterprise.

Instruction or Observation

In the improvisational method of the proletarian children's theater, the child's gesture is carefully observed by the director so that it can be developed into, "various forms of expression, such as the production of theatrical props, paintings, recitation, dance, and improvisation ...".⁴ Benjamin associates the transience of life, childhood and the gesture in such a way that they contrast with the 'rubbish' of "art performances" and the 'residue' of childhood:

The aristocratic dilettantism which used to compel its poor pupils to aim for such "art performances" only managed to fill their wardrobes and memories with rubbish which they preserved with great piety so that they might plague their own children with reminiscences of their former youth.⁵

By contrast children in the children's theater, "have fulfilled

⁴Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

⁵Benjamin, 1973, p. 31.

1 their childhood in playing. They do not carry a residue with them which later might inhibit unsentimental activity due to tearful childhood memories."⁶ Rubbish, residues, reminiscences, and tearful memories--all these are things that endure beyond their time and impinge on the prerogatives of new life.

Benjamin reserves special vigor for his denunciation of the husks of stale language, the "empty words", "mere phrases", "mere figures of speech", and "thousands of little words". This staleness of language is everywhere (associated with the bourgeoisie, who, with their pedagogic 'methods' continue, "muddling along in the same direction"; whose theater is "sociologically . . . an instrument of sensationalism", whose theater director's educational work is "hasty, much-belated and half-baked" and whose youth culture is a "hopeless compromise" (One need only return to the teachers' manual and planning manuals reviewed here in Chapters 4 and 5 to find a profusion of examples of "empty words" and "mere figures of speech").

Benjamin's image of the bourgeoisie is that of a corpse that refuses to step aside and make room for the new generation. Neither is the bourgeoisie inherently evil nor the child inherently good. After all, the point of, "the thesis that the child lives in his world as dictator,"⁷ is not to celebrate this dictatorship, but to extinguish it by letting the child work out his/her egocentricity in childhood. What Benjamin's polemic is

⁶Benjamin, 1973, p. 32.

⁷Benjamin, 1973, p. 30.

against is the attitude of superiority assumed by the bourgeoisie, their pretense of knowing better. At each opportunity the bourgeoisie 'instructs' the children. They present, "an idea to which he is educated."⁸ They demand that, "bourgeois educators put a ban on the children's theater".⁹ They carry out, "the purely bourgeois experiment of influencing children directly as a 'moral personage'".¹⁰

In contrast the "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater" envisions a children's theater which carries out educational work on the adults:

There is no possible place for audience superiority in the children's theater. Whoever has not become totally dulled will very likely feel ashamed.¹¹

In the performance of the theater, "children stand on stage and teach and educate their attentive educators".¹² Benjamin's program replaces bourgeois instruction with a three part structure of observation: the children observe "all life, in its unlimited fulness"; the theater director observes the child's spontaneous gestures in order to, "bring them to bear on the material"; and the adult collective observes the moral instance of the performance.

⁸Benjamin, 1973, p. 28.

⁹Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

¹⁰Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

¹¹Benjamin, 1973, p. 30.

¹²Benjamin, 1973, p. 32.

Danger: Children

The proletarian children's theater is situated in an imminent future. Its main characters are already *potentially* present in contemporary society. They are the new generation, the revolutionary working class and the theater director. The location, the theater, is a self-consciously literary image for the entire world: "only on the stage does all life, in its unlimited fullness, appear framed and as a circumscribed area...".¹³ The first line introduces the action at precisely the moment of maximum tension,

Every proletarian movement, once it breaks away from the pattern of parliamentary discussion, sees the power of the new generation, among the many forces which it suddenly faces unprepared, as the strongest, yet also the most dangerous.¹⁴

The suddenness, unpreparedness of the confrontation establishes the act of facing as a movement. That is to say that here 'faces' must be read as 'turns to face'. Benjamin choreographs this first line as a *catastrophe*, as a choral turning of the revolutionary class which marks and announces the crisis of the plot.

Consider the juxtaposition of 'proletarian' and 'children': in the title, 'proletarian' appears as an adjective modifying children, yet, (suddenly) in the first line of the program, proletarians and children are brought together in a dangerous confrontation--a powerful force opposing a movement which is

¹³ Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

¹⁴ Benjamin, 1973, p. 28.

breaking away. It helps to recall here that *prole* is latin for child, and that etymologically, *proletarian* refers to the class in society whose members' only property is their children. Underlying the struggle between classes is the patriarchal relations between generations, which Benjamin insists must be faced at once in the revolutionary period.

The theme of danger is developed also in connection with the bourgeoisie's attitude toward children's theater, "There is nothing which the bourgeoisie considers so dangerous for children as the theater."¹⁵ Benjamin puts the bourgeoisie in the same position of confrontation that was occupied in the first sentence by the proletariat. But he characterizes their response as demanding a ban on children's theater. Again, the image of danger appears in connection with fantasy, "It is the task of the director to rescue the children's signals out of the dangerous magic-realm of fantasy."¹⁶ As well, danger is implied in the children's relations to one another, "reality and play for children are so fused together that it is possible for pretended sufferings to become genuine, and for pretended beatings to turn into real ones."¹⁷

Benjamin does not construct his program around the theme of danger simply to add gratuitous sensation. The danger Benjamin refers to is neither neurotic nor entertaining, it is, quite

¹⁵Benjamin, 1973. p. 29.

¹⁶Benjamin, 1973, p. 30.

¹⁷Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

unsentimentally, *mortal* danger. The last sentence in the section, "The Pattern of Tension", declares the equation: "Theater as mortal art is children's art."¹⁸ Benjamin here takes seriously the image of death as a symbol of resurrection and new life. Childhood is understood as a fleeting aspect of the person that dies, like the gesture, in order to make room for the unsentimental activity of the adult. Art, that is, *techne*, practical knowledge, retains this same aspect of mortality. Knowledge for Benjamin is not something which is passed down from the adults in "empty phrases", "methods" or "reminiscences". Knowledge must be born fresh with each new generation--even in their interpretation of the traditional texts of knowledge. In theater, the gesture symbolizes this fused image of death and rebirth.

An Exact Connection to Great Theater

The section on "The Pattern of Tension" begins with the contentious claim that, "We shall leave aside the question of whether or not the children's theater . . . has an exact connection to great theater at the high points of its history."¹⁹ Benjamin does not, in fact, leave the question aside but weaves it *inside* the form of his essay. That is to say, instead of presenting a point by point discussion of that connection, he demonstrates by the form of his essay, both his

¹⁸ Benjamin, 1973, p. 31.

¹⁹ Benjamin, 1973, p. 29.

acute understanding of classical forms and his determination to innovate and improvise on those forms. The thorough dramaturgicality of Benjamin's essay is indicated at the first line, in the dramatic confrontation between the proletarian movement and the new generation. The image that he creates of history is as theatrical as his image of generational tensions, "the first act of the Bolsheviki was to raise the red flag."²⁰ This expression exceeds the convention of simply portraying history as a drama. What Benjamin seems to be saying here is that what counts as history is precisely its spectacular public performance. 'The first act' of the Bolsheviki is literally *Act One*.

Aside from leaving the question of the connection to great theater aside, Benjamin does take up the question. He repudiates bourgeois theater, "we must establish with absolute decisiveness that the children's theater has nothing in common with that of the present-day bourgeoisie."²¹ And, he directly compares the performance of the proletarian children's theater with the ancient cult Carnival,

The performance is the great creative pause in the educational enterprise. It is in the realm of children what Carnival was to the ancient cults. Everything is turned upside down...²²

Just as the essay opened with an image at the moment of maximum crisis, it closes *after* the performance has ended. The

²⁰ Benjamin, 1973, p. 20.

²¹ Benjamin, 1973, p. 31.

²² Benjamin, 1973, p. 32.

audience, the working class collective, leaves the performance in a state of heightened tension. The penultimate line contrasts the proletarian children's theater with the "propaganda of ideas that here and there excites actions which cannot be consummated, and which are dismissed at the theater exit in the first sober moment of reflection."²³ For the proletarian children's theater, however, "What is truly revolutionary in effect is the *secret signal* of what will come to be, which speaks from the gesture of children."²⁴ This fleeting gesture speaks of a world no longer inhabited by the present generation of adults. The purpose of the proletarian children's theater is not to instruct the children in the 'superior' ways of the adults but to amplify the power ("a *weak Messianic power*") of the children, and to project this moral instance before the adults.

Conclusion

The emplotment of the "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater" cannot be as easily categorized as those of the preceding texts. Benjamin has strategically placed his narrative in a tragic frame, but he has subverted that frame's classical sequence. The hero of this narrative is also indeterminable as perspective shifts from proletariat to theater director to children with no superiority granted to any one. Benjamin's image of time has been called 'Messianic', that term

²³ Benjamin, 1973, p. 32

²⁴ Benjamin, 1973, p. 32.

might well describe the time of the children's theater. Such a Messianic time is neither an escape from everyday time nor an acquiescence to it. It is a redemption of each moment of time for lived experience.

It has been noted that the mode of argument, in terms of Pépper's world hypotheses, has been consonant with the emplotment of the previous texts considered. That is, the Formist argument of the teachers' manual 'agrees with' its emplotment as a Romance; the planning manuals' Organicism 'agrees with' its emplotment as a comedy; and Willis' and Heath's Contextualism agrees with their Ironic emplotment. It would not be possible to contain Benjamin's argument into any *one* of Pepper's modes. Benjamin's central concept of the mimetic gesture encompasses, mimes all of the other ways of deploying an argument. Benjamin proceeds in a Formist manner under the theme of danger, content to demarcate the varieties of dangers posed--and responses tendered--by the children, their fantasies, the proletarian class, the bourgeoisie and the theater director. The theatrical frame itself posits an Organicist ultimate goal: that of representing "all life in its unlimited fullness" within a circumscribed area. Benjamin's persistent odd juxtapositions of unexpected courses of events--the practical jokes, and the performances which are incidental--mark the contextualist, or more exactly, *decontextualist* phase of his argument. Finally, the mechanistic phase is represented by the analytical distribution, into separate technical sections, of the task of transposing the child's gestures, and of the subsequent

synthesis, in performance, of the re-worked gestures.

Benjamin's Socialist/Communist ideological position, at least, would seem secured by the suddenness of the change that is portrayed in the program, and by his partisan terminology. But, again, the certainty of ideological implication is formally subverted in Benjamin's essay. While he begins the essay with a consideration of how the party program can become the basis for future action, including education, he ends it with an image of the radicalizing and activating effect of the child's gesture. Benjamin is not content to assume an imminent utopia, instead he evokes a more profound crisis that must inevitably be uncovered by the proletarian revolution. This deeper crisis must be considered theological rather than ideological; its concerns are explicitly the aporias of existence: the confrontation with mortality, the ordering of the relationship between generations, the transcendent 'covenant' of the human collectivity.

In contrast to the prescriptive practical texts considered earlier, Benjamin's "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater" does not profess to solve the aporias of existence by resort to comfortingly finished emplotments, arguments or ideologies. Benjamin's program presents practice as ineluctably rent by the discordance of temporal experience.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The practical texts considered here were presented in four groupings: (1) a teachers' manual, (2) seven planning manuals, (3) two ethnographies, and (4) a program for a proletarian children's theater. The first two groups of texts may be said to be standardizing in their intention toward practice; the latter two groups are aimed at diversifying practice, basing it on the private meanings of the children themselves. Narrative analysis of the texts indicates that the standardizing practical texts tend to be emplotted in archaic, finished forms. The school building planning manuals were most extreme in this regard, memorializing the 1950's American status quo by linking it to an epic national past. The teachers' manual placed 'research' on a remote level, prior and superior to both the teacher and the students. The manual established the ritual conditions for the teacher to participate occasionally in the elevated practice of research, and thus authorized the teacher's relative superiority to the students.

In the ethnographic texts, the ethnographer/narrator entered into the netherworld of everyday life. The contemporaneity of the settings, complexity of characterization and representation of dialogue established the ethnographies as novelistic. Walter Benjamin's "Program for a Proletarian Children's Theater" established its own, 'Messianic', time through a calculated disruption of modes of emplotment, argument

and ideology. While the conventional practical texts evade everyday experience, and the ethnographies enshrine it, Benjamin's program offers a critique of that experience which is at the same time a glimpse of redemption.

White's suggestion that there are affinities between particular modes of emplotment, argument and ideological implication was confirmed in the case of the conventional practical texts studied here. This could be an indicator of homogeneity of publics for each type of book. The consonance between modes of emplotment and argument noted here raises the question of whether there is a predisposition of practitioners in a particular occupation towards some modes of argument in preference to others. This could have implications for theoretical interventions that come from another occupational group. For example, administrators might tend to dismiss suggestions for change that come from teachers as 'romantic'. The tendency for consonance within the conventional texts might also explain why a text like Benjamin's, or even Heath's or Willis' ethnographies, might be viewed by practitioners as 'impractical'.

Paul Ricoeur's discussion of the relationship between narrative configuration and temporal experience highlights the importance of narrative images of time to our capacity to make sense of actions in the world. One might question whether the standardizing practical texts could place limits on the development of that capacity to make sense of the world. It

could be argued that precisely these limitations of the texts are what gains them wide acceptance as 'practical' texts.

In a review of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, Gary Comstock warned against misreading that book as privileging the "healing virtues of narrative over the wounding powers of history."¹ Comstock raises the question of what happens when a historical epoch loses "the capacity to exchange experience via narrative." His reflections on this possibility are apocalyptic. Possibly this narrative capacity might be lost, or might have already been lost, through the standardization and routinization of discourse genres. The limited investigation carried out here points to such a routinization of genres at the official school level.

The limited scope of the present investigation leaves unresolved the question of to what extent the high degree of consonance found between plots, arguments and ideological implication can be generalized for practical texts in education. The study of school building planning manuals suggests that there are generic characteristics that predominate among texts for that given area of practice. Further investigation would be needed to establish whether, for example, teachers' guides might be generally characterized as Formist in argument or Romantic in emplotment. The implication, following Ricoeur's suggestion of the text as a model for action, of analogies between the generic emplotments of practical texts and practitioners' 'emplotments'

¹Gary Comstock, "Review of *Time and Narrative*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71, 3 (August, 1985), 373-375.

of their practical tasks remains to be examined. Also indicated, would be an investigation of how the various generic practices might be articulated together in a practical institution.

One of the major problems with conducting a narrative critical analysis comes from the activity's participation in the kind of activity it is analyzing. The 'results' are written up at the end of the study--to this extent they are always being evaluated, deliberately or not, on the basis of how well they fit a particular kind of story. The question arises: "how does the narrative critic emplot his/her narrative critique?"

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