

Curriculum, Literacy and the State:  
Changing English Teaching in Western Australia

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Literacy is a critical element in the historical relationship between curriculum and the State. Recently, however, this has itself become complexified and problematical, given the increasing significance of new technologies and what has been called the communications revolution (Hinkson, 1991). Three key

issues inform this paper: first, the nature of the relationship among curriculum, literacy and the State; second, the changing nature of each of these, something which is arguably especially evident in the period in question here; and third, the specific implications of all this for English teaching, long established as a central element in modern schooling. These matters will be explored via an account of English curriculum change, literacy debates and educational politics in Western Australia in the period 1983-1989. Among much else in Australian education in the turbulent period of the 1980s, English teaching and literacy pedagogy went through a process of crisis and change, involving both public debate and extensive restructuring. This paper addresses such issues and debates in the context of national and international shifts and movements in educational policy and curriculum politics. My proposal is that these concerns, far from being simply of archival interest, may well register a

significant transition in Australian education and society.

A number of points need to be addressed here briefly, as a preliminary to the more extended and specific account of educational politics and English curriculum change which follows. Elsewhere I have argued that the relationship between literacy studies and curriculum theorizing is a matter worthy of and needing serious systematic scholarly attention, something which has been curiously lacking to date (Green [ed], 1993). Bringing together research in these two fields usually operating at some distance from each other, and thereby generating dialogue across them, can only be advantageous. I want now to suggest that policy studies has similarly tended to operate as a separate field, and that in this instance there is much of interest and relevance in the relationship between curriculum and literacy; further, that the policy implications of literacy research is an important albeit underdeveloped area of concern, arguably of increasing significance in the context of what has been described as the postmodern turn.

Indeed what seems very clear now is that attending adequately to the relationship between curriculum and literacy requires that due consideration is given to the nature of modern mainstream schooling, as both a State-sponsored educational apparatus and a key aspect of the larger social project of modernity. In accordance with arguments I have either marshalled or developed elsewhere, then, it seems to me that understanding curriculum and literacy in all their complexity, in themselves and in their interrelation, involves taking into account the political and epistemological relationships between speech and writing, between modernism and postmodernism, and between state and nation (Green, 1992; Green [ed], 1993). The emergence, evolution and crisis of

State-sponsored schooling ('popular education') needs to be analyzed within a theoretical framework that brings together these different but related concepts and problems. That is not something I can do here, where my primary focus is on a particular realization of the complex of curriculum, literacy and the State. Suffice it to point to work such as Hinkson's (1991) on the significance of what he calls "media of exchange" with regard to (post)modernity, state and education; and also recent work within a similar political and theoretical orientation on 'postmodern education', media culture, and the decoupling of curriculum and schooling (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1992; Giroux, 1992; Bigum, Fitzclarence and Green, 1993; Kenway, 1993).

From a somewhat different orientation, the recent collection edited by Lingard, Knight and Porter (1993) indicates very clearly the need to take due consideration of the State's role in educational politics and reform, focussing as it does specifically on Australian education in what is arguably the watershed period of the 1980s, albeit with reference and specific relation to similar moves elsewhere in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States. Of particular interest here is a study of Western Australia (Porter, Knight and Lingard, 1993) which presents both a comprehensive overview of reforms and debates in the 1983-1990 period and a grounded theoretical account of local educational politics and the educational state. In a sense what I offer here is in the way of a complement to that study and needs to be viewed in its light, if not its shadow. At the same time I want to suggest that there may well be value in looking closely, as I seek to do here, at specific subject-areas and curriculum practices and problematics, as a supplement to the perhaps necessarily generalized and abstract sociological and policy accounts that can seem almost generic in enquiries addressed to state theory and educational policy. Further, there is arguably good reason to take into particular

account changes and controversies in English teaching and literacy pedagogy, because of the longstanding centrality of language, literacy and the English subjects in the modernist project of state schooling. This is especially pertinent given recent arguments for the significance of notions of governmentality and the symbolic order, with regard to schooling and social regulation more generally (Donald, 1992; Green [ed], 1993).

Given the now well-documented relationship between English teaching and educational crisis in the post-1960s period, what happened to English teaching in Western Australia in the 1980s becomes of considerable interest, both as a specific bounded instance of what I have named elsewhere as the 'crisis' in

English teaching and as a particular manifestation of it. In this paper, accordingly, I want to examine this matter in some detail, seeking to locate English curriculum change in the context of cultural and curriculum politics more generally, and argue that the shift in curriculum focus, on the one hand, and the locus of curriculum control, on the other, is particularly symptomatic of the contemporary nexus between English teaching and educational politics in changing socio-cultural conditions. Of particular concern here will be the relationship between literacy debates and education policy, given that the 1980s saw questions of English teaching, language and literacy becoming overt objects of policy and public debate and unprecedented degrees of State and governmental intervention. This culminated in the Green and White Papers on literacy, released in 1990.

### 'Right'-ing Education and English Teaching in Western Australia

The 1980s has seen decisive shifts in the nature of public educational provision, as the effects of larger forms of social crisis have manifested themselves in education policy (Ball, 1990; Apple, 1993). Within this, there have been concomitantly major changes in English teaching<sup>1</sup>. This has been an international phenomenon, as one would expect, given that the 'crisis' in question has involved more or less the whole spectrum of liberal-democratic and western capitalist countries, including but obviously not limited to those for whom 'English' is a major educational concern. In this paper, however, I will concentrate on crisis and change in English teaching in the specific context of Western Australia. This is because, in various significant ways, the case—or maybe, the fate—of English teaching in this particular Australian state can be seen as an exemplary instance of 'the crisis in English teaching', and more broadly a register of crisis and change in public schooling.

As I have indicated, this has been, in particular, a crisis in and for the New English; however, as I have also suggested already, it has various ramifications and implications for English teaching historically and ideologically, since these changes must be seen directly in the context of a changed and changing agenda for curriculum and schooling as a whole. This new agenda was one which geared itself more deliberately and emphatically to social and economic 'reproduction' and a new mode of regulation (Ball, 1990: 15-16) and was informed, firstly, by the ideological concerns of liberal-conservative restoration, and secondly, by a reworked form of technocratic and instrumental rationality, within a general social-administrative discourse of accountability, efficiency and management. Central to such an agenda, therefore, is a (renewed) emphasis on testing and assessment, and a shift in public and education policy to a stress on 'outcomes' and productivity, rather than for instance

matters of access, 'input', and equality of opportunity. This has meant important changes and shifts in emphasis for English

teaching, particularly as formed in significant accordance with the principles and paradigms of post-Dartmouth versions of English curriculum. Elsewhere I have indicated that this involved a significant shift in the political economy of English teaching, within education more generally, with the classification between 'education' and 'economy' weakening as the effects of economic downturn become more marked, and a new logic of production replacing that of consumption in shaping educational policy and English curriculum change (Medway, 1990; Green, forthcoming; see also Knight, Lingard and Porter, 1993: 10-111). What this has meant, in practice, was an increasing emphasis on literacy education, understood in a particular way—that is, within a renewed rhetoric of 'skills' and 'training'—and within this, an increasing stress on literacy assessment, increasingly conceived officially and in terms of popular-public sensibility as the specific task of subject English. Watkins (1989: 1) points to what he describes as growing 'disquiet' not only in Australia but in contexts such as Britain, the United States and Western Europe about public educational provision and "a claimed apparent decline in educational standards, especially in literacy and numeracy", and consequently an increasing call for more rigorous, systematic and externally-organized forms of testing and assessment. This has meant, in particular, a reorientation of English teaching towards literacy pedagogy, conceived in largely instrumentalist and disciplinary terms. Hence, the movement between the Martin Report (1980) and the Beazley Report (1984), and subsequent developments in English teaching, literacy and secondary schooling in Western Australia in the post-Beazley era, becomes of particular interest, in the light of these comments and observations. Although released in 1980, it is patently clear in retrospect that the Martin Report was very much a document of the 1970s, and may be seen now as marking the end of an era in English teaching, rather than as perhaps was hoped, at least within the profession, heralding a new age. Subtitled "What Goes On in English Lessons", it involved case studies of a range of government high schools in Western Australia, commissioned in 1978 by the then Director-General Dr David Mossenson. The brief of the study was "to explore and describe the teaching and learning of English in State secondary schools, to identify the most influential factors in that process, and to make recommendations about future directions" (Martin, 1980: iii). The responsibility for conceiving, organizing and conducting the research was assigned to Nancy Martin, formerly Head of the Department of English at London University Institute of Education. This was a significant choice in many ways, but the point to stress here is that it

indicated the perceived pre-eminence of the discourse of the New English in English curriculum discussion at the time, particularly at the level of research and policy.

The point to stress here is that there is a distinctive version of English teaching enunciated in the Martin Report, one which is entirely congruent with the discourse of the New English emanating from the Dartmouth Conference in 1966, an international seminar which has come to represent the inaugural moment in post-1960s developments in English teaching and related pedagogies (Dixon, 1975 [1967]; Green, forthcoming). This version is made very explicit in the account given of "Subject English" (pp.51-65) and also in Part III ("The Findings"), which deals with classroom implications and the question of innovation in English teaching, and concludes with observations and recommendations with a clear policy mandate. It is manifest also, albeit rather more circumspectly, in the case-studies themselves. Of the nine schools which form the basis for the case-studies, it is clear that only one, Special Innovation School No. 1, is given more or less unqualified approval, as exhibiting "a unifying theoretical

conception" which the research team "did not find [...] anywhere else" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1980: 218)<sup>2</sup>. The team observed the following:

It was the general high level of work and commitment by the students which interested us. Quantity, quality and enthusiasm was not confined to the best students. Our guess is that this general high standard was at least in part due to their [teachers'] unified conception [of English teaching], which caused them to see 'competence growing incrementally through the interaction of writing, talking, reading and experience'; and as a result their programmes and their strategies were 'true to language as it actually functions' (Martin, 1980: 218).

As one who was teaching in the school at the time and heavily involved in the activities discussed in the case-study, I can confirm that there was just such a clearly-defined, coherent philosophy—moreover, one consciously in line with the principles of language learning and English teaching emanating from Dartmouth and Bullock. However, there was far from a consensus among all the staff involved, and it is possible in retrospect to view this particular English Department in much the same way as Ball and Lacey (1980) do, in their case-study account of "four English departments in four comprehensive schools" (Ball and Lacey, 1980: 57). Their study points to "the differences which exist within subject sub-cultures" (Ball and Lacey, 1980: 153; my emphasis), and suggests that this is a preferable and more realistic view to that which presents subject sub-cultures as

"undifferentiated epistemological communities sharing knowledge and methodology" (Ball and Lacey, 1980: 150). Yet it is the case that, for various reasons, there was a measure of unity in the English teaching programme of the school, albeit one more a matter of a somewhat unstable and even volatile discursive-hegemonic construct (and hence the 'outcome' of an on-going struggle) than something authoritatively fixed in place. The point here is that it was highly influenced by the discourse of the New English, and hence reveals both the positive and the negative features and consequences of that discourse.

With regard to the other case-studies, and hence to the portrait of English teaching in Western Australia that the Report provides, it can be argued that, however muted it tries to be, there is a marked narrative and enunciative presence in these accounts which subtly but insistently provides perspective on them. As Loudon (1982) notes, this is more a matter of artful juxtapositions and the implicit shaping of an agenda for discussion, analysis and observation, than it is a matter of explicit judgement and interpretation; nonetheless it is very clear, in reading the case-studies and attending to their rhetorical and discursive features, that there are indeed evaluations being made, in accordance with the view of English teaching and language education articulated elsewhere in the Report. Hence, there is indeed "a unifying theoretical conception" informing the document as a whole, which is not to say that the Report isn't nonetheless itself a 'fractured' text, subject to the effects and play of heteroglossia and contradiction. These signs of conflict and dissension--within the profession, between the profession and the community, including the wider educational community, among 'theory', 'policy' and 'practice'--can be viewed retrospectively as early indications of the changes, shifts in policy emphasis, and developments to come, announced most emphatically in the Beazley Report (1984).

The point to stress, once again, is that there had been calls prior to Beazley for curriculum reform in the English teaching

area, both from within the profession (e.g. Reid, 1982; Loudon, 1983; see also Green and Reid, 1986) and from within the wider community, educational and otherwise. There was clearly general concern about English teaching practice in the period leading up to the (post-)Beazley initiatives, although not at all necessarily in the same way as for the reasons and arguments marshalled in Beazley and elsewhere. The Martin Report was emphatic about the problem as it perceived it, in what is in fact an eloquent statement of 'the crisis in English teaching':

A coherent view of English teaching was not seen as important in our schools [...]. We saw little sense of the need to clear up the lack of consensus about what English is. A kind of anarchy is taken for granted. Students see English as punctuation, spelling and grammar; reading means practising reading; literature is books you read in literature sessions. Somewhere outside school are books and magazines you read for yourself (which are different from 'literature' and 'reading'); parallel but unconnected are drama and creative writing. This, of course, is a parody. In the case-study schools we saw much successful work involving discussion, assignment writing for projects, English based on outside activities, creative writing, film making and more; but the very success of these aspects of the work masked the fact that, alongside these activities, was going on a great deal of what can only be described as 'busy work' quite unrelated to the 'actual functions of language', or to what is known about its development (Martin, 1980: 257).

This may be seen as a diagnosis from within the professional discourse of English teaching, and represents at once a particular version of the 'crisis' and what is perceived to be an appropriate response—that is, a "lack of consensus", leading to the "lack of a theoretical base for work in English" (Martin, 1980: 263), which needs to be countered accordingly by "a unified theoretical conception" of English teaching and congruent policy initiatives as regards teacher development and educational management (Martin, 1980: 259-28; also Martin, 1983). As I have already suggested, there are major difficulties in the kind of "unified theoretical conception" associated with and advocated by the Martin Report; however, this does not cancel out the validity of the call for curriculum reform along these lines, including the potential for developing an appropriate, politically-sensitive theoretical discourse for English curriculum, one which offers the possibility of developing a unified critical-professional community. As I have sought to argue elsewhere (Green, 1990, 1992, forthcoming; see also Lingard and McLennan, 1983), there were available at the time elements which might well have been articulated into just such a discourse. This was not, however, the course adopted or endorsed by the Education Department; nor did it respond to the suggestions for policy development outlined in the Report, and this needs to be understood within the larger context of the decisive shift to the Right in educational policy and practice in the 1980s.

Accordingly, what needs to be noted here was a striking movement, as regards the currency of English teaching, from the Martin Report (1980) to the Beazley Report (1984). This movement saw one version of English teaching challenged and eventually and indeed comprehensively supplanted by another, in an exemplary

enactment of curriculum and cultural politics. There are several reasons why this happened, which collectively speak not only to the general and oft-noted recalcitrance of theory/practice relations but also to their political and ideological overdetermination. I have suggested elsewhere that there are clearly-marked ideological dilemmas in the discourse of post-

Dartmouth English teaching, and these need to be seen in an appropriately mediated relation to practical dilemmas, in both educational administration and classroom practice. At this point, therefore, it is useful to bring in an argument marshalled by Smart (1983), elaborating on Foucault's perception that "the normal relations between discourses, practices and effects [is] one of non-correspondence" (Smart, 1983: 94). That is to say, there is a necessary disjunction not simply between 'theory' and 'practice', but rather, between "discourses, social and institutional practices, and finally effects which materialise within the social field", as three distinct "orders of historical events" (Smart, 1983: 93). What such a formulation allows for, here, is that a distinction needs to be made between the discourse of the New English, its associated realization and institutionalization in the form of specific programmes, and the effects of such realization in the social field. Each of these "distinct orders of historical events" needs to be examined in its specificity but also in its only contingent relationship to each of the others.

Retrospectively, as I have already suggested, it is very clear that the Martin Report is filled with tensions and contradictions, marked as it is by internal pressures and by various dissonances and disturbance which are manifestly discursive and ideological in nature, although they speak to very real material and socio-economic issues and conditions. The point is, there was a distinctive version of English in circulation prior to Beazley, and it is this which informs and organizes the Martin Report. Further, the professional and educational ideology in question, embodied in a comprehensive array of theoretical and rhetorical work, needs to be seen as containing real possibilities for socially-progressive English curriculum and classroom practice, despite its flaws and shortcomings (McLennan and Lingard, 1983; Green, forthcoming). The 'failure' of post-Dartmouth English teaching, as expressed in the Martin Report, was due, consequently, not so much, or so conclusively, to its pedagogical weaknesses as to its politics—its inability to move beyond its own ideological limits, so as to draw into its educational project a more explicitly socio-political dimension. It worked, in short, with a quintessentially liberal-bourgeois vision of educational practice and hence, a limited view of the possibilities for

social change through cultural-educational mobilization.

This was no more clearly indicated than in the profession's striking inability to marshal either a defence or a coherent case of its own, in the face of widespread and increasingly vocal criticism of its performance in the 1980s. Increasingly, the initiative for English curriculum reform was taken by those outside the profession, many of whom either understood very little about contemporary developments in English teaching or else were unsympathetic to them. As I have indicated, this was due in no small way to the fact that what had been previously the dominant-hegemonic paradigm in the profession, particularly amongst its 'leadership', was patently losing its executive and explanatory power and was itself increasingly in disarray.

This is an important part of the context, then, for understanding the dynamics of crisis and change in English teaching in Western Australia in the 1980s. It is worth noting that the Martin Report did make explicit reference to changing socio-economic circumstances and the impact on schooling that this involved:

In times of threat people look around them with anxiety and sometimes suspicion. The shadow of doubt can fall anywhere. In times of economic threat like the present, it falls quickly on

education, which consumes an increasing amount of the national budget, yet cannot, in any real sense, be measured. The threatening skies are certainly not a local phenomenon, and belong at least to the whole Western world (Martin, 1980: 18).

Further: "This anxiety is fanned by the media, which tend to give education a bad press. Mistakes and failures are news; steady progress is not" (Martin, 1980:18). Ironically, the Report went on to observe: "But it would be unprofessional to attend only to such specific and ad hoc public issues and dangerous to put the clock back" (Martin, 1980: 18). In a sense, this is precisely what happened, although equally important here is the modernizing imperative informing such initiatives and restructurings—a manifestation therefore of the contradictory play of restoration and change in the cultural and discursive politics of the New Right.

Finally, in concluding this section, it needs to be stressed that the decisive curriculum and policy shifts of the 1980s not only involved a significant by-passing of professional sources of expertise and advice in the areas of literacy education and English teaching, but also they ignored altogether existing statements of policy and sources of information specifically in these areas, within the discourse of the New English. There are

no references whatsoever to the Martin Report in the Beazley Report, published only four years further on, and in retrospect this is a an omission which is both striking and telling.

The Beazley Report differed markedly from the Martin Report, in a number of significant ways. Perhaps most importantly, it was commissioned by an incoming government, when the Labor Party assumed office in 1983. Education reform was a key item in Labor's oppositional and pre-election strategy, and accordingly an election promise. Furthermore, the Report and its Committee of Inquiry had a much broader scope and a larger brief than Martin, given that it was concerned with a general assessment and re-structuring of public educational provision, particularly at the secondary level, and indeed its rationalization in accordance with new agendas in social and educational policy. Within this, English was, as it happened, a small but arguably significant issue, which is consistent with the point discussed elsewhere that the English subjects and more generally literacy policy have been particularly sensitive matters in and for the political project of educational re-structuring and the reconceptualization of public schooling (Green, 1992). Indeed, the very fervour of debate associated with the Report, focussed on matters of concern regarding English teaching, literacy pedagogy, educational standards, and assessment practices and procedures—especially concentrated as it was over a relatively brief period of time—suggests considerable and quite striking parallels with the situation in the United Kingdom. Noting the push in Thatcherism towards "a direct, centralized control over the school curriculum", Ball, Kenny and Gardiner go on to make the following point:

[T]he ensemble of political rhetoric, direct control and moral panic embedded in this positioning work also serves to illustrate our contention that English teaching occupies a special and critical role in education and that control of the subject, and thus of 'acceptable' versions of literacy, is central to the ideological maintenance of political and social order and national culture (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 81).

The extent to which this is directly applicable, as analysis and commentary, to the situation in Western Australia remains to be argued. Whether 'nationalism', for instance, is as significant

an issue in this context is certainly debatable, at least in the culturalist sense. However, the very boundedness of the Western Australian situation is particularly helpful, I suggest, in illuminating the discursive and rhetorical mechanisms at work in the construction of educational hegemony, and hence the nature of cultural politics.

At this point, then, I want to make more specific reference to the matter of literacy debates and their significance in and for educational policy and also, more specifically, English curriculum change. In particular, my concern is with the nature and significance of alleged literacy crisis, as 'perceived' in the media (and hence in national-popular sensibility) and as 'responded to' in government reports and educational policy. There is a strong sense in which literacy crisis maps readily onto more general educational crisis, conceived as a crisis in public schooling and popular education; further, and more specifically, it is characteristically associated with perceived problems (increasingly represented as being of 'crisis' proportions) in the curriculum practice of English teaching. What needs to be noted here, once again, is the important linkages between literacy and schooling, on the one hand, and between English teaching and popular education, on the other. This is a matter both of general State initiative and active intervention and of the cultural-historical nexus of language, ideology and education. It is also, very importantly, a matter of generalized social discipline, in the Foucaultian sense.

A quite crucial consideration in this respect is, very clearly, the ideological work of the media. The alliances that form between such parties as governments, the mass media, and public figures of note, around specific educational issues of concern to the New Right—for instance, 'literacy' or 'standards'—, need accordingly to be taken into account, because the relationship between literacy debates and educational policy involves the significant orchestration and intervention of the media, and especially newspaper reporting. That is to say, the media must be recognized as an important 'agent-form' in the construction of educational crisis, which in this case involves direct consideration of the nexus between English teaching and the politics of literacy. Of course, the actual influence of media-orchestrated literacy debates on educational policy and practice is hard to gauge, but at the very least it can be recognized as a significant organizer of public educational discourse.

What then is to be made of the Beazley Report?. Importantly, text and context need to be grasped in their dynamic interrelation. Given this, the notion of intertextuality is of particular pertinence here. Smyth, for instance, locates the Beazley Report in a large group of similarly inclined "reports of primary and secondary education in [Australia] in recent years" (Smyth, 1987: 14), making specific connections between the Australian situation and international trends in educational reform since the 1970s (cf. also Apple, 1986a, 1986b; Popkewitz, Pitman and Barry, 1986). As Tully (1987: 33) notes, the Beazley inquiry was "one of a series of parliamentary select committees,

white papers and committees of inquiry used by State Governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s to develop education policies to accommodate the economic constraints and demographic trends of the period"<sup>1</sup>. Donald's earlier account of educational crisis points specifically to the significance, in this regard, of what he calls "intertextual reality":

A full history of the Great Debate would have to examine the construction of the intertextual reality--in the stream of Government reports on education (Bullock, Holland, Auld, Mueller,

Taylor, Warnock and the rest); in the utterances of the Black Papers and industrialists like Arnold Weinstock and Arthur Bryan, which were appropriated as an effective 'opposition'; in the work of newspapers (in their coverage of the Tyndale circus, in according Neville Bennett's research the credibility and status of a 'Report', in the shifting criteria whereby stories about schools become 'news') and the work of television (not only the Panorama film on Faraday and the endless studio 'debates', but right down to the representation of schools in fiction and comedy series" (Donald, 1979: 31).

Even in terms of its local Western Australian context, the Beazley Report needs to be seen in relation to other education reports, perhaps most notably the McGaw Report (1984)--in essence, a companion volume--and also, from the perspective of this present study, the Martin Report (1980). Indeed, van Dijk's (1983: 28) observation that newspaper reporting involves "a reconstruction of available discourses" is readily applicable here; as will become evident, Beazley is paradigmatically an instance of the 're'-processing and recirculation of "available discourses" in government reporting.

However, given that the focus here is on literacy debates and English teaching, and that the notion of 'literacy crisis' relates directly to perceptions of crisis in English teaching, the intertextual series that runs from Newbolt (1921) through to Bullock (1975), from there to Martin (1980), and then to Kingman (1988) and Cox (1989) is of particular interest. It is within this series in particular that Beazley (1984) is to be most appropriately read, specifically with reference to the problem of literacy and language practices, and also the notion of crisis and change in English teaching.

What must be grasped, first of all, is that the Report cannot be adequately understood outside of a full and proper consideration of the relationship between ideology and curriculum change. This particular development in Western Australian education--described as "the most comprehensive review of education that WA had seen"

(The West Australian, April 14, 1984)--is entirely consistent with international trends in educational reform, in accordance with general economic recession and associated ideological crisis. This is the case even when it is conceded that the Report, in itself, represents specific party-political interest and expediency as much as, if not more than, an authentically educational imperative. Tully (1987) illuminates very strikingly both the difficult conditions and terms of its production, and also the processes involved: her work suggests that, given such circumstances, its peculiar and rather uneasy combination of sweeping reform, assertion and conservative (re)orientation is entirely understandable. Overburdened by an excessive set of terms-of-reference and compelled to present its findings and recommendations precisely one year after its establishment, and further, organized in such a way that educational bureaucrats had significant executive power, it is possible to describe the Report as, ultimately, a rhetorical exercise. Its ideological significance overshadowed its immediate material effects on the quality of educational life in Western Australian schools--just, it might be argued, as was its 'intention'. Tully notes that

in the three years prior to the 1983 Western Australian elections, three issues raised the public's awareness of education to the point where it became a major issue on the political agenda. These issues were youth unemployment and related changes in the upper secondary school population, the heavy-handed administrative style of the WA Education Department,

and the 1981 'funding cuts'. They created the climate in which the Beazley inquiry was well received (Tully, 1987: 7).

Of particular importance, in this regard, was the link between factors such as unemployment and public debate on educational standards:

High youth unemployment was a significant factor in placing education on the public agenda. It created a climate in which the nature and purpose of secondary schooling was increasingly questioned in both the popular press and in professional publications (Tully: 1987: 38).

As I have already indicated, an extensive newspaper coverage of educational issues, focussed on perceived problems of literacy, school discipline and 'standards', marked the period in question. The influence of such coverage is inscribed in the Report, in comments such as the following: "There is an urgent desire on the part of the community that special attention be given to standards of literacy and numeracy" (Beazley, 1984: 76). This

was realised in the following Recommendation:

That in response to community expectations and because of the changing demands of the workforce, special attention be given to the need to raise the general standards of literacy and numeracy (Beazley, 1984: 77).

Particularly with regard to literacy, this became an important organizing principle for subsequent policy moves in the post-Beazley era (Porter, Knight and Lingard, 1993).

As previously noted, the Beazley Committee of Inquiry was established by the then-incoming Labor Government, on the basis of an election promise. In his pre-election policy speech, Brian Burke as Leader of the Opposition had declared that, if elected, his government would "institute the most comprehensive inquiry ever conducted into the future direction of education in Western Australia" (cited in Tully, 1987: 2). Membership details and terms of reference were announced on March 11, 1983, immediately following the Labor victory in February, and the Committee met for the first time on April 12. Eleven months later, in March 1984, the Report was formally released. During this period, there was an intense public debate on educational standards, focussed particularly on literacy issues<sup>1</sup>. This was largely conducted through the media, with particularly heavy newspaper coverage, although there were various other, secondary forums involved. The role of the media, however, was quite pivotal here, and indeed the relationship between educational politics and the mass media is illustrated very clearly in this case. The 'debate' ran continuously through the best part of the deliberations of the Beazley Committee, roughly from June 1983 to April 1984, and there can be little doubt that it exerted a significant influence on the Committee's formulations, particularly given the way 'public opinion' functioned as a major reference-point in the Report.

It is important to note that this wasn't the first time that education had been hotly debated in the Western Australian media. In fact, there had been extensive coverage of educational issues in the three years leading up to Beazley. Of particular importance in this regard was a series entitled "Is Education Failing Our Children?" (in what was called intriguingly called a "Seminar in Print"), published over the first three months of 1981 in the major daily local newspaper The West Australian. Such media involvement in educational debate was not restricted to Western Australia, either; indeed, it became increasingly a

feature of public debate on education in Australia over the 1980s (Kenway 1990; Marginson, 1985, 1986), although momentum in this

respect had gathered over the latter part of the 1970s (Bannister et. al., 1979). A similar phenomenon is to be observed in the United Kingdom, as has been indicated, as well as in the United States. Increasingly the media was playing a significant role in educational politics generally, as the 'crisis' in public schooling became more markedly a matter of overt concern. The 1981 debate in Western Australia was certainly symptomatic in this regard, as Tully (1987: 42) makes clear: "The significance of this series of articles lies in the magnitude of the public response it drew. More than five hundred people responded, expressing their belief that the education system was failing students. By early 1981, education had become an issue high on the public agenda".

This was the context, then, for the 'debate' in question. Of particular interest here is how literacy and schooling are represented, and relatedly, the effects of this on English teaching. In what may be taken as a precursor text, an early editorial initiated the 'debate', setting the tone in the following terms:

Few people would agree that a return to an education system concentrating solely on literacy and numeracy was a good idea. All the same, many have been dismayed by the trend in recent years towards bypassing traditional areas of learning in support of nurturing less tangible aspects such as student identity, individuality and creativity (West Australian, 29/6/83 [editorial]).

With the agenda set up in this way, the debate proceeded to unfold in an entirely predictable way, initially with various academic figures weighing in with sharp criticisms of current school-leavers as they move into the tertiary sector, followed by a second phase featuring representatives from business and industry and employer groups. Whereas the former were concerned with what was perceived to be marked inadequacies as regards 'essayistic literacy' skills, the latter focussed more emphatically on 'basic skills' in the usual sense. This set in train, accordingly, what has been described as the discourse of 'functional literacy'. What became apparent, in the further course of the debate, was the identification of 'literacy' with, on the one hand, 'education' more generally, and on the other, with 'English', thus exemplifying the connotative relationship among these categories in the public sphere. Couched in alarmist, deficiency terms, the 'crisis' in literacy is linked directly to perceived problems in the nature and quality of teachers and public schooling, and serious reservations expressed about current trends in English teaching. A classic 'moral panic' pattern is activated, and characterizes the debate generally (Pyvis, 1986). Statements such as the following are

illustrative:

It is incredible that students can go through school with appalling reading and writing deficiencies that are not corrected. The solution may be remedial teaching but the problem is teaching itself (West Australian, 13/12/83 [editorial]).

Students who are not literate are propaganda fodder for teachers who wish to indoctrinate them rather than teaching them the basic skills they lack (West Australian, 16/12/83 [letter-to-the-editor]).

A good proportion of the blame for the illiteracy and bad spelling of school leavers must rest with the teaching system

[...]. The other proportion of the blame rests with the fact that a big proportion of children these days probably spend more time watching television than reading--thus the written word is not as prominent (West Australian, 16/12/83 [letter-to-the-editor]).

Hence what Ball (1987) describes as the perceived problem of "politically motivated teachers", functioning as 'folk devils', links up with a view of television as cultural corruption and the collapse of traditional institutions and forms of authority, as discussed previously in this study.

The Report represents, therefore, and in several senses, a decisive 'crisis' in English teaching. In particular, this is registered in, firstly, a recommended move away from its hitherto compulsory status and consequently what had been traditionally its central significance in terms of credentialling and final examinations, and secondly, its proposed redefinition as 'functional English'. This links up directly with the question of literacy, in that the position adopted in the Report on literacy and related issues involves both an effective conflation of subject English and literacy pedagogy, and a generalized technocratic rationality of the kind associated with the discourse of 'functional literacy' (Levine, 1986). That is to say, of the available discourses in literacy--to be identified broadly with the notions of 'functional', 'cultural' and 'critical' literacy, respectively (Green, 1992; Bigum and Green, 1993)--it is the first of these which the Report both focusses on and is organized by. This is partly because of the dominant-discursive association of 'literacy' with 'standards' and hence with matters of assessment, measurement and testing, within which over-arching framework 'teaching' together with 'learning' is entirely conceptualized. As much recent literacy scholarship indicates, particularly that of a critical-sociological

orientation (e.g. Graff, 1987; Levine, 1986; Street, 1984; Lankshear, 1987; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Cook-Gumperz [ed], 1986; Luke, 1988; Gee, 1990), this is a view of literacy which is at once highly politicized and particularly restricted, with serious implications concomitantly and consequently for educational practice. As Lankshear (1987: 72) observes: "[d]ifferent literacies ... may have very different political implications"; further, as he goes on to argue, different versions of literacy represent competing and often conflicting sectional interests, challenging therefore the normative, current-traditional view of literacy as neutral, unitary and essentially an independent variable (Lankshear, 1987: 39). Yet it is clear that it is this view of literacy which informs the Report—a view which, together with its recommendations on curriculum change and the reorganization of school practice, both embodies and enacts an ideology of paradigmatically 'improper' literacy (Lankshear, 1987). Why this happened, and how it happened, is a matter therefore of particular and compelling interest, with regard to not just the more general relationship between literacy debates and educational policy, but also, more specifically, English curriculum change and educational politics.

#### Changing English Teaching in Western Australia

What specifically were the effects of such intense work in both the popular-public sphere, as orchestrated by the media, and educational policy? What happened to English teaching in the aftermath of Beazley and McGaw? It is useful at this point to recall that central to both reports were recommendations focussed on matters of literacy and assessment, and their formal articulation. Moreover, although this was consistent with developments elsewhere in Australia, there is a case to be made

that the Western Australian situation was exemplary in this regard. Elsewhere I have provided an intensive account of reform and structuring in English teaching in the lower secondary school (Green, 1989, 1992); consequently I shall focus here on the Upper School.

As Nay-Brock (1987: 91) observed at the time, in his overview of the senior English curriculum in Australian schools: "Of all the eight Australian educational systems, it was that of Western Australia which was in the greatest state of flux in the senior secondary English curriculum at the time this book was being written", and he concluded his account of Western Australian changes in the Upper School English subjects with the observation that "[a]ll this adds up to a state of some uncertainty!" (Nay-Brock, 1987: 109). His assessment of the situation may be extended to English teaching in Western Australia more

generally<sup>1</sup>.

Reference has already been made to the furore generated by the McGaw proposal to omit English from the group of Upper School subjects required for tertiary admissions<sup>2</sup>. It is noteworthy that English Literature retained its place in the Group 1 List, since the whole thrust of the Beazley/McGaw deliberations, principally as organized by the interventions of Professor Michael Scriven<sup>1</sup>, was that there was currently significant duplication in the curriculum offerings and perspectives of the two subjects, that correspondingly there was less emphasis than there needed to be on 'functional English', and further, that English as presently conceptualized was ill-defined to the point of being indefensible. Another consideration likely to have influenced the decisions which were eventually made was that the Literature course had a recognizable, familiar and long-established disciplinary and institutional base, and also a clearly defined examination structure<sup>2</sup>. In addition, it is likely that the Literature course, as then constituted, represented a traditional culturalist agenda, in the élitist literary-ideological sense, drawing as it did significantly on the private school sector for its constituency and also being congruent in various important ways with the class and gender dynamics of its social project. A point also worth noting here is the close relationship to be observed between the literary-culturalist perspectives and agendas of the then dominant English Department of the University of Western Australia and those of the private school sector, especially those widely recognized at the time as the most prestigious schools<sup>3</sup>.

It may well have been the hope, as well, to preserve a traditionally-conceived 'cultural' dimension in the upper school curriculum, but to complement it by legislating a clearly marked 'functional' dimension, either by radically redefining English along these lines or by ensuring that literacy was given specific and more formal attention in upper school pedagogy generally. As it happened, the McGaw Report opted for a somewhat awkward combination of these two options. On the one hand, it proposed that English be redesigned as a course in 'functional English', rather ambiguously conceived along the lines of Professor Scriven's arguments in this regard, and on the other, it stressed the need for a whole-school perspective on literacy pedagogy, as a significant dimension in all forms of school and subject-area learning—an emphasis, that is, on language and literacy learning across the school curriculum, in an explicit gesture towards the principle of 'language-across-the-curriculum' which featured also in Bullock, as we have seen (Ball, 1987; Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990)<sup>4</sup>.

In the event, the proposal to omit English from the Group 1

subjects, widely perceived as effectively 'downgrading' the subject, met with such resistance and provoked such controversy that, as Tully (1987: 108) puts it, "[p]redictably in the face of this pressure, English was reprieved". Somewhat ironically, among the state's universities and other tertiary institutions, the University of Western Australia opted to work with the original proposal, despite the fact that its own English Department had vigorously criticized both the recommendation in question and the general thrust of the Beazley/McGaw inquiry into English teaching and literacy standards. One of the most vehement critics of the proposal regarding Upper School English was Professor John Hay, of the University's English Department; as he asserted, quite unequivocally: "Nothing is more certain than that literacy will decline if English is devalued" (The Sunday Times, April 19, 1984). Professor McGaw replied two weeks later, responding directly to what he described as Professor Hay's "misleading analysis of the report". Emphasizing that "we did not call for 'an unprecedented downgrading of English", as had been suggested in subsequent newspaper accounts, and that the focus of the report was on the nexus between secondary school graduation and literacy accreditation, McGaw observed that the decision to nominate English Literature as a tertiary admissions prerequisite, and not English, was based on two reasons, as follows:

One was that students must first satisfy the strong requirement for English competence at year 12 level before their admissions average should even be considered. We would expect many students to meet this requirement by taking the subject English, since it would still be available. The second reason for suggesting English not contribute to a student's final admissions average was that many students currently take the English examination and do very well without actually studying the subject. Most do this by studying only English Literature but taking the examinations in both subjects.

As he concluded: "This suggests that to allow English to count in a three-subject average for tertiary admissions would provide too soft an option" (The Sunday Times, April 2, 1984: 6; my emphasis)<sup>1</sup>. This article was followed by a flurry of others in the ensuing period, debating the issue, including one which reported Beazley's own response to the controversy and quoted him to this effect: "I interpret the McGaw Report as recommending that the teaching of functional English be established in WA high schools" (The Daily News, April 10, 1984; my emphasis). Crucially, the question of literacy is foregrounded throughout, and there is little doubt that this had become the central organizing principle for English curriculum discourse, both

professionally and in the public forum more generally.

Following this, there was a period of extensive revision of the Upper School English subjects, and there would be considerable interest and value in discussing this matter more fully; however, this cannot be undertaken here<sup>2</sup>. I want to make reference to one initiative in this respect, however. In 1987, the Secondary Education Authority, the body formally responsible for syllabus authorization and assessment and credentialling procedures, issued a discussion paper under the title "Changing Role of Subject English in Post Compulsory Schooling" (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987). Its release further indicates the significance of the English subjects in curriculum change more generally, as well as of the increasing importance of the category 'literacy' in educational policy in the period in question here. It was prefaced by a statement from the Authority's Chair, Dr Mossenson, briefly contextualizing the paper in relation to changes in upper secondary schooling

"[f]ollowing endorsement by the Government of the recommendations of the Beazley and McGaw Reports", and indicating that English had been designated a 'priority' concern in this regard:

The study of English and related subjects assumes special significance among areas of study in the post-compulsory years. The importance of English is reflected in the fact that almost all students study English courses as part of their upper school programme.

It is suggested, further, that adequate preparation in English is appropriately considered "one of the most critical of life skills", and there is at least a strong implication here that "competence in the use of English" is intimately linked to educational success, not just on the part of students, but also, significantly, on that of the education system itself. This point about the school population and English enrolments confirms, then, that a significant connection exists--and is seen to exist--between English and schooling, expressly from an administrative-bureaucratic point of view--in terms, that is, of what Cook-Gumperz (1986: 33) describes as "the professionalization of schooling".

The paper goes on to outline a view of English as "a 'mobile' subject", particularly sensitive to changing socio-economic and cultural conditions and to the play of competing interests and investments. 'Change' is a specifically marked term in the account, and language--more particularly, "proficiency with language"--is presented as an essential element in those forms of education deemed necessary to equip young people with the 'life

skills' required for living in "this rapidly changing world" (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 2). It is worth citing in full here the passage summarizing what is described as "the context for change":

The challenge to prepare students of post-compulsory age for the rapidly changing world is an immense and immediate one. These students will enter a world where: a full life-time of work cannot be anticipated; family and social units are increasingly mobile; political and industrial systems are more centrally based; individual responsibility for financial management (e.g. banking, purchasing, taxation, welfare, insurance, mortgages) is increasingly complex; more information is available to be collected, selected and processed; the technologies of information handling are moving towards automation and electronic retrieval; and, communications through the mass media have brought about new jargons, usages and effects with language (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 2 [original format amended]).

A brief account is made of "Directions of Change", noting recent trends and developments in post-compulsory schooling in the wider Australian context and briefly summarizing Western Australian initiatives of this kind, as well as the larger, more generalized concerns of the Beazley Report. This is followed by an overview of "Change and Subject English" which, as well as making specific reference to recent English syllabus work in the lower secondary context, presents an account of the relationship between literacy and English teaching: "Of the various aspects of subject English, the question of literacy is currently receiving the most attention" (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 7). The position taken in this regard is as follows:

In the present debate about literacy the term is being used to mean having competence in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The confident and appropriate use of these language modes, in the community, is seen to be the mark of a literate

person<sup>1</sup>.

Further:

The school has a responsibility for developing these skills [sic] across the curriculum. Teachers of English have a particular role to play because as language specialists they are best placed to help students understand the nature of language and the role of language in learning. They are expected to 'teach' the processes involved in reading, writing, speaking and listening (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 7).

Reference is then made to the Beazley recommendation that "English teachers should have a key responsibility in raising literacy standards", and hence, "in the framing and implementation of English syllabuses for secondary schools more emphasis should be placed on functional English" (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 7; my emphasis). Clearly the agenda has been firmly pre-established here, shaped significantly by the discourse on 'functional literacy' and 'educational standards' which is associated with the New Right, as has been discussed previously. "Competence", 'skills', 'teaching', 'processes' are then key terms in the revised educational agenda and the shift in policy priorities, with specific regard to the relationship between curriculum and literacy, as well as the rhetoric of critique associated with the proponents of anti-progressivism and the restoration of educational order. The paper goes on to propose that the Upper School English subjects be re-shaped so as to incorporate specific 'literacy objectives', and hence allow for the specification of literacy teaching in the post-compulsory schooling context, for all students.

There are two major problems in the paper, of direct and immediate relevance with regard to the question of crisis and change in English teaching in Western Australia. Firstly, there is a significant category confusion as to 'English', 'language' and 'literacy', which is registered in but also enables too ready an identification of subject English and literacy education. Secondly, there is a significant absence, in real terms, of a proper understanding of the importance of context in considerations of literacy and learning. Relatedly, there are marked ambiguities and inadequacies in the conceptualization of, firstly, subject English itself and the English subjects more generally—a curriculum-theoretical issue—; secondly, the concept of 'literacy'; and thirdly, the role of 'English' in school learning generally, that is, the English language as the principal medium of learning across the school curriculum and at all levels of schooling (Green 1988; Lemke, 1989). Finally, what must be noted is that the paper bases its understandings and proposals, with respect to English curriculum reconceptualization, specifically on post-Beazley work at the lower secondary level, in the preparation of a revised English syllabus. This suggests that the revisionary work of the Lower Secondary English Syllabus Working Party had been effectively endorsed by the official parties concerned, as at least heading in appropriate and desirable directions, certainly in terms of current policy.

Literacy Rules, OK?

By the latter part of the 1980s, there had emerged, and been institutionalized, a new discourse on English teaching in Western

Australia, and a new paradigmatic expression of English teaching itself: what, following Ball's schema, we can call the 'English-as-Literacy' paradigm (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990). A new syllabus was in operation, and a more regulated English classroom

practice was the result. This was not without resistance and struggle, or contestation, on the part of the profession, or indeed of students<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that the version of subject English eventually arrived at, and formally authorized, included elements and emphases which were positive and progressive in terms of English curriculum change and reconstruction, as professional concerns and informed arguments in English curriculum studies asserted themselves in the curriculum design and negotiation process (Nay-Brock, 1987: 195). However, there can also be little doubt that this was contextualized and over-determined by new agendas and priorities in educational policy, and by the general logic and interests of administration and management. The system had become more organized and accountable, in terms both of fiscal and budgetary considerations and of the relationship between knowledge and control; and within these frames, English teaching had been changed considerably and decisively.

It remains now only to indicate how English teaching in Western Australia was effectively brought back within the ambit of the Law, with regard specifically to the latter part of a decade of 'fluxibility' and disarray<sup>2</sup>. The end result of this was not just the restructuring of public education and the restoration of educational order but also a return to a more recognizable form of English teaching, one which was congruent with the expectations and requirements of the normative discourse on literacy and schooling. Medway's (1990) observation that English teaching in the 1960s, and subsequently, looked 'strange' is pertinent here because it raises the question: From whose perspective? Through whose eyes? The answer partly is, to all those outside the profession as it had come to understand itself, however contradictorily, in the post-1960s period. But it is also, importantly, the gaze from 'above': the social-administrative gaze, linked to and ultimately serving the interests of ruling groups and the dominant cultural bloc—the gaze of power, that is, and the power of the norm. By the end of the 1980s, English teaching in Western Australia had clearly been brought back within at least some semblance of the realms of public intelligibility. It was no longer 'strange'; rather, it was now, in certain significant respects, reassuringly familiar, because it was now more manageable and less dangerously different, symbolically if nothing else.

As I have indicated, particular attention was paid to English

teaching as the vanguard of the emergent order of things and conceived as the supreme example of the new governmental-bureaucratic commitment to accountability and coherence in public education, following the recommendations of Beazley and McGaw. The development of the new Syllabus for Lower Secondary English represented, in this sense, an overtly political process, as much as a specific form of curriculum change, at least in the usual sense. As such, what happened in Western Australia confirms and complements studies of similar educational developments, particularly those in the United Kingdom at this same time:

Since the mid-seventies English teaching has been brought firmly and overtly into the political arena. As a result the concept of what it is to be literate has been significantly reworked in a sustained process of state and political intervention into the subject arena (sic) of English teaching (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 80).

'What it is to be literate': this was very much the issue in the Western Australian situation, since there can be little doubt that the category 'literacy' was firmly placed at the centre of both English teaching and schooling more generally, synonymous as

it was in effect with notions of 'standards' and 'discipline'<sup>1</sup>.

That this was the case was made very clear in the early part of 1988, as the initial syllabus development work moved into its implementation phase, as did the Unit Curriculum more broadly, along with whole-curriculum measures regarding literacy assessment and accreditation. As might have been anticipated, there was considerable resistance from other subject-areas to being involved in and assuming responsibility for literacy matters, which indicates how difficult it had proved to be to institutionalize language-and-learning initiatives across the school curriculum. There was still confusion, further, about the specific role and responsibility of English teaching in this regard, and continuing concern about the curriculum identity of subject English, notwithstanding the revisionary work of the immediate post-Beazley period<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps predictably, then, in May of 1988, there was another outbreak of the 'literacy debate', sparked off by the publication of an article in The West Australian newspaper entitled "Teaching Hopefuls Failing Literacy" (Tuesday, May 3, 1988, p. 4). It was accompanied by an Editorial ("Back to Basics" [p. 10]), formal responses from the Minister of Education and the Ministry itself ("Schools Improving Literacy: Minister" [p. 5]), and subsequently, a brief flurry of Letters-to-the-Editor. Once again, Professor Scriven was centrally implicated, and I have

elsewhere analyzed his intervention and agency in some considerable detail (Green, 1992). What needs to be stressed is that the full force of New Right discursive politics, and the more specific rhetorical work of those engaged in liberal-conservative attacks on post-Dartmouth forms of English teaching, is neatly encapsulated in the public arguments he marshalled at the time. Divisions are once more produced between dangerous educational experimentation on the part of the profession generally—playing with students' futures, and encouraging and condoning their lack of discipline—and the serious, committed work of certain dedicated teachers, working in morally and intellectually more responsible ways in English lessons and English classrooms. The solution lies not only in locating 'literacy' at the heart of a reconstructed, more 'responsible' and 'mature' English teaching, but even more specifically, it is the discourse of 'functional literacy' which is to organize the agenda of English curriculum change, with all that this implies in terms of pedagogy and the relationship between education and society.

The actual effect of such a strong and even blatant intervention can only be speculated upon. It is also difficult to disentangle personal investments and political imperatives. It is possible, however, to offer a comment on the political and ideological significance of such a text, given its contextual configurations, and to consider it accordingly as a specific move within an on-going process of cultural and curriculum politics. There was a strongly felt sense of urgency in the way that this intervention was constructed, as registered in its various accompanying texts. Given the intense hegemonic work of the 1983/84 period, when the Right was markedly successful in negotiating a settlement in its favour, not simply in Western Australia but with regard to Australian educational politics more generally (Kenway, 1990), this subsequent eruption of rightwing activism can only be understood as a disciplining measure, indicating a keen sense of vigilance on the part of interested groups in the maintenance of discursive dominance as regards definitions of schooling and literacy. What the paper also indicates, however, as does the more general resurgence of the 'literacy debate', is that educational hegemony involves a constant struggle, and moreover

one which is never settled once and for all; and further, it confirms that the 1980s represented a particularly striking and crucial moment in the cultural and educational politics of the New Right, within which English teaching had a special significance. This was differently inflected and realized in different contexts, but all the same remarkably consistent in its general formulation across these contexts.

Specifically at issue here is the re-alignment of the relations among the categories 'language', 'literacy' and 'literature' in the curriculum-ideological ensemble which has long sustained the educational project of English teaching. What is patently clear, in this local instance at least, is the effective eclipse of literary ideology as the governing frame for English teaching but also for schooling more generally. Relatedly, but also significantly, it involved the re-assertion of literacy as what might be described as the curriculum 'dominant' for English teaching, as well as for schooling, and a major reconceptualization and re-organization of the relationship between English teaching and schooling. This process was contextualized by the rise into prominence of a new utilitarian and functionalist emphasis in curriculum and schooling, characterized on the one hand by vocational realism and on the other by economic rationalism. A further consideration here was the emergence of a new social-disciplinary imperative, in the face of major cultural shifts and what was increasingly perceived as a breakdown in traditional forms of social order and institutional and cultural authority.

However, what distinguished the Western Australian situation is, I would contend, the significance of economic instrumentalism over conservative culturalism—or rather, a particular realization of commercial culture as the dominant context for schooling. This change involved the assertion—and indeed, the construction—of a certain view of English teaching and of literacy pedagogy, congruent with New Right understandings of socio-economic reality and cultural relations, and was clearly established as the definitive position in Western Australian education by the end of the decade—that is, 'English as literacy': "[t]he literacy of skills [serving] to provide docile and effective workers and acquisitive consumers. The curriculum becomes carefully pre-specified in terms of grade-criteria, assessment items and levels of achievement" (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 77). It needs to be stressed that, despite local gains, this was overall a profoundly conservative version of English teaching, in effect re-asserting traditional understandings of the relationship between education and the economy, and the specific role of English teaching in this regard. Moreover, it involved a return to earlier forms of schooling, within which literacy was clearly defined in terms of social discipline and moral regulation—a move which was fraught with contradiction, however, since there were clearly new educational imperatives emerging as a result of changing forms of political economy and cultural practice, as would soon become patently obvious.

Conclusion

It needs to be recognized that the versions of literacy and English teaching which had been officially endorsed in this fashion were a selection from a much larger set of possibilities. The shift from Martin to Beazley and beyond involved a significant shift from the literacy project of the New English in its classical liberal-progressivist phase--"the literacy of personal discovery" and self-esteem, of "exploration and infinite differentiation" (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 80)--to "the

literacy of skills" and a very differently-configured English teaching. That such a move had a definite political significance, involving a changed relation to the State, is indicated in the following assessment of this "literacy of skills":

Here the primary emphasis is upon competitive individuals acquiring skills and competencies required by the market and the economy. Correct forms of expression and presentation of self are of primary importance[,] the standards and criteria for which are determined by the educational state acting on behalf of 'industry'. The relation of education to the state is exercised in terms of the state's role in providing the social and technical conditions for the reproduction of capitalism (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 77).

This was, then, the preferred discourse on literacy. Little official regard was made of those forms of English teaching organized around notions of the literary canon and the 'cultural heritage', that is, "English as 'great literature'" and "the literacy of morality" (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 78-79), and hence of the essentially conservative discourse of 'cultural literacy'. What is noticeable, in fact, is the general lack of support for this perspective in Western Australian English teaching, as elsewhere in Australia, at least in lower secondary school (Nay-Brock, 1987). Arguably, however, it remained influential, particularly in the Upper School and especially in the private school sector, as indicated very clearly in the curriculum politics associated with the attempt at this time to introduce new literary-theoretical and pedagogical initiatives into the English Literature course.

Even more significantly, there was an almost total disregard for what has been described as "English as a form of critical literacy", that is, socially-critical versions of English teaching, which Ball and his colleagues call "'radical' English" (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990: 80). This 'critical literacy' orientation represents a road definitely not taken, as regards English curriculum change in Western Australia. It could well have been, especially given the explicit introduction of media

texts into the English domain, in both the Lower Secondary English Syllabus and the Upper School English course, and growing signs of a cultural studies orientation in English teaching (Beynon et al, 1983; Green, forthcoming). This version of English was in sharp contrast to the one that eventually emerged out of the Western Australian syllabus development work, although arguably it was available among the options open at the time and certainly at least implicit in those forms of English teaching associated with the Martin Report<sup>2</sup>. Had such options been taken up, they would have produced a radically different version of the 'English-as-Literacy' paradigm, one defined very clearly in terms of critical pedagogy and cultural criticism, and consciously linked therefore to the project of critical-democratic schooling. That this did not happen was, in hindsight, both predictable and understandable.

Porter et al (1993) argue that what distinguishes the Australian manifestations of the New Right in education is the attempt to maintain a social justice and equity agenda, within and despite moves towards corporate managerialism and economic rationalism on the meta-policy level. On this basis, theirs is finally a more sanguine view of educational reform in Western Australia than might otherwise be the case. I am not convinced on this point. In the course of the 1980s, English teaching in Western Australia changed decisively, re-defined in accordance with the political ascendancy of the New Right. Professionally, important ground

had been lost and significant curriculum memories erased, in what was quintessentially the generation of 'crisis' and the renewal of hegemony. Notwithstanding official post-Beazley policy orientations towards inclusivity and the alleviation of social disadvantage, the endorsement of a particular discourse on literacy, arguably one which is socially and politically problematical, has real implications for curriculum more generally, closing down on and otherwise constraining the kind of critical-democratic possibilities that might well be the goal of such moves towards educational reform. In the end, a new settlement has emerged, and the State has assumed a much more explicit and active role in the changing and complex relationship between curriculum and literacy.

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1 For England and Wales, see Ball, Kenny Gardiner (1990); for Scotland, see Stoop (1992); and for New Zealand, see Stoop (1991).

1 Drawing principally upon the work of Claus Offe, Knight, Lingard and Porter (1993: 11) distinguish between "the politics of production (cf. economic policy directed towards accumulation)" and "the politics of consumption (cf. social service policy directed towards legitimation)". That distinction is usefully elaborated somewhat differently elsewhere (Porter, Knight and Lingard (1993: 224). It should be noted however that, despite such talk of 'shifts' and 'distinctions', they stress that education needs to be seen as "part of both the politics of production and of consumption", although arguably the balance between these may well be different at different times and in different circumstances.

2 Hereafter, in citing the Report, I shall use 'Martin' (e.g. in this instance—Martin, 1980: 218).

1 She cites specifically the Ahern Report (1980) in Queensland, The Keeves Report ('Education and Change in South Australia'), the McGowan Report (1981) in New South Wales, the 1980 White Paper in Victoria, and the Hughes Report in Tasmania.

1 In what follows, I am drawing on the empirical work of David Pyvis in his Honours dissertation, which I supervised (Pyvis, 1986), as well as subsequent discussions with him on these and related issues. A more comprehensive joint study of literacy, education and the media is currently in preparation.

1 Somewhat ironically, particularly with the advantages of hindsight, Western Australia was being marketed at the time as 'a state of excitement', associated with not only the election of a new government but also the hosting of the America's Cup, an international yachting event.

2 For a account of similar moves and debates in Victoria, see

McLeod (1989-1990).

1 I have elsewhere extensively documented and analyzed Professor Scriven's role in the WA literacy debate and its impact on education policy at the time in question here, arguing that he functioned as an exemplary 'primary definer'.

2 It also had less enrolments relative to the total final-year school population; for example, approximately 26% of the total cohort in Year Twelve over the three year period 1984-1986, whereas English had approximately 90% of the total enrolment over the same period (de Garis, Ellis and Hill, 1987: 14)--an important point, given the argument of a 'competition' for available curriculum space.

3 For an extended analysis of these schools, see Kenway (1987). For a critical assessment of the influence of university-based English Departments on Upper School English courses, see Nay-Brock (1987).

4 Linked also, it is important to add, to a 'Basic Skills' emphasis.

1 I have re-arranged the formatting somewhat of this passage. A point worth making here that both articles referred to here, by Hay and McGaw, were presented as directly authored by them; in general, however, more account would need to be taken of the editorial work involved in newspaper reporting, and hence of the associated forms of mediation.

2 For a comprehensive account of the English subjects in the Upper School in Western Australia, as well as in other Australian states at this time, see Nay-Brock (1987).

1 Note the careful way in which this account of literacy is expressed: "is being used to...", and "is seen to to be..."--a linguistic formulation which effectively distances the writers from assuming too authoritative a position in this regard, while also suggesting a responsiveness to received opinion.

1 Although how students have experienced the changed forms of curriculum, including that of their English classes, can only be speculated on here.

2 I take the term 'fluxibility here from Nay-Brock (1987: 5).

1 It is noteworthy that the other category commonly associated with 'the basics', 'numeracy', did not receive nearly as much attention.

2 Indeed, as I have suggested, this was partly because of this work, since it was itself contradictory and ultimately even compromised, politically and epistemologically (Green, 1989, 1992).

1 This attempt, which reached the stage of a draft syllabus outline before being considerably modified as a result of pressure by the private school lobby and others committed to a more traditional form of literary study, was described by Nay-Brock (1987: 108) as involving "an insistence upon acknowledging a network of relationships between reader, writer, text and context that is unique among comparable senior secondary English

literature syllabuses in Australia". On the persistence of the literary paradigm in post-Dartmouth English teaching, see Green (1990).

2 A good example of this is provided in McLeod (1987), the title of which is worth citing here here: "Critical Literacy: Taking Control of Our Lives". McLeod's work was directly in the London tradition, and links up with similarly-inclined work by John Hardcastle (1985) and Tony Burgess (1984, 1988).