

Creativity, Culture and Education Series



Culture and creative learning: a literature review

Ken Jones

Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) Literature Reviews

These reports, each by different authors, have been commissioned to introduce readers to the main principles, theories, research and debates in the field. They aim to introduce the major themes and writing pertaining to each area of study and to outline key trends and arguments.

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Foreword

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements and opening up more opportunities for their futures.

The programme supports thousands of innovative, long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals, from architects to scientists, multi-media developers to artists. They inspire schools to deliver the curriculum through innovative teaching techniques, and young people to challenge themselves in new ways, gain confidence and take an active role in their learning. Young people develop the skills they need to perform well not only in exams and extra-curricular activities, but also in the workplace and wider society. Working with Creative Partnerships, schools use creativity to solve problems and see real improvements in pupil behaviour and school performance.

Creative Partnerships aims to influence policy and practice in both the education and cultural sectors. It is managed by the national organisation Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), with funding from Arts Council England (ACE), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in response to the report by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) – *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (1999). The partnerships supported by Creative Partnerships are designed to develop creativity and encompass social, personal and economic domains. As a flagship project, Creative Partnerships can have maximum impact if teachers, parents, young people and creative practitioners learn from the experience and activities that are delivered through the programme. For this reason one of the most significant legacies of Creative Partnerships will be the product of its research and evaluation and how that is effectively communicated to stakeholders.

However, because Creative Partnerships works by creating partnerships drawn from the widest fields of endeavour, the different stakeholders recognise that there is a 'knowledge gap' between reflection, analysis and learning from Creative Partnerships. In addition, the wide focus of approach – which is fundamental to the nature of creativity - means that people are often working at the limit of their disciplines.

For these reasons we have commissioned a series of research monographs exploring the key issues in current literature and summarising the latest developments in each subject. Each monograph is written by an experienced and respected author in their field. The reports aim to be accessible, clearly referenced and to act as ‘stepping-stone’ resources to underpin the research conducted by and for Creative Partnerships.

This report offers an historical and theoretical overview of the idea of culture as it has permeated policy-making, public debate, practices in schools and in more academic writing by scholars and cultural commentators. The idea of culture has been central to the Creative Partnerships’ offer, and as Ken Jones explains here, this is not a simple idea that can be turned into programmes as it encompasses a range of beliefs about heritage, modernity, the role of schools in mediating national and formal cultures and the cultural experiences of the young themselves. It examines changes in the political landscape and shows how deep changes in English society since the Second World War have re-fashioned notions of public, elite and popular cultures in contested and complex ways. This topic is highly relevant to the ambitions, scope and reach of the organisation Creativity, Culture and Education and Ken Jones helps us further in this aim by teasing out some of the relationships between pedagogy, curriculum design and creative learning. His key messages are that education not only needs to understand better the diversity and reach of young people’s cultural experiences but also have a more reflective and intelligent understanding of its own past and to look closely at what works in practice with young people in the context of the often unreasonably high aspirations that are often over-loaded into this area of the education system.

We hope that the report will be a useful and practical handbook for those interested in better understanding what culture can mean to different stakeholders, and what expectations and demands it lays on schools. It offers a serious and sophisticated review of key concepts and a comprehensive and original review of how we can make creative use of culture at practical and theoretical levels. If Creativity, Culture and Education wants to leave a lasting impact on schools and the curriculum through its distinct and different ways of working and pushing the boundaries of how we understanding learning it needs to engage with the challenges Ken Jones lays out so clearly for us.

Dr David Parker, Creativity, Culture and Education

Dr Julian Sefton-Green, Creativity Culture and Education

After the 'great transformation' of the 1970s and 1980s, new protagonists emerged. These included currents of thought that have seen 'creativity' as central to the knowledge economy, as well as new theoretical frameworks that insist on the socio-cultural nature of learning.

1 Introduction

This review focuses on debates that have occurred in and around English education since 1944. It tracks a sequence of intense and continuing arguments about the proper meanings of 'culture' and 'creativity', about their salience to education, and, through education, to wider issues of equality, democracy, economics and emancipation.

Who are the participants in these arguments? In the 30 years after 1944, the review identifies three main currents of thought and practice:

- a cultural conservatism for which tradition and authority are important reference points;
- a progressivism concerned with child-centred learning;
- and a tendency whose belief that 'culture is ordinary' led to an insistence that working-class and popular culture should be represented in the classroom.

After the 'great transformation' of the 1970s and 1980s, new protagonists emerged. These included currents of thought that have seen 'creativity' as central to the knowledge economy, as well as new theoretical frameworks that insist on the socio-cultural nature of learning. Their prominence did not mean the total eclipse of older perspectives, whose continuing histories are dealt with in the later sections of the review. In many cases, the review suggests, 'new' positions intertwined with older understandings.

The arrangement of the review is largely chronological. Sometimes, though, the need to give a full account of a position requires overstepping chronological limits. In the case of progressivism, for instance, some of its fullest articulations came nearly two decades after its rise to a position of influence, but the clarity of this review is better served if these are incorporated into a systematic presentation of progressive ideas, rather than left for later treatment. The same is true of conservatism.

In the debates between these various positions, 'culture' and 'creativity' have acquired a range of meanings, so no easy definitions are possible. Nevertheless, some rough mapping of the fields of meaning is necessary. I follow Richard Johnson (1986) in seeing culture as a term that points in two directions: 'outwards', to 'language, rituals, discourses, ideologies, myths and all kinds of systems of signification'; and 'inwards' to the states of subjectivity

that these practices embody. I take it that schools are sites where such practices are organised – through the designs of policy-makers, for instance, and teachers. But I recognise also that when culture ‘happens’ in schools it exceeds the limits of design. In its encounters with students, ‘official’ culture, as many of the writers discussed in this review have emphasised, is sometimes contested, always modified, and thus in effect remade. I situate ‘creativity’ in the context of this remaking. Used broadly, the term refers to a capacity for meaning-making – for creating from the resources available something that differs in content, form or inflection from the material that was its starting-point. At the level of students’ learning, this capacity is recognised and evaluated differently from one discourse to another: in some cases, it is disparaged, as a symptom of a problematic progressivism; in others it is regarded as central to identity and social being.

1.1 Sources

The literature reviewed here has varied sources. It ranges from academic research, through cultural commentary and political advocacy, to reflections on classroom experience. It is worth emphasising the latter element. Educational theory has often been seen as a kind of second-order field, reliant on borrowings from other disciplines to sustain it. But if the relationship between schooling and culture has been a major theme for academic sociology (for example, Willis, 1977; Bernstein, 1975), and if it has often been understood through paradigms whose development has been largely exterior to education (for example, Bourdieu, 1986; Foucault, 1980), it has equally been the subject of work conducted in schools rather than the academy. To insist on this, at a time when teachers are often seen as the *deliverers* of teaching programmes devised elsewhere (Gewirtz *et al*, 2008), makes an important counter-emphasis: important though their work is, thinking about creativity, culture and learning has not been the sole property of academic researchers. One should add, here, a further, unifying point: from whatever perspective it is composed, the work described in this review shares a quality of ‘passion’, a passion that makes it over-polemical, sometimes, but also acts to sharpen its diagnosis of problems, its sense of what is at stake in an argument, and its vision of alternatives. I hope the review gives some sense of these energies, which have run through decades of thinking about culture and creative learning, and are not exhausted yet.

From whatever perspective it is composed, the work described in this review shares a quality of 'passion', a passion that makes it over-polemical, sometimes, but also acts to sharpen its diagnosis of problems, its sense of what is at stake in an argument, and its vision of alternatives.

'In our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards, and more and more abandoning the study of those subjects by which the essentials of our culture ...are transmitted; destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in the mechanised caravans.'

(T.S.Eliot)

2 1945 -1965: Conservatism

This section of the review sketches the main discourses about culture and creative learning in the period 1944-1965, a period whose debates have had a lasting influence. With due allowance for the cunning of history, which every so often reshuffles discourses from one category to another, we can understand these tendencies in terms of the model suggested by Raymond Williams of residual, dominant and emergent positions (Williams, 1973a).

2.1 Cultural conservatism

The residual positions, expressing a defensiveness in the face of change, were those of a cultural conservatism, voiced most influentially by T.S. Eliot in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). Eliot argued that educational expansion entailed cultural decline:

In our headlong rush to educate everybody, we are lowering our standards, and more and more abandoning the study of those subjects by which the essentials of our culture ... are transmitted; destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in the mechanised caravans' (1948:111).

Striking the same note, the educationalist G.H. Bantock complained in the journal *Scrutiny* of 'the increasing mechanisation of life' and the 'impersonality of human relationships' (1947:171). Michael Oakeshott, wrote of the dangers of a 'rationalism' which uprooted tradition in the name of abstract programmes unrelated to the organic life of society, and in the process created unworkable, politically driven monstrosities, that lacked all contact with the deeper levels of social experience (Oakeshott, 1962) . The politician and writer Richard Law – 'one of the most influential backbench MPs of the forties and fifties' (H. Jones, 1996) - located these troubled thoughts in the context of the post-war welfare state, which had removed 'the sense of personal responsibility and personal initiative which is the mainspring of social and economic activity', and thus brought about 'the collapse of all moral values and the end of man as a moral being' (Law, 1950).

These apocalyptic intuitions rested on a basis of cultural thinking that would be more fully articulated much later, by Anthony Quinton (1978) and by Roger Scruton (1984). In contrast to modernity, Conservatism, according to Quinton, possesses a social philosophy 'which takes society to be a unitary, natural growth, an organised living whole, not a mechanical aggregate'. Society is not 'composed of bare, abstract individuals but of social beings, related to one another within a texture of inherited customs and institutions which endow them with their specific social nature' (Quinton, 1978:16). Scruton makes a similar point about the centrality of custom and tradition: 'Conservatism arises directly from the sense that one belongs to some continuing and pre-existing social order, and that this fact is all important in determining what we do' (Scruton, 1984: 21).

The metaphors of growth and texture might suggest an order in which conflict is not the most significant feature, but in fact issues of power are never far away. 'Every tradition of any importance in the life of the citizen will tend to become part of the establishment of a state' so that 'custom, tradition and common culture become ruling conceptions in politics' (Scruton, 1984:43, 38). Culture, thus, is always a political matter. It is also a realm of necessary and accepted inequality.

When individuals learn their culture, the knowledge they acquire consists both of recognising the inner meanings and the human content of artefacts and institutions, and of developing 'appropriate responses' to them (Scruton, 1984:37). 'Appropriate responses' include a kind of submission that forms the heart of a person's subjectivity, a recognition of 'constraint, helplessness and subjection ... that heralds the citizen's realisation of his membership of society', a helplessness in which 'love of one's country is born' (1984:32), and 'an ability to orientate one's outlook in the light of observations and emotions expressed by greater and more perceptive minds than oneself.' (Scruton, 1984:42).

This element of submission, both social and intellectual, is linked to Scruton's understanding of necessity, of 'authority' and the obligations of 'allegiance', principles which are as important in culture as they are in politics.

From these starting-points, we can arrive at a conservative understanding of learning, including creative learning. It rests on inter-related maxims:

education is always cultural; culture is shaped by custom and tradition; learning, like creative practice generally, involves the acceptance of authority and the recognition of hierarchy. More than this, even, it is a means by which the individual seeks 'to relate himself to something transcendental' as a 'fragment of the greater social organism' (Scruton, 1984:42). Art, in this context, is not an affirmation of unfettered identity but a means of connecting present consciousness to tradition, so that the artist 'sees what he does now as belonging to a pattern that transcends the focus of his present interest, binding it to what has previously been done and done successfully' (Scruton, 1984:42).

2.2 Mass culture

As we shall see, the emphasis is one to which conservative writers frequently return. Eliot, like Scruton, had an affection for popular culture, particularly if it seemed to embody qualities of social reconciliation. A famous passage – a reverie – in *Notes* suggests that 'culture':

includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the 12th of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, 19th-century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar (1948:41).

It is possible to compile from Scruton's work a similar list, that would include motorbike shops and railways (1987a:143-44, 169-70). But affections like these do not obscure an essential division, between high and low culture, which the school must respect. 'It is an essential condition,' writes Eliot, 'of the quality of the culture of the minority, that it should continue to be a minority culture' (1948:184). In Eagleton's summary, 'for Eliot a culture is common when commonly shared, at different, fixed levels of participation and response: the conscious defining and nourishing remains the preserve of the few' (Eagleton, 1967/1998:112). Eliot's judgement was a consensual one, among a certain class, and complemented the view that cultural agency among the mass of the population was inconceivable. Mass culture was irredeemably degraded. As the *Times Educational Supplement* put it in 1958 'the idea that the modern masses possess a culture worth anything, or are

likely to create one, is delusory' (Whannel, 1958:34). Attempts at cultural egalitarianism, wrote Bantock, could only make things worse: 'a democracy of shared meanings can only be brought about in a totalitarian society'. (Armstrong and Bantock, 1977:167) Universal access to higher levels of education is from this perspective, undesirable, and modern – i.e. mass-culture should be kept at arm's length from serious schooling: in the words of its High Master, in what might be seen as a defining statement of residualism, 'a television set will enter Manchester Grammar School over my dead body' (Eric James, quoted in Whannel, 1958:35).

'The idea that the modern masses possess a culture worth anything, or are likely to create one, is delusory.'

(Times Educational Supplement, 1958)

'Nothing good enters the world except in and through the free activities of individual men and women and educational practice must be shaped to that end.'

(Percy Nunn, 1934)

3 1945 -1965: Progressive Education

Progressive education was dominant in the educational culture of the 50s and 60s not in the sense that it was practised everywhere, but rather because it supplied – to teacher educators, to education advisors and through them to teachers, particularly in primary schools – the main resources for thinking about, and encouraging, classroom-level change.

Simplifying a little we can follow Cunningham (1988) in saying that progressivism rested on three kinds of assertion:

- children are ‘unique persons and their individuality is to be acknowledged and respected’ (Bott, Brearley *et al*, 1969, quoted in Cunningham, 1988:20). The worlds of the child and the adult are very different – the ‘culture of childhood’ is special. (Marsh, 1970). Education should respect and value childhood, and not attempt to project onto it a notion of children as ‘future adults’ (Plowden, 1967:187).
- learning is the product of the active relationship between individuals and the world around them – ‘each person constructs his own mind as a result of interaction with things and people in his environment’ (Bott, Brearley *et al*, 1969, quoted in Cunningham, 1988:20) and thus ‘the child is the agent in his own learning’ (Plowden, 1967:194). The teacher ‘has to be prepared to follow up the personal interests of children who, either singly, or in groups, follow divergent paths of discovery’ (Plowden, 1967:200). Among younger children, play is the main pathway of discovery.
- learning is best organised through collaboration between students, and between students and their teachers (Cunningham, 1988:20). ‘Freedom’ should be a fundamental characteristic of such collaboration, since in the often-quoted words of the educationalist Percy Nunn, ‘nothing good enters the world except in and through the free activities of individual men and women and educational practice must be shaped to that end’ (Nunn, 1934: 12) In this process, the communication of forms of knowledge is less important than the development of individual creative capacities.

Government, in the form of the committees which drew up the reports which guided practice, had endorsed versions of these principles in the 1930s. By the 1950s, authoritative opinion – that of inspectors (Christian

Schiller, John Blackie), local authority advisors (Edith Moorhouse), administrators (Alec Clegg), teacher educators (Mollie Brearley) – had been colonised to the point where progressive arguments for the necessity of arts education could readily be made (Cunningham, 1988; Lowe, 2007). Self-expression – the expression of their ‘powers’ (Schiller in Richards, 1978) - was key to children’s development, and ‘art, literature, music and craftsmanship’ – the highest achievements of the human imagination’ (Blackie, 1963:62) - were essential to it. It was through art that ‘the hidden graces and talents of children’ (Edith Moorhouse, quoted in Rogers, 1970:190) became evident, revealing qualities suppressed by the dull routines of ‘learning which was really parroting, discipline which was really repression’. (Chanan and Gilchrist, 1974:2). Teachers could only be ‘sensitised’ to children’s creativity by discovering ‘fulfilment and confidence’ through their own creativity (Moorhouse in Rogers, 1970:190).

The primary teacher Sybil Marshall – later a teacher educator - offered a detailed and influential account of this double process of creative learning (of teachers, of children), insisting through concrete example on the transfiguring powers of art:

To believe in their own potentiality for creativity was for children the *first half* [my emphasis] of their journey towards being educated beings. The other half could be completed only when they could see their own lives surrounded, sustained and indeed explained by the general experience of all humanity. To be able to approach the classic works of art without fear, and with pleasure, interest, understanding and love is to be able to tap the inexhaustible well of past human experience ... (and) the world of strength and delight they could find in the arts.’ (Marshall, 1963:10).

The overlap here between Marshall, and cultural conservatism is clear enough. Both think in terms of a relationship between the learner and tradition, even if Marshall’s embrace of ‘all humanity’ as the maker of tradition might be too warm for someone of Eliot’s temperament. For later progressives, however, the first part of Marshall’s credo was more important than the second: arts education became ‘less an opportunity for ‘apprenticeship ... in the high western artistic tradition’ than a means of advancing the ‘theme of human expressivity’, and the prime purpose of arts education was to release these creative powers (Ross, quoted in Abbs, 2003:49-50).

It is this kind of assertion that has drawn the heaviest fire from critics. Scruton, for instance, assailed the belief that:

‘the purpose of education is to realise the potential of each child, that the potential is, in some deep sense, equal, and that the way to realise it is not through discipline or instruction, but through a process of free expression’ (Scruton, 1987b:39).

To this conservative criticism were added others. From the 1960s through to the 1990s, progressive education was accused of a shallowness in social understanding (Bernstein and Davies, 1969; Walkerdine, 1984; Donald, 1992), that led to a confusion of creative and intellectual capacity with the norms of middle-class childhood (Sharp and Green, 1975). The same problems of ‘thinking the social’ were said to render progressive conceptions of ‘culture’ nebulous. Focusing, on the one hand, on ‘the observation of individual children’, and, on the other, on ‘a knowledge of child development in general’ (Brearley *et al*, 1972) it lacked the means to engage with actually-existing, socially grounded cultures of childhood.

Williams aimed to ratify ...another kind of cultural achievement, which for him had intellectual substance as well as social weight. This was working-class culture, repository of 'the basic collective idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this.'

(Raymond Williams, 1963)

4 1945 -1965: Culture is Ordinary

Culture is Ordinary is the title of an essay published by Raymond Williams in 1958 (Williams, 1958a/1989). It encapsulates an approach to education, and to popular creativity, that is at odds with conservatism, and that offers a different reading from that of progressive education of the conditions for educational change. With other work of Williams (*Culture and Society*, 1958b; 1963; *The Long Revolution*, 1961) it helped form the self-understanding of a cultural practice that in the social and political conditions of the 1960s, could be said to be 'emergent', in the way that it embodied 'new meanings and values, new significances and experiences' (Williams, 1973a:11).

The essay, like much of Williams' work in the 1950s, can be read as a riposte to Eliot. Eliot privileged the achievements of high culture, seeing nothing of equivalent value in the popular domain. Williams aimed to ratify, alongside what he called this 'body of intellectual and imaginative work' (1963:311), another kind of cultural achievement, which for him had intellectual substance as well as social weight. This was working-class culture, repository of 'the basic collective idea and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this' (1963:311). This 'lived culture' was understood in terms of a theory of creativity. Creativity, Williams argued in the first chapter of *The Long Revolution* (1961) was as ordinary as culture. He sought justification for his claim in biological theory (the work of J.Z. Young), and in literary tradition, quoting Coleridge's understanding of 'imagination' as 'the living power and prime Agent of *all* human perception' (1961:21). Current social arrangements neglected these universalist insights; they had erected 'a real barrier in our mind ...a refusal to accept the creative capacities of life, a determination to limit and restrict the channels of growth' (1963:320).

Yet in reality, 'there are no ordinary activities, if by "ordinary" we mean the absence of creative interpretation and effort. We create our human world as we have thought of art as being created' (1961:27). Terry Eagleton pointed out the significance of this perspective. A moral and artistic meaning of culture was linked to a political meaning; the political meaning envisaged a collective practice of dialogue: 'the making of a common culture is a continual exchange of meanings, actions and descriptions' (1967/1998:112-3). Education, from this viewpoint, was one sector of a more general project to democratise creativity. It did not require a rejection of 'the culture of the selective tradition' (Williams, 1961: 49), but it did entail bringing it into a

relationship with 'the lived culture of a particular time and place', a move that was meant to enable both a revaluation of established high culture – of the sort Williams achieved in *The Country and the City* (1973b) – and a project of 'releasing and enriching the life experience which the rising class brings with it' (Williams, quoted in Smith 2008:380).

According to Tom Steele (1997) education was an important site for elaborating this rapprochement of culture with democracy. He singles out the adult education organisations of the 1950s, in which Williams, along with other new left radicals, like the historian E.P. Thompson, were involved. Others have taken the point further: the school, as well as the adult education class, was the site and the stimulus for a cultural rethinking that aimed not only at the recognition of working-class culture, and an understanding of the impact upon it of wider social and cultural change. John Hardcastle (2008) has identified in the London of the 1950s a network of secondary teachers keen to utilise the thinking of the new left. One such teacher, John Dixon, spoke of their ambitions in terms of a cultural exploration for which existing approaches were inadequate: 'There exists not merely this sort of élite culture, but some different kind of culture which it is necessary to seek out by going into other people's experience' (Dixon, 1961, quoted in Jones, 2003:144). Others repeatedly contrasted the new cultural forms created by a 'revolution in communications' with the very different 'norms and expectations of formal education' (Hall and Whannel 1964:13). Paddy Whannel stressed the tensions of this relationship. The school was not 'alert and alive to contemporary experience':

By and large, the kind of education the teacher receives in school and training college posits an established body of cultural products to which there are certain definable attitudes ... His pupils, however, will belong to a different world. The world of Tommy Steele and Elvis Presley' (1958:33-4).

4.1 Cultural revaluation

The identification of cultural difference was accompanied by an attempt at cultural revaluation. Here, Hall and Whannel's position was different from that of others on the left, and from that of Williams himself. Richard

Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1958), contrasted the authenticity of the culture of earlier working-class generations, with the commercialised popular culture of the present, sometimes described in terms of 'barbarism' (1958:250). The commercialisation and degradation of popular culture was often attributed to American influence. Martin Barker's account of the Communist Party's 1950s campaign to ban American horror comics from Britain makes much of the Party's deployment of anti-American themes to build an alliance, in defence of a vulnerable British childhood, that stretched across the political spectrum. In the process, Communists evoked a British literary canon, from Chaucer to George Bernard Shaw, in which 'popular culture' was subsumed into a progressive tradition of the written word (Barker, 1984).

Hall and Whannel were of a different disposition, in at least two ways. First, they had an interest that Williams conspicuously lacked, in the (americanised) youth cultures enabled by the 'revolution in communications' of the 1950s. These cultures were productive, an area of 'common symbols and meanings' (Hall and Whannel, 1964) generated by the young. Secondly, they began to suggest a different position for educators. Strongly affected not just by Williams, but also by works such as Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933), those concerned in the 1950s with problems of education and culture, tended to assume that the teacher's role was to impart a sense of discrimination – to help students distinguish, critically, between the values of an authentic organic culture and its degraded modern successor, or – in a more radical idiom – between the cultural achievements of the working class, and the commercialised culture which was out to destroy them. Though their conception of social mission was democratising and militant, such educators shared something with cultural conservatism - a common ground that was illuminated by the horror comics campaign.

Hall and Whannel, though not entirely free from such a mindset, tended to frame things differently. For Hall, the school was part of a cultural-educational system that reinforced 'class distinctions based on attitudes, taste and education' (1959:20), and which ratified 'an increasing gap between "high" and "popular" culture. The struggle against such schooling necessitated the admission into the field of education of 'the experiences of different social groups', including – centrally - youth. In that context, the

focus of teachers' attention had to change. Their confidence as transmitters of an established set of cultural values, needed to be disturbed to the point where they could recognise that: 'The struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle against modernisation but a conflict within these (popular) media' (1964:15).

There was, they suggested, much learning to be done here.

For Hall, the school was part of a cultural/educational system that reinforced 'class distinctions based on attitudes, taste and education' and which ratified 'an increasing gap between "high" and "popular" culture.'

'Children, not just a privileged few, but almost all of them, are capable of grasping the fundamental truths of science, humanities, mathematics, the arts.'

(Michael Armstrong, 1977)

5 Culture in Educational Practice: the 60s to the 80s

Williams argued for a 'form of cultural discussion' that linked 'the arts', 'learning' and 'society' (1961). This next section sketches the paths taken by such discussion, as education expanded, and felt the impact of new social and intellectual movements.

In their account of English teaching in the later twentieth century, Burgess and Martin, write that in the 1950s, 'through to the beginnings of the 1960s, a new progressive framework was being constructed in which the central elements were comprehensive schooling, an altered examination system, the emergence of new subject teaching associations, and the steady accumulation of agreed lines ... of teaching practice'. The 1960s and early 1970s, they add, 'look like years of consolidation of this framework, as well as of development and innovation' (1990:9).

The narrative can be extended. Reforms such as the raising of the leaving age had brought into the school 'a vastly expanded and variegated clientele'. 'Educational offerings' had to be 'made relevant' to such groups (Papadopoulos, 1994:59). Thus the 'development and innovation' of which Burgess and Martin write, involved the remaking of curricula with specific clienteles in mind, and in the process, the 'problem' of working-class culture and the ways in which education could handle it, became important policy issues.

Under these and other pressures, progressivism itself changed. Michael Armstrong registers these changes in his account of what progressivism meant to teachers who taught, as he did, at Countesthorpe College, a 14-19 state school in Leicestershire with a reputation for experiment. It rested:

on the assumption that children, not just a privileged few, but almost all of them, are capable of grasping the fundamental truths of science, humanities, mathematics, the arts. But at the same time "progressive education" assumes that there are innumerable ways that lead towards this common understanding, reflecting the extraordinary variety of intellect and imagination to be found among children ... To recognise the richness of this diversity is to commit oneself not merely to a wider dissemination of knowledge but to a reconstruction of many of its forms and contents (Armstrong and Bantock, 1977:181).

The progressive emphasis on variety, uniqueness and imagination is thus accompanied by other stresses. One is egalitarian; the other aims not just at

the dissemination of knowledge beyond the privileged few, but at its reconstruction, in the context of a more general movement towards cultural democratisation. Gabriel Chanan and Linda Gilchrist, researchers and teachers, addressed this latter project in their 1974 book *What School is For*. In contrast to a 'traditional culture' that carried no conviction with 'many of today's teachers and pupils':

Our emerging culture will distinguish itself from all former dominant cultures by not being tailored to the interests or glorification of a ruling class nor being an instrument at the disposal of priestly castes or academic experts. It will need to inspire values relevant to questions like: how can members of hitherto exploited classes or nations become self-determining? How can classes or societies which hitherto saw themselves as 'humanity', and the alien as expendable, exploitable or barbarian, learn to take nourishment from diversity? What forms should personal fulfilment take when liberated from the notion that pleasure and achievement consist in being better, happier, richer and more powerful than others? What forms should communal fulfilment take when liberated from the notion that social good consists in the creation of ever more sophisticated material needs and a permanently escalating exploitation of natural resources? (Chanan and Gilchrist, 1974:122-3).

5.1 The 'new sociology of education'

We can track these two linked emphases – one egalitarian, the other radically critical of established knowledge - through thickets of research and educational advocacy. The 'new sociology of education' (Young, 1971) treated existing knowledge systems as in a strong sense arbitrary, justified more by their connexion to social interests than to intrinsic intellectual authority. Dixon, quoted in the previous section, had spoken of the need to explore 'some different kind of culture' (Jones, 2003:144). The new sociology took this commitment a step further: the other, unrecognised cultures – encountered through classroom ethnographies – could provide vantage points for criticism of the base from which the explorers had set out, as well as foundations for the construction of new knowledges. Here the new sociology flowed into a wider current of interest in the politics of knowledge. Nell Keddie (1973) aimed to discredit myths that sustained cultural hierarchies and like Harold Rosen (1974), sought to demonstrate the

expressive powers, coherence and social insight embedded in working-class cultures. The London teacher Chris Searle, who published several collections of children's writing, linked by his own commentaries, wrote of 're-establishing culture in its organic, democratic sense, linking it to the real world of people who are working and struggling for control over the conditions of their lives' (1973:8). Other publishing projects, such as that of the Hackney-based 'Centerprise' worked along similar lines, 'presenting the idea that literacy could be a process of liberation and a weapon for social change' (Raleigh & Simons, 1981:14).

Some of this work, as Nigel Wright (1989) has pointed out, was based on an understanding, which he finds problematic, of 'working-class culture' as something both unified and in possession of an almost imminent potential for transformative social change. Other perspectives tended to emphasise issues of ethnicity and diversity, the impact of which on the policies and politics of teaching and learning was probably greater.

Work in these areas was in a sense licensed by government policy: Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary in 1966, had spoken of integration not as a 'flattening process of assimilation', but as 'equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity' (quoted in Burnage, 1990: 341). It was also stimulated, as Bernstein (1975) pointed out, by the activity of black social movements. Publications like the Race Today Collective's *The Black Explosion in British Schools* (Dhondy *et al*, 1982) and Bernard Coard's *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-Normal by the British School System* (1971) made issues of 'race' and racism an important, and contested, part of urban educational agenda.

These various perspectives stemmed from different experiences, positions and commitments. In policy documents, they were often counter-posed to each other: the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) (1983) contrasted a 'cultural diversity' approach with a 'perspective emphasising primarily equality'. The first sought to 'promote a "positive self-image" amongst black people, and tolerance and "sympathetic understanding" amongst white people'. The second highlighted what the first downplayed – 'the central and pervasive influence of racism' (ILEA, 1983:20-21). The distinctions registered real policy differences, and had real practical effects: the ILEA's aim of placing 'the experience of people who bear the brunt of racism' at the centre of education (ILEA, 1983:21) inspired much classroom work. As the

Burnage Report argued, however, anti-racism of this radical kind was often deployed without a sense of its relation to other kinds of educational politics, notably those of class and gender (1990:346-348).

In many cases, though, the dividing line between 'cultural diversity' and 'anti-racism' was hard to draw; the positions were mutually reinforcing. Indicative of this reciprocity is material produced for a conference organised in 1980 by the London Association for the Teaching of English and the National Association for Multi-racial Education Teacher. They begin with a statement that 'racism is endemic in our society', praise black resistance to 'overt racism on the streets' and also focus on 'what happens in classrooms', with a concern for issues of cultural and linguistic diversity. A combined attention, to classroom and society, inside and outside, pedagogy and broader politics was a common feature of other movements of urban teachers, including ALTARF (All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism (1984), and the magazines *Teaching London Kids* and *The English and Media Magazine*. It tended to mean that 'culture' was understood through the prism of oppression and resistance; and 'identity' or 'self-image' was seen in terms of power and empowerment. Because of their experience of racism in 70s Britain, 'minority communities' wrote the researcher Veronica Norburn, 'have shown a greater determination to keep their distinctive collective identity, and to reject "white" values which they might previously have implicitly accepted' (Norburn, 1981:3).

In these local educational contexts, 'creativity' and 'culture' shifted their meaning. They tended to be defined 'combatively', as qualities that needed to be asserted in the teeth of indifference or hostility. 'Do kids have culture?' asked Mike Rosen, in an account of his work at Vauxhall Manor School, 'Does the working class have culture?' The answer was 'yes', but schools often worked 'against' not 'with' it (Rosen, 1982). The making visible of this culture depended on the commitment and ingenuity of teachers (Rosen, 1982) and also on students' struggles against the dominant culture of the school: the teacher Farrukh Dhondy's fiction dramatised this process (Dhondy, 1976). Others described it in more general terms. Chanan and Gilchrist wrote that creativity provides 'some kind of inner confidence' that can make one 'less dependent on familiar external forms to "guarantee" reality'. Creativity is about the conscious, collective creation of new values by which we must live. In this schools had a 'vital part' to play (1974:129).

In these local educational contexts, 'creativity' and 'culture' shifted their meaning. They tended to be defined 'combatively', as qualities that needed to be asserted in the teeth of indifference or hostility. 'Do kids have culture?' asked Mike Rosen, in an account of his work at Vauxhall Manor School, 'Does the working class have culture?' The answer was 'yes', but schools often worked 'against' not 'with' it.

(Mike Rosen, 1982)

The learner who was the focus of an attention inspired by these perspectives was a very different being from the one imagined by progressive education. The progressive child, once liberated from the chains of repression, could possess an autonomous and unified personality. But in Althusser and Foucault, particularly, personalities were constituted through power and ideology.

6 'Cultural studies' and its impact

Much of the work discussed above drew from the resources of progressive education, turning that movement's child-centred and expressive emphases in social and critical directions. It was complemented by other kinds of approach, whose resources were more located in social and cultural theory.

Especially significant here was work associated with, or inspired by, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University, which systematised and enriched the thinking of the previous period, and acted as a sort of collective participant-analyst in relation to the social conflicts and experiments of the 1970s. As well as producing an influential account of schooling in post-war England (1981), the Centre also generated work across fields of culture, media and language, gender and race – all of which encouraged a rethinking of educational processes (CCCS, 1980; 1981; 1982). It was from Birmingham that Paul Willis produced *Learning to Labour*, whose focus on the relationship between working-class boys and the cultures of school and work has had a lasting impact (1977). Hebdige's *Subculture: the meaning of style* (1979), which established definitively the cultural agency of young people, also had its origins there.

In terms of education, the Centre had three main interests. The first lay in the cultures of childhood and, more significantly, youth. In the sense that it put the learner at the centre of cultural, and educational, processes, this was an interest compatible with those of progressive education. In other ways, though, it was at odds with it. Following, at different points, suggestions in the work of Gramsci, Althusser and Foucault, it saw cultures, and the individuals who inhabited them, as radically heterogeneous entities, composed of conflicting and irreconcilable elements. Gramsci's account of hegemony was employed to depict culture as a field in which contending forces fought for moral and intellectual leadership, and in which social relations, institutions – and individuals – bore the mark of these conflicts. In Gramscian terms, 'the [individual] personality' was 'strangely composite', a 'product of the historical process' that had deposited in people 'an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory' (Gramsci, 1971:324). In Althusserian ones, individuals were interpellated and constituted by ideology – there was no other way of 'becoming a subject' (Althusser, 1971:160-165). For Foucault, likewise, subjectivity was not a unified thing; it was an effect of those combinations of knowledge and power that he called discourses, was never settled, and was always in the making (e.g. Foucault, 1980).

The learner who was the focus of an attention inspired by these perspectives was a very different being from the one imagined by progressive education. The progressive child, once liberated from the chains of repression, could possess an autonomous and unified personality. But in Althusser and Foucault, particularly, personalities were constituted through power and ideology, which were intrinsic and inescapable shaping forces, not merely external constraints. This insistence on the effects of power on culture and on individuality is the second theme of CCCS work.

But the emphasis is at odds with a third theme, focused on the agency of those whom Althusser called 'subjects'. The fascination of Gramsci's work for CCCS lay in its attempt to think not only about the workings of power, and its presence in the practices of everyday life, but also about the means by which people developed understandings and capacities outside the terms of these apparently pervasive systems. The cultural and political effects of such agency provided the Centre with grounds for hope and a focus for practice.

6.1 Youth, Culture and Photography

These preoccupations were not widespread in education, but they shaped the thinking behind some of the most interesting work that occurred there. The schools-based project written up as *Youth, Culture and Photography* (Dewdney and Lister, 1988) - sustained over a long period and theorised in some depth - provides one of the most informative accounts of the premises, working methods, achievements and limitations of radical cultural practice in the 1970s and 1980s.

The project was based at the Cockpit Arts Workshops of the Inner London Education Authority between 1979 and 1985. One of its *animateurs*, Andrew Dewdney, summarises the meaning it held for those who worked in it in these terms, a meaning created by a particular historical moment:

(It was) one of the most exciting and productive kind of periods. Never again have I experienced the same kind of highs and lows really in work as that period ... When I think about the whole of the Cockpit project for all of us was a way of working through with lots of other people collectively these strands of our lives. This sort of post-war generation

who ...believed in social change and social experimentation and who saw education and art or now art/media as being a real genuine means of transforming people's relation to the world. (Dewdney, 2000)

The project's origins lay outside the school, in 'youth and community arts projects' which had established 'physical bases in working-class communities', where 'arts workers learnt to develop open and informal ways of working' (Dewdney and Lister, 1988:4). The project itself involved, likewise, 'a long apprenticeship to the worlds, values and subcultures of youth', focused on the experience of older secondary students in 'the transition from childhood to adulthood, and the making of the next labour force, or not' (1988:4).

Dewdney and Lister argued that in arts education, recognition of the cultural productivity of young people should be central. They denounced, here, the role of the school drawing attention to the gulf between 'what was claimed as being art in schools and the lived realities of many pupils was vast' (1988:5). Traditions of fine art outside the school were equally lacking – they 'relied on and perpetuated a mystifying view of the creative imagination' (1988:2).

The alternative to these moribund traditions lay in the adoption of new technical means and a new cultural stance. 'Mechanical media' – especially the still camera, chosen for its cheapness, simplicity and centrality to everyday cultural practice – provided the means. The cultural stance addressed the double role of young people, as both producers and consumers of culture. In terms of production, a word preferred to 'creativity', the project was based on young people making photographic meaning through 'encoding the meanings that they chose' from among their 'immediate topical and cultural interests' (1988:7). In terms of consumption, the project aimed to explore with learners the ways in which the dominant culture 'worked through the currencies and meanings of everyday life' (1988:20).

The learning at which the project aimed was rendered as 'empowerment' and as semiotic subversion (1988:17). The former involved 'changing your own life, the life of the people you lived with on the estate' (Dewdney, 2000) The latter, possibly more easily realisable, was more fully described:

As they [young people] adopt new forms of expression, create new images for themselves, often contradicting or ironically commenting upon the real conditions of their lives, they *repeatedly outstrip* the current definitions and representations of its dominant culture. This may provide the generalising and incorporating dominant culture with endless opportunities for new commodities and markets, but it also provides an arena for struggles over meanings and definitions between cultures (1988:17).

Thus an important aspect of radical cultural practice involved engagement with commercial popular culture, in terms which acknowledged its superior force. The resources of commercial culture, Dewdney accepted, were 'exceptionally powerful', not just because of their reach, but because of the pleasures they offered. 'The capitalists,' he commented, retrospectively, 'had all the toys ... the money, the budgets, the technology' (Dewdney, 2000). This concern with a superior power marked a different understanding of the cultural field from that of Williams, with his confident expectation that the 'rising class' had already begun a process of cultural transformation. It would be echoed in later work.

6.2 'Really Useful Knowledge'

Another long-term project, described by its elaborator, Phil Cohen, as 'applied cultural studies', also started from interests close to CCCS. It went beyond them, though, in its pedagogical thinking. In the early seventies, Cohen had suggested that the youth subcultures of the 60s and 70s were an effect of a larger process, the post-war recomposition of working-class communities (Cohen, 1972). Tracking the economic changes of the late seventies and earlier eighties – recession, collapse of the youth labour market, deindustrialisation – Cohen showed how here, too, the lives of young people had been transformed, in ways that education had not comprehended. Whether in school or in the newly-created training empire of the Manpower Services Commission, it did not offer students the means to make sense of and react to the social changes that had taken hold of their lives. His own project, spanning formal and informal education, and spread across subject areas such as art and social studies schools was based on understanding the sociology of change. But its reach was broader than sociology's. It was at one and the same time:

a method of critical ethnography for investigating issues in young people's lives, a practical *pedagogy* for working around issues of identity and difference, and ...a theoretical arena within which the youth question could be connected to wider debates (Cohen, 1997:13).

The element of pedagogy was fundamental. Young people were ill served by both the authoritarianism of the right and the critical didacticism of the left. They needed not so much to be equipped with the right skills or the correct ideas as offered:

a potential space in which these knowledge/power games are temporarily put in abeyance, and where consequently it is possible to conduct the kind of negotiations in which children can actually learn to find their own voice, not by shouting loudest, but by listening and putting into words what has been silenced by what they have been made to echo' (Cohen, 1997:403).

As with Dewdney and Lister, the development of 'voice' began with the capacities for meaning-making that learners already possessed. Cohen's assumption was that learners had a kind of knowledge – 'really useful knowledge' – that went unrecognised by schools and training agencies. This much was familiar from other kinds of radical practice. What distinguished Cohen was his interest in the intimate and emotional dimensions of learning, and his suggestion that 'popular cultural forms' provided not merely forms of knowledge about the world, but raw materials for learning in which 'structures of phantasy and belief are inextricably intertwined' (Cohen, 1997:382). Cohen envisaged a pedagogy that would use these materials to create 'a symbolic framework which enables children to explore and make their own discoveries about the world, rather than ... train up their minds or discipline their bodies' (Cohen, 1997:385).

The echoes of progressive educational traditions are audible at this point. Cohen hears them too, but stresses the distinctiveness of his own project. It grounds 'the student within concrete contexts of meaning', rather than in a generalised image of the child. It understands learning as a process that works on already existing symbolic resources, and that makes something new from them. It regards a dialogic pedagogy as essential, but is sceptical of school's ability to understand and respond to students' cultural experience and meaning-making capacities – he writes an extended and excruciating account of one such failure (Cohen, 1997). Dialogic pedagogy, he adds,

entails responding to all features of youth culture – in its sexist and racist forms, as well as its emancipatory moments.

Other echoes can also be heard, of a sort that Cohen does not disavow. Like Hall in the 1950s, and many others in the intervening years, he wants to 'build on the resources students already value and possess and take them into new areas' (1997:346). This meant staging through education an engagement with dominant commercial cultures, an engagement that allowed the possibility that alternative meanings might be created:

The popular cultures which have formed around computers, video, photography and hi-fi are an obvious site where technologies are to some extent transformed by the social relations of their use. The enlarged reproduction of dominant imagery is potentially interrupted by new facilities for do-it-yourself culture (Cohen, 1997:341).

In this space, alternative creative practices might grow.

Cohen envisaged a pedagogy that would use these materials to create 'a symbolic framework which enables children to explore and make their own discoveries about the world, rather than ...train up their minds or discipline their bodies.'

(Phil Cohen, 1997)

‘The probabilities of a reliable and decent wage through manual work have been radically decreased for substantial parts of the working class ...and the threat of its removal has become a permanent condition for all workers ...The pride, depth and independence of a collective industrial tradition [have given way] to the indignities of flexible and obedient labour’

(Paul Willis, 2003)

7 The great transformation

This is a literature review, not a history. Nevertheless, the changes that occurred in the 1980s in the tenor, source, focus, content and purpose of educational work on culture and creativity are so striking as to require some attempt to situate them socially and historically, however brief that must be.

The long decade 1976-1990 saw a succession of 'breaks', in economic, occupational, technological, social, cultural and educational fields, in which the patterns established earlier in the century were disrupted and remade. Harvey (1989, 2005) has charted the destructive-creative processes of deindustrialisation, financial deregulation and privatisation. Other writers have identified the rise of an informational capitalism, or knowledge economy, claiming (contestedly) that symbolic or immaterial work has overtaken manufacturing as the defining economic activity of our time (Hardt & Negri, 2001; Castells, 1998; Camfield, 2007). Others have analysed the occupational structure of this post-industrial society, suggesting that it is polarised between symbolic workers, high paid and relatively secure, and generic, 'reprogrammable' labour (Castells, 1998).

Considering the consequences of deindustrialisation, alongside the political defeat of the labour movement in the 1980s, Mike Savage argues that the 'working class has been largely eviscerated as a visible social presence' and 'is no longer a central reference point in British culture' (Savage, 2003:536). For Paul Willis, likewise:

the probabilities of a reliable and decent wage through manual work have been radically decreased for substantial parts of the working class ...and the threat of its removal has become a permanent condition for all workers ...The pride, depth and independence of a collective industrial tradition [have given way] to the indignities of flexible and obedient labour (Willis 2003:397).

Castells has drawn attention to the connexion between the destabilisation of the post-war order, and a new intensity of cultural politics, with issues of identity – ethnic, religious – moving centre-stage; this development, too, poses problems for a project founded upon the notion that the culture of a 'rising class' could provide resources for educational transformation (Castells, 1997).

Tracking these social changes, and much affected by what they regard as the definitive political victories of neo-liberalism in the Reagan and Thatcher years, some theorists argue that culture, too, has experienced an evisceration. It no longer provides a space in which critical practice might be developed and new political horizons opened. Instead, according to Perry Anderson, culture has been 'saturated ...in the serum of capital', commodified and unchallenging (Anderson, 1998:55). This is an effect not only of a shift in ideas, but of changes in the material conditions for practice. Frederic Jameson wrote of an attempt to 'proletarianise' – that is, to subject to capitalist discipline – what he called 'all those unbound social forces that gave the sixties their energy' (Jameson, 1979: 268). The notion of 'bringing back into line' practices – like those of the Cockpit, perhaps – that had become recalcitrant helps to illuminate the changes of the 1980s.

7.1 Patterns of publication

Patterns of publication are revealing here, displaying the decline of some influences and the rise of others. There was a fall, from the mid-80s on, in the amount of material published by teachers or small groups of radicals, and a decline too in the number of independent bookshops and the distribution networks that could help them reach an audience. On the other hand, for-profit academic publishing – books and journals – grew prodigiously, with a corresponding separation between the work of teachers and that of academics, whose careers depended upon finding 'certified' outlets for their writing. At the same time, government publications provided copious, regulation-backed material to guide what teachers did, think-tanks – the Centre for Policy Studies under Conservatism, Demos and the Institute for Public Policy Research under Labour – were far more influential than established, education-based groups in promoting agenda for change. An increase in teachers' workloads, and closer management control over the way they organised their time added other constraints. Such changes removed some of the conditions necessary for extended work on education and culture.

From other perspectives, less melancholy than those of Jameson, the decade could appear quite differently: economic change had produced an upskilling of the working population and a new set of dispositions, flexible

and adventurous (Hargreaves, 2003), that business was capable of recruiting and developing, rather than stifling. Social and cultural change had undermined many kinds of everyday repression, notably in relation to gender, and opened up new possibilities of lifestyle choice (Arnot *et al*, 1999). The risks of a post-welfare society were from this point of view manageable by a population that had learned to adapt to new environments. In schools, teachers might have sacrificed some autonomy, but had acquired a new, policy-guided expertise and confidence.

These accounts of the social landscape were accompanied by others that focused on the cultural impact of new technologies. The life-world had become 'media saturated' (Green, 1998:180) but this was not a cause for regret; new technologies expanded the affordances for meaning-making (Kress, 2003) and new media audiences were sophisticated in production as well as consumption. The masses, in as much as they still existed in a diverse and niche-based culture, were not dupes, and the theories of a Hoggart or a Leavis had become anachronistic. New paradigms of research emphasised the active role of audiences: whether watching, listening or reading, they were (re) makers of texts as much as they were consumers of them (Ang, 1985; Radway, 1987) authorial intention or attempts at authoritative critical judgment mattered less than the spontaneous interpretive work of readers, which always served to 'pluralise' the meanings and pleasures of the text (Fiske, 1989:28).

7.2 Conservative policy: cultural, economic and social

Debates between optimistic and pessimistic understandings of cultural possibility have continued since the 1980s, and their encounters form a strong thread in the sections that follow. Before this thread is spun out, however, it is important to follow another strand of thought and practice, which was both powerful, and ill-at-ease with the social effects of market-driven policy. It has been pointed out many times (Gamble, 1988; Giddens, 1994; Edgar, 1986) that conservatism's cultural principles, stressing established order and tradition, were at odds with the economic and social dynamism that other aspects of Thatcher's programme sought to promote. As Conservatism grew stronger, so these tensions increased, especially in education. According to a rising volume of critique, culminating at the end of

the 90s in the NACCCE report *All Our Futures* (1999) under Conservative rule schooling had become out of step with the times: directed, not deregulated; uniform not sensitive to context; backward-looking in aspects of its content, and remote from innovative currents of thinking. Conservative cultural discourse, which had done much to shape the settlement of 1988, did much to undermine it afterwards.

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'Each small detail [of educational change] the attack on exams, the abandonment of form positions, of prizes and speech day, is part of the new consciousness, the new hegemony ...whose impractical utopian values will destroy all that is most valuable in our culture.'

(Brian Cox, 1981)

8 Conservatism's second wind

'Second wind' is the phrase used by the historian Maurice Cowling to describe the resurgence of cultural conservatism (Cowling, 1989). Its founding principles remained unchanged: Conservatism, wrote the politician David Willetts, was committed to 'community, as the source of individual identity and satisfaction' (Willetts, 1992 68-9); community was defined in terms of nation and tradition (Major, 1993). What gave the principles a new edge was the ability of Conservative intellectuals and politicians to deploy them as a critique of post-war reform, which was held to have contributed to cultural disintegration and a crisis of national identity. Education provided a focus for this critique (Jones, 1989; Ball, 1993), that linked the minute particulars of curricular, pedagogic and pastoral change to larger problems of cultural continuity and order: Scruton's maxim, that for conservatism questions of culture were fundamentally political, was put to work. As Brian Cox wrote: 'each small detail [of educational change] the attack on exams, the abandonment of form positions, of prizes and speech day, is part of the new consciousness, the new hegemony ...whose impractical utopian values will destroy all that is most valuable in our culture' (Cox, 1981:20).

These positions fed the most successful short-term campaign of cultural politics in the history of state education – the discrediting of educational reform and the establishment of the 1988 Education Reform Act. They helped to wrest 'cultural power' (Schwarz, 1991) away from the educationalists who had wielded it since 1944. The subject-centred curriculum and the national system of pupil testing intrinsic to the Act were direct outcomes of the right's opposition to what they saw as a 40 year old progressive consensus. Conservative policies were also pursued at a level of classroom detail that went beyond the formal terms of the Act. Important in this context were an attempt to discourage child-centred teaching (Alexander, Rose, and Woodhead, 1992), and a kind of anti-modernism that among other things was hostile to the inclusion of media studies in the curriculum (Patten, 1992, quoted in Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994:1). Questions of language were another focus of controversy. Conservatives saw toleration of non-standard dialects as a sign of a cultural relativism: whatever the educationalists of the 1970s may have argued, dialects reflected 'the limited range of functions for which they have traditionally been used; the exchanges of everyday life, mainly among those unrefined by education', and to refuse to recognise this was to be complicit in the lowering of standards (Marenbon, 1987). The English curriculum, accordingly, was reshaped.

There was more to conservatism than this, however. It was a complex and divided formation. It offered resources for critique of post-war reform and its educational cultures, yet, shaped by ideas about custom and tradition, it could not sit comfortably alongside hectic change, whether market-driven or government-inspired. In a famous essay, Michael Oakeshott had charged post-war social democracy with 'a fatally rationalist disposition of mind,' in which, 'traditions of behaviour have given way to ideologies ...the politics of destruction and creation have been substituted for the politics of repair, the consciously planned and deliberately executed being considered (for that reason) better than what has grown up and established itself unselfconsciously' (Oakeshott, 1962:21). This kind of critique had been employed effectively against the programmes of reform – but it could also be turned against the system of centralised curriculum control introduced after 1988. Conservative traditionalism, united till then against reform, at the point of its victory split in two. Some wished to continue the war against progressivism with the weapons that the Act had given to central government. Others concluded that true Conservatism suggested that 'what as a whole should be covered [for example] by English at school is not ...the proper concern of government' (Marenbon, 1993).

Divided, and facing powerful opposition, cultural conservatism subsided. The attempt (1992-4) to revise the National Curriculum, on whose first version the ink had hardly dried, so as to enforce a nation-focused, traditionalist schooling, failed (Jones, 1994). But the building blocks of the Conservative system – testing, targets, a nationally-specified curriculum, an inspection agency with disciplinary powers – were retained after 1997 by the Labour government, and this legacy, apparently at odds with other aspects of the transformations of the 1980s, has remained a central issue in debates about creative learning.

8.1 Radical conservatism: Peter Abbs

The arts educator Peter Abbs has written about creativity for more than 30 years, seeking to give accounts of its realisation, both through the making of works of art, and through instances – moments – of collective learning. Despite this focus, which might be thought to be near the centre of contemporary concerns, his work tends not to be part of policy-related

conversations about culture and creative learning. Such marginality indicates something about the incompatibility of his version of cultural conservatism with dominant interests.

At the core of Abbs' work is a defence of artistic (rather than more broadly social) tradition against what he calls 'an individualistic expressive arts paradigm,' closely associated with progressive education, that has appropriated and misused the name of creativity (Abbs, 1989). What has resulted is, 'at heart a psychological paradigm of the present tense, of personal learning, of immediate process, of sincerity, and of spontaneity with little formal mediation' (2003:48). It is a paradigm in which the teacher is seen as 'the releaser of the child's innate creativity through acts of self-expression and self-discovery'. Consistent with this model of arts teaching, writes Abbs, 'nearly all the necessary resources [are] seen to reside in the natural self, not in the collective culture and not in the specific art form the teacher was claiming to teach' (Abbs, 2003:48).

This is a view, naturalist and individualist, that Abbs disputes. It has 'distorted the deeper truth about creativity', namely that:

it would seem to be an inherent part of our common biological nature and that its full development requires a repertoire of received expressive forms, a living inheritance of examples and procedures transmitted by the culture' (Abbs, 1989:2).

'Culture' here, as elsewhere in Abbs' work, refers to the *disciplinary* culture associated with a particular art form – 'the symbolic field in which it takes place' (1989:4). The word has a strongly historical inflection connecting it with generations of predecessors. Education, too, exists to 'set up a conversation down the ages', 'to move backwards and forwards across time to weave the cultural cloth' (Abbs, 2003:17). Children are 'born into history and culture', and it is the responsibility of arts education to make them aware of it. From this conversation can come an awareness of artistic resource, a symbolic vocabulary of 'metaphors, models, ideas, images, narratives, facts' that can open possibilities for the 'flowering of consciousness' (Abbs, 2003:17). In its absence, learners are left to live in their own spontaneous and limited culture, lacking 'any alternative wisdom or perspectives to draw on' and are yet 'blissfully ignorant of (their) radical impoverishment' (Abbs, 2003:17).

Abbs' thoroughly cultural view of individuality ('the "I" is seen as part of an inevitable matrix of cultural connexions' Abbs, 2003:55), developed through an understanding of culture which tends to be narrowed down in practice to the field of art.; it is on artistic terrain that the counter-position of the individual and the social, the untutored self and the resources of tradition, is worked out. It is on such ground, too, that Abbs aligns himself with a conservative body of thought, in which tradition, by rendering the individual social and cultural, is the enabler of a full creative individuality.

Up to this point, it is possible to read Abbs' positions in terms of cultural conservatism. His work can be seen as part of the great flow of critique that undermined progressive ideas. In Abbs, however, traditionalism becomes something else, a resource for critical militancy, directed not only against the hapless progressives, but against those he takes to be the new (commercial) masters of the cultural world. The only demonstration, that he has ever attended, Abbs tells the reader (Abbs, 2003), was against the Turner Prize for contemporary art – an award that, like conservative critics such as Peter Fuller, he associated with the trivialisation and commercialisation of creativity. His perspective on what he calls 'consumer democracy' is correspondingly scathing: the old public spaces have been ravaged by market forces', while in education a milieu of endless testing and instant accountability [means that] it is impossible for profound levels of creativity to be released' (Abbs, 2003:2, 59).

Pitted against the market and the audit culture, Abbs appeals to a vision of teaching and learning that invokes Socratic and Athenian models. These offer 'an image of the good society' and a 'cultural polis', a communal place, a 'Community of Recognition', in which 'the individuals in the group interact to recognise each other, challenge and extend each other's understanding, both of art and life'. Committed to such a vision, we can become 'the free and willing agents of our own actions and understanding' (Abbs, 2003:10, 15).

In one sense, the language of recognition and self-making at work here has affinities with cultural studies perspectives. In another, the high cultural reference points, detachment from everyday culture and emphasis on disciplinary tradition offer a very different emphasis. Neither, though, would easily find a home in the 'creative turn' of the later nineties as I show in Section 10.

In Abbs, however, traditionalism becomes something else, a resource for critical militancy, directed not only against the hapless progressives, but against those he takes to be the new (commercial) masters of the cultural world.

'The worker ...surrenders his ('labouring capacity's') creative power, like Esau his birthright for a mess of pottage ...The creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an alien power confronting him.'

(Grundrisse – Marx, 1973)

9 Cultural studies in the new order

Cultural and creative research and practice after the great transformation of the 1980s is contradictory and takes place against a background created by the radical conservatism outlined in the section above. Some strands of practice, notably those concerned with meaning-making and working-class youth, were almost extinguished by the change - though not before Paul Willis staged, in the initial and final chapters of *Common Culture* (1990), a blazing encounter between the cultural studies tradition and the new social order.

9.1 *Common Culture*

Common Culture, along with associated articles and reports, was the product of research into contemporary youth cultures conducted in the late 1980s. By then the effects of deindustrialisation on working-class communities were unmistakable, popular culture seemed to a much greater extent than previously to have become commodified, as we have seen above with Abbs, and the eclipse of the political and social movements that had sustained or provided a reference point for cultural practice in education was likewise impossible to overlook (Willis *et al*, 1990; Willis, 1990; Willis, 1998). It was in this unfriendly context that Willis, the main author of *Common Culture*, set out a defence of ordinary culture, and a criticism of traditions of high art, that took the positions sketched by Williams, 30 years earlier, to their furthest extreme. At the same time, more fiercely than any other writer in the cultural studies tradition, he argued that commercial popular culture was a field of engagement, more than an object of critique. He thus tried to reclaim for cultural radicalism a purchase on cultural change, precisely at the moment when it might have slipped into nostalgia.

The book was in part an ethnographic enquiry into young people's leisure time – music-making, fashion, drinking and so on – focusing on 'their use and meaning for and by young people' (Willis *et al*, 1990:6). Chapters on these topics were book-ended by theoretical sections, in which Willis pursued two kinds of argument – one about the meaning of common culture, in relation to other cultural formations, the other about the effects on this culture of social and historical change.

In one sense, we can find in Willis an interest in audience reception similar to that of other writers of the 1980s (see above). In another, his affiliations are older - standing in line of descent from a radical humanism which includes, centrally, Marx. In the *Grundrisse* Marx had given creativity a central part in a

drama of labour, exploitation and capital accumulation, wherein, 'the worker ...surrenders his ('labouring capacity's') *creative power*, like Esau his birthright for a mess of pottage ...The creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an *alien power* confronting him' (1973:307). Many times repeated, the counter-position between 'creative powers' and capital provides a structure for Marx's work, and something of a model for Willis, who sees in culture the resources for the development of human capacities that can exceed the 'impoverished role' offered to humanity by 'modern state bureaucracies and rationalised industry' (Willis *et al*, 1990:14). It is through culture – meaning-making – that we 'reaffirm our sense of our own vital capacities' (1990:12).

At the heart of his analysis is the concept of symbolic work - a universal human quality. It is:

the application of human capacities to and through on and with symbolic resources and raw materials (collections of signs and symbols – for instance the language we inherit as well as texts, songs, films, images and artefacts of all kinds) to produce meanings. This is broader than, logically prior to and a condition of material production, but its necessariness has been forgotten (1990:10).

Such work is done both through the kind of formalised symbolic representation found in art, and a through wider symbolic creativity, which in the common culture of youth involves:

the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanise, decorate and invest with meanings their common and immediate life spaces and social practices - personal styles and choice of clothes, selective and active use of music, TV, magazines, decoration of bedrooms, the rituals of romance and subcultural styles, the style, banter and drama of friendship groups, music-making and dance ...They can be crucial to the creation and sustenance of individual and group identities, even to the cultural survival of identity itself ...' (1990:2).

In contrast, 'the institutions and practices, genres and terms of high art ...have no connection with most young people or their lives.' In fact, their effect is negative. They 'discourage wider and more general symbolic creativity,' while 'the arts establishment connives to keep alive the myth of the special, creative individual artist holding out against passive mass consumerism. '(1990:1).

If high art traditions are still in this sense alive, other significant cultural forces are not. Class society has not come to an end, but the industrial working class – the subject and privileged agent, in the cultural studies tradition, of twentieth century history – has disappeared, at least in the sense of an homogeneous cultural bloc. Its destruction – ‘verbal, stylistic, expressive’ – is welcomed: ‘the old mass has been culturally emancipated into popularly differentiated cultural citizens, through exposure to a widened circle of commodity relations’ (1990:17-18). This emancipation is the work of capitalism, which, uniquely, has been able to provide the resources on which symbolic creativity can work: ‘no other agency has recognised this realm ... this continent of informal everyday culture’ (1990:18). Commercial cultural commodities, unlike the artefacts of artistic tradition, offer themselves to the possibility of use; everyday symbolic creativity can pick up and transform their meanings. In return, the ‘market’s restless search to find and make new appetites raises, wholesale, the popular currency of symbolic aspiration’ (1990:26). This is movement. ‘History may be progressing through its bad side. But it progresses’ (1990:26).

Schooling, a potential site for the development of a cultural politics, features only lightly in this argument. An intellectual framework in which symbolic creativity is ubiquitous and pervasive has no need for a specific theory of learning. Moreover, the school has provided few reasons why it should not be sidelined. Faced by the cultures of home and street, it has been found wanting, incapable of addressing everyday symbolic creativity, existing ‘in tension with the grounded aesthetics of the young’ (Willis, 1990:60). Schools’ increasing instrumentalism may be seen ‘as a necessary evil to be tolerated in order to obtain access to the wage.’ But ‘for the majority, these things will never be accepted as the whole of life ... Common culture is shouting this at us if nothing else; necessary symbolic work has to be done too’. Yet ‘in so far as educational practices are still predicated on traditional liberal humanist lines and on the assumed superiority of high art, they will become almost totally irrelevant to the real energies and interests of most young people and no part of their identity formation’ (1990:147). The only hope for unblocking the impasse is expressed in generalised terms: ‘Education/training should re-enter the broader plains of culture and the possibility there for the full development of human capacities and abilities, this time led not by élite culture but by common culture’ (Willis, 1990:147) – a final phrase which leaves open a relationship that has yet to be explored.

Contemporary capitalism ...has been hugely changed by the volume of information generated by business activity, information which necessarily becomes part of the environment in which business must operate.

10 Creativity and economic change

Both the conservatism explored in Section 8 and the radical work of Willis above have had their grounded and located versions of creativity overwritten by current economic discourse. One such discourse is neo-liberalism, which has strong claims to be the dominant discourse of the age. David Harvey takes neo-liberalism to involve 'in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey, 2005:2). It is a discourse with some space – 'well-being', 'liberating', 'freedom' – for the recognition of creativity.

Theory, according to some writers, is matched, at the level of the workplace, by practice. Contemporary capitalism, Nigel Thrift argues, has been hugely changed by the volume of information generated by business activity, information which necessarily becomes part of the environment in which business must operate (Thrift, 1999; 2005). The accelerating pace of change enabled by this accumulation of knowledge places a premium on rapid and continuous innovation – that is, on the absorption of existing knowledge and the creation of new knowledge, embodied in products which include information itself. The workforce must therefore be capable of adaptability and continuous learning. What such a world requires from extra-economic organisations like schools and universities is the production of subjects who can fit its new forms, and who are in this sense creative. The promise it makes in return is one of fulfilling work, in which the need for 'well-being' is satisfied.

In a review of creativity discourses, Hartley adds that it is not just at the top end of the labour market that capacities fostered by creativity are required. There are sections of the economy – personal services, for instance – which are 'high touch' more than they are high tech and in which emotional intelligence, a kind of sub-set of creativity, is an asset (Hartley, 2003). This complements Michael Hardt's account of the importance of 'the affective labour of human contact and interaction' which through 'the creation and manipulation of effects' can bring into being 'a feeling of ease, well being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community' (Hardt Generation Online, accessed August 25th 2008).

10.1 Creativity in education

How do these changes affect education? 'The 'economic imperative to foster creativity in business,' writes Craft, 'has helped to raise the profile and credentials of creativity in education more generally' (2001:11). But the meaning given to creativity by the policy documents that incite such change goes well beyond the boundaries of a traditional arts-based model (Roberts, 2006). This is because adaptation to new social and economic complexities depends less upon the capacity for expressiveness nurtured by earlier models of creativity, and more on the subject's ability to draw from the entire range of their experience so as to respond productively - creatively - to new challenges. The criticism levelled from this viewpoint at the existing national curriculum is that it has no innovative element; it 'focuses on what students know rather than how they use that knowledge' (Bentley and Seltzer, 1999:9) and so cannot rise to the challenge of adaptability. This is more than a workplace issue. Creativity is not only a set of skills, but a modality of life:

It is about equipping people with the skills they need to live full lives; the ability to respond creatively and confidently to changing situations and unfamiliar demands, to solve the problems and challenges they face at home, in education, at work, to make a positive contribution to the life of their communities' (Bentley and Selzer, 1999:9).

On this basis, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority extended the reach of creativity across the curriculum. Its 2005 document *Creativity – Find it ...* (QCA, 2005) rendered creativity as a set of mental and attitudinal qualities, discoverable in any kind of learning activity: 'questioning and challenging conventions and assumptions ...making inventive connections and associating things that are not usually related'; 'envisaging what might be ...'; trying alternatives and fresh approaches ...reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes' (QCA, 2005).

The new stress places creativity, potentially, at the centre of learning. But it should be evident that in the process some important shifts of meaning have occurred. The stress now is on a different sort of creativity – born in different circumstances, harnessed to different purposes - from that of previous discourses. For Raymond Williams creativity may have been more a species-enhancing capacity, than a source of economic value but this is a meaning that has been lost in current emphases (Williams, 1976; 1977).

Bentley and Selzer, for instance, separate 'creativity' both from artistic discourses and from those in which it figures as a fundamental, imaginative capacity; it becomes instead 'the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to reach a valued goal' (Bentley and Selzer, 1999).

These shifts have effects that are of concern to some educationalists: if creativity has become a means to 'feed the creative and cultural industries', if not industry more generally (Cochrane *et al*, 2008), then its value is contingent rather than absolute. Traditional arguments, like those of Sybil Marshall, which found in it an intrinsic good, are undermined.

10.2 Criticism of the new trend

Criticism of the new trend tends to accept that creativity is economically important, but is ambivalent about the new meanings it has acquired. There is an alternative view, however, that questions the extent to which 'creativity' is a term that can be applied at all accurately to the contemporary workplace – a questioning that has implications, too, for understanding the possibilities of creativity in schools. Willis, for instance, claims that creativity, located in 'unofficial spaces of meaning' has been driven out of paid work, to find a home in the sphere of consumption, where 'people can be treated like humans' (Willis, 1990:10, 16). Richard Sennett argues that the new capitalism removes skill and craft, scorns knowledge gained through long experience, and puts a premium on quick but superficial skills – among which he includes the qualities of 'teamwork' and 'initiative' that are characteristic of descriptions of the creative workplace (Sennett, 2006). Boltanski and Chiapello suggest that capitalism responded to an 'artistic critique' of its highly regulated mode of functioning by offering a 'new spirit', in which workers and managers would work in more autonomous and responsible ways, with 'liberation' and 'authenticity' recognised as legitimate goals of the enterprise, and qualities such as conviviality, openness to others, and 'listening to lived experience' promoted by managerial discourse (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: Chapter 7). But this is not, they say, an offer that has been fully realised, at least at the level of wage earners. 'Increased autonomy and responsibility were obtained at the price of a reduction in the protections enjoyed by wage-earners. Moreover, the intensification of work in the current period, 'bound up with the automatic tempo of machines norms and tight deadlines' and 'facilitated by the new information

technology' means that workers have become 'simultaneously more autonomous and more constrained' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005:430).

The creativity/economy debates are conducted in very general terms. Their rhetoric tends to run ahead of concrete experience, and participants often arrive at sweeping conclusions on the basis of limited evidence. Nevertheless, they are important because they form a kind of magnetic field, which draws discussions of creativity-in-education towards it. The field, at present, is one which emphasises creativity's compatibility with economic change. This is a significant shift. Earlier sections of this review have argued that between 1940 and the 1970s, the framework for creative practice was provided sometimes by traditions of arts education, sometimes by progressive education and sometimes by right or left wing cultural criticism. Arguments for creative practice that sought direct economic justification were rare, and discussion took place in the light of a recognition that responding in some sort to the cultural presence of working class students was essential. It is clear that the power of such reference points, whether located in traditions of professional practice or some wider matrix, has since lessened. Discursively, at least, creativity is established as central to economic life.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) suggest that capitalism responded to an 'artistic critique' of its highly regulated mode of functioning by offering a 'new spirit', in which workers and managers would work in more autonomous and responsible ways, with 'liberation' and 'authenticity' recognised as legitimate goals of the enterprise.

Creativity research sought alternatives to the 'conformism' of mass society, which was thought to 'discourage independent thought' among future artists and scientists.

11 From individual to social

In both learning theory and the psychology of creativity there was a shift in the 1980s and 1990s away from naturalism and individualism towards social understandings. The shift was academically driven – that is to say, its origins were independent of economic motivation. Subsequently, it has at some points become articulated with economic arguments for educational change, as part of the ensemble of discourses from which policy draws in contemplating the value of a creative turn (see Section 10 above). As Hartley (2003) suggests, a new economy based on information, and requiring from its workers the capacity to become involved in the production of knowledge and the creation of affect may be well served by ideas about cognition that emphasise its social construction.

The socialising of learning theory involved a take-up of the socio-cultural approaches to learning developed by theorists such as Vygotsky (1986) and Bruner (1987) alongside a valedictory critique of Piagetian psychology and progressivism, the former because of a ‘myopic focus on the physical environment [which ignored] the social context in which children grow’ (Halsey and Sylva, 1987:9, quoted in Silcock, 1999:59); the latter because of its reliance on a ‘principle of naturalism ... (that) could imply a refusal to engage with social and economic realities’ (Alexander, 1995:280).

Psychological theorising about creativity was open to similar critiques, and underwent a parallel change. According to Anna Craft, psychology in the period 1950-1975 ‘treated creativity as if it were an individual attribute’ (Craft, 2005:134). Research sought to measure creativity as an individual attribute, and to define creativity in terms of ‘genius’ or high levels of talent or giftedness. Vernon’s 1970 introduction to a field-mapping anthology of creativity tends to confirm Craft’s point. In existing research, he wrote, ‘the major ... emphasis is on differences in the abilities and personality characteristics that underlie the production of artistic or scientific work which is generally recognised as creative and original’ (Vernon, 1970:9). Such research sought alternatives to the ‘conformism’ of mass society, which was thought to ‘discourage independent thought’ among future artists and scientists (Vernon, 1970: 10). Albert and Runco likewise emphasise the individualism of the paradigm, which counter-posed the ‘individual’ to the ‘mass’. ‘During the 1950s and 1960s, the creative personality was the hot new topic ... Whether they knew it or not researchers on creativity were in the avant garde of a new version of individualism ... Creative people of all types became our culture’s heroes’ (Albert and Runco, 1999:28).

The differences between this version of the locus of creativity and that offered by Williams, writing in the same period, do not need elaborating. What is more productive is to track the ways in which psychological paradigms of creativity have shifted since then, to trace their impact on educational thinking, and to delineate the similarities and differences between a 'cultural psychology' of creativity, and the understandings characteristic of a cultural studies tradition. In this way, we can consider the terms on which the two streams of 'psychological' and 'cultural' thinking about creativity, separate in the 1950s, are now united.

11.1 Psychology's cultural turn

Important to psychology's cultural turn, and to its assimilation within education, has been the work of the American theorist Mihail Csikszentmihalyi, for whom creativity is defined in broad and social terms - it means 'the ability to add something new to the culture' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999:314), is not specifically associated with the arts, and it is 'as much a cultural and a social as it is a psychological event' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999:313).

Shifting the focus away from individual qualities, Csikszentmihalyi asks 'why, when and where new ideas arise, form and become established in a culture?' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999:313). His answer is framed in terms of two concepts, 'domain' and 'field'. 'Domain' refers to the symbolic resources from which individuals draw when involved in creative practice. 'Field' means the socially organised systems of taste and discrimination that make judgments about the products of individuals' products. Cultures are made up of a variety of domains and fields, both of which are socially malleable - that is to say transformable by social action. Individual factors - cognitive and motivational - are not unimportant, but they only have an effect on the achievement of individuals through interaction with the state of the domain and of the field. An unacknowledged creativity, from this viewpoint, is no creativity at all; it is only when it is selected and recognised as such, that it becomes creative.

How does selection work? Csikszentmihalyi's model is a Darwinian one. 'Creativity is to culture as 'mutation/selection/transmission of genetic variation is to biological evolution' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999:316). In Darwin,

the agent of selection is the environment; for Csikszentmihalyi the 'selector' is the field, a socially-organised system. From one point of view, this is a radically demystifying argument – the notion of creativity as genius disappears. From another, a different mystification takes its place.

The problem lies in Csikszentmihalyi 's translation of Darwinism from the natural to the social world, and thus in his tendency to accept as authoritative the judgement of the field. But whereas the natural environment has been to a considerable extent beyond human shaping, fields are not. "Symbolic resources' are provided by the work of people, more than of nature. The selectors themselves must be selected, the educators educated – in other words, open to the myriad influences of a culture. What counts as 'something new', what can be recognised as important to a field, are contestable matters in which argument and conflicting social interests have parts to play.

This is a less a point about the 'van Gogh' effect and the existence of works of genius that go unrecognised by the field, than about the conceptualisation of cultural flows across an entire society. As theorists like Voloshinov (1986) and Bakhtin (1986) have suggested, the whole of society is continuously involved in the making, receiving and selection of symbolic resources and this creative process consists of an endless recursive sequence of response, quotation, adaptation and refutation. At points, Csikszentmihalyi comes close to assimilating such an insight into his theory – notably when he argues that in relation to the products of popular culture it is the people who constitute the field – but on the whole it is a theorisation that eludes him. It may be that education could benefit from understandings of a Bakhtinian sort, accepting with Csikszentmihalyi that creativity is thoroughly cultural and social, but adopting a more fluid and provisional notion of domains and fields, so that the inter-connectedness of creativity, and the dependence of particular, individualised achievements on hinterlands of collectively-created symbolic resources become clearer.

Without ultimately departing from his framework, Csikszentmihalyi himself takes steps towards a loosening of its terms. He suggests that for a society that wishes to 'increase the frequency of creativity, it may be more advantageous' to work at the level of fields and domains rather than at the level of individuals (1999:327). They should reorganise their fields so that they are better able to recognise achievement. They should remove social

barriers to the acquisition of knowledge, and open up the symbolic resources provided by domains. They should recognise, too, that domains are enriched by cultural mixing and hybridity, and understand that creativity, of all sorts, is increased when a society is sufficiently free from economic exigency to possess a 'surplus energy' that can be turned in a creative direction.

11.2 Creativity and social psychology

Though, unfortunately, British researchers have tended not to work with Csikszentmihalyi's rigorous apparatus of domains and fields, they have appreciated Csikszentmihalyi's contribution to 'contextualising creativity into a social psychological framework that recognises the important role of social structures in fostering creativity' (Jeffrey and Craft, 2001:14). Jeffrey and Craft offer here an analogy between the 'social turn' of theories of creativity and the 'cultural turn' of management and organisational theory - both seek to recognise and value human qualities of meaning-making that have previously been neglected. Craft feels able to take one step further the line of thinking initiated by Csikszentmihalyi in moving from a concern with social structures to an interest in social institutions as well:

The fundamental shift from focusing on individual traits and abilities to concentrating on organisations, climates and cultures has had the effect of universalising creativity ... The shift has encouraged perspectives that suggest that everyone is capable of being creative, given the right environment (Craft 2005: 7).

'Everyone is capable of being creative' is, says Craft, a statement of 'democratic creativity'. It is 'the 'creativity of the ordinary person' (2005:134). Elaborating the concept, she subdivides creativity into 'big C' creativity and 'little c' creativity. The first possesses qualities such as 'excellence', 'recognition by peers' and the capacity to effect a break with previous practice - to make something new, and to 'change domains of knowledge.' This kind of creativity, in other words, is akin to Csikszentmihalyi's use of the term: it is creativity that has been accepted by the field. Creativity of the latter, little c kind is described in terms of personal qualities rather than productive accomplishment:

individuals are required to be increasingly self-directed, for ... these qualities will be even more in demand ... One way of describing the quality of self-directedness might be little creativity. (Craft, 2005: 46)

Though generous in its scope, the argument is not without problems. The recognition of 'little c' creativity seems both to isolate ordinary creativity from the symbolic realm and to assign it a subordinate status. The differences with Willis, and with Williams, are considerable. Willis's notion, of an 'extraordinary' ordinary creativity whose recognition might transform educational practice, has been lost; the idea of a continuity between the 'high' and the 'ordinary' underlying Williams' insistence that 'we create our human world as we have thought of art as being created' (1961:37) is likewise set aside.

11.3 Socio-culturalising of learning theory

Jerome Bruner is another major influence on the 'socio-culturalising' of learning theory. Bruner has devoted a career to establishing 'the cultural situatedness of all mental activity' (1996:xi). His book *The Culture of Education*, regarded as agenda-setting (Pollard, 1999) and cited in current socio-cultural work on creativity in England (Woods and Jeffrey, 2001), tries to connect issues of learning and development with culture in a broader, societal sense, and to understand the school as a culturally productive democracy, a place where a society shares existing knowledge and negotiates new forms (Bruner, 1996; Pollard, 1999).

Rather more than Csikszentmihalyi, Bruner's idea of culture includes and explicitly addresses division and conflict. Operation Headstart, for instance, targeted in the 1960s on black under-achievement, is criticised for operating with a 'standard of culture' that was implicitly derived from 'notions about idealised middle-class American culture', that 'failed to face the underlying issue of discrimination fairly' (Bruner, 1996:73-4). The continuing relevance of these judgments is evident. But they should not obscure a kind of fault-line that runs through Bruner's thinking about 'ordinary culture' and its relation to culture's dominant forms – a fault-line that grows wider in English work that seeks to emulate his approach.

The problem appears most clearly in his essay 'The Complexity of Educational Aims' (1996:66-85). Here Bruner aims at an even-handed treatment of the key 'antinomies' of American education. One of them is the 'particularism versus universalism antinomy', Bruner writes with full 'respect' for the 'uniqueness of local identities' and the 'local knowledge' that sustains them. He has a fear, though, that the 'cost of local identity' may be a 'cultural Tower of Babel' (Bruner, 1996:69). Localism, subculturalism, tend to forget that 'human plights,' though expressed in 'time, place and circumstance', are 'nonetheless an expression of some more universal history' (Bruner, 1996:69). 'To forget this history', he goes on, 'is to deny the legitimacy of the broader culture'.

There are a number of provocative questions here – on what grounds might the broad culture claim legitimacy? – that must go unexplored. More salient to this review is Bruner's tendency to make vital judgments about the capacities of cultures – in this case, that local cultures are doomed to particularism - on the basis of no discernible inquiry into the cultural experiences that are being judged. It should be surprising to find a socio-cultural theory of learning resting upon such fragile understanding of material cultures, but it seems in fact to be a common feature of the literature. 'Context for learning' is held to be important, but tends, in the recent literature to be only lightly explored (Jeffrey and Craft, 2001; Jeffrey and Woods 2003; Craft 2005). Such work turns more for its intellectual resources to psychological and pedagogical traditions; the gap thus opened up between this approach and an ethnographically orientated cultural studies tradition remains unnecessarily wide.

Localism, subculturalism, tend to forget that 'human plights,' though expressed in 'time, place and circumstance', are 'nonetheless an expression of some more universal history.'

(Jerome Bruner, 1996)

Buckingham and Jones identify in turn-of the-century New Labour discourse a linking of 'culture' to questions of tolerance and social responsibility. Cultural activity is seen to underpin a new mode of social cohesion, no longer so dependent on tradition and authority.

12 Culture and Policy

In contemporary policy terms, 'creativity' has acquired a relatively stable meaning. It has extended its reach beyond the arts, to include a range of capacities; in addition, it is used inclusively - creativity is not considered to be a minority attribute and most people are assumed to be in some way creative. 'Culture' is more problematic, however, pulled in different directions by interests that are often in tension with each other. Inclusive in some of its uses – sometimes to the extent of wishing away divisions that are all too evident – in other ways it bears marks of conflict.

12.1 New Labour

To consider, first of all, culture's more eirenic uses. As we have seen, Conservatism in the 1980s and 1990s was torn between a defence of national heritage and traditional criteria of value, and a contradictory championing of market forces, with adherence to the latter principle threatening to rip apart traditional ties. The New Labour government was less troubled by these tensions. Buckingham and Jones identify in turn-of-the-century New Labour discourse a linking of 'culture' to questions of tolerance and social responsibility. Cultural activity is seen to underpin a new mode of social cohesion, no longer so dependent on tradition and authority. It has a 'shaping' function, which should be employed in the service of "a multi-cultural tolerance which respects and rejoices at cultural difference" (Bennett, 1998:105). Thus, the Arts Council's *Leading through Learning* celebrated hybridity, citing 'the benefits that come from mixing differing cultural traditions, values and aesthetics to produce new artistic expression, informed by different perspectives and heritage' (Bennett 1998).

Similarly, Labour's first culture minister, Chris Smith, refused a clear distinction between high and low culture: 'what matters,' he wrote, 'is not the imposition of an inappropriate category but the quality of the work and its ability to transcend geography and class and time' (Smith, 1998:3). Later statements were just as open to the idea of difference: the government's 2008 announcement of a 'cultural offer' to students, giving them 'the chance to experience high quality arts and culture' made no distinction between cultural levels or forms.

These positions were criticised from several directions. Some read into them a subordination of art to social 'good' reminiscent of Stalinism (Brighton, 2002). Others were less inclined to take policy at face value, and questioned whether the claims to inclusiveness were as strong as they appeared; John Carey for instance, suggested that Smith's yardsticks of quality remained those supplied by high culture, (even including 'transcendence') (Carey, 2006). Another line of criticism was that Labour's cultural policy forgot or overlooked the experience of earlier decades: cultural practice is an area of conflict rather than a site of reconciliation, and it is difficult to address it productively unless the existence of different orientations to culture, different values and meanings is explicitly discussed and negotiated (Buckingham and Jones, 2001).

Whatever the force of these criticisms, policy for the arts tends to understand culture as a unified field. Elsewhere it is different. Stephen Ball, writing about family policy, discusses two intertwined and contradictory strands:

The first is a neoliberal or market relation based on more choice and voice ... The other indicates a disciplinary relationship... [in which] the causes of 'failure' and inequality are posited as cultural and moral rather than structural. In the first instance, the emphasis is on "rights" and in the second on "responsibilities" (Ball, 2008:179).

In this context, McCaig (2001) writes of a tendency towards 'social authoritarianism', and Gewirtz, identifies an overall strategy of 'responsibilisation', an attempt to render 'working-class culture' fit for purpose in a risk society, and in doing so to normalise and generalise middle-class values (Gewirtz, 2001). 'Culture' is in these versions a field of conflict.

12.2 Culture, race and policy

The linking of 'culture' to issues of the management and control of populations is particularly evident in the case of ethnicity. Describing a meeting between Tony Blair and social policy researchers in 2006, Margaret Wetherell (2008) identifies two sharply different understandings of the politics of culture and ethnicity. The policy researchers – tended to emphasise the 'interactivity' of relations between ethnic communities, and

to stress that in the process of interaction, 'new, complex, hybrid forms of identity are emerging among second and subsequent generations of migrants as part of the normal process of identity change over time' (Wetherell 2008: 305). In the great majority of cases, they argued, these identities included a strong British component, whose effect was to make people define themselves in 'hyphenated' ways – as British Asian, Black British and so on. Not all identities were hybridised, however: some groups, including white British working-class people, 'try to hang on to older cultural forms and senses of belonging' (2008: 306). And, in all cases, ethnically-based identities are articulated, in different ways, with social class.

The Prime Minister, writes Wetherell, spoke in other terms, seeing in ethnic diversity less a process of interaction than a set of distinct and separate communities – Wetherell calls this a 'mosaic pattern'. Kundnani argues that such a perspective is the bedrock of government policy in the twenty-first century, and informs a new strategy for the management of cultural difference and conflict, that breaks from that of the past (Kundnani, 2007). State strategies from 1981 – the year of riots in Brixton, Toxteth and many other inner city areas - to 2001 were essentially bi-partisan. Though Conservatism may have emphasised more than Labour the importance of a particular version of national heritage, in most respects both parties followed the same path, that of multi-culturalism. Multi-culturalism, for Kundnani, is a strategy of rule. Formed in response to resistance, it assimilated elements of earlier oppositional practice into a new, non-progressive ensemble. It neglected inequalities both within minority communities, and between such communities and elite groups. Turning away from the possibility of wider alliances around common interests, across ethnic divides, it favoured instead a 'vacuous' celebration of difference and a policy of 'separate development' that sustained conservative forces within communities, by allowing them to manage the flow of funds provided by central and local government.

Like Sivanandan (2006) and other writers associated with the Institute for Race Relations, Kundnani argues that after 2001 a shift occurred from 'multi-culturalism' to 'community cohesion'. Key here was the Cattle Report (Cattle, 2001), commissioned by the Home Office to explore the causes of a new set of upheavals, this time in 2001 in Bradford, Rochdale, Oldham and other northern towns and cities. The explanation offered by Cattle was different from previous reports. The Scarman Inquiry into the Brixton riots (1981) had found that poverty and racism were contributing factors. The

MacPherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (1999) had accepted 'institutional racism' as a key problem affecting the conduct of the police investigation of his murder. Cattle shifted the argument on to new ground. His diagnosis was that minority ethnic and white 'communities (were) leading parallel lives, defined by high levels of segregation in housing and schools reinforced by differences in language, culture and religion' (Cattle, 2006:4). Meaningful interaction had become 'virtually non-existent' (Burnett, 2007), and communities had developed their own separate identities and belief systems. The measures recommended by Cattle to avoid unrest borrowed from Northern Ireland: cross-cultural contact, inter-faith dialogue, the twinning of schools from different localities, the fostering of understanding and respect. At national level, the report spoke of a 'greater acceptance of the principal national institutions' (Cattle, 2001:19).

Both diagnosis and recommendations have been politically influential – an influence that can only have been strengthened by the post 9/11 'war on terror'. They have supported a drive to consolidate a sense of Britishness, 'a political identity (created) through active membership of the nation state, which regulates individual behaviour and provides for collective action' (Cattle, quoted in Burnett, 2007:117). In Gordon Brown's words, 'almost every question that we have to deal with about the future of Britain revolves around Britishness' (Brown, 2006). But 'Britishness' was not defined in a Conservative manner. John Major, in 1993, had talked about national identity in terms of heroes, literary giants and the monarchy (Major, 1993). Brown was more likely to stress toleration, 'liberal values', and the rule of law. In both cases, though, a line was being drawn between the nation and its 'others', whether these were the cultural militants of the 1980s or – post-2001 – the potential supporters of 'Islamic' terror and, by extension, Muslim communities more generally. From the perspective of 'community cohesion', Kundnani argues, some cultural identities had come to seem dangerous (Kundnani, 2007; Fekete, 2008).

12.3 Policies for cohesion

Policies for cohesion, and the discourses that accompany them, seem to have cultural effects that work against the kinds of recognition and reconciliation that arts initiatives seek to achieve. This was one of the tensions addressed by the Ajegbo Report, *Curriculum Review: Diversity and*

Citizenship (Ajegbo *et al* 2007). The report's authors took its title to mean 'teaching and learning ...that addresses issues of ethnicity, culture, language and religion and the multiple identities children inhabit.'(ibid, 2007:15). Earlier reports, notably Bullock (1975), had called on schools to recognise children's identities, which should not be 'set aside' as they entered the doors of the school. Ajegbo extended Bullock's principle - 'every child needs an education that is contextualised and relevant to them' (Ajegbo *et al*, 2007:19). The 2006 Education Act had given schools the task of 'promoting community cohesion', and the 'changing nature of the UK' and 'potential for tension to arise now' made it 'ever more pressing' to work towards that goal (ibid, 2007:27).

The road to cohesion led, for Ajegbo, through the interactive notions of diversity favoured by Wetherell. It could not easily be achieved, however, not only because of factors external to the school, but for reasons that had deep internal roots in the school's way of functioning. The flexibility, cross-curricular working and 'trust in teachers' skills and creativity' for which the report called were often, it claimed, in practice blocked by 'school leaders and middle managers' (ibid, 2007:34). The report, thus, faced several problems. Calling for schools to respond to diversity seemed, in many cases, to make a demand that was beyond their capacities. At the same time, the terms of the cohesion agenda tended to foreclose the debates that the report wanted to open. Previous cultural projects in education (Cohen, 1997) had suggested that responding to 'diversity' generally entailed an encounter with tensions, dissatisfactions and conflicts, but it was hard to admit such issues when, at a more general level, social and cultural programmes dictated that cohesion and the strengthening of national identity were prime objectives.

Much current thinking about creative learning has an impulse towards the social and the cultural.

13 Some conclusions

The review has tried to trace through post-war schooling in England various tracks of cultural practice, reflection, polemic and theorising. These trails were not exactly broken in the 1990s, but many of them became fainter; the crashing around of some great and well-fed beasts – cultural nationalism, an audit culture – drove lesser creatures away, and more or less wiped out their traces. Post-1999, the trails have become stronger again, though – to pursue this poor metaphor to exhaustion – the species that make them are not quite the same.

Much current thinking about creative learning has an impulse towards the social and the cultural. Cochrane, Craft and Jeffrey talk about ‘surfacing the learner’s experience’ (2008). Cochrane and Cockett (2006) account for the success of some programmes for creative learning on the grounds that they stay close to young people’s experiences and interests, and do not impose a prior, fixed agenda. This impulse is powerful, and sustains much of the best practice in Creative Partnerships. It is still, however, to some extent ‘lonely’ – it usually expresses itself without strong reference to the past and, perhaps more importantly, has not often met up with research traditions that could enrich practice and at the same time provoke thought about conditions that constrain it. Particularly relevant here is a long chain of ethnographic work that focuses on cultures of childhood and youth, and on such topics as girls’ friendships (Hey, 1997), inner-city masculinities (Reay, 2002; Archer and Yamashita, 2003), social class and classroom experience (Reay and Lucey, 2003), language and ethnicity (Hewitt, 1986; Rampton, 2005). Work in this tradition is a potentially invaluable resource, in that it supplies a cultural concreteness, a series of grounded accounts of meaning-making, and a way of thinking about the relationship of social situations to students’ experiences that tend to be absent from creative initiatives as they are currently practised. The (re)joining of ethnography with issues of learning and teaching should be welcomed.

But it would be insufficient. The line of work from Williams to Willis rested upon a narrative of historical and potential change. That is to say, the cultures it discussed or explored were ascribed an historical meaning – as part of the rise of the working-class, its potential for cultural dominance, its cultural disintegration, the terms of its possible recomposition. It was a narrative with eloquent absences – around race, and gender – (Gilroy, 1987; CCCS, 1982), and it has been scathingly criticised for the self-illusions it has perpetuated; for Tony Bennett, cultural studies is an opium of the intellectuals, which leads

them to spurn the feasible projects of a government-focused cultural policy, in favour of an unlikely hope of social transformation, in which they award themselves a leading role, as interlocutors of popular desire (Bennett, 1998). My view is that the tradition is more capacious than its critics allow, and also more grounded in everyday practice, with a sense of limit and constraint. These debates are for another day, perhaps; here it is enough to note, at a time when 'low aspirations' are routinely ascribed to large numbers of working-class students, and adduced to explain their failure, a line of reflection and practice that worked habitually with high expectations of students is no bad thing. Cultural practice, and in some respects the progressive educational tradition too, tried to work out ways of teaching and learning that were connected to a wider project of enlarging human capacities – Williams' notion of cultural democracy is as handy a term for it as any. Its practitioners viewed their work, and what students did, from the vantage-point that this project provided. The way that ethnography was done, or the ways in which classrooms were observed, were informed by this theory, so that a possible future was, as it were, written back into the present. Some work – for instance, that of John Yandell, 2006; 2008) – continues to do this; I think it is important to broaden our sense of alternative futures.

The final point concerns 'human resources'. Gramsci's much quoted maxim underwrites the more recent findings of Hanushek, who is concerned by a disparity between the capacities of teachers and the nature of the tasks to which policy is assigning them. 'Programmes' are not enough, Gramsci wrote, people are needed to carry them out, and these people are products of the 'whole social complex that they express' (Gramsci, 1971:25; Hanushek, 2005). Perhaps the problems perceived by Hanushek are problems of the social complex, rather than of the teacher. As the Introduction suggested, one of the features of the material gathered in the review is its provenance; much of it is academic, but a sizeable part isn't, and stems from reflection on projects of teaching and learning, both formal and informal, in contexts where there was some greater scope for teacher agency than now, and some greater likelihood that the cultural agency of learners would also be recognised. If we, in the present, are to make a reasoned selection and translation of past achievements, we need perhaps a different 'social complex' of education, one that is more open to the influences that cultural and social movements can exert, and allows a greater space for agency, dialogue, and experiment.

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