

**Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader.** Harvey J. Graff (Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 340 pages, \$37.50.

*Reviewed by Tom Morris, Trent University*

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People nowadays seem irritated when the work "literacy" enters conversation. It feels as if you've stumbled over one of those unwieldy words, like sex or culture or power, that barely contain the incomplete historical conflicts they have been made to carry.

Many of us were told in school to guard against such imprecise words. The ideal was to be exact, which in practice meant to machine response to the self-evident, to deny the unresolved and truly complex, to finally dissociate the knowing of things out there from the knowing and feeling of individuated and not-always-namable things in here. It's called growing up, becoming civilized, literate—all associations sinking deep to the point of invisibility in modern literacy promotion. Textuality, we read, fosters higher correspondences between observation and statement, foregoes language's ties to wisdom and common sense and traditional authority and the ambiguous, becomes the tool of the "disinterested search of the scientist," confirms its value by the "true implications" that follow from it.<sup>1</sup> But the first true implications are not disinterested. Rather they are renewed defences of schooling more or less as it has been this last half-century: word and text centered, encouraging formalized versions of expression and thought, hierarchical and competitive and privatizing, weighed on the side of the technician's eye and against individual passions. If you are reading this you have been made literate, which is to say you have probably been schooled, which in turn is to suggest that how you or I think about literacy is deeply entwined with how we have come to live being schooled in our minds and bodies. For example: the scars of the controls one placed on oneself in the face of professionalized, passionless questionings of one's competence. Then the selfdoubt, and the renewed striving to justify oneself. Who would dare look back directly on their complicity in this development of (imposition of!) competence against the self? Preferable to defend the necessity of the whole process, because one is thereby clinging to the lingering hope for the saner future they always held out, even while daily affirming the value of what has happened to oneself. It was all well intended, as it is now for my children. But you listen to this being said, and then you read the ordinary fruits of such schooled literacy—reading as if the live person had delegated the schooled "writer" in him or herself to go off and perform its higher functions, while saving those recesses where he or she really lives for the affairs of life that matter. Or you listen to people recollect becoming taught schooled language use, and you watch the stiffening jaws and neck, and you know the body hasn't been able to swallow the lies imposed as "development." Those who dream of the precise give to living a terrible obscurity.

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<sup>1</sup>David R. Olson, From Utterance to Text: The Bias of Language in Speech and Writing, *Harvard Educational Review*, 1977, 47, 277-278. Similar arguments on what Olson calls the "civilizing" role of writing can be found in Jack Goody and Ian Watts, "The Consequences of Literacy" in Jack Goody (Ed.), *Literacy In Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and John Oxenham, *Literacy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

What irritates about the word "literacy" is maybe how it has come to force together those divided memories of and expectations for schooling *with* the sensation of intensifying cultural madness *with* more and more compensatory expectations that schools are supposed to meet *with* the frustrating overall suspicion that such literacy has already become merely the latest term for cultural dilemmas which habitually get defined in such a way that you never really get out of them. The idea has sunk in that being literate carries an ideal of enlightened social progress and offers the manna of a fattened pocketbook. But it is known too that all this rarely materializes and rather often gets turned against the lives people might have lived. From another angle, those whom the schools say write well can indeed often write technically well, can answer the question, can key the statement to the observation. But often the whole is produced with obvious dissociation. Automated, received observations get lathed into exact statements, in order to "get it right." The student comes to nervously seek out the teacherly, correct response, and at the same time angrily resents the suggestion that he or she might possess and elaborate his or her *own* responses. As long as everyone and everything is seen in terms of the institution, it all seems to work. But the inner schisms and discomforts, the puzzling blank spaces between performance and withheld intelligence, announce it doesn't work really. Rather such pathologies beg for a radical re-examination of our version of literacy, and social and individual development.

This is where Graff's reader becomes worth thinking about. Its historical materials help to critically situate one's experience of modern literacy, including one's experience of schooling and what happened apart from schooling. They also begin to de-mythicize some of the premises and demands that police the literacy debate today, especially as these pertain to the social functions and origins of literacy. The collection contains fifteen reprints of essays and book chapters, almost all of which have been written since 1970. They are intended to combine the makings of a substantive social history of literacy from the Middle Ages to this century, with an introduction to recent empirical and theoretical approaches to the relations between literacy's social roles and meanings and that far more obscure phenomenon called "social development."

These materials question many of what Graff calls the "legacies" or received premises and ideals and institutions which have become central to the history of literacy and Western social development. Such legacies form a composite of working assumptions and argued claims: that literacy and its special technology, mechanized printing, possess some intrinsic and deeply determining social powers; that literacy in itself fosters enlightenment, humane "improvement," social-economic development, upward class mobility; that becoming literate can be meaningfully thought of apart from its experienced usefulness in the lives of particularized people(s); that orality is, at least implicitly, a condition quite distinct from being literate, and a lesser way of being human; and that high levels of social development require high levels of literacy. High levels? Development? Improvement? Intrinsic powers? What does all this mean? The point of Graff's collection is that apart from the myth-sustaining powers of culturally emotive and ideal concepts, these things mean very little until they are grounded in the live matter of history. Others, like Jack Goody in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, have argued that literacy reinforces if not generates the historical point of view, even while the same authors dissociate an ideal of literacy from historical process. The historians collected here are arguing first and foremost that literacy is lived *inside* social process; that it too is susceptible to how these processes, as struggles, get weighed institutionally; that it too can become myth and be used to push us around, just as the technological determinists of media (like Marshall McLuhan and Walter J.

Ong, S.J.) have said media *have* to drive us and treat us like ciphers.

This historical de-mythification takes many forms. Elizabeth Eisenstein says we have to see the effect of printing as entailing both enlightenment and mystification (p. 55). Her example of the flood of printed occult lore in the late fifteenth century isn't hard to duplicate many times over the ensuing five hundred years. Gerald Strauss, Egil Johannson, and François Furet and Jacques Ozouf all point to how Christian catechisms were devised and widely distributed, under an ideal of correct response, in order to strictly direct reading responses. Given the corroding of old world traditions, mass printing certainly facilitates the spread of competing ways of knowing things. But it does so under the impress of new and competing social interests. Eisenstein also shows that while printing was *the* vehicle for the "wholesale assault on all received opinion" in the sixteenth century, it was also a ready means for the quick standardization and formalization of both received and recently conceived ideas (p. 65). She tends to highlight mechanized printing as the primary causal factor here. I still do not find this very convincing—especially, for example, when I see, through Natalie Zemon Davis' experientially sensitive work on sixteenth-century France, how Protestantism and the overall anxieties built into modern reflection combined with the interests of self-proclaimed urban experts who enthusiastically used printing to relieve the vast domains of ignorance assumed to surround them. There are books like *Astrologie des Rustiques*, an early form of what today is called "development" literature, advising countryfolk how to predict the weather from sure terrestrial signs. Against this material the "backward" peasants had to be cautious, as in the case of one *Calendrier* where tools are combined with totally inappropriate animals, or as with a 1566 Lyon edition where the month of sowing appears before the month of reaping. You clearly had to know when to trust in your own ignorance, as against all this expertise. But the point is that already, amid presses and calls for new regimes of truth and order, the presumptuous self-ideal of the expert intelligentsia surrounded by people in want is getting established.

This work by Davis shows how the roles of printing are deeply embedded in the dynamics of social interests competing in a self-consciously secularizing culture. There's the case of the late sixteenth-century medical popularizer Dr. Laurent Joubert: how he laboured to collect and correct all kinds of traditional medical lore; how he did de-mystify some and re-mystified others; but most of all how printing came to be *used* by *him* to both "raise" the surgeons from their "routine illiterate practice" and similarly raise the people to a better understanding of how to care for themselves, even while making the surgeons more dependent on expert advice and the people more dependent on the doctor's orders (pp. 93-94). There is an uncanny ring to all this, something that becomes clearer when you read E. Verne's essay on contemporary "development" as expropriation of individually and community-based life skills. In fact this is a central problem of the literacy debate, and one probably not adequately indicated in this reader: the intelligentsia's displacement and screening of its own social roles and habits by fixing on the formally conceived powers of print, reading, and writing.<sup>2</sup>

What about the other end of this dynamic: those who are reading all this, or being read to, or hearing it secondhand? Again the historical record says you cannot typify what happens here, or why it happens. Nor can you simply treat readers or listeners to reading as ciphers of a medium which in turn deeply alters their sensibility. Nor can you presumptively equate non-literacy with the implication of lesser abilities to make one's way more or less sanely through life.

<sup>2</sup>On this see the fine work in Alvin W. Gouldner, Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals, *Telos*, 1975-1976, 26, and *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Davis remarks, for example, that rural oral culture in late sixteenth century France was still so dominant that it "transformed everything it touched" (p. 83). Access to or ability to afford books did not mean one would want or need them. There were things in print you couldn't trust; other things might or might not usefully supplement already existing knowledge. Talented storytellers and the importance of social occasions in truly viable cultures (all of which we hear far too little of here) made printed materials not very appealing. Something has to happen socially—i.e., the corrosive dynamic of modernism—before things like storytelling compete first with public and later with private reading. It is this domain of struggle and choice, by the way, that those who isolate and aggrandize media erase from the historical record, thereby de-politicizing the past and sustaining the illusion of a present made up of merely technical choices. But the historical record suggests that people are more discretionary than many of those who end up writing about them. Much early public reading was more correctly translating, Davis says, since the reader was simultaneously translating the text into a local dialect and no doubt reinterpreting the text more or less to suit the occasion. Michael T. Clanchy points out that many literates preferred hearing writing and auditing records aurally in order to make the most intelligent response. Medieval officials need not be able to read or write, or need not personally use such skills even if they possessed them. But rather than suggesting some lesser state of intelligence, this merely says "they were as literate as the tasks required" (p. 45). This experientially discretionary levelling of literacy is an excellent rule of thumb to remember, especially later when it becomes necessary to distinguish voluntaristic and local-practical forms of literacy from the programs of Enlightenment pedagogues and church educators aimed at disciplining and improving children through text-centered schooling.

This distinction remains crucial today because promoters of the literacy myth seem to want to collapse learning into text-centered, operationally-oriented, behavioristic schooling; to think of social development as dependent on such schooling; and then to look back on the unschooled as living a merely human rather than civilized life. In part this general line of thinking stems from the Reformation educators' mistrust of non-prescribed forms of learning, and from the Enlightenment educators' exaggeration of the intrinsic powers of textualized learning. Such beliefs have found ready public acceptance given the class and racial ideals circulating through the history of the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup> The mistrust and exaggerations come together in figures like Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada and an articulate theorist of the founding purposes of modern disciplinary schooling (see Graff's chapter). The contemporary twist on this history is the tendency to isolate the powers of the text (the ideal being the expository essay), and then place them on the side of correct, normalized, operational "development." Thus is constructed the facade of a non-ideological understanding of schooling which effectively emasculates learning as

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<sup>3</sup>See Gerald Strauss, "The State of Pedagogical Theory c. 1530: What Protestant Reformers Knew About Education," and Carl Kaestle, "Between the Scylla of Brutal Ignorance and the Charybdis of a Literary Education: Elite Attitudes Toward Mass Schooling in Early Industrial England and America," both in Lawrence Stone (Ed.), *Schooling and Society* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1976); Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900, Past and Present, 1969, 42; Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977); J.M. Goldstrom, *The Social Context of Education, 1808-1870* (Shannon: Irish Universities, 1972); and the documentary materials in Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: MacMillan, 1981). Broader and perhaps more critical contexts for this work can be found in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Vintage, 1962); and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. 1 (New York: Urizen, 1978).

something the established order might rightly suspect. Indeed, one of the more striking impressions of literacy's social history is how, in contrast to the far more interest-aware Ryerson, our own school promoters have turned "disinterested science" into a vehicle to repress the politics of learning and appoint themselves the bureaucratic-technical directors of a naturalized schooled culture.

The new history again helps to de-reify this recent chaining of intelligence to education to schooling to texts to experiential disciplining to normalized human development to operational standards of performance to existing conceptions of social progress. Against the economic and attitudinal arguments of the modernization theorists, Kenneth A. Lockridge writes that neither the expectation nor reality of improved socio-economic conditions was involved in the massive rise in literacy in mid-eighteenth century New England; nor did literacy in this instance seem to entail "new, more generous, abstract, widely aware or innovative social sympathies" (pp. 186-187). Studying life in late nineteenth-century Provence, Tony Judt finds "absolutely no correlation between literacy and political behavior," the important determinants being day-to-day experience and group allegiances—e.g., whether one was a literate, conservative clergy or a non-literate hungry, and possibly rebellious peasant. Graff reminds us that the Swing movement surfaces in areas of intense grievance and very low literacy, but even to have to make this kind of point reveals how ideals about literacy in our culture can bury what should be obvious. Roger S. Schofield concludes that the reduction of non-literacy in nineteenth century England might well be more a cultural change brought about by economic growth than one of the causes of growth (p. 213). On the same subject, Graff cites evidence that indicates early industrialization was disruptive of learning, that literacy rates fell or stagnated as a result. He also argues that schooling "overwhelmingly" reinforced rather than significantly altered one's class position, and that the more crucial variables have been sex, race, ethnicity, class, and age. In one of the most important sections of this reader, and one that strikingly clarifies the prehistory of many ideological assumptions at work in modern schooling, Graff points out that in the early history of mass schooling, reading and writing become one of the key vehicles to "improve" or discipline children (e.g., inculcate time-thrift, attention control, body control, proper manners, dependency, careful expression), all of which was quite consciously designed to assimilate children of the labouring class and children-as-children into industrialized labour and bourgeois manner and needs.<sup>4</sup> More pervasively, such improvement passed the child through a regimen of training in being trained (Graff quoting the work of R.P. Dore on Japan, p. 258), of learning on the senses, Kafka said, the terrible lessons of hesitation, guilt, self-discipline, and obedience necessary to make most performance in this culture even barely, albeit perversely, credible to the self.

This too scattered summary of arguments hardly indicates how the sampling of research gathered here qualifies and negates many elements of the literacy myth, how it begins to give literacy a particularized and lived, not formalized and image-ridden, history. These materials are also freeing up the debate, as is evident from the concluding theoretical essays by Verne and Johan Galtung. In part, both of these writers take up a recurrent theme of the anthology: without either devaluing or sentimentalizing it, to begin to take seriously everyday experience, non-schooled wisdom, shared and practical knack, the day-to-day ways people have of combining experience and doing and words on the margins of schooling's productivist society.

<sup>4</sup>On this see Sidney Pollard, *Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution*, *Economic History Review*, 1964, 16; and the suggestive comparative work in E.P. Thompson, *Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism*, *Past and Present*, 1967, 38. On modern, self-consciously "adult" anxiety over children, see Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, and Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.

While not forgetting the problematic tensions between everyday and critical-conceptual modes of reflection, the schizoid bilingualism of modern life, these last two essays highlight what Davis calls the "salty, particularistic, resourceful layer of culture" which struggles to adapt mainstream institutions and ideals to more localized needs and traditions (p. 95, Davis is here thinking of Richard Hoggart's work). Verne speaks of the "passive resistance" evident in some reactions to institutionalized literacy, what developers write off as "tradition-bound cultural peculiarities" and educators only see as stubborn dumbness.<sup>5</sup> So often, if you listen, you come upon the same message: I won't easily learn to be your ideal (of a student, producer, citizen, consumer) if it means, as I suspect it means, denying needs that (I remember, I imagine) can only be satisfied between *live* people making their way in social forms scaled to direct decision-making by those who have to live the consequences of the decisions made. The insight of such resistance has nothing to do with progressivist programs which devise increasingly fragmented special-interest curriculums while retaining intact the total abstracting, hierarchical, normalized apparatus of schooling. The insight implies a demand for a fundamental de-bureaucratization of education (starting with a wish that teachers stop being taught to play "roles" when teaching "subjects," for example) and an equally fundamental decentralization of society. Or as Galtung writes, learning needs to be re-thought on the premise that people be encouraged to "dare respect their own insights more" (p. 285). The unanswerable question today is to what extent the massive, self-congratulatory *presence* of things as they are will make it possible for individuals to know (find believable and workable and extendable) anything not narrowly functional. Even the deep individuated soul cannot bear being terrorized forever by the contrary forces of social performance and non-socialized personal longing.

And saying this brings me to a final point. It is good to be able to de-mythicize much contemporary thinking about the social powers of literacy, and to critically question the meaning of Westernized social development and literacy's reputed role in that. But there is also something limiting, not searching enough, in this primarily *social* perspective mediated by today's culturally aggrandized categories: language, script, text, printing, schooling, social functionality.

Everyone here is already socially de-limited: writing wills, signing registers, being schooled, schooling others, listening to legal documents, writing Protestantized autobiographies, talking-reading-writing politics, studying catechisms, printing Bibles and almanacs. A telling sign of this, which the literacy literature makes thoroughly predictable, are the interminable discussions of Luther and Bacon and their heirs, and the close to absolute silence on Rabelais and Cervantes and their heirs. What's the meaning of this peculiar silence about the novel, *the form* of the modern epoch along with the essay and the report? Why do the much lauded presses seem to do everything but print novels? Another sign: literacy here is already socially institutionalized literacy. We come away with no *deep* comparative sense of the ongoing activities involved in independent, informal, often personal learning of which reading and writing have formed some important part—I am thinking of hints in Colin Ward's *The Child in the City*, for example. More generally, there is only the slightest indication in Graff's reader that anything else exists besides social being, besides socially-defined literacy—as when Furet and Ozouf point to Stendhal's divided reaction to bourgeois promotions of Enlightenment that have built into them programs to socially co-opt and normalize sensuous life. Or, another example, when Galtung writes in an

<sup>5</sup>The comment on tradition-bound cultural peculiarities is by Robert Heilbroner, quoted along with much similar material in John H. Bodley, *Victims of Progress* (Menlo Park: Benjamin/Cummings, 1982). On stubborn, institutionally forced dumbness, see George Dennison's comments on José in *The Lives of Children* (New York: Vintage, 1969).

otherwise uncritically elaborated statement that "Through schooling the individual is on trial; in education society is on trial" (p. 277). But what would it mean for the history of literacy to examine the suggestion that society can be deeply questioned by the individual? Even without trying to answer this question, Galtung's comment implies that in our culture individual experience is not continuous with social experience; and that individuals struggle amid meanings that look both outward, socially, and inward toward the "private" worlds of need, memory, longing, body sensation, and bodily knowledge. It implies that the individual is other than received, socially-dominant codings of reality, which the writers here know. But it also implies that the individual is other than the socially-proscribed preoccupations of any society, which many of the writers here do not have any inkling of.

Recently I have been teaching William Morris, and it was a certain grounding in his work that kept coming to mind when thinking about this anthology. Morris judged his society by the fact that it "offends the senses at every turn . . . forces us unconsciously to blunt their keenness" and either suffer silently, become combative, or go mad.<sup>6</sup> I believe he could only have thought of social history and written social critique in this way if he was working with an *experience* of (not primarily language-mediated idea on) what it means, and could mean, to be complexly, sensuously, individually human. There is no other believable way to generate such critique unless its sense of offense and hope are rooted in the single body: its sensibility and its subjectivity. In other words, while the intention of Morris' vision was the deep transformation of social processes, the grounding of his work, the truly radicalizing arbiter of interpretation and vision seemed more often to be the sensible experience and needs of the single individual. And now to that point I promised: it is this grounding—of not necessarily socialized subjectivity, of intelligence not keyed to ordinary versions of social performance, of non-verbal experience and expression, of a subjective literacy that resists being made social—that is already pretty well incorporated into the "social" by the time the history recreated here is written. And it is at this point that such history begins to move into line with the strongly socialized, behaviorist assumptions of those whose work is otherwise criticized. The absence of a not already socially occupied subjectivity means that Galtung's insight can never really be followed through to the point where the social is seen and judged in terms of the struggles of individuals to listen to the body's persistent longing to become sensible and intelligent. Thus any material grounding for sensibility and intelligence, as Morris understood these things, is eliminated, and social history and critique are made to retain the managerial assumptions about people's experience that the intelligentsia find so convincing.

Consistent with this is the excising from literacy's social history of all serious consideration of literary fictions, especially the novel. Obvious factual distortions result, but far less obvious is the fact that this silence does not allow anyone to even consider the non-behaviorized in readers and writers. What I mean here has been suggested in Dieter Richter's inquiries into the ongoing attempts in this culture to suppress the reading of novels and, more recently, to police their reading through formal and experience-dismembering techniques. Why, Richter asks, is the novel above all forms perceived as "wrong" literature, not easily-enough "digested" and "transmuted into strength and nourishment, and applied appropriately to life and action"? What does it mean to say it creates irritations, weakens us, is overly seductive, stimulates dissatisfactions? Richter points out that many schooled readers today read novels with what he calls a "double reading morality," one way inside the institution and another way outside, the lines of division being between socially occupied forms of technical competence versus private and intimate responses rooted in every

<sup>6</sup>Morris, "The Society of the Future," in A.L. Morton (Ed.), *Political Writings of William Morris* (New York: International, 1973, pp. 200-201).

imaginable kind of social and *asocial* memory, fantasy, sensation, longing, fear, passion.<sup>7</sup> Why all this? In part it is because many novels appeal to the *asocial* deeps of one's sensuous life, they elicit out of the experiencing reader a greater awareness (sometimes verbal, sometimes sensational, often not precise) of one's living a tangle of behavioralized and singled experiences, the latter with their *own* sense of memory and channels of becoming intelligent. Reading novels can thereby begin to stir round congealed habit and received truths and those harmonious phrasings of purpose we readily collect in order to later declare the necessity of how we lived. Novels often act, I suspect, like a voice Ivan Ilych hears as he is dying. It is not an "audible" voice, but rather the voice of his soul or "the currents of thoughts arising within him," a voice which makes him aware that while socialized expectation and its language has led him to believe his life has been going uphill, all along the possibilities of a fulfilled life have been "ebbing away" and his life in truth has been going downhill.<sup>8</sup> The novel discloses readers as also *asocial*, inaudible voices and currents of thoughts, sensuous creatures who probably still exist far more outside writing than inside it, who still—because each body has to re-live accumulated culture—often cannot digest the idea that what is socially workable or even pertinent is necessarily workable or pertinent in terms of the individual's life.

The literacy promoters seem to imagine an ideal of a linguistically self-revealing text, a semantically self-contained text, against which subjectivity as I have been discussing it has to be perceived as a mere nuisance. The "text [i.e., expository essay] stands firm" while the schooled child has to learn to "suspend all the nontextual expectancies" and to "live in the text."<sup>9</sup> It is hard to imagine really achieving this burial of the self, but working from such ideals you *can* help people towards believing they are moving uphill when they might well be plunging downhill. At some point I think this schooled dispossession of subjectivity has its analogue in the deeply socialized (although not conformist) subjects of Graff's reader. All the not yet socially accommodated expectancies suspended: no stammering against the facts, no speechlessness, no intimacy, nor rich sense of sensibility at work the way Morris could still know it (or as Paul Goodman or Herbert Marcuse have in our time). Suspended: which is to say seemingly not pertinent, which in turn is to implicitly smooth out the powerful tensions and pathologies generated between a society always on the offensive, because so lacking credibility, and a subjectivity under retreat. Everyone here is already public property and that is the first precondition to assuming that you can virtuously teach people to live in yet one more prescribed language machined towards social functionality. In the end, this absence of attention to (often even understanding of) subjectivity and sensibility clears the ground for new waves of social managers and developers and progressives, a tendency indicated in the essays by Galtung and Verne, in the double pull of compassion for and demeaning of peasant sensibility seen often in Paulo Freire's work, and especially in such studies as John Oxenham's *Literacy*, where

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<sup>7</sup>Richter, *Teachers and Readers: Reading Attitudes as a Problem of Teaching Literature*, *New German Critique*, 1976, 7, 31-36. On transmuting novels into socially operational strengths, Richter is quoting the Enlightenment pedagogue Joachim Heinrich Campe. On current pressures to adjust a critical and cultural literacy into defensive and conformist uses of literature, and for a sense of *live* readers and writers rarely found in the literacy debate, see the unpublished paper by Jerald Zaslove, *Eisenbahnstrasse: The Production of Literate Culture: The Legacies of Formalism and the Dilemmas of Bureaucratic Literacy*, 1982.

<sup>8</sup>Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, trans. Aylmer Maude (New York: New American Library, 1960, pp. 146-148).

<sup>9</sup>David R. Olson, Review: Toward A Literate Society, *Proceedings*, National Academy of Education, 1975-1976, p. 153.



the rhetoric of enlightenment doesn't even conceal the claimed need to bind people's emotional and physical lives.<sup>10</sup> Given the anti-social society developing over the modern epoch, and given the readiness of the schooled intelligentsia to rationalize a position of power for themselves in such a society, social literacy *especially* cannot be taken for granted as *the* significant sphere by which to critically re-vision how we think about literacy and its association with sensibility, intelligence, social performance. How much truer this must be if one grants, along with many of the historians here, that a basic end of historical research is to open the ways for the re-appropriation of speech—and experience, community, labour, play—by both livable societies and discrete individuals.

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<sup>10</sup>Thoroughly joining bodily and emotional regimentation with self-improvement and social progress, Oxenham says "Perhaps Napoleon was right: soldiers who have been systematically drilled, pushed and stretched into being good readers and good writers, need much less drilling—i.e. learn more rapidly—the tedious routines of the army." Here amidst a Silly Putty theory of human nature, the ideological history of Western schooling is suppressed, reading and writing are portrayed most positively as the intrinsic vehicles of improved (productive, endlessly needful) discipline, and then the State is introduced as being "obliged" to satisfy the "basic human right" of "this particular form of learning or training" (*Literacy*, pp. 50-51). Typical also in the literacy literature is the fact that Oxenham's allusions to critical readers and human needs and what he calls the "lighter sides of human life" all get smothered by the overwhelming sense of literacy as a "technology of usefulness" leading individuals onward to their "higher" purposes (p. 128), "higher" immaculately meaning rational, democratic, humane, but in substance meaning the factory, the office, the classroom centralized under the State. For his part, Paulo Freire objects to arguments from "extension agents" and administrators like Oxenham which tend towards the prescriptive normalization of self-understanding, and yet Freire also assumes the necessity of people's breaking with their familiar, localized, often ecologically well grounded life-ways, a break he associates with "separation" from nature and the sensuous within which such people are seen "submerged" like mere animals. For all his excitement over signs of native intelligence, Freire seems to assume that the way of the future is towards nationalized cultures, albeit under "progressive" states, and that to achieve this individuals will have (here he quotes Zevedei Barbu) to make "more and more use of intellectual, and less and less of emotional and instinctive functions . . ." (*Education For Critical Consciousness*. New York: Seabury, 1973, p. 6).