Consumption and Identity in the World of the Book.

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Abstract.

Consumption and Identity in the World of the Book. Paul Stallard.

- The thesis draws upon an ethnographic and qualitative study of two related sites in the world of commercial bookselling. It provides a detailed account of the role of the book in the everyday lives of a group of readers and of the organisational practices and experience of work within a UK bookselling chain. This empirical account is entwined with a theoretical argument founded in non-representational theories of practice and subjectivity. This leads to a stance critical of dualistic conceptions of society and space and an attempt to describe and understand these sites as the outcome of material, human and discursive relations rather than as essentialised entities. The thesis explores the implications of this conceptualisation of these sites in terms of recent debates concerning commodity chains, the role of the object and materiality in constituting society and space and notions of subjectivity and identity and draws conclusions concerning the spatiality of these concepts.

Acknowledgements.

This thesis has certainly been an unbounded entity in its manner of production and would not exist were it not for the multitude of social and material relations which have constituted my own subjectivity during its lengthy production.
Thanks are due first of all to the many other 'voices' which appear in or inform the work and who have been forced to 'represent' readers and workers, all of whom helped convert a terrified ethnographer into an avid enthusiast for trying to get people to talk about seemingly bizarre topics. Thanks and fond memories go also to my bookselling colleagues who not only dutifully carried on with their day to day practices for me to 'observe' but were also the source of a fantastic social life.
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And thanks to my family and the many friends who've been a source of love, support and friendship over the last few years with, special thanks to Birgit and Claire for the constant encouragement, good cheer and counselling!

I also acknowledge the financial support of the ESRC for fees and maintenance.

Responsibility for the finished thesis remains my own.

Paul Stallard.

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Section A: Theory and Methods.

Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1: The Thesis.

The title of this thesis is 'consumption and identity in the world of the book'. All of the terms in this title are deliberately nebulous. The thesis is as much about this nebulousness as it is the terms themselves. The difficulty of bounding entities of any kind so that the terms which describe them *mean* something by themselves is a constant refrain in the thesis. So for instance, consumption

> "is a process intricately enmeshed in the situated practices and social relations of modern everyday life, in the commonplace spatialities of individual and collective existence. It is so completely and complexly enmeshed in those practices, relations and spatialities that it may be regarded onto itself only through acts of academic legerdemain"[1]

The title nonetheless alludes in general terms to the content and focus of the thesis.

The thesis provides an empirical account of two 'sites' in a network (or 'world') of practices, discourses, meanings, objects and people. The common denominator in this network is the book. In both settings my concern is with the intersection of the book, literary culture, individual subjectivities, and commercial retail practices. The two settings are the production and consumption axes of the commercial bookselling chain Waterstone's. I examine the experience of work in such a bookselling chain and its attendant retail practices and the experience and practices of consumers, the kind of readers who might use a place like Waterstone's to buy their

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[1]Pred, 1996: 13.

books. The thesis is grounded in empirical exploration of both these groups, readers and workers.

This empirical material intertwines with a theoretical argument and these mutually inform each other. This theoretical conceptualisation owes its provenance to a diverse body of literature, most of which shares a similar approach in rejecting

> "the efficacy of representational models of the world, whose main focus is the 'internal' and whose basic terms or objects are symbolic representations, and are instead committed to non-representational models of the world, in which the focus is external and in which basic terms and objects are forged in a manifold of actions and interactions."[2]

This leads to an emphasis on *description* rather than *explanation* as a means of understanding the social world and a position which sees society and space as the outcome of dynamic *relations* between entities. The thesis consists of an attempt to conceptualise the empirical descriptions of these (interconnected) sites in relational rather than dualistic terms. In particular I consider the relational engagements between humans and objects - the way in which identity and subjectivity relates to the material world and how these mutually constitute each other. The implications of this relational thinking are also considered for other scales and debates such as place and the commodity chain.

The remainder of Section A explores this theoretical provenance and its implications for researching the social world in greater detail, and introduces the methods employed to generate the empirical material prior to the descriptive accounts of readers and workers in Sections 2 and 3. I begin this chapter however by attempting to arrive at an ontological definition of the object which provides continuity and a running theme to the thesis - the book. This is far from being the only character in the thesis but nevertheless underpins its narrative form. In much of the thesis the book is not even mentioned but it is always a presence and its existence nevertheless influences

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[2]Thrift, 1996: 6.

the settings being described. The difficulties of defining the book lead me to a theoretical account of the ontological slippage between subject and object. This leads to a discussion of the themes of subjectivity and identity addressed in the thesis and a summary of the thesis.

1.2: The Book.

> "The printed book could be said to have 'arrived' between 1500 and 1510. Little by little it replaced the manuscript in library collections, relegating it to second place, and by 1550 the latter was hardly used except by scholars for special purposes ... by the 16th century the printed book had been produced in sufficient quantities to make it accessible to anyone who could read."[3]

What is the book? An object with a particular set of dimensions and a certain number of pages (though these vary considerably), the focus of a set of discourses concerning social importance, civilisation, a text, a peripheral set of practices, a symbol. Certainly an entity which is hard to pin down.

Let us begin, for the sake of beginning somewhere, by considering the book as something slightly magical.[4] Something perhaps with a degree of agency of its own.

> "These biros, writing desks, tables, books, diskettes, consoles, memories produce the group that thinks, that remembers, that expresses itself and, sometimes, invents ... Certain objects in this world write and think; we take them and make others so that they can think for us, with us, among us and by means of which, even within which, we think ... To call these marvellous things simply objects seems to me as idiotic and unfair as saying that slaves and women have no souls, that servants have no needs and that children don't need freedom."[5]

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[3]Febvre & Martin, 1990: 262.
[4]For Hennion "only magic deals in forces that act at a distance" (1989: 402) a comment he uses to refer to the way in which objects, subjects or agents have a power and influence beyond their immediate locality.
[5]Serres, 1993: 49-51.

In puzzled and humorous fashion John Updike attempts to account for the way in which the many books which arrive through the front door of his house seem to inexplicably navigate and circulate within his home. For him the only explanation is that the books become enlivened in the manner of the dancing objects in Disney's The Magician's Apprentice:

> "One night, when we are all asleep and except for the twitching of the thermostat the house is still, the unread books leap into the air, sail through the kitchen door, bank jauntily over the stove and coast at a smart cant into the library, where they settle, fluffing and cooing on chair arms, sofa backs, hi-fi speakers and the space where my wife is supposed to write letters."[6]

An account amusing for its fantasy. And yet other authors with more serious intentions make claims for the book's cultural power which lean towards endowing it with similarly fantastical properties and perhaps an agency of its own. Boureau for instance aligns the book with other objects of totemic and symbolic value:

> "The dual nature, theological and magical, of the hagiographic book made it a sacred object that one could manipulate. Like a cult object it could be possessed in common and be endowed with sacred power, but like devotional materials, it was an individual continuation of cultic activities and the mark of a religious practice. It took its place among medals, pious images and pilgrimage tokens. It signalled, recalled, evoked a vow or a past or ongoing practice."[7]

Further marshalling the literature we find the book held accountable for various charges of cultural influence and accused of either direct responsibility or guilt by association. Febvre and Martin for instance describe the book's quite literal condemnation for its "critical" role in moving 16th Century protestantism towards reformation:

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[6]Updike, 1962: 38.
[7]Boureau, 1989: 18.

"It is perhaps the case that a book on its own has never been sufficient to change anybody's mind. But if it does not succeed in convincing the printed book is at least tangible evidence of convictions held because it embodies and symbolises them; it furnishes arguments to those who are already converts, lets them develop and refine their faith, offers them points which will help them to triumph in debate, and encourages the hesitant."[8]

And as such was regarded as an accomplice or partner in crime:

> "On 21st January 1535 in the day time there was a penitential procession in which the King took part through the streets of Paris and in the evening, through the streets through which the procession had passed, six heretics were burned at the stake. To complete the symbolism three large sacks of books were added to the pyres before execution. The large numbers of handbills recovered and the many suspected books seized during the enquiries must certainly have surprised the King who seems to have suddenly understood the importance of the book in the propagation of heresy. Books, moreover, provided the sole tangible proof of a suspect's guilt, materialising as it were his private heretical opinions ... Francois I took extreme measures and on 13th January 1535 forbade any book to be printed within the kingdom on pain of death by hanging."[9]

A response which did little to impede the book's remarkably swift and prolific rise throughout the continent (including the particularly resistant France) during this period.

> "Though the book trade was restricted by ever more decrees and regulations, though heretic colporteurs were hunted down and it became commonplace between 1556 and 1560 for them to be sent to the stake, nothing could impede the invasion of France by forbidden literature."[10]

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[8]Febvre and Martin, 1990: 288. It is worth noting the subtlety, complexity and historical specificity of these authors' arguments, given the debates which follow regarding deterministic accounts of the book. Whilst they clearly establish the (influential) presence of the book in the nexus of influences which constitute the history of reformation Europe, the emergence of humanism and the changing linguistic practices which came to underpin the modern Nation-State, they are at pains to restrain their argument from reifying the book as an independent dynamic of change: "We must, of course, be careful not to ascribe to the book or even to the preacher too important a role in the birth and development of the reformation ... It is not part of our intention to revive the ridiculous thesis that the reformation was the child of the printing press" (p288).

[9]Febvre and Martin, 1990: 310.

[10]Febvre and Martin, 1990: 317.

Similar claims for the book's cultural power run through the veins of the literature addressing the emergence of this 'print culture.'[11] Within this work the book is elided somewhat with other forms of printed material and technology. Possible reasons for this confused ontology are discussed below. For now however I follow this literature in allowing the book to stand as a general representative of 'print culture' and/or the emergence of reading. Even if it is worth problematising this elision by recalling that amongst the ranks of printed matters books have never been the most prevalent form (even if they may have been the most privileged)[12]. This might include both the pre-Gutenberg enshrining of texts in transportable form (in contrast to oral culture)[13] or the post-Gutenberg mass production of printed texts, which might also include objects not necessarily booklike in form - pamphlets, handbills, newspapers etc. (in contrast to manuscript culture.)[14]

Such a broad focus allows us to grasp the historical sweep of these musings on the book's effects. It allows us, for example, to include in our account the West's first developed theory of reading which ambivalently deals with the impact of reading upon selfhood, mental representations, memory, emotions cognition and the ethics of interpretation as advanced in c400AD by St Augustine.[15] Or we might join with more recent authors in blaming the book for, variously and in no particular order:

- **Modern science:** "A press could print an 'exactly repeatable visual statement' as easily as a form set up from type. One consequence of the new exactly repeatable visual statement was modern science. Exact observation does not begin with

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[11]See particularly Innis, 1950, 1951; McLuhan, 1962, 1967; Ong, 1977, 1982; Goody, 1977; Goody & Watt, 1968; Febvre & Martin, 1990; Eisenstein 1979; Darnton, 1979. It is also worth noting a more recent literature critical of the ontological foundations of this earlier work represented particularly in Chartier (ed), 1987; Chartier, 1992; Nunberg (ed) 1996; Warner, 1992.
[12]Nunberg, 1993.
[13]Typified particularly by Ong and Goody.
[14]Typified particularly by Febvre & Martin and Eisenstein. See also Chartier (ed) 1987. It is worth following Boureau (1996: 16) in noting that the initial Latin term for the book - Libellus - indicated at the time a genre rather than a specific object.
[15]Stock, 1996. See also Manguel, 1996 & Saenger, 1997.

modern science. For ages it has always been essential for survival ... What is distinctive of modern science is the conjuncture of exact observation and exact visualisation."[16]

- The emergence of the **bourgeois public sphere** as a critical space between state and civil society as print dissemination allows individuals to make public use of their reason.[17]

- **Redefining religious and cultural life** by modifying "practices of devotion, of entertainment, of information, and of knowledge and they redefined men's and women's relations with the sacred, with power, and with their community."[18]

- The development of the sense of **personal privacy** that marks modern society via "books smaller and more portable than those common in a manuscript culture, setting the stage psychologically for solo reading in a quiet corner and eventually completely silent reading."[19]

- **Straitjacketing art:** "The printed book encouraged artists to reduce all forms of expression as much as possible to the single descriptive and narrative plane of the printed word. The advent of electric media released art at once creating the world of Paul Klee, Picasso, Braque, Eisenstein, The Marx Brothers and James Joyce)[20]

There is a whiff of determinism to all of this. As Carla Hesse puts it, the term 'print culture' is

"misleading in that it implicitly carries with it a technological determinism that conflates the history of a *means of cultural production* (the printing

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[16]Ong, 1982: 127.
[17]Habermas, 1962, 1971; Warner, 1990.
[18]Chartier, 1989: 1.
[19]Ong, 1982: 131; Manguel: 149-161.
[20]McLuhan, 1964: 54.

press) with the historical development of a *mode of cultural production"*[21]

Such determinisms

> "assume and reproduce a stable and matter of fact distinction between the material/technical and the social such that changes in the former are supposed somehow to 'impact' upon the latter"[22]

So in the case of the book, the assumption that technology somehow precedes culture

> "results in a kind of retro-determination whereby the political history of a technology is converted into the unfolding nature of that technology. Everything that has been ascribed to the agency of printing - from formal characteristics such as abstraction, uniformity, and visualisation to broad social changes such as rationalisation and democratisation - has been retro-determined in this way. What have historically become the characteristics of printing have been projected backward as its natural, essential logic. Meanwhile its historical determinations have not yet been analysed, for historians have learned to consider the realm of politics and culture only as the secondary field of technology's presumed effects... When media and technologies receive this kind of transcendental status their social investments and rhetorical meaning disappear from the field of analysis only to return in mystified form disguised as the previously latent logic of the technology."[23]

With due fairness to the literature drawn from above this deserves some qualification. Elizabeth Eisenstein for instance is in some ways typical of the genre, acknowledging her boosterism of the book as an agent of change as part of her agenda to compensate for what she perceives as the lack of historical accounts of the book's impact by establishing print history as a clearly defined object of study (with the inherent *objectification* such discipline founding suggests). Nevertheless, even for her,

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[21]Hesse, 1996: 21. Hesse confronts this technological determinism by placing 'the book' firmly within a web of social determinations.

[22]Bingham, 1996: 635. See also Duiguid, 1996 for a critique of the lexicon of supersession and technological determinism involved in contemporary debates about the future of the book; Fischer, 1994 for an account of the differing models through which such 'impact' has been explained and Thrift, 1996b for an account of 'new era thinking' in debates surrounding electronic telecommunications technologies.

"the transforming powers of print did begin to take effect ... Intellectual and spiritual life ... were profoundly transformed by the multiplication of new tools for duplicating books in fifteenth century Europe ... The communications shift altered the way Western Christians viewed their sacred book and the natural world ... The printing press laid the basis for literal fundamentalism and for modern science."[24]

Similarly, it seems unfair to Marshall McLuhan - who (along with Harold Innis[25]) might be seen as the progenitor of the 'print culture' oeuvre as a loose disciplinary form[26] - to castigate him too harshly for an unbridled technological determinism.[27] Both his notions of the hybridity of communications media,[28] and his concepts of the medium and the techne[29] at least hint at a more nuanced and reflexive ontology than a simple subject/object dualism.[30]

Nevertheless the ontological foundations of much of this literature involves just such a dualistic separation of object and culture where

> "religion, science, capitalism, republicanism and the like appear insofar as they are affected by printing, not for the way in which they have entered into the constitution and meaning of print in the first place"[31]

Clearly then there is a paradox bound up with this. If the book is to be seen as ontologically separate from the culture/society it acts upon then it must be possible to

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[23]Warner, 1990: 9&8.
[24]Eisenstein, 1979: 703-704.
[25]Innis, 1950 & 1951.
[26]His influence is acknowledged by Eisenstein, Ong & Goody
[27]Williams, 1974.
[28]McLuhan, 1964: ch5. It is also worth emphasising the chronology of the literature evoked. Later works (especially Chartier, 1989, 1992; Warner, 1990) foreground the complexity of relations between technology and society and problematise the ontologies of earlier works.
[29]The former being described as a category of relations rather than a closed object, and the latter as a complex patterning and interrelating of a period's sociality, language, political economy, science and art (Wilmott, 1996: ch1).
[30]For a reading of McLuhan which acknowledges his techno*centrism* whilst defending his sensitivity to the media's role in reflexively structurating (rather than determining) intersubjective social relations see Stevenson, 1995: ch4.
[31]Warner, 1990: 6.

clearly delimit and define the book as a distinct entity. It is generally hard to derive such a definition from these literatures. In part this is a result of the tendency towards the use of 'print culture' as a conceptual device. This has the advantage of a greater generality than would the use of a precise definition and separation of the technolog(ies) under scrutiny.[32] Entangled with the term is I think a (mainly unacknowledged) admission of the complexity of making such an ontological distinction. As my partial defence of the oeuvre against outright charges of technological determinism suggests there is at least an implied suggestion of a relational rather than dualistic relationship between society and culture which this generality can accommodate. A more cynical reading might be that this is a fudge, allowing for a vague nod towards the inseparability of technology and society whilst avoiding the need to define their precise ontological relationship, allowing for a subtle re-reification of the object into something capable of 'impact.'

Of course one might try harder to clearly limit and define the book as a distinct entity. For Carla Hesse 'the book' can be defined as an outcome of particular sets of social practices and political decisions which favoured the mode of temporality characteristic of the book as a very specific form. As an emergent form, it was indeed inseparable from a broader

> "stabilisation of written culture into a canon of authored texts, the notion of the author as creator, the book as property and the reader as an elective public."[33]

But the nature of its emergence, specifically its privileging as a form of print culture had everything to do with the way in which the book form lends itself to being a safe version of this culture, accessible to regulation:

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[32]Eisenstein acknowledges the significance of this generality by critiquing Febvre and Martin for their deception in suggesting that their work is indeed about the coming of the book when they singly fail to separate the book from the broader 'print culture' she espouses (Eisenstein, 1979: 35).
[33]Hesse, 1996: 21.

"Legal and institutional changes aimed at ensuring the dominance of the book - a cultural form that encouraged slow, reasoned reflection upon events rather than the spontaneous and rapid interventions made possible by newspaper and pamphlet production. The author of books, who had property rights in his or her work could be held legally accountable for what he or she published"[34]

The context is 17th Century France but this privileging clearly still has resonance. As does the relationship between the form of the book and its ongoing institutional setting. Particularly the relationship between its paratextual baggage and, for example, institutional support for private authorship and ownership. For Genette the book represents a relationship between text and paratext:

> "the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d'etre. This something is the text"[35] ... "a text without a paratext does not exist and has never existed."[36]

Paratexts being the assorted devices and accompaniments external to the text of a book but which "surround it and extend it in order to present it ... to ensure the text's presence in the world:"[37] the introductions, appendices, indexes, formats, covers, publishers details, reviews, author reputations, titles, notes, prefaces, dedications and so on which lend the text its specific form of existence in the world. "What enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers."[38] As such they might be seen as 'boundaries', 'thresholds' or 'vestibules' between the text and the world,

> " a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned towards the text) or the outward side (turned towards the world's discourse about the text."[39]

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[34]Hesse, 1996: 26.
[35]Genette, 1987: 12.
[36]Genette, 1987: 3.
[37]Genette, 1987: 1.
[38]Genette, 1987: 1.
[39]Genette, 1987: 2.

In terms of my general trajectory in this thesis the value of Genette's approach seems to me to be in establishing the book as a decidedly relational entity. His ideas concerning the book's unboundedness, its connection to the world and its audience of readers via a space of transition and transaction allow for a helpful slippage between the book as an object separate from the world and the book as a quasi-object connected to the world by flows of practice, discourse and meaning. For Hesse the emphasis is on the role of these characteristics in placing the book within an institutional framework of ownership, property rights and origination:

> "for the last several centuries the lion's share of profits in commercial publishing has inhered not in the limited 'property right' claims to an author's text but rather in the claim to a particular edition of the text, or the paratext."[40]

The precise form of the book - an object containing a relationship between a text and its peripheral accoutrements - is therefore an outcome of a social framework designed to favour the book and construct it as a particular form with a particular purpose. Hesse's argument is a quite deliberate antithesis to the technological determinism of the print culture oeuvre. I present it not so much as a means of parrying the technological determinists with a socially determined alternative of my own but to further establish the difficulty of establishing 'the book' as an operational concept and the paradoxical nature of any attempts to do so.

The book then as paradox. Simultaneously presented as a remarkably unchanging and eternal form and as ever changing, constituted reflexively in the context of the society in which it appears. McLuhan is sensitive to this, regarding the book as both "a definitive package"[41] with particular abilities and effects (encoding time, transcending space, insisting upon precision and attention) unchanging since its arrival, **and** a transient form, changing chameleon-like against its background:

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[40]Hesse, 1996: 26.
[41]McLuhan, 1973: 30

"To write about the present of the book, with a keen eye for the changing ground for the book as a figure is to realise how many new forms the book has assumed even in our time ... the book does not have its meaning alone. The book in the pre-literate world appears as a magical form of miraculously repeatable symbols. To the literate world the book serves a myriad of roles, ornamental and recreative and utilitarian. What is to be the new nature and form of the book against the new electronic surround"[42]

I begin with these attempts to define the book as a way of introducing a major player in the thesis. The thesis is not, per se, specifically about 'the book' nor an attempt to pin it down or define it. In some of the chapters which follow, the book is only appears occasionally. The book does however constitute a relatively constant, connecting *presence* amongst the ensuing chapters, acting as the connector between otherwise disparate themes. These opening musings are intended to point to the book's role as a "boundary object" -

> "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites"[43]

- to elaborate the elusiveness and slipperiness of the book as an object and therefore its capacity for appearing in a variety of settings in ways which are both consistent and inconsistent, determined and determining. The aim is to introduce the book as a hybrid and a mediator.

1.3: Ontology of the Object.

My purpose in reviewing the literature so far considered is not to criticise it for the complete absence of such a view. I think that it is possible to derive such a version of the book from most of the literature under consideration, if only via the tacit acknowledgement of the complexity of such a definition and a subsequent lapses into

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[42]McLuhan, 1973: 36-31.
[43]Star & Greisemer, 1989: 393.

vagueness as an alternative. It is rare however for the book to be precisely defined in these terms of heterogeneity and mediation with the sense of purpose manifest in those commentators both within geography[44] and without[45] who

> "when confronted with two unsavoury options (...) look for an escape route, to search for some means of evading invidious choices between this or that, one side or the other."[46]

And find such an emergency exit in the non-dualistic theories of material semiotics espoused for instance under the (increasingly broad) banner of Actor Network Theory,[47] as well as by other theorists less easily corralled into a school.[48] Their overriding concern is

> "with how all sorts of bits and pieces - bodies, machines and buildings, as well as texts are associated together in attempts to build order. None of these bits and pieces are privileged. Any or all of them could be necessary in the production of a particular local ordering and any or all of them might play the role of ... actants."[49]

Here, the object is always a paradox, always between two states, always partial. It does not belong.

> "Quasi objects do not belong to Nature, or to society, or to the subject. They do not belong to language either."[50]

The Latourian[51] concept of the quasi-object and quasi-subject derives from his ontological reframing of subject and object in the light of his critique of the modern

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[44]Bingham, 1996; Bingham and Thrift, forthcoming; Demeritt, 1996; Hinchcliffe, 1996; Murdoch, 1997a & 1997b; Thrift, 1996a; Whatmore, 1997; Whatmore & Thornes, 1997.
[45]Cooper, 1992; Michael, 1996; Robson, 1992.
[46]Murdoch, 1997: 321.
[47]See for example Callon, 1986a, 1986b; Latour, 1986, 1987, 1991, 1993; Law, 1986, 1992.
[48]Debray, 1996; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 1991, 1992.
[49]Bingham, 1996: 644.
[50]Latour, 1993: 65.
[51]Or in fact Serrian since Latour acknowledges his mentor as the source of this concept (1993: 51. See also Serres, 1987; Serres & Latour, 1995)

'constitution.' It is this constitution which for Latour lend the moderns their 'invincibility.'[52] It rests upon a separation between

> "two sets of entirely different practices ... The first set of practices, by 'translation', creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture. The second, by 'purification' creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand, that of non-humans on the other"[53]

The achievement of this separation is the modern's ability to constantly shift the blame between these opposing poles which (with the additional presence of a further guarantor or scapegoat - a 'crossed out' God) allow for:

> "a threefold transcendence and a threefold immanence in a criss-crossed schema which locks in all the possibilities ... they have not made nature, they make society; they make nature, they have not made society; they have not made either, God has made everything; God has made nothing, they have made everything. There is no way we can understand the moderns unless we see that the four guarantors serve as checks and balances for one another."[54]

Crucial to this constant sleight of hand is an absent space:

> "Everything happens in the middle, everything passes between the two, everything happens by way of mediation, translation and networks, but this space does not exist, it has no place. It is the unthinkable, the unconscious of the moderns."[55]

Latour's manifesto is a call to expose and attend to this previously absent space, or 'Middle Kingdom"[56]. The crux of this project is to extend concepts of being to everything that populates this space, humans and non-humans alike. If this invisible republic derives, as Latour suggests, from a separation of subject and object -

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[52]Latour, 1993: 37.
[53]Latour, 1993: 10.
[54]Latour, 1993: 34.
[55]Latour, 1993: 37.
[56]Latour, 1993: 48.

> "splitting the mixtures apart in order to extract from them what came from the subject (or the social) and what came from the object. In this way the middle was simultaneously maintained and abolished, recognised and denied, specified and silenced"[57]

- then its reappearance depends on refusing this separation. Thus subjects and objects are only ever 'quasi' - that is never fully an object or a subject. Rather their status and agency comes from conjunction, their relations with other quasi-objects/subjects. Both quasi-subject and quasi-object can potentially 'act' but neither really exists as an agent until they come together with other quasi-objects/subjects in a network of agency. Agency is this 'coming together.'

Central to this reworked ontology is a distinction between intermediaries and mediators. The moderns recognised the work of quasi-objects but

> "emptied it of any relevance by turning full blown mediators into mere intermediaries. An intermediary - though recognised as necessary - simply transports, transfers, transmits energy from one of the poles of the constitution. It is void in itself and can only be less faithful or more or less opaque. A mediator, however is an original event and *creates what it translates* as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role. If we simply restore this mediating role to all the agents, exactly the same world composed of exactly the same entities ceases being modern and becomes what it never ceased to be - that is non-modern"[58]

The book then as mediator rather than (or as well as) intermediary. Interesting not so much for its essence as an object but for its connections and relations and what is made from those.

> "The text as an ideal unity is less pertinent than the book as object, and the object in its turn less so than its metamorphoses. Our province is the intermediate or intercalcative ... It is in reality the intermediate spaces and time, the betweeness of two things or periods, the trough of the wave that

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[57]Latour, 1993: 78
[58]Latour, 1993: 77-78, my emphasis.

are decisive; but our language works the opposite way: it spontaneously subverts the sign of relations to those of being, and doing to being"[59] "The mediological manner or cast of mind consists in putting ones finger on the *intersections* between intellectual, material and social life and making those hinges grate audibly."[60]

1.4: Ontological Tensions.

Before going on to further elaborate the specific empirical focus of the thesis I want to use Debray's grating note of dissonance as a cue to introduce some noisy tension of my own. As I stated towards the end of Section 1.2 the above is an attempt to introduce the book as a key presence and narrative link in the thesis. It is also an excuse to introduce a theoretical agenda which has implications that go beyond merely providing an ontological definition of the book. I want to proceed with elaborating this theoretical agenda by in fact problematising the ontological account I have just offered. By doing so I also intend to broaden the reach of this theoretical project to encompass and introduce more of the themes which will later be introduced more formally as the main concerns of the thesis.

This problematisation proceeds from a comparison between the ontology of the Actor-network outlined above with another theoretical project - the concerted effort to develop a theory of material culture by Daniel Miller.[61] As a project this shares striking similarities as well as striking differences to the ANT school. Central to the similarity is a shared foundational stance of striving to overcome the "subject-object dualism which (has) been a pivotal problem in Western philosophy since the

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[59]Debray, 1996: 11-12.
[60]Debray, 1996: 19.
[61]See esp. Miller, 1987 as well as1993; 1994; 1995; 1997 and at slight removal from his original agenda, 1998. The lineage of material culture studies would include Bourdieu, 1977; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; Brewer & Porter (eds), 1983; Appadurai (ed), 1986 and more recently Tilley (ed), 1990; Riggins (ed), 1994. I introduce Miller partly for his individual body of work and partly as a representative of a wider body of work foregrounding consumption and the materiality of everyday life.

period of classical Greece."[62] Ensuing from this in both instances is a fascination for the nature of the encounter between human and material worlds. Central to their differences is their stance towards Hegel.[63]

Miller is at pains to point out that his is a reading of Hegel which extends and elaborates a few Hegelian concepts, rather than a truly Hegelian approach. Nevertheless Hegel's concept of objectification is the bedrock of his theory.[64] Objectification carries within it the essence of his non-dualistic approach being simultaneously a theory of object and subject, the subject being constituted through iterative encounters with objects -

> "There is never any prior subject because the subject is always constituted by the process of absorbing its own object. Similarly, the object, if understood as human cultural development, must reflect the capacity of humanity at any given stage of history. Hegel has thereby resolved the central problem of subject-object relations not merely in the utopian state of absolute knowledge but in the much more important refusal to allow for the existence of either subject or object except in a mutually constitutive relationship which itself exists only as part of the process of its own realisation."[65]

The appeal of Miller's thesis for me lies in the energy it radiates. The theory of objectification is also a dynamic theory of culture in becoming:

> "Objectification is intended as the foundation for a theory of culture. Indeed, if culture is defined as the externalisation of society in history, through which it is able to embody and thus reproduce itself, objectification and culture may be defined with respect to one another. The use of the term objectification then asserts the necessity for a particular kind of relationship between human development and external form. This relationship is never static, but always a process of becoming which cannot be reduced to either of its two component parts: subject and

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[62]Miller, 1987: 20.
[63]Especially Hegel, 1977.
[64]A bedrock he selects in part because of its permeation of so many other approaches to material culture, Marx and Simmel included.
[65]Miller, 1987: 27.

> object. ... Objectification is therefore an assertion of the non-reductionist nature of culture as process."[66]

It is this energy which draws me towards Miller as an antithesis to ANT. Through its insistence on establishing how similar (ontologically identical) to human actants object actants are it seems to me that ANT fails to sufficiently describe the implications of itself for the human part of this network of agency. In Miller there remains a creative tension between humans and non-humans wherein the human seems more easily imaginable as a living, breathing, messy subject embedded in networks of the material and social. Thus

> "mass goods represent culture, not because they are merely there, as the environment in which we operate, but because they are an integral part of that process of objectification by which we create ourselves as an industrial society: our identities, our social affiliations, our lived everyday practices. The authenticity of artefacts as culture derives, not from their relationship to some historical style or manufacturing process - in other words there is no truth or falsity immanent in them - but rather from their active participation in a process of self creation in which they are directly constitutive of our understanding of ourselves and others."[67]

Miller is explicit then (where ANT is vague) that whilst subject and object are not necessarily ontologically distinguishable, it is nevertheless the object side of the hybrid which energises the human in becoming:

> "The modern process of consumption is a much neglected part of the great process of sublation by which society attempts to create itself through negation. Thus, far from being a mere commodity, a continuation of all those processes which lead up to the object - that is, the mass abstractions which create objects as external forms - the object in consumption confronts, criticises and finally may often subjugate these abstractions in a process of human becoming."[68]

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[66]Miller, 1987: 33.
[67]Miller, 1987: 215.
[68]Miller, 1987: 191-192.

If the human part of the actor-network equation seems less well developed this perhaps owes something to ANT's methodological focus on laboratories and managerialism.[69] Or perhaps stems from ANT's (polemical) desire to equate non-human agency with what is typically conceived by social theory as human agency resulting in as strong a sense of the human as (typically) object as of the object as (typically) human. And thus a sense of the human as colder, less dynamic, less living and breathing than in Miller. Thrift for example criticises ANT for its inability to incorporate these 'living and breathing' attributes of the human, the

> "tactile, elusory embodiment which cannot be reduced to just the constituent elements of different networks. This is, then, an embodiment which is folded into the world by virtue of the passions of the five senses and constant, concrete attunements to different practices."[70]

A position which stems from ANT's failure to acknowledge the importance of place

> "because they are reluctant to ascribe different competences to different aspects of a network or to understand the role of common ground in how networks echo back and forth, often unwittingly."[71]

This does not entirely pinpoint my motivation in mobilising Miller's ideas however. A concern to (vividly) imagine the implications of a very similar ontology to ANT for the human parts of these human/object assemblages is prevalent for instance in the work of Deleuze and Guattari and their concepts of bodies without organs, becomings, haecceities etc.[72] Were it merely a question of requiring a greater human presence in the theorising this would be a direction to turn. My concern is also with intellectual trajectories and the tensions between them. At their most basic ontological levels the ANT and Millerian approaches are incommensurable. I have mentioned Miller's debt to Hegelian dialectics. For Latour Hegel is a source of considerable

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[69]Which is not to suggest that the humans in laboratories or offices are somehow 'less human' than humans elsewhere but that this represents a narrow cross section of 'everyday life.'
[70]Thrift, 1999: 314.
[71]Thrift, 1999L 313.
[72]Deleuze & Guattari, 1987.

irritation, his meddling with subjects and objects in an attempt to resolve their false duality really just makes things worse! Attempting to meld the poles merely draws attention to them and results in an even deeper reification:

> "By believing he was abolishing Kant's separation between things-in-themselves and the subject, Hegel brought the separation even more fully to life. He raised it to the level of a contradiction, pushed it to the limit and beyond, then made it the driving force of history ... It became the mainspring of the entire plot. How could the modern paradox be better illustrated? ... Phenomenology was to establish the great split, but this time with less ballast: it jettisoned the two poles of pure consciousness and pure object and spread itself, literally, over the middle, in an attempt to cover the now gaping hole that it sensed it could no longer absorb ... They really have the impression that they are speaking only of a mediation that does not require any pole to hold fast. Yet like so many anxious modernisers they no longer trace anything but a line between poles that are thus given the greatest importance. Pure objectivity and pure consciousness are missing but they are nevertheless, indeed all the more in place." [73]

And similarly for Deleuze, Hegel is

> "too despicable to even merit a mutant offspring. "[74] "The Hegelian dialectic only *seemed* to engage the non-rational; its logic of negation and contradiction was based ultimately on a logic of identity, within which the non-rational 'other' could only be conceived of as the shadow of the rational 'same'. What was needed ... was a philosophy of difference as difference, irreducible to the concepts of identity and representation."[75]

My motivation then has more to do with intellectual trajectories and seeing benefit and productivity in the tensions between them than specific lacunae in these theories. In some ways it is possible to overplay this tension, despite these disagreements over Hegel. As stated above, while not quite an immaculate conception of a monstrous, mutant offspring[76] in the Deleuzian tradition Miller's is a *reading* of Hegel rather than an Hegelian approach. His emphasis is firmly on one particular

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[73]Latour, 1993: 57-58.
[74]Massumi, 1993: 2.
[75]Bogue, 1989: 2-3.
[76]Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: x.

Hegelian concept, that of objectification. As for the rest of Hegel, "the majority of (his) ideas and the form in which they were expressed will be either ignored or abandoned."[77]

There are certain similarities then between Miller and the other approaches under discussion (particularly Deleuze) - the notion of an unfixed subjectivity, of identity and culture as becoming, the nods towards agency as an encounter between subject/object etc - even though Miller does not make a similar ontological leap away from the dialectic. Rather his project remains quite specifically within this dialectical Marxist lineage. His aim is to recast this using the Hegelian notion of objectification which was originally deployed by Marx to construct notions of rupture and alienation. Here

> "the ongoing process of externalisation is stripped of its positive gloss and replaced with an antipathetic perspective. The consequence of the employment of this perspective is that Marx is 'forced' to employ an antithetical solution to externalisation (communism) instead of being grounded in the immediate problems of living through modernity."[78]

Miller's intention here being to

> "reinvigorate a theoretical framing of contemporary societies through the prism of the formation(s) of material culture and consumption in commodity worlds."[79]

Rather than rejecting his theoretical lineage (Latour's polemical refusal of modernity; Deleuze & Guattari's 'ass fuck' of their progenitors and 'bastard lines') Miller sees his project as 'reinvigorating' his ancestry. Baudrillard, and his reversal (rather than absolute rejection) of the Marxist formulae of commodity exchange,[80] is an

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[77]Miller, 1987: 20.
[78]Thorpe, Crang & Cook, undated: 5.
[79]Thorpe, Crang & Cook, undated: 6.
[80]See especially Baudrillard, 1975 and further development in Baudrillard, 1981. Best, 1989 summarises the relationship between Marx's and Baudrillard's reading of the commodity. For a concerted attempt to argue for Baudrillard's *reinvigoration* of Marx see Kroker & Cook, 1988. For a

acknowledged influence for Miller,[81] although he is at pains to avoid Baudrillard's move towards the celebration of the victory of the commodity/object over the human.

At the heart of Miller's approach then is a sensitivity to consumption as a lived everyday practice central to the constitution of selves and cultures:

> "What we have in Miller's account then is a representation of consumption as a practice of both translation and negation, and crucially, a process that facilitates the overcoming of estrangement and provides the basis for a fundamental (re)engagement with the world ... Miller's repositioning of consumption as a positive[82] act and process, rather than a passive response to the accelerating momentum of abstraction and alienation encourages a more probing analysis of the productivities of consumption in the modern world ... This has primarily been achieved through an accentuation of the culturally dependent nature of the meaning of material culture and, more directly, the differentiated employment of social, symbolic and material resources through which abstraction is negated and material culture rendered meaningful."[83]

> "Consumption is simply a process of objectification - that is a use of goods and services in which the object or activity becomes simultaneously a practice in the world and a form in which we construct our understandings of ourselves in the world."[84]

My motivation in introducing Miller therefore is to open the way to drawing upon a body of work which does not necessarily share an actor network ontology but which shares this Millerian aspiration towards overcoming the subject-object duality via a careful empiricism and consideration of the recontextualisation of commodities by consumers. As well as a broad positioning within a cultural Marxist lineage which recasts Marx (often like Miller via Simmel[85]) as a critique of Marx's productionist slant. The Millerian approach acts then as a cipher in the thesis for an emergent body

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steadfast refusal of this viewpoint see Kellner, 1994 and for an argument that Baudrillard misrepresents Marx's intentions in his original commodity exchange formulation see Preteceille & Terrail, 1985.

[81]Miller, 1987: 46-48 & 164-165.

[82]By which I would read *active* rather than necessarily *favourable* or *good*.

[83]Thorpe, Crang & Cook, undated: 7-8.

[84]Miller, 1995: 30.

[85]Especially Simmel, 1978.

of literature which whilst not necessarily sharing Miller's vision in its entirety is nevertheless united by this focus on the role of materiality in the constitution of subjectivity and society.

An overview of the literature(s) in question is provided by Miller et al who see the progenitors of consumption[86] as being united by an attempt to address firstly the

> "paucity of theoretical or empirical work on consumption; secondly the diversity of the social relations involved in consumption ... and third, the need to consider consumption through many different kinds of social relation."[87]

They go on to distil a number of themes from the various evolutionary stages of this field, many of which have a bearing and influence upon the trajectory this thesis develops. Following their review I would acknowledge many of the roots of the thesis as being amongst what they see as the mid stages of this field. These are characterised by the foregrounding of Bourdieu and de Certeau (whose influence will be further acknowledged in later chapters) as

> "the all purpose patron saints of consumption, with Bourdieu's consumer categorisations ameliorated by de Certeau's emphasis on amorphous, dynamic and flexible consumer 'tactics';[88]

the emergence of an interest in the relationship between consumption and the construction of subjectivity[89] and the broadening of horizons concerning where consumption takes place.[90] In addition, the thesis might be seen as paralleling some of

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[86]Citing alongside Miller, 1987: Douglas & Isherwood, 1978, McKendrick, Brewer & Plumb, 1982, Appadurai, 1986 and Campbell, 1987.
[87]Miller et al, 1998: 1.
[88]Miller et al, 1998: 3. See also Bourdieu, 1984; de Certeau, 1986.
[89]Nava, 1992; Willis, 1991.
[90]Miller, 1993 on alternative festivals; Crewe & Gregson, 1997 on boot sales; Belk, 1995 on collecting. The impact on this thesis is the broadening of consumption as a practice exclusively associated with the space of shopping, to include for instance public, private and intermediate space.

the trajectories of what Miller et al[91] regard as the emergent themes of this field. They list these as:

- a concern to redress the original lacunae regarding the roles the retail workforce play as intermediaries in the production/consumption nexus;

- a concern to explore the *precise* relationship between the subject and the object in consumption;[92]

- a concern with precisely how consumer objects produce subjects via renewed interest in performativity, rationality and the displacement of "the vocabulary of rationality, choice and representation by a vocabulary of joint action and embodiment,"[93]

- a concern for space & place as crucial elements of consumer identities.

I elaborate the place of these themes in the thesis below and in the chapters that follow. In terms of the argument in hand my motivation for introducing Miller as both a deliberate theoretical tension with the earlier ANT ontology (a tension I do not necessarily hope to resolve but which I hope is fruitfully illustrative[94]) and as a cipher for a field of enquiry crucial to the lineage of the thesis hopefully becomes clear.

1.5: Middlebrow Culture.

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[91]All this section derives from Miller, 1998: ch1. See also Bowlby,1985; Campbell, 1987; Falk, 1994; Lunt & Livingstone, 1992; Slater, 1997; Wrigley & Lowe, 1996.
[92]Via say the phenomenology of Game, 1991 or Grosz, 1994; the resurrection of interest in Benjamin's notions of tactility etc or the endeavours of ANT itself.
[93]Miller et al, 1998: 6. See also Hermes, 1993; Thrift, 1996a.
[94]For a recent paper which endeavours to explore such a tension see Allen & Pryke, 1999 on the relationship between Simmel and Deleuze & Guattari.

Let me reiterate my reiteration - the book is not necessarily a major player in this thesis. In some ways its presence is trivial, or relatively unimportant. Other themes and subject matters may come to the fore as the important foci of the thesis. But the book is a presence throughout, its metamorphoses impinging in some way upon the networks of relations and practices the thesis describes. It was the methodological starting point for this work as I elaborate in Chapter 2. The thesis takes as its starting point two particular settings (amongst many) in which the book appears as a mediator. Both of these are loosely related to a contemporary incarnation of the metamorphosing book and specifically its circulation as a commodity within a commercial, consumer culture during the 1990s in the United Kingdom. This period (and its preceding decade) witnessed a significant growth in the size, profits and power of a number of commercial bookselling chains.

This represented a shift in the practices of bookselling and book consumption away from a market modelled around numerous and fragmented small scale independent booksellers at one end of the market alongside a very limited number of chain booksellers (specifically W.H.Smiths) mass marketing a limited range of titles. Richard Todd sees this polarised market in terms of a distinction between consumers of paperback fiction and hardback fiction:

> "Formerly there was a greater polarisation between the paperback buyer and the hardback buyer. At the risk of caricaturing the two ends of the market, one could say that the former would be more likely to look to station and airport bookstores, or general retailers such as John Menzies or W.H.Smiths than would the latter. Whereas the paperback buyer would have accepted that the outlets she or he was patronizing were lightly or patchily stocked, these limitations were clearly preferable to the chaos of Foyle's in Charing Cross Road, or the patrician atmosphere of specialist stores such as Dillons University bookshop in London, Blackwells in Oxford or Heffers in Cambridge. All well stocked with contemporary hardback and paperback fiction they were clearly in whatever way seen as elitist in their appeal to the consumer's pocket - to say nothing of the consumer's time ... The sense of elitism had much to do with the location of these specialist stores: the axis was London and Oxbridge.[95]

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[95]Todd, 1996: 122-123.

He goes on to describe the change in this retail structure which occurred with the emergence of the bookselling chains Waterstone's and Dillons and their rapid expansion across the UK from the early 1980s onwards as:

> "a revolution ... in the retail book trade that amounted to a dramatic extension of the book buyer's franchise. It took the form of what can only be described as a shake up of the entire system ... The competition that ensued between the two enterprises exercised a ripple-outwards effect on the entire specialist retail book trade in Britain. It is hard to convey to any reader under about the age of 30 the magnitude of these changes in terms of what one encounters when one walks into any of the ... bookstores associated with Dillons or Waterstone's today. Nevertheless it is important to try to do so because, contrary to much popular perception the British bookbuyer has never had it so good."[96]

Bound up with Todd's distinction between hardback and paperback consumers is an allusion to some form of hierarchy of literary taste and consumption practice. This is not necessarily something which Todd condemns or condones but certainly it informs his work, as it does popular stereotypes of book consumption. Thus the paperback buyer might embody notions of lowbrow, mass-market, popular fiction, reading for pleasure, lightweight etc and the hardback buyer notions of highbrow, elite market, literary fiction, reading for improvement, heavyweight etc. The commercial shift I am attempting to pinpoint here might be framed within the context of a blurring and elision of these polarities - as a revitalisation of the middlebrow.

The term middlebrow carries with it a range of baggage and meanings. In some ways it carries with it such a range the term seems close to collapse as a useful signifier. I propose to struggle on with it as a way of introducing the range of baggage and meanings caught up with this literary/retail culture of the late 80s and early 90s I am attempting to describe.

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[96]Todd, 1996: 123.

Middlebrow can be mobilised as a pejorative term denoting blandness, compromise and a dilution of the supposed values of high culture.[97] The term appears frequently in popular debates concerning the 'dumbing down' of society and culture. It is also valorised as a 'third way' which somehow incorporates the notions of improvement and civilisation associated with high (elite) culture with the energy, popularity and vitality of low (mass) culture, thus avoiding the reification of either of these. In her nuanced study of the complex institutional and subjective mediation between elite and mass literary culture Janice Radway shows how one such institution, the 'Book of the Month Club' occupied a delicate position between elite and popular attitudes towards reading:

> "on the one hand the club underwrote and legitimated an ideology supporting the notions of special expertise and technical knowledge. On the other hand, by stressing the worth and necessity of popularisation, the Book of the Month Club and other similar middlebrow institutions also expressed resentment about the insularity and narcissism of professionals who claimed such knowledge as their special province."[98]

Bound up with the expression (in both its popular, more disparaging form and its more critical, academic readings) are concepts of subjectivity and of canon. The term is striated by class, gender[99] and material/textual practices. The popular use of the term for instance is clearly intended to evoke a 'type.' Rubin recounts (in the context of the United States) how the "language of the brows" was firmly fixed in the popular lexicon (along with a "softening of its critical edge") by a playful article by the then editor of Harper's Magazine in which he carefully described each of the four

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[97]Virginia Woolf described the middlebrow as "a mixture of geniality and sentiment stuck together with a sticky slime of calf's foot jelly ... betwixt and between (with) no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed rather indistinguishably with money, fame, power or prestige" (Woolf, 1942 cited in Rubin, 1992: xiii).

[98]Radway, 1997: 358.

[99]And no doubt racial significances. This is prevalent in the some of the literature on the middlebrow canon (see Todd, 1996: ch6 'Silenced Voices and Hidden Histories') though less apparent in discussions of middlebrow subjectivity and practice despite Rubin's acknowledgement in her review of the term's emergence and trajectory as common parlance in US culture that the term has its roots in "phrenology and carried overtones of racial differentiation." (Rubin, 1992: xii).

brow sizes (high, upper-middle, lower-middle and low). The satire depends upon the particular class types being parodied in each of the groups described:

> "The highbrow ... linked culture with every aspect of daily life ... as a bulwark against the enticements of Hollywood and the advertising agencies. They were in a word serious about books and arts. The lowbrow ... wanted to be comfortable and enjoy himself without having to worry about whether he had good taste or not ... lowbrows adopted an attitude towards the arts of live and let live ... Lynes reserved his most finely drawn definition for the term middlebrow which he subdivided into upper and lower. In the first group fell the highbrow's chief patrons: publishers, museum directors and other cultural do gooders. *Their* audience, the lower middlebrows ...were the book-club members, the course takers who swell the enrolments of adult education classes, the lecture goers hell bent on improving their minds as well as their fortunes ... his highbrows wished that all middlebrows would have their televisions taken away, be suspended from society until they had agreed to give up their subscriptions to Book of the Month."[100]

For Radner meanwhile the middlebrow is explicitly 'out of category' and defined more by its consumption than by shared textual traditions, specifically the gender of its readership:

> "Middlebrow novels are read and written by intellectuals, in particular intellectual women such as Anita Brookner, Margaret Drabble, A.S. Byatt - producing a genre that is by definition out of category, that is not marked by narrative formula but by the readership it addresses, from which its authors are frequently drawn ... (it) represents an intersection point that marks a specifically feminine subject who wanders between two worlds, exiled from both - the public world of the professional and the private world of the feminine."[101]

Whilst for Todd notions of a middlebrow canon or:

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[100]Rubin, 1992: xiii-xiv citing Lynes, 1949.
[101]Radner, 1995: 106. Radner is again a proponent of the middle brow, pointing to the work to be done and noting the exile of this form from academic study - "Academia has failed to generate an adequate methodology that would represent this genre in its fullest sense as a cultural moment that is neither high art nor popular culture" (ibid).

> "self consciously literary novels intended to appeal to the general reader ... a reasonably sophisticated, largely but not exclusively professional readership with an interest in but not unlimited time for, the leisured consumption of full length fiction" is "guided but not dictated by consumer forces."[102]

What is being alluded to here then is a complex phenomenon involving the intersection of commerce, culture and subjectivity. Rubin sees middlebrow culture (in the US during her period 1917 - 1950) as the reflection of a society in transition and "a powerful illustration of the shift from producer to consumer values in America."[103] She describes the complex nexus of historical change this encompasses as notions of 'gentility' are mobilised as a desired form of subjectivity and as a means of negotiating the perceived commercialisation of aesthetics and a culture previously defined in antithesis to the commercial sphere. A formulation which also influences the mediations of cultural arbiters upon the formation of canon.

Radway follows a broadly similar trajectory to Rubin and concludes that the modes of subjectivity which emerged with the formation of middlebrow culture she describes are (despite a certain ambivalence on her part), a positive form. Whilst furthering the commodification of culture and the attendant consumer subject (the source of her ambivalence), the club nevertheless acted inclusively to provide opportunities for previously more marginal groups to obtain cultural capital and as such,

> "may also have been acting to trouble at least a little the usually tight connections between social status, access to advanced literacy and public command of a certain kind of taste ... it may also have been helping to envision a subject not singularly tied to some unchanging essence but one more multiple, mobile, and fluid, a subject with more porous boundaries and therefore intensely intertwined with the object world and distinctly receptive to the constitutive and transforming gaze of others. In concert with additional forces cracking apart the supposed coherence of the unitary bourgeois subject (like the diversification and hybridisation of the

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[102]Todd, 1996: 3.
[103]Rubin, 1992: 33.

> population), middlebrow reading in particular may have nurtured a self potentially open to engagement with the social world in new ways, a subject not sealed off but desiring and dependent, a subject therefore open to the possibility of fostering unprecedented connections and forging surprising alliances such as those that fuelled the civil rights movement, the women's movement and the gay rights movement after that."[104]

Such a blend of processes impinge on the retail formation which this thesis takes as its focus. I referred previously to the 'revitalisation of the middlebrow'. I choose the term revitalisation deliberately since I want to avoid talking of this as an emergence or necessarily something historically new. The particular form of the 'middlebrow culture' under consideration is of course historically specific, the product of a conjunction of numerous factors, some with a long historical lineage, some more uniquely contemporary (not least the book's current hybridity with computer and information technologies in terms of its production, distribution and consumption). So though it is certainly fair to say that the particular model of book retailing under discussion is an historically new phenomenon this is not however to argue for this as **the** emergence of the middlebrow in UK literary culture nor for this culture of reading and the book as **exclusively** contemporary and with no historical precedent.[105]

What it is to do is to underpin these notions of retail change with this complex interweaving of commerce, culture and subjectivity. Thus as Todd suggests, the emergence of this form of middlebrow chain bookselling occurs hand in hand with a restructuring of literary culture (the growth of literary prizes such as the booker prize and attendant publicity) and of literary canon (for him an increasingly heterogeneous and diasporic selection of fiction). And we might add ourselves that all of this occurs hand in hand with changing subjectivities influenced by both changing retail practice and changing literary practice. A nexus or assemblage of social change.

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[104]Radway, 1996: 359-360.

[105]To take one mainly quantitative example Todd shows how "if the 1980s ushered in a period of rich choice for the consumer of fiction, such choice was by no means unprecedented. On the contrary it represented recovery to a position of parity with the situation that had been disrupted by the 1939-45 war" (Todd, 1996: 8).

1.6: Breaking the Chains.

Having established this wider interconnectivity let me then be more specific about the parts of this nexus or assemblage which concern me here. The process of retail change in bookselling introduced at the beginning of 1.5 witnessed the emergence and/or expansion of a number of bookselling chains transforming the market to a situation where amongst them these chains have a presence on most High Streets in the country as well as outlets in non-high street retail spaces (out of town malls etc) and recently pioneering mega-store scale outlets in major UK cities. These chains include the dominant Dillon's and Waterstone's as well as Ottakar's, Blackwell's, Hatchard's, Sherrat and Hughes and more recently the American import Borders. My loose methodological focus in this thesis is on one of these chains - Waterstone's.

A number of features are broadly typical of this retail genre[106] some of which have been hinted at in the preceding account of the middlebrow. The chains found their commercial strategy on attaining a wide as possible customer base via these strategies of the middlebrow. Thus they aim for breadth of appeal via as broad as possible notion of canon - bestsellers are presented side by side with books judged on the basis of qualitative rather than quantitative merit by literary arbiters of taste, including in many cases the judgement, recommendation and review by the shops themselves. And they aim for increased accessibility by the adoption of retail practices appropriated from outside bookselling as a way of reducing the perceived 'otherness' and elitism of previous bookshop formats. So enhanced customer service and forms of display and promotion derived from say supermarkets or the fashion industry allow consumers to participate in bookbuying via the use of 'shopping skills'[107] rather than literary skills.

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[106]See further elaboration of Waterstone's working practices in Section C.
[107]Slater, 1993; Campbell & Falk, 1997; Miller, 1998; Miller et al, 1998.

> "Waterstone's in particular transformed the retail book trade by making it a priority to employ energetic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. Many branches are open seven days a week and on every weekday evening."[108]

As stated previously then the focus of the thesis is on two particular settings relating to the book and this commercial retail sector (particularly my case study of Waterstone's). In both settings my concern is with the intersection of the book, literary culture, individual subjectivities, and commercial retail practices. The two settings being the production and consumption axes of this retail sector - the experience of work in such a bookselling chain and its attendant retail practices and the experience and practices of consumers, the kind of readers who might use a place like Waterstone's to buy their books. The thesis is grounded in empirical exploration of both these groups, readers and workers.

The distinction I use to communicate these settings - between producers and consumers of these places is however one I hope to problematise. One thing this thesis is about is a gap. Despite problematising this in some areas of the literature recent debates about consumption suggest some form of linear relationship - a chain - between the various (supposed) spheres of production, retailing and consumption. In this schema this is a thesis about the link in this chain between retailing and consumption. One problem with this linear metaphor is its suggestion of a duality. It is tempting for instance to read into some of this literature the idea that at one end of the chain - the end that includes the relationship between manufacturers and retailers lies mainly economics; whilst on the other side - the relationship between retailers and consumers - lies culture. This is to parody much of this literature wherein the complexity of these dualisms and the interactions between economy and culture *are* acknowledged.[109]

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[108]Todd, 1996: 125.
[109]Crang, 1994, 1996; Crewe & Lowe, 1995; Pred, 1996.

Some order is given to these complex debates by Leslie & Reimer[110] who in their critical review of the commodity chain literature order the field into three main approaches:

- a global commodity chain approach derived from world systems theory[111] centring on the global dynamics of production/consumption/retailing linkages, and the systems and flows of commodities rather than individual nodes. This is "reductionist in that it subsumes observations about gender transformations, labour force issues, household restructuring or new regimes of capital accumulation"[112] as a result of its productionist slant.

- a systems of provision approach[113] based in "a vertical approach which does not isolate common aspects of consumption but instead pinpoints differences in the ways in which production and consumption are linked in various commodities"[114] and considers the specific relationships between material and cultural practices across the consumption, distribution and production of goods. Such an approach "allows for a more balanced treatment of the relationship between production and consumption"[115] whilst also being sensitive to the historical contingency of chains.

- a commodity circuits approach[116] stressing the non-linearity of consumption chains and the various points in the circuit at which changes in form and meaning can occur. "Unlike a chain, circuits have no beginning or end. They allow for a dense web of interactions between all sites and assume that commodities interrelate with

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[110]Leslie & Reimer, forthcoming.
[111]Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1986.
[112]Leslie & Reimer, fg: 9.
[113]Fine & Leopold, 1993.
[114]Leslie & Reimer, fg: 10.
[115]Leslie & Reimer, fg: 11.
[116]With its roots particularly in Johnson, 1986. See also Jackson & Thrift, 1995: 206

other goods as they travel."[117] An approach entirely predicated on the 'contingency of the circumstance'[118] rather than any assumed power of the chain.

The latter two of these schema hold the most nuance, detail and usefulness for our purposes here. They might be respectively made to (very loosely) fit notions of vertical versus horizontal commodity chains. The vertical plays more heavily on the chain metaphor, emphasising the linkages and movement of specific products between the various production/retail/consumption sectors. Whilst the horizontal favours the analysis of specific sites and issues for their illustration of the forging of particular relations between commodities.[119] My approach in this thesis is more firmly grounded in the latter of these, the horizontal/commodity circuits approach. I am broadly sympathetic to Miller's[120] discomfort with attempting to apply models of causality to relations within this production/consumption network. I also have some sympathy with the counter-argument to this position which would defend the need to identify inherent differences in power between sites along the chain.[121] And I certainly have some sympathy for the suggestion that "an explicit consideration of the role of space in mediating relationships across the chain provides a means of combining horizontal and vertical analyses"[122] and to any call for greater specificity in consumption studies as a means of accommodating the "leakiness"[123] of commodity chains:

> "Particular networks of provision are not neat self contained entities sealed off from other areas of economic and social life ... The rituals of shopping, or the projection of the self through personal goods, intersected with other fields of social action, especially at the level of everyday life. Many of these interconnections become obvious once consumption practices are explored concretely, in particular environments. It is therefore not

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[117]Leslie & Reimer, fg: 13.
[118]Du Gay et al, 1997: 3.
[119]Leslie & Reimer,fg: 15
[120]Miller, 1997: 312
[121]Fine, 1994; Fine et al 1996; Harvey, 1990; McRobbie, 1997.
[122]Leslie & Reimer, fg: 20. And therefore little sympathy for Fine et als suggestion that such theoretical hybridity leads to "analytical degradation" (Fine et al, 1996: 65)
[123]Glennie & Thrift, 1993; O'Donohoe, 1997.

> adequate to understand consumption in any given period as simply the agglomeration of different commodity chains."[124]

My general approach to this literature then is positive. The commodity chains concept seems to have engendered a healthy debate producing a range of theoretico-methodological positions providing a variety of approaches depending on scale and circumstance. A well equipped toolbox of ideas. There nevertheless seems room to add another strand to the debate by mobilising the theoretical agenda offered above to provide a modest supplement or a modest critique of the existing state of affairs. Again, I initially seek succour in notions of the Actor-network as a means of applying some ontological clarity to a state of slight ontological vagueness.[125] My argument is that despite the commodity circuits approach's avowed attempt to overcome the productionist slant of the systems of provision approach it nevertheless ends up reifying a very similar productionist ontology as a result of its focus on circulation. The argument tends towards being more about the nature of the circulation of goods through these supposed spheres rather than a concerted interrogation of the validity of those spheres themselves.[126]

What is the effect then of considering spheres of 'production' and 'consumption' in terms of actor-networks? In some ways I want to avoid answering that question other than by saying that where they exist ontologically, they exist (as with the discussion of the book, above) not as *a priori* spheres but as relational outcomes. It is not my aim in this thesis to imagine and elaborate specific network

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[124]Mort, 1997: 17.

[125]I use the term vagueness deliberately as a means of avoiding making this a catch all argument. I take a similar view to this literature as I do with the literature concerning the book and print culture (see my opening comments in Section A.3 above) which is that I do not see it as diametrically opposed to the argument I am marshalling. One might point rather to many similarities of approach but struggle to find this explicitly defined (though see Jackson, 1998 for more explicit use of similar arguments). I talk of these 'literature's' and 'approaches' therefore in broad rather than specific terms, of tendencies rather than precise examples.

[126]Again see Richard Johnson's (1986) circuit of culture as reproduced diagrammatically by Jackson & Thrift, 1996: 206 for the way in which production is (literally) black boxed as a self contained entity from which commodities flow to and from.

definitions of these terms.[127] The thesis is however an attempt to describe at least some of the connections and relations which allow for action at a distance[128] within the network of what might otherwise be described as a specific juncture of the spheres of production and consumption in the book industry. The bookshop as an assemblage. And indeed the thesis is ordered in traditional fashion in these 'otherwise' terms with a methodological and textual separation between 'consumers' and 'producers,' readers and booksellers.

My aim however is to destabilise this separation, specifically by offering accounts of subjectivity and identity formation at each of these two sites. The intention is to expose the interconnectedness (or not) of these parts of the network by exposing the similarity of these subjectivities. A metaphor might be choosing two geological drill sites to show that the strata beneath the surface show interconnections, folding and perhaps rupture. At a theoretical level this involves making the assertion that the fundamental, ontological nature of these subjectivities or selfhood is the same. In explaining this I run into a slight difficulty with language which requires a careful definition of terms.

Following Rolland Munro[129] (and in turn his reading of Marilyn Strathern[130]) I want to argue that a truly consumption view of self perhaps differs from the notions of selfhood bound up with the majority of accounts of consumption. For Munro, the prevailing ethos of self is one still firmly rooted in a productionist perspective:

> "The labour of self is assumed to be one of prosthesis, building up extensions from a foundational core ... a production view of self is one of

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[127]Though a good job is being done of re-imagining 'production' by Michel Callon with his work on 'the market' (Callon 1999a; 1999b).
[128]Law (1986a, 1986b) examines the relationship between Portugal and its colonial periphery to explore "the methods that actors may use to create passive agents at a distance" (1986a: 17). I do not wish to follow Law in his suggestion of a unidirectional relationship across distance but do wish to draw upon his network metaphor wherein distanced spaces represent nodes in the same network, connected invisibly by flows of objects, humans, discourses and practices. See also Debray, 1996; Latour, 1993; Robson, 1992.
[129]Munro, 1996.
[130]Strathern 1991, 1992 & 1995.

> persons sometimes expanding *their* empires sometimes retreating in disarray to a core, or minimal self . One can think of an air bag, expanding with the drawing in of air and then contracting on its expulsion. The metaphor of self is one of inflation and deflation: first out, then in."[131]

The implications of this dual (out and in) self are important ones for the models of social theory under critique since it allows them to exclude aspects of self where these are not helpful for the theoretical project in hand, the individual and subjective (belief, interpretation, desire) being easily parted from the universal or objective (rationality, class, gender) as a separation between individuality and agency. This permits a moral order wherein

> "that which is 'right' in the person (agency, rational choice) is held to sustain that which is 'right' in society (markets and more recently hierarchies). That which is 'wrong' in the person (individuality, irrationality) accounts for that which is 'wrong' in society (gaps in the market, lack of optimality)."[132]

As stated previously Munro views this conception of selfhood as underpinning the majority of approaches to consumption wherein

> "goods turn out to be no more than intermediaries; 'way stations of meaning' in the transfer of meanings from the 'culturally constituted world' to the 'individual consumer.'[133]

His solution to this situation is to ontologically reconceptualise the self in a way that avoids this 'in and out' duality by redefining the notion of prosthesis[134] or extension as a permanent rather than temporary state for the self:

> "We are always in extension. Indeed extension is all that we are ever 'in'. There is no 'core' self to which we retreat and come out again. Appropriation of artefacts makes possible 'performance' on a scale. this may be big or small, far or near; but we mistake the nature of the

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[131]Munro, 1996: 252-253.
[132]Munro, 1996: 254.
[133]Munro, 1996: 259.
[134]Butler (1990) & Shotter (1993) both advance similar notions of selfhood founded in prosthesis.

> movement if we relate this diminishment or anonymity back to a *loss* of self. To suffer a 'loss of self' in moments of despair, or accomplish it as a form of meditation is still to remain in extension."[135]

There are clear resonances, similarities and connections here with the ANT ontology outlined above. This is a version of self wherein the separation between object and subject (as between self and social,....) is (continually) blurred: "Object and subject, as effects, move hand in hand."[136] In some ways then I am contradicting my earlier statements concerning the difficulty of imagining the forms of human subjectivity deriving from the ANT ontology and my subsequent fall back on the nuanced productionism of Miller. Again then this ontology of self is mobilised partly in tension with different viewpoints.

To clarify this I shall now offer a more precise summary of the thesis and the way it unfurls. As stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, the thesis involves two empirical strands (separated artificially for the purposes of explication):

- an empirical study of the everyday practices associated with books and reading.
- an empirical study of the retail workplace and the work associated with selling books and reading.

These empirical accounts inform:

- an intervention in debates about commodity chains.
- an intervention in debates about relations between subjects and objects.
- an intervention in debates about subjectivity, identity and a consumption view of self.

In the following chapter (2) I elaborate the methodological approach employed in the thesis. The theoretical agenda outlined above, despite its disparity, has in common a

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[135]Munro, 1996: 264.

commitment to specificity leading to anthropological forms of enquiry. I here outline the means by which I conducted my (crude) anthropology of book-reading and book-selling and the ways in which the ontological claims made in this chapter might methodologically translate into a research agenda. The thesis then unfolds through two sections, a deliberate separation of the interconnected halves of the 'great divide' between retailing and consumption.

Section B focuses on readers and reading. Therein I consider the role of the book in the day to day lives of these reading subjects. I begin by establishing the importance of the book as part of the materiality of these people's lives and to problematise the separation between public and private as arenas of consumption. I go on to consider in detail the nature of the relationship between these subjects and the book as object via examination of the role of the book in constituting a reflexively held narrative identity. I here draw on the work of Donald Winnicott (as one possible representative of object relations theory) to emphasise the symbiosis between subject and object.

In Section C I consider the character of retail spaces devoted to the book as a workplace. I examine the way in which branches of Waterstone's are constructed around particular discourses and practices attached to the book, retailing and particular conceptions of consumer subjectivity. I show how workplace subjectivities are mobilised to achieve this and problematise existing conceptions of workplace subjectivities and the experience of work by considering the identity of booksellers via application of the consumption view of self outlined above.

I conclude the thesis by briefly reiterating some of the key themes which emerge from the descriptive accounts in sections B and C, by summarising the way in which these sites are conceptualised in the thesis and the implications of this for the

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[136]Munro, 1996: 260.

theoretical debates the thesis addresses. This leads to a brief autocritique of absences within the thesis and pointers towards further directions for travel.

Chapter 2: Methodology.

2.1: Introduction.

In this chapter I attempt to account for the methods by which I generated and obtained the empirical material this thesis is founded upon and to elaborate and define some of the relevant terms and vocabulary I use to make sense of this material. The chapter is not *per* se an account *of* these methods and approaches. Many of the actual methods and practices employed to construct this research are left unspoken in this chapter and are instead elaborated in Appendix 1. This chapter should be read alongside the more mundane and technical information provided in this appendix. As stated previously the thesis has as its empirical focus the everyday lived practices of two notionally connected, notionally separate groups of people or "communities of practice:" 'producers' and 'consumers' - workers and readers. The thesis was generated from formal interviewing and participant observation of these two groups.

I begin by exploring the connections and relationships between this empirical account and the theoretical agenda the thesis advances. I discuss the ways in which the theoretical framework I have begun to introduce leads to a particular methodological stance. This is followed by a brief illustration of the inextricable interweaving of theory and method and the dialogical evolution of these as my research progressed. I then go on to describe the methodological focus of my research in more detail and endeavour to justify my methodological separation of research subjects from the wider social world they inhabit. This leads me to a final section wherein I explore some of the epistemological and methodological implications of researching subjectivity.

2.2: Theory and Methods.

The preceding chapter has already undertaken some of the work involved in explicating the methodological approach in this thesis with its attempt to elaborate a relational 'definition' of the book and subjectivity and its resort to an ontology of unboundedness. I draw attention to this in part to excuse the bounding of 'methodology' into a separate chapter as if it is indeed separate from the ontology or wider theory which underpins the thesis. In a thesis that takes as a guiding theme the impossibility of separation, or dualism, it is perhaps appropriate that much of what might pass as 'methodology' has already appeared.

The theoretical issues outlined in Chapter 1 lend themselves to a certain methodological focus. Firstly, at a basic level the divergent yet similar ontologies outlined above lend themselves to an essentially 'anthropological' approach in the sense of their interest in the interconnections between supposedly separate phenomena at specific sites and the 'thick description'[137] required to understand these unbounded relations.

Latour for instance praises anthropology for its ability to deal with the "seamless fabric" of nature-culture and bring together

> "in a seamless monograph the myths, ethnosciences, genealogies, political forms, techniques, religions, epics and rites"[138]

of its pre-modern focus of study. He is pessimistic however of its ability to describe the 'modern', Western world of science and technology unless it recognises the non-modern character of this world and adopts a constitution

> "more likely to recognise (and value) the contribution of the non-human by shifting our cultural classification of entities ... restoring the share of the 'anthropological matrix' of actors other than human agents."[139]

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[137]Geertz, 1989.
[138]Latour, 1993: 7.
[139]Pile & Thrift, 1995: 37; Latour, 1993: 91-92.

And similarly, despite the fundamental ontological differences described in chapter 1, Miller also founds his anthropology, grounded in "the everyday world of high street shopping centres"[140] in a revivified role for the object in understanding culture as a process irreducible to its object or subject form.[141]

Following from this is a particular sense of *scale*. Relations are privileged over social phenomena - nothing exists outside of its relations. It follows then that these relations are potentially accessible at a variety of sites including say the body, the object, spaces etc. As Latour shows, networks, practices, documents and translations act as an 'Ariadne's thread' allowing us to pass with continuity from the local to the global. The 'global' is in fact an aggregate of local interactions. "The leviathan is a skein of networks."[142] The thesis attempts therefore to methodologically incorporate a range of scales - the book, the subject, communities of practice, the bookshop - without necessarily privileging any one of these.

One scale then is *place*. Place is particularly significant for the bodies of theory which I draw upon both because of the aforementioned interest in specificity – "place is still important because there is no other definition of these hybrids but a contextual one" [143]- and via the emphasis in the (broader versions) of these theories on subjectivity and practice. Both Miller and ANT are concerned with culture/society/subjectivity as 'process:'

> "Actor-network theory is more concerned with changing recursive processes than is usual in writing influenced by post-structuralism. It tends to tell stories, stories that have to do with the process of ordering that generate effects such as technologies, stories that have to do with the process of ordering[144] ... "Culture is always a process and is never reducible to either its object or its subject form. For this reason, evaluation should always be of a dynamic relationship, never of mere things."[145]

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[140]Miller, 1987: 4.
[141]Miller, 1987; Miller, 1994.
[142]Latour, 1993: 120 & 121.
[143] Thrift, 1999: 317.
[144]Law, 1994: 18.
[145]Miller, 1987: 11.

As such they share common ground with a broader literature (also informing the thesis) whose provenance is a concern with the foundation of the social world in *practice.*[146] As Pile & Thrift indicate, theories of practice draw frequently upon spatial metaphors and understandings and emphasise the subject's grounding in space and place:

> "The subject can only 'know from.' Therefore abstracting subjectivity from time and space becomes an impossibility because practices are always open and uncertain, dependent to some degree upon the immediate resources available at the moment they show up in time and space. Thus each action is lived in time and space, and part of what each action is is a judgement on its appropriateness in time and space ... It follows that there is a major emphasis in theories of practice on the specificities of place. Particular contexts are crucial elements of the practical sense because dispositions have to be constantly tuned to the indeterminacy of each context, often in creative ways so the 'rule' never says quite the same. In other words place is constitutive of the subject's understanding of the world"[147]

I mention this to qualify my use of 'a place' as a 'methodological starting point.' As well as relying on the space of the bookshop as an initial access point for considering the range of scales described above, space and place also underpin the ensuing empirical chapters as resolutely intertwined with the subjectivities they describe. As such, talking of place as a starting point implies an undesirable level of fixity. What I hope to emphasise in the subsequent empirical chapters is that place is in fact contingent and mobile:

> "The identity of a place is not given ... in no case does the identity of a site pre-exist because it is always the outcome of a construction."[148]

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[146]Braidotti, 1994; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1988; Shotter, 1993: Taylor, 1989; Wittgenstein, 1958. On Wittgenstein see also Perloff, 1996; Stirk, 1999
[147]Pile & Thrift, 1995: 29.
[148]Cache, 1995: 15.

Thus I show how place is forever being constituted from the practices of reading and work I describe. Place and space here are

> "the product of interrelations ... (it) is constituted through a process of interaction ... And precisely because it is the product of relations, relations which are active practices, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out, space is always in a process of becoming. It is always being made. It is always, therefore, also in a sense, unfinished. There are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not), potential links which may never be established. 'Space' then, can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already (and at that moment unchangingly) linked to everywhere else. There are always loose ends in space. It is always integrally space/time."[149]

As such they are spaces founded in 'dwelling' wherein space and time are

> "folded in and are forms of the objects (and subjects) themselves ... 'the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the context of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings.'"[150]

In contrast to the space of 'building' wherein humans must supposedly build

> "discursive worlds by actively constructing webs of significance which are laid out over the physical substrate. In other words, human beings are located in a terrain which appears as a set of phenomena to which representations must be affixed prior to any attempt at engagement ... space and time are neutral grids, or perhaps containers over which and in which meaning is 'placed.' They are not part of the play, they are onlookers" an outside, rather than a part of the construction of a network."[151]

I further elaborate the methodological implications of some of these other 'scales' below, specifically the scales of 'community and subjectivity. Prior to this I

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[149]Massey, 1999:279 & 283-4. See also Massey, 1995a, 1995b.
[150]Thrift, 1999: 308 and Ingold, 1995 cited in Thrift, 1999: 309. It should be noted that this metaphor is not intended to denote a static form of being, rather dwelling involves movement and flux between ever shifting spaces.

wish to boldly highlight the connections and interweavings in the thesis between the methodological approach, empirical experience and theoretical outcome:

> "In every ethnographic study the researcher has to confront very specific problems of access and interpretation, which will have a decisive impact on the shape of the eventual account that is presented by the ethnographer ... ethnographic fieldwork amongst audiences - in the broad sense of engaging oneself with the unruly and heterogeneous practices and accounts of real historical viewers or readers - helps keep our critical discourses from becoming closed texts of truth, because it forces the researcher to come to terms with perspectives that may not be easily integrated in a smooth, finished and coherent theory."[152]

To take one possible example of this interweaving let me try to account for the slight theoretical differences which might be detected between the two empirical sections of the thesis. There is for instance a slight shift in emphasis between the account of readers/consumers and the account of workers/producers involving a slight variance in the theoretical notions of self these are predicated on. In Section B I describe a reflexive form of self-hood which relies to varying degrees on some notion of a 'real' or 'core' self[153] whilst Section C is based on theories of self which reject the notion of a 'core' insisting instead on the absolute relationality of self.[154]

I do not wish to *over*-emphasise this variance by drawing attention to it. The point of the thesis is to emphasise the redundancy of (clear) distinctions between the productionist and consumer self (and therefore between my two artificial groupings of research subjects) and to establish self-hood as unassailably relational. The theoretical variance can be seen in part as a *deliberately* paradoxical attempt to apply a slightly more productionist theoretical slant to the supposed consumers and a slightly more consumerist theoretical slant to the supposed producers. It is also as much an outcome of the empirical material, my experiences 'in the field,' the methodological approaches I adopted and the slight variances in my approach at each 'site' as it is a 'deliberate'

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[151]Thrift, 1999: 300 & 301.
[152]Ang, 1996: 100.
[153]Miller, Winnicott, Giddens, Lash & Urry etc.

application of theory. Thus I would argue that the limitations of interviewing as a means of uncovering the relationship between subjectivity and reading practice gave rise to a greater emphasis on productionist notions of self whilst the use of participant observation alongside interviewing on the producer side raised the significance for me of consumptionist subjectivities.

An indication of the epistemological and representational limitations of these methods is provided in appendix 1. Crudely however my argument is that interview testimonies place an excessive reliance on the cognitivised and voiced accounts of frequently non-cognitive, unvoiced practices. This leads to a greater emphasis in the context of the interview on the respondent's own self conception. By encouraging self reflection, interviewing constructs self-reflexivity. Participant observation simultaneously undervalues the research subject's own reflection upon their motives and practices (the observation) whilst resting heavily on a (qualified) account of the researcher's experiences (the participation). I would confidently hypothesise for instance that were many of my bookselling colleagues to be presented with the notion that their work self was as much their 'true' self as their private self or their relational self in any other context, their reflexive response to this would likely be to present a narrative explaining their core self in terms reflecting the more productionist theoretical stance. And similarly were there a means of participating in and observing the multiple spaces and practices involved in the everyday lives of book readers my account would be more likely to emphasise performativity over fixity in selfhood.

2.3: Research Subjects.

First I wish to clarify what I am referring to when I talk of communities of practice and to provide a descriptive account of the nature of the "groups" under study. At the heart of the thesis, unifying and connecting these two groups is the

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[154]Latour, Strathern, Munro etc.

Sheffield branch of the bookselling chain Waterstone's. This site provided the focal point for my research amongst workers, a point of access into other sites connected to it as part of the Waterstone's network of operation and a site for the recruitment of my reader participants.

Neither the producer or consumer 'group' represent a strong, contractually based form of community in the manner of Tonnie's idealised communities of *gemeinschaft.*[155] In the case of the readers I interviewed few of the respondents actually knew each other. They had all responded to a flier they picked up in the study shop (or had passed to them by friends) asking if they had positive or negative opinions about books and reading which they would be willing to express on behalf of a university research project. The only definite common ground between them then was some or other use of that branch of Waterstone's, some form of positive or negative identification with books and reading and a willingness to be helpful. As I elaborate below, most shared social and spatial practices and may thus have unwittingly encountered one another in instances of sociality in times and places common to their respective lives but they certainly did not represent a group or community with strong bonds or ties based in familiarity and spatial proximity to one another.

The workers were more clearly delineated by being defined by a common workplace. This work 'place' is nevertheless unbounded and incorporates multiple sites (the shop floor, the managers office, head office, socialisation outside 'company space'). Different members of the 'group' have differential access to this range of sites, are differently placed in workplace hierarchies and have different knowledges of one another and are tied socially in different ways: shop floor workers know *of* senior managers but senior managers probably do not know of them; shop managers have knowledge of shop floor workers (qualifications, personal record etc) which shop floor workers do not have of them; social ties such as friendship operate across but do

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[155]Tonnies, 1957; See also Calhoun, 1991; Shields, 1992b; Glennie & Thrift, 1996.

not erase relations such as these. Some workers then knew or knew of each other, others did not.

My interest in these two groups is in neither case as some tightly defined, strongly bonded, contractually based community but as communities of practice linked across time and space by loose bonds of shared discourse, practice and meaning. I draw here instead from notions of 'community' derived from two sources: Glennie & Thrift contrast the bonded & ""contractual" sense of community expressed in Tonnies Gemeinschaft with the looser "tactile community built up from the solidarity and reciprocity of everyday life"[156]embodied in concepts of sociality,[157] a

> "relatively weak, relatively fluid form of social relation ... sociality produces a series of loosely bonded and temporary social groups crystallised out of the mass."[158]

Sociality represents a temporary form of community in which the individual is briefly aligned with other individuals by virtue of shared practice and meanings (often expressed via co-presence at a particular site such as a retail space and communicated via visual and tactile means rather than cognitively) amongst the many practices and meanings which constitute their individuality.

Secondly and similarly, Lave & Wenger refer to communities as

> "a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognised as competence"[159] ... "communities of practice are everywhere."[160]They are "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretative support for making sense of its heritage ... (it) is a set of relations among persons, activity and the world, over time and

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[156]Glennie & Thrift, 1996: 225.
[157]Simmel, 1908, 1950; Goffman, 1959; Boden & Molotch, 1994; Maffesoli, 1991; Shields, 1992a.
[158]Glennie & Thrift, 1996: 225.
[159]Wenger, 1999: 5.
[160]Wenger, 1999: 6.

> in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice."[161]

Here then community stands for the very ordinary shared meanings and practices which allow collective action to flourish. It is neither permanent nor fixed, a shifting terrain of mundane, everyday 'common understanding.'

Both of these notions of community apply with differing strengths to the two 'groups' under consideration. Notions of sociality are perhaps slightly more applicable to the readers I study, as the theoretical content of Section B makes apparent. Here looser bonds, which nevertheless constitute shared meanings and practices and configure the group at least at moments and in particular places as an "interpretative community"[162] occur briefly and often in particular places such as the bookshop to give wider meaning to the individual practices of reading. Concepts of communities of practice meanwhile are slightly more applicable to the experience of work in the bookshop. Here the shared understandings are perhaps more apparent due to the 'tighter' character of the group that results from its greater spatial and temporal co-presence and the more formal definition and codification of many of the knowledges and practices conditioning the experience of work. And for these reasons these shared understandings are of greater *significance* to the individual since the nature of their participation in the group is likely to be of greater consequence to their everyday lives than participation in the looser community of readers united only by their common leisure interest is likely to be.

This is not to tie each of these definitions exclusively to one or other group however. Whilst these notions of community map onto these respective groups, they do also conversely apply to their weaker alternatives. Readers are still connected by the kinds of shared meanings and practices described by Lave & Wenger[163] in the context of work and learning, despite lack of regular co-presence. Whilst workers

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[161]Lave & Wenger, 1991: 98.
[162]Fish, 1980; Radway, 1984, 1988; Ang, 1996.
[163]Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999.

obtain much of their own sense of community via the forms of loose interaction associated with sociality amongst both themselves and the public they work amongst. The point is to establish that whilst these two groups are characterised by both similarities (books, the bookshop) and differences (leisure/work; looser ties/stronger ties) that a similar theoretical approach is applicable to consider the ways in which subjectivity and identity operate within these two social settings.

The methodological significance of this deserves sharp underlining. I here follow Roger Chartier in his insistence that:

> "cultural divisions are not obligatorily organised in accordance with the one grid of social divisions which supposedly commands the unequal presence of objects or differences in behaviour patterns. We must turn the perspective around and begin by designating the social areas in which each corpus of texts and each genre of printed matter circulates. Beginning with objects, in this fashion, rather than classes or groups leads to considering that the French style of socio-cultural history has too long continued to exist on the basis of a mutilated conception of the social. By privileging only socio-professional classification it has forgotten that other and equally social principles of differentiation might explain cultural divisions even more pertinently."[164]

Chartier's remit here is the reader and reading but his rejection of *a priori* social categories in favour of relations with objects has wider applicability. Again the focus is on the way in which social groupings coalesce, with varying intensity and longevity, out of the practice, discourses and objects common to them rather than on the way in which previously determined groups interact with particular objects etc. The difference in approach here can be illustrated via an account of the evolution of my own methodological stance towards my research groups.

Initial attempts at evolving my research methods and recruiting research participants were marked by a concern for the 'reflectiveness' of the research subjects. My initial hopes were that from the point of view of the consumers I could recruit a

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[164]Chartier, 1994: 7.

group of respondents who were in some way reflective of the kind of customer Waterstone's targets and precisely defines in its internal literature as a means of most closely assessing the 'impact' of Waterstone's marketing strategies upon the subjectivities it designs this marketing around. Similar considerations were in the foreground when attempting to persuade booksellers to participate in more formal interviews to complement my participant observation. My initial concern was to recruit a variety of individuals who would be as representative as possible of the range of subject positions I had encountered amongst my colleagues during my involvement with the company.

Both these intentions became compromised and waylaid as the research progressed, partly as a result of a failure to achieve these methodological aims and partly as a result of a growing disenchantment with my original agenda as my theoretical position evolved in response to the empirical realities I was encountering. I shall continue to illustrate this whilst introducing the features and characteristics of the two groups in question:

Waterstone's pictures its 'ideal customer' in behavioural, demographic and psychographic terms. Behaviourally they are people who buy 40 or more books annually. Demographically they *tend* towards being: graduates (41% of all customers); female (60% of all customers); socio-economic group AB (30% of customers); and aged between 24 and 55 (76% of all customers). And psychographically they tend to be influenced by book reviews and/or loyal to particular authors; to regard books as 'central to their lives'; to browse compulsively whilst disliking shopping for other goods and to 'quest' for knowledge and self improvement. Their 'needs' as consumers are seen as being convenient sites and trading hours; a wide and deep range of stock; intelligent, confident and efficient service; a comfortable browsing atmosphere and a sense of affiliation with like-minded staff and customers. This target market is selected as a basis for strategy since they reflect a large segment of the market; are likely to be a growth segment due to the large size of the 35-55 demographic cohort; the growth in tertiary education and discourses of self improvement and (importantly in the

context of the thesis' emphasis on communities and networks of practice and meaning) because staff, suppliers and external opinion formers share the views of this target market.[165]

In many ways the 19 individuals who responded to my request for interviewees do collectively reflect this ideal market.[166]All were frequent readers and identified positively with reading, frequently in terms of the liberal discourses of self improvement via knowledge emphasised by Waterstone's. Most fit the criteria of reading 40 books per year and some bought that many from shops like Waterstone's (though others relied more on library borrowing, second-hand buying or located their heavy purchasing in the past). Approximately 60% of the group were female; over 75% were in the 24-55 age group; nearly all had some form of higher education and most were middle class and relatively affluent. "A reasonably sophisticated, largely but not exclusively professional readership with an interest in, but not unlimited time for, the leisured consumption of full length fiction."[167] Similarly many of the themes raised by the respondents concerning their reading and shopping practices might have been predicted from the Waterstone's formulae, particularly in terms of their views on the browser friendly 'atmosphere' that bookshops do or should provide.[168]

Within Waterstone's I interviewed members of staff from various levels of the Waterstone's hierarchy - five from the shop site including various ranks of bookseller and manager and five senior members of the head office team. My research additionally included interviews with a range of individuals involved in various ways in 'producing' the literary and book related sphere. Some of these arose via a process of 'snowballing' from the Waterstone's site and pursuing connections and relations which

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[165]Waterstone's, 1995: 4-6.
[166]More detailed summaries of these respondents and the aspects of their biography and reading practice revealed to me in the process of interview (though see this chapter, below for a critical account of the inevitable partiality of these interviews) are provided in appendix 2. My descriptions here draw from and occasionally add to the map of the terrain of consumer subject positions provided in these summaries.
[167]Todd, 1996: 3.

became visible through my participant observation. These included representatives of: local (Yorkshire) arts boards; local (Sheffield) book festivals; a national publishing company and a reading promotion consultancy. Others arose by directly approaching 'alternative' consumption spaces with the initial aim of providing a substantial comparative element to the 'high street' example provided by Waterstone's. In comparison to the excellent access afforded me within Waterstone's this proved limited and merely resulted in a few interviews with 2nd hand booksellers with shops or stands at bookfairs. These nevertheless highlighted some of the specificity or otherwise of the Waterstone's case study as well as broadening my participation as a consumer of book related spaces.

Similarly my research also included a minor element of comparative research in the Canadian book industry, specifically interviews with representatives of a similar bookselling chain to Waterstone's and a small number of Canadian consumers and participant observation amongst book related spaces. Again this element of the research was too limited to allow meaningful comparison between the two sites and cultures but did provide some sense of the specificity of Waterstone's and the UK 'sphere.'

The main focus of this segment of the research was then Waterstone's and particularly the study shop in which I participated as a part time employee during the period of the research. Where in Section B I draw upon the accounts of my reader respondents to consider the relationship between the book and identity, in Section C I draw upon participation, observation and interviews with this group to consider in detail the way in which subjectivity is constituted in *conjunction* with the bookselling workplace. The combination of conformity to 'type' *and* individual heterogeneity which characterised the consumer group is also appropriate here. Certainly Waterstone's puts a similar amount of effort into defining the 'type' of "intelligent,

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[168]See for example the range of quotes in chapters 3&4 regarding the perceived sociality (or lack thereof) of the bookshop space.

well read, well motivated, graduate calibre booksellers"[169] they require to maintain the brand and developing methods to recruit individuals which reflect this profile[170] as they do in defining their 'ideal' customer. Most Waterstone's booksellers in some ways embody this profile.[171]

Despite the possible resemblances of my 'groups' to these Waterstone's archetypes I still want to avoid making claims for their 'representivity' of this group. Mainly because of a reluctance to uncritically accept

> "the misleading assumption that 'audience' (*for which read readers or customers)* is a self contained object of study ready made for specialist empirical and theoretical analysis."[172]

And particularly to accept this objectification of the audience using the terms provided by Waterstone's with their commercial interest in objectifying and measuring their customers/staff. Certainly I wished to avoid evolving a methodology rooted in earlier paradigms of 'consumer research'[173] considering the 'effects' of Waterstone's marketing efforts on these objectified audiences.

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[169]Waterstone's, 1995: 26.
[170]Waterstone's, 1997 is a training document directed at managers developing skills for interviewing prospective Waterstone's employees and provides profiles of the type of skills, characteristics, personality and experience for different positions in the shop as well as suggested techniques and questions for ascertaining these in interview.
[171]This can be qualified slightly. The merger of Sherrat and Hughes into Waterstone's involved the imposition of Waterstone's organisational practices onto a slightly different organisational culture much more dominated by strategic thinking than the more "intuitive, creative" Waterstone's. "Its strategy was constructed by business planners, cautiously approved by consultants and analysts, designed by more consultants and finally delivered to the high street supported by the buying power, logistics and administrative infrastructure of a multinational retailer" (Barker, 1998: 22). It's personnel profile differs from Waterstone's in being slightly older, more predominantly female with a slightly lower average of educational attainment and a greater tendency to regard the job as a long term rather than transitory occupation. Most of the Sherrat and Hughes staff stayed with the company when it became Waterstone's and continue to lend the overall personnel profile of the company a character different to the natural outcome of current employment practice (See also appendix 1).
[172]Ang, 1996: 8, my italics.
[173]For a summary of the shifting paradigms and methodologies within the field of consumer research, the emergence of a more critical wave of 'new consumer research' and its interconnections with its preceding paradigm see Belk, 1995.

For Ang the marketeers conception of the objectified audience/market segment/customer profile etc is paralleled in many respects by liberal pluralist arguments regarding audience within academia. She shows how even the 'radical pluralism' of Fiske[174] "colludes" with the avowedly liberal and revisionist communications theories of Curran and Schlesinger.[175]This occurs through their common reluctance to jettison "the familiar topography of communication"[176]wherein the senders sphere of production and distribution is held separate from the receiving sphere of reception and consumption in an oppositional, closed circuit of power. For Ang then these readings represent attempts to contain diversity.

> "It is in this sense that liberal pluralist discourse conjoins the marketing discourse of market segmentation (where consumers are neatly divided up and categorised in a grid of self contained demographic or psychographic 'segments'), which is not so surprising given that the two discourses are two sides of the coin of 'democratic capitalism.' ...Difference and diversity refers to the structured partition of that unitary order ... into fixed parts such as identifiable readings and audience groupings (to be uncovered by 'audience research'). The idea of indeterminacy of meaning however enables us to put forward a much more radical theorisation of difference and diversity, one that does away with any notion of an essence of social order, a bounded 'society' which grounds the empirical variations expressed t the surface of social life. Not order, but chaos is the starting point ... From this perspective, this ordered social totality is no longer a pregiven structure which establishes the limits within which diverse meanings and identities are constituted. Rather, since the social is the site of potentially infinite semiosis, it always *exceeds* the limits of any attempt to constitute 'society,' to demarcate its boundaries."[177]

This shift is a necessity for critical theory if it is to contend with the

> "uncertainty brought about by the disturbing incoherence of a globalised capitalist postmodernity and the mixture of resistance and complicity occurring within it. The critical import of audience ethnography ... should be seen in this context: it is to document how the bottom-top, micro-

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[174]Fiske, 1987.
[175]Currran, 1990; Schlesinger, 1991.
[176]Ang, 1996: 170.
[177]Ang, 1996: 172-173.

> powers of audience activity are both complicit with and resistant to the dominant, macro forces within capitalist postmodernity."[178]

This lengthy quote encapsulates much of my own approach to researching bookbuyers and booksellers, particularly through the tension it expresses between order(ing) and diversity; resistance and complicity. Despite the extent of their conformity to Waterstone's attempt at demarcating a society of consumers/workers from the chaos of society my respondents also surprised me with their heterogeneity. My overall sense of this 'group' of individual respondents was similar to my overall sense of the general public I encountered whilst working at Waterstone's and in my attempts at participation in book related activity. That is being on the one hand 'typical' of Waterstone's in their whiteness, middleclassness etc, whilst being surprisingly diverse, constantly demonstrating a diverse and complex array of reading practices, reading tastes, personal biographies, interests other than reading, careers, politics, attitudes etcetera. Similarly the respondents embodied highly complex combinations of complicity with and resistance to various forms of power that structured their lives and experiences as readers. To attempt then to summarise them as 'Waterstone's Heavy Bookbuyers' or 'Waterstone's booksellers' would sever hundreds of connections to other possible groupings or orderings:

> "Our various forms of participation delineate pieces of a puzzle we put together rather than sharp boundaries between disconnected parts of ourselves. An identity is thus more than a single trajectory, instead it should be viewed as a nexus of multimembership."[179]

In the following sections the responses and my observation of these heterogeneous yet similar 'groups' are drawn upon in differing ways to construct arguments about the relationship between books, work and identity. What I hope I have emphasised here is that as 'groups' they are not intended to represent a wider society of readers or booksellers, nor are they in any sense a fixed group or community themselves. To fix them as a group, objectified by my criteria or those of

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[178]Ang, 1996: 171.

others involves cutting them off from the multiplicity of influences that constitute their subjectivities. As readers and workers they are all however striated by a similar set of practices, discourses and meanings, and making similar use of these in constitution of diverse identities. Collectively they make these visible and expose the material and social connections which make these practices, discourses and meanings relevant.

2.4: Researching Subjectivity.

Certain important epistemological and methodological issues concerning power and resistance, othering and the position of the researcher ensue from this focus on these two groups.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the thesis concerns itself with examining aspects of the "everyday lived practice" of the groups I have just described. A number of definitional issues stem from this. The first concerns the usefulness of 'the everyday' as a conceptual term. Ironically, given the concept's genesis as a reaction to the absence of the everyday and the ordinary in social theory it is quite difficult to locate any social phenomena which cannot shelter beneath its conceptual umbrella. It is potentially all encompassing:

> "(E)veryday life always seems to refer to other spheres or layers of social life...The endeavours to conceptualise everyday life seem endless because life always escapes control... If you start the exploration of everyday life with an open mind, willing to conceptualise it *in toto*, you might get lost for the rest if your life, either in endless flows of details multiplying themselves whenever you turn to them. Or in generalisations about everyday life as a system which it is not."[180]

And even if we take its magnanimous embrace as its strength, the 'everything' of the everyday cannot be conveyed sociologically.

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[179]Wenger, 1998: 159
[180]Jorgensen, 1990: 20.

> "When the sociological pen is put to paper all the flavours, smells, movements, touches, feelings, noises and silence of everyday life seem to melt into air."[181]

Everyday life and everyday lived practice are definitional and representational problems then. As a substantive concept it is unhelpful.[182] Everyday life cannot be defined. It is being created and recreated all the time and it is multiple and inexpressible other than by living it. It can however be considered as a process. It is possible to describe and examine the conditions of a specific everyday life and the way in which these conditions are handled.[183] Everyday life as conduct or action, as situated practice. The idea of 'the everyday' opens up the sense in which social reproduction takes place via the ordinary, intuitive, unquestioned practices of living. It draws attention to these uneventful, un-intellectualised, "meaningless but not unintelligible"[184]spheres of social life for the (re)production of subjectivity. 'Everyday life' as an ontology of knowledge then - an intersubjective

> "knowledge that can never be completely present in the head of any one of the individuals involved in its use. It only makes its appearance in the background of our social activities ... Such a form of knowledge cannot be formulated in terms of facts or theoretical principles for it is a form of practical knowledge relevant only in particular concrete situations ... which only has its being in our relation to others."[185]

This conception draws upon

> "a line of thinking which stretches from Heidegger and Wittgenstein, through Merleau Ponty, to most recently, Bourdieu, de Certeau and

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[181]Jorgensen, 1990: 20.
[182]Although its multiple theoretical lineages make it a helpful shorthand for communicating these simultaneously. The term embodies for instance both a sense of the depth to which ideology permeates human consciousness (Lefebvre, 1971): "everyday life becomes an adjunct to consumer capitalism and all human relations are seen as an adjunct to the market" (Eyles, 1989: 108) And the site of resistance and creative agency - the location of the symbolic and cultural activity that occurs as part of the daily production and reproduction of human existence (Willis, 1990: de Certeau, 1984).
[183]Jorgensen, 1990: 20-24; Longhurst & Savage, 1996.
[184]Glennie & Thrift, 1995: 23.
[185]Shotter, 1993: 3&7

Shotter, who have tried to conjure up the situated, prelinguistic, embodied states that give intelligibility (but not necessarily meaning) to human action. What Heidegger called the primordial, or preontological understanding of the common world, our ability to make sense of things, what Wittgenstein knew as the background, what Merleau Ponty conceived of as the space of the lived body and what Bourdieu means by the Habitus. Each of these authors is concerned in other words to get away from Cartesian intellectualism, with its understanding of being as a belief system implicit in the minds of individual subjects, and return to an understanding of being as 'the social with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing and which we carry with us inseparably before any objectifications'. Thus in this view being is not an entity but a way of being which constitutes a shared agreement in our practices about what entities can show up. In each case, what these authors have in common is that they see the subject as primarily derived in practice."[186]

Such an ontology defines my own approach to understanding subjectivity, underpinning the focus in each of the following sections on the *practices* which coalesce around the book and the workplace. Both sections attempt to explore many of the 'taken for granted', and intuitive elements of the settings they describe. It also underpins the emphasis in my methodological approach on firstly *plural methods* and secondly *positioning*. The reliance on a range of sources - participant observation, interviews, focus groups, documentary evidence - stems then from the inevitable limitation of any one method in unveiling or describing practice. Within this ontology the social world only exists through encounter and methodologies represent different tools to facilitate different forms of these. The blend of formal interviewing, participation and material and documentary sources is intended to create an articulation between other subject's accounts of their practice and my own experiences and practices within these shared spaces.

My own position within the research is central to this. Whilst thoroughly acknowledging the inevitable power relations involved within any relationship between academia and the world it researches[187] I nevertheless mean this in a literal sense. The

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[186]Pile & Thrift, 1995: 27, citing Merleau Ponty, 1962: 362. See also Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; de Certeau, 1984; Heidegger, 1983; Rowles, 1983; Seamon, 1979; Shotter, 1993; Wittgenstein, 1953.
[187]Clifford, 1992; Fine, 1998; Keith, 1992; Pile & Thrift, 1995; Probyn, 1993; Taussig, 1992.

research area was selected because of my own positioning within it as a participant in this network of reading and bookselling *prior to* my involvement as an academic researcher.[188] A means of avoiding (or reducing) the potential voyeurism [189] involved in researching the oppressed and subjugated 'other' rather than focusing upon social networks already occupied and experienced as a (middle-class, white, male) academic.[190] This self-reflexive positioning is important, not (I hope) because it leads to a narcissistic privileging of the self as a site of authentic experience,[191] but rather because it demands an acknowledgement of the inevitable *partiality* of the account being offered. The thesis is the outcome of intersubjective encounters with people and places and my subsequent ordering of the records of those encounters into a coherent narrative intended to communicate those encounters and their possible significance for certain current academic debates.

> "Representations, whatever their provenance are always the product of ordering work ... all stories ... are also heroic attempts at suppression ... all sorts of bits and pieces - events that *might* have been told - these are excluded, deleted, suppressed, forgotten, ignored or considered irrelevant."[192]

Thus,

> "we can only strive for the construction of 'partial truths' ... Critical theorising, then, always has to imply an acknowledgement of its own open-endedness, its own partiality in its inevitable drive towards narrative closure, in attempts to impose order in the stories it tells. At the very least, a critical understanding of what it means to live in the true realm of uncertainty that is capitalist postmodernity must take on board a positive

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[188]See biographies, appendix 2. Here I include a summary of relevant aspects of my own biography, not to establish myself as a privileged site in experiencing this terrain but to emphasise the similarities and differences between myself and my research participants. This does not alter the nature of these intersubjective encounters as being between researcher and researched but does hopefully emphasise the points of potential engagement (eg middle class, reader, educated) and disengagement (gender, age, academic) between myself and this community of practice.

[189]Moore, 1988.

[190]For examples of this form of situated ethnography see Steedman, 1986 & Walkerdine, 1984 & 1995. I do not however wish to lay false claim to their radical contextualism in providing a positioned account of the experience of oppressive power relations.

[191]"Too often, the results of the writers attempts to use reflexivity to interrogate the self/other relationship come perilously close to narcissism and solipsism" (Pile & Thrift, 1995: 16).

[192]Law, 1994: 153 & 155.

> uncertainty about its own 'communicative' effect, its own attempts to construct meaningful discourse in which the chaos of the world today is rendered in sceptical if not paranoid assessment."[193]

The thesis contains the voices of many others and does attempt to accommodate polyphony[194] as well as acknowledge speaking position.[195] As appendix 1 makes clear however, interviewing is as much an intersubjective encounter as any other method and the material generated from these interviews therefore as much the product of the position of the researcher as the researched. John Shotter draws upon a lexicon of metaphor and topoi derived from Vico to presents a methodology and/or representational strategy which allows him to communicate the 'speakings of everyday life' in such a way that "his own speakings did not distort their nature.[196] Similarly Bourdieu presents a framework to enable the researcher,

> "whilst remaining in the place inexorably assigned to her in the social world, to imagine herself in the place where the object (who is, at least to a certain degree an alter ego) is also positioned and thus to take her point of view, that is to say, to understand that if she were in her shoes she would doubtless be and think like her."[197]

I wholeheartedly endorse these sentiments and have hopefully evolved a methodology informed by them. As far as possible I attempt to 'understand' in Bourdieu's sense of the term the respondents and the social and material culture setting I encountered and participated in. Nevertheless I do not fully share Shotter and Bourdieu's optimism regarding the possibility of presenting an unmediated account of the lives and practices of others. The encounter between researcher and researched inevitably involves interpretation or 'ordering' by the researcher inevitably conditioned by his/her own subjectivity. It seems sensible to acknowledge this and consider the implications. I do not claim therefore that the 'voices' of my participants necessarily represent the lives, practices and opinions of these participants. Rather I attempt to

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[193]Ang, 1996: 180; Morris, 1988.
[194]Crang, 1992.
[195]Pratt, 1992.
[196]Shotter, 1993: 179.

"empower the reader within the processes of order*ing*, rather than insist that she insert herself into the logic of a completed order."[198] Quotations from interviews therefore appear at length in the thesis to allow the reader to observe other potential orderings or constructions of this material from different subject positions or perspectives.

I make no apologies for this since "it is this very subjectivity that gives ethnography its reliability."[199]

> "Ethnographers - and social theorists too - are not distant, all seeing gods. They do not stand outside their subject matter, but are better seen as part of it ... history is the product of interaction between story teller and subject matter, an interaction in which we wrestle with the double hermeneutic."[200]

I prefer then to celebrate and valorise partiality since

> "location resists the politics of closure, finality or ... simplification ...We seek knowledges ruled by partial sight and limited voice - not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. ... The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular."[201]

Defining that somewhere requires establishing ones position in respect to power. The above groups are, as with any intersubjective relations, striated by power which requires conceptualising in some way or another. In the chapters which follow I make little mention of power. Following Pile and Thrift who refuse to

> "isolate particular regimes of power because these always seem to be there (more or less): power - whether organised through knowledge, class, 'race,' gender, sexuality and so on - is (at least partly) about mapping the

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[197]Bourdieu, 1996: 34.
[198]Law, 1994: 191.
[199]Cook & Crang, 1995: 11.
[200]Law, 1994: 19.
[201]Haraway, 1988: 590.

> subject; where particular sites - for example, the body, the self and so on, become 'points of capture for power."[202]

Power is a presence rather than a clearly articulated phenomenon. The thesis is not *about* power nor is it intended to advance a theory of power. Power nevertheless and inevitably underpins these accounts.

As stated above, the groups of readers and workers I focus upon 'embody highly complex combinations of complicity with and resistance to various forms of power that structures their lives and experiences.' Having established my own position within this social context I also wish to position myself and my research within this ambiguous relationship towards power. The accounts in the following chapters regarding experiences of reading and working with books, whilst not explicitly articulating power, describe actions which involve simultaneously 'accepting' and 'denying' the power relations which striate them. I do not claim that my work exists outside these although it does attempt to represent and describe them. Specifically I wish to avoid celebrating the practices I describe in terms of a "theoretical myth of the evasive everyday"[203] which uncritically celebrates resistance as a defining feature of everyday life:

> "What needs to be emphasised is that the desire to be different can be simultaneously complicit with and defiant against the institutionalisation of excess of desire in capitalist postmodernity ... What is built in in the culture of capitalist postmodernity is not 'resistance,' but uncertainty, ambiguity, the chaos that emanates from the institutionalization of infinite semiosis."[204]

Both reading and work involve elements of potential resistance to power. One possible ordering of the following empirical sections which has been "excluded, deleted, suppressed, forgotten, ignored or considered irrelevant" (see footnote [192] above) would have been to privilege the readers accounts or workplace observations

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[202]Pile & Thrift, 1995: 13.
[203]Ang, 1996: 179. See also Morris, 1992: 464-5.
[204]Ang, 1996: 179.

which demonstrate a reflexive awareness of the power relations that striate the experience and the knowing resistances to them. Numerous reader respondents for instance recounted their perception of the 'marketing tricks' employed by retailers to sell books to them and the tactics they employed to resist these. Similarly where in chapter 6 I refer to the self disciplining involved in the experience of work, numerous personal or observational instances could be deployed to illustrate the 'failure' of this self-discipline and the frequent (ab)use of this working practice to *avoid* work whilst in the workplace. Another would be to extend the emphasis in chapter 4 on the Winnicotian sense of play involved in relations with books into a stronger case for the way in which reading therefore

> "eludes power rather than confronts it and for two reasons. First because as a world of virtual forms it cannot be commanded in the way that is true of work, since it is not made up of fixed means-ends relationships. Second, because as a world of virtual forms it can be described by words but ultimately cannot be written or spoken."[205]

In both instances however these resistances seem more worthy of Ang's ambiguity - defiant complicity, escaping without leaving[206] - than of celebrating as heroic acts.

2.5: Reflexivity.

I want to illustrate this ambiguity by way of an account which in a sense runs ahead of the 'narrative' of the thesis by prefiguring the empirical material presented in Sections B and C. It also hopefully provides some sense of the connections between these two sections which are otherwise left unspoken and implicit. The account concerns the way in which (potentially) resistant practices and discourses of readers are mobilised by agents within Waterstone's who also embody these practices and discourses and are reflexively aware of their significance as resistances. It leads to an account of power founded in the lexicon of Actor Network Theory. The account

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[205]Thrift, 1996a: 149.

provides another example of the relationship in the thesis between theory and empiricism and the situated position of the thesis within the practices I describe. It grew from my own experience of having my theoretical approach confounded at various stages by encountering very similar knowledges being (strategically) employed within the retail organisation I was studying.

In Section C I describe the ways in which action within Waterstone's is mobilised around very clear strategies. Many of these rely upon the 'enculturation' of the retail workplace part of which involves a heightened response to consumer reflexivity via the 'empowerment' of shop floor staff to cognitively and aesthetically 'reflect' the consumer and the production of spaces in which the kind of sociality required for reflexivity can flourish. Central to the Waterstone's brand since the inception of the company has been a 'passion about the product' - the book. As John Law suggests however, organisations driven by enterprise cannot remain static:

> "You've got all these balls up in the air and the art of management is to keep them all up in the air at the same time. And to do that you have to keep on moving" ... "Enterprise ... tells of the way in which agents - heroes and organisations - are sensitive to shifting opportunities and demands. It tells of capitalising on those opportunities."[207]

There is a sense currently within Waterstone's that movement and opportunity[208] might derive from an expansion of their founding rhetoric to incorporate 'the reader' as well as 'the book:'

> "It's probably fair to say that the company has gone as far as it can in doing really good promotions which celebrate books and establish the company as an authority for books and there's room now to think about other areas where the company can develop without compromising what we already do, such as in the area of reading."[209]

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[206]de Certeau, 1984, Ang, 1996; Frow, 1991; Thrift, 1996a
[207]Law, 1994: 188 & 75
[208]Currently regarded as more pressing as the company ensures it remains a market leader in the face of competition from US incomers and to justify itself more than ever before in terms of enterprise in preparation for its upcoming flotation on the stock market.
[209]Producer interview 7.

There is therefore an emergent rhetoric surrounding readers and 'reader centred promotion' partly deriving from the organisation's desire to "enrol"[210] other organisations into the Waterstone's network of influence as a means of both consolidating further the presence of Waterstone's within the habitus[211] of its clientele and broadening that customer base.

One particular arena considered worthy of enrolment are the networks of meaning and practice associated with the library service. This liaison is articulated as a relationship in which Waterstone's is dominant:

> "using the fact that our literary counter space can be terribly useful for other people and not underestimating how useful that can be especially to a smaller organisation like the library association struggling still to get libraries out of the 'ladies in tweed skirts' image. They like the idea of being associated with Waterstone's and I like it in reverse because it shows we're more generous."[212]

This veils a less often articulated valorisation of the spaces and practices of public libraries (in their more recent, modernised, professionalised forms) in terms of their community building, sociality and the breadth of 'audience' they serve. Part of what Waterstone's really wants to enrol is the inclusiveness of library spaces and practices as a means of broadening their customer base. A director at Waterstone's concluded a conversation with me about the merits of incorporating a reader centred approach into the Waterstone's strategy with the comment that what really worried him was that the brand 'missed people' - that the brand was not sufficiently fine tuned to provide a 'mirror' or point of recognition for the maximum possible profile of people. Reader centred promotion, imported as a set of discourses and practices from the library service offers a means for fine tuning the brand, centred still upon the product to

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[210] Callon, 1986; Latour, 1992; Shapin & Shaffer, 1985.
[211] Bourdieu, 1977.
[212] Producer interview 1. For further comment upon changes underway in the library service and the gendering of these changes in terms of an attempt to reinscribe a feminised service industry in

maximise this mirroring effect by making readers and customers, themselves part of the mirror.

An important conduit channelling these discourses and practices into Waterstone's network of ordering is, in John Law's terms an "heroic agent"[213] in the form of a consultancy which has pioneered 'reader centred promotion' within the library sector and has now been contracted to introduce certain aspects of this approach to Waterstone's. The philosophy of the consultancy derives from a number of sources. Its agents have backgrounds which include adult education, arts administration, community publishing, as well as their own graduate educations. Informing their approach in a general sense is a notion of 'critical literacy' akin to that found in a wide literature[214] ranging from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire,[215] to the Reader Response Criticism of Wolfgang Iser,[216] Stanley Fish[217] or Louise Rosenblatt.[218] Common to all of these is a focus on the act of reading, or 'reception' and an insistence on the potentially emancipatory, improving or liberating character of the act either in terms of the individual self or wider society. Similarly, an explicit aim of the consultancy is to turn the notions of reading as the creative process in the chain that links author and reader espoused by structuralism and post-structuralism into praxis:

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positive, professionalised terms rather than 'negative' associations of servility and domesticity see Greenhalgh, 1991: 10-12 and Worpole, 1991.

[213]Law, 1994: ch3. The agent in question appeared aware of the double sided status of this heroism: "the danger now is for a while that voice became personalised and people talked about the "(consultants name) effect, having had (consultants name) and it was like a conversion and people used my name as shorthand because there was a lack of vocabulary to talk about what we talk about [...] that was very dangerous because it implied that this thing depended on an individual and personal enthusiasm and did not depend on a set of ideals that could be learnt and transmitted and used" (Producer interview 13).

[214]It should be noted that this is my interpretation of the detailed account their representative provided of their philosophy and motivation and they do not necessarily acknowledge these influences themselves.

[215]Freire, 1987; Taylor, 1993.

[216]Iser, 1978, 1995.

[217]Fish, 1980

[218]Rosenblatt, 1970; Clifford (ed) 1991.

> "the people who expounded a philosophy of reading best are the structuralists, the post structuralists. So in an academic world the reader has been recognised and the reader writes the text. The reader has been recognised all along but in a language that is not acceptable to anybody. It happens in a sealed off area that has been separate from everything else."[219]

The foundation of their ethos might best be summarised by De Certeau's claim for reading as poaching:

> "The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organised by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings."[220] "All writing depends on the generosity of the reader."[221]

So the consultancy operates on the basis of privileging reading as the creative process over and above the creativity of the text, the author or the authorities attributing meaning to that text. They define themselves as "the start of a new wave which values the creative role of the reader as well as the artistic impulse of the writer."[222] This leads to a shift in emphasis from design, promotion, practice and marketing based around *product* to the same based around the *process* of reading. In practice this leads to attempts to privilege reader response over the response of authorities external to the reader and an emphasis on the experience of reading and the 'use' of books in relation to existing subjectivities rather than the ascription of meaning to texts in terms of their relation to other texts (literary canon).

In Waterstone's the consultancy has been involved in training staff how to facilitate reading groups in ways which allow (shared) experiences of reading to come to the fore rather than abstractions about 'meaning'; in encouraging a form of recommendation that avoids recourse to 'literary authority' but instead refers again to

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[219]Producer interview 13.
[220]De Certeau, 1984: 169.
[221]Manguel, 1996: 179.

experiences of readers; and in developing generic promotions which focus on reading rather than product. The example here being a joint promotion between Waterstone's and the Library services for National Libraries Week intended to develop a language about reading which contrasts with the alienating languages of literary criticism and media reviewing:

> "an accessible language which enables us to discuss the complexity of the reading experience and the way this is shaped by the creative contribution of individual readers [...] to lighten up the whole debate about reading and involve more people in it."[223]

This was promoted via a campaign encouraging readers, shoppers and borrowers to draw comparisons between reading and their narrative and relational identities[224] in terms of another area of broad, shared experience, in this instance relationships in their love life - "Play Around with a Book!:"

> "This comparison [...] encourages readers to think about what they are prepared to put into the relationship from their side and what they expect to get back from it ... Some of us are serial monogamists while others are promiscuous with half a dozen books on the go at once. Everyone has their dream read, their bit on the side, an old flame they go back to."[225]

What is being suggested here then is an enhancement of the responsiveness of a commercial sector to consumer subjectivities and reflexivity - the fine tuning of the mirroring capabilities of a commercial brand via greater incorporation of the subjectivities being mirrored into that brand. The extent to which this occurs should not be overplayed. The strategy is not one of complete emulation of the (potentially) heterotopic space[226] of public libraries, their privileging of reading experience and subsequent breadth of acceptable subjectivities. Rather any appropriation of that model is mediated by an ongoing commitment to the existing brand which targets a

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[222]Van Riel & Fowler, 1996: 8.
[223]Waterstone's/National Library Week press release, October 1997.

[224]Giddens, 1991; Somers, 1994.
[225]Waterstone's/National Libraries Week press release, October 1997

very specific customer profile.[227] The intent is to achieve a broadening of this profile in a manner which doesn't weaken the core of the brand's design (based in product) and its appeal to this group. A corollary of this nevertheless is the increased responsiveness of this sector to gendered subjectivities. I turn now to a discussion of the way in which changes in practices and discourses surrounding reading in this retail industry reflect a gendering of practices amongst readers.

Reading consists of a collision of practices. In his account of the reading practices of science fiction readers James Kneale[228] shows how reading styles, and practices intertwine during his respondent's reading. The picture is of a web of practices and styles, different readers drawing on different parts of the web in terms to constitute their own reading style and relation to canon and genre. And indeed individual readers drawing on different parts of the web at different times and places in their reading experience. He identifies a range of reading styles ranging from reading for realism (plausibility, mimesis of social reality etc), reading for the fantastic (escape, otherness, new ways of thinking) reading beyond the narrative (for say the interaction of characters rather than plot development in the manner of soap opera[229]) and reading for affect (physical pleasure, the traces of which are visible in descriptions of goosebumps, spines tingling or languorous sensation). And drawing upon the chapters which follow in this thesis I might add reading for practical gain (learning how to do something), reading for self improvement, as well as various other non-textual motivations influencing reading style such as reading for social encounter (sharing books amongst friends, reading for topics of conversation etc)[230] and location (reading

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[226]Lee, 1996.
[227]76% aged 24-55; 30% AB1; 60% female; 39% resident in London or South East; responsive to book reviews; loyal to particular authors; promiscuous brand affinity; dislike shopping for other goods (Waterstone's 1995/96).
[228]Kneale, 1995:ch7. For a further account of the multiply nuanced nature of the reading process see Manguel, 1996.
[229]"The pleasure that is solicited by what may be termed 'the grain of the story': the subtle, differentiated texture of each book's staging of the romantic tale that makes its reading a 'new' experience even though the plot is standard" (Ang, 1996: 105; See also Radway, 1984)
[230]See for example Morley, 1986 on the sociability of television viewing.

to fill time and alter space).[231] This web is cross-cut by hierarchies of class and gender. So for example Kneale, drawing on Bourdieu's notion of the connoisseur and the pedant [232]points to the complex use of strategies and tactics derived from different areas of this terrain of practice in terms of their relation to an 'elite' view of science fiction:

> "The place of these readers both within and outside the cultural elite creates a fascinating set of movements backward and forward across the line between 'high' and 'low' culture [...] By demonstrating their knowledge of the 'right' way to read, and mimicking the strategies of the elite, these discussants attempt to gain access to their store of cultural capital."[233]

My own reader's responses similarly suggest a complex gendering of this terrain. This is illustrated by the difficulty I had in getting male respondents to acknowledge their occupancy of certain parts of this web of practices and styles. This was particularly true in terms of ideas such as reading for affect and reading to be transported elsewhere. Whilst the subtexts of their comments and their allusions to their practice suggested that frequently this did form part of their motivation for reading there was nevertheless a tendency (rather than a rule) for this to be avoided or steered away from as an explanatory factor by male respondents. This is not necessarily to suggest a binary male versus female reading style along the lines of affect versus practicality, realism versus escapism, individual versus social, cognitive versus bodily as 'the way that men read' and 'the way that women read'. Both male and female respondents frequently occupied positions transcending such binaries.

It is perhaps to suggest such a model in terms of gender based power relations. My explanation of these encounters where I had the sense of account not matching subtext is that the respondent's were reflexively accounting for themselves in terms of where they felt they were, or wanted to be placed in terms of their perception of the

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[231]See for example Tacchi, 1998 on the use of radio to 'fill' domestic space.
[232]Bourdieu, 1986: 66-74.
[233]Kneale, 1995: 232.

power relations affecting reading. This would hold in terms of the power relations of the interview setting and the respondent's dialogical encounter with a male interviewer potentially positionable within this (masculine) elite reading position.[234] Thus a male tendency to emphasise their own positioning within these masculinised discourses and practices by avoiding their discussion and a female tendency to draw from both masculine and feminine positions but to feel the need to apologise for some of the feminine ones as 'guilty' pleasures, or, frequently to describe these reading positions in terms of their own resistance to the dominant masculinised discourses.

I want to finish by returning to my argument about the commercial response to this reflexivity. Waterstone's understands its customers in terms of a simplified version of the network of reading practices described above, defining them in terms of a 'psychographic' typology regarding whether they have an 'internal' or 'external' orientation towards books and reading. The former broadly encapsulates the masculinist side of the dualism's listed above referring to cognitive, individualist, practical notions of reading. The latter the feminised side of the power equation encompassing affective and social attributes.[235] Both of these have been incorporated into the design of the brand. The gradual emergence of 'the reader' as an object of consideration and brand retuning however occurs in the context of the sense that where internally oriented customers are served well by the brand, and the book industry generally, the externally oriented have been responded to less effectively. The developments associated with reader centred promotion might be seen in terms of an incorporation of the feminised aspects of the network of reading practices into the commercial framework, and to an extent therefore a favourable shift in the power relations between these feminised and masculinised styles. Certainly, the tenets of

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[234]All respondents knew of my academic background; some knew of my involvement in bookselling; many assumed my background was in English Literature; most assumed they could talk about genres, canons, authors, titles or assumed meanings of texts without the need for explanation or contextualisation. I frequently attempted to perform other positions in this network of practices although these may well have been read as strategic rather than 'natural' performances. See appendix 1.

[235]Producer interview 6; Producer interview 8.

reader centred promotion are based around privileging the affective, emotional response to reading and the social networks of reading.

This (emergent) attitude partly owes its existence to power relations within the commodity chain. In common with other sectors of the retail economy[236] a case can be made to argue that the balance of power between manufacturer/supplier and retailer has shifted in the retailer's favour. There is certainly a sense within Waterstone's that this is the case and that their innovation and taste setting has an impact on the rest of the industry. One discourse that emerged from interviews at head office level was that it had taken the company a while to wake up to the fact that it did have a power and an influence over other areas of the industry. The 'retuning' described in this paper can be seen in the context of a new confidence within the company and a sense that their innovation and responsiveness to consumer reflexivity can act as a mark of differentiation and a means of authority against other areas of the industry. Some of this 'innovation' has indeed influenced other areas of the commodity chain. The organisation has for instance worked collaboratively with publishers to produce guides to their novels intended for use by reading groups as starting points for discussion.

In this context 'the industry' however includes both actual suppliers/publishers and the wider institutions of 'taste setting' notably the literary media. The rhetoric within the company surrounding the forms of reader based promotion discussed in this article was often contrasted with the distinct lack of reflexivity or responsiveness to readers of the literary media, deemed "up (its) own arse."[237] In part this can be seen in terms of an enterprising, female (in this instance) agent reflexively aligning themselves within the network of gendered power relations in the manner in which my reader respondents positioned their own selves, in this case defining themselves (and their agency within the organisation) firmly against the masculinist hegemony perceived elsewhere in the industry.

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[236]Bromley & Thomas, 1993; Du Gay, 1996: ch5.

My argument then is that, driven by a discourse of enterprise and by a conscious understanding of notions of consumer reflexivity, the 'retuning' of the Waterstone's brand has led to a heightened sensitivity to the subjectivities of consumers and a subsequent shift in the gendering of the practices and discourses of reading the organisation promotes. To a limited extent the hegemonic position of the company within the book industry means that this influence extends into the commodity chain beyond the retail sector.

There is a danger that this conclusion leads to a cheerful celebration of the retail sector as a democratising influence via its responsiveness to consumer demand. It is possible however to read this in other ways. Scott Lash for example in a discussion about the "dangers inherent in the extension of reflexivity"[238] draws upon the later Foucault to argue that "what appears as the freedom of agency for the theory of reflexivity is just another means of control [...] as the direct operation of power on the body has been displaced by its mediated operation on the body through the soul."[239] For John Law however this becomes more a question about the nature of the "modes of ordering" which condition this reflexivity:

> "it is plausible to go out and look for fairly coherent and large scale ordering patterns in the networks of the social [...] orderings which (to the extent that they are performed) generate, define and interrelate elements in relatively coherent ways. And in particular it is plausible to look out for specific strategies of reflexivity and self reflexivity."[240]

Waterstone's attempts then to fine tune its brand and organisation by enhancing its responsiveness to its customers via a focus on reading might be seen in terms of the development of just such a mode of ordering for practices of reading. This mode of ordering is relationally defined by the existing practices and discourses of ordering which make up the Waterstone's organisation. These are multiple and

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[237]Producer interview 1.
[238]Lash, 1993: 19.
[239]Lash, 1993: 20.
[240]Law, 1994: 107.

varied and allow for a relatively free play of subjectivities defined outside the organisation, as the set of influences (critical literacy, post structuralism, gendered resistance to dominant discourses) constituting the agents involved in the promotion of these reader centred approaches suggest. Nevertheless the hegemonic mode of ordering within the company remains one of enterprise and commercial vitality defined in terms of profitability, market leading and innovation.

Hopefully then this account captures some of the connectivities between the book, literary culture, individual subjectivities, and commercial retail practices and the nuances of power and resistance which striate these. As I stated at the outset of 2.5, this runs ahead of the arguments presented in the next two sections which provide greater detail and setting for this account. I turn now then to providing some of this detail regarding the experience of reading and individual reader's relationships with books.

Section B: Reading.

Chapter 3: The book in day to day life.

3.1: Introduction.

In this chapter I attempt to explore some of the ways in which people live with books. The aim is to offer a detailed description of the multiple and complicated ways in which the book appears in people's everyday lives. The chapter makes a number of points about the material presence of books in the lives of milieu of people my research focuses on.

Firstly, running through the chapter is the idea that the book is *complex* and that it is used in lots of different ways. It is a site upon which lots of different practices come together ranging from different ways of reading, to ways of acquiring books to ways of keeping them and these practices are quite hard to separate. Secondly, I show that while at times books are something quite extraordinary in the lives of these people and can at times be described as being used to act a kind of magic on people's lives they are for the most part very *ordinary*. Their presence is normally fairly unremarkable, something that is just there in the lives of this group. Thirdly however I try to show that books are nevertheless *significant* in these peoples lives and I begin to offer reasons for this significance which will be explored further in chapter 4.

As I have established in the previous chapter and appendix 1, this is an inevitably partial account. It is not intended to generate universalised conclusions regarding the way in which people read and interact with books. The group of readers I draw from are not intended to represent any wider society, nor a 'typical' Waterstone's market, although their characteristics do broadly reflect the latter. It is intended to show how meanings, discourses and practices striate such interpretative communities. It should also be noted that this is a written account, derived largely from talking to people (though also involving *some* reference to observation and

personal experience) about what they do with books. Again I have commented elsewhere on the methodological implications (and failings) of representing practices. The verbalised accounts this chapter draws upon are collated thematically in appendix 3 below. Respondents are quoted at length to provide as much context as possible for the themes being illustrated and to allow scope for alternative interpretations by the reader. Further context is provided by the biographies in appendix 2 which hopefully further contextualise the interview exerpts and analysis by demonstrating the overlapping, interweaving and contradiction of the practices described within individual subjectivities.

3.2: Practices of Reading

One of the things that these people all do with books is read them. I follow Michel De Certeau in believing that reading is productive.

> "The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they 'intended.' He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organised by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings."[241] "All writing depends on the generosity of the readers."[242]

There are therefore as many 'types' of reading as there are encounters between book and reader. Here I attempt to draw some common practices from the accounts offered to me by my respondents.

Various commonly held strategies for expressing 'why one reads' can be discerned. One of these is an expression of reading in terms of 'pleasure'. Pleasure or enjoyment were drawn upon by my respondents in a variety of ways. In some ways the term is merely a shorthand for the inevitable failing of language in describing practice,

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[241]De Certeau, 1984: 169.
[242]Manguel, 1996: 179.

a perfectly logical rationalisation of why one does something - 'because I like it.' The term was rarely used by respondents themselves but their descriptions of a range of reading practices were couched in terms of pleasure and enjoyment, or even, frequently expressed non-linguistically as respondents expressed an immediate pleasure even in recounting their practices. In box 1 then reading is referred to as something inducing a sensual experience, acting upon the body like alcohol or drugs (Reader 6), an 'appetite' requiring satiation (Reader 12) or inducing the coronary effects of happiness (Reader 9).

This sensual, embodied pleasure is however inseparable from other motivations or explanations for reading. Inevitably, multiple meanings converge upon the term, which are frequently difficult to separate. Thus in boxes 1 and 2 the more bodily pleasures of relaxation are inseparable from the pleasures involved in 'escaping' via reading. This is defined as pleasurable by virtue of its contrast with the everyday, defined as necessity, routine, the mundane, stress etc. The routinised, regular and everyday practice of reading, though a prominent strand in the weave of the fabric of the everyday, is so for its contrast with the rest of the weave. So notions of relaxation, unwinding or breaking with routine intertwine with notions of an 'elsewhere' in reading where this takes place (see box 2), a

> "new or unfamiliar space, one which draws some of its power from its links to our everyday world; a place which allows us to look at the world with new eyes. While it is impossible to leave our sense of being in the world completely, it is possible to imagine a somewhere else, a place where things are very different."[243] "To read is to be elsewhere, where *they* are not, in another world; it is to constitute a secret scene, a place where one can enter and leave when one wishes."[244]

This requires qualification since it nearly always seemed to for my respondents. Even when clearly acknowledged as part of the practice of reading, pleasure tends to

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[243]Kneale, 1995: 10.

[244]De Certeau, 1984: 173. De Certeau's 'secret scene' need not I think be particularly fantastical or otherly. It is the sense of it being a created place which is important and the creativity involved in its constitution.

entwine with other practices defined more in terms of their 'functionality,' a function usually grounded in more cognitivist notions of self improvement or acquisition of demonstrable knowledge. Most respondents felt the need to emphasise this whether overtly or more generally through the multiplicity of their accounts of their reading practices and their definite unwillingness to account for reading in terms of any one of these practices (see box 3). These motivations were not necessarily defined *against* pleasure (though for many respondents 'necessary' or 'enforced' reading, for school or work, where reading *became* the everyday and mundane emphatically was). Reader 2 for instance insists that her reading practices which centre firmly upon acquiring cognitivist knowledge and practical skills are as pleasurable as they are purposeful. Reader 10 is typical of many respondents in describing the enhancement of reading for escape by *simultaneously* reading for knowledge and self improvement by describing the historical acumen of a female 'genre' author.

The way these practices intertwine, and particularly the level of influence respondents were prepared to concede to pleasure were affected by other characteristics of their 'reading contract.' This is a term advanced by Kneale to encapsulate the complex mental maps readers have of the terrains of their own reading habits and tastes.[245] Kneale shows how reading styles and practices intertwine during reading so readers who read to be 'transported elsewhere'[246] order this by realist reading practice employing realism to discuss the fantastic and vice versa, the two styles sharing a "close and dialogical relationship."[247] Variations in the relationship between these and other styles condition the nature of the 'contract' readers enter into with SF - their likes and dislikes according to genres, sub genres, canonical works and authors as well as the overlap between these and particular practices of reading.

This can be seen in the group's frequent qualification of pleasure. It is fair to say that all of my respondents gained pleasure from reading. All of them read lots,

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[245]Kneale, 1995.
[246]Kneale, 1995: 215.
[247]Kneale, 1995: 214.

none of them expressed a sudden surprise in realising that they found this interest unlikeable. All of them alluded to the pleasure it afforded at least obliquely, at the very least through the enjoyment they seemed to get from talking about reading - most of them commented on how much they enjoyed the experience of being interviewed and my letting them 'go on about books.' Some respondents however were more willing than others to allow 'pleasure' on to the record as their motivation for reading. In the quotes in box 3 for instance both Reader 8 and Reader 18's switch from (my or their) mention of pleasure/escape etceteras into what they perhaps regard as more 'worthy' explanations are typical of their interviews as a whole in which if pleasure/escape arose on the agenda it was put there by me and tended usually to be subtly removed again by the respondent's change of terms.

As I have already briefly introduced in the preceding chapter, such an outlook can be seen in terms of the reader's reflexive alignment with gendered power relations. Here I want to stress that this is not to suggest some sort of gender based dualism to 'explain' reading practices along the lines of pleasurable/practical; guilty/worthy; male/female (though it might be to arrive at a similar point via a more circuitous route!). Other male respondents were happy to suggest and accept pleasure as an explanatory term for their reading, plenty of female suggested they were slightly uncomfortable talking about pleasure. Some variation can be discerned in the extent to which respondents drew upon these in defining their reading contract, or what they choose as acceptable reading for themselves. That everyone possessed such a contract is demonstrated by the ease with which they could define what they did and did not read, if not explicate this beyond resorting to listing their favourite books. I would suggest as well that each contract is equally detailed and nuanced.

Practices of pleasure and practicality also intertwine with attitudes towards notions of canon, genre and decision-making practices. Reader 6 reads mainly genre fiction such as crime, science fiction and fantasy and emphasises that she enjoys these as 'happy books,' a contrast with the 'unhappiness' of the world. The pleasure she derived from her reading was evident during my interview with her when she

occasionally sighed with pleasure at merely recounting her experiences. She particularly enjoys genre series by authors such as Lillian Jackson Braun and admits to re-reading these often up to eight or nine times. This might be accounted for in similar terms to those Ang (re)applies to Radway's romance readers.

Ang challenges Radway's interpretation of the Smithton women's enjoyment of romance stories with confessedly similar heroes and heroines and exclusively happy endings as delusional, the reader succumbing to the ideological trickery of the genre. Her reading sees the reader actively and strategically seeking pleasure from stories where the outcome and generic style is known allowing enjoyment of "the pleasure that is solicited by what may be termed 'the grain of the story': the subtle, differentiated texture of each book's staging of the romantic tale that makes its reading a 'new' experience even though the plot is standard."[248] Reader 6's own account of her reading confirms this:

> "That's the skill of how they do it. If you read a book and you read almost every word then they're a good author. If you're reading a book and you start skipping paragraphs to get to the next bit then they're not a good author. And I usually judge a book on how I have to read it. If I can't wait to get to the end and I'm skipping it half way through and then I get to the end and something's happened and I've got to go all the way back over it and I think (sighs with disappointment). And if its very good then you're disappointed when you finish."

Reader 6's contract is still nuanced however and she distinguishes a specific subset of her reading which are:

> "what I call my silhouette romance books. When I'm feeling that I need something that's very lightweight I just grab one of those and its something that takes me one maybe two hours to read ... You always know what the ending is going to be its just how they get there basically. I do like a story."

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[248]Ien Ang, 1996: 105. See also Radway, 1984.

Reader 8's reading contract combines with a different intersection of practices. In contrast with Reader 6 his favoured reading is "wrapped up in present concerns." He lists books such as Blake Morrison and Andrew O'Hagan's non-fiction alongside contemporary fiction, defining his reading *against* genre fiction which he feels tends not to be 'self-improving' although he qualified this with reference to certain canonical writers from science fiction such as J G Ballard and with the admission that it was perhaps a "knee jerk reaction" that made him shy away from this form of reading.

And again this contrasts with Reader 6 in terms of its intersection with his motivation for reading. He emphasises a notion of self improvement via learning something universal about life in a manner that he finds personally interesting, self improvement via self reflexivity:[249]

> "A book has got to speak to me about my life, things that have happened, things that are happening and if not then its got to really address universal themes such as (pauses) I keep going back to Hardy and that whole idea of fate rolling on and the inevitability of certain things happening and those kinds of novels will always appeal to me even though they might not speak directly to my life at the moment."
> **Paul:** "Do you think that is self improving?"
> "I don't know. I would hope it is. Yes. To a certain extent I must believe that because I believe there are certain novels which aren't self improving, certain reading patterns which are regressive if anything and I would actively fight against that in what I read."

This combines with a sense of pleasure derived from a sense of self determination in what he reads expressed in terms of improvement over time:

> "I think I'm now less influenced by what other people think about a work of literature. I feel better able to make up my own mind about it, although I may take as a starting point newspaper reviews. I'm looking for an analogy. Its very similar to reading Melody Maker when you're 18 and being told what you should listen to and listening to it and thinking I should probably enjoy this and coming to enjoy it. And that's not me now

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[249]The strength of this discourse amongst the respondents will be emphasised below in discussions of relations between the book and narrative self identity. See box 12, appendix 3.

and that probably was me four or five years ago but I'm in a definite position where I make up my own mind more I think."

I want here to avoid suggesting two ends of a scale, particularly for its connotations of polarity and potentially hierarchy. I prefer rather to suggest something more amorphous. I make these comparisons to illustrate how reading practices are dialectically woven with tastes and affinities towards genres and styles to form a reading contract. To show this weaving I have separated the practices of pleasure and practicality in a way that most of my respondents found extremely difficult and emphasised these at the expense of other practices relating to books some of which may be dealt with later, others of which may not have emerged as common to my group. The line that connects pleasure with practicality is a line in a network that is pulled out of shape by other lines of practice. It is a rhizomatic, Deleuzian line[250]. Reader 8 and Reader 6 are potentially much 'closer' in parts of this network of practice than this oppositional account suggests.

That said, in terms of my milieu of respondents and their loose representation of Waterstone's customers, most of them are positioned on a point of this imaginary line perhaps slightly on the side of Reader 8 in favouring notions of self improvement and reference to a quality defined by a canon or authority external to Reader 6's more autonomous measurement of the pleasurableness of each engagement with the text. This provides further legitimacy to the argument advanced in the previous chapter regarding the gendering of power relations within this community of practice and the validity of mobilising these relations. As the biographies in appendix 2 show, this is not an exclusively male subject position just as Reader 6's autonomous pleasure is not exclusively female. For nearly all these readers the sense was of an *emerging* acceptance of the legitimacy of the feminine discourses and a heightened cautiousness regarding the universality of the masculine. My aim is not to suggest the reflection or absorption of these discourses by readers from Waterstone's or the literary sphere, rather that both communities are striated by similar discourses.

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[250]Deleuze & Guattari, 1983.

3.3: Practices of the Book.

I have established then that reading practices intertwine and it is possible to discern patterns in this intertwining. I next go on to suggest that practices of reading are themselves interwoven with practices not merely to do with the *reading* of books. So the pleasure(s) of the text, derived from intimate absorption or mediated experience connect also to pleasures, practices and meanings of the book as an *object*.

> "Books fill shelves and whole walls in many homes, warming us with their presence. We experience them not only as individual texts whose contents enrich our intellectual, spiritual or recreational lives but also as objects, or groups of objects whose presence decorates a room, symbolises our identity and life experience, embodies important memories and intellectual, spiritual and recreational concerns. The 19th-century English poet Leigh Hunt wrote: 'When I speak of being in contact with my books, I mean it literally. I like to lean my head against them."[251]

So for instance many respondents indicated that part of the pleasure of books/reading derived from the sensual and auratic[252] characteristics of the object - the feel or the smell of the book, its ability to receive the imprint of ownership and collectively create space (Box 4). Whilst others described how the semiotics of the object and the "paratexts"[253] of the book define the decision making process (Box 5).[254] Such paratexts are the source of considerable reflexivity on the part of the reader, as Reader 9's discussion of the semiotics of the cover begin to suggest. Reader 18 for instance explicitly identifies book covers as a site of possible manipulation by publishers (see biographies, appendix 2). There was a general sense from many of the respondents of sharing Genette's conceptualisation of paratexts as a liminal space between the book's

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[251]Danet, 1997: 10.
[252]Benjamin, 1992b.
[253]Genette, 1997.
[254]The degree of reflexivity and awareness of possible manipulation by marketing or personal position in an interpretative community here is worthy of comment.

status as a commodity and literary or textual artefact and a subsequent need for a more guarded appraisal of their effects.[255]

In a less vocalised but perhaps more important way the significance of the book as object is evident through the group's almost universal tendency to *keep* books. I hesitate slightly in calling these 'collections' in the sense of being consciously acquired via collecting and the wider set of skills and knowledges involved in such a practice:

> "The purchasing done by a book collector has very little in common with that done in a bookshop by a student getting a textbook, a man of the world buying a present for his lady or a businessman intending to while away the next train journey .... The acquisition of books is by no means a matter of money or expert knowledge alone. Not even both factors together suffice for the establishment of a real library, which is always somewhat impenetrable and at the same time uniquely itself. Anyone who buys from catalogues must have a flair in addition to the qualities I have mentioned. Dates, place names, formats, previous owners, bindings and the like: all these details must tell him something - not as dry, isolated facts, but as a harmonious whole; from the quality and intensity of this harmony he must be able to recognise whether a book is for him or not. An auction requires yet another set of qualities in the collector...etceteras."[256]

Rather than being expertly acquired collections involving all the practices of knowledge acquisition, searching etc that would entail, (including as in Benjamin's case, knowledge of previous ownership[257]and particularly knowledge the respondent's tendency to be surrounded by books seems to be something much less remarkable, accidental and unplanned rather than consciously worked at, a project in the manner of a collection. Again though this is a case of sets of practices coinciding. At times some

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[255]The consultancy referred to in Chapter 2 pioneering reader centred promotions uses a training exercise to encourage readers to develop confidence and autonomy in their own reading practices which involves group appraisal of the effects of covers in influencing initial perception of books.
[256]Benjamin, 1992a: 64-65. In the context of my arguments below concerning the role of books in making space, it is interesting to consider Benjamin's practices in terms of his own dislocation (Buck-Morss, 1989). "In a study of identity, immigration and possessions among Russian immigrants to Israel, I found that books were invariably mentioned as the most important possessions they brought with them (Danet, 1989: 10).

respondent's described their books very much in terms of 'collections.' Definite forms of ordering were often apparent in terms of some people's storage strategies whilst some people also alluded to consciously buying particular types of books or buying complete sets of books by particular authors(box 6).

For the most part however any 'collection' or 'ordering' of books tend to be something much more ordinary (Box 7), a collision between these practices of collections, bibliographic and practices of the everyday. The image then is one of messy, unpatterned and unstrategic acquisition combined with the best attempts at ordering that the rest of everyday life allows. 'Little heaps of stuff all over the house' rather than catalogues or collections. Nevertheless, many of these disordered 'collections' are described in terms similar to the "secular sacred character"[258] of collections and other consumer goods with great meaning for the self, "retained and cherished because of their extraordinary status and their implications for self definition. Their sacredness may be preserved through sustaining rituals"[259] such as Reader 6's secret tidying or Reader 5's imaginary rescuing.

3.4: The Everyday Book.

Colliding practices once more. As argued above, although a prominent, contrasting and colourful strand in the weave of the fabric of this group's everyday lives it is nevertheless very much a part of that weave. As the quotes in box 8 begin to sketch in more detail all of the practices so far described mingle with 'the everyday.' Practices of reading collide with practices of the book collide with practices of the everyday. The book 'fits around' or as with Reader 3, 'fills in the gaps' between other day to day activities and commitments or even constitutes a 'background' to these activities, filling ""empty' space and 'empty' time with a familiar routine, so familiar

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[257]Danet and Katriel, 1989.
[258]Belk et al, 1989.
[259]Belk, 1995: 72; McCracken, 1986.

that it is unremarkable"[260] in a similar way to the radio sound this quote describes - indeed frequently the book shares or competes for this time/space with other technologies such as the radio, newspapers, magazines, music, television. None of which were ever described in *exactly* the same way as books but all of which were variously thought worthy of mention in the same breath.

And similarly one characteristic (among many) of this groups practices for acquiring books is its 'ordinariness' and inextricable association with other day to day practices. Shopping for books is squeezed into daily time, or part of a routine of other shopping and leisure practices (see box 9).[261]

3.5: Narrative Identity.

Hopefully the above begins to show that in complex ways and in ordinary ways the book is of personal significance to these respondents. This is notable throughout the group of respondents through their protection of reading as something very much 'theirs,' something which *they* controlled. This could be in a general sense of defining their reading *against* other people's like Reader 8; in annoyance at the intrusion of others like Reader 4; or a general sense throughout the interviews of '*I* do this' - that whatever the external influence on their reading (whether this be newspaper review, notions of canon, prizes, shop recommendations, advice from friends etceteras) it was still something which ultimately *they* controlled and decided upon (see appendix 2).

It is also possible to point to a relationship articulated by the group between books and their identity and sense of self. The book so far described in this chapter represents a collision between practices of reading, practices of the object and practices of the everyday. A collision therefore between subject and object. This can

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[260]Tacchi, 1998: 25.

also be seen in the form of the relationship between the book and the respondent's personal biography.

> "Certain goods may come to be seen as extensions of the self. These things extend our grasp, our abilities, or our ego. They provide a sense of mastery of the environment, others and the self. They are expressive and aid feelings of identity, continuity and even immortality. And they often provide us with a sense of past - both individual and shared with others."[262]

Many respondents were explicit for instance about the relationship between reading and some sense of 'who they are' (box 10), the book acting as 'a pointer to ones own mind' or clearly held sense of identity. This relationship between book and self is not always monitored quite so consciously. A sense of the connection between reading practices and personal identity often came through the respondent's reflection of how their reading had changed over time and the connections between this and changes in their own identity. Increasing sophistication in reading practices is commonly attributed to an increase in personal experience (see box 11). Re-reading then can become a reflection upon the experiences gained since the original encounter, providing the 'sense of past' referred to above by Belk. For Reader 5 this is particularly stark, the practice of reading certain books being a deliberate process of reflection and measuring the changes in his life and outlook over time.

The book then is implicated in the individual's narrative identity. Nick Hornby describes a character who in periods of emotional stress reorganises his record collection in the order in which it was acquired to reassert his sense of self by reminding himself that understanding its ordering requires an understanding of his biography which only he possesses:

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[261] For an account of everyday practices of shopping which draws in part on a community of shoppers in Sheffield with similar backgrounds and habitus to my respondents here see Evans et al., 1996. See also Campbell & Falk, 1997; Miller et al, 1998.
[262]Belk, 1995: 72; Belk, 1988;

"Tuesday night I reorganise my record collection; I often do this at periods of emotional stress ... When Laura was here I had the records arranged alphabetically ... Tonight though I fancy something different, so I try to remember the order I bought them in: that way I hope to write my own autobiography without having to do anything like pick up a pen. I pull the records off the shelves, put them in piles all over the sitting room floor, look for *Revolver* and go on from there, and when I'm finished I'm flushed with a sense of self, because this, after all, is who I am. I like being able to see how I got from Deep Purple to Howling Wolf in twenty five moves; I am no longer pained by the memory of listening to Sexual Healing all the way through a period of enforced celibacy... But what I really like is the feeling of security I get from my new filing system; I have made myself more complicated than I really am ... You have to be me - or at the very least, a doctor of Flemingology - to know how to find any of them. If I want to play say, *Blue* by Joni Mitchell, I have to remember that I bought it for someone in 1983 and thought better of giving it to her ... Well you don't know any of that so you're knackered really aren't you? You'd have to ask me to dig it out for you and for some reason I find that enormously comforting."[263]

Attachment to the object (the book/the record) derives from objects being a means of storing and reaccessing biography. Books travel through the narrative history of respondents, parts of that history becomes inscribed upon them and can be nostalgically accessed at a later date, the practice of reading becoming in part a practice of biographical journeying.[264] This journeying can be temporal as with Reader 10's resurrection of her childhood. For Reader 7, Reader 12 and Reader 9 this journeying is literally spatial, their books acting as emotional and experiential maps of their previous travels or visits. Reader 11 and Reader 3 meanwhile draw upon them as emotional cues, particular books providing triggers for reflection, again connecting time by allowing the present to be juxtaposed with the past (see box 12).

This should not be over-simplified. Reader 8 for instance resists relying wholly on this explanation drawing attention to the messiness of this inscription:

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[263]Hornby, 1996: 52.

[264]See also Breckenridge (1989) & Pearce (1995) on collecting. For both of these objects can have no narrative of their own but can be made to look as though they do via the inscription onto them of personal narratives of the possessor.

"The whole Nick Hornby, High Fidelity thing where he can use his record collection to map his life is too hard in literature. Its easier in music definitely but not in literature. Because there's so many things I've revisited. Nineteenth century English literature should take me back to my university days but it doesn't, it takes me back to the last couple of years so I don't think that chronology is there. It probably does earlier on. From sixteen to eighteen/nineteen I could go around picking out certain novels and think yes I remember reading that at that time and that had this certain effect on me, but of late its all become rather more jumbled up".

A messiness that other respondents would no doubt agree with. There is nevertheless a qualified element here of "writing an autobiography without picking up a pen."[265] For Anthony Giddens "autobiography - particularly in the broad sense of an interpretative self history produced by the individual concerned, whether written down or not - is actually at the core of self identity in modern social life."[266] And its inscription in an external object is fitting given Giddens' conception of the self's 'ontological security.' This derives from Winnicott's object relation's ego psychology which sees the infant/carer - self/other relationship replaced by a self/other relationship with external abstract systems and objects.

For Winnicott this process is essentially social. His account rests upon the self encountering an object that is already out in the world. This is encountered neither as a pure projection of the self onto the outside world nor as a straightforward imposition of the object directly onto subjectivity. Rather it is a separate entity within a relationship of mutuality from which the self derives its power of movement and creativity. The energy for this mutuality or betweenness derives from the self's desire to meet others.[267] The subject's mutuality with the object is thoroughly social. This will be explored more fully in chapter 4.

What I hope I have done in this chapter is offer some indication of the way in which books are the site of multiple and intertwined practices and how they 'matter'

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[265]Hornby, 1996: 52.
[266]Giddens, 1991: 76.
[267]Benjamin, 1988; Latham, forthcoming; Winnicott, 1971.

and constitute a "richly textured presence"[268] in the lives of my respondents. The book "forms a rhizome with the world"[269] it is multiple in its connection to practices and people, always between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. I explore this further in the following chapter where I consider the spatiality of this always in between, always connecting book amongst this particular milieu.

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[268]Miller, 1998: 15.
[269]Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 11.

Chapter 4. Reading as a Social Act.

4.1: Introduction

The preceding chapter established that reading is an ordinary activity. A largely unexceptional practice interwoven with other practices of the everyday. This chapter takes the story further and demonstrates the interweaving of reading (as an individual, solitary encounter with an object and text) with everyday practices involving social encounters and relations with others. It then goes on to consider the ways in which the space of reading might also be considered broadly, interwoven with multiple spaces of the everyday.

The general point I want to make is that practices of reading are entwined with the social networks in which the individual reader circulates. The book is a significant non-human component in these networks, both literally as a circulating object and more abstractly as a presence in the lives of these people and therefore a topic of conversation, a marker of identity etceteras. I begin by offering an empirical account of the ways in which the book and its associated practices interacts with the social behaviour of my respondents. I follow this with an exploration of the ways in which these social networks have a particular kind of spatiality. I then conclude with a discussion of the way in which this sociality and spatiality assist in the constitution of modern reflexive subjectivities.

4.2: Sociability and the Book.

I demonstrated at the end of chapter 2 how the book as both text and object is consciously and unconsciously implicated in the narrative identity of the respondents. The tone there was of a personally defined narrativity defined from within the self and

its experiences. I hope to show here that this identity also requires a social and relational context, that

> "ontological narratives are above all social and interpersonal [...] can only exist interpersonally in the course of social and structural interactions over time."[270]

I emphasised previously how the personal significance of books and reading to the respondents led to a defence and protection of reading as something very much theirs, an exercise in autonomy. This conditions the way in which the relationship between their reading and other people is viewed. Part of the social context of reading is its use in consciously defining the self *against* other people. All three of the respondents in box 13 are emphatic that reading is *theirs*, a space defined by the absence of the influence or surveillance of others, yet providing a point of comparison or Bourdieuean distinction in these intersubjective relations. Reader 8's sense that this is 'bizarre' reflects the paradox that this narrative of autonomy requires the presence of a social network to operate.

> "The subject assumes, in both senses of the word, an identity on the basis of commonality with others and yet the subject, in both senses of the word assumes that they are an individual."[271]

Identity then is defined relationally.

> "Any one of the fluid collective or individual identities a person evokes in telling stories about herself and others (partly involves) the assuming of a position, the marking out of a space, the drawing of meaning-filled, meaning separating boundaries, on the inside of which are those with whom one shares likenesses, with whom one is identical, on the outside of which are those marked by difference, those who are excluded, those *others* who are not identical yet whose otherness tells us of our sameness."[272]

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[270]Somers 1994: 618.
[271]Pile and Thrift 1995: 39.
[272]Pred, 1996: 18.

For a number of respondents this occurs as they place themselves in terms of public narratives or "those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual"[273] about reading. This extends the argument made in the previous chapter concerning the mediation of reading practices (or if not actual practice, accounts of that practice) by masculine and feminine discourses of reading. A similar discourse relates to the perceived status of reading by wider society:

> "By the end of the fifteenth century, eyeglasses were sufficiently familiar to symbolise not only the prestige of reading but also its abuses. Most readers, then and now have sometimes experienced the humiliation of being told that their occupation is reprehensible. I remember being laughed at, during one recess in grade six or seven, for staying indoors and reading, and how the taunting ended with me being sprawled face down on the floor, my glasses kicked into one corner, my book into another. 'You wouldn't enjoy it' was the verdict of my cousins who having seen my book lined bedroom assumed that I would not want to accompany them to see yet another Western [...] Slothful, feeble, pretentious, pedantic, elitist - these are some of the epithets that eventually became associated with the poor sighted scholar, the bookworm, the nerd. Buried in books, isolated from the world of facts and flesh, feeling superior to those unfamiliar with the words preserved between dusty covers, the bespectacled reader who pretended to know what God in his wisdom had hidden was seen as a fool.[274]"

A public narrative about the reader which can still be drawn upon, both through Reader 14 and Reader 17's personal experience in box 14 of feeling 'misidentified' as being 'intellectual or 'having something wrong with you as a result of their reading, and Reader 19's reflection upon the wider societal discourses this depends upon.

This network of relations also conditions the nature of reading practice. The other is a constant presence or non-presence determining how reading occurs, the nature of the experience. Thus Reader 3 describes how the presence of a visitor not familiar with her two friends day to day practices of reading intrudes upon these, rendering them embarrassing, inexplicable and undoable. The three other testimonies

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[273]Somers 1994: 619. See also Taylor, 1989.
[274]Manguel 1996: 296.

in box 15 each describe reading as a kind of intimately shared experience. Paradoxically this relies on an incomplete sharing of the experience. Reader 6 regards communication of her experience with the book is unnecessary despite her husband's requests whilst for Reader 17 and Reader 19 some communication occurs but this is only minimal. The intimacy derives from the other's respect for the individual's enjoyment of that experience as indicated by Reader 19's comparison with her previous husband's attitude of intrusion and failed understanding.

The testimonies also suggest how the book helps mediate social relationships by acting as a prosthesis of the self and standing 'in between' its relation with the other, allowing for greater regulation of the encounter than would any direct connection between the two. The book regulates intimacy. Drawing upon extensive professional involvement promoting reading groups and reading as a social activity Producer 13 regards their social function thus:

> "Its a way of talking about your deepest values and beliefs safely. Otherwise what are your choices? Confession? Self revelation of a very lacerating and painful time which you only do with your most closest nearest and dearest. And if its not about you then its about your friends and then its bitching and gossip at its worst. But fictional characters you can talk about and you can reveal all kinds of things about yourself obliquely. And you can control how far that should be. And people can't make assumptions about your own life, sexuality or lifestyle from that. And that's a great liberation to be able to have a meeting of ... I often find in reading groups that people suddenly engage at a level that is deeper than ordinary conversation, which we all want of course but to be able to do it in a way that is personally raw."

This oblique presentation of self and regulation of intimacy can be seen both directly and indirectly through the comments of my reading respondents. A common theme for many was the presence of books somehow in social encounters and their use in forming an initial bond. For Reader 7 this was by signifying the 'type' of person she prefers to interact with, for Reader 11 a shared topic of conversation where social differences would perhaps preclude other shared experiences (box 16). In both cases

the book indicates shared membership of particular interpretative communities or helps provide a repertoire of 'connected knowing.'[275]

Commonly the book's presence as a mutual signifier of the respective selves in the relationship continues as the relationship develops. So whilst the encounter which led to Reader 3's relationship with her friend was initially aided by their shared interest in books, the book again defining 'my kind of person,' the relationship was subsequently maintained by an ongoing exchange of recommendations and actual books and a growing understanding of each others tastes alongside wider knowledge of character. Knowledge of taste becomes a marker of intimacy (box 17).

Reader 12 and Reader 10 also articulate this process of knowing the other through books. Reader 12 shows how this process is founded in knowledge of the other and how 'experimentation' can lead to an increase in this knowledge, or 'surprise' whilst Reader 10 emphasises the pleasure involved in making a selection the other enjoys, a mixture of getting the book right and getting the other right with it (box 18). For Reader 9 (box 19) this process is one practice among many which she shares with her friends but is one which has allowed a heightened level of intimacy, a 'deepening' of each's understanding and knowledge of the other through the opportunities for discussion and sharing the joint interest provides.

The range of social relations referred to in the above is fairly broad, from stranger to close friend with neighbours and acquaintances along the way. The book helps ease the journey. It is present during social relations from the cursory encounters of sociality to intimate relationships of friendship or love. The nature of this presence is also broad, the book being put to a variety of uses in the midst of this sociality: its use by Reader 17, Reader 19 and Reader 6 as a way of enjoying the company of the other whilst regulating their intrusion into that enjoyment; Reader 7's use of books as a predictor of the 'type' of person she has encountered; Reader 9's use of the book to

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[275]Hermes, 1995.

deepen her relationships with close friends; Reader 10's enjoyment of matching types of book to type of person etc. Running through these is some sense of the extent to which the self can be invested in and projected using the book and its associated practices. The exchange ranges then from the sharing of common knowledges, tastes and practices to the literal exchange of an object either as a loan or permanent gift.

> "This bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give part of oneself."[276]

Where in the previous chapter I showed how the book is implicated in the narrative constitution of self this I hope begins to indicate how this narrativity requires a social milieu for its success.

Ontological narrativity - our stories about ourselves - are defined within a network of self-other relations.

> "We might visualise this as an infinite number of spider's webs intersecting at infinite angles, each at dynamic relation within itself where each change produces iterative changes elsewhere in the fable, fibril, febrile structure of the map of the subject."[277] "The meaning of the human organism is established by its activity and the activity of others with respect to it [...] selves are outcomes not antecedents of human interaction."[278]
> "Intersubjectivity does not derive from subjectivity but the other way round."[279]

Caught within and conditioned by this web are the practices associated with the book and reading. These also themselves mediate, determine, influence and sustain.

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[276]Mauss, 1954: 10
[277]Pile and Thrift 1995: 44
[278]Brissett and Eggley quoted in Tseelon 1992: 115 "a transient self which is situationally and interactively defined; a social product which does not have an existence outside an interaction" (Tseelon, 1992: 121).
[279]Giddens 1991: 51

It is this network of human relations which provides the narrated identity with its 'ontological security'[280] which I here wish to argue, following Winnicott[281] emerges in a 'potential space'[282] of contact between self and other. The potential of this space is as a site in which the experience of mutuality between self and other prior to the infant's recognition of the object as external to the self can (potentially) be revived. "The mutuality with early caretakers [...] is a substantially unconscious sociality which precedes an 'I' and a 'me' and is a prior basis of any differentiation between the two."[283] This is not a given however and rests on a distinction between relating to an object and using an object:

> "First there is object relating, then in the end there is object use; in between is the most difficult thing [...] the subject's placing of the object outside of the area of the subject's omnipotent control, that is the subject's perception of the object as an external phenomenon, not as a protective entity, in fact recognition of it as an entity in its own right."[284]

An external placing predicated on the (internal) destruction of the object by the self and a subsequent re-encounter with the object and realisation that therefore the object is external and also valuable - "you have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you."[285]

> "The self discovers an object that is already out in the world, yet, through the self's capacity to form and then destroy the object in fantasy the object is encountered neither as a pure projection of the self onto the outside world, nor as a straightforward imposition of the object onto the subjectivity of the self but rather as a separate entity within a relationship of mutuality. It is here, within the achievement of mutuality that the self feels its power to move, to create, to be alive."[286]

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[280]Giddens 1991; Somers 1993.
[281]Winnicott 1971. See also Benjamin 1988 Giddens 1991; Lash & Urry 1994; Latham forthcoming.
[282]Or transitional space, or third space. See Winicott 1971: chs 1&6.
[283]Giddens 1991: 38
[284]Winnicott 1971: 89
[285]Winnicott 1971: 90
[286]Latham forthcoming.

> "It is being with the other that I experience the most profound sense of self [...] it is the capacity for mutual, reciprocal, intersubjective relations that allows for the constitution of subjectivity."[287]

So ontological security emerges through a creative encounter with the other. And as with the infant's use of a transitional object[288] - an "intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute" - to help understand the division and connectivity between self and other, the book plays a similar role in the adult encounter as an intermediary connecting *and* separating in the social encounter.

4.3: Spaces of Reading.

I want to pursue this point in the rest of the chapter via a discussion of the book and its associated practices and its entangling with space. The above accounts of the social context of reading rub shoulders in the original interviews with stories about *where* reading and its practices occur. In line with the thesis I have been advancing through these chapters that reading is (amongst other things) emphatically entwined with the practices of the everyday, the spaces of reading tend to be as multiple as the everyday spaces of my respondent's lives. As such, it perhaps goes without saying that there is a clear association between books and their practices and that key site in the day to day lives of these respondents, the home. In the course of conducting my interviews I got numerous tours, descriptive or physical of the micro-geographies of the book in the homes of my respondents. Common to most of these geographies was an embeddedness in the wider practices of reading alluded to by the respondents. A common distinction for instance arose between distinctly public areas of the home, usually the living room or kitchen where ideas of public display were forwarded and particularly the bedroom where stored books were described in far more personal or intimate terms.

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[287]Braidotti 1994: 72 & 201.
[288]Winnicott 1971: ch1.

Alberto Manguel makes much of the relationship between books and the space of bed. The bed represents an ideal space for reading as a result of its "particular quality of privacy."[289] It is a retreat, a liminal refuge from everyday sociality and the demands of others:

> "Reading in bed is a self-centred act, immobile, free from ordinary social conventions, invisible to the world and one that, because it takes place between the sheets, in the realm of lust and sinful idleness, has something of the thrill of the forbidden."[290]

This association gives voice to a social assumption about reading and therefore the book - that reading is a private practice and the book a private object. As a technology the book is for the most part only a 'single user tool.' It also emphasises the fact that books as objects can help *make* space (private).

It is this *making* of space I particularly want to emphasise in this chapter. An example of the kind of story that can be told here has already been given above with Reader 19 and reader 17's account (box 15) of reading with others and their use of the book to combine individualised (private, interior) space with shared space (public, exterior).

> "Indeed, reading has no place ... (the reader's) place is not here or there, one or the other, but neither the one nor the other, simultaneously inside and outside, dissolving both by mixing them together, associating texts like funerary statues that he awakens and hosts, but never owns. In that way he also escapes from the law of each text in particular and from that of the social milieu."[291]

This analogy of mixing or weaving is appropriate. This 'making space' was a common practice amongst respondents, the space made always being very much part of the everyday. The most common discourse in describing reading was one of 'fitting it in.'

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[289]Manguel 1996: 153.
[290]Manguel 1996: 153-4

Fitting reading into the times, practices and spaces of lives already dense with activity and movement. So for all the following respondents reading redefines domestic space, being used (amongst other things) as a tool to change the nature of otherwise mundane practices of domestic reproduction. The gender of these respondents is worthy of comment. Whilst most of the male respondents clearly described reading as playing a similar role in redefining the space of the home, few specifically mentioned practising it around routines of domestic maintenance, even though the majority of my male interviewees would be involved in shared or individual responsibility for these duties and a number contrasted their shopping for books with their role in shopping for food etcetera.[292] For Reader 16 by contrast, this incurs a tension between the 'luxurious' practice of reading and mundane everyday responsibilities. Reader 4 meanwhile clearly contextualises books as one technology amongst many which she employs constructively to shape the material fabric of her day to day life (box 20).

Seeing reading as making space in this way allows an escape from the typical dualism which confines the space of reading in some or other conception of private space. For most of the respondents reading transcends any such pre-defined boundary between public and private, spilling rather *across* spaces.[293] Across is perhaps appropriate since for many respondents movement was a dominant theme. For Reader 6 the very portability of the book is a virtue to be celebrated and exploited (carried everywhere), a practice which takes on particular significance in the light of her earlier (box 6) description of the "sustaining rituals"[294] of secret unpacking, checking and reordering she participates in with her books. Reader 14 also celebrates the book for turning his journey to work into a meaningful part of the day for him whilst Reader 3

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[291]de Certeau 1984: 174

[292]The glib explanation may be that none of the male respondents had developed sufficient skill at these tasks to be able to iron or wash up whilst simultaneously reading!

[293]Van Riel & Fowler (1996) provides excellent visual illustration of reading and book related practices spilling across spaces and constructing out of those spaces a particular enclave of privacy for those engaged in the act. A variety of photographs show reading taking place against a variety of backdrops (busy stations, bus queues, deserted beaches, treetops, city centres, bedrooms). These are employed as part of an argument aimed at empowering readers and the creativity of their reading process. The images are notable for their unusualness in that everyday images of books *and* readers are rare, particularly in social settings.

underlines the way in which the book can quite literally make public space at least quasi-private (box 21). The notions of security, expressed particularly by Reader 6 and Reader 3, involving the construction of (defensive, private) space resonates with the Winnicotian notions of ontological security described above[295].

Again, reading is frequently 'fitted in' to busy routines in life. Daily time is routinised and disciplined by work, home and relationships and reading must literally be squeezed into times (and spaces) when this discipline is relaxed, enhancing the value of that time. Time on public transport is one such instance of emptier time and space but where presence is still purposeful or disciplined. Absent from these accounts were instances of space being made by reading where presence there did not have some other purpose, reading not 'fitted in' to some other routine such as work, leisure, shopping or the routines of the home. Other frequently mentioned times were lunch breaks and the hours or minutes before bedtime.

This often appears a two way process: Such time and space is searched for, or made as an opportunity to enjoy a known luxury. So Reader 18 (box 22) finds himself making time and space by preventing the intrusion of an intimate other whilst avoiding being left as a lone self. It can also however be seen as 'dead time' disengaged from other parts of life and needing to be filled with the ontological security of the self's engagement with a (quasi) other. So for Reader 6 (box 21) if this time becomes 'filled' by friends then reading waits for another opportunity whilst Reader 3 (box 21) can "never be bored."

I want to also suggest that if these are examples of the book being employed to create a quasi-private space amidst public, one might also identify ways in which the book allows private, individual space to become (quasi) public. I have discussed above how reading is implicated in social networks of varying degrees of intimacy. For some respondents the book and its associated practices act as a social mediator in this way

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[294]Belk, 1995: 72

with public encounters with strangers. So for Reader 7 (box 12) her use of reading as a measure of character extends to an interest in the public performances of readers and collectors for whom an excitement at finding a book or text reflecting their self is expressed bodily (box 23). Further the use of reading as a measure of character allows a connectivity with others in public spaces where the other's shared interest is made visible (the bookshop, bookfair). This use of the book to provide a reflection of self and therefore some point of contact with strangers is common to the rest of the respondent's in box 12. For Reader 6 it provides confirmation of the social context of her own feelings about reading otherwise assumed to be individualised and disconnected. Reader 3 elides the sociality with strangers in these spaces with that of known friends whilst for Reader 12 the pleasure of this sociality is also felt as a lack, a frustration that these encounters do not occur more often (box 23).

This notion of a lack of sociality in public space and a desire for more opportunity for encounters with strangers was also widely felt (see box 24). A common experience for me during interviews was the discovery (or recollection if the respondents knew this in advance) that in addition to my role as a researcher I also worked in Waterstone's and that part of my research involved contact with the upper levels of the Waterstone's hierarchy. Respondent's were often subsequently keen to make suggestions about how Waterstone's could improves its service and operation. These commonly revolved around ways in which the Sheffield shop could become a more 'sociable' space - by introducing a US style coffee outlet and cafe area; by providing more tables and library style areas for reading, browsing and discussing; by having more 'social' evening events with authors and discussions; and for a couple of (semi-joking) interviewees, by importing another US idea - singles nights.

This desired sociality was also alluded to by some respondents via reference to some perceived utopian alternative time or space of reading. On a number of occasions during the informal chatting that took place after I had formally finished the

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[295]See also Boethius, 1992: 153

interview by switching off the tape recorder I found myself in the slightly odd position of being enthusiastically thanked by the interviewee for letting them take part in the interview whilst I was attempting to express my own gratitude for their participation. Their explanation for this gratitude tended to be the rarity of actually talking about books (and therefore themselves) and their great enjoyment of it whenever the opportunity did occasionally arise. The finger of blame for the low frequency of such opportunities was often pointed towards the nature of Sheffield as a 'non literary' place[296] which was not conducive to their notional 'salon' type culture of discussion and encounter which they felt did perhaps exist in other larger cities such as London or Manchester.

A similar imaginary might be discerned amongst the comments of a number of respondents who saw the book as a technology doing work which in a more traditional society could be done via face to face communication. It is perhaps hard to read this precisely as a nostalgia for this form of traditional, simple, social rather than technologically based society, rather these respondents point to the way in which the book somehow contains this idea of social encounter and exchange within itself (box 25). In relation to the emergence of the sorts of social spaces in commercial bookstores in the United States described above, Miller refers to:

> "the tremendous symbolic power that the concept of community holds in American culture. The perceived replacement of communal bonds with contractual, interest based relations, along with a perceived decline of individuals' sense of obligation to their localities remain perennial themes in American discourse."[297]

Themes which are so prevalent that "ideas about community are capable of organising action"[298] providing a 'mode of ordering'[299] around which agency can coalesce,

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[296]Although when asked during the interview what they thought of Sheffield as a place most respondent's tended to talk positively about the good facilities in terms of large bookshops, good secondhand shops etc. Or at least in terms of improvement of these facilities over the time they had been in Sheffield and especially in the last few years.
[297]Miller, 1999: 386. See also Zukin, 1995.
[298]Miller, 1999: 386.

particularly within the semi-commodified realm of the book and bookselling, leading to a strong association between bookstores and community in contemporary American culture, drawing upon associations between the book and a real or imagined public sphere wherein

> "men who never saw or knew one another were held together by their common use of objects."[300]

Community here is connotational rather than being sociologically precise, melding notions of geographic locality with

> "a particular quality of human relationship ... a physical place and a set of ideals which are juxtaposed against the world in which most Americans now live."[301]

It underpins an emergent political discourse stressing recommitment to family, neighbourhood and civic life as a counterweight to the anomie and individualisation of contemporary society.[302] Critiques of this stance frequently dwell on the potentially exclusionary nature of such liberal pluralist practices:

> "a desire for the fusion of subjects with one another which in practice operates to exclude those with whom the group does not identify. The ideal of community denies and represses social difference."[303]

As stated in Chapter 2 above, my use of the term community and communities of practice is not intended to convey notions of a strongly bonded and bounded collective. In this context I am happy to let some of the senses of community Miller refers to, along with their positive and negative associations resonate.

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[299]Law, 1994.
[300]Boorstin, 1974: 90. See also Warner, 1990.
[301]Miller, 1999: 389.
[302]Etzioni, 1995, 1996.
[303]Young, 1990: 227 cited in Miller 1999. See also Sennett, 1992

4.4: Space, Sociality and Subjectivity.

What I hope this chapter has shown is that the subject outlined in the preceding chapter who uses the book as part of their reflexive monitoring and construction of self, requires as part of this process an arena of sociality in which to perform this subjectivity.

> "The reflexive turn and the rising importance of individuation and identity politics that come with this turn have produced an increasing emphasis on sociality; on the play of different identifications adapted to particular social settings and on the sites of social centrality that promote it. Low personal risk is concentrated in places of sociality. This combination of sociability and sites of social centrality allows different forms of the self to be 'tried on.' In other words it allows the identifications necessary to fashion the self to be made through alignment with or modification of one or more of the various transient social groups that inhabit the throng in these sites, but this is an investment which can normally be made without too much in the way of personal commitment or risk. Such an investment can be withdrawn without undue damage to those involved."[304]

A sociality of "mutable *relationships* rather than fixed *roles*."[305] Thus in the above accounts the book appears as a mediator, a shared projection of identity in social relationships of varying levels of intimacy.

And as such this sociality is also grounded in a fairly mutable kind of space, as the above descriptions of the interactions between public space, private space, the book and the subject indicate. Lash and Urry also point to this dialectical entwining of the public and the private. For them the reflexive subject is founded in both a private space of cognitive reflection[306] as well as in a public space founded in a less dualistic

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[304]Glennie and Thrift, 1996: 234

[305]Glennie and Thrift 1996: 226. Drawn from the recent work of Shields (1992) and Maffesoli (1996) which extends the rather more fixed conceptions offered earlier by e.g Simmel (1908) and Goffman (1959).

[306]Following Gidden's positivistic notion of 'the ego'(Giddens, 1991: ch 3; Lash & Urry, 1994: ch 3; Lash, 1993)

notion of the body as "neither subject nor object"[307] rather than merely object monitored by the ego subject as in Giddens. So in

> "public space rather than the privacy of place underscored by symbol. Yet its public space is not that of Enlightenment rationality and communication, but that of Benjamin and Baudelaire's more figural communication."[308&309]

So the private, reflective space of reading and self investment via autonomous reading choice entwined with say Reader 7's aesthetic space of

> "all these people and they're all looking for something and you see them and when they find something and their eyes light up and there's this kind of inner ... I don't know" (Box 23).

In the next chapter I consider the ways in which a public space, wherein this figural communication might take place, comes to be constructed.

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[307]Lash and Urry, 1994: 45. Derived particularly from Mauss and Bourdieu.
[308]Lash and Urry, 1994: 54. My italics.
[309]And in terms of applying this to books and reading this is something that Benjamin at least was clear on the relevance of. 'Unpacking my Library' (1992: 61 - 82), Benjamin's confessional tribute to book collecting has a geography that belies the private space implied by the title as Benjamin indulges in his own Flemingology recalling the cities and locations where each book was found. The private is dialectically entwined with the public.

Section C: Working.

Chapter 5. Creating a Bookshop.

5.1 Introduction

> "This booklet is not intended to be a rule book. An absence of rules does not imply an absence of care or a lack of determination to reach and maintain high standards of design throughout Waterstone's. Identity is a living thing. It evolves constantly and we have no intention of stopping evolution. However, everyone within Waterstone's should work within the framework for our identity which has been shown in this book [...] We should be precise yet imaginative in the way that we manage our identity. This (booklet) sets out clearly the main elements of Waterstone's identity - I ask you to read it, keep it, refer to it and, above all, *observe its spirit*
> "[310]

In this chapter I explore the ways in which Waterstone's is made. I examine the way in which the 'spirit' referred to in the above quotation comes to be materially embodied in the shelves, tables, people and books which make up the shops in the Waterstone's chain. As such the chapter is a discussion of power, although power is rarely discussed explicitly. It is an examination of the extent to which the clearly defined aims and intentions of an organisation motivated by enterprise and profit come to be the aims and intentions of a network of human and non-human actors.

5.2: Constructing a bookshop.

The following list represents a selection of some of the possible objects and components which might be utilised to construct a branch of Waterstone's such as my study shop:

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[310]Waterstone's, undated: 44 & 1. My italics.

- 13'000 square feet of retail space featuring: 2 trading floors connected by stairs and 2 lifts; 1 staff floor connected by stairs featuring offices, staffroom/kitchen and toilet facilities; one goods in area connected by corridor; 7 front windows with display floors; 3 entry points and 5 fire escapes;
- numerous tables in warm black (pantone 412);
- numerous metres of warm black shelving;
- red carpets;
- 4 warm black till furniture units;
- 2 computer CPUs;
- 21 computer VDUs;
- 9 till drawers, pdq machines and till printers;
- approximately 300'000 books, various titles;
- signage: white on warm black in New Baskerville or Frutiger typeface;
- promotional material reflecting Waterstone's design ethic and heavy use of Waterstone's logotype and 'W' symbol;
- 36 paid human actors, assorted ages and genders disciplined to act the roles of manager; assistant manager; cash office staff; stock room staff; cleaner or assorted booksellers grades 1 - 5.
- Assorted customers disciplined to act in certain ways, particularly the purchasing of books. Number of customers will vary according to time of day/week etc.

This chapter considers the deployment and ordering of these ingredients. It looks at what is done within Waterstone's to 'make space,' what happens to create a bookshop such as the one I have spent time at in Sheffield. The list above is sprawling and might seem as arbitrary as Foucault's Chinese encyclopaedia[311] were it not 'ordered' as a bookshop. Within the list are objects, discourses, subjectivities,

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[311]Foucault, 1974.

practices, texts each of which might be examined individually and seen also to be constituted in complex ways by its location in a relational network of things, discourses, practices, subjectivities etc. The bookshop then is an assemblage, "a multiplicity which is made up from heterogeneous terms and establishes liaisons between them."[312] Agents, decisions, machines, organisations, interactions between organisations and their environment, speech, action, texts [...] they all tell, embody or perform a network of multiply-ordering relations."[313] A set of relations and therefore a setting for power. This making of place represents the outcome of an institutional strategy or

> "the calculus of force relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment.' A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it ('competitors', 'adversaries', 'clienteles', 'targets' or 'objects of research')."[314]

Indeed far from being an abstract theoretical description of behaviour, a Waterstone's shop can be seen as very much the outcome of a clearly defined strategy with specific aims and implications for behaviour and practice. I explore the workings of this strategy in Section D below. Prior to this I explain 'strategic thinking' and an associated set of managerial practices in the context of wider economic and sectoral conditions.

5.3: Context.

Such explicitly strategic thinking can be seen in the context of a set of wider changes involving the de-differentiation of economy and culture in the retail sector as a whole and a sector wide valorisation of enterprise, "strategic thinking, customer

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[312]Deleuze and Parnet, 1987: 69.
[313]Law, 1994: 22.
[314]de Certeau, 1984: xix.

service, cultural change, excellence, quality and ownership"[315] as a means of increased market penetration. A form of 'governmental rationality'[316] driven by the dislocation of global capitalism:[317]

> "The effects of dislocation require constant 'creativity' and the continuous construction of collective operational space that rests less on inherited objective forms (bureaucracy) and more on *cultural* reconstruction. Thus 'new wave management' is concerned with changing people's values, norms and attitudes so that they make the 'right' and necessary contribution to the success of the organisation for which they work. To this end excellence encourages managers to view the most effective and excellent organisations as those with 'strong cultures' - patterns of meaning which enable all members of an organisation to *identify* with the goals and objectives of the company for which they work."[318]

And equally it can be seen in terms of the dynamics of retail capital. I here continue to follow Paul Du Gay who sees retailing as symbiotically entwined with the emergence of a "new regime of accumulation based on flexible forms of production and increasingly specialised production practices."[319] Changing retail organisation shares the dynamics of the post-fordist shift in the wider economy (technological change, changing labour markets, altered patterns of capital circulation, shifting geographies etc.) and constitutes a spur to that shift via the "progressive dislocation of relations between production and consumption."[320] This de-differentiation of economy and culture encourages "the progressive penetration of the market into all walks of British life, encouraging and facilitating the spread of consumer culture."[321]

The 'enculturation' phase in the logic of retail capital builds upon a period of vitality within retailing[322] and the growing dominance of the sector over

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[315]Du Gay, 1996: 120
[316]Foucault cited in Du Gay, 1996: 57.
[317]Laclau, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1994.
[318]Du Gay,1996: 57-58. See also the discourses of excellence expressed by management 'gurus' Kanter, 1990; Peters & Waterman, 1982.
[319]Du Gay, 1996: 97.
[320]Du Gay, 1996: 98.
[321]Du Gay, 1996: 99.
[322]Bromley and Thomas, 1993; Du Gay, 1996: ch 5.

manufacturing. The seesawing balance of power between retailers and manufacturers might be said to have come to rest in favour of retailers to the extent that retail capital now sets the agenda for manufacturing capital. Retailers have appropriated (or come to influence) a range of functions such as distribution, packaging and product design their control of which tend to blur the line between manufacturing and retailing; Secondly, structural changes in the relative sizes of manufacturers of consumer goods and retailers mean that the largest retail groups are larger than their suppliers in terms of assets, capitalisation and number of sales; Thirdly, and consequently retailing has tended to out perform the consumer goods manufacturing sector over the last fifteen years in terms of growth in profitability.

This was driven by efficiency gains based around concentration[323] and a reduction in circulation costs driven by technology,[324] location[325] and labour.[326] Until the 1980s 'the market' was seen relatively homogeneously, retailer strategies to increase sales revolving around competing primarily on cost and price. Falling inflation and rising disposable incomes from the early 1980s encouraged mass retailing to seek competitivity and differentiation on terms other than price and encouraged a shift upmarket as retailers compete for higher income groups. This drove the enculturation of retailing. "The successful expansion of the retail industry was to be 'customer led',

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[323]The total number of UK shops has declined by approximately 333,000 since 1950. This statistic masks various stages of change in the structure of UK (and US) retailing. Most of all it reflects the growth in market share of large scale chain retailers at the expense of independent sellers and the growth in size, rather than number of their outlets, a process driven by economies of scale and economies of replication.

[324] Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) technology providing immediate, detailed and accurate sales records allow for faster and more accurate re-ordering and a consequent reduction in capital held in stock and in unsellable product lines. Temporal sales measurement also allows for more efficient prediction of staff requirement and reduces labour costs. Electronic Fund Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS) technology similarly reduces costs by reducing loss via improved security, reducing labour costs via electronic processing of paperwork and potentially allowing for 'directed marketing' when combined with customer information databases.

[325]Increased centralisation of provision and command shifts much of the work of consumption and exchange onto the consumer. Larger retail units allow the capture of larger markets whilst also reducing delivery costs, administrative replication etc.

[326]The adoption of self service shopping in the 1960s both reduced the total number of sales staff required and, by again shifting much of the 'work' of consumption onto the consumer, redefined the character of retail work from specialised service into repetitive, labour intensive, low skilled and

achieved through interventions aimed in part at the subjectivity of the consumer. Hence the increased importance of the symbolic expertise of marketing, design and advertising, underpinned by the knowledges and techniques of subjectivity, to recent developments within the retail sector."[327] The 'ideal consumer' now has attributed to him or her a particular view of self, that is a "dynamic, narcissistic view of self as project, as object to be continually worked on and improved."[328] The success of retailing becomes dependent on offering a package which the consumer perceives as enhancing these skills of self realisation, self direction and self presentation. Staying close to the customer. This requires a transformation in retail labour practices via a shift back to customer service as a source of competitive advantage in the battle for the hearts, mind, imagination and expenditure of the consumer.

The specific context of Waterstone's is fairly typical of these wider processes of retail change although one might perhaps reverse the chronology applicable in much of the literature, specifically that derived from studies of grocery retailing wherein enculturation *follows* the maximisation of efficiency in terms of technology, location, labour etc. In Waterstone's enculturation was the starting point to which efficiency gains were subsequently applied. The first branches of Waterstone's opened in 1982. The company might be seen as a pioneer of this latter phase of retail enculturation. It was advantageously placed as such a pioneer in that the retail book industry is an industry in which the de-differentiation of culture and economy is already a given, the product and the manufacturing industry the sector is a retailer for being very much on the cusp between economy and culture. A significant level of activity in the peripheral network of institutions around the book industry, notably reviewing and criticism might be described as being in the business of emphasising the use value of the book as

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therefore low paid occupations. The dramatic growth in part time, particularly female labour in retailing parallels this shift.

[327]Du Gay, 1996: 110.

[328]Du Gay, 1996: 113. See also Featherstone, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Lash, 1990; Lash and Urry, 1993; Rose, 1990.

a greater determinant of its value than its exchange value in a celebration of the object's "metaphysical kernel."[329]

Characterising the emergent Waterstone's operation then was an emphasis on this quasi-commodity as the raison d'etre of the operation:

> "There's a heart of Waterstone's which they (the personnel) protect quite strongly which is about books come first. Yes we want to be commercial and successful but books come first."[330]

And entwined with this the provision of a form of retailing involving shop design, customer service, promotional activity etceteras which also suggested (paradoxically) an only semi-commodified venture, a:

> "shop that's not a shop. We're a haven. That's a crucial part of why people come and shop in Waterstone's. You're on the high street, you go and bash your way around all the shops then you go and enjoy yourself in Waterstone's. That's how we're perceived by all our customers."[331]

> "Waterstone's had caught the imagination of the book buying public by focusing every last ounce of effort on books. The quality and breadth of stockholding was everything. Provocative presentation drove the message home, as did an ambitious programme of readings, signings and other in-store events. There was an almost innate understanding of the motivations that drive book buyers. There were some wonderful sites, many talented people and a self confidence bordering on arrogance. Waterstone's managers were almost evangelical about their business and its mould breaking approach."[332]

Mould breaking particularly for the way in which the organisation defined itself against *existing* book retailing chains, particularly WHSmiths which, in terms of my earlier chronology might be seen as somewhere between phases one and two, dominating bookselling with outlets benefiting from reduced labour costs particularly

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[329]Marx quoted in Best, 1989: 27. See also Lee, 1993: ch1.
[330]Producer interview 5.
[331]Producer interview 2.
[332]Barker, 1998: 22.

by choosing stock profiles to cater for a national mass market centrally. By 1982 it was on the point of capitalising further on the economies of scale this gave the chain over independent booksellers by implementing EPOS and EFTPOS technologies. Waterstone's represents a reversal of the chronology, beginning with enculturation and gaining the technological and organisational economies subsequently.

> "If, as the experts of symbolic mediation argue, consumers will only ally themselves with retail 'offers' to the extent that they construe them as enhancing their own skills of self realisation, self presentation and self direction, then the success of the retail enterprise depends increasingly on its ability to 'stay close to the customer'. However, staying close to the customer is more than a matter of logistics. In the battle to capture consumer spending it is becoming increasingly vital to capture their hearts and minds as well. And the only way to achieve this task is with vastly improved customer service. In other words, labour effectiveness, the quality of personal service provided by sales floor assistance is an increasingly vital component of the value added approach to achieving competitive advantage."[333]

Organisationally this personal and personnel capturing of hearts and minds or 'almost innate understanding of the motivations that drive book buyers' was achieved through an ethic of decentralisation which remains staunchly defended. Individual shops in the chain have control over their own budgets and a decision making freedom, particularly regarding stock profile. Even at the lowest level of the employment hierarchy, part of the bookseller job description is to take responsibility for the content of particular sections of the bookshop. Centralised functions in the company are organised around[334] the service needs of the shops in the chain and what is judged the requisite amount of

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[333]Du Gay, 1996: 114.

[334]Since its inception in 1982 the structure of the company has undergone certain changes. The company merged with Sherrat and Hughes in 1991 was bought by WHSmiths in 1993 and in 1998 has just announced that it is to demerge with WHSmiths and form a new company with Thorn EMI the current owners of Dillons and HMV which will float on the stock market in 1999. Each of these changes have involved related change in organisation. Where these effect my argument I make this clear. Otherwise the present tense refers to the prevailing conditions whilst I was conducting my research in 1997 when the company was part of the WHSmiths organisation, the past tense refers to its initial phase as an independent company and the future the planned changes dependent on the EMI merger.

central decision making to ensure the company retains a chain wide identity rather than consisting of an unrelated collection of shops. The head office function consists of a service sector providing mainly financial services and information technology design and backup and a more corporate function ensuring marketing and operations are consistent across the chain.

The key here however is "productivity through people, treating the rank and file as the root source of quality and productivity gain."[335] The lowest ranking shop floor staff are empowered in various ways (see chapter 5 and below) allowing and encouraging their agency unmediated provision of the highest possible levels of customer service:

> "If it was a fantastic experience and you really had a nice time then that's surely what will drive you back in rather than being insulted at a till. You must have had it when you go into a shop and you think 'bastards, I'm never going in there again' just because of their indifference to you [....] I think we do manage it quite well and that's because our staff are empowered. They're not paid huge sums of money but they're given responsibility to use their brains and their initiative and they can therefore care about what they do. Everybody who works for Waterstone's makes a difference to the way that the business runs and that has a huge effect on the overall impression I think. If you go into WHSmiths and you ask for help they can be as polite as they like but if they don't have the skill or the nous to help you with what you want then its frustrating all round. Its frustrating for the customer and its frustrating for them."[336]

Enculturation by labour relies on a particular labour profile.[337] Most Waterstone's employees are graduates, on the whole arts graduates with broad general and personal interest in the arts and culture. Whilst being one of the better places to work on the High Street in terms of pay levels these are still close to the retail average and constitute a 'shop floor' salary rather than 'graduate' salary. The company benefits then from the reduced labour costs operating in the wider retail sector created by long term changes in retail labour practices (and indeed employs many of these

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[335]Peters and Waterman, 1982: 14.
[336]Producer interview 1.

practices - self service, new technologies etc.) which, combined with increasing graduate numbers allow a relatively highly skilled labour force at relatively low cost.

The basic formula then is of an encultured work place achieved via the empowerment of staff and the centrality of a cultural product. This was successful enough to encourage fairly rapid replication and expansion of the chain but not enough to induce profitability:

> "Financially it struggled in Tim (Waterstone)'s day and now its profitable [...] There is actually a model of business where you have a pioneer then bureaucratisation then rejuvenation and Tim was the classic pioneer. Then in the bureaucratic phase, bureaucratic in the best sense of the word its just a case of taking the pioneer's vision and making it breathtakingly efficient. You could argue that that's where we are now. Thirdly you can argue you then move to a regeneration phase and that's very much where we are now opening 30 new shops of a certain size."[338]

This bureaucratic phase involves economies of scale derived from a range of the efficiency building factors listed above, where these don't detract from the core pioneer values. Four aspects of this might be identified:

(1) An EPOS stock control system (IBID) was pioneered and rolled out across the chain between 1993 and 1995 heralding a range of efficiencies:

- Greatly improved stock control allowing accurate inventorying of stock and monitoring of sales allowing stock ordering based on actual rather than perceived sales and a greatly improved stock turn.
- Reduction in staff time spent choosing stock to reorder and placing of order with publishers via introduction of tele-ordering - computer sorting of bulk order by

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[337]See Chapter 2 and appendix 1.
[338]Producer interview 2.

publisher and bulk transmission of order to publishers via information technology replacing written or telephoned order.

- Improved customer service in terms of speed and quality of service via instant access to accurate[339] store inventory and on screen rather than microfiche information regarding current British Books in Print.

(2) A chain wide streamlining of labour costs and job descriptions reducing payroll costs by standardising a range of procedures evolved over the haphazard emergence of the company and allowing greater ease of movement of staff between shops. Recent developments in organisational practice around the opening of new Waterstone's megastores suggest an increased separation of roles between relatively unskilled till service work and other higher skilled parts of the bookseller job description via physical separation of pay areas and service areas - a separation which does not take place in traditional sized shops.

(3) Centralisation of supply chain. As stated above strong emphasis in Waterstone's is placed on the decentralised buying function as a means of 'staying close to the customer' rather than imposing top down stock profiles. Greater centralisation of supply was nevertheless achieved from 1993 onwards (also enabled by EPOS technology) by expanding the WHSmiths central buying and distribution facility into a central purchasing and distribution (but not decision making) centre for Waterstone's. Individual shop orders for major publishers were routed via WHSmiths Swindon warehouse allowing economies via a) better terms from publishers due to bulk buying and b) reduced delivery costs.

(4) Increased domination of retailer/manufacturer relationship. The general success of the company has arguably led to an increase in their influence over

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[339]Or usually accurate store inventory. The introduction of EPOS heralded a set of practices (practices certainly to the extent that they are now routinised and unquestioned) involving regular EPOS 'housekeeping' to ensure accurate and effective running of the system.

suppliers. Terms of supply for heavily stocked titles have swung slowly in the company's favour whilst a general sense of 'increased co-operation' and influence over publisher's practices is also noted:

> "There's a lot less suspicion around than in the early days. But still some of them are bloody difficult they really are. There are other publishers, and big publishers who come to it very willingly and are delighted to be a part of the promotion and see it I guess as a long term thing [...] they see it as a relationship where we can work together. Especially big back list publishers [...] because we've worked such miracles on a lot of their books [...] a guy from (publishers name) came up and said 'we're really glad you involved us in this promotion because we've actually realised that so many of these books are out of print, we'd forgotten we had them.' It brings books back into print!"[340]

These economies all emerged approximately one decade into the life of the company as part of a coherent strategy to maintain and expand market position. I now turn to discussion of this strategy.

5.4: Strategy.

Central to much of the retail engineering involved in this shift towards governance by enterprise is the development of a coherent and consistent strategy.[341]

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[340]Producer interview 3. A slightly different perception of the potential influence of retail capital over manufacturing output is provided by Christopher Pierce (1998) of New York Booksellers Shakespeare and Co: "The question that should be considered with the arrival of the two US superstore booksellers Borders and Barnes and Noble is [...] the imminent death of open decision making in British publishing. Does anyone expect that the UK industry will fare any differently from its US counterpart? Their decision to publish a book is now almost based entirely on the buying decisions of these two chains. It doesn't take an expert to realise that the breadth of the British publishing industry whose life and death will be increasingly determined by the actions of companies that control a very large percentage of the market will be forever negatively affected." This view of the malign influence of retailing is not especially unusual, particularly amongst publishers, independent booksellers and literary reviewers (See also Schiffrin, 1996).

[341]The documentation I base this account on (Waterstone's, 1995) relates to the strategic review 1995/6 - 1999/2000. It was published internally in September 1995 and draws from an assessment of internal and external environments probably conducted earlier in that year. It builds upon a previous review published internally in 1993 which it is suggested was the first of these review processes. This timing fits with the chronology of development listed above and the "bureaucratisation" phase when

At the heart of the Waterstone's strategy lies a 'vision' derived from a framework designed for use within industries wanting to make this 'enterprise shift'[342] and to "identify, agree and articulate the vision of (their) organisation."[343] This involves defining Core Values and Beliefs ("guiding, inviolate principles and tenets; a philosophy of life"), Purpose ("the fundamental reason for existence, like a guiding star, always worked towards but never fully attained") and Mission ("a bold, compelling, audacious goal, linked to financial performance with a clear finish line.")[344]

In the case of Waterstone's then core values are founded in 'beliefs' about the key areas of:

- **books** - "we believe that the availability of books is central to the development of a cultured, intelligent and civilised society; that a passion for books must run through the organisation;"

- **customers** - "we believe in understanding and responding to customers as individuals;"

- and **corporate growth** - "we believe in the constant pursuit of innovation and improvement; in the need for profitable growth for our business for the benefit of our customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and the communities in which we operate."

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the company was consolidating and rationalising its initial 'pioneering phase soon after its purchase by WHSmiths. It is also likely that further reviews were published subsequent to this and that this one found its way into my hands due to its slight outdatedness. It nevertheless serves to illustrate the strategic nature of organisational activity.

[342]The 'Collins Porras Vision Framework.' See Collins & Porras, 1997.

[343]Waterstone's, 1984: 8.

[344]Quotes in brackets from Waterstone's, 1984: 8&9. I include these to illustrate the discourse of enterprise this is founded in.

These come together to form a purpose and a mission founded in an altruistic commitment to external values ("To enrich people's lives by sharing our passion for books; setting world class standards in the way we respond to customers; providing the most authoritative choice of books with guaranteed availability") underpinned by the acknowledged aim of enterprise, the anticipated outcome being

> "an unrivalled affection and reputation for excellence from writers, publishers, opinion formers, retailers and more importantly heavy book buyers, not just where we trade but world wide. By so doing we will ensure the entrepreneurial success story of the 80's becomes an enduring, world class retailer of the 90's."

Interacting with these values and aims is a careful analysis of a range of external factors and their potential influence upon the success of the company's project. These include market positioning and definition of primary target market[345] and its needs:[346] economic forecasts;[347] legislative forecasts;[348] technological predictions;[349] demographic[350] and sociological[351] factors as well as assessment of the company's relative position against its bookselling competitors in terms of cost, relative differentiation and relative advantage. This analysis is employed to evaluate, adapt and justify the overall strategy of:

> Targeting a primary market of heavy book buyers and secondary targets of medium bookbuyers and children by positioning ourselves as responsive to customers as individuals through superior range, recommendation and

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[345]The *heavy book buyer* defined in behavioural, demographic and psychographic terms.
[346]Convenient sites and trading hours, stock range, intelligent, knowledgeable booksellers, confident service, browsing atmosphere, information on books, sense of affiliation with like minded people, value but not at expense of service.
[347]Likelihood of permanent low growth, low inflation environment; predictions of consumer confidence.
[348]Effects of EC on labour costs; change in intellectual property right laws; predictions re public sector funding for libraries and educational budgets.
[349]Market intelligence opportunities; impact of changing print technology; impact/opportunity of internet as publishers by-pass retailers.
[350]Growing importance of time and money rich 'grey' market; demographic change favourable for customers but adverse for labour.
[351]Emergence of underclass negatively influencing security costs; potential emergence in non-high street retail formats; long run threat to book markets from aliteracy amongst young; time poverty in key consumer groups increasing demand for 'shopping efficiency.'

> availability delivered by the sustainable competitive advantages of a literary, decentralised culture which focuses on our booksellers and unrivalled economies of scale and financial backing, with the aim of becoming the world's best loved and most profitable bookshops.

The full package is summarised again using a 'framework' derived from management rhetorician McKinsey's[352] "seven S's of strategy," encompassing - strategy, shared values, structure, staff, skills, system and style. So 'strategy' encompasses a set of core values, aims and practices expanding out to determine the wider range of practices and organisational behaviour.

This highly codified strategy functions more as an underlying discourse, a written ur-text which acts as a starting point or adjudicator of last resort with which to define and regulate company activity. There is a rulebook but it only comes out when the players are arguing. Or when the players need to convince "significant others"[353] of the merits of the game. In practice these strategies tend to be expressed in rather more intuitive ways, testimony to their success as strategies and the absorption of these aims in to the everyday culture of the company. This 'intuition' is mobilised in particular by the deferral of agents to the meaning and significance of the Waterstone's 'brand.'

5.5: Brand.

The Waterstones's brand is something which people who work in Waterstone's talk about a lot if you ask them about their job. Amongst those in the higher levels of the company hierarchy the brand peppers their conversation liberally. This reflects their *responsibility* for the brand. Their task is to protect, develop, and promote the brand and communicate its importance to those below them. At lower levels it appears more infrequently, often in the context of something that has to be 'learned' as part of their job, something which they are aware of as important to the

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[352]Rasiel, 1999.

powers that be at Head Office. The former group are more likely to surround their use of the term with a detailed definition of what they mean by the term brand, the latter more likely to use it to encapsulate something which they know intuitively but can only vaguely articulate. Being able to communicate the brand effectively is a part of the workplace hierarchy. One of the criteria for assessment within the yearly appraisals through which employees progress from bookseller to senior bookseller to management is "understanding and promotion of the Waterstone's brand."[354] Managers become managers because one of the things they can do better is understand, communicate and promote 'the brand.'

Throughout the company 'the brand' is a shorthand encapsulating much of the concrete and abstract rhetoric about the company and its aims expressed in the strategic planning document(s). Firstly it is a shorthand for a concept. A glance at the managerial and marketing literature on branding reveals that brands are vehicles for communicating conceptual information both linguistically and extra-linguistically. Amongst other things they:

- distil the values of an organisation into a vision;[355]
- shape perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences[356];
- create empathy amongst consumers;[357]
- appeal to the expressive and central values that the owners would like to see lodged in consumers' minds;[358]

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[353]Du Gay, 1996: 123. The most significant 'other' being 'the city' and its role as judge of enterprising success.
[354]Waterstone's employee manual.
[355]Interbrand, 1996: xii.
[356]Interbrand, 1996: xi.
[357]Macrae, 1991: 2.
[358]Interbrand, 1996: xii.

The language is of perceptual influence induced at an emotional, affinitive level via distillation of some sort of essence of the company. According to Interbrand brands mix "three tiers of brand values."[359] Functional values (what the product or service 'does'), entwine with expressive values (emotional attachment from the customer), which entwine with central values (the embodiment of trends and values held by culture more broadly). So at Waterstone's 'the brand' could be said to entwine the selling of books to people in an environment that provides the shopper with a pleasurable emotional response and a feeling of having participated in a literary culture extending beyond the act of shopping for something to read.

This would certainly be one way of responding to a question about the Waterstone's brand in a company job appraisal and would earn the respondent a tick in the box that allowed them to progress up the company hierarchy. To go even further they might lift directly from company text and summarise the brand as "a celebration of literature."[360] Or they might quote Ros, the brand manager:

> "I would describe the brand in emotional terms like innovative and creative and intellectual and that's totally just a feeling. Rather than saying its clean or organised or anything that you might use to describe another brand like Smiths for example where you would say it was firmly based, basic. I've done a lot of work on customer research and its the emotional response that people have to it that make it so valuable and so unique. [....] Successful retailing is about a successful brand and it is about that emotional response that people have, its not about whether or not we have the book you wanted. Its to do with how you felt when you got it in your bag and came out. If it was a fantastic experience and you really had a nice time then that's surely what will drive you back in. [...] The company has changed quite a lot in the last few years but originally the concept of it was this wonderful, innovative place abundantly stocked with books which everyone feels passionate about. And the whole business has been built on that and that understanding and its getting that appeal to customers. Which it has. Its a very, very strong brand. If you go and interview our customers and talk to people at any length, short or long, they almost all

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[359]Interbrand, 1996: xi.
[360]Waterstone's, undated: 1- 3.

> feel the same way about it [...] people want to love it [...] They have a very warm emotional feeling about it."[361]

So the brand is a concept, a feeling, something to be projected. Secondly it is also a shorthand for action required. Something to be created, protected, and maintained and something which regulates and determines action within the company. It denotes the things that the company does, and often more importantly, doesn't, that makes it Waterstone's. It underpins many of the practices and organisational structures within the company. At the heart of the brand is an apparent paradox which is celebrated as vital. This is a repeated emphasis on the importance of the decentralisation of power in the company relative to other retail organisations and the consequent importance of shop floor staff and their mediating effect on any central decision making:

> "If you were looking at a MacDonald's say, the brand, the name of the company is driven by that central marketing focus, the whole package is driven centrally. In Waterstone's its a shared concept, the brand is presented by central promotion but its also presented by the shops and by you as a bookseller. You (the bookseller) are the brand as much as we are the brand in a way that is not the case in a more centralised retailer. The booksellers are integral to the brand in a way that the staff are probably not in another retailer."[362]

Decentralisation is celebrated as the brand's source of vitality and its expressive and central values of innovation, creativity and literary celebration. The central functions of marketing, promotion, design and brand development, designed to provide brand coherency throughout the chain of 100+ shops are it is claimed, paradoxically influenced by the core value of decentralisation and the mediating effects of this. This is not especially a claim by staff at head office that Waterstone's is an entirely democratic organisation in which all power is diffuse and where all have equal influence on chain wide corporate decision making. Rather the claim is that the value of decentralisation lies at the heart of central decision making and that the emphasis

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[361]Producer interview 4.
[362]Producer interview 2.

upon this recursively drives the quality of the brand. A good deal of what makes a Waterstone's a Waterstone's derives from decisions made at head office. In particular the marketing department, in conjunction with a network of service providers, specifically a design company and a public relations company marketing makes major design decisions regarding say shop furnishings and fittings and provides a regular supply of material for chain wide promotions. The centre provides a global, chain wide vision capable of incorporating local variation in the form of responsiveness to local demands and tastes:

> "We (the centre) have to have a conversation, with branch managers primarily, which is sometimes quite a difficult conversation where we, having an overview insist that some things happen. So its about defining the amount of freedom that branch has to operate its own way. So there are some givens. We say that if you are a manager running a Waterstone's branch then starting right with the basics it will say Waterstone's over the door, its going to look like a Waterstone's, have all the Waterstone's fascias, the carpets, the bookshelves. We are going to expect a wide range of books but we're not going to go into any detail about what that wide range is made up of, and we're going to expect that you, like all other managers follow the central rationale of having Waterstone's recommends and book of the month and from my point of view that you pay people the same in your shop as someone in another shop and that all of that is consistent. So behind the scenes there is consistency but from the customer's point of view they've got to be able to go in and think 'this shop is really geared to what I want in Sheffield.' And the only people that are going to know whether that's done right is the team of people in that branch. That's really true. That's not lip service. So what we have to do is hold ourselves back from thinking we know best for every locality and every market."[363]

> "The other good thing about the company is they haven't really got rid of the people who would have been managers in the early days. You can still, definitely be creative or innovative in your own way but within these parameters that they set at head office. They're only loose ones. When you get a visit from an area manager or whatever she doesn't come down and say 'you must do this, that or the other.' She'll make suggestions and look for your own input as well. So there's definitely scope for doing your own thing but the boundaries that they set help you to focus more."[364]

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[363]Producer interview 5.
[364]Producer interview 8.

The potential for dilution of the brand by the devolution of power to the periphery is defended by the centre by attributing some of the responsibility for brand identity to an external agency:

> "John Simmonds at Newell and Sorrel is more Waterstone's than anybody else! They're the guardians of the purity of the brand really. There's always a tension in every organisation between the purist view, probably radiating from the centre to the slightly more operational view focusing on the shop manager. And you're looking to obtain operational effectiveness and brand sanctity and obviously its a trade off at certain times but there's various forces at work on it around the sheer practicality of things and whether they deliver sales. They look pretty but do they work [...] Newell and Sorrel are co-owners of the brand in a way, they are guardians of the brand as much as we are. Certainly they're more purist than we are."[365]

Recursively though it is this tension between centre and periphery that is seen to provide the dynamism, integrity and innovative properties of 'the brand':

> "I have to convince people all the time. Because we're not a centralised company and we don't have central buying it means that every promotion we run we have to justify. It has to be good otherwise no one is going to do it. They don't have to do it. They don't have to buy the books involved in the promotions. Everything is done with us hoping that this month its going to be terrific and everyone is going to support it and if they don't then it'll be our fault because we didn't make it good enough. If you imagine what that's like, that every idea we have has got to be the best idea because there's a lot of competition coming from other things out there, the shops can do exactly what they want to do whenever they want to do it. And they are defended fiercely by the operations director for their right to choose so there's no smooth ride for anybody here about 'oh god that wasn't very good was it, we didn't give it our best shot'. It just can't happen like that [...] Most of our booksellers are people with degrees, with attitude, they do it for a limited amount of time, they're on their way to being rocket scientists or whatever they're going to do. Everybody is on a stepping stone and that makes the company very empowered. Everybody has got high qualifications and that 'don't give us that, you need me more than I need you' sort of approach."[366]

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[365]Producer interview 2.
[366]Producer interview 4.

So written out longhand the brand begins to seem more complicated. My main concern here is to show how the brand determines action. Things get done in its name. It helps to order the panoply of ingredients listed above. It is

> "much more than a narrative, if by (this) we mean stories that order nothing beyond their telling. This is because (it is) also in some measure performed or embodied in a concrete, non-verbal, manner in the network of relations."[367]

The brand (with its roots in textualised strategy) is a set of knowledges, the 'special something' which ensures the right mix of ingredients, the right order.

In the following section I consider some of the ways in which this story about the Waterstone'sness of Waterstone's becomes embodied in the material fabric of the shops. I do this by considering in turn a number of the participants in the network of relations that constitute Waterstone's.

5.6: The Ingredients.

5.6.1: Interior Design.

> "The experience of Waterstone's should be a celebration of literature. Customers should sense this, staff should embody it, everyone should feel this celebration of literature as a pulse beating through everything we do. To help us achieve this we need a well managed visual identity. We need an identity that is clear because we do not want to create any confusion about what we stand for; an identity that is consistent because we do not want to undermine our brand with conflicting signals. At the same time, because we are excited by books we need ways to show that excitement visually without being hampered by a restrictive identity system."[368]

So the brand underpins the design brief through which the visual identity of the shops are constructed. This identity is designed to be encountered both by the gaze (a look) and bodily (a sensation). The language is of appearance and experience, a text to be read and an environment to be felt.

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[367]Law, 1994: 20.
[368]Waterstone's, undated: 3.

A choice of warm but classy principal colours;[369] a typeface with "a long history as a traditional book typeface, dating back to 1757 when John Baskerville printed his own edition of *The Georgics of Virgil* [...]for where we want to maintain a conversational tone in signage"[370] and a more modern typeface for more formal and instructional use results in a set of

> "visual basic elements (which) enable Waterstone's to project itself with authority through a strong link with the traditions of books. These elements alone however allow too quiet a celebration of books. Our identity needs the flexibility to be able to speak in different visual and verbal tones, reflecting the variety of books themselves. By creating new versions of the W - appropriate to different promotions, ranges or subjects - we can reinforce the idea of abundance"[371] whilst "through quotation we can demonstrate that we enjoy the written word; and we can also show that words and books have a limitless potential to make different connections, to explore new ideas. The phrase '*at Waterstone's*' can then be consistently used as a method of branding in written form."[372]

And this extends to the choice of carpeting and furnishings, the shops being

> "deliberately set in a high standard of fit out, of opulence, of red carpet, of library and lush and all of those things."[373]

In these instances then the identity of the shops is constructed by the importation of designed materials. Shops are supplied with standardised fixtures, fittings, posters, signage, fascias and furniture and these objects provide the basis for the look and feel of the retail space. Shop by shop the amount of furniture varies according to available space. The arrangement of shelving is fixed according to available wall/floor space and its initial placement according to a space maximising formula, in larger, wider shops such as my study site this often results in a 'bays and

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[369]Black, warm black, gold, white and red.
[370]Waterstone's, undated: 11&13
[371]Waterstone's, undated: 17. The 'new versions of the W' refer to a series of distinctive designs based around the Waterstone's W similar to the range of 'cartoons' placing the '2' logo in different contexts used by BBC2.
[372]Waterstone's, undated: 21
[373]Producer interview 4.

headlands' arrangement. Table and 'dumpbin' units are relatively mobile, their arrangement being governed by the quantity of display space determined necessary for specific sections combined with their use in determining thoroughfares and circulation space. Furniture and signage thus provides a *relatively* flexible framework for the contribution of another set of objects.

5.6.2: Stock.

The book or 'stock profile' is as indicated previously not standardised or designed by the centre. It is the outcome of a complex set of practices and knowledges relationally embodied in a hierarchy of actors, technologies and materials. Booksellers at all levels are empowered to order books. Most booksellers have responsibility for 'running' particular sections and, after some training/supervision order books via computer tele-ordering or via contact with publisher's representatives.

The following paragraphs offer an inevitably partial account of the way in which the range of books to be found on the shelves in my study shop came to be there.

Legacy: In October 1996 the study shop 'officially' reopened after a three month period of renovation and expansion leading to a one week period of closure in which the old shop's books, having been juggled back and forth in and out of storage over the summer as different parts of the shop were closed for building, arrived back in the shop. These were joined by a succession of deliveries from publishers and distributors - extra stock required to fill the extra 120% of available space. This stock was the outcome of ordering decisions founded in:

- staff knowledge - "with us just opening what is basically a new shop, your stock profile is so important. Booksellers are getting a guiding hand from the managers about what we want them to do. So its kind of our vision of

the shop and within that vision we're not going to say to someone 'no you can't stock this in your section' because you believe in their ability to shape their sections but you still believe in your own idea of what you want the sections to be like so as long as they seem to be following your ideas then outside of that they can do what they want;"[374]

- information from shop database about previous sales of individual titles (good sales = more copies ordered) and performance of specific sections (good sales/customer response = more space for those sections);

- comparison of shop database with database of similar size shop in a city with a similar demographic profile;

- information from publisher's representatives concerning 'missing titles.'

For several months afterwards the shop was understocked and this continued to influence ordering decisions:

> "Simply the shop hasn't got enough books in it [...] we need to improve stock holding and we've got our basic range of books so what we're doing now is we're encouraging people to go and look in catalogues, phone up other shops, keep their eye on the trade press and basically just get in any sort of stock which is of sufficient quality to sell in Waterstone's [...] At the moment we're stuck between trying a lot of new stuff which by rights if it doesn't sell you ought to get rid of but also on a practical level having full shelves so at the moment we're not getting rid of as much stuff as we did in the past. [375]

Core Stock: Certain titles are labelled 'from the centre' as 'essential' Waterstone's titles. The database is occasionally updated with data from head office which 'flags' certain titles as a 'core stock' title, these being titles regarded as an essential presence if a shop is going to have the look and feel of a Waterstone's. The bookseller is then

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[374]Producer interview 8.

alerted by the IT system if there is any less than 98% availability of these titles. In most cases flagging these is a formality. The rootedness of the bookseller's knowledge in 'the brand' is enough to ensure that these books are an assumed and unquestioned presence.

Staff obsession: Staff are empowered and encouraged to bring their knowledge and opinions concerning books to bear on the process of stocking the shop. So for instance a colleague whose undergraduate dissertation was on (author x) and who was responsible for the relevant section was able to ensure that the section contained the complete works of this author. Various forms of discipline exist to regulate this power:

- constant regulation of 'individual empowerment' by the 'greater good' of the shop/company/profits/customers - "I mean take (a particular bookseller's section). Although its a very good section its quite narrow minded as well because she tends to home in on books she thinks ... that she likes herself and perhaps discards the more popular titles [...] I know full well she doesn't stock many of the books that would perhaps bring her sales up. Its not a bad thing because I think she's got a great section [...] but overall I don't think it does the shop much good. It could do better if perhaps she was a lot more open minded about what she subbed. She's very snobbish in her outlook;"[376]

- respect for bookseller's responsibility for their own sections (rather than taking the initiative and ordering the title(s), normal practice would be to suggest such an order to the bookseller with responsibility for that section and leave the decisionmaking to them);

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[375]Producer interview 8.
[376]Producer interview 9, referring to her own self regulation of her interests.

- a practice of 'if its just one it can't hurt' (no one would notice/trace the order of one book among thousands, once the book is on the database, any sales recorded will potentially generate further orders and keep the book 'in the system.')

'Subbing' - Subscriptions to new titles from publishers representative: The vast majority of new titles are brought to the attention of booksellers via regular visits from reps[377]. 'Seeing a rep' is a regular ritual involving the rep talking booksellers through their catalogue(s) of forthcoming titles. The rep offers brief descriptions of the titles on offer, information about the marketing of these titles by the publisher, predictions of success, reminders of previous titles and sales by that author, likely markets etceteras. This process is usually repeated several times per visit by the rep as booksellers with responsibility for different sections visit the rep one by one and the rep tailors their tour through the catalogue for their area of interest.

The bookseller states the required number of copies of each title, often after further questioning of the rep about the nature of the book. Number ordered can range from one where the book is judged worthy of 'being in the system' to see if it will generate any sales (and where in most cases slow or non-movers can be returned after three months) up to about one hundred for a predicted best-seller where books will be used for table, window and face out displays as well as for heavy initial sales. Further copies can be delivered within ten days of initial sales figures so predicted sales have to be exceptional to exceed one hundred. Average 'sub' figures are probably nearer ten copies for 'good bets' - known authors, heavily marketed first books, repeat titles where previous sales figures are known (annual travel guides for instance) and between one to three copies for 'unknowns' deemed 'worth a go.' Ultimately the number subbed is based in uncodified practice and bookseller knowledge about what makes a 'Waterstone's title' on the basis of summary information (blurb, synopsis, covers, author biographies etc.) presented by a sales person aware of his sales context.

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[377]Thousands of new titles are published per year and obviously only a minority of these will actually be stocked. Some titles who's publicity, authorship or word of mouth interest suggest potential sales

On the whole subbing is a formality, particularly in a larger store where the anticipated stock profile is fairly broad - "My particular vision for my floor is I want a fantastic fiction section encompassing lowbrow to highbrow with all sorts of ephemera in between [...] It works in other sections a bit like that, you're looking for a wider range of stock, you have your core stock that you must have and you want people to go out and buy interesting books as well which you might sell one or two of."[378] The non Waterstone's titles select themselves (too specialised, too tacky, not different or original enough in an area of interest already well catered for etc.) whilst both the rep and bookseller usually have an idea of the likely sales performance of a particular title.

The ritual is occasionally nuanced by prior knowledge of the 'reputation' of the rep in question acquired via conversation with other booksellers about their experiences with that person. 'Reputation' usually alludes to some form of behaviour on the reps part which shifts their position from a provider of information who passively acknowledges the bookseller's response[379] to that information to someone who actively seeks to influence that response. Typical descriptions might be 'pushy,' 'wily,' or 'disrespectful' of the booksellers judgement.

Computer reorder: Another routinised ritual performed daily as a bookseller is the process of replenishing stock with reference to the records of previous days (or weeks, or months, or years) sales. Most frequently this is done by running through an on screen list of sales over a selected period and deciding whether or not to re-order each title sold on the basis of detailed sales history information. Each book sold then will be brought in this way to the attention of the bookseller with responsibility for that

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and warrant being stocked slip the net and are brought to the bookseller's attention by customer requests, newspaper reviews etc.

[378]Producer interview 8.

[379]This is not to suggest that reps are perceived as neutral 'bearer's of information.' The encounter is defined as one between 'salesperson' or 'marketeer' and 'buyer' and part of the encounter is a 'healthy scepticism' about the publishing company's marketing, the rep's sales person training, the tricks of the trade etc. 'Reputation' tends to stem from annoyance at more blatant attempts to 'control' the situation - arguing with the bookseller about her decision for instance.

section and on the basis of its sales history will either be returned to the shelves (after a 10-14 day order and delivery period) or will be judged 'spent' and left unordered unless it is brought to the booksellers attention for some other reason. Again, this decisionmaking becomes intuitive. Some titles are obvious candidates for reorder, some provoke an audible cry of elation when the bookseller realises it has been sold and its space opened up for a more worthy occupant.

The IT system provides other methods of surveillance of the stock profile - checks to see core stock, best-sellers or fast turners are re-ordered in sufficient quantities to ensure their ongoing presence on the shelves and checks to label stock as suitable for returning on the basis of low sales.

Table display: Certain books will be judged worthy of display in a face up pile on a table. This decision is made on the basis of likely sales in the context of the intended stock profile of the shop. Table displays act as a form of signage for the kind of books on offer and the kind of sections available. They represent a 'best of' summary of the shop's intended stock profile. So Producer 8's quote above that

> "My particular vision for my floor is I want a fantastic fiction section encompassing lowbrow to highbrow with all sorts of ephemera in between"[380]

is represented materially via a range of table displays which 'talk' the customer into the fiction section - so tables marked 'best-sellers' and 'new fiction' do indeed contain best-sellers and new fiction but with the proviso that these are also 'Waterstone'sy titles.' Never quite articulated these are the books judged to appeal to the core Waterstone's market of the heavy bookbuyer -

> "A Mills and Boone buyer of course is a heavy bookbuyer because they buy one hundred books a year so it is around a certain sort of heavy bookbuyer. There is a canon. A Waterstone's canon of books that

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[380]Producer interview 8.

> exemplifies these people. Miss Smilla, Nick Hornby, crikey you know the titles, Snow Falling on Cedars. They exemplify that person".[381] "Self consciously literary novels intended to appeal to the general reader."[382]

Predominantly of appeal to either gender, literary but not so that this detracts from the pleasure of reading and packaged to reflect this appeal. Middlebrow. And perhaps defined *against* the table found slightly further into the fiction section. This is distinctly and consciously divided by gender. On one side rest thrillers, action adventures, the occasional Western or comedy by a male writer. Covers tend to be simple with bold lettering and colour. The other side houses romances, historical sagas and novels with 'feminine themes.' Covers tend to be pastoral, pictorial and pastel. Further down still is a table labelled 'cult fiction' - the target market being a younger (18-30?) age group, young authors with young outlooks, covers tending towards the more 'stylised.' Similarly tables around the shop act as signs and navigation aids for the various sections, providing a kind of visual overload so that one say 'feels' that they are in cookery before noticing a textual sign. In short then books on tables represent 'sellers' and 'talkers.' Books that do well and also communicate their place in the scheme of things.

Customer order. If a customer enquires about a book that is not in stock the standard bookseller response is to mention that the book could be ordered and would arrive in approximately two weeks. Customers frequently enter the shop knowing that the book will not be in stock and wanting to order it specially. Consequently at any one time there will be a cupboard full of books in the shop most of which have arrived there as the direct result of a customer request (the occasional few are orders for books stocked anyway but temporarily out of stock when the customer visited/badly damaged etc.). A small number of these find their way onto the 'public' shelves if they aren't collected by the customer or again because they have 'got into the system' and get reordered via computer re-ordering.

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[381]Producer interview 2.

Waterstone's recommends. A monthly selection of seven books promoted as the company's recommended titles for that month across all Waterstone's outlets. This 'imposition' from the centre again reflects the brand as strong emphasis is given in the explanatory copy to the democratic and decentralised way in which this selection is decided upon 'selected by a panel of booksellers' from any level or location of the company.

5.6.3: Paid Performers.

In contrast to the largely imposed design of the staging - (furnishing, visual display etc.) the ordering of the props (books etc.) depends upon the interaction of a set of practices, knowledges and technologies. Running through this account, (and generally among the stories in this chapter) is a story about the role of people. Much of the material engendering of the brand - the Waterstone'sness of it all - derives from the correct kind of performance:

> "I can go to a former Sherrat and Hughes and spend the day there and come away having to think 'was that a Sherrat and Hughes?' for a moment because its all about the atmosphere its creating. Although you think of a Waterstone's as being black with red carpets if you spent the day in a shop that's got blonde wood and green carpets but is full of the same sort of staff, the same sort of approach, the same sort of customers then you can't actually remember what the shop fit is and that's all credit to the brand."[383]

The descriptions above of the way in which books come to arrive in the shop and get ordered on the shelves and tables in particular ways demonstrates the way in which booksellers are involved in a performance of their own knowledges. A significant part of their own knowledge is knowledge about the brand and what it requires. To return to my earlier contextualisation of Waterstone's as an 'encultured' retail environment, this relies on a particular form of subjectification:

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[382]Todd, 1996: 3.
[383]Producer interview 4.

> "The enterprising vision of excellence provides a novel image of the worker and the organisation and their relationship one with the other. [...] The message is clear: organisations must shift from formality to flexibility in all their activities and relations. 'Formal rules' as to how work should be done must be replaced by 'implicit expectations' as to how work should be done. This requires that all employees make the goals and objectives of their employing organisation their own personal goals and objectives, thus ensuring that they will employ their autonomy and creativity correctly from the organisation's point of view."[384]

Chapter 6 examines in greater detail the *experience* of work in this kind of retail environment and the extent to which 'the goals and objectives of their employing organisation' do in fact become the goals and objectives of employees. Here I consider the strategic ways in which these human actors might be said to be disciplined or constituted and the ways in which their embodiment of the brand adds to the assemblage.[385] It is worth emphasising the significance of this enculturation to this case study. It is justifiably the case that the enculturation du Gay describes, and its implications for retail subejctivities, has been taken further in Waterstone's than in any of du Gays case studies,[386] or any other UK high street retailer.[387]

The main way of achieving 'the right kind' of employee is by selecting the right kind in the first place.

> "In the personnel manual there's an outline of what you're looking for in staff [...] first and foremost its a passion for books then beyond that the ability to communicate, attention to detail but what you're primarily focusing on is a passion for books. [...] You really want to appoint someone who's already got a knowledge of books. Obviously straight away someone can't go and recommend a book on needlecraft or

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[384]Du Gay, 1996: 62.
[385]It should be noted that I refer here to the paid employees who are engaged in performing the brand. In my study shop there were five permanent members of staff who might be described as 'backstage workers' - two cash office clerks, two goods in/out operatives and one cleaner. I do not discuss them here since whilst their actions contribute to the constitution of the shop, there's is not a performative role.
[386]See also Crang, 1994.
[387]Though see Crewe & Lowe, 1995 on independent retailers.

> something like that but you want someone who's got a genuine enthusiasm for books and will go on the shop floor straight away and talk to customers about books and recommend something they've read or whatever. And I reckon about 60-70% of the people recently appointed could do that straight away and that's what you're looking for in an applicant."[388]

The successful candidate will, through their personal enthusiasm for books be in alignment with the core values of the organisation from the start. The interview also tests for other attributes regarded as important in a bookseller - the ideal candidate being "team oriented; enthusiastic and energetic; flexible and self motivated; intelligent and articulate; a good communicator; presentable and confident; open minded with an interest in culture, the arts, current affairs etc.; and with an empathy for Waterstone's."[389] Much of the process of recruiting 'the right type' however is again implicit. Those involved in the process are able to articulate the requirements which are textually enshrined in recruitment manuals, the design of application forms etceteras but there is also a sense of 'just knowing' what a 'Waterstone's type' is like.[390]

So the bookseller/employee's subjectivity is *a priori* in general alignment with the goals and horizons of the organisation.

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[388]Producer interview 8.

[389]Waterstone's guide to recruitment. What is not stated but is implicit is that new recruits will also be young (in their twenties), graduates, slightly more often female and will not usually have a markedly 'different' appearance (e.g. be excessively overweight).

[390]My research shop receives 10-20 applications per month delivered by post or by hand to booksellers at till points (to be passed on to the manager) My research diary records a couple of occasions where the appearance of the deliverer provoked discussion about their likely unsuitability for such a position. Another series of entries record my observations regarding the behaviour and reception of a new member of staff. To my own eyes her/his behaviour seemed interesting and it seemed (s)he'd attracted the attention of others as well, one colleague summarising his/her behaviour as being "so over Waterstone'sy its as if (s)he's taking the piss." My interest had been in the fact that as a new recruit (s)he might offer an interesting study of the way Waterstone's is 'performed' by the booksellers. (S)he had attracted the attention of the others by doing just this. She initially appeared as a 'Waterstone's type' with any 'performance' off pat and 'natural' but seemed to gradually overplay this role, somehow exceeding boundaries about what this type is by overdoing everything - trying to offer customer service that was *so* committed and enthusiastic, customers started to look uncomfortable, enthusing *so* much about his/her favourite books it seemed insincere or again embarrassing. Over time it appeared that this was the result of partly of a genuinely 'larger than life' personality but partly also the result of trying to 'learn' the performance of bookselling.

"Within the discourse of excellence, work is characterised not as a painful obligation imposed upon individuals, nor as an activity only undertaken by people for the fulfilment of instrumental needs and satisfactions. Work is itself a means for self fulfilment, and the road to company profit is also the path to individual self development and growth."[391]

Thus for producer 10 in box 26, the job's appeal lies more in the alignment of her own interests and sense of self with the day to day performance of the brand (customer service, interest in books) than 'external' factors such as pay. This is broadly typical of the types of comments that can be heard frequently during discussions about work amongst booksellers - employees enjoy the job because they like books, like people and on the whole like Waterstone's as a 'concept'. They complain about low pay, comparatively inflexible working hours and timetables and the more routinised aspects of the work such as being 'stuck' at a busy till for a long period.

This investment of self in work is the primary form of workplace 'discipline.' The brand gets 'performed' not as a tightly scripted, Bravermanesque[392] routine motivated by reward for successful completion but as an improvisation by actors playing themselves in a particular setting.[393] "'Formal rules' as to how work should be done [are] replaced by 'implicit expectations' as to how work should be done." Not that there are *no* 'rules.' Disciplinary procedures exist to govern lateness and other forms of 'misconduct' such as breaches of security procedure or behaviour that might reflect badly upon the company, although these are minimal and are more often applied discretionally and according to context:

> "There are times when people ring me up and say 'can you tell me the policy on this that or anything' and it can be anything from 'so and so wants to put an ear ring through their eye brow' through to 'how many days off am I supposed to give when somebody has suffered a bereavement in their family.' And I'm quite happy to say that we don't have a policy. The policy is about you as a manager using your judgement

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[391]Du Gay, 1996: 63
[392]Braverman, 1974.
[393]See Crang, 1994 & elaboration in chapter 5 below.

> in this situation. And yes we've probably got precedents, I can probably say 'when this happened in such and such a branch what they did was this, but its up to you. You decide.'"[394]

For the most part however action 'just happens' from within a network of practice. Actors know what is expected, partly through an intuitive understanding of the Waterstone's brand from being 'Waterstone'sy people,' partly through learning these expectations through the behaviour of others and occasionally by being reminded via management repetition of textual sources of authority concerning these practices.

The latter part of this formula is the only area where 'disciplining' seems apparent. The effectiveness of this is aided by a discourse of 'anti-hierarchy' which permeates the company. This is more discourse than reality since the organisation operates round a clearly defined structure of responsibility and reward.[395] The discourse is carried however by the company's policy of internal recruitment and the ensuing theme of shared experience and 'all being in the same boat:'

> "...Because lets face it virtually anyone in the company could do virtually anyone else's job in terms of competency. Its only particular kinds of experience that make much of a difference. Which is why its so flat. I'm sure there are hundreds of people in the company who could do my job. That's if they'd want to!"[396]

> "Even at Head Office the majority of people have come from bookseller level which does mean that they know everyone's particular concerns and are prepared to accept that the things you do have good reason because they've worked in that position as well."[397]

Such claims would be looked on from the lower end of the hierarchy with a degree of cynicism about the 'us and them' reality:

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[394]Producer interview 5.
[395]Particularly reward. Responsibilty is often fairly diffuse as part of the rhetoric and practice of employee empowerment. Pay scales however are distinctly pyramidal and this is the source of much complaint at lower levels in the hierarchy, complaint particularly centring on the disjuncture between these rhetorics of flattened hierarchy and devolved power and remuneration.
[396]Producer interview 1.
[397]Producer interview 8.

"The thing that really irritates me about the head office structure is that you seem to get all these memos from entirely faceless people who you never get to meet and you're expected to implement them and as a result ... I worked (here) for three years and I only met (company director) about two months ago. That's the only time I've ever met him. They just don't bother to come out and see the problems."[398]

Nevertheless, within shops, and despite the realities of the actual employee hierarchy some sense of shared commitment and involvement surpasses the management hierarchy.

This might be illustrated with a particular example: 'Retail standards' is a two part Waterstone's internal document governing a range of factors relating to the overall 'standard' of experience customers to Waterstone's can expect to encounter. It provides a definition of expected standards in a range of areas from 'fresh flowers in shops' to ways in which staff can be 'more approachable' for customers - smiling, not talking to colleagues, not talking about other customers, not chewing gum etceteras. The document was introduced in 1994 as part of the standardisation and efficiency programmes described in **5.4** above. As such it represents the enshrining in text of existing best practice rather than a fresh formulation and imposition of a new set of practices. In my study shop the practices it describes are employed first and foremost because they tend to be the kind of ways in which the employees would like to present themselves to customers anyhow. Offering the best possible customer service, a pleasant environment, being polite etceteras fits with the aims of the employees as well as the aims of the company since it is in these areas of customer interaction and service provision that employees invest much of their job satisfaction.

The practices are 'learned' by new members of staff via the sort of mixture of 'just doing it' and observation of others described above. Most of the practices seem like 'common sense' to the 'Waterstone's type' person (being polite to customers)

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[398]Producer interview 10.

whilst specific ways of acting (stopping any other activity to attend to waiting customers) are learned fairly quickly by emulating the behaviour of others.

Where these standards are not met the main explanation tends to be the intrusion of other day to day realities of the workplace. So factors of time, busy-ness, short staffing, the prioritising of other tasks not directly connected with maintaining these retail standards prevent them being practised to the expected level. And for the most part this is accepted at all levels of the shop hierarchy as 'the reality' of the job. Periodically however, and commonly at a time of year when the shop is quieter (not September to Christmas) the management note that retail standards are worthy of greater attention and have recourse to a meeting in which the textual version of retail standards is discussed and weak areas identified to be acted upon. [399] The tone of the most recent of these meetings in my study shop was (deliberately?) anti-hierarchical. Rather than management preach their concerns, offer criticisms and suggest improvements, members of staff were invited to self-reflexively consider areas of weakness in the context of retail standards and collectively agree strategies for improvement.

The point here then is that the embodiment of 'the brand' occurs through a mixture of prior embodiment with practices 'learned' via non verbal communication and absorbed because of the alignment between company and individual aims. These are *occasionally* backed up by recourse to the centrally designed ur-texts of training manuals and standards criteria and the mediation of these by manager's aware of the day to day realities of their application and the compromises these can entail.

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[399]In my study shop this occurred in the later part of my time there amidst discussion of how long it had been since the last discussion of retail standards and how many members of staff had joined since then. The outcome of the reminders was an agreement to pay more attention to retail standards but the recognition that this also required changes in other areas of practice, notably time management and staffing levels.

5.6.4: Disciplining Unpaid Performers.

The main action into which customers require disciplining is to actually visit the shop(s) and spend their money in it. Once in the shop behaviour is governed generally by the norms of quasi-public consumption spaces and customers are subject to the regulation that implies. Behaviour is acceptable as long as it is broadly in line with the definition of the space as somewhere people browse for and buy books. Behaviour deemed to lie outside that definition will become subject to control and exclusion. This however is rare. The only real form of surveillance and regulation for such behaviour is for 'security threats.' These primarily include potential shop lifters/ till thieves/ fraudsters as well as potential terrorist threats such as unattended packages etceteras. Employees are issued with a set of guidelines for observation and action for each of these designed primarily for deterrence and/or obtaining descriptions of known perpetrators. Prosecution is unusual though there are fairly frequent occasions where suspected shop lifters are deterred by constant and obvious monitoring by members of staff and much less frequent occasions where managers verbally inform people that they are suspected of stealing and request that they don't return to the shop. On the whole however 'normal' consumer behaviour is entirely self regulating.

Part of the Waterstone's brand is to emphasise that the parameters for such 'normal' behaviour are comparatively broad in terms of retail space more generally. The shop clearly is a shopping space and behaviour not deemed 'shopping' would meet with regulation.[400] Nevertheless the definition of 'shopping' is wide, being

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[400]Illustration is difficult here since other than in the aforementioned instance of security issues little occurs to provide a contrast to the day to day use of the shop as a shopping space! Two instances are perhaps vaguely indicative: On one occasion a senior member of staff returned from their lunch break concerned that a left wing political group was canvassing and pamphleteering outside the shop for a book signing event to occur in Waterstone's the following week. Pleased that this would mean a good attendance and good sales (s)he was nevertheless nervous lest they should try pamphleteering in or outside the shop itself as (s)he felt that a) the group itself was not one Waterstone's should be seen supporting even though the 'issue' itself was one we were happy to support and b)pamphleteering generally was 'a bit annoying for customers.' The second instance concerns the general reaction of disapproval that any form of canvassers from commercial rather than charity or community organisations receive when approaching the shop with requests to say 'display a poster in the staff room' or 'hand out leaflets to customers'.

regarded as a leisure activity within a (semi)public milieu from which an act of purchase hopefully follows but not merely as an act of choosing then purchasing. The strategic emphasis on 'the availability of books [as] central to the development of a cultured, intelligent and civilised society' and 'understanding and responding to customers as individuals' leads to a version of retail space that emphasises (if not fully embracing) the public aspect of retail space and the historical relationship between books and public for a such as libraries and salons. The intended atmosphere might be described as one of liberal tolerance.

Any disciplining then involves encouraging the customer in this leisured browsing (or chatting, or resting, or childminding). Thus the relaxing design described above, featuring chairs, secluded corners, browsing tables etceteras.[401] And thus a policy of non-intrusion by employees and the avoidance of forms of discipline associated with other retail spaces - asking people sat on the floor to move on, creating flows of people to prevent stopping and talking, asking known 'non purchasers'[402] to leave etceteras. And thus attempts to minimise the aspects of the shopping experience regarded as less enjoyable by where possible speeding up the act of purchase. And thus the increasingly common extension of the retail space into a 'leisured space' featuring author events and readings in a relaxed wine bar or salon style atmosphere outside normal selling hours, or featuring coffee and newspapers during Sunday trading hours.

This 'leisured atmosphere' represents the main strategy for disciplining customers into coming to visit branches of Waterstone's. The other of these involves

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[401]And in other shops the in store coffee shop or internet cafe. A much requested addition to the study shop during my period of study as repeated newspaper articles described their importation from the US.

[402]Surveillance extends to identification and 'definition' of these - people spending all day reading and not buying, local homeless people sheltering from bad weather, people using the shop as a social site or information source etcetera but the policy is usually one of non intrusion or regulation unless their behaviour begins to detract from rather than enhance this artificial sense of public space as if for instance they are noisy or otherwise intrusive upon the browsing of other customers.

communicating 'the brand' and all it embodies as widely as possible beyond the shops. This occurs both nationally and locally, in both instances by a process of:

purchasing space: the company undertakes both national and local advertising. A current national advertising campaign combines the 'W' image with a textual and visual message about the profound cultural significance of books, listing for example authors who have been killed or imprisoned for what they have written. Local campaigns tend to advertise specific events usually combining the logo with quotation.

being offered space as a source of authority: representatives from the company are increasingly called on by various mediums as a 'knowledgeable authority' in book related matters. This is in part the result of a concerted effort from the centre of the company to establish this authoritative position amongst the media. This was achieved by the recruitment of a PR agency employed to offer comment when any book related story appeared in the news and by the success of a national Waterstone's campaign and promotion to elect the Nation's books of the century. The announcement in 1997 caused the company name and commentary to appear throughout the media establishing them as an authoritative commentator.

by enrolling the association of other spaces and organisations: strengthening the network of relations that makes up Waterstone's by connecting it to other networks via co-run events and associations. Communication by association and by building a

> "relationship with charities and other organisations where there's a natural relationship or I hope there's a natural relationship, like the Tate Gallery, the Turner prize [...] Its just generating support and understanding about the brand without necessarily being seen or mentioning professional activity [...] A lot of my work involved with charities and organisations is something that they always want if they're looking for an ABC1 literate audience because they're always exactly the same people. The people who give most to charities are most likely to be Waterstone's customers. It just goes on wherever you go. And that relates to food and eating out and clothes and travel and almost every kind of consumer area you can think of. Everyone wants a slice of it. [...] Those are the sort of relationships I deal in. Trying to set up networks of people who like what each other are

> doing and who can help each other. And using the fact that our literary counter space can be terribly useful for other people especially to a smaller organisation [...] They like the idea of being associated with Waterstone's and I like it in return because it shows we're more generous."[403]

Each then strategies to ensure the brand travels beyond its material embodiment in shops and staff.

5.6.5: Operations.

A final ingredient in this bookshop recipe is a set of practices and routines imposed from the centre as procedures to ensure the effective functioning of the shop in terms of its role as a profit making enterprise. These are again materially embodied in both human and non-human actors. In terms of my accounts above of the various ways in which the brand is 'performed' these might be considered backstage or offstage activities. They are routines such as the careful accounting of shop budgets and the very precise communication of this information in the correct form to the centre; such as the systematic procedures involved with the entrance and exit of books to and from the shop which ensure that the computerised stock inventory is as accurate as possible at all times to ensure accurate financial accounting; such as the systematic ways in which money is received from customers and change given to ensure that all moneys received is accounted for and can be accounted for quickly in terms of the form in which it was received (cash, credit card, cheque etc.)

The material embodiment of these routines occurs in as disparate a range of ways as the on stage routines described above. Many of these are associated with producing information in a particular form - documents which must be completed in the correct way and machines which produce information in a particular form. And the human embodiment involves a form of disciplining, both for the employees who exclusively perform and monitor these routines (cash office staff, goods in operatives)

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[403]Producer interview 1.

and for the booksellers described above which contrasts sharply with the self disciplining and autonomy associated with performing the brand. Most of the 'training' that occurs within Waterstone's involves the instilling of these very precise routines into employees so that their execution becomes naturalised.

These routines are an integral part of the weave of the network of relations and materials that constitutes a functioning Waterstone's bookshop. To an extent 'the brand' influences their form - they are designed to be as invisible as possible to customers, to aid customer service rather than hinder or intrude upon it. They owe their existence to the strategy of enterprise and profit maximisation which requires very careful handling and measurement of money and value. And to an extent they reflexively influence the performance of the brand. Much of the way in which customer service is performed is determined by the character of the information available the ordering of which is determined as much by the need for effective accounting as it is by the need to service customers.

5.7: Closing Time.

In no particular order then a set of ingredients, an indication of the flavour they given and an indication of the way in which they blend and interrelate to produce a whole. This chapter is a partial account of the power relations involved in constructing a network of materials mobilised to endeavour towards the strategic goals and aims of an enterprising organisation. It describes the *design* of this network. Implicit in this account is the way in which this mode of ordering effects and determines the nature of individual components of the overall set of ingredients. Tables become tables with piles of books on which together become semiotic carriers of 'the brand' and 'the strategy.' Booksellers become enterprising subjects. There is a danger here of suggesting that design equates with outcome. This is a reasonably accurate, if summarised, account of the way in which this network is constructed. It is not necessarily an account of the way in which it works. Chapter 5 now turns to a more

detailed description of the actual ways in which this ordered assemblage is lived and experienced.

Chapter 6: The Bookshop as a Workplace.

6.1: Introduction.

This chapter expands on the preceding account of how Waterstone's is made. Specifically it expands upon the themes introduced in that chapter regarding the way in which Waterstone's personnel embody a Waterstone's 'spirit.' The preceding chapter placed considerable emphasis on the role played by the mobilisation of workplace subjectivities in successfully performing a brand and retail strategies of enterprise and flexibility. My intention here is to consider the nature of these subjectivities and their specific engagement with the material and discursive practices of Waterstone's as a company. I hope to show that work in Waterstone's is a multiple and varied experience as a result of the 'collaborative manufacture'[404] of the times and spaces which make up the job:

> "The role played by an individual is not a constant one, but dependent on interactions in an encounter and the character of that particular encounter itself."[405]

My aim here is not particularly to celebrate the Waterstone's workplace for the fulfilment and job satisfaction provided by these multiple and varied characteristics. Rather it is to follow the broad tradition of theorising the 'everydayness' of social practices such as work in exposing the extent to which capitalism extends itself into everyday subjectivities.[406] In doing this however it is also my aim to problematise some of the foundations upon which notions such as 'fulfilment' and 'job satisfaction' might be founded. Particularly where such concepts are rooted in a separation between what I hope to show - via an empirical account of the experience of work in Waterstone's -

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[404]Goffman cited in Crang, 1994: 686.
[405]Crang, 1994: 686.
[406] See Chapter 2.

is an unhelpful separation between the working self and a 'real' or 'true' self obtaining fulfillment or otherwise from work.

The chapter draws upon an argument made by Phil Crang regarding work in the service industry. Crang argues that such work, while indisputably representing a mobilisation of labour by capital, rather than being based around a *modification* of self to fit the role required by capital, is to the contrary "fused" with the self of the worker:

> "the performances required of staff are of socially embodied selves, embodiments for which they are held accountable during the interaction. Thus in the performances of these staff and in the spaces of the stage on which they are set paid labour is not just surrounded by but fused with a number of social relations often understood as its exclusions: communicative understanding, performances of sexuality, gender, age, social class and play."[407]

I hope here to modify and extend Crang's argument by pursuing his criticism of a dualistic separation between worker and work further towards its limit. The precise nature of these workplace 'performances' retain a slight ambiguity in Crang's work. This stems I would argue from ambiguities inherent in treatments of his primary theoretical source - the dramaturgical metaphors of Erving Goffman.[408] It is possible to read Goffman as advancing a view of self consistent with the post-Cartesian selves of Gergen[409] and Harre[410] wherein the self is ontologically conceived as

> "a discursive phenomenon, not an essentialist one ... the Goffmanesque self is post-modern in that it consists of surfaces or performances. It is a transient self which is situationally or interactively defined; a social product which does not have existence outside an interaction. It does not rely on a dualistic image of the self but is anchored instead in a metaphysics of surface: an interplay of images, of signifiers with no underlying signifieds, a 'text' with no reality behind it ... Goffman's actor

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[407]Crang, 1994: 699. See also McDowell & Court, 1994.
[408]Goffman, 1956; 1961; 1963; 1971; 1983. Though to give full acknowledgement to Crang's grounding of his argument in situated ethnography, differences in our approach to Goffman no doubt stem from the different specificities of the workplaces in question.
[409]Gergen, 1990.
[410]Harre, 1986.

> has no interior and exterior. Rather s/he has a repertoire of 'faces' each activated in front of a different audience, for the purpose of creating and maintaining a given definition of the situation."[411]

For Tseelon this is far from being a typical reading of Goffman. Both Impression Management interpreters of Goffman[412] and his critics[413]read Goffman as advancing a notion of self which is manipulative. The presentation of different images of self is strategic, a (not necessarily conscious) misrepresentation of an underlying 'reality' of self:

> "private views are different from public ones ... the private self is sincere while the public persona is designed to form a false impression. The model of the individual is that of a manipulator who makes cost oriented calculations of how and when to gain credit falsely without risking disrepute ... Impression Management is based on an essentialist (Cartesian) notion of self which focuses on the individual as an autonomous unit, and on a metaphysics of depth which contrasts private realities with public appearances."[414]

Such a reading overdetermines interpretations of Goffman. The productivist overtones of a Cartesian view of self are privilegd over the reproductivist notions of the post Cartesian self which lie closer to Goffman's intended ontology. Such an ambiguity is present in Crang's mobilisation of Goffmansesque metaphors.

There are *occasional* times when Crang finds it hard to jettison this productivist notion of self, as in the preceding quote where performance is still 'of' self. Rather, work is, for the working subject, an unremarkable part of everyday life. Within a schema of a consumption self, it can be little else. It is one part of the terrain via which that self is constituted. This does not dramatically alter the story told by

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[411]Tseelon, 1992: 120 - 121 & 116.
[412]Tedeschi (ed), 1981
[413]Silver & Sabini, 1985.
[414]Tseelon, 1992: 118-119.

Crang. This is still an 'entanglement'[415] with capitalist exchange values. Rather it emphasises further Crang's insistence that service work is

> "more than a simple domination of cultural life and employment and employees by the logic of commodification, more than an impositional conquest in which only the invaded territory is transformed"[416]

by considering workplace subjectivities firmly in terms of a consumption schematic of self and identity rather than the productionist schematic Crang begins to argue his way away from. An effort to consider workers from the same sorts of positions the 'consumers' have been considered from in the preceding chapters by describing a subjectivity born out of social and material interaction with a view to subverting the production/consumption dualism inherent in much writing upon the workplace.

It is worth stressing here that within this schema work still involves some notion of 'becoming,' the acquisition of an identity. My argument is that this is true of the self's encounter with any form of social setting or community of practice. Work is still 'learned,' and

> "learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities - it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. ... Activities, tasks, functions and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of a broader system of relations in which they have meaning ... The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities."[417]

I begin then by describing in 6.2 my own personal experience of adapting myself to the network of practices, discourses and influential objects the Waterstone's employee finds themselves working within. The process of becoming bookseller. My

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[415]See also Crang, 1996: 63.
[416]Crang, 1994: 698.
[417]Lave & Wenger, 1991: 53.

aim here is to emphasise the founding of workplace knowledges and practices in a web of material and social, practical and linguistic influences. I then go on in 6.3 to offer a more general account of the experience of work as a bookseller in Waterstone's with the aim of again emphasising the relational and contingent character of this work.

6.2: Bookseller Knowledges.

The skills which need to be learnt to work successfully as a Waterstone's bookseller might be divided into two broad types. Firstly are skills which involve the learning of clear, codified procedures and practices. These range from say learning the correct rules and routine for receiving cash, credit cards etceteras into the till and giving change; learning the possible functions on the shop computer system for obtaining bibliographic or inventory information and the correct keys to access them; learning the system for receiving goods into the shop and returning them if unsold. All routines with a clear script (in the sense of an order of action rather than an order of words) governing their usage, most of which were (and certainly are now in Waterstone's) at least available to be (if not actually) learned from written documents or computer training packages.

Second are skills involving the learning of much less explicit procedures, practices, techniques and knowledges: Developing a knowledge of whether and where books are in the shop without using the computer inventory; skills surrounding customer service such as diplomatically dealing with complaints; ordering books from publishers reps. These two skill types blur into one another - scripted skills rarely have to be performed precisely to the script whilst unscripted skills involve an element of scripting as most of them are learned via observing and emulating the practices (scripts) of others. I use this distinction more to demarcate skills which are learned easily and where the processes of learning can be seen quite clearly (the former) and those where acquisition is harder/longer, the process less clear.

Within the first few weeks and months of working at Waterstone's the scripted skills necessary for performing the role of a bookseller are learned and become intuitive fairly easily. An ongoing feeling for me during my first few months as an employee of the company however, was a worry about being a charlatan who had dramatically over-exaggerated their knowledge and enthusiasm for books during the interview for the job.[418] I had read quite a few books - some partially but enough to have a fair idea of what they were about, some wholly - because I had had to at university and I felt reasonably confident that my knowledge of the kind of books in certain Waterstone's sections (geography, sociology, cultural studies, gender studies etceteras) was as good as anyone else's in the shop. I had also professed on CV and in interview to having a fiction addiction. In reality this probably amounted more to enjoying fiction as a fairly regular distraction, rather than as a compulsion (see biographies). I read, and read a range of the books Waterstone's sells and promotes, classics, contemporary fiction, sci-fi etceteras but by no means read the 40 books a year Waterstone's uses as its criteria for target customers. If I had been asked to name a piece of fiction that emphatically represented the Waterstone's brand I might have had difficulty.

My sense of inadequacy stemmed primarily from sudden immersion amidst an overload of information about books embodied in the fabric of the shop, the bibliographic tools available for booksearching and the knowledges of colleagues and customers. The physical abundance of books within the bookshop required navigation; the actual paucity of this abundance in relation to actually available books was constantly highlighted by customers wishing to acquire books not in the shop; computer systems suggest a seemingly infinite array of possible titles and sources; customers with piles of books known or unknown to myself suggested alarmingly high quotas of books read; fellow booksellers appeared to consistently show a high level of knowledge about books, authors, publishers and their relative merits and significance; single purchases or comments or questions about individual books became

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[418] Types of question to ask: What kind of books do you like reading? What book are you reading

contextualised within this overall sense of abundance and other people's breadth of book knowledge. All of this contributed to a sense of slight surprise and awe at the sheer range of tastes and books available, the sheer amount of reading going on by other people and the sheer numbers of things to read.

The process of acquiring the broader book knowledge I felt I was lacking and the understanding of the relationship between particular books and the Waterstone's brand is it seems to me central to the process of acquiring the subjectivity of a bookseller. How then is this learned? And indeed, *what* is it being learned?

At root what is being learned is just that, a broader knowledge of books. The acquisition of information about who wrote what, what else they write, the type of books one would expect from a particular author or publisher, the likelihood of that being the kind of book stocked in the shop, how that book would be categorised in the shop. In part this occurs through a simple process of reading more books - my own consumption of 'Waterstone's style' fiction soared after I started working in a bookshop out of greatly increased curiosity as to what these books which I kept seeing people buying were about combined with their greater ease of availability in terms of price (discounted or free proof copies) and access (everyday availability).

More than this though this knowledge is acquired in non-textual ways. What is also being learned is a way of using the available technology, reading the paratexts of books and acquiring knowledge of the specific nuances of the shop filing system via practical encounters with it to obtain a knowledge that is more contingent and ephemeral than that acquired through encounters with the text. The book knowledge that I possess now as a more experienced bookseller familiar with the tricks of bookselling works in the following way. In response to any given request for a book the following might occur:

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currently? What has been your favourite book in the past few months? (Waterstone's, 1997).

- **It is a book that I have read.** I can show the customer exactly where it is in the shop and if necessary (the customer asks, the customer looks unfamiliar with the book as though they are buying it speculatively and would welcome reassurance/recommendation) offer comment and personal opinion. Usually I would only offer positive opinion ("good book," "best thing I've read by her," "I'm reading this now and I'm really enjoying it") mainly because in any casual exchange of words with a stranger negative opinion risks offence if the customer has something of their self invested in the book (they have previously read and enjoyed it; it has been recommended by a friend). But also in part because of my role as a bookseller and recognition of the need to prioritise selling books over my own opinions on them. This does not completely preclude negative recommendation and genuine expression of personal opinion where this can be used to build a relationship with a customer and made positive by substituting alternative titles for those negatively criticised.

- **It is a book that I have not read but that I know because a lot of people are buying it.** A similar scenario as before. The book will be easy to find because I have found it before/ it is prominently displayed/ its filing is not 'unusual'/ it is familiar of appearance. And I will be able, if necessary to demonstrate some knowledge of the book having acquired this from the paratexts (blurb, style of cover, author biography), reviews, discussion of the book with colleagues who may have read it or acquired similar paratextual knowledge, previous knowledge of author's oeuvre etc. Conversation if required might then be - "this is supposed to be good," "I'm going to have to read this" etc. A frequent occurrence with both these categories is for a customer to enquire about a book in a way that suggests their expectation is that acquiring the book will involve complex searching, then ordering and to be surprised when the book is immediately known and immediately found or directed to.

- **It is a book that I have not heard of.** On each of the previous occasions the shop computer systems may have been reverted to as a means of briefly establishing that

the book is in the shop.[419] If a book is requested that does not ring any bells personally then the computer must be immediately used as a substitute for personal knowledge. Because the computer can be used both to check the actual presence of the book in the shop (see previous footnote) and to acquire bibliographic information about the book[420] it need not be immediately admitted that the book is not known, allowing an illusion of personal knowledge. This need only be broken if information is required regarding spelling of title/author etc. The next level of personal authority is demonstrated via use of the bibliographic knowledge provided by the computer. If the book is in the shop this involves interpreting the information to rapidly locate the book in the shop, if out of the shop to provide information about possibility and speed of ordering.

For the former this involves rapid assimilation of any number of the following aids to location: category - to know where to start looking; quantity on hand - to indicate whether the book might be out on display if numerous or hard to find if few; date of arrival in shop - to check whether the book is likely to have made it to the shelves; size and type of cover to give visual clues to what is being looked for; publisher - to allow spines to be rapidly scanned for publisher's monograph, quicker to scan for than author or title.

For the latter it involves communicating the information provided by the computer regarding the book's status to the customer. Most needful of translation is the information 'reprinting' since this is the most ambiguous of the three possible options (in print and therefore available to order; out of print and therefore not available to order but potentially available on the second hand market or from libraries; reprinting). Reprinting can mean anything from a new print run currently

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[419]If a book is amongst the comparatively small number in my own mental inventory then it is likely to be a book that *should* be in stock. Checking is required since the book may have been overlooked in reordering, be between orders or be unavailable from the publishers. Reliance on mental knowledge alone, save in cases of absolute knowledge (you have seen the book that day etc.) can result in wasted journeys around the shop.

[420]Author, title, publisher, date of publication, price, availability, edition, number of pages, size and cover type.

taking place with the publisher aiming to get the book back in the shops as soon as possible to the publishers giving slow consideration to the idea of bothering to reprint on the basis of their yearly budgets and number of current orders. Communicating the significance of this to the customer then requires some judgement about the kind of book in question and the likelihood of its reavailability. Again this judgement is based on a mixture of knowledges - use of the available bibliographic information to categorise the book as a particular 'type' and then use of experientially gained knowledge about the likely commercial performance and shelf life of that particular 'type' to make an educated prediction about the likelihood of the book's reappearance.

It is worth commenting here on a particular factor governing the character of some of these descriptions. Running through the above is a strategic use of this knowledge (or in some ways, a strategic *construction* of this knowledge) as a means of influencing the nature of the social encounter between bookseller and customer. Note in the above the careful use of the bibliographic technologies, techniques of searching etceteras as *extensions* of the bookseller's personal knowledge rather than knowledges in their own right. The technique for instance of nonchalantly using the computer as though one is checking to see if 'oh yes, that book' is in the shop whilst in fact using it to supply information about the book from a position of almost complete ignorance.[421]

The nuances of this practice spill over into a form of bookseller etiquette regarding interrupting with information. This is vague and by no means formalised, operating circumstantially according to who the interaction is between and the tact of

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[421]This is rarely an overt, or deliberate, or even conscious deceit. It is also likely that it fools no one! It is not a question of actually *claiming* to know the book. Further into any enquiry it may be happily acknowledged that one knows absolutely nothing about the title in question (partly because this then shifts the bookseller's authority to being an accurate interpreter of and elaborator upon the information provided by the computer as described with 'the book I have not heard of' above.) It is merely that at the beginning of any encounter one starts with a cool air of authority and almost universal knowledgability by doing nothing to suggest otherwise, even if one's interior self is panic

its handling. The basis of the etiquette is that it is not acceptable to interrupt an encounter between a fellow bookseller and a customer even if you are able to immediately supply the required information from the personal memory kinds of knowledge listed above. This safeguards the blurred distinction between personal knowledge and computer knowledge allowing the bookseller engaged in the encounter to carry through the procedure of using the computer to establish the whereabouts of a known book without compromising their own personal knowledge of the title. Interruption to provide personal knowledge to assist an encounter is not forbidden per se, but it is a question of gauging when this interruption constitutes assistance (and will lead to gratitude from the colleague) against when it will undermine the other bookseller's authority.[422] The etiquette may include some apologetic exchange after any such interruption has taken place with the interrupter checking to see that the interrupted hasn't been annoyed. This might be seen in terms of protective behaviour towards an aspect of the job felt as empowering for its display of authority - a means of defining the role as 'not just shop work.' I comment further on such bookseller strategies below.

What is being suggested here is a multiply founded form of knowledge, its roots stretching into the self of the bookseller, the bibliographic technology, practices of social interaction and the fabric of the shop. It involves: knowing an order or the categorisation system of the shop, and within this knowing a canon - 'Waterstone's type' books; knowing techniques - tricks with computers, rapid identification methods; and knowing a language of paratexts and knowing something about texts themselves. In short it is a contingent and spatially grounded knowledge. Firstly there is the bookseller's actual knowledge of books encountered by reading them, their well readiness, finding expression occasionally if personal comment or recommendation is requested. A reading determined to an extent as we have seen by the sociality of the

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stricken by the obscure sounding character of the title in question and you immediately know that the title will involve lengthy searching and embarrassing waits while the technology slowly does its work!

[422]This is hierarchised but peculiarly in that snubs are more likely to be generated by interactions between relative equals than by those separate in experience or status. Thus senior can instruct junior and junior can get away with it through inexperience and attribution of the snub to enthusiasm.

bookshop - my curiosity at all the books being bought driven in part by the people buying them - as with the customers in chapters 3 and 4. This intersects with knowledge founded in the day to day practice of the shop emerging from the need for rapid identification through a reading of books via their paratextual characteristics and their place in a system of classification. This in turn intersects with a knowledge founded in the bookseller's strategic (to establish a knowledgeable authority in the interaction with a customer) use of information technology.

This knowledge then is contingent. The terrain of my own knowledge of books is a mixture of more permanent fixtures - personal favourites, books inscribed on my memory from some connection to my own biography (themselves changing status over time as new landmarks are acquired and old ones fade or are rediscovered), combined with a more shifting terrain - brief familiarity with books who's popularity leads to frequent encounter but who's prominence soon fades.[423] All the terrain meanwhile is rapidly know*able* by means of the techniques and tricks repeatedly required to find books within the framework of the shop's categorisation system.

This is learned via repetition within a relational setting. Most 'learning' at Waterstone's occurs via a mixture of personal evolution of ways of working derived from observation of the working practices of other more experienced colleagues, or from observation and engagement with existing structures and systems in the shop such as categorisation systems. So for instance the technique of using bibliographic information to establish and maintain authority in transactions with customers emerges from:

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[423]The books promoted and displayed each month as national 'Waterstone's Recommends' titles for instance are for this short period of a month foremost in bookseller's knowledge in terms of practice (repetitive fetching or directing to) and textual authority (being able to comment if only vaguely about 'type' of book, nature of content, style/character of author etc.) By the following month these books have normally returned to the nondescript and more or less unknown ranks of nearly every other book in the shop. Need to know has finished.

- experiencing customers become frustrated if they sense they are dealing with someone who does not have authority and knowledge regarding the books being discussed;
- observing same in transactions between customers and colleagues;
- observing/experiencing customers whose intent is to gain the upper hand in the exchange (by demonstrating their own knowledge and condescending to one's own) and feeling frustration/annoyance at this;
- observing/listening to other bookseller's strategies for scripting the exchange and emulating these;
- developing personal script strategies during encounters and repeating these;
- utilising the advantage provided in the encounter by the arrangement of objects involved - the arrangement of computer terminals favours the bookseller in that they have direct visual access to the information and control over what information is displayed. The customer can only see the information being used if this is offered by the bookseller by moving the VDU to give an (awkward) view of the information or by providing a print out of the information. They have no control over what information is actually displayed other than via the mediation of the bookseller.

Similarly the process of learning the ordering system in the shop occurs as a mixture of individual experimentation and encounter and relational observation. My research diary records a couple of occasions where as a more experienced bookseller I was engaged in shelving books in the fiction section alongside members of staff with similar or more experience. A few books on the shelves were catching the eye for being misfiled away from their rightful places in biography or crime. The blame for this was placed by my colleague (more by way of making conversation than as a serious criticism or complaint) on letting new members of staff loose shelving books in this important section. The requirement not being fulfilled is the *intuitive* placing of books within the correct category. Mostly this is easy. Shape and style provide an early clue as to type of book - the relatively uniform paperback ranks of fiction versus the varied shapes and sizes of 'leisure books' such as say cookery. A large proportion of books

have their categorisation marked on the back and this generally matches Waterstone's own ordering system. For others the broad category is simply obvious from title or cover. The harder knowledge relates to the red herrings - books which at first look like straightforward fiction but are in fact crime, or science fiction, or travel literature. An encounter then with the nuances of the shop's classificatory system - to an extent an arbitrary system imposing an order on books which other 'authorities' might decry or do differently - the publisher, the author,[424] library classifications, other readers, other booksellers etceteras.

These nuances tend to be learned by the bookseller via a number of routes, both individual and relational. Trial and error encounters with the system whilst engaged in shelving or searching for books for customers leads to a slow accumulation of knowledge regarding where these nuances and subtleties lie. Detailed knowledge of any section is best acquired (and tends to be so) by personal involvement with the process of ordering itself - thus the 'experts' in any shop on any particular section tend to be those with final responsibility for running that section.

My own experience of taking over new sections when first starting as a bookseller was of an initial period of bewilderment and complete failure to understand the details of the section I had inherited. Just as I was convinced that I had cracked the code and that the organisation was a simple matter of alphabetisation by author I would spot a sub-category I had been unaware of. In some sections I would realise that what I had thought was a sub category was in fact a coincidence of untidiness! For a period the easiest way of filing was to stick the books anywhere and leave customers to their own devices. Knowledge of the section came from the realisation

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[424]A local author in Sheffield once came into the shop to complain strongly that his book had been categorised as crime - a category selected after the book's appearance in the crime section of the publisher's catalogue, and from the back cover blurb which also contextualised it as crime fiction - on the grounds that it could just as easily qualify as fiction and in his judgement the book would sell better from there. This later provoked much critical conversation provoked by this attack on the bookseller's power in making the selection, the acuity of his own judgement in assuming that a crime classification necessarily led to reduced sales and the audacity/unusualness of this author in subverting

that it was acceptable to dismantle and reconstruct the section, imposing my own vision upon it as I wished, a fact learned from observation and listening to other booksellers and their ponderings upon how best to order their own sections and get them to reflect their own interests. This opened the door to understanding the section(s) via a fine toothcombed dismantling and reconstruction. For the most part the reconstructed section was identical to the original with perhaps a few personal modifications or sub-categories added where these looked as though they might aid customer searching whilst requiring minimal maintenance. Nevertheless I now knew precisely how the section worked since it was me who had decided this, albeit within fairly narrow parameters of available options, and frequently by 'borrowing' ordering ideas from the methods of other colleagues.

6.3. Experience of Work.

The nature of work and place then varies according to time and according to the nature of the employee's encounter with customers, routines and objects. The shop is a different place to work at different times. Chat amongst colleagues at work frequently includes comment about the nature of the place at any particular time (It's busy? Why is it so dead today? Was it busy/quiet yesterday on my day off? Its half term this week it'll probably be busy.) The nature and experience of work can vary significantly.

If asked for a summary of how I felt about Waterstone's as a place to work that summary would include both praise and criticism. It is a place I enjoy working for and where at times I genuinely look forward to going to work at. It is also a place which has over the years inspired me to complain at length to friends, colleagues and family and to be reduced to boredom, anger, frustration and annoyance. I would acknowledge that enjoyment has been present to a slightly greater extent in this

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the convention of bookseller authority. The book was however moved and subsequent books by that author with similar ambiguity continued to appear in fiction.

equation since Waterstone's has become for me a workplace among others, adding variety (and often a healthy dose of sanity) to my other occupation as a researcher or teacher. On various occasions this privileged position has been commented on with envy by colleagues, on other occasions with sympathy, usually at the numbers of words I was expected to produce as output and the self discipline involved in so doing.[425] A common comment about the job amongst employees is that it would be an ideal job if it paid enough to either allow for the same income working only say three days a week or just so that the financial reward was something to think about as compensation during the negative aspects of the job. In general then my mixture of praise and criticism for the job, judging from the behaviour and comments of colleagues I have worked with, socialised with and interviewed over the years is a fairly typical response.

My personal reasons for liking and disliking the work are also broadly typical. I would broadly concur with the comments from booksellers in box 26 regarding the experience of work. For me the job is made enjoyable by the contact it affords with other people - both fellow employees and customers. For the former this enjoyment might be described as a general pleasure in chatting and socialising amidst a group of people who range from colleagues to close friends. The nature of the day to day social encounter ranges from extended conversation (often constructed around the interruptions of customers) about events in our respective lives & shared interests to brief hello's and passing nods with colleagues passed during movement around the shop into areas less frequently worked in. For the latter, the enjoyment stems being a participant in a crowd of strangers, specifically a participant who is there to offer service and assistance. This pleasure derives from a mixture of enjoying being part of a social exchange where the server enjoys providing the service and the customer enjoys receiving it; enjoying investing the knowledge and skills I possess about books in this social exchange and the power this involves; enjoying the possibility, and the actuality

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[425]This it is worth noting tended to be from colleagues quite capable themselves in terms of academic background, personal interests etc of undertaking similar work themselves but for whom working at

where this occurs that the social exchange might become an encounter of equals and a genuine exchange of conversation and information rather than a relationship of server and served.

At times this enjoyment is enough to reduce or remove the annoyance I can feel at the relatively low levels wages the job provides - I am doing something I enjoy therefore I don't feel as though I need to be so highly remunerated for my time and effort. I do not enjoy the job when the work becomes routinised, repetitive and monotonous, particularly when this involves tasks that do not involve social interaction such as shelf filling or computer inventory maintenance. It is particularly during these periods of monotony, where time seems to stretch that the relatively low wages begin to grate. The experience of work then varies. The research diary composites in appendix 3 suggest some of this variety.

A number of themes can be drawn from these accounts. Firstly, running through them is a story of the everyday **tactics** of employees within the Waterstone's workplace. As Du Gay puts it,

> "tactics of consumption are habits of action and modes of operation that cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localisation) place, nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the strategic as a visible totality. Thus, tactics are an 'art' of the weak (though not of the unfree or totally powerless) who, given their lack of control over institutions and resources, have to operate in the margins (temporal and spatial) defined by those who are ... in 'control' of such institutional resources."[426] These are immanent rather than external to power.[427]

Thus the behaviours above which are consistent with the space but adapted by the bookseller to suit their needs over that of the shop such as performing work to kill

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Waterstone's was, at least for the moment a deliberate antithesis to work or career involving self motivation.

[426]Du Gay, 1996: 149.

[427]Du Gay, 1996: 174.

time and to allow contact with books (quiet weekday) or exercising autonomy with customers by requesting that they shop at another time.

There is a close elision between these tactics and self **disciplining** and self surveillance in the workplace. Lack of industry, or distractions such as chatting, examining books or just standing induce guilt and usually lead to self motivated searching for gainful employment about the shop. A number of other factors feed into this. Firstly the partially devolved nature of power in the shop gives booksellers responsibility for various sections of the shop (their stock, their tidiness etceteras) as well as frequently other clear duties such as responsibility for post going out of the shop, for customer orders or for requisitioning stationery. This means that responsibility for work does lie with the bookseller. Managers rarely have a need to allocate specific tasks as most tasks will lie within the remit of individual booksellers. Those with fewer responsibilities such as part timers are encouraged to assist colleagues with any tasks that may need doing. The actual motivation to do the work comes from a mixture of:

- self discipline - doing the work because of the satisfaction in running good sections etceteras and because it is more interesting than not doing work;
- relational discipline amongst colleagues - a 'team spirit' operates amongst booksellers, founded in a general agreement about what the positive and negative aspects of the job are and a sharing of the experiences of these (collective moaning, collective experience of busy days etceteras). This extends to a general expectation that everybody pulls their weight and contributes equally in terms of work load and effort. Not working in the presence of others who are is therefore frowned upon unless the reason for this is known and felt acceptable in which case colleagues will rally to cover or assist with workload (in the event say of feeling ill, or hungover). Generally this operates unspokenly via practice - a chatting group will collectively feel it is time to work and go off and find roles for instance. Occasionally it operates formally as complaints are made to management about division of labour and the share of the overall workload being taken by particular employees.

- discipline by management - It was shown above (quiet weekday) how the *presence* of management can act as a disciplinary spur. Management also exercise a disciplinary role via their power of allocation of responsibilities (allocating those felt to be underperforming more roles and duties, taking away from those under too much pressure) and via informal and formal methods of direct verbal (or in the last instance, written) discipline - 'little chats' and/or formal appraisals setting targets for performance.
- discipline by incentive: the system of progression up the hierarchy of job description and reward is designed 'meritocratically' on the basis of 'performance' - the more self discipline shown in putting effort into the job, the more rapid the advance.

This mixture of discipline and tactics then involves working within and around a **hierarchy**. This hierarchy works best when it is not employed overtly. In my study shop it is commonly known and expressed that the experience of work differs in different areas of the shop in accordance with variations in the way this hierarchy was performed by managers. In one part of the shop discipline by direction and control was favoured by the relevant managers over and above self discipline. In another self discipline was assumed as the primary form of motivation and overt discipline by management regarded as an intrusion upon the identity and self respect of the bookseller. Throughout the shop it was felt that the latter area was the more favourable place to work and indeed a number of people working in this area were doing so because they had objected to the disciplining by management in the other area, regarding it as insulting since it assumed that their self-discipline was not sufficient to get the job done effectively. It also erodes some of the foundation for self identity in the workplace which rests on (re-)emphasising the relative flatness of the workplace hierarchy. The notion that "lets face it virtually anyone in the company could do virtually anyone else's job in terms of competency."[428] This becomes undermined when managers overtly perform the role of manager with skills and abilities not possessed by other members of staff. Much of the criticism of these

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[428]Producer interview 1.

managers way of managing stemmed from the perception that in fact it was their skills and work that was lacking and failing to contribute to the running of that area of the shop rather than any deficiency on the part of booksellers.

The workplace hierarchy interrelates then with the ways in which personal **identities and subjectivities** are founded in the workplace. Waterstone's is a sociable place to work. Recruitment around a similar set of criteria produces a set of colleagues with similarities of interest, background and outlook. Many are of a similar age and position - recent graduates without necessarily a long term commitment to the job. The experience tends towards that of working amongst a group of friends rather than amongst a group of highly differentiated 'work only' colleagues. For much of my period of research approximately one third of the staff in the shop were involved in a relationship with another member of staff. Working life blurs into social life as groups of varying sizes follow work with trips to the pub, the cinema or other colleagues houses.

This informal sociability characterises the work environment. Work here can be seen in terms of Maffesoli's notion of tribal encounter. One of[429] the "plethora of small groups and temporary groupings which we are members of at different times during our day."[430] The temporary tribe of workplace colleagues features rituals and behaviours relating to both work and the requirements of the job as well as "a more hedonistic everyday life, that is, less finalised, less determined by the 'ought' and by work ... This conquest of the present is manifested in an informal way by the small groups where activity simply involves roaming about exploring the world. This leads them to experiment with new ways of being in which the next trip, the cinema, sport, the communal meal take on a predominant role."[431] Central to Maffesoli's conception of the tribe is the idea that the individual is a nodal point in a series of different (but interconnecting) tribes. As such, individualism is "invalid. Each social actor is less

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[429]A fairly major one of in terms of time invested though not necessarily in terms of investment of self.
[430]Shields in Maffesoli, 1996: ix.
[431]Maffesoli, 1996: 143.

acting than acted upon. Each person is diffracted into infinity, according to the *kairos,* the opportunities and occasions that present themselves."[432]

This is not to suggest that subjectivities at Waterstone's are undifferentiated - a homogenous tribe. Rather it is comprised of members also members of other tribes and communities of interest, some aspects of which are brought to work as part of their identity, others of which are kept away from this membership. So and so has 'character' (a particular set of experiences, ways of looking at things, set of phraseology or slang, ways of doing things) for their involvement in such and such a tribe or tribes. Someone else may have a particular role at work as a result (however tenuous) of their membership of other tribes and their subsequently unique set of intellectual and practical knowledges (responsibility for foreign language section because of previous residency abroad, responsibility for window design because of current membership of and practice in artistic communities).[433]

Identity at work is a matter of 'making sense' of the community of practice constituting the workplace and negotiating the relationship between that and other identities:

> "What (booksellers) learn cannot be easily categorised into discrete skills and pieces of information that are useful or harmful, functional or dysfunctional. Learning their jobs, they also learn how much they are to make sense of what they do or encounter. They learn how not to learn and how to live with the ignorance they deem appropriate ... They learn how to engage and disengage, accept and resist, as well as how to keep a sense of themselves in spite of the status of their occupation. They learn to weave together their work and their private lives. They learn how to find little joys and how to deal with being depressed. What they learn and don't learn makes sense only as part of an identity ... and which subsumes the

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[432]Maffesoli, 1996: 145.

[433]"Almost immediately after the interview you've got an idea of where you'd like to put them in the shop, which sections you'd like them to run ... when we appointed the last lot there were people who said psychology, philosophy, things like that and that's an absolute godsend because he's gone off to do that section. Someone who's interested in things like that is a boon" (Producer interview 8).

skills they acquire and gives them meaning. They *become* (booksellers)."[434]

This sociable, semi-hedonistic tribalism cross-cuts and interacts with hierarchy in the workplace. Hierarchy is flattened because a) personal identity in terms of embeddedness in other areas of practice and knowledge (membership of other tribes) is valorised as contributing to the economic success of the branch[435]; b) self identity is reaffirmed via self discipline and undermined via discipline by management (see above) and c) managers are implicated in the sociable tribalism of the shop.

Equally this means that the workplace is a stage for the power relations involved in social interactions more generally. To follow Crang again, "a liminal place where dominant power relations are in many ways intensified, but at the same time a place where they can also be parodied and where possibilities for marginalised alternatives are made visible to all." The former results largely from the exposure inherent in the work. A number of female colleagues for instance had one or two 'regular' (in that they were recognisable for appearing in the shop more than once) male customers who they expressed discomfort about serving feeling that they (deliberately?) attempted to influence the collaborative manufacture of the situation to make the encounter more than an encounter between bookseller and customer - in one instance a customer emphasised the frequency of his custom and his supposed status as 'friend' rather than customer by greeting female staff with a 'friendly embrace' and deliberately crossing he boundary between shop floor and till area as though he was an employee of the shop.[436]

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[434]Lave, 1998: 40.

[435]"They (Waterstone's) wanted to become an equal opportunities employer because one of the reasons our customers are all white and middle class is because its white and middle class people who work there so its to do with where people feel comfortable as consumers. So one of the things they were saying is we're missing out on the whole black market because we've got, certainly in Sheffield, no black staff" (Producer interview 8).

[436]The effects of these discomfort inducing customers are where possible subtly policed by colleagues and managers by polite removal of the 'target' bookseller from the encounter by offering them an escape clause such as a telephone call or a task to perform elsewhere in the shop.

In general though the emphasis in Waterstone's is perhaps skewed slightly in favour of the latter half of this equation - the visibility of possibilities for marginal alternatives. As the preceding chapter indicated part of the brand and experience of Waterstone's is the maintenance of an atmosphere of liberal tolerance. This is in part maintained by the abundance of stock and its reflection/tolerance of multifarious arenas of interest, some of this 'signposted' as e.g. Gay Interest, Black Writers, Gender Studies/ Women's Studies; partly by a policy of subtle opposition to censorship expressed via company 'enrolment' of other organisations such as Index and sponsorship of freedom of speech debates; and partly by tolerance of identity and difference in terms of staff and customer behaviour. The creation of a deliberate liminality via an atmosphere of sociality rooted in a valorisation of the tribal identities brought to the shop by different booksellers and customers (see above). This can of course be violated but generally both customers and staff operate within a framework of respect for difference.

A tribal notion of identity also provides a working framework for other social relations which figure as part of the experience of work in a branch. Part of the membership of the Waterstone's tribe involves making brief connections with tribes of customers. These encounters are relational, a **working consensus**[437] between customer and bookseller. As with Crang's account of waiting work, "the definition of any encounter was being constantly monitored and negotiated as it progressed"[438] and by using similar techniques - attempting to prejudge the nature of the encounter by e.g. looking to see if the customer is empty handed and therefore likely to be enquiring rather than purchasing; judging the possible nature of the enquiry on the basis of type of person;[439] judging the seriousness of the enquiry on the basis of customer's

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[437]"The general tone of Goffman's body of work on social encounters carries with it a clear stress on the achieved character of situational definition and the necessity of that achievement (rather than solely oppositions to it) for social life to go on. He thus talks about the need for a "**working consensus**" of the situation to be established and refined" (Crang, 1994: 687).

[438]Crang, 1994: 687.

[439]"Yeah. That really works with regard to people who like Science fiction and fantasy books. They are a complete stereotype. It sounds bad to say it but 98% of the time it is true - you can tell a mile off,

response to say one's own pessimistic response; making use of strategies to maintain "the jump"[440] or the upper hand in the encounter and so on. Such encounters are then context dependant, "the role played by an individual is not a constant one, but dependent on interactions in an encounter and the character of that particular encounter itself ... of crucial importance in the social relations of performative encounters are the defining processes of the situation or context of that "collaborative manufacture."[441]

This face to face interaction is delicately nuanced involving simultaneous "recognition and blurring of clear teams"[442] (or tribes). As Crang describes for waiting staff, booksellers operate at a "corporate boundary"[443] where they simultaneously engage in behaviour which reaffirms their identity and solidarity with other booksellers whilst also behaving to establish solidarity with customers as either members of similar communities of interest and/or mediators on their behalf for or against the company. Thus conversation amongst booksellers frequently revolves around experiences in dealing with difficult customers or anecdotes regarding particularly amusing or eccentric customers yet at the same time staff are always ready to position themselves within modes of behaviour that define themselves not as booksellers or employees of the company but as sympathetic fellow consumers, or fellow enthusiasts for particular authors.

Finally then, the experience of work at Waterstone's also has a particular **spatiality** to it. As described above, the shop is different places at different times. At the simplest level this is self-evident. As described in the previous chapter the space is deliberately flexible even to the point of being transformable, as is frequently the case from a purely browsing and selling space to a theatre style space when visiting authors

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there's a certain look. I don't know what reading science fiction books for a couple of years does to you but there's obviously personal transformation you undergo (laughs)!" (Producer interview 9).
[440]Goffman cited in Crang, 1994: 686.
[441]Crang, 1994: 686.
[442]Crang, 1994: 689.
[443]Adams cited in Crang, 1994: 690.

give events. Over time, the shop undergoes slow transformation as promoted books change, whereabouts of sections alter, tables move, staff move on and are replaced etceteras. The terrain is always slightly and imperceptibly shifting.

Similarly, the shop contains with in it clearly defined (by unshifting boundaries) frontstage and backstage areas, backstage consisting of a staff room, offices, unpacking areas. In line with the argument in this chapter regarding the foundation of work in a consumption version of self, behaviour in these areas differs, in that the interactional setting places the worker amidst only fellow workers rather than amidst customers and workers. This is not however an instance of the worker escaping spatially to their 'true' self. Rather the backstage area involves an intensification of a particular tribal identity with its attendant practices and modes of belonging. These might include knowing when not to interrupt a colleague who is creating their own personal space using a book or newspaper, expressing thoughtfulness about other colleagues by making sure the kettle is refilled after use, knowing when colleagues have had enough of the shop floor and will not want to hear about that in conversation, or knowing when an anecdote about a 'difficult' customer will provoke group solidarity via empathy etceteras.

The meaning of frontstage and backstage is therefore vague, acting only to limit the context of social interaction, rather than to indicate different areas of selfhood. Backstage operates to an extent as an area where the highly presented area is (largely) invisibly maintained and serviced, housing activities such as accounting, unpacking and computer paraphernalia. However much of this servicing spills over onto front stage - computer management, parcels spilling from the unpacking room onto the shop floor, trolleys full of unshelved books lying around etceteras whilst some 'backstage' work actually involves frontstage type behaviour (minus any visual practices) as say pr and publicity are conducted over the telephone. For Crang and his restaurant workers, frontstage and backstage operate more contingently - backstage tending to be constructed in particular public areas as a means of "temporary respite

from front region performance."[444] This contingency is central to Tseelon's reading of Goffman's region behaviour. Private and public, front and back

> "is a dynamic symbolic interactionist concept which refers not to a structural element (such as a place or a part of the self) but to the experience of being visible or invisible."[445]

They are means of segregating settings, audiences or communities of practice to ensure that

> "those before whom one plays one of his parts won't be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting."[446]

Again I wish to avoid the possible interpretation of this as a temporary return to the 'true self.' As a practice of 'customer exclusion' this contingent use of space certainly applies in the context of Waterstone's. At busy periods control over space in this manner tends to be lost and booksellers are at the mercies of the stream of customers. During quiet to moderate periods however the worker has considerable 'range' in terms of the areas of the shop they can legitimately occupy whilst performing their self-disciplined tasks - as my example above of use of shelving in a quiet corner of the shop to 'control' the experience of work - this 'range' can be used to create space away from customers , or colleagues, or create space in which e.g. socialising between colleagues can occur. This is not however to establish a distinction between the 'real' worker and the 'staged' worker. The "distinction between real and fake, fact and fiction become a matter of style rather than substance,"[447] these region behaviours being performances in different styles to suit different situations rather than the switching on or off of performance.

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[444]Crang, 1994: 695.
[445]Tseelon, 1992: 116.
[446]Goffman cited in Tseelon, 1992: 116.
[447]Tseelon, 1992: 125.

6.4: Conclusion.

I want to conclude by re-emphasising the nature of self involved in the descriptions above. The performative character of the interaction has the potential to be read as an internal self being projected as an external character according to the context. Rather, as we saw above, "each social actor is less acting than acted upon."[448] Following Madeleine Strathern[449], Rolland Munro contrasts the productionist view of self - which "fall(s) back on prosthesis ... It is to insist on a particular and possibly parochial, view of extension. It is an image of persons taking on artefacts or 'roles' which either enlarge or diminish identity; and then retreating, hermit like to a 'true' self"[450] - with a consumption view of self where "we are always in extension. Indeed, extension is all we are ever 'in.' There is no core self to which we retreat and come out again. Appropriation of artefacts make possible 'performance' on a scale. This may be big or small, far or near but we mistake the nature of the movement if we relate this diminishment or anonymity back to a *loss* of self."[451] At work then any performance is not contrary to, or reflective of a 'true' self, rather selves, already constituted by networks of social and material relations *outside* work, act in relation to the social and material relations within the workplace.

This is a subtle shift in emphasis away from notions of "the production of consumption"[452] but the shift is significant. It erases the notion of a conscious production of social life and the impact of this upon an exterior self replacing it with a messier view of power concerned with the interactions of social, technical, material and discursive networks.

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[448]Maffesoli, 1996: 145
[449]Strathern, 1991 & 1995.
[450]Munro, 1996: 263.
[451]Munro, 1996: 264.
[452]Featherstone, 1991.

Section D: Conclusion.

Chapter 7: Conclusions.

As stated in Chapter 1, the aims of this thesis are relatively straightforward. Via my joint empirical focus on the practices of reading and the work associated with selling books, the intention has been to provide a detailed empirical description of two overlapping sites. This description is informed by and is intended to inform three theoretical debates: the notion of the commodity chain and relationships between spheres of consumption and spheres of production; conceptualisations of objects and their role in society and space and approaches generally towards theorising subjectivity, identity and selfhood. Two specific relationships and one general theme. Following from my alignment in the thesis with 'non-representational theories'[453] my conclusions do not consist of a systematic attempt to finally draw explanations, solutions or answers from the accounts in the preceding chapters. The task of these theories is to give

> "the right place to description"[454]... "understanding is not so much about unearthing something of which we might previously have been ignorant, delving for deep principles or delving for rock bottom, ultimate causes as it is about discovering the options people have about how to live."[455]

Any 'conclusions' have already been offered *within* the dense descriptions of the preceding chapters. These chapters offer a whole range of insights into the 'options' people have to live by. These options are not cognitive choices but intuitively held assumptions about what is knowable and what is doable. Both chapters show how knowledge – of others, of books, of how to do ones job – is constructed between others, both human and non-human.

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[453]Pile & Thrift, 1995; Thrift, 1996, 1999.
[454]Thrift, 1999: 296
[455]Thrift, 1996: 8

The 'point' of the thesis is to conceptualise this specificity in terms of the networks of relations which construct these empirical sites. As Massey points out, this 'point' is defensible for the *potential* involved in such a (re)conceptualisation:

> "identities of subjects and identities of places constructed through interrelations not only challenge notions of past authenticities but also hold open the possibility of change in the future. Both these reconceptualizations in other words are intimately imbued with politics."[456]

I shall attempt therefore to offer modest conclusions or brief comments concerning these (re)conceptualisations under three (interconnected) headings: (1) Commodity chains; (2) Identity and subjectivity and (3) Objects and their relations. Common to the conclusions under all these headings is an emphasis on the impossibility of describing or understanding any of these in dualistic terms. Through these themes I also address the productive dynamism of the relations which ensue from rejecting such essentialist conceptions of entities by (re)considering concepts of space. This involves me in a brief auto-critique of an absence in the thesis which stems from my methodological approach, and in a final return to the opening pages of the thesis and my initial musings regarding the book as an object.

7.1: Commodity chains.

The connections between the two 'spheres' described in sections 2 and 3 have been left deliberately oblique as a rhetorical strategy.[457] The intention is to allow any relationships to resonate, to emerge themselves or from the attentions of the reader rather than to highlight or privilege these interconnections as a methodological approach. By so doing I hope to highlight the difficulties of making such connections, to emphasise the gap rather than the connections which bridge it. This is not to deny any relationship between these two 'spheres.' The account at the end of Chapter 2

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[456]Massey, 1999: 288.
[457]Atkinson, 1990; Barnes, 1994

shows some of the ways in which discourse, meanings and practices transcend the boundary between retailer and consumer and the complex arrangements of power involved in this. Hopefully other resonances also occur between the two sections.

Some of these derive from the reflexive *encounter* between these two groups. Waterstone's is able - due largely to its (highly qualified) decentralisation of power to shop floor staff - to reflexively respond to the practices of reading embodied by its potential customers at a cognitive and aesthetic level. Thus, the perceived lack of sociality and encounter within reading amongst readers is 'reflected' by Waterstone's in organisational attempts to allow such sociality to flourish (coffee shops, relaxed browsing atmosphere, chatty, friendly staff etc). Similarly, many interconnections occur from reader's reflexive responses to the (perceived) marketing strategies of Waterstone's. An enhanced reflexivity towards the 'effect' of the cover in conditioning response to a book derives from the perceived manipulation of this paratext by Waterstone's or other 'producers to target an 'audience.'

Some connections meanwhile are present unreflexively and *despite* this encounter. Both Waterstone's and its readers share a relationship to a wider literary discourse which feminises particular practices of reading and masculinises others. Waterstone's institutionalises this but within the organisation patterns of resistance, denial or acceptance towards this discourse are similar to those amongst consumers. The discourse and its associated practices is external to the relationship between these 'spheres' rather than its outcome. Much of the possibility for such unreflexive, unconnected similarities between these 'spheres' derives from the potential similarities between 'consumer' and 'producer' subjectivities and the scope for a relatively free play of subjectivity and identity within the working practice of Waterstone's.

Many of these subjective similarities (and differences) are hidden to the thesis due to the (artificial) methodological separation of these two spheres. Were the consumer methodology to be applied to the producer respondents a similar terrain of different identities overlain with similar practices, discourses and meanings would no

doubt emerge. Nevertheless, section 3 clearly suggests the *possibility* of this terrain with its demonstration of the redundancy of any ontological separation between concepts of selfhood in these supposed spheres.

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim here is to problematise or enhance the language and foundations of parts of the commodity chain literature. These empirical accounts demonstrate firstly, the difficulty of separating 'production' and 'consumption' as distinct entities and secondly, the unsuitability of a linear conception of connection between any supposed separation. I acknowledge that such a critique is potentially weakened by my methodological separation of these spheres (although I make no claims, methodological or otherwise for a linear relationship across this divide). I would also however point to the way in which such a weakness might strengthen my argument given the possibility of these claims *despite* this approach.

The relationship here between retailer and consumer is generally consistent with recent theories which begin to move away from the linearity and singularity of the 'chain' metaphor in commodity analysis and which

> "question understandings of modern consumption which view its geographies through notions of difference and distinctiveness based in separation and hence cast connecting flows as corrupting invasion."[458]

Here the emphasis is more on the commodity *circuit*[459] employed to conceptualise the relationship between producers and consumers as dynamic[460] and shifting, avoiding

> "a reification and fixing of connections into a uni-directional chain. Rather, commodity chain analyses can (and should be) employed to consider the complex and shifting power dynamics between sites: to open up tensions and anxieties in the multiple sets of relationships between producers and consumers."[461]

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[458]Crang, 1996: 51.
[459]Johnson, 1986.
[460]Jackson & Taylor, 1996; du Gay et al, 1997.
[461]Leslie & Reimer, forthcoming.

This conception then has less interest in causality and explanatory sequences[462] than theories drawing more heavily on the concept of the chain. 'Origins' are always constructed.[463] Circuits have no beginning or end but allow for a dense web of interactions between sites and assume that commodities relate with other goods as they travel.[464] Certainly the two sections here resonate with such a web of interactions whilst avoiding attributing 'causality' or directional effects to these interactions.

Nevertheless, as stated in chapter 1, such conceptions still 'black box' the supposed spheres of production and consumption, focusing on the multiple circulations of commodities through them without necessarily interrogating the ontology of the spheres themselves. My aim here is not to provide a fully elaborated alternative to the aforementioned approaches, or necessarily to argue for the need for one. In line with 'modest' approaches to theory more generally[465] the range of approaches within the commodity chain oeuvre should provide a range of tools to be drawn upon contingently depending on the specific setting and story being told. The aim here has been to *suggest* that a network metaphor also provides a potential tool for recounting these relations which avoids privileging 'spheres' as *a priori* determinants of action and ordering.

The spheres of retailing and consumption appear in the thesis acknowledged as convenient methodological constructions. The overall intent however is to emphasise their absolute relationality. Both are the products of sets of relations which give rise to their *coherency* as methodological sites and spaces of interpretation. Section 2 demonstrates the loose ties and connections which constitute these individual readers as an interpretative community in relation to the book and its spaces. Section 3 illustrates the process of ordering around a strategy of enterprise which constitutes the bookshop as a coherent space or sphere. Both are also overlain by relations which

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[462]Hinchcliffe, 1997; Miller, 1997.
[463]Cook & Crang, 1996.
[464]Leslie & Reimer, forthcoming.

problematise this boundedness. Thus the workers in the supposed production sphere constitute their workplace subjectivities by 'consuming' the workplace whilst readers 'produce' spaces of individuality or sociality. Similarly, both spheres are relationally connected to (and help constitute) a wider network of discourses and practices relating to shopping, reading and the book.

The image then is of a broad network of practices, objects, subjects and meanings from which these sites and spaces coalesce. This is a similar image to that of commodities circulating through different social spheres but with the duality of pre-existing spheres erased. Spheres, sites or spaces are the outcome of different relations within the same network rather than these relations being the product of pre-existing spheres.

7.2: Identity and subjectivity.

The demonstration of relationality over duality also characterises the presence of the human subject. Various conceptions of selfhood and identity appear in the thesis – the lone reader in solitary engagement with the text/object of the book; the bookseller learning the practices of his/her trade and the embodiment of a brand in conjunction with objects and other workers and customers; the 'consumer' reflexively responding to the marketing strategies of Waterstone's. Throughout, this is

> "a transient self which is situationally and interactively defined; a social (and/or material) product which does not have an existence outside an interaction."[466]

The consumption based self[467] derives from a range of relations:

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[465]Pile & Thrift, 1996.
[466] Tseelon, 1992: 121, my brackets.
[467] Munro, 1996.

> "performative processes directed at impressing others, processes directed at reassuring oneself and also processes forming links and bonds with significant others."[468]

The 'self' is a nodal point in a shifting terrain of loose tribal memberships and the social world a continual process of 'learning' the performances and routines that allow a coherent identity to be performed in these social settings.[469]. An identity rooted in the 'spatial logic' of the everyday:[470]

> "a concept of identity which attempts to inject *movement and mobility* into identity formation ... individuals and groups are made up of a tangle of lines which cross over one another in all kinds of ways, composing and recomposing lives in a manner that illustrates their subtle modifications and detours, as well as their more fixed attachments and territories ... The use of space as a 'milieu of becoming' as a way of thinking through the different trajectories of people's identities."[471]

It is important to acknowledge the way in which this conception of space again draws attention to the (inevitable) partiality of this thesis. These notions of territorialisation raise the issue of the ways in which mobility is structured,[472] they can not rely on the assumption that

> "space is in-different, that it acts as a fluid medium in which mobile subjects dwell. But, of course space is not like this. For example, there is the matter of boundaries. ... This is where much of the writing employing spatial figures still seems curious to many geographers. It neglects the crucial importance of different *places* – performed spaces in which physical and social boundaries are all too clear, in which resources are clearly available to some and not others."[473]

This resonates with Massey's insistence that space is

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[468]Longhurst and Savage, 1996: 296
[469] Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991.
[470] Allen & Pryke, 1999; Grossberg, 1992, 1996.
[471] Allen & Pryke, 1999: 53. See also Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Deleuze & Parnet, 1987; Grossberg, 1996; Pile & Thrift, 1995.
[472] Grossberg, 1996.

> "the sphere of the possibility of the existence of more than one voice; space as the sphere in which distinct narratives co-exist."[474]

Although multiplicity and the structuring of mobility is *acknowledged* in the work the focus is still on a relatively narrow territory of becoming. Whilst this is defended in Chapter 2 as an inevitable result of positioning within the thesis it is nevertheless worth reiterating in the context of Allen & Prykes description of the

> "cartography of identity which displays the relations through which people move and the ways in which they anchor themselves in certain imaginary locations"[475]

that this is an incomplete mapping which only shows the territories of a very limited number of identities of the possible maps which may incorporate some parts of the terrain here as part of their own territorialisations.

7.3: The object.

The terrain in which the subject finds itself is also material. The thesis clearly describes ways in which material culture and human subjectivity are "mutually enmeshed. Intertangled. Complexly interfused."[476] The tangle of lines and the territories in the quote above are also constructed from objects which engage with the human in frequently indistinguishable ways. At the deepest ontological level the human self engages with objects such as the book in ways which fundamentally blur the boundary between the human and the non-human in the encounter:

> The main non-human player in the thesis - the book - never appears as a bounded entity. It is always 'quasi' or connected, made what it is by its relationship with other entities: books, objects, the ordering practices of enterprise, people and

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[473] Pile & Thrift, 1995: 374.
[474] Massey, 1999: 280.
[475] Allen & Pryke, 1999: 53.
[476] Pred, 1996: 11.

their biographies, practices, emotions. "Things are not given, they are the product of processes in particular times and places."[477] The same is true of all the 'minor' objects which are ordered together alongside the multifarious practices, objects, discourses, human actants etc which are ordered to form Waterstone's. Their agency, or effect exists *in conjunction*, through their relations with other entities. They are "precarious achievements."[478]

This precariousness is paradoxical. Hand in hand with its unstable contingency is a certain stability and durability.[479] Common to the appearance of all the non-human objects in the thesis is some sense of the *security* they offer – the ontological security provided by the book in mediating a whole range of social relationships (p.103) and 'regulating intimacy' (p.102) or the security provided at work as till points become a means of mediating encounters between worker and customer and literally generate knowledge to establish a relationship of power in that encounter. As the Winnicotian conception of ontological security elaborated in Section B implies, this security stems in part from the object's ability to occupy a boundary zone between the human and the non-human, to absorb or be inscribed with some of the human but to remain detached and mobile, distinct or distinguishable.

What is clear then is that 'the object,' unbounded as it is, is nevertheless a *necessary* and integral part of any conceptualisation of space, subjectivity or practice. The social 'achievements' described in both sections are achieved through the presence of these objects, and particularly the book:

> "the notion that social ordering is indeed simply social ... disappears ... What we call the social is materially heterogeneous: talk, bodies, texts, machines, architectures, all of these and many more are implicated in and help perform the social."[480]

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[477]Massey et al, 1999: 12.
[478]Massey et al, 1999: 18.
[479] Latour, 1991; Debray, 1996.
[480]Law, 1994: 2.

The social achievements of the object are also, frequently, spatial. Both sections describe the production of places - the home; the ephemeral, individualised places created from shifting between[481] the world of the book and the everyday present; places of encounter mediated by the book; the place of the bookshop etc. - as a relation between (quasi)subject and (quasi)object. Space then is the outcome of materially embedded practice, the result of a dynamic becoming derived from the encounter between the multitude of entities listed in Law's quotation:

> "Things are folded into the human world in all manner of active and inseparable ways, and most especially in the innumerable interactions between things and bodies which are placed at particular locations in particular configurations of action and value."[482]

For Thrift, this folding of things is one of the ways in which places can come to 'haunt' us. By this he means firstly that places are dynamic – taking place in their passing – and incomplete – containing practices they were not intended for. And secondly that they are more than a 'context or setting' but can also have folded into them embodied *human* competences such as passion, memory and performed language.

> "Thus the ecology of place is a rich and varied *spectral gathering* ... It is, I think, no coincidence that one of the chief concerns of current social and cultural theory is the aspects of that tense gathering which both value and multiply anomaly, receptivity and imaginative capacity: ghosts, apparitions and monsters; magic, hauntings and dreams; rites, rituals and raves. And it is this new way of describing becoming – with its accompanying baggage of only half understood and sometimes inarticulate textual skills ... which is allowing a different and more open sense of place into the open."[483]

I want to suggest that the object plays an important role in this haunting by virtue of the 'part-humanness' it derives from the boundary role described above and in section B. This is not to contradict Thrift's argument which relies on the 'interrelation'

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[481] Akrich and Latour, 1992: 260
[482] Thrift, 1999: 312
[483] Thrift,1999: 317

between the folding of objects and the folding of emotions, passions, memories etc into place. It is to return to my opening musings regarding the possible 'magic' of the book[484] and to my motivation in introducing Miller's material culture schema as a counterpoint to Latour in compensation for the slightly cold and inhuman version of the object in ANT.[485] The places made by the book in this thesis and talked about by the voices in appendix 2 rely precisely on the folding in of human competences such as memory, passion and emotion. The role of the book is not merely of a functional, ordering, technological nature. As a mediator it has a decidedly human form.

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[484] Updike, 1962; Hennion, 1989 in 1.2 above.
[485] In 1.4 above.

Section E: Bibliography and Appendices.

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Appendix 1: Summary of Research Methods.

1.1: Interviews:

1.1.1 Summary.

A total of 35 interviews were conducted for the research, the bulk of which took place between January and July 1997. These comprised: 15 interviews with readers (See also focus groups below); 5 with shop workers at my study branch of Waterstone's; 5 with members of the Waterstone's senior management team; 4 with representatives of peripheral organisations related to Waterstone's; 2 with second-hand book traders in Sheffield; and 4 with individuals involved privately or professionally with reading in Vancouver, Canada. Respondents were selected on the basis of their involvement in various parts of the network of the book my research focuses on. Numbers of respondents were restrained by the limitations exerted by difficulties of access and recruitment, factors which encouraged ongoing modification of the research focus towards areas where this was most successful. This combined with an attention towards 'theoretical saturation'[486] which provided cues to constrain the overall number of interviews with particular groups when repetition and similarity became prevalent.

All interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were tape recorded for subsequent transcription. Additional notes regarding the interview and off tape conversations were recorded in a research diary after the interview had finished. All respondents were assured of their anonymity. All interviews were loosely structured[487] using a pre-prepared interview schedule. For the reader and bookseller interviews the

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[486]Cook & Crang, 1995; Burgess, 1992.
[487]Brenner, 1979; Cook & Crang, 1995; Denscombe, 1998.

same schedule was used consistently; for the other interviews a brief list of possible issues and themes was prepared beforehand. In both cases I tended to rely more on performative response to the interviewees agenda than on the schedules. The interviews were introduced to the respondents as being "informal and conversational" and conducted as "guided conversations"[488] with the aim of creating a relaxed atmosphere in which the respondent could feel confident about advancing their priorities and interests. The majority of interviews were conducted in 'neutral' leisure spaces such as bars and cafes, selected by the respondent as somewhere they would feel comfortable to meet. A small proportion of the consumer interviews were conducted - at the respondent's suggestion - in their homes. Most of the interviews with senior Waterstone's staff and representatives of peripheral organisations were conducted in their place of work at their invitation.

1.1.2: Access.

Initial 'access' to respondents was obtained in a variety of ways. Reader/consumer respondents were all recruited by means of a flier distributed via the bookshop in which I conducted my participant observation. The flier operated both as a tool to communicate my research and contact details in my absence, in some cases operating over time and distance, generating phone calls from outside Sheffield and some weeks after I had stopped distributing them. And as a prompt for face to face interaction whilst I was working in the bookshop as customers enquired to myself or other colleagues about the project and allowing me to emphasise the informality of the experience and (hopefully) my own approachability. Bookseller respondents were recruited by direct, conversational approach to workplace colleagues. A number of colleagues who I approached requesting an interview refused this and the respondents were skewed towards colleagues with whom I had established a stronger interpersonal bond. I did not press colleagues who refused for their reasons. Their immediate responses suggested that their perception of the interview was to 'test' them for

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[488]Rubin & Rubin, 1995, ch.6.

knowledge or information they felt that they lacked and/or that the interview would involve carrying the practices and behaviours of the workplace outside the working environment when they preferred to devote their non-work time entirely to leisure. Other possible reasons might have been a clumsiness in my approach combined with my ambiguous and potentially threatening position as both a part time bookseller and an academic researcher.

Access to second-hand booksellers was gained by direct face to face approach whilst senior Waterstone's staff and to representatives of peripheral organisations were initially approached by letter followed up by a telephone call. Senior staff were aware of my dual status as academic and bookseller and that I had received permission for the research from my immediate manager and the Managing Director. As the research progressed my sense of the strong relationship between my full participation as an employee at Waterstone's and the access this afforded to consumers and other employees, combined with the greater difficulties I had acquiring interview access and/or comparable levels of participation at other sites led to my commitment to an empirical focus on Waterstone's as a node in the commodity network of the book and away from a wider comparative study which may have more evenly incorporated other sites in the network such as publishing, public libraries and the 2nd hand market.

1.1.3: Experience.

As chapter 2 makes clear every research encounter is an "intersubjective experience."[489] I am of course unable to account for the experiences of my co-participants in these interviews but hope nevertheless to give some sense of my own experiences as a performer and my own perception of the performances I was interacting with.

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[489]Ang, 1996; Clifford, 1992; Cook & Crang, 1995; Keith, 1992; Taussig, 1992.

The consumer interviews were lubricated by the presence of the book. They proceeded freely as directed conversations about a mutual interest. I presented myself (or was unable to avoid presenting myself) as someone who was knowledgeable and enthusiastic about books and (hopefully) as someone with an open mind regarding what constitutes the meaning and significance of reading and a 'good' book. Nearly every respondent commented on their enjoyment of the interview as an opportunity to converse at length about books and reading. This was beneficial in terms of the low level of effort involved in getting respondents to recount their views and experiences. It presented difficulties in that in some ways it often skewed the conversation towards hegemonic discourses associated with books and reading - demonstrations of what and how much had been read and textual, rather than personal interpretations of the reading. A number of respondents arrived at the interview with long lists of their favourite books; least favourite books; categorisations of their collections etc.. The natural tendency of the respondent's was often to steer the conversation towards "what did you think of such and such author/character/book?" type questions. This was unproblematic in that it was still revealing of their practices of reading and relationship to 'literary' meanings and discourses. It encouraged me however to develop strategies to try to counter such conversational tendencies by steering towards the more mundane and ordinary ways in which they interacted with books. A strategy which was often met with surprise and comments at the end of interviews about how their prior assumption had been that I would be a Literature student with primarily textual interests.

I gained a sense from a number of my respondents that they were aware of the hermeneutic gap between practice and its articulation in speech. Often they felt literally at a loss for words to explain their reasons for reading:[490]

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[490] It is worth remarking that while most respondents expressed a degree of doubt about how accurately their verbal accounts actually were in expressing why they read those who literally expressed themselves as 'at a loss for words' tended most often to be men. It tended also to be the men who were most reluctant to 'explain' their reading by drawing on a vocabulary of pleasure.

Reader 8: Its very difficult to put my finger on it but all books I've enjoyed speak to me at a personal level.....

Reader 14: Because a lot of the time you don't know. You're not exactly sure why a certain book appeals to you....

Reader 5:.....Its a peculiar Reader 4h.... I don't know. Its a long time since I discussed the ins and outs of why I read..... The other thing is, that if we discussed this tomorrow, it'd be a different conversation completely.....

Reader 13: I don't know why. I would say I actually love books but I couldn't tell you exactly why....

And while other respondents did not precisely articulate this difficulty they expressed it via frequent recourse to 'I suppose' or 'perhaps' or simply through a professed bemusement at the interview, a mixture I think of surprise at the nature of the interview and at their difficulty in expressing themselves when asked why they read. Part of the difficulty perhaps lies in trying to separate out the layers of influences that contribute to partaking in the act of reading. Ordering the multiple layers of practice and meaning which converge upon the book into separate layers appears to the reader a false separation. Trying to tease the layers of practice apart during an hour or so of prompting and cajoling by myself often caused the respondents to express this as inarticulable.

A similar process of in-situ reflexivity characterised the 'producer sphere' interviews. Within these the experience of interviewing workplace colleagues was very different to that of interviewing head office staff and representatives of peripheral organisations. I largely attribute this to the different relationships between cognition and practice these two groups embodied. The senior workers are involved on a day to day basis in articulating their work and their corporate practices cognitively and

verbally. Their job is to communicate what they and their company do on a verbal level. The job of shop workers by contrast is to perform their tasks, preferably without thinking very much about them and without the need to articulate them.

In this sense the bookseller interviews share similarities with the reader interviews in that the respondents often found it hard to articulate some of the practices and routines I was questioning them about, expressing this in terms of surprise at the kind of themes I was interested in, the mundanity of some of my questions. This was exacerbated by my own positionality as a bookseller and a colleague. Many of the practices I was enquiring about or which might have been introduced to the interview by the respondent had my positioning been different were shared in their mundanity and assumed to also be a practical knowledge for me. Often then there was a reliance instead on the narratives used by respondents (and often shared socially amongst booksellers) for justifying the work to ones self by articulating the 'good' and 'bad' experiences of the work. Again I regard this as essentially unproblematic once the intersubjective nature of ethnography is recognised. It impinges on the ways in which I make use of this interview material as I describe below.

The interviews with senior staff meanwhile raised two concerns. Firstly I was conscious as these progressed of the highly performative character of these respondent's everyday roles. My sense in most of the interviews was that these respondents did not regard providing these accounts of what they did and what Waterstone's did as at all unusual. At times it felt as though they were merely repeating a spiel or patter which they deployed to other audiences in similar ways on a day to day basis. This no doubt exaggerates or parodies the 'salesmanship' of their roles but certainly the experience contrasted with the apparent hermeneutic rupture being experienced in the reader and bookseller interviews.

This overlapped with another result of my own positioning. As with the bookseller interviews I found my own position as a fellow employee of Waterstone's

to be double edged. In both cases it undoubtedly provided me with an ease of access and a candour of response that was invaluable. The assumed knowledges that existed between myself and my respondents allowed the interview to be conducted on an entirely different level than it would have been were I an 'outsider' without the shared languages and assumptions our joint corporate culture afforded. Potentially the interviews would not have occurred at all were it not for this 'insider' status and my letter of encouragement from the MD. Initially however I found both these issues sources of frustration and concern. I felt I should be developing ways in which I could improve upon my interview technique to better 'get beyond' these performances and access the 'real Waterstone's' or the 'real' senior staff. Or adapt my performance so as to better play the 'outsider' ignorant of our shared knowledges. To an extent my interviewing strategies probably did evolve in this manner. A more significant outcome however was realisation of the inescapability of positioning. Again then I recount these experiences to underline the partiality of these accounts and draw attention to the way in which they are mobilised in the thesis to maximise their empirical strengths.

1.2: Participant Observation.

1.2.1: Summary.

A key component in the empirical work the thesis draws from is my participation as an employee at Waterstone's. I worked in my study shop in Sheffield on two days of the week during the 3 years I was working full time on the thesis (1995-1998). My 'participation' also spread beyond the boundaries of this regular employment. The shop proved to be a very sociable place to work and I regularly participated in social networks arising from this workplace. Whilst at work I adopted strategies to attempt to gain involvement in as many aspects of the Waterstone's network that was possible for someone at my level of the employment hierarchy. This was partly motivated by my research agenda and partly by my previous experiences of

the retail workplace and evolution of strategies to make the job more varied and interesting. In particular I gained involvement in marketing the shop and managing in store events. This role provided access to a range of additional sites and occurrences in addition to the everyday activities of the bookshop. These included visits to the London International Bookfair, publisher hospitality events, meetings with publishers and training events; a range of in-store events such as author readings or entertainment events; repeated involvement in the organisation of a local literary festival and the establishment and participation in a regular monthly reading group. All of these broadened my participation in both consumer and producer spheres of the book network. Additionally much of my interview experience - particularly those with senior members of staff and representatives of peripheral organisations - frequently generated valuable observational material as well as interview transcripts due to the access they afforded to otherwise invisible spaces in the network of retail production.[491] I would also include as part of my 'participation' my reflection upon my own practices of shopping and reading which also involved an effort to extend these everyday practices by developing an obsessive enthusiasm for visiting and browsing in bookshops, alongside my increased involvement in book related activity such as events and reading groups.

1.2.2: Access.

I acquired the job in Waterstone's partly as a result of previous full time employment with the company (though it would not have been impossible to do so without this). My presence as a researcher was overt though ambiguous. When I was initially interviewed for the job I made it clear that my other occupation was as a graduate student researching reading and that I hoped that being in the shop might eventually prove helpful with establishing useful contacts for this research. My motivation in obtaining the work combined the need for extra financing to support my postgraduate studies, a desire to obtain a social/working life outside academia and a

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[491]Cook & Crang, 1995

vague plan that the work would eventually contribute in some way towards my research.

I was personally conscious therefore from the outset of my role as an observer as well as a participant (though initially vague about precisely what my interests might be) and began to keep a research diary of sorts (see below) from the outset. There was some public knowledge of these intentions but mostly I was regarded as a new part time bookseller. It was not until several months into the research and my employment in the shop however that I began to contemplate my participation in the shop being a major part of the research. I subsequently requested and gained formal permission from my immediate manager and the managing director to use the shop as a research site and to approach personnel within the company to be interviewed. I emphasised that it would not intrude upon my work in the shop, vaguely but truthfully stated my interests as the relationship between retailers and consumers and offered to provide a brief summary of my research findings to the company at the end of my research.

1.2.3: Experience.

Formalising my position as a researcher did not have any immediate impact on my identity or behaviour at work. My identity as a researcher emerged gradually and contextually rather than being an overt 'arrival.'[492] Behaviourally I was always first and foremost a bookseller whilst at work and rarely altered my behaviour to perform research related acts such as notetaking or formal questioning[493]. Initially I did nothing to back up my formal permission to 'research' in the shop by way of communicating this supposed change in my identity to other colleagues, largely since I had no foreseeable plans for this to alter my behaviour or relationships. Most colleagues were aware that I was also undertaking PhD research and that this had something to do with Waterstone's. This had some effect on my perceived identity mainly via my 'part

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[492] Crang, 1994; Pratt, 1986.
[493] Cassell, 1988.

timeness' or incomplete reliance on Waterstone's for financial support, future career or day to day routines. Typical notions of the 'privileged' academic'[494] were no doubt applicable in some shape or form.

The Waterstone's workplace is however crosscut by these sorts of relationships in complex ways. Because of Waterstone's tendency to employ graduates and accept a relatively fast turnover of staff it is not at all uncommon for people to work on the shop floor at Waterstone's whilst simultaneously pursuing other interests or to regard their employment at Waterstone's as a temporary way station on the Reader 4h to a career elsewhere, including rapid acceleration up the Waterstone's hierarchy. Nevertheless there are employees for whom being a bookseller is a long term career and who often but not exclusively have different social backgrounds and lower terminal education age. These distinctions are neither clearly defined nor necessarily sources of tension. They are nevertheless a presence influencing social interaction in the workplace in subtle ways, not least because the longer term participation in the shop of the latter group of 'career booksellers' engenders a stronger sense of community (even where this may be expressed negatively or adversarially) than for the shorter term workers.

On the whole there was little to distinguish my participation between these two 'groups' and as a bookseller I interacted in similar ways with each. Nevertheless it was with the latter group where my position as a 'privileged academic' felt closer to the foreground. Paradoxically this aspect of my identity was foregrounded by its apparent absence in these intersubjective relations. Where for instance interests or career matters external to Waterstone's tended to be a frequent topic of shared conversation amongst the 'shorter term' booksellers this tended to be less the case amongst the 'career booksellers' meaning my research was less often a topic of interest or conversation amongst this group. Correspondingly it was here that I found it hardest to recruit interview respondents as described above.

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[494]Tedlock, 1991.

The strongest emphasis on my identity as a researcher came after approximately eighteen months when I began to undertake formal interviews. At roughly the same time the study shop underwent a major expansion and refit which involved recruiting large numbers of new staff. When encountering these (and subsequent) new members I was more overt than I had previously been regarding my research interests in the shop. My 'multiple identity' was also increasingly apparent as my use of the shop to recruit interviewees involved me in more visible performances of my research, some of which - notably the recruitment of consumers - some colleagues became actively and enthusiastically involved in, passing out fliers and directing interested respondent's to me. Similarly my occasional visits to head office occasionally materialised as talking points partly due to the incongruity of a shop floor worker bypassing the conventional workplace hierarchy and initiating contacts and meetings with senior staff. After I had completed my programme of interviews and was no longer using the shop as a recruiting ground my perceived identity appeared to revert to previous forms, my status as a 'researcher' only being raised in the form of occasional questions along the lines of "are you still doing that research?"

My involvement in the social networks radiating from the Waterstone's workplace also impinged upon my variable identity as a researcher. For me Waterstone's was a very sociable place to work and this contributed to my enjoyment of working and researching there. This sociability was not uniform for everyone working there however, and this influenced the intersubjective terrain of the workplace in a similar way to the differing relationships to the work as a primary career as described above. Rather the workplace (as no doubt are most workplaces) was characterised by indistinct and shifting social cliques. These tended to coalesce out of different communities of interest (one group for instance crystallised around regular cinema visits, another around regular pub visits); different workplace geographies as social plans arose from conversations among workers rostered together in the same part of the shop (upstairs workers often had different social routines from downstairs workers) and different attitudes towards extending work into leisure routines (some

colleagues were prevented from socialising by family commitments, others clearly wished to avoid combining work and leisure and referred to distinctly separate social lives). Despite being aware of this terrain of 'cliques' and shifting social groupings, and endeavouring in some ways to overcome them by attempting to participate in a range of groups - a position made slightly easier by my role as a part timer and random rostering throughout the shop, my participation was nevertheless skewed towards the more sociable of these groups.

My role and identity as a participant researcher was then ambiguous, variable and contextual, both in terms of how I was viewed and how I personally experienced being a 'researcher.' As I have stated I was aware from my arrival in Waterstone's that I would make some use of my work there as part of my research. Beyond this I had little conception of what such participant research might entail other than it would involve immersing myself in the everyday practices of the workplace[495] whilst observing but also experiencing, talking and listening.[496] And somehow recording this research encounter. The research diary I employed to do this recording reflects the ambiguous, contextual, variable and evolving nature of this experience.

I kept a diary sporadically. For long periods of the participation I was literally at a loss to know what to write or what it was I should be privileging as important. "What does an ethnographer do?"[497] My main difficulty was in recording mundanity. For long periods each experience working or socialising in the shop would be more or less identical to the one that had preceded it. Initially the work was a novelty and it was easy to record my experiences encountering the practices and social dynamics of a new workplace. As the work ceased to be an unusual experience it became harder to know what to include in the diary other than highly repetitive accounts regarding the specific pace of work that particular day or apparently trivial pieces of shop gossip or politicking. My diary keeping would consequently wane until some novel experience

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[495]Cook & Crang, 1995; Denzin, 1978, ch.7.
[496]Crang, 1994, p.676; Burgess, 1988; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983.
[497]Law, 1994, p.44.

came along which seemed worthy of recording. Events such as the expansion and renovation of the shop or the appointment of new staff provided ways to write about some of the taken for granted practices of the shop as some of these practices became ruptured or compromised - a form of unintended 'Garfinkeling.'[498] Similarly I would occasionally undergo periods of panic about the way my research was progressing (or not progressing) and zealously make entries in the diary until again these (quickly) became repetitive and mundane. This was particularly the case later in the research by which time I had realised that it was often the extremely repetitive and mundane aspects of life in the shop which were important to the way the shop worked. Some later 'diary' entries were almost written directly into the thesis as it was written, specifically accounts of the organisational practices and routines in the shop, a form of diary keeping I would defend through my ongoing participation in the shop at the time of writing and the element of 'rewriting' involved from earlier, less explicit or detailed diary entries from which these later ideas had originally evolved.

1.3: Group Interviews.

The research programme also included three group interviews. The first of these was an initial 'pilot' focus group intended to establish the feasibility of using focus groups as a methodology. This group consisted of myself and four individuals who were all previously unknown to myself and each other and were recruited via a flier requesting participants with a strong interest in a particular text. Subsequent research diverged from the methods employed with this group as at this early stage the 'focus' of the methodology and group discussion leaned heavily towards understanding the relationship between specific texts and personal biographies and practices.[499] Whilst the material generated established that researchable relationships no doubt existed (and the relationship between the book purely as a text and identity is

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[498]The argument that the assumed, intuitive practices of everyday life can be exposed by disrupting them (Garfinkel, 1967)

[499]See eg Radway, 1984; Kneale, 1995.

still a presence in parts of the thesis), subsequent one to one conversations off tape with group members had the strongest influence on my eventual methodology. These persuaded me that the book as an object was a more fruitful avenue of enquiry than the book as a text and that one to one interviewing could be as fruitful as group interviewing since both are intersubjective encounters. Whilst focus groups allow more subjectivities to encounter one another interviews allow the interviewer greater control over the performance of their subjectivity. The planned (consumer) methodology that resulted from this pilot group involved an even mix of group discussion and one to one interviews concerning the role of the book as an object in the lives of the participants. The subsequent weighting towards interviews was the result of the greater difficulties encountered recruiting focus groups or accessing established groups.

I did however manage to recruit four consumers willing to participate in a group rather than a one to one discussion and access an existing group willing to discuss books and reading. In both of these I used the same schedule and similar techniques to keep the discussion within relevant boundaries as in the interviews. The existing group were all retirees who met on a monthly basis and described themselves as 'self learners' who invited a different visiting speaker each month. In exchange for a brief synopsis of my research interests they agreed to dedicate their session to discussing my themes. Attempts to tape record this discussion unfortunately failed (although research diary notes were hastily taken immediately afterwards) so the voices of these participants do not form part of my analysis. This group provided a broader range of subjectivities than my interview profiles and the focus group below. Some members shared strong similarities in their practices and discourses with the profile of my interviewees, others diverged markedly, a number of participants sharply defining themselves as non-readers. The group was however too large (14 participants) to give sufficient play to this range of subjectivities.

The third group discussion then complements the consumer interviews described above, its participants are profiled alongside these interviewees in appendix 2 and their quotes appear alongside these interviewees in the text of the thesis. The

differences between this group and the interviews reflect my comments above regarding multiple subjectivities and the performance of the interviewer. I adopted the role of 'moderator' common to the literature on focus groups[500]. This role felt similar to my role in the interviews but I felt there was more scope for 'equal' participation and less for strategically pursuing lines of enquiry and adjusting my 'performance' to persuade the respondents to reveal more about particular aspects of themselves or elaborate on comments. The 'depth' of respondents comments was determined by the extent to which other participants pressed them on what had been said or on what they were prepared to reveal to those participants. The group setting was successful however in allowing issues to be raised and explored which were considered priorities for the participants and the discussion probably ventured further away from my initial interview schedule than many of the interviews were able to do.

1.4: Analysis.

It will be apparent then that the nature of the empirical material differs slightly between the two 'spheres' the thesis explores and problematises. Hopefully there is a significant degree of overlap as the broad nature of my participant observation provides an ethnographic context for the formal interview material in both spheres. The material is nevertheless drawn on in different ways in different parts of the thesis. Specifically Section B privileges the voice of the consumer (accepting of course the partiality of these accounts and their genesis in an intersubjective encounter with my own positioning as a researcher). Section C relies on two strands of material. Firstly, more 'realist' accounts of the minutiae of the way Waterstone's works, drawing from interview accounts involving 'statements of fact' about the company, secondary materials such as in house publications and personal experience. This interlinks with accounts of the experience of working within these practices which relies more heavily on my own voice and experience as a participant in the workplace I describe, an

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[500]Cook & Crang, 1995; Morgan, 1988; Templeton, 1987;

account grounded by my observation, interaction and formal and informal conversations with other participants in this environment (accepting again the way in which my intersubjective dealings with these individuals was structured by my own subjectivity in the workplace).

My analysis of these overlapping but differing sets of empirical material reflects this difference in approach. All interviews (and the successful consumer discussion group) were transcribed in full and the research diary collated but left in its original form. All materials were then subjected to a period of reading, re-reading and very crude 'open coding'[501] to generate a list of initial themes and issues. The consumer material was then subjected to a more rigorous procedure of iterative coding using a cut and paste procedure in word processing software designed to emulate the rigour of formal computer analysis packages and avoid data 'quarrying:'[502]

Interviews were initially read and quotes illustrating the general (neutral) themes which had emerged from the crude open coding were extracted into separate files. This process recursively generated more root themes and a series of sub-themes (each allocated separate files) as interview material failed to fit these initial themes proving more nuanced, complex or dissonant. After numerous recursive readings approximately 25 files were produced varying in size from single quotations to several pages of response (See appendix 5 for analysis file key). Care was taken throughout not to separate comment from context. This 'analysed data' was then left for a period of several months whilst other thesis work took place. It was then returned to and drawn upon to generate the ideas and illustrative quotations in Section B. Quotes are given at length in the thesis to acknowledge the potential polyvocality of this approach and allow the reader to view the potential for alternative readings from subject positions other than my own.

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[501]Strauss, 1987.
[502]Cook & Crang, 1995; Atkinson, 1990

As stated above the producer interviews were treated firstly as sources of statements of fact about the company, the transcripts being handled alongside secondary materials as 'textual authorities.' And secondly as a means of grounding my own personal experiences in the company and hopefully suggesting that my own voice is 'representative' of other subjectivities in the company with all the qualifications and reservations mentioned above regarding this representativity. In a sense then this material was overtly 'quarried' for ways in which it justified my position. It was also carefully and recursively read and subject to the 'open coding' described above to judge my own intersubjective relationship with the material and construct the arguments I construct here and in chapter 2 concerning this.

A similarly reflexive analysis applies to the research diary material. In many ways my use of this material rubs against the grain of 'best practice' for conducting rigorous ethnographic accounts. Whilst the diary material underwent a degree of open coding to produce secondary notes and to develop the theoretical and empirical themes of the thesis it is also in a sense shamelessly 'quarried' to provide an authority for claims made in the thesis. Again my defence is all this material simultaneously operates to provide a reflexive critique of its own partiality and inextricable grounding in my own subjectivity. As stated in chapter 2, the writing of one story excludes the telling of others.

Appendix 2: The respondents.

I here provide synopses of the respondents drawn upon in the study. These are divided into 'producers' and 'readers' as a methodological construct in line with the separation of the thesis into separate sections dealing with this supposed difference.

The reader synopses represent attempts to 'summarise' the respondent by virtue of the themes and issues which materialised as important in their interviews. This is not an attempt to provide an accurate or realist picture of the respondent and their biography - as my methodology did not allow for such a depth study of these individuals. Rather I attempt to give a sense of the range of the terrain of these subjectivities and to offer some sense of the different subject positions and their manifestations in reading/book related practice by allowing comparison alongside each other. They are intended to provide greater background when reading the quotes of various respondents. All of these people were unknown to me before I encountered them for this project. Most of them became known to me when they phoned me in response to a flier I had left in bookshops and a library in Sheffield requesting the time and conversation of people who thought that books played some part in their lives.

Producer synopses are provided as brief job descriptions and information on the gender of the respondents since further biographical information was not gathered as part of the research. Some job descriptions have been modified slightly to preserve the anonymity which had been promised to the respondents.

2.1: Readers:

Paul: The author/researcher

The author has identified himself as an avid reader since an early age. His actual reading habits have varied according to different phases of his life. He received strong encouragement to read from his parents as a child and was provided with

abundant books and library visits. Whilst at school reading generally seemed the more enjoyable component of formal education and fiction was frequently used to provide a diversion from everyday routines. An enthusiasm for 'escapist' fiction such as science fiction, fantasy and adventure began to give way as a teenager to an interest in a perceived notion of 'contemporary classics.' This 'canon' was obtained from general impressions of the relationship between literary fiction and popular culture derived from the interests of school friends and the media and leaned towards American fiction. Studying English Literature at GCSE and A level began to turn reading from a pleasure into a chore and other forms of leisure activity such as magazine reading and music began to take precedence over reading. This continued during university when reading became established as a 'practice of work' rather than pleasure. Socialising with literary minded friends at university however encouraged him to re-emphasise reading as an important part of his identity and to use holidays and spare time to read novels which might raise his credibility amongst these friends! Again these tended towards supposed 'classics' or literary 'greats' as well as contemporary novels given supposed 'weight' by winning literary prizes or being reviewed in the literary media.

Upon leaving university he gained employment in a bookshop, partly by exaggerating the role reading played in his identity. Working with books and readers deflated any previously held youthful pretensions regarding the 'importance' of reading particular types of book and his own status as someone 'well read' and therefore somehow more worthy or experienced. Feeling like someone who had read very little of what one could possibly read and who had very narrow horizons about what reading could mean engendered a strong enthusiasm for reading, a far more catholic attitude towards what was read and a much less intellectual explanation for the motivation for reading. Combined with the availability of cheap or free books and a working and social context within which reading was frequently discussed, acquiring and reading books simultaneously became much more important in terms of time invested in it and less important in terms of the supposed status or pretension attached to it. Ongoing involvement in selling books and researching and promoting reading has engendered a magpie approach to reading. This no doubt still reflects a vaguely 'Waterstone'sy' type canon but represents an 'anything goes' philosophy within this. He now reads fiction sporadically and usually in bursts on holiday etc. and books selected are usually determined by the recommendation of others and personal enthusiasms for particular authors (usually male and slightly 'boys own adventurey' types such as Cormac McCarthy, Patrick O' Brien and Graham Greene). This combines with a compulsion bordering on an obsession in acquiring coffee table style books on cookery, art, gardening etc. preferably as cheaply as possible and usually justified by the claim that they will make him an expert in these areas!

Reader 1

Reader 1 is in her 30s and lives in S11. She doesn't currently work having until recently been a student in Sheffield studying history. She responded to my flier because she's "an avid book reader" and because she's "happy to help a student" having recently encountered the difficulty of recruiting respondents for her dissertation. She came to the interview with a printed list of her favourite books. These were predominantly fiction, much of it a typical Waterstone's 'non genre' mix but also including a distinct quantity of fantasy/science fiction writing and feminist fiction. She was aware of people regarding genre fiction as "second class" and found this slightly annoying since she felt the skill in creating an entire fantasy world was greater than writing founded in realist experience. She had only discovered fantasy recently herself and hinted that previously she was more swayed by these notions of quality. Her encounters with English literature at university had made her annoyed at the power involved with deciding what was good literature whereas she thought it should be down to personal taste. Her criteria now for reading involved more general notions of 'readability' - "you could probably have a bad story admittedly told well by a good storyteller but I've got to have both." Reader 1 also reads non-fiction, some of which she reads "purely for pleasure" as with her fiction reading although mostly she "like(s) to know that I have them so that I can dip into them if I have to." She reads mainly at night to relax herself before sleep and tries to avoid reading in the day as this can relax her into sleep as well. She expresses concern about this and browsing for hours in bookshops which she does frequently as she "could be doing something useful" although if she's honest she thinks if she stopped either reading or browsing she'd be "lost without them" and she does regard books as "valuable" and storytelling "part of a tradition She has read since childhood when her father who was a librarian and "great storyteller" got her into reading. She still swaps books and suggestions with him now and also has one other friend where they each have a good idea of what the other will be interested in.

Reader 2

Reader 2 is in her 30s and works as a childminder whilst she does an Open University Degree as part of a redundancy retraining package to retrain as an educational psychologist. She is a single parent and combines childminding and studying with looking after her three year old daughter. The room I interviewed her in had one wall entirely covered with books as well as children's books strewn across the floor and in toy boxes and she professed to having bookshelves in the toilet, dining room, boxes of books downstairs and books in every bedroom. Lots of these were waiting to be rehoused in a cellar room she was going to entirely fill with bookshelves. She mentioned that when she was young she used to collect Observers books - the only real collection she'd had suggesting she did not define the current mass of books as a collection. Her reading was characterised by an almost complete avoidance of fiction, although she had recently read a couple of

works of fiction a close friend had recommended but seemed to find them more interesting because they were "what (her friend) would read." She read instead for 'knowledge' and to fill in gaps in what she knows, frequently buying books because she thinks "Oh I never knew that" or "I could do with knowing that to help me with something." She also found books empowered her to be able to do things, she had done her own conveyancing when she moved house because she found a book that told her how and had embarked on various ambitious DIY projects. She laughed at herself for buying books on projects she would probably never get round to starting but thought at least buying the book first was better than buying all the materials! She claimed to have been interested in reading since childhood but her accounts suggested that she had become more involved since leaving home as her parents had put a lot of pressure on her and her brother to read lots. She was keen to emphasise that she put no pressure on her own daughter and the masses of children's books were the result of her daughter's request for "more books." She found that with the exception of her friend most people were useless at buying books for her as they would either not be to her taste or she would have it. She had various strategies for getting cheap books such as knowing where the cheap 2nd hand sources were and using mail-order book clubs and frequently sold books she had been bought back to 2nd hand shops.

Reader 3

Reader 3 is a Chaplain in her mid thirties. She has to read heavily to keep up with current theological debates which she sees as essential for keeping 'fresh' in her job. She makes a personal distinction between the practices associated with reading for work and reading for pleasure. There are clearly some similarities as well as she describes both as occurring within a social context of fellow readers and recommenders. She has one very close friend with whom (leisure) reading is a shared interest and regular topic of conversation and refers to their knowledge of each others tastes as a measure of their friendship. As well as emphasising the sociability of reading she also enjoys reading as a wilfully unsociable practice and a self indulgence for someone living alone. She is quite conscious of the different practices which can constitute reading and reluctant to allow herself to be positioned by any one of these so qualifies her explanations of reading for pleasure with expressions of guilt at the supposed frivolity of this whilst qualifying her accounts of the 'universal' values or accounts of human experience she derives from more 'literary' reading with comments regarding the pretentiousness of such motivations and jokes regarding the expectation of literariness associated with her career. She enjoys the process of shopping for books and has one particular (second hand) bookshop which has associations of community and belonging due to its position in the centre of her Parish where she will often encounter parishioners informally. She enjoys shopping both as a shared, sociable experience that can be revealing about the character of those one is shopping with and as a process of individual discovery, "rooting around" then finding a treasure. She feels increasingly aware of the 'marketing' of books via bookshops and press reviews and feels there are two kinds of books, ones you feel you should read because these

institutions say so and ones you'd like to read. The books she does read lie somewhere between these two poles. She defines her reading and shopping as so compulsive that she worries about how much she spends on books and has recently cut up a bookshop account card, viewing it as a significant proportion of her income. She utilises "saving" strategies where she will attempt to acquire books she will read once, very quickly and purely for pleasure either by borrowing or second-hand. She nevertheless compares shopping in Sheffield unfavourably to her previous experience living in Cambridge where she felt "spoilt" because books and communities of readers were so abundant. She has a very careful ordering strategy for the books in her house wherein certain books with particular significance to her are kept near to hand in her more private areas.

Reader 4.

Reader 4 is a retired administrator. She came to the interview with a long (50-60 books) list of her favourite books and recent reads. She has a 'house full' of books at home because she'd been "collecting for a long time and can't walk past a bookshop." Now she's retired she enjoys frequent trips to town where she has a route that takes in some of the bookshops on West Street, Waterstone's (where she "practically lives" and was thrilled to be recognised as a regular when she recently won a competition), Cole Brothers and Marks & Spencers and usually a coffee and a read in the pub opposite Waterstone's. Nevertheless she recalls that in the past she had more time for reading, particularly as a child and "in those days you could really get buried in a book but now it tends to be bits of time." She fits reading around other interests such as gardening, radio and television and previously found it a relaxing contrast to her job as a secretary. Reader 4 also borrows lots of books from the library. She tends to read more non-fiction than fiction and often finds that reading one book leads to another though she does find out about books through reviews. She doesn't like being recommended books by friends seeing reading as quite a solitary pleasure and suggestions an intrusion into this, making her think "well that's not me, leave me alone, I know what I like." For this reason she knows she wouldn't enjoy going to a reading group, although she does attend a more general discussion group which though not specifically to do with books does at times complement her reading and lead to discussions with others about shared reading. Reader 4 was introduced to reading in childhood by a mother who used to take her to libraries but also thinks "you are a reader or you're not" and (half jokingly) attributes her reading habit to her star sign.

Reader 5

Reader 5 lives in a Lincolnshire village and is a father in his 40s. His wife works whilst he looks after their son. In an earlier period of his life "he did little else other than read" but now finds it hard to read much because of his child care duties. Most of the walls of the room I interviewed him in were covered in books and the floor was strewn with piles of books for his son to look at. These were often adult books

of illustrations and art rather than specifically children's books. This reflected Reader 5's attitude that books are emancipatory and self-improving, an attitude founded in his own self-education through books. He frequently contrasted the individual Reader 4h of self improvement one could take with reading with the 'herd-like' consumption of popular culture by 'the masses' and the indoctrination of institutionalised education. He was at pains to emphasise his egalitarianism however seeing mass culture as a form of class repression and commenting on the working class people he had encountered who had 'improved themselves' through cultural pursuits. He also feels that there was "no such thing as a rubbishy book" but there were books that deserved to be read more than once although he "wouldn't care to stand up in court and make a judgement about a book" or the criteria for this. Reader 5 generally sees reading as an individual pursuit, perhaps a reflection of his self professed shyness but does allude to some mentors in his past who he had met through conversations about books. He gave the impression that he no longer shopped for books and that he didn't regard the process of acquiring and shopping for books as part of their value to him, although he did mention that one of the mentors in his past was a bookshop owner.

Reader 6.

Reader 6 is a university librarian in the law library and in her 40s. She reads a great deal, initially obtaining most of her books from the library and purchasing them later for her 'collection' if she likes them and knows she will re-read them. She keeps track of her reading by regularly monitoring Books in Print and by recording lists of the books she has read, wants to read and those she enjoyed enough to want to buy on a database on her work place computer. The printout of the list of books she planned to obtain over interlibrary loan in the next few months stretched to several pages. She has very clear ideas about what she likes to read and this tends to be genre fiction and specifically "a happy book. I suppose thrillers, science fiction, crime and by that I don't mean vicious crime books." She particularly likes authors who write books in a series and tends to collect the whole series and re-read these when the series is complete, often re-reading her favourites several times. Reader 6 is such a frequent visitor to central Library that they know her by name and make recommendations to her about books she might like, although she takes pride in the fact that she has usually planned to obtain them already. They also allow her to order more books by Inter Library Loan than would normally be allowed. She keeps her collection of books in boxes in her spare room, with her favourites in a wardrobe so they are more accessible. In part this is a strategy to reduce her husbands "nagging" about the number of books she has. A habit of hers is to get out her favourite books when her husband goes out just to enjoy looking at them. Reader 6 also collects books which help her with her other main interest which is in quiz competitions and now has a large reference collection.

Reader 7.

Reader 7 is in her late twenties and works in Sheffield as a nurse. She describes herself as having "a passion" for books and buys "prolifically." She reads as a means of relaxing from the stresses of work and also describes browsing and buying as a relaxing leisure activity. She admits to finding fiction "difficult to get to grips with" and prefers to read about reality to remind herself that there are other things going on in the world than what she experiences in her day to day life, although she does also get drawn into books by the "quality of the writing." Reading offers an insight into the experiences of other people and a reminder of her own experiences. Her past has involved extensive travelling and she grew up in various different countries and reading now acts as a reminder of this - "books are very representative of something that was very important at the time and I want to go back and remember that, to feel it all over again." During the times she lived abroad certain books frequently "kept her going" and there are still particular books which she travels with as a form of emotional security in new places. Reader 7's decision making about what to read has "nothing to do with anyone else" and she has previously been critical of people who don't read or who read books when "they're not really learning anything from it." She now tries not to make judgements like these but tends to find that people who read "are interested in the world around them" or have expressed this interest by obtaining real experience.

Reader 8.

Reader 8 is an English teacher in his mid twenties. He began to define himself as a reader as a teenager having got into the habit of reading for A' level English and deciding to "look elsewhere." He often defines his reading against what other people are reading and finds part of the pleasure of reading comes from coming to a book yourself, charting a change in his own life from being influenced by recommending factors such as the Booker prize to making his own buying decisions, using the newspapers for information on this. He thinks the role of his parents was important in introducing him to reading but he was not influenced by what they read. Since university he has had a small group of friends who share his reading interests and whom books pass among and this has continued whilst working. His criteria for a good book is a notion of 'readability' combined with some quality that provides for self development. He finds it hard to define this positively but knows he finds some forms of reading 'regressive' for their lack of anything that might be deemed improving. He does use books as a break from his ordinary routine but doesn't see reading as escapism since he reads books 'wrapped up in present concerns.' He finds it hard to find time to read, fitting it in just before sleeping in term time and 'catching up' during the holidays. His job also requires that he keep up with a certain amount of reading but he distinguishes between this and 'his' reading partly because these tend to be children's book and partly because he feels he is being 'told what to read' rather than choosing his own reading. He also feel that he has to 'catch up' in terms of what he reads, having a large backlist of books which he feels he 'should have' read. He sees the fundamental aim of his job to be to get children to enjoy reading and breaks with convention in his school

to have private reading sessions at the beginning of lessons where he will also sit reading a book in the hope of acting as a role model.

Reader 9.

Reader 9 is in her early thirties and works as a civil servant. Her main book interests lie in contemporary fiction, along with non-fiction books reflecting her interests in art and astrology. Her collection of art books reflects exhibitions she has been to visit whilst her astrology books act like a reference library when she is doing astrological charts for people. She also has a collection of books about religion though she keeps these upstairs away from public view as it is a side of herself she is less public about. Her criteria for a good book depends on how she is going to be able to read it so she will choose different books for say train journeys than for free weekends. She regards reading as 'her luxury' and revels in the pleasure it can provide. She likes reading as an insight into other people's thought processes both in terms of the author and in terms of finding out what other people have thought about a particular book. She has various friends who are readers and attends a number of reading groups, 'more to listen to other people's opinions than to necessarily say what I felt.' She uses reviews in newspapers to find out about books but is selective about the kind of papers she will be interested in the opinion of, preferring newspapers with 'a broad appeal ... men and women' rather than the narrow appeal of say women's magazines. She also tends to end up choosing books on the basis of the cover or the style of the book, seeing these as 'almost a language' describing the book. She greatly enjoys shopping for books though can end up annoying friends if she goes in a group as 'they know they have to drag (her) out.'

Reader 10

Reader 10 is in her fifties and works as a librarian. She describes herself as an 'uncontrolled' book buyer but in fact makes complex use of other sources of books such as the library and second-hand market to 'experiment' with unfamiliar texts she is 'uncertain' about. She has a mental list of favourite writers whose books she will immediately purchase in the certainty that they will be enjoyable and build complete collections of some of these authors. This allows her to reread her favourites at whim. Drawing upon these multiple sources allows her to acquire the large number of books she requires. She describes her use of these in terms of 'filling' her everyday routines, comparing books to having the radio on in the background. Her criteria for enjoyment is that the book must be 'well written' although she also has quite detailed criteria of the forms of genre and subgenre she does and does not like. She regularly lends her books to a network of contacts and describes the process of building a gradual picture of other people's tastes, drawing upon a similar 'map' of genre and sub genre and how these are represented by particular authors to the one she uses to define her own tastes. She used to buy books for a housebound neighbour and enjoy the process of shopping for an

additional set of tastes to her own. Her reading is a source of humour amongst her family who tease her about her reading, defining her as a 'bookaholic' but responding to her hints regarding books she would like as gifts etc.

Reader 11

Reader 11 is French and works as a translator in Sheffield. He recalls being a compulsive reader since an early age and his mother complaining about his reading spilling over into other family practices such as mealtimes, although she was also a big influencing in encouraging him to read. He studied English literature at University and now reads a wide variety of books in English, partly for the 'pleasure' of reading and partly to improve his colloquial English. Enjoys bookshops and can "lose himself" there and has a very specific route around bookshops allowing him to focus on particular sections which interest him. He recently went on 'romantic weekend' to Hay on Wye but admitted that his motivation was as much all the 2nd hand shops and his companion was bored. He gets slightly frustrated at lack of other friends who share his interest in books though has recently made friends with someone who is otherwise entirely unlike him through a shared enthusiasm for a particular author. He is aware of how his background in studying literature in France influences his reading practices and how the 'formality' of this training can often be an alienating way of approaching reading and talking about reading. Consequently he consciously adopts different practices by "shutting down the old reflex from university" and instead emphasising his personal response to the work according to the social context of his reading. Often he feels "torn" between this formal, objective response to the text and his subjective response. He gains most enjoyment from reading practices which avoid formal analysis and are instead related to using reading as an escape from his troubles or as a cathartic expression of emotions he is already feeling, reading having been extremely important to him on occasions when "everything had crumbled and ... it was the only thing I had left as a sanctuary." He has a number of books, including reference books which he will regularly re-read for emotional security in this way and treasures these books as objects, often associating them with other emotional triggers such as a piece of music, and he will often find a piece of music before he begins the book so "its associated with the book and also the time in my life I was reading that book". He will happily dispose of books he doesn't really care about although he dislikes himself or other marking books in any way as it can 'fix' the book in its first reading and prevent the discovery of new points of engagement.

Reader 12

Reader 12 is a health worker in his late thirties. He describes reading as integral to his life and as being unable to sleep at night unless he's read a few chapters. He attends a reading group as he enjoys the entertainment of other peoples opinions of books, he tends to gravitates towards people with an enthusiasm for books so most

of his friends are readers and he enjoys sharing books and recommendations and knowing people well enough to know what they will and won't enjoy. He enjoys the process of shopping for books and regards this as a leisure activity, distinguishing between 'chore shopping' and 'pleasure shopping' and finding that pleasure shopping tends to eat into the time when he should be chore shopping. He enjoys the sociability of bookshops but would like the opportunity for more social encounter and semi jokingly refers to the sitcom 'Ellen' which is set in a bookshop but "is more about people trying to get laid" as an ideal model of the alternative uses bookshops can be put to. Certain books he owns are very important to him as physical reminders of times when he was very happy. He is aware of publishers marketing books to him as a 'type' of reader but is realistic rather than cynical about this process. He acknowledges a range of motivations for his reading from "pleasure in its most basic sense" to more literary evaluations or "insight." He describes looking for "a common experience" as an important motivation for reading but as a gay man finds it harder to find this directly represented in literary texts but enjoys looking for the ways in which gay experiences are represented in sub textual ways. He finds it hard to separate the practices associated with reading books from his consumption of other text based media such as magazines and newspapers.

Reader 13

Reader 13 is a college student in his late teens. His reading is motivated primarily by literary discourses and notions of self development through intellectualism. He regards books as "good objects" and regards them as part of the furnishing of his room and sees bookshops as providing a public "intellectual culture." He acknowledges that reading for him is "careerism" in that it supplies him with the necessary cultural capital to go to Oxbridge and pursue an "intellectual" career and associates careers such as journalism or politics with communities of "well read" practitioners. He has acquired this sense of the qualifications necessary to become a part of such community of letters from reading broadsheet newspapers and political and literary magazines, and BBC Radio 3 and 4 which he also regards as part of the currency of the community he aspires to. His bookbuying tends to be influenced by the reviews and commentary produced by this liberal intelligentsia and he has a mental list of reviewers and commentators whose opinion he finds particularly influential. He regards literary authorship as the ultimate figure of respect amidst such a community and amongst society generally as represented by institutions such as the poetry society of America. However he views the reality of such authorship as unattractive for its tedium and potential lack of remuneration. In general he regards the notion of an intellectual community as aspirational and representing something unavailable to him in Sheffield.

Reader 14

Reader 14 is an office worker in his mid twenties. He defines himself as an avid

consumer of contemporary fiction and has a particular interest in North American fiction and he regards novels as part of a wider range of media including film, music and theatre which reflects his interest in the creative arts from this region. He visits a bookshop nearly every day on his journey home from work, usually browsing to research new purchases and frequently to buy. He enjoys the facilities provided by a city the size of Sheffield such as bookshops and libraries and compares these to the lack of outlets for books in the small village he grew up in. He regards reading as a habit that he has acquired, particularly since leaving university education where he studied literature but found the formality of the approach alienating and discouraging of the more compulsive habit he has now rooted in personal response to texts, although he does describe his own personal engagement in fairly "literary" terms related to the narrative development of characters. He equates reading with watching television drama or cinema but the greater portability of the medium allows him to fill his lengthy journey to work. He rarely rereads books as he would resent the opportunity cost when he could have been using the time to read one of the many new books he either owns or has on his mental list of books to acquire and enjoying the "adventure" of a new encounter. He is highly autonomous in his decision making concerning what to read and has been disappointed by the few occasions where he has responded to personal recommendation from friends, tending to avoid recommending titles himself because of his perception of the extreme subjectivity of reading tastes. He is aware that friends and acquaintances know he is a heavy reader and compares his current ease with this identity with his experiences as a child when this earned him a reputation as having "something wrong" with him, although he does not regard the kinds of credentials literary discourses might suggest heavy reading might provide such as notions of "well readness" as particularly important or applicable to him.

Reader 15

Reader 15 is a female student in her twenties who defines herself as an 'avid' reader. She had previously worked in the library service, a job which she was drawn to because of a love of books 'from an early age.' She defines 'reading' as leisure reading, finding she reads less as a student because of the demands of reading books for her course, although she frequently uses reading as a distraction from this. Her leisure reading includes fiction and non-fiction although she regards her use of non-fiction more like using 'tools' to learn how to do something than a relaxing leisure activity. She defines her tastes as embracing a wide variety of styles genres and authors although she avoids certain genres such as Westerns and most Science Fiction. She is dismissive of the use of books as 'ornaments' since 'they are for reading' and purchases most books second hand. She resists using new bookstores to browse as she can rarely afford what she would like to buy and finds this frustrating although she does sometimes use them as sources of free information and to research books she will later acquire by borrowing or second hand. She derives satisfaction from making a purchase and finding that the book fulfils or exceeds her expectations. She has a community of friends with whom she shares conversations and recommendations about reading but finds that her

boyfriend and his community of friends a better source for this social interaction since her friends 'tend to go for whatever's been the thing to read at the time' which she views as often 'hyped. She finds that recommendation relies on how well she knows the person. She has little interest in the biographies or personalities of the authors she reads

Reader 16*

Reader 16 is a health worker in her early 40s. She enthuses about the experience of shopping for books regarding bookshops as 'like sweetshops,' her love of new books meaning she avoids second-hand shops and libraries. She relies heavily on recommendations from friends since she doesn't want to waste her limited reading time on books which aren't very good, although she feels that as she gets older, her experience means she is less likely to choose something disappointing. For this reason she celebrates the sociality of bookshops and the ability of staff to recommend or comment on the quality of titles and what is currently regarded as good and would prefer to meet people socially there than in a club or disco. She would like to be able to identify with a particular reviewer in the mass media whose judgement she trusts but has not so far encountered one. Generally she perceives this engagement with people as a lack regarding her interest in reading as something she is often unable to talk about. For this reason she has recently started attending a reading group which allows for this form of social encounter. Her work involves a great deal of reading to keep up with debates so she does not feel as though she is made to feel 'bookish' by reading as this defines her workplace. It is unusual however for people in her workplace to read as a leisure activity. She views books as a 'really good way to find out about a person' and will always examine the bookshelves if she is visiting someones house for information on their character. She refers to making use of the book as an object to protect her from 'hassle' in public places such as waiting rooms or pubs and associates reading with travel, regarding it as unthinkable to go on holiday without taking a book. She suggests books could be improved by having wipe clean pages so they could better cope with the routines of everyday life.

Reader 17*

Reader 17 is a student in her late twenties. She is unable to remember a time when she didn't read, though in her childhood she recalls pretending that she didn't as it wasn't regarded as 'cool' to read, particularly to read classics which she enjoyed. She often revisits books from her childhood and would always keep certain ones as she has 'fallen in love with them' despite regularly culling other parts of her collection. She has recently undertaken university access courses so as to be able to pursue her interests in English literature in a more formal manner. She privileges 'escaping from reality' as a motivation for her reading. She always carries a book with her and reads whenever the opportunity arises, often using the book as a defensive barrier in public space. She thinks books are often, though not always a

good marker of other peoples identities and recalls once meeting someone who had exactly the same book collection as her and finding that they did not need to talk about books as they had so much else in common.

Reader 18*

Reader 18 is a medical consultant in his late forties. He describes himself as a slow reader and sensitive to the environment in which he's reading, needing to be in company to read but not with people he knows where they are a distraction. He therefore often combines reading with going to sit in a cafe etc. Because he's a slow reader he's less bothered about the number of books he reads more about getting from each 'such phenomenal enjoyment that it leaves an impression that will last a lifetime.' He feels however that he has read a lot of books when younger that he didn't have the personal experience to appreciate and would like to be able to reread these. He likes 'well researched books' but mainly reads to find out the way people feel about things and the emotional and psychological growth of the characters. He also buys a lot of reference books, he tends to order his books so he knows where they are and compares this to his partner's 'higgledy piggledy' approach. He finds shopping for books slightly frustrating, finding bookshops intimidating with too many books and nowhere to sit and browse so choosing takes too long as for him time is always a factor. He therefore finds recommendations very helpful as it stops you 'wasting time' with stuff you're not going to like. He uses reviews to help decide but as a source of information not by building a relationship with particular reviewers. He doesn't like being manipulated and on his guard against being manipulated by recommendations, reviews, 'gaudy covers' etc so adopts a 'defensive posture' when shopping. He does however enjoy books as tactile objects in their own right and likes the feel of new books. He likes the social side of reading and attends a reading group with his partner (Reader 16) but isn't sure that you can tell what people are like from their books.

Reader 19*

Reader 19 is a retired primary school teacher whose career involved professional experience in literacy and reading development. She emphasised the critical and political significance of reading as a motive in this career viewing reading as a means of teaching children to "question everything." Despite being retired she still finds it hard to find time for reading and looks forward to holidays as an opportunity to get through lots of novels. Books spill all over her house in 'little heaps.' She has recently remarried and amalgamated the two families in a new house and enjoyed the process of comparing and contrasting each families book collection. She is critical of the way reading is viewed in society and feels that attitudes towards books need to change as 'if you read books you're a bit funny and on your own.' She felt bookshops can help contribute to this by creating an atmosphere emphasising reading as an elite activity with massed ranks of book creating a feel of an academic library. She personally finds this off putting and

stressful and would prefer to see more emphasis placed on the social aspects of bookshops as she likes the idea of making contact with others but doesn't feel this happens often. She personally regards books as highly interactive media recalling how in her first marriage books were a sore point as her husband wasn't a reader and found it hard to accept Reader 19 sitting in a room and reading as he found it excluding. Her new husband is equally disinterested in reading himself but does find Reader 19's reading a point of engagement and "gets involved in what's happening." This interactivity also conditions her view of reviewing and literary media. She is influenced by reviews but thinks this entails a skill in knowing about the reviewer and their agenda, prejudices and preconceptions. She finds this quite social as it involves knowing about the personality of the reviewer. She also favours purchasing second hand books partly because she likes getting different editions of the same book but also as she likes looking for the 'imprint' (pencillings etc) of the previous reader and speculating about them.

*Denotes focus group participants.

2.2: Producers:

Producer 1	Publicity Manager, Waterstone's Head Office, Female.
Producer 2	Marketing Manager, Waterstone's Head Office, Male.
Producer 3	Marketing Manager, Waterstone's Head Office, Male.
Producer 4	Brand Manager, Waterstone's Head Office, Female.
Producer 5	Personnel Manager, Waterstone's Head Office, Male
Producer 6*	Marketing Director, Waterstone's Head Office, Male.
Producer 7 *	Regional Manager, Waterstone's North, Female.
Producer 8	Branch Manager, Waterstone's Sheffield,

	Male.
Producer 9	Marketing Officer, Waterstone's Sheffield, Female.
Producer 10	Senior Bookseller, Waterstone's Sheffield, Female.
Producer 11	Bookseller, Waterstone's Sheffield, Female.
Producer 12	Bookseller, Waterstone's Sheffield, Male.
Producer 13	Reading Promotions Consultant, Female.
Producer 14	Organiser of South Yorkshire Reading Festival, Female.
Producer 15	Literature Officer, Yorkshire Arts Organisation, Male.
Producer 16	Marketing Manager, UK Publisher, Male.
Producer 17	Proprietor, 2nd hand bookseller, Sheffield, Female.
Producer 18	Proprietor, 2nd hand bookseller, Sheffield, Male.

*These interviews were informal conversations subsequently recorded in my research diary rather than formally arranged and recorded interviews.

Appendix 3: Research Material.

Box 1. Reading as pleasure.

Reader 6: You can sit me in the corner with a book wherever I go and I'm quite happy and if I haven't got a book in my handbag I'm lost!..... I think I read and I watch television and I see films and I want to enjoy myself. I don't want to have to think about anything. Schindler's List must be a very good book and a very good film but its not a happy thing. I wouldn't go to watch it or read it because you have enough in life. I think you read or whatever to enjoy and to have something nice. You have to work all day. You just want a bit of pleasure. You can drink or take drugs but readings an awful lot easier way to relax. Its an addiction. You read to enjoy.

Reader 12: Well that's interesting actually and this is non-attributable when you write it up but yeah I occasionally read pornography and that's very different from reading anything else. Its a bizarre sort of reading because you're not reading for the quality of the writing, or the plot or what happens next. You're reading for pleasure in its most basic sense.
Paul: Isn't that sometimes why you read fiction?
Reader 12: Yeah. If I think back to my earliest experience of reading, I started school at three, three and a half..... And the only reason I read was because I enjoyed it and I would read anything, anything that was given to me. So always as a child I was reading stuff that was above me, from an age group far above me. And that wasn't because I was intelligent or gifted or anything it was just that my appetite for reading was so big.

Reader 9: And I can remember one night I'd got some really nice saxophone music in the background and normally, lots of bubbles in the bath but this particular night the water was really, really still and I had some little candles which are green and I was reading this chapter in the book and it was all about this almost magic kingdom that they'd found and it was in this forest and it was describing all this lush green place he'd stumbled across by accident and it was just like a whole community of people that were living in this forest and there was some sort of festival with clowns and children all dressed up with some sort of fancy dress party, all this really wonderful imagery that he was building up and I just got really involved with it and really thought I was there and I put the book to one side for a moment and saw the bathwater and it had all gone green with these candles and you know sometimes you feel so happy about something and you feel your heart jumping about and it was just so, so wonderful....

Box 2. Reading to relax and to escape.

Reader 1: I think to be honest I'd be lost without books. I can't remember the last time I didn't have at least one book on the go. I honestly can't. It must be years now. I suppose generally it is a form of escapism and very relaxing, a good way to get to sleep easily once I've been reading for an hour or so.

Reader 7: .... I think if I've got to read them its a pain really, I don't look on it as a pleasurable experience at all. If I'm reading a book on anatomy or something and its pretty heavy and I don't really want to do it but I've got to then I'll have a ten minute break and I'll go and read about Chinese cookery or something.....

Reader 18: If you're talking about the social function of reading well it depends what you're doing reading for, whether its to obtain lots of facts or escape from reality or simply enjoy a good story....
Reader 17: Escape from reality! (Laughs).

Reader 9: The other thing that I love about a book is ... I so love it when I'm reading a book that I either feel that its like a friend that I've read with this book or I can imagine myself in that place. Something like 'On the Road' by Jack Kerouac - the way he described the places he's been to its just like being a part of that.

Reader 7: Well I find it really difficult to keep it going. But I read on the bus as I go into work and in the evening. Actually I find it really good coming back really late at night, half past ten and I just read and that relaxes me. It doesn't matter how hard the day has been, its a really good way.
Paul: Because you're no longer attached to the day? You're off somewhere else?
Reader 7: Definitely. I just find life quite mundane and I don't like that aspect of it. I like to be able to know that there are passions and interests and other people thinking about things rather than just everyday living which people get too into and it stops them really thinking about things. So I like to be able to know that there's all this opportunity out there.

Reader 11: Especially there's a few books I go back to again and again. Reading is sometimes just a refuge. There have been points in my life where it basically was the only thing I had left as a sanctuary.
Paul: What do you mean by that?
Reader 11: Well moments I felt really low and everything had crumbled and there was not a lot left.

Paul: And reading was partly an exercise in nostalgia?
Reader 11: Not really. I've noticed that I can lose myself in a book and it tends to make me forget at least a little bit of my current situation

Box 3. Relationships between functional reading and reading for pleasure.

Paul: So in terms of the earlier question about when you read and when you find time to read, that moment of coming home from school or having a holiday or creating a gap in your day to do that isn't about shifting place and escaping from Disley, or Scunthorpe, or school, or the everyday?
Reader 8: Escaping from school to a certain extent in as much that anything I read at home would have absolutely nothing to do with anything that was being taught at school, but other than that, no I've never considered literature as a form of escape. Perhaps as a teenager more, I remember reading Evelyn Waugh novels and that whole idea of that idyllic past with spires at Oxford, that sort of yarn was more appealing then, but certainly not now. I prefer novels and non-fiction that are wrapped up in present concerns. My sister was talking about the new Blake Morrison that is coming out, which fascinates me completely because the whole Bulger case fascinates me.
Paul: So there's quite a practical side to it as well? You'll come home and read something and it'll be good partly because its an escape that's helped you relax in that evening but also because then maybe you'll go and use that at some point in your life?
Reader 7: Yes. I just find it a real release to know that there are a lot of other things going on in the world.....
Paul: You mentioned about wider horizons and wider scope for what you might do with you life, are there other ways in which being 'well read' perhaps aids or adds to your life.
Reader 7: I think so. Particularly with where I'm working where I work with a lot of Asian and multi-cultural people, people from the Yemen, Afro-Caribbean and I've read quite a lot on their lives and culture which really helps me relate to them much better, I can bring up things that perhaps other people hadn't realised about respect and dignity and language.

Reader 18: If you're talking about the social function of reading well it depends what you're doing the reading for, whether its to obtain lots of facts or escape from reality or simply enjoy a good story....
Reader 17: Escape from reality (laughs).
Paul: Do you tend to read for all those reasons?
Reader 18: Yes probably. I'm reading E Annie Proulx at the moment and I'm enjoying that because its researched well or at least I assume it is. That's one of the problems with books you assume that when they remake what's happening in 19th Century America it actually did happen in 19th

Century America but you have to take that for granted. So its a well researched book. Miss Smilla's feeling for snow was researched up to a point, I'm not sure about the end of it. So its nice to have some basis on which the book is read but it has to grow in an emotional and psychological way, that's what attracts me, the way people feel about things.....

Reader 10: I suppose in a way its something that helps me unwind..... And I suppose for information. Or escapism, whichever.
Paul: Does it feel different to be reading history or biography than it does one of you favourite authors say?
Reader 10: Well you're reading for information that you might not have got from another novel. But you can actually get information from novels as well with some authors if they've really researched well. I always reckoned that Georgette Heyer's description of the battle of Waterloo was pretty good. I read a biography about her and it was amazing, she'd actually done pen and ink drawings of the battle field and stuff which I hadn't realised until I read the biography. And certain things (inaudible). Different things about people that you hadn't perhaps taken on board. And with travel books obviously it helps to know the things to look out for if you're going on holiday.

Reader 2: .....I mean DIY jobs - I've always been useless at DIY but I always feel that if I've got a book that shows you how to do it then I can do it. It empowers you.
Paul: So you're quite self sufficient as a result of thinking you can access any sort of knowledge you want?
Reader 2: Yeah, I think I'm fortunate enough to be able to access books on virtually anything that you want to do.
Paul: Is that how you see yourself? Rather than reading for pleasure you read for a purpose?
Reader 2: I do read for pleasure. It is for pleasure just not for a story.

Box 4. Pleasure from books as objects.

Reader 18: Because I must say when I read books, personally, I know some people like getting second hand books and going through second hand shops but I personally like getting new books, they feel nicer in your hands.....

Reader 17: I'd probably buy a classic as an old one but anything new then I like my own, new copy. I always put my name in it.

Reader 16: I love new books I don't especially like older books, I like the feeling that its me looking at them for the first time. I don't mind reading

friend's books if they lend them to me but there's nothing like having a brand new book and then opening it for the first time and you're the only one who's going to have read it or had the smell of it. So I don't really go into libraries or second-hand shops or whatever.

Reader 9: Wherever possible I try to not mark because I do love books so much. In saying that I do have a dilemma because especially if its a book I really enjoyed I like to share it out with my friends and I get them back in some dreadful states really but I still prefer that and to have shared that than to keep them nice.

Reader 4: The feeling of it. I think so. I don't think books will disappear and I don't think that's just being defensive because I like them. I think there'll be a lot of other things, in fact there are like audio books and books on computers but I think books have been here a long time and they're easy to get rid of and you don't need power to get it going and I think people do like different things. I don't think anyone who reads thinks books will go.

Reader 13: Books are good objects as well as everything else. They can furnish your room.

Box 5. Semiotics of the object.

Reader 3: Yes, with Carol Shields it was 'The Republic of Love' and I bought that because of the cover when I saw it in the Independent bookshop and it was this wonderful green.... it was a woman wearing a dress with a really big skirt and carrying a bunch of balloons and it was so... I don't know.... It just really made me want to read the book.
Paul: And did the book reflect the cover when you read it?
Reader 3: Yes. It had the same kind of qualities of being a bit fey.

Reader 6: ... its like the ones I was telling you about - Lillian Jackson Braun, the cat books, a friend of mine who used to work here lent me two of her cat books in paperback and I tried reading one of them and I just wasn't interested in it. And I went to the library maybe six months later and there was this book on the shelf and I thought 'oh that looks interesting!' looked at the cover, picked it up, didn't realise, got hooked and really enjoyed reading the books and realised it was the same book that she'd lent me but in paperback. And from me actually reading the hardback copy she lent me all her softback ones and I eventually ended up going out and buying them because I enjoyed them so much (laughs).....
Paul: So what was the difference there between the two?
Reader 6: I think the fact that originally it was in paperback and it didn't look interesting. As soon as I got the hardback book which obviously was

a nice glossy one. It was a better cover, the cover ... I don't know, sometimes I go through the library when I'm really bored and I've come to the conclusion that its the cover that attracts you first if its something you've never heard of. I look and if its something that's attractive I'll pick the book up and then read the inside (interruption)....I don't know, there must be something about a cover that if you've never read the author the cover attracts first. Or you'll pick the book up and then look at the cover because you'll just see the spine normally. I often think that whoever designs the book jackets has to have an idea of what's inside the book to make it attractive to you. Because quite often the paperbacks will not attract you but if you've actually read the hardback and enjoyed it then you'll happily go out and buy the paperback..... Quite often I'll actually put a book back because I've looked at the cover and thought if they haven't got a very good cover on the jacket I don't know if I'm going to enjoy reading the book... I do think the packaging says something about what's inside it.....

Reader 12: .....Books have to have an appearance and part of the pleasure of the book is the cover. Jonathan Coe's new novel that I read recently , part of the pleasure of that is that it has this transparent cover with a blue eye on it that's superimposed and will open and close and you can take that off or leave it on. So yeah, books as objects are important and those messages that are put out by the publishers can be misleading but I think often we do use them as shorthand to select our books.....

Reader 9: O.K So if I just say walked into Waterstone's and walked around ... The covers always the first thing and by that it could be either just the style of the pattern on the cover of maybe the title.....So that's the first thing, the cover. I would avoid very sentimental, romantic covers..... Things like, you know this (inaudible) that's out now where the couple are on the beach, that seems to be a very romantic image that's being portrayed.....

Paul: Do you think with covers that they've been designed for you to spot?

Reader 9: Oh yes I do. It tends to be couples on the front. There's almost a language. And you know when you don't buy them its hard to think what ... I suppose its a very subconscious thing in a way anyway that would make me steer away from them. Sometimes, I mean maybe when it is when I read the blurb and I just think 'oh no I don't think...' there's something in there that will suggest that its overly romantic and then wouldn't appeal. So the cover's the first thing and then the title. Oh and I love those nice feely books as well. That is a really big attraction for me with the covers, this kind of (shows book with 'tactile' cover) ... so I know that's something anybody else would probably pay no attention to but I do (laughs).

Box 6. Ordering strategies & collections.

Reader 6: I'm running out of space and my husband keeps saying I'll have to put them up in the loft. But that's the ordinary, what I call my ordinary paperbacks, not the ones that I'm going to reread, those I've got (whispers secretively) in a wardrobe piled up with all my clothes at the front so he doesn't realise how many I've got! (laughs)
Paul: I suppose with having complete sets of things as well...
Reader 6: Well the complete sets I keep in a wardrobe so I wait until he's out, if I've got the day off or something (interrupted) I wait until he's gone out and then I get them all on the bed and I tidy them up and put them all in order and put them back in the wardrobe..... My husband is talking about buying me a bookcase for my books because I have proper books all to help with the quiz. I've got all sorts of books, general knowledge, encyclopaedias, enough to fill four of those shelves and they all help with the quiz. Its just a general knowledge reference at home. I just keep buying them. He says 'oh not another book, when did you get that one' (laughs).
Paul: So you're fighting for some space in the house for those!?
Reader 6: I've got a double bookshelf but I need four shelves and he's said that when we find a bookshelf that can fit them all I can have one but I haven't found one yet. But I've got all sorts, dictionaries, Spanish dictionaries...

Reader 11: Yes, they're all in a particular order. My favourite books I know where they are and they're all in order. Its a question of space as well because I've run out of space since I arrived. I had three of four shelves in an alcove in my wall and I've got a shelf of literary criticism and classics all piled up, then I've got my Bond and spy writing sort of thing, all the Fleming book and criticism on Bond, then a shelf on sports, martial arts, music and a few Le Carre because they're so thick they wouldn't fit with the Bonds. Then humour and reference, then I've got a section, a few French book locked away in a bedside cabinet so I can't see them, a few French books written by the same author which are autobiographical which I come back to again and again. The Sherlock Holmes, again I know where they are.

Reader 15: Right, see I like cooking and I've got this thing about cookery books and I've got loads of cookery books .... The cookery books are all in the kitchen.

Reader 5: Diderot's Jacques the fatalist - that's on my.... I have a 'if the house burns down shelf.' If the house burns down I'll get Paulus out and I get Carol out and then .... Although now I think about it maybe I'd get my books out then I'll get them out! But there's this sort of rack that I know ... I've got a couple that would be difficult to get hold of, but there's this

rack that - they go.

Paul: I've just been being very nosy and poking through your bookshelves and there seem to be three types of books?
Reader 9: (laughs) Well that's probably not the most indicative book case!
Paul: So there are others in the house as well? So this one seems to indicate considerable expertise as an astrologer! (there are several shelves of v. large astrology books.) So this is astrology, fiction and art, a few biographies? When you say that's not terribly representative what other things are elsewhere?
Reader 9: The vast majority of my books are fiction. The ones I've got there are ... the ones on the top are more like reference books for so if I'm working by any chance on a chart its really handy to have them close. I love art and I love to get books with large, quality prints in them, ...most of those are there....
Paul: Do you regard those as an ongoing collection in a way?
Reader 9: Yes. Some of them I've actually bought when I've been to particular exhibitions ... I'll give you a quick guided tour of where the books are. (Guided tour of the bookshelves off tape. Bookshelves in conservatory - fiction etc., cookbooks in kitchen, astrology, new fiction etc. in main room as above, collection of religion books upstairs).

Reader 19: I like collecting, not that I have a lot of money to do it, books by the same author in different editions. I love gardening books, particularly on herbs and I've got a first edition of various of those and about three different other versions.

Box 7: Dis-ordering!

Reader 19: Mine just line the walls!.....When I was with my first husband who didn't like reading I wasn't allowed to have books in the living room but as soon as he went I got two bookcases and put them in there. And the major project with my husband now was to get all the books that we possessed together and not have his books or my books but say right this is fiction, this is biography and put them all up with a mixture of both our books all together. A bookless house is one I'd be quite lost in.
Paul: Did you do this as soon as you got married?
Reader 19: We would of done except we were putting two families together as well so at one time there were five adults in the house with all their stuff plus all the stuff we were storing from another lot because all our kids were adults. So basically all our stuff was up in the attic until we'd got rid of all the various offspring. But that was the first thing we really sorted out. It was going to MFI, choosing the bookcases, making sure they fitted in the room then building these bookcases and half way

through deciding to read the instructions - another male trait - and then putting them up, then it was getting the books out and 'ooh when did you buy this' or 'what did you buy that for?'
Reader 18: I was thinking about when we were talking about displaying books and there's two ways of doing that. There's the serried ranks of books all labelled then there's books all higgledy piggledy which Reader 16 likes and I must say I do like mine so I know where to find them but with some books lying around you can just pick up and look at.
Reader 19: We have a mixture like that. Books you've read tend to be neatly on the shelves in the right place but the things that are ongoing are lying around on the floor with The Guardian and the cats and everything else. There's little heaps of stuff all over our house and some of them are books and some of them aren't.

Reader 10: Oh yes. Having moved and just quickly unpacked them to get rid of the packing crates we've got to go round and put them in order. We haven't managed to get them on the bookcases, except for the travel books.....
Paul: Do you regard the ones that you've got as much as a collection and something you collect as they are individual books?
Reader 10: On occasions when they get over crowded I do go through and weed out what I can bear to part with but its not usually very many. I do tend to get all the ones of authors. Although the last couple of times I have thought I might give up and not get the whole series because there's a limit to what you can get on your shelf!.... We've got three bookcases with seven shelves on and they're full. That size (armspan) with three shelves and they're full, one which has got my library bound copies on and that's full, and another very big one and that's full then three shelves in my study as well. And then I've got heaps which I've bought recently which I haven't found space for yet so they're all piled up as well.....

Paul: You described your collection of books as a library, are they arranged in any particular way?
Reader 4: Well that's using the word loosely! Someone said to me recently 'have you catalogued them?' I said 'I can't abide catalogues' I'm not a librarian. I only think of it as a library because they stay there. I don't want to get rid of them, or at least not many of them, I might find the odd one that I know I won't read again. But there's something I think about being a person who reads books, or at least my kind of person that buys books, they are a library. You're not just lining the walls with them. You always hope that you're going to have time to read that one again that you read a long time ago.

Paul: Do you have all the books in your house out on the shelves and displayed?
Reader 1: Yes.

Paul: Is there any rhyme or reason to that?
Reader 1: Not now. I went through a stage of doing them all alphabetically but that got very confusing so I gave up. Now its basically fiction and non fiction. My various textbooks and encyclopaedias and so on are on one shelf and the fiction is on other shelves. I don't tend to mix them.... But generally I just like to know that I have them so that I can dip into if I have to. I'm sure there's lots of them that I could have sold but I'm loathe to get rid of any of them.

Paul: Do you generally keep stuff permanently?
Reader 2: Occasionally I'll have a clear out of things, it tends to be things people have bought for me more. A hardback astrology book for instance that was pretty tabloid newspaper level and I'd put it on the bookshelf and think 'well I'm never going to read that, I'm never going to lend it to anyone so I might as well throw it out'..... I mean I've got these bookshelves, I've got bookshelves in the toilet, bookshelves in the dining room, I've got boxes of books downstairs, I've got books in every bedroom..... Some people are able to live in such a minimal and different way and its almost enviable although I don't think I could do without having a certain amount of stuff.
Paul: Do you think the books are part of that?
Reader 2: The books are definitely part of that. A lot of the books there's no point in having them - I mean I've got boxes of books down in the cellar where I'm turning the room into a study library with book shelves from floor to ceiling and I'm going to put all the books up there in some sort of order so I know where to look for them - there's no point in having books unless ... like the books in the boxes in the cellar, if I want something out of one of those books I'll just do without because you can't start rooting through all those boxes, they've got to be so you can get to them....

Box 8. Finding time to read.

Paul: Tell me something about the actual practice of reading, again in terms of changes over time. When do you read, where do you read?
Reader 8: During term time I find very little time to read and its usually between 10 and 11 at night before going to bed. During the holidays I'd read far more voraciously and get most of my reading done. Which is a sad state of affairs for an English teacher I suppose. I tend to end up reading during term time texts that I'm teaching and that takes up a lot of my reading time....

Paul: When do you read now working as a nurse?
Reader 7: Well I find it really difficult to keep it going. But I read on the bus as I go into work and in the evening. Actually I find it really good

coming back really late at night, half past ten and I just read and that relaxes me. It doesn't matter how hard the day has been, its a really good way.....

Reader 3: Yeah. And I think also, working such long hours any moment that I can possibly utilise to do my own thing, I will.
Paul: Do you set time aside for reading or do you just fill in any gaps?
Reader 3: It fills in the gaps. I often wake quite early in the morning and I might read for an hour or so before I get up, or I read at night, and over meals. I'm very unsociable!

Paul: What about other times, what are the other times in your week when you get to read?
Reader 6: I very rarely read at home, I'm usually too busy at home and there's usually too much to do. So my time is on the bus going to work, unless I meet a friend, on the bus going home from work, and coffee times. And even with that I can usually read three books a week..... When I go on holiday in May I shall have at least five or six books in my suitcase. And it'll probably be the Lillian Jackson Braun ones because I'll have started reading them again because hopefully the middle book will be out by then. If not I'll just have to read the first four or five books on holiday.
Paul: Are you looking forward to having lots of time for reading?
Reader 6: Yes. I can have one on the plane back, one on the plane going, and when I'm there I'll be sat under my umbrella with my book. If we go out for the day I'll have a book in my handbag.....

Paul: Is one of the problems of reading at home that if you're at home then you feel as though you should be doing something else?
Reader 16, Reader 17, Reader 19 (together): Oh, yes!
Reader 18: Whereas if you're in a bookshop you're there to read or in a cafe to have a cup of coffee and read. Very true.
Reader 16: You feel like you should be doing the cleaning or the washing up and things not having your luxury.

Paul: When during your day do you find time to read?
Reader 10: (laughing) When I can. At the weekends, Sometimes while I'm waiting for breakfast I might have a quick read. I have been known to peel the potatoes and read! You prop the book open and ... I can't read on the bus now because I drive but I read at coffee time and lunchtime unless I come out here shopping. If I go on holiday I take a book with me. So I suppose I might read where other people would play their stereos. I tend to read books anywhere.....

Reader 9: ..... Because its a thick book I have to feel that - I've got to have plenty of time to read it. Maybe if I'm going on holiday that would

have been better but this month because there's been so many other things going on its been quite a struggle to fit that in.

Reader 4: .... I was talking to a lady on the train the other day and we concluded that book buyers were optimists because they always think they're going to have time to read them! (Laughs)....
Paul: So do you spend a lot of your time at home reading?
Reader 4: Not as much as I'd like. There's always the television and the radio. I'm a great radio fan. I like the television. And the garden. Usually during the evenings and occasionally during the day. I'll sit down with a cup of tea.
Paul: So even though you're retired you still find everything takes up your time!
Reader 4: Yes (inaudible).... I've got some lovely old books, I read some of them when I'm doing the ironing. There's always one in my bag. I just carry it around and it gets opened somewhere.

Paul: And do you still read quite a lot now?
Reader 15: Yes. Not as much as I used to because of having to read academic books. Most of the time I've got a book on the go but I find that, like at the moment I've got loads of work to do so I tend to read short stories rather than a novel because I can dip into them. If I get into a really good novel then I won't put it down and if I'm meant to be doing an essay then that's obviously not the right thing to do (laughs).....So if I'm going to get a book out its generally from the library so I think 'right, what am I going to be doing the next few weeks' and if I know that I'm going to be really busy then I'll get some short stories or I'll get a book that is really easy to read. I won't go and get some long complicated novel that's going to be quite intense. That's either holiday reading, time when you know you've got lots to yourself.....
Paul: So its sometimes quite spontaneous? You'll go into the library with no clear idea of what you're after.
Reader 15: Yes. No idea at all. But usually with some idea of what I'm going to be doing in the next few weeks.....

Box 9. Time for shopping.

Reader 3: Yeah, yes I do. I used to be the curate of the Parish that YSF is in. One of the things about this job is that you often have to work in the evenings so sometimes it gets to quite late afternoon and you're feeling a bit tired so you think I'm working this evening I'll go and take an hour or so off and go and look in a bookshop.

Reader 18: The biggest problem is that you're just spoilt for choice. Where do you begin? There's piles and piles of 'This is the book of the

month, this is the one I like, this is another book, this is a classic' and there's piles of them all over the place and even browsing through a couple of pages of each one would take you an hour, well most of us don't have an hour. I don't anyway. I think Sunday opening is great because you can go down without the hassle of weekdays.

Reader 2: I used to go around these cheap bookshops and they had all these classic books at sort of 95% off ... I don't do that now because I don't have the time to wander about now.
Paul: When you had more time to browse for books was the hunt and the search as much part of the pleasure or was it more of a chore?
Reader 2: Neither one thing or the other really. Its just like general shopping.

Reader 12: That's another thing as well, hours are really poor here and I suppose one of the reasons I use Waterstone's is because its open that bit later so I can pop in after work and if it was open until 8 or 9 I'd be in there even more often. You need other stuff around in the centre to support that I suppose.....

Reader 4: I go to most of the bookshops. Occasionally West Street. I was taking a course at university last year so I went into Blackwell's a lot. But I come into town quite often and I tend to go to Coles, and then here (gestures towards Waterstone's, then to Marks and Spencers. I have a little route. Or I'll start at that end and do a bit of shopping and come here at that end, do some browsing and pop out in the middle to have a drink in The Hogshead, particularly in the summer when they have tables outside.

Box 10. Books and Personal Identity.

Reader 8: I think a book for me has to speak at some personal level and without that I find it a slog to read I have to say. It has to have something universal but also something personal in it. Its very difficult to put my finger on it but all books I've enjoyed speak to me at a personal level.
Paul: So what is 'good' to you?
Reader 8: Well back to what I was talking about earlier really. Still very much what was good for me in the teen years in as much as a books got to speak to me about my life, things that have happened things that are happening.

Reader 12: I think one of the things I look for in reading is a common experience and something that informs me about my self, my life. And because I'm a gay man that's harder to find off the shelf than it would be otherwise because there's less published. And gay men in my experience are very good at interpreting other people's experiences to fit their own

because we've had to do it that way.

Paul: Do you think you have got things out of books which have say added to you as a person?
Reader 15: Maybe not added to me as a person but maybe got me thinking about situations or thinking about yourself a bit. Questioning parts of my own life.
Paul: In what sorts of ways?
Reader 15: Probably mainly through feminist literature, contemporary feminism. Maybe some of the stuff Angela Carter or Margaret Atwood has written, that sort of ... It sort of tends to be on a different level at times.....

Reader 5: Without a standard in your own head you cannot distinguish between that which is agreeable and that which is a pleasant read but can actually do something for you..... Within any book there's something to be gleaned, its just some books don't bear reading twice. Should that be a criteria for a 'good' book? I don't know. I wouldn't care to stand up in court and make a judgement about a book in all conscience. I would have done ten years ago. I'd have stood up and written your thesis for you. I was that proud I knew that much. All I can suggest now is that books can be in an informal way, books can be a wonderful pointer to ones own mind.

Box 11. Change in reading practice over time.

Reader 8: Yes, because reading at university is ... we were involved in reading for very different reasons ... I remember reading Bronte at university for example from a very Marxist point of view which is something I'd never consider doing now. It may pop up or appear in my thought processes as I'm reading but to approach a novel from such a technical point of view or from a feminist point of view is something I no longer do but something I had to do then. So certainly I'm reading differently now.....

Paul: So if you've been reading since you were five has the stuff that you've been into changed over time?
Reader 7: Yes it has. When I first started I used to read everything that my mum and dad had in the house, I just read everything, if my brothers and sisters had it I'd just read it. And then I developed specific authors that I really enjoyed reading and lately, over the last five years I've got those particular people that I always read and whenever a new book comes out I'll always read it. I'm very interested in art, Picasso particularly and I always like reading about his stuff. I never used to do that at all because that was so unfashionable and nobody at my school did

it but I thought I'd go and see a few pictures and that got me into it.....

Reader 18: A second hand book I bought recently was a Biggles book! I'm a big Biggles fan. I read them when I was eight or nine. Obviously one gets more sophisticated in ones requirements just like you start drinking wine. You start drinking sweet wine and get more involved with it and start going on to drier wines. Its the same with reading you start with accessible books with lots of easily accessible emotions and then move on to more subtle, complex abstractions. Things that you wouldn't dream of reading when you were younger because you wouldn't have understood them. And I think that's one of the sad things I read a lot of books when I was younger and I didn't really appreciate them.
Reader 17: I remember writing in my diary once about a particular book I'd read when I was eighteen and I picked it up again about eight years later and read it again and I remember writing in my diary 'I read this book (I forget what it was!) and I understand it now and I didn't when I was eighteen.
Reader 16: Its like Lord of the Rings. In my era, when everyone was a teenager everyone read Lord of the Rings and it was the book to read and I read it and I did enjoy it but I don't think I really appreciated it. I haven't read it since but my friend has and he said he gets so much more out of it now twenty years later so even though you do....
Reader 18: People are tapping into themselves aren't they rather than the book? They're tapping their own experience which they've acquired and then putting it into the book.
Reader 17: So the subject matter doesn't change but you've changed so your perception and understanding of it changes.....

Reader 12: ...its a book that I've read a few times and it fulfils that cliché of there being something new each time you read it. New insights, things that you notice the 2nd or 3rd time round that you didn't notice before.... so I was reading English classics like Jane Eyre around 11 or 12 and I wasn't understanding them I was just reading the story. I remember when we came to do O'Levels, I was fourteen and started doing O'level English and we were given totally unsuitable books really for our age really and one of them was Wuthering Heights which I read and didn't enjoy at all and it was ... it took me ten years to come back to Wuthering Heights. I tried it again a couple of times in the interim and didn't get it and it wasn't until I'd been through love and a break up and that pain and anguish that it suddenly clicked and I realised why this is a terrific novel and Wuthering heights is a classic.

Reader 1: .....As I say fantasy is one of my big things at the moment whereas five years ago I wouldn't have touched it. Tastes change as you get older I think.....

Reader 5:.....Some novels go beyond... I've been reading Jacques the fatalist for ten or fifteen years now and every time I read it I see a different standpoint, a different point of view.... what we fail to understand is what a book can do for an individual at whatever stage in life. I can give you a prime example of this. I've got six books which I've been reading since I was sixteen and as I was saying earlier on I've been reading them every year and it keeps changing, they keep changing shape and form for me. It is possible with say Somerset Maugham that when I reach the age of seventy I may end up viewing him completely differently.

Reader 14: I think that its very easy to read Stephen King books when you're thirteen or fourteen because really not much has happened to you. You haven't got much experience of anything really so that fantasy element is just something that's a good story or whatever. I think as you get older sometimes you look for books that are removed from your experience totally and other times you look for books that you can associate with. So I like first person novels more than I do third person. Anything that's a first person confessional kind of thing. I remember reading the Reader 1 Papers when I was about fourteen because the film came out and I bought the book and it just meant nothing to me at all. I didn't like it, I didn't like the central character and I gave up on it. And I came to read it again about three years later when I was seventeen and suddenly it had a lot more meaning. It was more relevant to me than it had been before. You're looking for something you can associate with.

Box 12. Narrative Identity.

Paul: Could you see yourself looking back at now in the future and realising why you were interested in the nineteenth century again?
Reader 8: Its this whole thing of it being too soon to tell. It could possibly have something to do with me yearning to revisit university days and wanting to be involved in highbrow discussion of literature once again. That's something that I certainly miss. So perhaps thetas why in the last few months I've gone back and read Bronte, Hardy. Yes. Yes actually I think you or I have stumbled across something there. It probably is that two years after university that sense of wishing ... I'm reading things now that I can remember my friends reading at the time and talking about so it must be all wrapped up in that somehow.

Paul: So your collection has more significance because its all connected in this personal way?
Reader 7: Definitely. I just realised that it is very connected to what I've done in my life or what I've been through with other people. There's all sorts of things I've become interested in just having done nursing about people who work abroad, people who have done things that I'd like to do.

Work in Africa perhaps. It just opens completely new horizons for me, things that I want to strive and do. I think books should do that, they should inspire you to do things. I don't think you should just read a book and think 'that's OK but it doesn't really matter to me.'.....

Paul: Going back to what you were saying about how you'd recently realised that your collection of books maybe represent some sort of biography of you, can you talk me through that a bit, are there phases to that?

Reader 7: Yes there are definitely. There's a kind of phase where I was travelling a lot all round the world and I have a lot of books about walking and travelling, Lonely Planet guides and that kind of thing. And that's definitely representative of what I was interested in at the time about exploring things, about using things that I'd learnt. I was in a country and I'd buy a book on another part of the country and go and work there. There was a stage where I was (inaudible) about relationships perhaps and I've got a whole load of books about how men and women interact with one another, work together, live together, cook together, things like that.

Paul: Do you go back and re read things as well?

Reader 7: Definitely. I find that books are very representative of something that was very important at that time and I want to go back and remember that, to feel it all over again and I do it.

Paul: So you almost choose the one you're going to re-read on the basis of the original experience?

Reader 7: Yes.

Reader 3: War & Peace was the novel I read when I was in my early twenties and I broke up from a serious relationship - the worst thing had happened and I was in anguish - I just picked up War and Peace and I read it doggedly. So it has a kind of ... When I read it now its not just the book itself its all the times I've read it in my life and all the things its meant to me and the ways in which escaping into a completely different world helped me to cope when my world wasn't so great.

Paul: So its about your biography as much as the biographies of the people in the book?.

Reader 3: Yes. And you identify with the characters. In different ways. I mean I wouldn't say I am Pierre or I am Natasha or anything like that. But elements of them ring true for you. I think that's it. Its the ability of somebody to make you identify with people and with their life experiences.

Paul: So books are a marker of someone that you know you can get on with? Would you be happy to be judged on your bookshelves in that way or are there parts of you which are left out, that you can't read from your bookshelves?

Reader 3: I suppose because I tend to cull my books, if you judge me from the books that are in the house although you'd get an idea, you might think... there are obviously things I've been through that you wouldn't see on the bookshelves any more. So in that sense you'd miss out. But I still

think you'd get a fair idea of me. You might get an idea if you saw which books are in which room. The theology books are in the study along with one's for my research. The theology books which I don't use and some really rubbishy books are in some shelves in the upper hall. In the living room you've got a shelf of biography, a shelf of gardening books and a huge shelf of art books.
Paul: So they're the public ones. Your first public face?
Reader 3: The public ones! I must sound awful! I could also tell you how I arrange them! But I won't, don't worry!.... Its actually something that's quite personal to you. I wouldn't tell you my life story if you asked me this way but talking about my books, I feel like I'm telling you quite a lot about myself but in an O.K way.....You can tell when people were ordained by looking at their bookshelves. Most of our books stem from that period. I buy books which make my shelves deceptive but there are plenty I don't read.....

Paul: So if a stranger came into your house do you think they'd be able to read something about you from the books on your shelves? Do they say something about your life?
Reader 18, Reader 16, Reader 17, Reader 19 (together loudly): Yes!
Reader 16: Its the same isn't it if you go to someone else's house. Although it depends a little bit because some people don't have books on show. We've got books in our sitting room so anyone could see at a glance what sort of things we like and you could probably build up a fairly good character profile of us. But if you go to some people's houses there's no books at all and I think that's a bit worrying. Or at least there's none on the shelves. But it is interesting because you can actually tell what people are like. I think its fascinating looking at other peoples book collections.

Reader 12: Yeah. I can look at a whole shelf of books which I brought back with me from the States and they're important as physical things, physical reminders of a time when I was very happy and a time that I enjoyed thoroughly and the fact that they're American editions. When we read 'A Prayer for Owen Meany' for the reading group I had my American edition of that and it felt like a sense of reconnection to handle the book, to have that edition. So that was very nice. Sometimes its ... I suppose with books that's the real quality. I couldn't tell you I suppose what I was doing at any time in my life when I read a John Grisham or an Agatha Christie or something like that because they're not that important to me. They're very entertaining and they've provided some light reading and they're fine for that but they're never going to be important.

Paul: Do books monopolise you're Xmas stocking?
Reader 10: They're always saying 'we're not getting you books tokens!' so I didn't get a books token this year but I did get the Richard Mabey

book. It takes me back to my childhood because where we used to live in Devon we used to walk along the hedgerows to school. I wonder if they're still there, I suspect not. It jogs your memory and you can go back to it. It triggers things off.....

Reader 9: Yes. Some of them I've actually bought when I've gone to particular exhibitions and its because ... I mean the Toulouse Lautrec one comes from a fabulous exhibition in London about five or six years ago and I was just so impressed with the whole range of things he did that I wanted to have a particular book which bought that day back, that I could look through and really re-live the whole day... there are quite a few where it is just the day itself so that's so personal I guess.

Paul: Do you think if someone came round here and looked at your bookshelves they could make judgements about you?
Reader 9: Oh yes. I think that's why I don't keep too many fiction ones downstairs.
Paul: Because they'd be too much of a clue?
Reader 9: I think I'm probably quite shy really and books are so personal. I mean I always look at people's books.

Reader 4: You're not just lining the walls with them. You always hope that you're going to have time to read that one again that you read a long time ago. Its almost like going back to an old friend, that kind of thing. They are like old friends.

Reader 11: One thing I found out which you may be interested to know is that often I'll associate a song or a particular song or piece of music with a book. I'll start a book and I'll often try and find a song or piece of music that I can associate with that and then reading the book I'll often play the music and then associate it even more with the book. If you take the Jack Higgins series I've read a few and one or two of those are associated with music. There's a piece by Enya which is quite deep and moody which is in keeping with that particular book. Another one with a lot of characters who are disillusioned with life or are going through the motions or thinking that life is a bad joke if you could but laugh about it and there's a song by a French singer which is quite sad as well I associate with it. Stephen King, all the books I've read by him I've associated with a piece of music. I tend to try and find a piece of music at the beginning, I don't know why and every time I listen to that piece of music it always plunges me back into the book. Its associated with the book and also with the time in my life that I was reading the book and I plunged in and identified with this or that character and it was a time when I was doing this and going out with her and doing this or that. I find as well that sometimes if you read a book and you enjoy it, it lifts you and it releases some emotions in you and listening to the song which I associated with that particular book

does the same but in a few minutes rather than over a period of however long. Its quite powerful. A very efficient network of associations.

Box 13. Autonomy.

Reader 14: Its always been pretty much me deciding what I'm going to read. It doesn't always work that way anyhow because when people recommend books to you it doesn't necessarily mean you'll enjoy them. I very rarely tell other people what books to read.
Paul: Is that because you've been disappointed by books people have recommended to you?
Reader 14: Its difficult to think of a case where someone did. Someone recommended me a Roddy Doyle book, that Paddy Clarke one and it was a couple of years before I got around to reading it and I didn't really like it all that much. I can't think of one case where someone's said 'you've got to read this' and they were right, I did have to read it. I've done it a couple of times and said to someone 'oh you should read this' and they haven't liked it and you actually get quite annoyed at that as well when they do, especially when they say 'well I started it and I couldn't get into it' and they've only read about ten pages. If you've really enjoyed a book and recommend it it is quite a personal thing.

Reader 7: Its got nothing to do with anyone else. When I read its not influenced by anyone. And I've found that quite hard, people when I was growing up were reading fictional romance sort of stuff but I've never found that interesting and I found it very boring and insular. They weren't really learning anything from it.

Reader 8: Well it was a conscious decision certainly not to read what others were reading and it very much was a conscious decision. Not that it gave me any more status or anything like that because no one else saw what I was reading and I certainly didn't see what other people were reading. So although it was a conscious decision I didn't gain anything from it. Quite bizarre when I think about it.....

Box 14. The Book Fool.

Reader 14: It doesn't really cause me any problems now. I remember it did when I was younger. Like with long summer holidays. I can't stand sun. I can't bear to be in it so I'd rather stay in and read in the afternoons when everybody else would want to go out and build dens or whatever it is that people do at that age and people think you're a bit weird. Because there is that connotation when you're younger anyhow that if you read there is something wrong with you.

Reader 17: My best friend, I love her to pieces, she's my best friend in the whole world but all she reads is Mills and Boon Doctors and Nurses romances and I can't relate to those. I used to read them when I was at school but I don't anymore and she just can't relate to that. She thinks I'm an intellectual and I'm not at all.
Reader 19: I think that's the unfortunate things that books can do and also the way bookshops are laid out. It reinforces that idea that somehow its an elite activity and if you're reading anything other than a magazine or a holiday romance that somehow you've removed yourself from the rest of your circle. I think that's very very unfortunate and its something that's in-built into British society and I think that's a real shame because it denies a lot of people who would actually get a great deal out of bookshops and who certainly have the capacity to get a great deal out of them, they're just put off at the door. The whole society has got to change I think from this 'If you read books you're a bit funny and you're on your own' because people see it as a solitary activity because the social side of it hasn't been developed.
Reader 17: People think you're an introvert. Calling somebody bookish and a bookworm is quite derogatory isn't it?

Box 15. Reading with others.

Reader 3: My friend is married and she was saying that her father in law came to live with them for a while and the problem was they couldn't get their books out at the dinner table because they both understood that if they both wanted to read it didn't mean that their marriage was on the rocks but you couldn't explain that to another person so it was really hard.
Paul: Hard from that point of view? They thought that they should make conversation just to include the father in law or they thought that if they didn't do that it would reflect badly on their marriage.
Reader 3: Both really. He wasn't such an avid reader as they are [...]I often think my goodness I could never get married because it would get in the way of my reading!

Paul: So what does your husband and your family think of your reading?
Reader 6: Its just a husband, and two cats.
Paul: And is he a reader as well?
Reader 6: Not fiction. He's doing a course at the moment, he enjoys doing courses, this one's on health and safety at Richmond college. So he sits and reads and does his work that way.
Paul: So he's reasonably tolerant?
Reader 6: Oh yeah, he'll sit and watch TV while I've got my books out. And he'll say 'well aren't there any you want to ask me' and I say 'no, no, you're all right!' (laughs)

Reader 19: I've been married twice and my first husband was not a reader

and it was quite a sore point in our relationship. It was one of the things that he found very difficult to come to terms with, the fact that I could sit in a room and read and he saw that as me excluding him. But if I tried to discuss with him he wasn't prepared to read books, he was frightened of them. I'm not criticising that it was just the culture in which he was brought up. He saw it as an exclusive and an excluding activity. Whereas the man I'm married to now who does read though not as much as I do but he will come in and if I'm reading a book he'll say 'oh what's that you're reading?' It may not be the sort of book he wants to read but he's interested to find out what I'm reading, why I'm reading, what I think of it [...]And he'll become involved in what's happening. So many times I've found that because its a silent activity in part people don't like you sitting there reading and unless you can find someone who'll sit in a room with you and be quiet while you're reading it becomes almost a threat.
Reader 17: I find that interesting because my boyfriends in a similar position. His previous partner. We've all been part of the same social group for years and she's a big reader and she chose to exclude him from that. She used to bury her nose in books and she'd read and she wouldn't communicate and they split up because they didn't communicate.
(Boyfriend's name) reads a lot and I read a lot and I read fiction and he doesn't he reads things about railways and bikes and stuff like that and I'm quite happy to sit in one chair and him in another and he'll say 'oh guess what I've read in this?' and I'll do the same.

Box 16. Books and encounters with others.

Paul: Can you understand people who aren't interested in books?
Reader 7: That's something I have a problem with actually. I'm trying to come to terms with it because I think it effects the way I relate to people. I tend to be drawn to people who find books interesting in some way.
Paul: How do you find that out?
Reader 7: By talking to them. They always tend to bring up things and I'll ask how they know that and they'll say 'oh I read it here or there' I think it just shows that people are interested in the world around them and not necessarily that they can't look beyond themselves. Often I find that to be true but that people who haven't read so much have made up for it in experience.....

Reader 11: The only person I can think of in Sheffield that I met through books, there was a social in a pub and I met him there and he's 42, a true through and through Sheffielder, working class and we both found out that we liked Ian Fleming and we clicked from that moment on. We're from completely different backgrounds and we got on together quite well. We see one another quite regularly , we have a drink together and we talk about Bond and Fleming and about other things as well but it was mainly through this that we met [...] If I'm talking about a book I like just with a

friend like my friend who likes Bond, I'm fairly sure he's not been to university, he's not interested in that sort of thing, his vocabulary is fairly down to earth and I wouldn't have a literary discussion about Bond in the way I would have to do in my MA. We'll talk about the book because we can relate to the character or we like him or we find it interesting so its a different level.

Box 17. Books and knowledge of others.

Reader 3: I don't know if we've got a shared passion but my best friend lives over the road and she knows about the secret passion! She likes crime novels as well [...] I suppose actually a lot of my friendships have been formed through books. These friends I've been mentioning, they were a member of the congregation at the church I was a curate at and they invited me to supper and they're both about five or six years older than me, but because when I got to their house it was full of books and you immediately start talking about books, then that's it, immediately this bond was formed and one of Imogen's all time favourite books was one of my all time favourite books and it was they who introduced me to Patrick O'Brian and I used to go on raids to their house. They buy far more books than I do. I'll go round and Imogen will have been to the bookshop and bought about five books and she'll say 'Oh I'm going to read this one first, which one do you want to read?' which is a true friend! Someone who'll lend their pristine books out first before they get their hands on them!
Paul: So you knew these people in a professional way and then you became quite close friends with them because they were interested in books and you were and you had common ground.
Reader 3. Yes. And obviously now our relationship has got beyond books and we're actually quite close. We became good friends and then when they were looking for a new house the house just opposite mine was up for sale and I said well you should come and look at it and the next thing I know they're moving in over the road! But I've other friends as well which I've made through books and its almost like when you go to somebody's house and you look on the shelf and you see a lot of things that you recognise you think "well this is my kind of person....."
Paul: And do you usually all agree. Do they know what you like and you usually like it on their say so.
Reader 3: Funnily enough it was their wedding anniversary recently and they bought each other exactly the same books without the other knowing as part of their presents. And one of the other books Reader 5 bought Imogen was the book I'd bought her for Christmas! So I think we've got each others tastes reasonably sussed!

Box 18. Books and knowledge of others part 2.

Reader 12: Sometimes I'm surprised that she doesn't like things or she'll give me something and I'll be really bored with it and I don't like it, I don't read it and just pass it back. There are certain things I'll pick up and read which I know (friend's name) won't enjoy so I don't even bother passing them on. And then there'll be things where I'll think 'yeah, she'll like it.' I got 'Anita & Me' recently and I read it and enjoyed it but it would just a light read, a comic novel that I'd enjoyed reading. But (friend's name) is from the part of the country where its set and she identifies very much with it, with the little girl. I think Meera Syal is probably about (friend's name) is age, mid 30s now so the time she's growing up, the things she's experiencing and the place were the same. So she's got a lot out of it and she's since passed it on to other friends and they've passed it on.

Reader 10: Most of the time. Sometimes they'll bring one back and say 'I didn't like that.' There was one where I was saying about this new author where there were three books and I thought there might be one I hadn't read. Well I lent that(?) to Fay and I wasn't sure if she would like it or not and she has liked it. I was really pleased because sometimes you're not sure if people are going to like things or not

Box 19. Books deepening intimacy.

Reader 9: We really are good friends and we've got very similar ideals and we'd both read the Shipping News and loved it and I've introduced him to a lot of books that he really has liked a lot and its just that real sharing thing, we can sit and chat for ages about a book afterwards but for some reason this is a particular author I can't entice him into and because he's one of my favourites, you know how you like to share things. So it wasn't particularly that with this chapter it reminded me of him it was more that I felt he would get something from me which is why I really prepared and highlighted the chapter for him rather than make him read the book. [...] Going back to the friendship thing again I think with Colin sharing books has probably enriched or deepened our friendship because we probably share books more than anyone else I can think of really.
Paul: So is that an instance where you become friends with people because you start talking to them and find out that they like reading and so you get a rapport chatting about books?
Reader 9: I think with work its a really good social life and we do a lot of things together so I would say its probably one more thing that's attracted me more to certain people and certainly its very much a talking point whenever I see them but I don't know if that would make me actually become friends with someone. I'm trying to think if there is anyone like that and nothing springs to mind [...] Going back to the friendship thing again I think with Colin sharing books has probably enriched or deepened

our friendship because we probably share books more than anyone else I can think of really.

Box 20. Fitting it in.

Reader 4: I've got some lovely old books. I read some of them while I'm ironing.
Paul: So do you spend a lot of your time at home reading?
Reader 4: Not as much as I'd like. There's always the television and the radio. I'm a great radio fan. And the garden. Usually during the evenings and occasionally during the day. I'll sit down with a cup of tea.

Paul: Do you set time aside for reading or do you just fill in any gaps?
Reader 3: It fills in the gaps. I often wake quite early in the morning and I might read for an hour or so before I get up, or I read at night, and over meals. I'm very unsociable!
Paul: Really? That's something I'd quite like to be able to do but I'm never able to keep the book open!
Reader 3: Well I've lived alone for years so I'm sure I've got no table manners. I just shovel it in whilst turning the pages.

Paul: Is one of the problems of reading at home that if you're at home then you feel as though you should be doing something else?
Reader 16, Reader 17, Reader 19: Oh, yes.
Reader 18: Whereas if you're in a bookshop you're there to read or in a cafe to have a cup of coffee and read. Very true.
Reader 16: You feel like you should be doing the cleaning or the washing up and things, not having your luxury.

Reader 10: (laughing) When I can. At the weekends, Sometimes while I'm waiting for breakfast I might have a quick read. I have been known to peel the potatoes and read! You prop the book open and ... I can't read on the bus now because I drive but I read at coffee time and lunchtime unless I come out here shopping. If I go on holiday I take a book with me. So I suppose I might read where other people would play their stereos. I tend to read books anywhere.

Box 21. Travelling books.

Reader 6: ....As he (her husband) says it doesn't matter where I am I've always got a book in my handbag so if I go out on a Friday night for a drink with the girls around town if my handbag's big enough there's a book in it to read on the bus or the tram going there or going back.
Paul: What about other times, what are the other times in your week when you get to read?

Reader 6: I very rarely read at home, I'm usually too busy at home and there's usually too much to do. So my time is on the bus going to work, unless I meet a friend, on the bus going home from work, and coffee times. And even with that I can usually read three books a week.....

Reader 14: Yeah definitely. I mean I have to get up fairly early to get to work at half past six and I need to get two buses to get there and I read on the bus. Its not very good getting up that early and I could get quite fed up about it but I actually look forward to getting onto the bus because I can read. Its a twenty minute bus journey, it lasts till about half seven in the morning, five days every week but I actually look forward to it now because it kind of takes my mind off having to go into work. I'd be very surprised if there's anything that would make me think that's it, I'm not going to read anymore. It would make the bus journeys too boring in the morning. I would be very surprised if there was a point where I thought 'no more books.' It would save me some money but. I'd probably start smoking again.

Reader 3:...I can't ... If I go on a bus I've got to have a book with me. I can't go on a train journey without reading a book.
Paul: Because you like just being able to dip into it?
Reader 3: And I think because it makes you feel safe. If you don't want to talk to someone. If you see a stranger looming up, coming out of the buffet car having had about five drinks, then you can hide behind your book. I think it makes you feel safer. And I hate being bored even for a moment [...]

Paul: When do you read now working as a nurse?
Reader 7: Well I find it really difficult to keep it going. But I read on the bus as I go into work and in the evening. Actually I find it really good coming back really late at night, half past ten and I just read and that relaxes me. It doesn't matter how hard the day has been, its a really good way.

Box 22. Social paradox.

Reader 18: ....And one of the problems I find is you can be so intent on ... I'm a very slow reader and I dwell on each line and it takes me forever to read a book really and I find it very difficult to find the time when I can sit quietly because I find its very disruptive if I'm sitting in a room and someone else is in the same room twiddling away or putting music on and doing something else, I find that quite awkward. Actually I'm having both ends of the argument here because if I'm in a room by myself I can't stand it so what I tend to do is go to a cafe because there's a hustle and a bustle in the background [...] because there's a hustle and bustle in the background which is keeping my outside brain occupied which I'm not

paying any attention to although I'll occasionally look up and see what they're doing over there but it means that I can just get on with those quiet moments of reading.

Box 23. Encounters with strangers.

Paul: What is it that's fascinating about the book fairs?
Reader 7: Well its this air of ... there's all these people and they're all looking for something and you see them and when they find something and their eyes light up and there's this kind of inner ... I don't know. I think its really interesting to see all these people making their own little discoveries.
Paul: How about the shops in Sheffield - is there any kind of social element there?
Reader 7: There is in that you always get interesting people who are willing to talk about things and come up to you and say 'what do you think about this' I've just had really good conversations with people, really unexpected people, who are maybe a lot younger than me, a lot older than me. There's something about a bookshop that makes people want to talk and share their ideas and ask what other people know. I don't worry about going up to someone. My boyfriends quite embarrassed at times because he doesn't like books but its fine I'll just go up to someone and ask them a question.

Reader 6: I think its amazing how you think that you're the only one interested sometimes. Like when I went to Reader 17 McCaffrey's signing and they were all them and maybe a roomful of chairs and you got talking to people and were discussing the books and that was brilliant. Knowing that someone else really enjoys exactly what you enjoy doing. That is nice to know. There were one or two people from the main library down there. I didn't know they were even interested! It was nice to talk to them about it.

Reader 3: I mean bookshops aren't just about buying books! If you love books just going into a bookshop and rooting around is a pleasure in itself. Someone was telling me that the Waterstone's in Cambridge which is about five floors has a coffee bar on top and people just sit there and talk and that's what bookshops are about really I think.
Paul: So they're a public arena? They're about other people, being among other people with books?
Reader 3: Yes. Sometimes I've been really intrusive I suppose. I've been in a bookshop and somebody has picked up a book that I've recently read and I've turned to them and said "Oh I thought that was really good" so you get a chance to share .... And quite often, if I'm meeting friends in town we'll arrange to meet in Waterstone's so then if one of us is late then we'll have something to do. On my birthday I went out to lunch with a group of friends and I knew I had a booktoken I had to spend so we went

into Waterstone's and spent ages browsing and everybody was going (mimes people showing books to someone) ... different people liked different types of books so it was quite interesting.

Reader 12: When we were reading 'A Prayer for Owen Meany' I was visiting my family ... I went back to see my folks in hospital and before I came back to Sheffield I met up with a friend in the centre of Preston and we went into Waterstone's there and she was asking me for titles and what had I read, what would I recommend and we were drifting through the shop and a woman pulled out a copy of 'A Prayer for Owen Meany' and I said 'read it, just buy it, get it, you'll love it, its great. I'm rereading it at the moment and its just such a good read. You must read it'. And I almost wish more people would do that when you're looking for things because so often you make mistakes and you buy something that's just been promoted.

Box 24. Sociality as lack in public space.

Reader 19: I think the social side of it could really be developed. You can be standing next to somebody at these shelves and they're looking intently at a book and you're looking intently at a book and you may want to say to them 'ooh what's that like' but for some reason the atmosphere's not conducive to doing that and you don't want it to appear like you're trying to pick them up. You might be but ...! And I think if there was much more of an informal area where people could just go and sit, unlike a library where you don't talk but where you're almost encouraged to say 'oh what's that like?' it would be much much better because most of the books that I've really enjoyed have been through the recommendation of other people not just reviews. If you know the person concerned or you can tell by their enthusiasm, their body language, you can think yes this really is a good book and go out and read it. That social contact and communication is very important.

Reader 16: Yes. The chap said last week that you have friends who you know you'll never be able to talk about books with so if you did meet in a bookshop and you met someone that was holding the same book that you've met someone that you've got at least one thing in common with. Its not everyone who you talk about it with. People at work or your family, not everyone you know will read a lot or is likely to have read the same books as you've read.

Box 25. Books as modern versions of oral wisdom.

Reader 5: All that literature has done in a sense is take over from the spoken word. Since we have such an enormous society rather than a clan

or a group of people, we can afford in this society to go where we want to go. That's part of the idea of the individual fulfilling his or her self. But no one ever does that, because herd like we all follow the same things [...] Being happy and content with oneself gives one a freedom and I think literature can do that for us. Its an adequate substitute for the wise words of the old man and the old woman of the tribe.

Paul: Is the book incredibly important, the sort of thing that you or society couldn't do without?
Reader 3: Yes I think it is, definitely. When I think of other things... I mean, some films who do the same in terms of storytelling and telling you about characters, although I think the proportion of films that do that in comparison to books is actually pretty slim, and I think visual arts on the whole do a different thing. The bible, as many other ancient books required the oral tradition to get it together, so I think its the storytelling element. Like with parables, say the man with the vineyard. Actually, no one's really interested in the man with the vineyard, its what lies behind that, the moral of the story that's the important thing.....

Reader 1: I think they're very valuable. From the point of view, I mean going back to childhood the more you read, whatever it is the better your understanding of the English language is. You tend to be better at writing essays or whatever and I think that's important. Also I think books just as themselves, stories, after all, when it comes down to it every tribe, clan, people have always told stories. Its part of tradition , a way of telling traditional stories I suppose.

Box 26.

Producer 9: Yes I do enjoy it. Or shall I qualify that by saying 'yes, most of the time?' Because I'm interested in books, I like working with them, I like the people I work with very much, that's one of the best things about the job. And believe it or not I do actually like serving the public most of the time. It's interesting. Even though ... you'll get one really horrible, bolshy customer but for every one of those there'll be someone else who's a real pleasure to serve and who's interested in books or it'll be something you've read. You trade information with customers. Its really nice.
Paul: And what don't you like about it?
The fact that we don't get paid any money, that's the main hassle. The fact that people come in the shop sometimes and just look at you as though you're the kind of shop assistant ... a lot of my friends think that what I do is basically serving people. I could be working in a supermarket. What else don't I like about it? The fact that there never seems to be enough people on the shop floor. A lot of the head office bureaucracy.

Producer 9: I like the people I work with. I like the customers. And that's

probably about it. I don't like the monotony of the job and I don't like putting books away.

Appendix 4: Research Diary Entries.

A quiet weekday, springtime.

Today was slow from the off. Too many staff and not enough customers! To begin with this is quite pleasant, most of the downstairs managers are away or off the shop floor so the atmosphere is fairly relaxed. Chatting and banter at the tills or whilst finding stuff to do that's not too soul destroying like shelving. Have a few good chats with people I haven't shared shifts with for a while - general catching up, a bit of book chat plus hearing any gossip or people's moans that have been going around since I was last in. By mid morning its dragging and lunch time still feels a long way off. Its a question of standing around at the till, waiting for customers, getting bored and feeling guilty about doing nothing so going off to find something to do only to have to keep zipping back to the till to serve the occasional customer. There seems to be a fair share of awkward, difficult or just generally glum customers, though to be fair a good number of cheery pleasant ones pleased to be in a quiet shop and swap a few words at the till, even of sympathy when they spot we're bored.

Once the lunch rota starts things get a bit better with less staff and a few more customers as workers pop in on lunch breaks and town fills up with a few more general shoppers. Lunch itself is a relief. Fresh air and food help shake that lethargic feeling brought on by boredom, three and a half hours on your feet and the dehydrating effects of air conditioning and lights. Plus a chance for a bit of stimulation, the paper, a chapter of a book, a look around town or some more chatting without the slight feelings of guilt one gets on the shop floor or stop - start conversations punctuated by customers.

The afternoon is even worse. Lunch is now a reminder that I'm actually only half way through the day. If anything there's even less custom than in the morning. To make matters worse one of the upstairs managers keeps pointedly flitting around. He knows its quiet and he wants to make sure people are motivating themselves to find jobs that need doing. Its no big deal and I could probably just ignore it and vegetate at the till pretending to be busy at a terminal if he goes past but I know from experience that loafing just makes the time go slower. Also, other people are making an effort to at least look busy and with those that aren't there's an uncomfortable pressure to think of ideas for small talk. Someone's trying to organise a group for a drink after work. I'm up for it. A light at the end of the tunnel!

The job I should do is frontlisting[503]. Its probably more important and urgent than anything else I can think of and it means I'll be on the till for any customers that do come along. But its incredibly dull. It'll probably end up getting done by one of the newer booksellers who'll get given the job by a manager. I decide instead to do some tidying given that most of the new stock has been put out. None of the sections are all that untidy but they can always be neatened somehow. Plus its a way of looking at, handling and sneaking the occasional short read of the books in the section. Directly book related by contrast with the rather abstracted nature of frontlisting. Perversely (when there are other members of staff obviously not busy) it also seems a good way of attracting customers with enquiries (probably because its a good way of looking as though you do actually work in the shop.) This works. I get a good look through biography (at the back so out of sight, out of mind of managers!) and pick up a couple of customers, one of whom is really chatty and appreciative of the attention he gets because its so quiet. The job doesn't really fill he afternoon and I clock watch all the last half hour but its something.

A busy Saturday, autumn.

I'm exhausted but I enjoyed today. There was very little let up from dealing with customers all day. Either end of the day was a bit quieter and some people found time to get other stuff done like shelving or re-ordering but I was mostly on the till points all day with one or two bits of floorwalking[504] when the till was crowded with other colleagues. The rhythm, between customers and with other staff is great. You'll get a longish period working a till with a colleague, evolving a routine together after about 3 or 4 customers. The first few transactions together can be funny with both of us pausing to see who's going to do the talking and command the encounter then both come out with 'that'll be £20.99 please' in unison and keep getting in each others way until a routine is established. It doesn't help with customers coming from different directions meaning its not always the same partner that gets reached first.

[503]Adding the details of all the new books that'll be arriving over the next few months to the inventory database.

[504]Supposedly a designated task intended to a) enhance shop security by emphasising the presence and surveillance of booksellers randomly throughout the shop rather than in service areas, b) enhance approachability of booksellers to public by ensuring that customers can 'grab' service without approaching the potentially intimidating or slow service areas; c) familiarise bookseller with shop and encourage surveillance of shelves to detect and rectify untidiness etc. In practice it is hard to do involving balancing looking 'busy' to managers but looking available to customers. It generally involves superficial tidying combined with wandering and attempting to make eye contact with customers.

Just as a routine gets going a customer will come with a query and then its either work the till alone until a new partner slots in to fill the gap or its off to deal with the query. Bizarrely, even when its busy I don't feel any real pressure to cut corners or do any less for the enquiry than when its quiet. In some ways you have to do more because you can't pass the enquiry on as everyone else is too busy so its nip upstairs to try and locate books in less familiar sections and off all over the shop really. I had one query today where they wanted a whole list of books and I had to tell them we couldn't do it today but there'd be no problem on a weekday. They were fine about it. I had one 'difficult' customer who was being very pedantic and picky and seemed to be enquiring more to show off about wanting all these really hard to find books and to tut tut about the time it'd take us to get them than because he actually wanted to read them. The good thing about having a crowd around is you can tell everyone else is thinking they're annoying as well. The next customer actually muttered something sympathetic.

Lunchtime was an incredible relief. Everyone was coming into the staffroom looking a bit dazed and just flaking out for about ten minutes before getting lunch or reading the paper or whatever. Despite that I was actually looking forward to going back at the end and getting back into the buzz. As the afternoon wore on you could tell people were starting to get a bit fed up with constantly having to adapt to new till partners and that different styles of working were starting to clash. Each till started to get a more fixed coterie of staff and people were developing little partnerships with people whose style was similar and obviously trying to avoid those who's weren't. I could tell a few people were avoiding me for being too erratic and not always sticking to a clear routine and I was doing the same, preferring to work with two or three others in particular. It was a nice leveller today as well with management mucking in with everyone and showing that they're no better or worse at this than anyone else.

Appendix 5: Analysis themes.

5.1: Analysis Themes.

Transcribed interview material was systematically collated into the following themes which emerged iteratively from a smaller number of original themes:

- Readability.
- Inexplicability - inability to articulate practices of reading.
- Pleasure of shopping/reading.
- Types of reading. Escape/experience etc.
- Reading for work.
- Addiction/obsession.
- Economic strategies.
- Storage strategies.
- Context of reading - interest in other arts etc.
- Reading as a social act.
- Recommendations, reviews etc.
- Browsing as decision-making.
- Covers etc. The book as object.
- Authors/ personalities.
- Book as modern version of oral wisdom.
- Book as important.
- Parents/school etc. as influence.
- Waterstone's/bookshops generally.
- Good/bad places to live as a reader.
- Narrative identity.
- Genres.
- Gender.
- Fitting reading into everyday life - Where/when?