

Eighty Years On: representations of teachers and schools in British films, from 1930 to 2010

by

Nicholas Johnson

A thesis submitted to the
University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Education
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
2011

79,992 words

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Abstract

Teachers are required to be reflective practitioners: that is, they must constantly assess and evaluate their performance, and its effectiveness. In addition, of course, they come under external scrutiny from government and parents. However, what of the way the public look at teachers? Teachers and schools may be read about in newspapers, comics and journals, discussed on television and the radio; they may even fall foul of social networking sites on the Internet. Popular films may be regarded as ninety-minute essays, presented dramatically for the entertainment of their audiences; the teacher or school film has been a staple of popular cinema in this country for almost eighty years.

Moreover, the representations of teachers in British films have tended to retain a continuity of message despite the many changes that have taken place in education over this period. This thesis looks at those representations, and changes in education, and attempts to make connections, backed up with a philosophical approach that seeks to explain the visual turn in terms of successive orders of simulation. My hope is that new generations of teachers may reflect on the cultural heritage of which they, and their chosen profession, are very much a part.

Acknowledgements.

For philosophical contemplation, I am especially indebted to Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations* (1983) and Susan Blackmore's *The Meme Machine* (2000); for her lead in studying films as an insight into education, my thanks go to Mary M. Dalton and *The Hollywood Curriculum* (2007). For lending historical 'backbone' to this work, I would like to pay particular tribute to Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner (2004), Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden (1966), Gary McCulloch (1998), Peter Woods and Bob Jeffrey (2002) and Andy Hargreaves (1994).

I have drawn inspiration from the work of my former tutor Professor Anthony Aldgate of the Open University whose work on film as historical artefact forms the blueprint of my methodology; from Dr Raymond McCluskey of Glasgow University for his enthusiasm, insight and energy; last, and by no means least, from my supervisor Professor Ian Grosvenor for his work in the vanguard of promoting the visual in the study of education, and his unstinting support, good humour and direction.

For Frances and Rosa.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.

Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to eye and more open to observation. George Santayana (Goffman 1956: foreword)

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard claimed that our notion of reality is based upon simulations which we absorb from the culture in which we are all immersed. So, rather than reality being represented in simulation, our 'reality' is actually constructed *from* those simulations, and image is a 'phantom of authenticity which always ends up just short of reality' (Ward 1997: 71). Our society is now structured according to *codes*, says Baudrillard, which are neither natural, nor timeless, but which precede the real and 'produce the real social order in which we all participate.' We manufacture the 'real' because of simulation, and through panic seek the *hyperreal* (Baudrillard 1983: 115, 146).

The consequence for the postmodern world is that the previous 'deep, authentic self' has been lost in what Ward describes as 'a recognition, and sometimes a celebration, of disintegration, fragmented desires, superficiality, and identity as something you shop for' (Ward 1997: 120). 'Image is now all that matters.' Nobody invents their own identity, but in the postmodern world, we are invited to choose from a variety of different identities, rather like children taking their pick from a dressing-up box. Teacher identity, too, is a construct based upon images absorbed daily, from memories and experiences as pupils, of course, but also from representations in books, magazines and comics, TV and film. In this work, I am concerned with the representation of teachers and schools in British feature films. I will draw a parallel between changes in those representations and Baudrillard's three orders of simulacra, linking both to changes in British education.

The 'teacher film' is so ubiquitous and persistent as to deserve to be regarded, in my view, as its own genre (during the writing of this work, there arose a dozen new films worthy of mention; there will be others by the time this is read). I shall be looking at why the genre is so popular, and asking whether there is anything unique about British teacher films, as well as looking for evidence of continuity and change which might reflect shifts in society. And do these films have a contemporary relevance? Is there a cultural

longevity that allows us to say something about the time of their production, or is their significance 'time-bound'?

Foucault maintained that authority in the post-Enlightenment age was procured by people governing their own behaviour beneath the all-seeing eye of the Panopticon: this might be God, or society, one's neighbour or Big Brother– an 'infra-law' nominally egalitarian but essentially 'a guarantee of the submission of forces and bodies' (Rabinow 1991: 211–213). In this view, if people feel they are under scrutiny, their actions should adapt accordingly. School would perform the role of overseeing the young in the age when education became compulsory; it would control and correct before the imago of individual conscience, it is presumed, had developed.

Whatever the local organization, mass schooling institutionalized the separation of children from society. School was a universalized space specifically designed to hold children. It was a space in which teachers developed their professional role, educating and disciplining the young. Control was in the buildings, the space created, and in the material contents of this space– furniture and equipment. Under the influence of school architecture the child was transformed into a *schoolchild*, into a subject of school culture (Burke and Grosvenor 2008: 65).

Control derived from more than the architecture of the school, however. Edward Blishen saw despotism in schooling and observed that '...responsible people are not created by imposing rules of conduct upon them, without discussion. Any rule that is not freely accepted, after debate, is likely to breed sullenness, furtive evasion' (in Harber 2009: 14). Harber cites Freire as claiming 'all education is inherently political' and that 'any education offered as part of the existing system in an oppressive state and society will simply reproduce the ideas and interests of the oppressors' (ibid: 17). Though Blishen and Freire were writing in the 1969 and 1970 respectively, things had actually got worse, according to Harber, in the subsequent forty

years: 'Existing education systems for the majority seem permanently glued to current practices of curriculum, teaching and assessment which often damage learners and their societies' (ibid: 141) and 'over-testing' had encouraged a 'cramming of facts and [had created] an overwhelming dependency on extrinsic goals, rather than intrinsic ones' (ibid: 146). Moreover, Avis (2003) suggested that the debate over evidence informed policy, the watchwords of the neo-conservative managerialists, was less to do with pupils' improvement and 'rather more about control and shaping teacher and researcher's subjectivity in ways that align these to the goals of the state, and indeed to a wider social formation predicated on models of competitiveness rooted in the needs of capital' thus becoming 'a means by which teachers and researchers are made culpable for the failings of the educational system' (385, 386).

Teachers, who had become the embodiment of the all-seeing eye of authority in schools, have not themselves escaped from being observed, either. In fact, teachers probably enjoy more external scrutiny than any other profession. In the U.K. this can mean inspections from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), school assessments and league tables, to say nothing of the critical eye of the parent who naturally wants the best for their child, and the media. There is evidence that, as a consequence, teachers' confidence and authority has been damaged as a result of rigorous and relentless scrutiny (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 222).

However, turning the gaze back on teachers might be instructive, even empowering, if it is done in a constructive way. The definitive 'reflective practitioner' is the teacher who seeks to evaluate his or her performance, and strive to improve, but the one aspect of reflection that is often ignored is the way society sees teachers as a profession, which view may be rooted in our culture.

A text in *Teacher Development* (Manuel and Hughes in vol.10, no:1 March 2006), addressing the 'dream' of becoming a teacher, acknowledges a 'cycle of influence' (Manuel 2003a) whereby society elders pass on a culture of caring to the young, and notes the clash between the external modernist culture

(in Australia) and post-modernist tendencies within teaching. However, the article did not enquire as to the cultural source of the 'dream': if we delve into the prevailing culture, and study how teachers and schools are seen, we might help improve their standing in the public eye. There is, after all, a wealth of film-texts available for us all to examine- a resource which might illuminate and educate.

Medicine has not been slow to appreciate the value of such illumination. In his book *Medicinema- Doctors in Films* (2010), Brian Glasser states that 'although film is not a handmaiden to medicine, it can teach us to look, listen, analyse and interpret- all fundamental skills in most medical practice' (3). In February 2010, and again in April 2011, I was fortunate to be invited to attend seminars in the University of Birmingham Medical School. Tutors Patrick Hayes and Helen Timmins had been conducting a week-long series on the portrayal of doctors in popular culture and I attended their seminars on *Film and Medicine*. The students presented various clips from a variety of films and then made, and elicited, comment on the way the doctors had been represented, and the effect that might have had on the public, their 'clients'. The medical school must believe the way doctors are perceived by the public is an important part of these young doctors' training, or why else would they spend valuable training time on the subject? If this is regarded as a valuable part of doctors' training, why does this not apply to teachers, who as reflective practitioners must also look, listen, analyse and interpret?

Many representations of teachers in British films are, however, jaundiced; the characters are very often not those we would hope to see in charge of our children. Is this an example of 'cognitive dissonance' between what we experience and what we learn to 'know'? Leon Festinger defined cognitive dissonance as the 'feeling of discomfort we feel when trying to hold two contradictory ideas simultaneously and the urge to reduce the dissonance by modifying or rejecting one of the ideas. It operates when we choose between two almost equal objects and, having chosen, invest our choice with superlative advantage over the alternative so that we can happily reject it. The decision process must be part of our genetic inheritance; we need that certainty in human transactions' (Lovelock 2010, 25)). Whilst there are many brilliant teachers who no

doubt put the interests of their pupils first, and no matter how kind or sympathetic the teacher, the role is still imbued with power. If we look at how teachers and schools are portrayed in popular film, we might get an inkling of both what was deemed acceptable, or normal, over history, and get an impression of the popular reaction to them. Popular film should, by definition, reflect the people's view.

The philosophy behind the methodology.

I unapologetically use film as historical text. After Aldgate and Richards, I believe that films can tell us much of what was deemed acceptable at a given moment in time: 'Popular films...function as rituals, cementing the beliefs and ideals of society, enforcing social norms and exposing and isolating deviants' (Aldgate and Richards 2002: 3). The "'unwitting" testimony' of film (Marwick, in Aldgate and Richards 2002: 2) obviates hermeneutical problems of 'meaning' (how to interpret the intention of a collaborative venture like a movie?) and popularity attests to a degree of consensus:

There is a law of the market; the bigger its commercial success, the more a film is likely to tell us about the unvoiced assumptions of the people who watched it. It is the tedious documentary, or the film financed by political subscription, which tells us least (Marwick, in Aldgate and Richards 2002: 2).

Does this mean that only popular films are worthy of our scrutiny? Although, as expressed by Marwick, popularity may accord with orthodoxy, there has to be room for the groundbreaking film, the one that changes minds. And even 'bad' films may deserve mention. As Mitchell and Weber put it, '...you cannot condemn what you have not noticed- negative publicity calls further attention to cultural texts' (Mitchell and Weber 1999: 168). I have tried to include as many British teacher films as I could, but have concentrated my attention on those which speak to the most momentous changes in education, and issues pertinent to the time, and, perhaps, now.

It should be noted, however, that certain 'chapters' are longer than others and that this may leave my thesis open to an accusation of unevenness. It is possible to further argue that such unevenness detracts from a smooth narrative. I would answer (and humility demands that I assert that I am not attempting to elevate myself or my work to his esteemed heights) that this is what Herodotus did in his *The Histories*: a mixture of parataxis, whereby 'fairly short, self-contained units are not obviously integrated into a larger conceptual whole but follow each other in a sequence of discrete segments, like beads on a string' (Carolyn Dewald, Introduction, *The Histories* 1998: xix) and what Dewald calls 'ring composition', whereby the aforementioned discrete segments may appear to be digressions, yet illuminate the narrative to which the reader returns, having gone full circle; 'a (main narrative) / b(digression) / a (main narrative resumed)' (ibid, xxiii). The thread on which Herodotus hung his beads was the 'red thread' of Persian imperial aggression; my thread is the chronology of British education. Sometimes the beads might obscure the string, and some beads are larger than others: my writing on *if...* (1968), for example, is a much larger bauble, because, for me, it is a seminal portrayal of 'school-as-society' as being alien, redundant and malign, which, happily, hangs pretty much at the centre point of my period of interest). Whilst my narrative may not be orthodox, therefore, it has the virtue of being far from unique.

Ontology.

The ontology of film is itself a seminal issue. The diegesis, or world within the film, is a fictional construct, but whilst not 'real', may have much to say in a poetic if not literal manner: fiction, as Disraeli said, 'in the temper of the times, stands the best chance of influencing opinion' (preface to *Coningsby*, 1884). This diegesis, while poetic and fictive, nonetheless utilises a vocabulary and grammar familiar to the viewer, so there is an ontological truth to what we see that draws us into the narrative, and relates the story; it has a discursive veracity using 'frames of reference [...] within the particular cultural, historical,

epistemological, institutional and juridical parameters of our being' (Peim 2006). And a representation does not mean unreal: 'The combination of similarity-but-difference (or association-but-difference) is the basic means of any representation [...] The image (or sign) must be similar to (or associated with) whatever it represents, without actually being it, or it couldn't stand *for* it' (Williamson 1986: 76).

There is an intriguing psychological aspect to the relation of image and reality as evidenced in an interesting experiment carried out which went by the name of the 'phantom hand'. This experiment, reported in *Scientific American Mind* (2004: volume 14, no:5), shows how the brain can be fooled into feeling sensation in a prosthesis. Researchers at Nottingham Trent University have recently created a computer model to replicate the illusion to alleviate pain for arthritis sufferers (Mind tricks may help arthritic pain, www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-13068924, [last accessed 14/04/11]).

The experiment is important for this reason: if it is possible to 'fool' the brain by simple means of a repeated code and a screen, might not similar forces be at play in our suspension of disbelief when witnessing a particularly compelling film drama, albeit fictional? If a film can articulate with the emotions, experience and perhaps even aspirations we bring to the cinema, then what is the chance that what we feel (or what the filmmaker has made us feel) could be identical simply by chance? Nil. Or maybe nearly so. The screen, which originally would have been the safety curtain in theatres (there to *protect* the audience), and which in the referred to experiment disguised the truth, has become instead the means of transmission, and this goes for televisions, phones and computers as well: small wonder an illusion is sometimes mistaken for reality, the image reified into real meaning (the abstract made real).

Andreou and McCall have conducted research (at the Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham) into how a 13 year old boy ('Markus'), blind from birth, overcame his difficulties using 'mind maps' 'made up of tactile, auditory and kinaesthetic information' (The British Journal of Visual Impairment (2010), 28 (2): 122). The BBC Horizon programme 'Is Seeing Believing?' (broadcast 18/10/2010) (which also replicated the rubber-hand

illusion) suggested that the 'cross-modal plasticity' of the brain may enable one sense to replace another, with sounds, for example, stimulating the visual cortex. If the visually impaired can supplant their lack of vision with other senses, are the visually-able in danger of relying too much on this one sense, and disabling others? Stephen Bertman in his book *Hyperculture* believes so: 'Our attitudes are thus colored not merely by the particular things we see, but by the very existence of sight' (1998: 32). An over-reliance on the visual could result in a culture of all surface and no feeling.

The text of cinema uses signs, images and language that are (usually) familiar to the public consciousness, and which enable us to both watch and reflect. Burke concurs: 'images, like texts and oral testimonies, are an important form of historical evidence. They record acts of eyewitnessing' albeit with the reservation that theirs is a 'mute' witness, it being difficult to 'translate their testimony into words' and there remain problems of context, function, rhetoric and recollection (Burke 2001: 14).

However, as a work of art, a film may resonate with different viewers in different ways: we are thus permitted our own hermeneutical interpretation of the work, whilst being led by the narrative constructed by the film-maker(s). The ontological implications are profound. The pursuit of 'truth' or even verisimilitude in a fictive work is perhaps therefore a fool's errand; rather, if we accept Jean-Francois Lyotard's assertion that all reality 'is a constructed reality' (in Cohen 1996: 397), we might usefully find *meaning* from within the 'ensemble of discourses' of our culture, in which film plays an active and influential role.

Kracauer finds a special place for moving pictures: 'The whole dimension of everyday life with its infinitesimal movements and its multitude of transitory actions could be disclosed nowhere but on the screen...films illuminate the realm of bagatelles, of little events.' (Burke 2001: 33) This multitude of little events allows for connection with the audience: the articulation of author and viewer (Hall, in Dalton, 2007: 4). This pixellation is perhaps why Burke prefers to refer to 'traces' within texts rather than sources.

Moreover, if, as Erwin Panofsky says, 'an artist is not a camera but a communicator with his or her own

agenda' (Panofsky 1970: 90) then nor is the filmgoer an unthinking sponge. If Roland Barthes can 'read texts, images, cities, faces, gestures, scenes etc', so can we all (Burke 2001: 85). And our interpretation will change as our culturally-shaped view of context changes.

Epistemology.

Epistemology as it relates to film is also contentious: how do we 'know' what we see on the screen and what is the message? One may be tempted to make the assumption that there is a cinematic paradigm, a 'constellation of beliefs, values, techniques' (Kuhn 1970: 75) shared by the cinema audience. Whilst it is true that, for most of us, we are content to accept a passive and consensual role as viewer (we pay for our ticket, expect to be entertained and don't let what we see on the screen direct our actions in the real world), there must be a role for cinema to influence the way we make our choices (beyond the cinema) as a result of what we have seen. Thus, a viewer of Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salo* might retain a loathing for fascism; and a young, disaffected youth seeing *A Clockwork Orange* might engage in his own version of 'ultra-violence'. Equally, it was feared that the arbitrary violence in *Spare The Rod* might spark classroom riot (the film struggled to get an A certificate) (Aldgate 1995: 13-29); Ilmar Raag's *The Class* (a graphic post-Columbine film) was awarded an 18. Other films may make more use of symbolism and metaphor, rather than conventional narrative (for example, the films of Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway). Equally, a reflective viewer might, as Sandra Weber did, see a portrayal of a teacher presented in a movie, and decide that that would be a worthy career (Weber and Mitchell 1995: 137-8).

In addition, it is worth noting here that most popular teacher films follow the pattern which in literature is

known as *Bildungsroman*, that is, they chart the social, psychological or emotional development of the lead character(s). We the viewer are invited to empathise with the characters as they progress along their journey, with all its ups and downs. Their narrative journey becomes ours. It is in the nature of popular film to adhere to the equilibrium /disequilibrium /new equilibrium motif favoured by Hollywood, and this sits comfortably with *Bildungsroman*, regardless of how 'true-to-life' or not that might make them.

Articulation.

For me, of highest importance is the notion of articulation, after Hall, and expanded by Fiske, that any artefact worthy of the name 'art' must talk to the reader:

What a text "utters" determines, limits, and influences the links that can be made between it and its readers...For a text to be popular, it must "utter" what its readers wish to say, and must allow those readers to participate in their choice of its utterances...as they construct and discover its points of pertinence in their social situation (Dalton 2007: 4).

Hall's theory of articulation was formulated as a response to the postmodern insistence that everything could be reduced to the discursive (Morley and Chen (eds.), 1997: 145). For Hall, this was as reductionist as the culturalist view that social experiences, political functions, cultural practices and needs and interests all derived necessarily from one's economic (class) position. Instead he proposed a 'marxism without guarantees' (ibid, Grossberg: 156) which recognised the 'social formation as a concrete, historically produced organization' whilst acknowledging that 'each form of social practice ... has its own specificity or 'relative autonomy' and that articulation could occur if the social forces connected. 'An articulation is [...] the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions... the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it' (ibid, Hall: 141,142). Grossberg states (ibid, 167)

that while 'Hall argues that the audience cannot be seen as passive cultural dupes', nonetheless the culturalist position is more akin to that of the critic rather than the audience, remaining 'distanced from the effectivity of the popular'. I think this is remedied by Hall's notion of articulation, as can be shown by reference to popular film. If an audience emotes or connects with a film, they must, if such a literal metaphor can be excused, have hitched their emotional trailer to the truck of the film. Articulation allows for discourse without reducing the discursive to a relativist flatland with few discernible landmarks, and it permits the political without resorting to reductionism. As hegemony relies on the consent of the governed, articulation requires input from the audience; thus, it *is* acceptable to study popular film by dint of its popularity: this is a positive, not a negative, and renders the analysis of film texts as objective and not subjective.

History and films.

A debate was aired in the pages of *Sight and Sound* in the summer and autumn of 1942 concerning the teaching of history through films. Dr. Rachel Reid had appealed for an authenticity to 'history' films that would let the viewers use their imagination, much like the original explorers would have had to have done, on finding new lands. She eschewed 'dramatic' interpretations and encouraged film makers to focus on crafts and tools, the study of which could then be related to children's own experience (What historians want, *Sight and Sound*, summer 1942). In the autumn edition, a history teacher named R.S. Miles signalled his disagreement with an article entitled 'There should be "dramatic" films in history teaching' in which he refers to 'the value of the vivid'; 'diagrammatic' and social realist films may have their value

but, I would suggest, dramatic films are just as necessary as either of these two. In fact, even more so. The stimulation supplied by carefully selected dramatic episodes will help the cause of history teaching far more than any other kind of teaching (...)

History teaching (...) depends for success so very much upon “atmosphere” which most people will agree can be more successfully conveyed by films which can portray authentic-looking architecture, costumes and manners than by the improvisations of classroom or school plays (...) [the better to] capture the essential spirit of any age.

Miles concludes: ‘I am quite sure if *we* don’t regard these films as “source books” for modern history, future historians will definitely do so’ (*Sight and Sound*, autumn 1942). Robert A. Rosenstone would prove Miles correct. His *Visions of the Past* (1995) is an ‘investigation of how a visual medium, subject to the conventions of drama and fiction, might be used as a serious vehicle for thinking about our relationship to the past’ (3). However, my use of film concerns what Rosenstone calls ‘the analysis of film as a document (text) that provides a window onto the social and cultural concerns of an era’ (ibid, 3). Even though I am using films as historical texts, I am not usually focussing on historical films *per se* (some are historical, most are not), and so Rosenstone’s quandary about the veracity of film as history does not require resolution.

Genre.

So, can we call teacher and school films a genre? Sarah Street lumps *The Happiest Days of Your Life* (1950) and the *St. Trinian’s* films in with other 1940s and 1950s comedies, and finds space in later chapters to briefly mention *if...* (1968) and *Another Country* (1984) (Street, 2009), but these never appear as a separate genre in her book. Similarly, in the list of genres on the BFI website, there is no separate classification for these movies. However, if we look at their definition of what *constitutes* a genre, we may be permitted to assign them a place.

We commonly consider films in terms of their genre – the set of characteristics that distinguish, say, a Western from a Comedy or a Thriller. We recognise genres by their narratives or their themes, but also by their iconography, characters and certain stylistic elements (for example, lighting, camera style). As audiences, we enjoy the repetition of the familiar, but also the injection of novelty and change to familiar forms.

British cinema, like other national cinemas, has favoured some genres over others ... and has put its own distinctive spin on existing genres and invented new ones of its own (screenonline.org.uk)

By this definition, we may certainly make a case for our own genre. We recognise familiar narratives, of power, control and corruption; we sometimes see school as a refuge, but more often a prison; we often find school acting as a metaphor for society, and can detect both continuity and change. And the persistence of these films, and their interest with the public, is beyond question.

Positionality.

My period of interest extends from the 1930s to the present day, though inevitably certain times demand more attention than others: these are the periods of social and educational change referred to above. I shall describe the more momentous changes in education, examine films from these periods and look for a reflection in the films of said changes, and patterns of continuity, notwithstanding. Analysis of the content will be accompanied by an examination of the popular and critical reception, where evidence is available.

Here it might be appropriate to briefly explain my own position. I do not approach this work from a 'film studies' perspective, but that is not out of snobbishness, merely ignorance. My knowledge of camera angles, lighting and *mise en scene* is slight, but forgivable, I hope. My degrees were in history, my master's thesis

examining the films of Gracie Fields and working class culture in 1930s Britain. There, as here, I used film to illustrate attitudes and mores. I adopt a critical, broadly Marxist view of history, whilst being intrigued by the work of Baudrillard, Gray, Blackmore and others in trying to come to terms with our fragmented, postmodern world; despite that fragmentation, film preserves norms as amber may preserve an insect. Once the camera has captured a scene to celluloid, it is ours to analyse at length.

I am also a teacher. It is no doubt tempting for those who control either private or public expenditure to imagine that, in this cyber-age, teachers may become a redundant force, an expensive, archaic and unnecessary adjunct to the rapidly expanding technological resources available. I propose that the opposite is true: there has never before been such a need for teachers to bring the text to life, to excite the very molecules of learning and help students connect. I would maintain that a teacher's role is not merely as facilitator, enabling the student to navigate the blizzard of information at their fingertips: we have also to excite. When I read texts, be they film or book, I connect if I am excited. In this thesis, there will be moments when my enthusiasm goes beyond the dryly academic, and I depart from the language usually employed by researchers. I make no apology; you have witnessed my excitement at the articulation of the text with my own thought, feelings and experiences.

Limitations/methodology.

In a thesis of 80,000 words, it is important to limit one's scope. Therefore, documentary film evidence is not included here, for reasons given by Marwick above. Nor do I look at television representations of teachers, though they have become more common in Britain in the last thirty years: television series may be able to document the everyday better than film, but film can present issues more dramatically, in a ninety-minute format. Neither is there space here for anything but the most fleeting references to foreign teacher films, though I would hope this work might inspire another researcher to conduct a comparative

analysis.

There are also certain caveats that should be made when studying popular films. These may include the cooperative creation of a popular film: few movies can be regarded as the work of a single 'auteur'.

Richards warns us against regarding film as art for this reason, seeing them instead as artefacts, the 'product' of an industry, and 'a direct response to the era which has produced them' (Aldgate and Richards 2002: 6-7). Wheeler Winston Dixon points up the very real difficulty of analysing film:

As Foucault notes, "in modern thought, historicism and the analytic of finitude confront one another" (1970, 372). Nowhere is this truer than in the study of twentieth-century filmic practice, in which the spectator and theoretician are both confronted with a series of texts of such spectacular complexity as to nearly defy definitive analysis (Wheeler Winston Dixon (ed.) 1994: 3).

Then there is the problem of interpretation. A film maker (director? producer?) may place his or her interpretation on a script, which itself may have been adapted from a book. The casting of a 'star' may bring with it 'meaning' garnered from earlier films. And an audience may well 'read' a film differently from the director, depending on contemporary social events. Finally, as a writer describing some films and not others, I am *selecting* (the most swingeing and least fair act of discrimination possible?) according to my own positionality (Usher and Scott 1996: 18), and which films deliver the most historical usefulness to my purpose. I ask for the reader's understanding, and invite you to right my wrongs forthwith. I look forward to your contribution, both as a reader and perhaps future writer, asking only a little forbearance.

Portraying 'teacher'.

'...men's minds work on two quite distinct levels. The first, on which we are accustomed to make a large part of our everyday judgements, is the level of images and the way things outwardly appear to be, or the way in which, however unconsciously, we would like them to be. The second is based on things as they actually are.' Christopher Booker, *The Neophiliacs* 1970: 307).

Teaching is fundamentally a performance, the purpose of which is, of course, to educate, but also to influence behaviour (Goffman 1956: 8). In effect, any 'person' is a mask (Park, in Goffman, 1956: 12), a character which is the result of the accretion of our culture, and the role we choose to play. 'Teachers' use their 'front' (the 'expressive equipment' they utilise, including appearance, facial expression, voice) and the setting of the classroom, or the school, in a permanent performance. The teacher/performer will enhance his/her activity with dramatic realisation, rendering the visible disproportionately influential in the performance. Goffman elaborates; in a social context 'a given social front tends to become institutionalised in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise...The front becomes a 'collective representation'.' (1956: 17)

However, the role of teacher is a changing, and multiple, role. In fact, Joseph and Burnaford, editors of a work examining the construction of teacher image, *Images of Schoolteachers in Twentieth-Century America: paragon, polarities, complexities* (1994), list no fewer than 104 separate teacher images, from 'Abuser' to 'Worker', via, among many others, 'Ogre', 'Pedant' and 'Mother' (see appendix). The custodian *in loco parentis* has become pixellated into something quite different (iated).

In the postmodern world, the previous 'deep, authentic self' has been lost (as Ward described, above) whereby 'disintegration, fragmented desires, superficiality, and identity' become commodities (Ward 1997: 120). Giddens notes the demise of the 'high degree of trust' constructed from a deal teachers brokered in

the 1920s (with head of the Board of Education Lord Percy and educationalist Cyril Norwood), and that bridged the years of consensus, on into Plowden, but which fractured as a result of the ‘disembedding...of social relations from local contexts’, resulting in a challenge to the ‘ontological security’ of the self (Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 222). Giddens (1991) explains that ‘disembedding mechanisms’ of two types– ‘symbolic tokens’ and ‘expert systems’ (which for teachers might loosely translate as their knowledge and expertise)– both depend on *trust*, attitudes of which ‘are directly connected to the *psychological* security of individuals and groups’ (18,19) but that in high modernity, institutional reflexivity (‘the regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation’) is founded not on certainty but on *doubt*. Disembedded knowledge and expertise, and practitioners wanting in confidence, and losing trust and their protective ‘cocoon’ of self-identity under an onslaught of existential anxiety (54)– all has resulted in teachers with multiple selves, lacking ‘the warmth of a loving self-regard’ (ibid), and with it, the humanistic, holistic identity of the vocational teacher. ‘Good teachers’ have been replaced by teachers with assigned social identities, based on core competencies of ‘subject expertise, coordination, collaboration, management and supervision’(Woods and Jeffrey 2002: 228).

Nonetheless, there is a continuity, or a set of ‘grammatical’ rules, to the visual representation of teachers that makes it instantly recognisable (see Nóvoa below on the ‘grammar of schooling’). Whence this grammar? Is it learnt from our own experience, or is there more schooling in our culture? Susan Blackmore asserts that just as we have a biological, genetic inheritance which determines our fitness, so we also carry a cultural, memetic inheritance through which we make sense of our world: memes are units of cultural transmission (after Dawkins) whose only power is to replicate (Blackmore 1999: 6). When groups of memes work together, they may be referred to as a ‘memeplex’ (ibid, 19); it is perfectly possible to see the multiple, self-replicating memes of ‘teacher’ as a memeplex. This, of course, does not rule out change, or agency. Genetics points to the function of mutation as being crucial to evolutionary development; and we as humans are free to make (certain) choices. Nonetheless, there is a lot in meme theory that can explain the longitudinal longevity of what we almost universally recognise as ‘teacher’. ‘Contemporary popular

culture subsumes not only the culture of today's children and adults, but also a myriad of images from the past which blend seamlessly and often undetected into our familiar, unquestioned everyday knowledge' (Mitchell and Weber 1999: 168). So, how might popular culture affect our perceptions of teacher?

Education and image in the twentieth century

'...I can remember identifying with Sir as he battled with cynical teachers, prejudice and ignorance, ultimately rejecting a much more prestigious career as an engineer for the love of teaching, for the love of children. Romantic!? Heavy stuff?! Prior to seeing the movie, I had never even considered a career in teaching, but I did not forget that film. It lingered somewhere in the sedimentary collage of images that form the inchoate, primary material for thinking and feeling.' Weber and Mitchell (1995: 137-8), re *To Sir, With Love*.

In this quotation, Sandra Weber elegantly encapsulates the process whereby a cultural artefact, in this case film, sparks the imagination of the subject, and changes their way of looking at the world. The 'sedimentary collage of images that form the inchoate, primary material of thinking and feeling' is a good description of the mass of visual stimuli that settle in our subconscious, and from which we make sense of our world, form opinions, make choices. In Weber's case, one film triggered a response that took her from film-fan to educationalist. Such is the power of cinema, with each individual sovereign, and each interpreting according to their own experiences. And, wonderfully, these ideas are beyond the control of politicians and capitalists, and may just liberate us from our world of simulation.

I am now going to look at three academic articles which address the issue of the public perception of teachers. The first, by Antonio Nóvoa, gives us a historical perspective on the increasing importance of the visual, and discovers a continuity in the "grammar of schooling" ; the second, by Sol Cohen, uses the example of American film to show how the cinema can be regarded as a legitimate textual source; the third, by Ian Grosvenor and Martin Lawn, uses historical texts to show how what we know as 'teacher' is

in fact the result of political negotiation. By using ideas from all three articles, I hope to convince the reader of the legitimacy of using popular film to show how changes and continuity in education might be reflected.

In his article *Ways of Saying, Ways of Seeing: Public Images of Teachers (19th -20th Centuries)* (2000), Antonio Nóvoa gives us an Iberian perspective of the perceptions of educators. He references W.J.T. Mitchell's influence in relating images of teachers to their social construction (22). He begins by relating how the 'civilisation of the image' has superseded the 'Gutenberg galaxy', and not merely as an anecdotal adjunct to the written text, but as text in its own right, 'chiasmically intertwined' with the linguistic and the discursive. The pictorial turn is 'a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies and figurality', and 'spectatorship' may prove as problematic as 'reading'. We, as educational historians, must endeavour to apply the same analytical rigour to the pictorial as has been afforded the linguistic i.e. if postmodernism has privileged the linguistic ensemble of discourses a plurality of meanings denied by the singular grand narrative, then the same should apply to the visual: we need to become "a vivid eye". Nóvoa's hope is that in so doing, we might understand the 'production and circulation of images' [of teachers] about themselves', and discover their 'collective soul'.

Nóvoa cites Martin Jay in his book *Downcast Eyes* as describing the ocularcentric bias of historians which has subsequently led to a suspicion of the visual. Nóvoa follows Jay's logic that the hypertrophy of the visual has, contrarily, denigrated its value, exposing itself to various interpretations, and losing scientific determinism (23,24). Jonathan Crary (*Techniques of the Observer: on vision and modernity in the nineteenth century*) links this phenomenon with the nineteenth century 'remapping of the body' which saw a 'separation of the senses', leaving the visual a 'mystified and abstract identity' (24). Nonetheless, we have in postmodernism a tool which will render a multiplicity of meanings, a compound eye, and a 'multifaceted dialectics of seeing' which will permit a plural epistemology, via hermeneutic interpretation. Images are neither

merely symbols or signs, but are ‘something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence or character endowed with legendary status’. In a world of images, our society is ‘impregnated with an excess of meanings’ or ‘an excessive search for meanings’; postmodernism possesses the obstetric skills necessary to deliver living meaning.

Nóvoa restricts himself to three aspects of the pictorial turn in order to historically research images of teachers: the image as a means of expression, images as relationships and the construction of an archive of (all) past images. This will give us an ontological corpus of ‘teacher’ as conveyed by images, a ‘metapicture’ ‘fundamental to [his] understanding of teachers’ images’: what Mitchell and Weber refer to as the ‘Cumulative Cultural Text of ‘teacher’’ (1999: 166). Historically, Nóvoa covers the period from the late nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, the era of compulsory education in Britain, which coincided with the development of photography. He also finds value in caricature as a means of expressing the relationship between teachers and the general public, the divining of the ‘difficult and miniscule “truth”’ in which public opinion is consolidated.

In fact, Nóvoa discovers three general ideas from his study of the pictorial corpus. Firstly, that despite changes in the architecture and the didactic materials of teaching, there appears a continuity in the “grammar of schooling”, and a permanence in the images of teacher that transcended ruptures in the historiography of education. Secondly, images of teachers transmitted a sense of ‘serenity and organisation’, specifically at those times of pedagogical renovation, affording them a propaganda value (p31). Thirdly, mass schooling attained a “normative principle” and “an organizational reality” in all countries studied and in all regions. Education thus becomes ‘probably one of the most powerful world-wide institutions.’

And yet the profession could not bequeath its practitioners a salary commensurate with other professions, such as the law, or medicine. Using images garnered from a variety of countries, Nóvoa presents a picture of an impoverished teacher body, which, like the priesthood, appeared to require a vocational drive from the

incumbents, in place of a living wage. The power wielded by teachers was not matched in their pay, and the situation was worse for primary teachers, drawn from the lower middle class, and especially women (secondary teachers were drawn from the social elite.) Caricatures of poverty helped make this situation unsustainable.

The male caricature of teacher is one of a relationship mediated with disciplinary tools, which become ‘a kind of “prosthesis”’. The power to punish, *in loco parentis*, was a prerogative of the male teacher, although in secondary school the form of correction was usually the examination. Women on the other hand are represented as protected, more ‘private’ and maternal: the strange contradiction of a largely female profession still represented as male is explained away as a consequence of the need to present a professional, powerful image, an anomaly that was only really addressed nearly a century later, in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The centre of the historian’s work, says Nóvoa, is in *remembering–imagining*. We must stress the relationship between images and history, and ‘seek a balance between “reproduction” and “construction”’. The author raises three questions relating to historical study in the field of education. Firstly, he positions the ‘civilisation of images’ within a nineteenth century triumvirate of ‘Images, Education and History’: all three being developed contemporaneously, leading to a conflation under the notion of progress in which we might expect a linear improvement as a result of ‘the regulation of individual self-reflection, self-examination and consciousness.’ The author then asks whether this notion is useful at the end of the twentieth, and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Harold Silver is quoted as saying that ‘the history of education looks to imagine past alternatives, at the same time as it reflects on forms of thinking for the future’ (37): it is a question of ‘overcoming the gulf between *experience* and *expectation*’.

Today, we have at our disposal a plurality of meanings and interpretations, gleaned from an epistemological and ontological examination of what is known and what is real, an ‘amalgamation of

performances and discursive practices.’ Nóvoa’s third point relates to articulating the discursive construction of the social with the social construction of the discourse: it is not *facts* but ‘historians who dominate the debate’, and while education might be ‘the least understood thing, the worst understood, precisely because it is assumed to be the most clearly understood, and by everybody’, it is that proximity which we have all experienced, if only as pupils, that demands historians step back, in order to get a better picture; the closer one is to an object, the more it blocks one’s view. We can often see more from a distance.

American Sol Cohen prefaces his article (1996) with a quotation from Lynn Hunt in which she advocates the close examination ‘of texts, of pictures, and of actions’ which reveal more than an ‘elaboration of new master narratives.’ The author proposes film be accepted by historians as a ‘legitimate form of textual representation and important evidential “source” for our new exploration and interpretation of culture and of education.’ Cohen addresses the issue of reality, quoting Jean-Francois Lyotard: ‘[postmodernism] cannot exist...without discovery of the ‘lack of reality’ of reality, together with the invention of other realities’(397).

Cohen elaborates:

in the postmodern view, ‘there is neither a primary “real” world nor one “true” representation of the world.’ ‘[R]eality is a constructed reality’, and “text” (or “language” or “discourse”) becomes the primary realm of human experience.’ Far from being problematical for the historian analysing film, this is the touchstone to our success, for what is fictive film if not a ‘constructed reality’?

Cohen next refers to two closely connected strands of postmodernism: the apotheosis of culture, and the elision of high and popular culture. Furthermore, intertextuality, i.e. the infinite possibilities thrown up by the interaction within the “ensemble of discourses” in culture is a concept which enables us to interpret film, which has already undergone interpretation by film maker and audience alike, thus creating a triple hermeneutic. We should be less distracted therefore by looking for verisimilitude than seeing film as one

element in an intertextual network of the ensemble of discourses.

The author then proceeds to follow Derrida's concept of deferred meaning to deconstruct the Peter Weir film *Dead Poets Society*, in order to tease out 'the warring forces of signification within the text itself', and reveal its intrinsic, subverting meaning. Our epistemological knowledge of what the film 'means' is challenged, with Cohen citing Raymond Williams, and his claim that 'no text is a unity', and that whilst there might be a "dominant" moment in the text, there will also reside "emergent" and "residual" moments as well (404). Thus, on the face of it, the film 'juxtaposes two discourses which are incommensurable... Tradition and Romanticism', and tradition in *Dead Poets Society* is personified by the headmaster of Welton College, Mr Nolan, who sees his job as preparing his students for Harvard: his college is a conduit to that bastion of conservative success, and the boys must learn obedience and conformity. The ends justify the means. Progressive education is represented in the person of maverick teacher (and old boy, hinting that Nolan's regime is not fool-proof) John Keating, an advocate of what D. Ravitch described as "self-expression and maximum child growth" (403). So is set up a conflict of pedagogical styles and interests that forms the dominant moment of the text. However, there is a fracture in this white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Eden. Tradition and Discipline are foregrounded to the detriment of the other two 'pillars of wisdom', Honor (sic) and Excellence. Can such a world be supported without two of the pillars? Cohen cites Foucault in reminding us that 'disciplinary-modalities construct docile bodies by means of the Gaze' that, in the person of Nolan, 'watches, judges, and normalizes all of Welton's inhabitants, teachers as well as students', thus maintaining the class hierarchy (406).

The revival of Keating's Dead Poets Society and its secret meetings are an attempt by the boys to evade the Gaze. Here, activities which would not be tolerated in college are permissible: self-expression, smoking, jazz, poetry; an acknowledgement of romantic aspirations. Significantly, however, none of these activities threatens Welton. Indeed, the only damage caused is to the boys themselves, in particular Neil Perry, whose inability to reconcile his father's ambitions for him, and his own dreams of acting lead to his

tragic suicide. I would maintain that this is the emergent moment in the film, the realisation that Keating's flirtation with progressive ideas, apparently so rebellious, has led to nothing more substantial than 'a holiday from reality' (413); he 'never moves beyond slogans and exhortations.' Keating is guilty of a proud, self-serving 'preoccupation with the self', a narcissistic flounce against 'the herd', but without equipping the boys with any structural critique of the system he is so ill at ease with, and with no prescription for its resolution (see Lasch, 416). His kick against the pricks is essentially juvenile and unsustainable, and attests to his own arrested development. Casting Robin Williams in the role is masterful, as many of the actor's characterisations have been of *ingenus*, innocents and failures; a thoughtful way of grafting meaning onto our perception of Keating. We might question not just whether the Dead Poets Society is a useful refuge for the Romantic heart, but perhaps more an accusation, an indictment of American society in which poetic idealism has already died. Made in 1989, but referencing a period before the seismic rumblings of the sixties, I would suggest that the film seeks to pinpoint the root cause of the failure of the radicalism that died in a miasma of sex, drugs and rock'n roll, and inchoate adolescent idealism, in the absence of structured ideological opposition. The root cause of the failure was that the roots hadn't developed.

Cohen concludes his piece by suggesting (returning to the film's dominant moment, or theme) that perhaps in educational terms, the answer to the traditionalist/progressive dichotomy is some admixture of the two: perhaps a rather disappointing, though workable, conclusion to draw, given the radical deconstruction of the film, and perhaps the equivalent of the accommodation of the bipartite squabble between Republicans and Democrats that leaves the capitalist system of the United States intact, and unthreatened. Mary Dalton puts it thus:

...the Hollywood curriculum schools its audience to view these good teachers as
progressive if not outright radical, and at the same time makes it unthinkable to
viewers that these teachers might actually unite one with another and form a bloc
together with students to displace the educational bureaucracy in the name of

democratic education and social justice. (Dalton 2007: 41)

No united front to challenge what McTaggart calls the privatism of the workplace (Hargreaves 1994: 170–171).

My third article, by Ian Grosvenor and Martin Lawn (2001), explains that the origin of the fixed identity of the British teacher is less the product of systemic or structural change, but more the result of a discourse surrounding the (good) character of the teacher; this discourse is itself a construct, and so questions arise as to the epistemological roots of 'teacher', and the ontological base of that identity. In fact, the prescribed (conservative) values of society came to be embodied in the person of the 'good teacher'.

The construction of teacher identity began with the 'official nationalism' of the 1920s, which itself was a conservative reaction to the perceived threat to the national hegemony from the left, from international events and from trades unionism. To create an 'imagined community of teachers' which would help preserve the status quo, Lord Eustace Percy devised the notion of 'reasonable independence', borrowed from the Colonial Office, which was designed to give an impression of devolved power to the local level without ever compromising the effective power of the centre. Strategic control would remain with government. The *quid pro quo* was that teachers should retain control over the content of what they taught, and the pedagogic style. In return, teachers would conduct themselves properly and be of good moral character. They would be distinct from the other within society, and from other societies, and as a body were ascribed a collective identity which would normally adhere to an individual i.e. 'an inherent system of morality', observance of rules that 'govern the game' and a 'racial' character unique to England. This was a managed system, a discourse appealing to the 'essential soundness' of teachers, a discourse in which 'service outplayed action, negotiation silenced militancy, responsibility replaced prescription and reasonableness quietened conflict'. The system and teachers were united in their Englishness, and the resultant fixed identity did as much to shape school as any structural alteration.

In his work *National Identity* (1991: 161–162), A.D. Smith identified three purposes to the ‘official nationalism’ of the period (Grosvenor and Lawn 2001: 359). It provided a ‘strong community of history and destiny’, restoring ‘collective faith’; it provided a ‘glorious past’, a ‘felt antiquity for a community and its mythological value’; and it provided fraternity, the nation as family. Democracy, professionalism and autonomy: key words applicable equally to the nation, and to the teacher. Herein lies the home, say Grosvenor and Lawn, of the ‘myths about education’: ‘this who we are and this what we do’; sacrifice, public service, the struggle for education and the coming into the light. And behind it all, control, and power.

Four texts are used by the authors to explain how English educational discourse constructed a collective teacher identity: Norwood’s *The English Tradition of Education* (1929); Board of Education (1944); Crowther (Central Advisory Council for Education [CACE], 1959); and Newsom (CACE, 1963). Cyril Norwood built on Percy’s strategic conservative vision of ‘reasonable independence’, joining public school values of ‘games, teamwork and service’ with a ‘muscular Christianity and a ‘race’ mission.’ Norwood saw in England ‘an inherited system of morality’, which, if made overt to the individual, should deliver ‘cooperation, and an orderly life in the community...’ There was a homology, or correspondence, between the nation and the good person, especially the teacher, ‘servants and interpreters’ of this particular culture and tradition. The Victorian view of the teacher as ‘moral guide and regulator’, as ‘ethical exemplars’ for children to ape, was to be supplemented, so that a *modus vivendi* was created, a mix of a ‘bureaucratic program orientated to the social training of citizens’ and ‘a pastoral pedagogy orientated to individual salvation and moral perfection.’

Change came with the aftermath of the Second World War, when the good character of a teacher was no longer deemed sufficient: the requirement now was for mature, enthusiastic teachers who would have a rounded world-view and a zeal for teaching. More mature women teachers were represented in the new

collective identity. The new Jerusalem required good personal relationships between teacher and pupil, and teaching colleagues. Social reconstruction accompanied a restructured teaching profession; the child was now a trainee democrat. Education's aim was now to change and develop society, and this new 'progressive Englishness' placed the teacher at the 'epicentre of social renewal and its particular discourse.'

The late 50s and early 60s saw England rocked by disquiet and scandal, and the good teacher was regarded as crucial in restoring some integrity. Sir Geoffrey Crowther chaired the Central Advisory Council for Education which declared for mature, strong and moral teachers who had a love for learning, and a gift to inspire. Structural changes were eschewed in favour of a search for teachers of substance and conviction. These 'totemic' qualities, and the emphasis upon the person, meant an establishment of a collective teacher identity which defined teacher as other than his peers, a moral force personifying the English national identity with which it was 'forcefully intertwined', and which became ubiquitous, and normative, enshrined in Newsom (CACE 1963).

In a note at the end of Grosvenor and Lawn's article we find a quotation from Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister who had overseen the running of a National Government in the 1930s, an exercise in consensus that sought to quell class divisions in the interests of the one nation. His appeal is to the teacher of character who influences those in his charge almost subliminally, but who earns their respect, in retrospect. The influence of this teacher will extend long after schooldays have been enjoyed, or endured; the moral lesson is taken into adulthood, such that:

when we are faced...with problems that test our character, ...we should be almost afraid, as it were, to take the part that we know to be the less right one, because we feel somehow that that was the one thing that would not have met with the approval of him (sic) whom we knew all those years ago.

'Teacher' had become the conscience of the nation. Epistemologically, we, as citizens, were required to

accept the rectitude of both; to do other would be treason. The position of teacher was now unassailable. Ontologically, the deliberate conflation of how we were to see the country and how we were to regard teacher was a distortion of reality which nonetheless served the 'official nationalism' of England, at the same time elevating the status of a profession hitherto struggling to keep up with fellow professionals, such as those in the law, or medicine. The notion of 'reasonable independence' with autonomy for the teacher, and a faith in their ability to deliver must have been highly seductive, and is in sharp contrast with the niggardly mistrust of the neo-conservative governments of the last thirty years.

If strands of these authors are entwined together, we may begin to see how the cultural representation of teacher became so resilient and recognisable. Nóvoa's articulation of the 'discursive construction of the social with the social construction of the discourse' provides the primordial social 'soup' whence emerges a construct garbed in the grammar of *remembered-imagined* images, serene and normal. Cohen's 'ensemble of discourses' is personified in Joseph and Burnaford's encyclopaedic role-call (sic); in Britain, this creation was legitimised, and given life, through the British government's commandeering of education as a means to an empirical end, as shown by Grosvenor and Lawn. But how and why did these constructions persist and evolve?

Blackmore explains the advent of new, memetic life as equivalent to the evolution of genetically-favoured organisms:

Imagine early hominids who have discovered the biologically 'good trick' of imitation. Initially, this good trick allowed some individuals to profit by stealing the discoveries of others, and these individuals therefore passed on the genes that made them imitators until imitation became widespread. Then a new replicator was born and, using the copying machine of the brain, began to make copies- copies of actions, copies of behaviours, copies of gestures and facial expressions, and copies of sounds. This

world of early memes is the equivalent of the primeval soup. Which of these potentially copyable (sic) actions will be more successful as a replicator? The answer is those with high fidelity, high fecundity, and longevity (Blackmore 1999: 101–2).

But not only are the ingredients crucial. You also need the recipe. ‘[F]ollowing recipes is not a reversible process’, says Blackmore. You can’t taste soup and deduce the ingredients, quantities or preparation. ‘[E]rrors are bound to creep into the reverse engineering required to copy the product’ and if ‘copies of copies are made the errors are compounded.’ ‘It is far better to have clear instructions to follow’ (ibid, 214). The teacher memplex, a self-replicating socio-cultural construct, would replicate and survive because it fits its socio-cultural environment.

And yet teachers and pupils are real. Notwithstanding the post-modern truisms of Hargreaves’ ‘moving mosaic’ (1994), Baudrillard’s simulacra (1983) and Blackmore’s memplex, we must remind ourselves of the human investment in education. As we shall see (Ball, below), education is becoming big business, and private capital offers market solutions to perceived failings in the system. John Gray in *Black Mass* (2008) suggests a *realist* alternative to the millennial, and potentially apocalyptic, search for utopian perfection, be it from left or right, an alternative which accepts diverse opinion and which might, as a result, help us live within the physical constraints of our world (after Lovelock (2007)). May we come to an acceptance of a degree of human fallibility, without disposing of both baby and bathwater, or are we hell-bent on perfectibility, when to err is human?

As part of my Diploma in Professional Studies (2008–2010), I conducted a brief study of teachers’ reflections on film representations of their profession, and asked which, if any, had inspired them to become teachers. The overwhelming majority of those who responded to this question cited charismatic teachers (the most popular being the aforementioned maverick John Keating in *Dead Poets Society*). As referred to earlier, there are British film representations of charismatic teachers, but they are outnumbered by the mad,

bad and dangerous to know. It also appears (from the annual awards to outstanding teachers) that these are the professionals who are most loved by schools, children and society at large: the question could then be put— how to manufacture charismatic teachers, the ones that ‘make a difference’? The answer is beyond the scope of this work, but it might be useful to question whether the present mania for regulation, orthodoxy and ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves 1994: 186) might in itself not be deterring or even preventing the development of such individuals. Further, might not education for results (rather than education as a holistic, individual asset) hamper the production of new charismatic teachers for the future? The very drive to professionalise could itself be the very instrument of its own destruction: how may today’s children think for themselves when their teachers are not permitted to?

Scientist and author James Lovelock warns of the danger of the public believing ‘good storytellers’ over the evidence of scientists as concerns climate change:

This is why I take Michael Crichton’s opinions seriously, not because they are true, but because he is such a good storyteller... The public is much more likely to be influenced by writers such as Michael Crichton than they are by scientists. Fiction writers and film producers should ask themselves if they are sure that what they say is true before succumbing to the overriding imperative of the storyline... (Lovelock 2007: 62).

Harold Rosen, head of English at Walworth School in the 1950s, was acutely aware of articulation with narrative when dealing with his working-class pupils:

‘Whatever language the pupils possess, it is this which must be built on rather than driven underground. However narrow the experience of our pupils may be (and it is often wider than we think), it is this experience alone which has given their language meaning’. And in an interview, he expands: ‘But the business about the

working class– argumentative, reflective and so on– is what’s their experience of it?

I mean, you can’t conjure it out of the air. You need an experience of well-trodden paths, in a sense, and many of them had none whatsoever. And therefore, those things they do want to deal with, they do within the thing they do have experience with, narrative....the mode of dealing with this is the mode that is available to them.

So what you find is, the seeds of all these forms of discourse, all forms of discourse, you can find in narrative (Harold Rosen interview in seminar paper Social change and English: a study of three English departments, 1945–1965, given at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood (DOMUS), University of Birmingham: 22/11/2010).

What links Lovelock to Rosen is their awareness of the power of the narrative, and this, it can be argued, is the most powerful force in popular film. People are more likely to be influenced, either orally or visually, by a good story, and especially if it articulates with their own ‘experience of well-trodden paths’. Teachers need to reflect not only on their own practice, but on the narratives of teacher that precede and accompany them, and, I would argue, most especially in the ninety-minute movie format wherein those narratives may be most affecting.

The following work is an attempt to make a connection between the study of teacher films as artefacts with the history of education, in order to highlight the importance of the socio-cultural legacy and reflection they provide. This ‘triangulation’ of education, history and film has meant that traditional literature reviews are less helpful than in theses based solely on the written word. Nonetheless, I shall attempt a brief overview of what is to follow, so as to guide the reader to their chapter of choice.

I will chart the major changes in education in Britain over the last century, from the 1930s to 2010, and look for reflections of change and continuity as expressed in popular films. Ellsmore (2005) claims: ‘Teaching is not made for the purpose of generating exciting cinema’. While this may be true, film

nonetheless preserves contemporary attitudes and manners. Whilst Dalton (2007) has chosen a methodology loosely based on Huebner's 'five "value frameworks" of curricular thought' (11), and Fisher, Harris and Jarvis (2008) have themed chapters, I have opted for a (broadly) chronological ordering, which I deemed the most appropriate given my hypothesis. I use Baudrillard's three simulacra as a device to suggest three shifts in thinking as regards teachers. In addition, and hopefully, not too confusingly for the reader, I concentrate my attention on three periods of major educational change, namely post World War 2, the sixties and the neo-conservative era from 1979 to the present day; there are ten chapters in total, indicating perhaps the complexity of trying to fit film into neatly constructed 'bites'. It is also true that more attention is paid to certain films than others, and this speaks of their usefulness to me in this thesis, and not of their quality as films *per se*.

Pre-war comedies are looked at in chapter 2, entitled **Schools for Scandals**, where the comedies of Will Hay and Cicely Courteneidge are contrasted with *Goodbye, Mr Chips*. Cunningham and Gardner's *Becoming Teachers* (2004) has given valuable insights into the professionalisation of teaching in this period. Following the war, the changes forged by the 1944 Education Act are reflected in films such as *The Guinea Pig*, *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill* and *The Browning Version*. I study these films in depth in chapter 3 called **A New England**. The work of Jackson and Marsden in *Education and the Working Class* (1966) is particularly illuminating for this period. The early sixties saw several films addressing the issue of what kind of teaching was desirable, and the pitfalls that may beset the unwary, liberal teacher; chapter 4, titled **Trials and Tribulations**, focuses on *It's Great To Be Young*, *Spare The Rod* and *Term of Trial*. McCulloch, *Failing the Ordinary Child?* (1998) has been of special help in understanding this era. The tensions of the classroom make for good comedy, and the following chapter (5), **A Little Light Relief**, includes the *St Trinian's* movies, *Carry On Teacher* and *Please, Sir!*, while the darker side of 60s disillusionment is looked at in chapter 6, **Class War?**, to include *To Sir, With Love*, *if....*, *Kes* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The late seventies onwards saw governments replacing the 'reasonable independence' of an earlier age with a regimen of assessment and inspection. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times* by Hargreaves (1994) has

provided many useful insights into the transition, and its effects. Chapter 7, **An End to Consensus** looks at the films that were made during the period of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, when the criticisms of teachers were made flesh and reflections, celluloid. Chapter 8, **Hogwarts and All**, spotlights films in which teachers, if not magical, were cynical and sometimes manipulating, including the various *Harry Potter* films. **Teaching in A Neo Conservative Age**, chapter 9, looks at *The History Boys*, *Notes On A Scandal* and latterly *St Trinian's* and *Cracks*. Chapter 10, **Conclusion: eighty years on**, seeks to address the state of education in Britain in the 21st century, and reflect on lessons learned and possible futures. The accompanying DVD contains clips from several films.

CHAPTER 2. SCHOOLS FOR SCANDALS: THE THIRTIES.

The 1930s saw Britain in the grip of an economic slump. The possibility of revolution had stalled on the failure of the General Strike of 1926 and a divided Labour Party, and the National Government of Stanley Baldwin, a Conservative, sought to salve the wounds with an attempt at consensus ('Smokeless chimneys and anxious mothers! The remedy: vote for the National Government'; General Election poster, 1931). The mood of (certain parts of) the country was grim: parts of the north were ravaged as the old staples of coal, steel, cotton and shipbuilding were on the ropes. Meanwhile, new manufacturing was bringing jobs to the south, with consumer durables replacing heavy industry; the new Hoover building in Perivale and the Ford plant at Dagenham seemed to herald 'the dawn of affluence' (Stevenson and Cook 1979: 15).

Education in Britain was in a condition of stasis. The Bryce Report of 1895 had recognised the need for a thorough overhaul of the nation's secondary education system, replacing School Boards with Local Education Authorities responsible to central government, but answerable to the local needs. Bryce also suggested a course of instruction to fit the nation's youth for life, with secondary schools providing instruction to the age of 16 for those wealthy enough, or fortunate enough to obtain a scholarship: secondary schools here meaning advanced of elementary, and not referring to the age of the student (McCulloch in Aldrich

(ed.) 2002: 34–6). The Labour Party, however, was manoeuvring for a change in secondary education, with secondary education to be the right of all adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. This change in nomenclature was confirmed in the Hadow Report of 1926 which also acceded to the Labour demand for a different and distinct education for those not inclined to a classical academic education. The notion of the modern school was born. Nevertheless, fears were expressed that this provision of a different education for different needs might widen the class divide: 'We admit that we are here walking on difficult ground, and that there are fires burning beneath the thin crust on which we tread.' Hadow Report, ppxxii, in McCulloch, *ibid*, 37). Less concerned with firefighting than maintaining the privilege of the elite was Dr Cyril Norwood, chairman of the Secondary Schools Examination Council, who would later become the chairman of the Board of Education. The stage was set for a battle of minds, but the contest was effectively postponed by the economic problems blighting government and country alike. Education was put on the back-burner.

Meanwhile, the people needed their cup of cheer, and the cinema would provide it. As Marr explains, Scottish socialist Edwin Muir despaired of this 'commercial 'bus-driven, cinema-educated' age making the immediate environment...matter less to how people behave. 'The inhabitants of all our towns, great and small, Scottish and English, are being subjected more and more exclusively to action from a distance'' (Marr 2009: xxv). Nevertheless, working class people in particular flocked to the thousands of 'dream palaces' and 'flea pits' that sprang up in every town, both large and small. There were an estimated 3,000 cinemas in 1926, which had grown to 4,967 by 1938, with annual admissions rising from 903 million in 1934 to 1,027 million in 1940 (Richards 1989: 11,12). Gracie Fields ('Our Gracie') would become Britain's highest-paid film star, her movies a heady mix of impish, irreverent comedy, spectacle and sentimentality which at the same time spoke to her audience in their own language, and often, their own accent (*ibid*: 169–172). A night at the flicks would lift the gloom in 'the devil's decade', and often the butt of the jokes would be our lords, and, in both senses, our masters.

French philosopher Jean Baudrillard conceived of three orders of simulacra. The first, the Counterfeit, is

based on the natural law of value and corresponded to the Renaissance, with its neo-classical design and stucco angels: *a worldly demiurge* (Baudrillard 1983: 87). We are in a world of theatrical machinery, of bourgeois values plastered over the cracks of human fallibility to simulate democracy.

There is a strict correlation between the mental obedience of the Jesuits ("*perinde ac cadaver*") and the demiurgic ambition to exorcise the natural substance of a thing in order to substitute a synthetic one...Reunify the scattered world (after the Reformation) under the aegis of a homogenous doctrine...In order to accomplish this, you need to create effective simulacra: the apparatus of the organization (sic) is one, but also is clerkly magnificence and the theatre...And training and education are other simulacra that aimed, for the first time ever in a systematic manner, at remodeling (sic) an ideal nature from a child. (Baudrillard 1983: 88, 89)

This is a land of costume and prosthesis, of automata: 'The entire metaphysics of man as protagonist of the *natural theatre* of the creation is incarnated in the automaton...A perfect double for man' (ibid: 93). In 1930s British cinema, we find representations of teacher that appear to reflect Baudrillard's first order of simulation, right down to the cap, gown and cane.

Boys Will Be Boys (1935), director William Beaudine.

In the 1930s, veteran music hall star Will Hay followed the lead of Gracie Fields and transferred his skills from stage to screen in a series of films in which he plays corrupt and incompetent schoolmasters. In *Boys Will Be Boys* (1935, director William Beaudine), Hay plays the part of Dr. Alec Smart, the new headmaster at Narkover college, a school for the sons of gentlemen thieves. Fresh from a stint teaching recalcitrant convicts at the local jail, Smart has only got the job courtesy of a neat bit of penmanship by

one of the inmates, who just happens to have a son at Narkover. After a stormy reception from the boys, it becomes very clear to Smart that he must live on his wits; when confronted by students less interested in learning than card sharpers, the teacher throws in his lot with his pupils, using guile to exact revenge, and then win them over. Survival for Sharp means confounding the conniving Colonel Crableigh, whose nephew Smart has beaten to the post of head, and he does so by enlisting the help of the boys, who display a commendable honour amongst thieves. Smart may be corrupt, but he still ranks head and shoulders above the contemptible colonel.

A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD.

EP at the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (vol. II, no:13, 1935) was quick to point out, somewhat defensively, that the story in the film was a 'crazy and ridiculous farce' which 'bears no relation whatever to everyday life'; nonetheless, this 'burlesque travesty of school life' that moved 'briskly from beginning to end' was 'an admirable vehicle for the fooling of Will Hay'.

Good Morning Boys! (1936), director Marcel Varnel.

An almost identical plot is found in the 1936 film *Good Morning Boys!* (director Marcel Varnel), in which Hay plays Dr. Benjamin Twist, the head of St Michael's, (once more) a public school for the sons of rogues and ne'er do wells. Again, his authority is challenged, but he colludes with the pupils for a quiet life. Condemning gambling as a 'national curse' 'undermining the social structure', he reveals himself to be a keen aficionado, even arranging for Albert, one of the boys, to accept a bet. As a *quid pro quo*, he

conspires to protect the boys from the inspection of new governor Colonel Willoughby-Gore, disguising Albert's gambling odds as historical data.

To prove their teacher's worth, the boys must excel in an inter-schools examination, and Twist, fearing being found out, knows his job depends on good results, and turns a blind eye to cheating- and the knobbling of other students' papers. Twist's loyalty pays off in the end, when he thwarts a plot to steal the Mona Lisa, with the help of the boys. So, honour and honesty are placed on a sliding scale; this is not a world of absolute values, more one determined by pragmatism, and bluff.

Monthly Film Review (IV, 37, 1937) thought the film 'strongly reminiscent of *Boys Will Be Boys*' and added somewhat acerbically: 'To those to whom this was distasteful, *Good Morning, Boys* will be equally lacking in appeal', though the 'pace was swift' and the film contained an 'abundance of riotous and hilarious adventures and incidents', albeit heavily dependent on Hay 'who is at his best in his own unique fashion'.

The Ghost of St Michael's (1941), director Marcel Varnel.

The role was reprised in 1941 when Hay appears as William Lamb (to the slaughter?) in *The Ghost of St Michael's* (Marcel Varnel), a comedy murder-mystery set on the Isle of Skye. The school has decamped from Sevenoaks to Scotland, due to the war, but Dunbain Castle is already occupied: by the ghost of Mad McKinnon. But is the incumbent supernatural or criminal by nature? First headmaster Dr Winter, and then his replacement Mr Humphries, are murdered, and suspicion falls on Lamb. Taken to court, Lamb is saved thanks to his obvious ignorance of chemistry, and the support of the boys and their ringleader, Thorne, whom he has earlier won over (colluding in a midnight feast of lobster and whisky). A fellow master, the imbecilic Tisdaile is offered the headship: the governor, Sir Ambrose, recognises that the

modern age needs his qualities: 'bold; enterprising; youth'. A shame he's totally incapable; and dispensable. But Tisdaile reinstates Lamb. Meanwhile, Thorne suspects fellow master Stock- is he not Swiss but a Nazi? In fact, it's the matron, Mrs Wigmore, who has been signalling U-boats, and Stock's a British agent. Boys and masters combine to overcome the matron, and foil the plot to land spies on Skye.

Reviews of this film are conspicuously absent, though the BFI rightly describes it as a 'superlative mix of comedy and wartime thrills' (www.bfi.org.uk; last accessed 10/10/2010). Like our next movie, any shortcomings in sophistication are more than offset by the cheering effect it must have had on the audience's morale; at the same time, it serves as a serious reminder that 'walls have ears' and fifth columnists were more than just a conspiracy theory in 1941.

The Goose Steps Out (1942), directors Basil Dearden and Will Hay.

Our final Will Hay film is 1942's *The Goose Steps Out* (Basil Dearden and Will Hay) in which schoolmaster William Potts (Hay, of course) of Meadowvale School, who just happens to be a double for captured Nazi spy 'Muller', is parachuted into Germany to discover and retrieve a secret weapon. Muller is in the hands of British intelligence, so Potts' cover is secure, so long as he can convince the German authorities of his authenticity. Whilst there, he is required to teach trainee spies at Altenburg University how to fit in with British society, which gives the audience the chance to laugh at their own lackadaisical approach to the war: the English never carry their gas masks, or even sit up straight, for example. The young Nazis are incredulous, but it transpires that there are friends in the camp who help Potts bamboozle his superiors. The most famous scene comes where he teaches his students the British form of salutation- the two-fingers- which he demonstrates to a portrait of Adolf Hitler, and gets his protégés to follow suit. This must have delighted British audiences, for not only were they familiar by now with Hay's string of counterfeit teachers, but to use the scam to hoodwink the enemy *and* inflict the ultimate humiliation upon

their leader must have been uplifting to the spirits.

William K. Everson relates that, at the time of its release, *The Goose Steps Out* was regarded as 'one of his [Hay's] lesser efforts' but it proved 'a huge morale booster, not least because it attacked Hitler and Nazism on pure slapstick terms'. Astutely, Everson makes this general observation about the great comic:

Hay ... must be unique in being the only comic to achieve such great popularity with a character who was almost always a fraud, a cheat, a braggard, and totally without sentimentality or pathos in that he was never involved with either girl friends or nagging wives (Monthly Film Bulletin, vol. XV, no: 3, 2003).

Hay's films 'contain potentially anarchic elements in that their 'presentation of community is not idyllic, not a portrait of consensus, but rather a darker picture of a divided society held together by the efforts, often inept, of a few individuals who uncover the disrupting forces (Landy, 1991: 351)' (Street, 2009: 56).

Things Are Looking Up (1935), director Albert de Courville.

Smart, Twist, Lamb and Potts are weak men who, through a Faustian pact with their pupils, will conceal their ignorance behind a façade of authority, in very much the same way as does Cicely Courtneidge in *Things Are Looking Up* (1935, director Albert de Courville). In this musical comedy, a horse-riding circus performer, Cicely Fytte (Courtneidge) runs Cicely's Circus, while her twin sister Bertha (also Courtneidge) is a teacher at a public school down the road. In fact, Bertha is one of two candidates for the soon-to-be-vacant Head's position, as Miss McTavish (Henrietta Watson) is soon to retire. It is between herself and the shrew Miss Crabbe (Cicely Oates). The headmistress has a liking for Bertha, but insists she should smile more; 'try and understand' the girls, 'overlook their little faults', and 'make yourself younger'. Bertha has other plans, however; she is 'tired of looking after other people's children'; she has fallen in

love with the Big Black Fox, a wrestler with the circus, and she decides to elope, planning to sail away from Southampton with her lover, leaving Cicely to pick up the pieces— she is obliged to: a third sister Mary is a pupil, and a scandal must be avoided. There then follows a series of trials for the circus girl as she tries to pull off the deception of pretending to be her teacher sister, while Joey (Max Miller) from the circus guarantees he'll have Bertha back within 24 hours.

The main problem for Cicely is that Bertha is a misanthrope, 'miserable' and 'cantankerous', and accused by a mock jury of schoolgirls of 'interfering with [their] enjoyment of school'. She is a formidable character, shirt and tie, martial bearing, hair scraped back, forbidding manner: 'Children should be seen and not heard.' She refuses to let the girls visit the circus, even though she secretly is seeing the Black Fox.

When Cicely takes the place of Bertha, the changes in her demeanour are immediately apparent, but the Head thinks she is acting upon her advice! Cicely has real problems with adopting the military style of her sister, even under the tutelage of Mary. When required to teach, she thinks on her feet, and faces down awkward pupils with a resort to authority, and getting the girls to answer their own questions (Courtneidge's facial contortions when faced with the difficulty of dealing with the girls almost exactly match those of Will Hay in *Boys Will Be Boys*.) She counters one enquiring pupil, arm raised to ask a question, but resembling a fascist salute, with an aside to Mary: 'how many Italian girls are there in the school?' Facing a geometry class, and hopelessly out of her depth, she entreats the girls to read 'page 10 to 400, very slowly.' Her more relaxed manner, and prettier style of dress attracts the attention of music teacher Mr Van Gaard (William Gargan), with whom she flirts. When the bell rings for the end of the lesson, she declares to have been 'saved by the bell in the first round.' This is indicative of the contest she is facing.

Cicely is in her element when conducting Natural History class, and uses her impressions of circus animals to have the girls in stitches. 'Miss Fytte's gone mad' declares one student; on investigating for herself, Miss McTavish regards Cicely's attempt at 'bright and cheerful' as having been conducted 'too

enthusiastically'. If Miss Fytte can get the balance right, she can become Head, 'become mother of all these children', were 'the happiness of these girls [to become] your sole aim in life'; 'fight for them, suffer for them' implores the Head. 'Die for them' quips Cicely. 'From now on your life is not your own' advises Miss McTavish. Miss Fytte manages a forced smile. 'The children of today are the women of tomorrow, the mothers of the future.'

Her impersonation leads Cicely into further scrapes, notably having to play the French world champion tennis player Mlle Bombarde at Wimbledon (Bertha was an adept herself). A fake injury gets her off the hook, but Van Gaard reveals he is an impostor himself: 'a girls' school is about the only place where one can get away with a fairytale about one's qualifications.' For the present, Cicely remains undiscovered, but the music man has his suspicions.

The time has come for the governors to convene to choose Miss McTavish's successor. Meanwhile, Bertha reveals her impending return with a telegram, and Van Gaard, now entrusted with the truth, conspires to disrupt proceedings, until the sister's return. When Bertha gets back, and is entreated to smile, she finds she is rewarded with the headship, and Cicely and Van Gaard can now drive off to his parents', for a new life together.

Things Are Looking Up is very similar to the previous year's *Sing As We Go* with Gracie Fields. In that film, a thin plot is draped over the spectacle of Blackpool's wakes week, and the audience is treated (vicariously) to a tour of the Pleasure Beach. Here, Cicely invites us to the circus. *Film Weekly* (01/03/35) is somewhat dismissive, saying 'the story is simply a string of incidents intended to give her [Courtneidge] the opportunity of putting over her farcical characterisations in her own inimitable way' and *Picturegoer Weekly* of (20/04/35) agrees, saying that 'this spirited comedy burlesque' is 'practically a "one woman" show'. Nonetheless, for me, and my research interest, the real jewels lie in the attitudes expressed in relation to education. The inter-changeability of Cicely for Bertha suggests that there is little special to

teaching that someone with wit, front and an authoritative manner could not master. The appeals for a little humanity in Bertha's style is a concession to a shift away from the more dour Victorian methods favoured by the misanthrope. Van Gaard's admission of fakery again suggests that the entry requirements for this teaching establishment are not as rigorous as they might be. The fact that the governors are unable to discriminate between the real teacher (Crabbe) and the imposter (Cicely) when replacing the Head suggests this lassitude is endemic.

Were it not so. Could a balance be struck whereby genuine teachers, strict but fair, would exercise their duties to the betterment of their students? Say hello to Mr Chips.

Goodbye, Mr Chips (1939), director Sam Wood.

The film begins at the start of a new term at Brookfield school, but as the boys and staff assemble, the 83 year-old master Mr Chipping (Robert Donat), thirteen years retired but retained, and known affectionately as Chips, is absent with a cold. In fact, he is merely late. He meets new master Mr Jackson who declares the senior man must hold the secret to being a good teacher. He learnt it from 'someone else', replies Chips obliquely.

Back at his fireside Chips dreams of his first days at Brookfield, in 1870 (the very year education became compulsory for all children in England). There we meet a fearsome headmaster, a supportive, if slightly ribbing staffroom, and unruly boys in 'Lower prep'. The head enters Chips' room to find a disturbance; he sees him in his study later, and lays down the law. A university degree is not the most important qualification: the need is to mould boys into men, and the role 'demands the ability to exercise authority'. It will not happen again, says the master, and indeed, true to his word, he keeps his class in for extra study when the rest of the school is watching a cricket match. He has sacrificed their friendship

for authority.

Chips is envious of other masters' strong relationship with the boys, as evidenced at the farewells for Christmas. The one boy who does say goodbye is one Chips offered friendship to on the train. Chips has put himself up for housemaster, but is overlooked. He is to 'concentrate on teaching'. Max Staefel, an Austrian master, invites him on holiday to his country. Here, in the cloud on the mountain, he meets Katherine Ellis (Greer Garson); she too is holidaying with a companion. Not truly in need of help, she allows Chips to effect a gallant rescue. On the mountain, in an unreal world free of convention, they talk. They become enamoured of each other, she confessing to finding teaching 'exciting' and 'heroic', keeping one young as those in one's charge develop. The mist clears: the pair must repair 'back to reality'. On their descent, they are met by Max and folk from the hotel, and Chips is feted a hero. But shyness prevents him from enjoying the party thrown in his honour, for 'saving' Kathy. He realises he might lose her, but resolves to 'bump into' her, and her companion, on their journey. They do, and they dine and waltz the night away in Vienna. At the station, on Kathy's departure, Chips proposes, and she accepts.

Chips brings his new wife to meet his colleagues, and they are utterly bewitched. Likewise the boys, who respond to her kindness; she is a 'revolutionary', says Chips, 'trying to pull Brookfield down, stone by stone'. This Christmas, the boys send him off with real affection. And the head announces Chips is to be housemaster; such is Kathy's benign influence, and he, Kathy and Max celebrate.

Tragedy strikes when Kathy and baby die in childbirth on April Fool's Day. Chips is dumbstruck; the boys don't know, and their pre-prepared prank falls flat. Chips tries to battle on, but the boys are mortified on hearing the news.

Time passes, with 'overheard' references to the Boer War, the death of Queen Victoria, and Bleriot's flight across the channel. Chips' retirement is mooted by the head, but he refuses. Chips is now seen as a

traditionalist, while the world is changing. The head is 'trying to make Brookfield an up-to-date school', but Chips is 'clinging to the past'. Chips hits back:

'I've seen the old traditions dying, one by one; grace, and dignity, a feeling for the past. All that matters here today is a fat banking account. You're trying to run the school like a factory, for turning out money-making machine-made snobs. You've raised the fees, and in the end, the boys who really belong to Brookfield will be frozen out, frozen out. Modern methods! Intensive training! Poppycock!'

Chips refuses to go. The governors back him, thanks largely to old boy, Sir John Colley, and Chips agrees to a degree of modernisation. When at last he does retire, he is toasted by the head and staff alike, and the boys give him three cheers, and a biscuit barrel as a retirement present. But Chips is staying on the premises, in a reduced capacity.

World War One breaks out, and boys and a master are lost. At last, Chips is made headmaster, for the duration of the war, fulfilling Kathy's prediction that he would make the grade. During a zeppelin attack, Chips is teaching the boys about Julius Caesar, the while keeping his nerve and fostering a sense of security and normality through the attack. To the accompaniment of bombs going off, very close, he quips: 'You can't judge the importance of things...by the noise they make'.

Chips visits old boy Peter Colley's wife, Helen, who wishes her husband back home, doing commonplace things: 'Think of living without fear again...Surely, we shall never again take our happiness for granted'. Alas, Peter is to die, just before the peace. He died trying to rescue his batman, the 'town cheese' (lower class 'oik') with whom the boy Colley had fought. Max, too, has perished. Chips pays them equal tribute.

Back in the present, Old Chips is disturbed from his sleep by two new boys, one of whom is young Colley, Helen and Peter's boy. Chips has now been at Brookfield 63 years, he confides to the lad, and he treats him to tea and cake. Colley feels a lot more at home, and a lot less scared, for the meeting.

On his death bed, Chips is fussed over by the doctor and the head. What a pity he never had any children. 'But you're wrong. I have', says the master. 'Thousands of them...and all boys'.

Goodbye Mr Chips was the highpoint of Donat's career, but he was criticised for his performance as Mr Charles Chipping by film director John Boulting, who thought the performance 'a little bit of a burlesque' (Norman 1982: 161). Indeed, the great actor, who beat Clark Gable, James Stewart and Laurence Olivier to the 1939 Oscar, delivers a rather too sentimental characterisation. The film is not without pathos, notably on the occasion of the loss of the beloved Kathy, but the general confection is so sweet that only a charming performance by Greer Garson saves this film from becoming mawkish. Nonetheless, it is still the tear-jerker it ever was, a lushly sentimental journey through a life lived well, albeit marked by tragedy. Nonetheless, while Chips' challenge to the headmaster's innovations is not perhaps crucial to the plot, it is notable for being the point where the head, as well as the boys, learn something from the elderly master. Schools like Brookfield were initially set up with the express purpose of bringing a good education to boys of the area, regardless of an ability to pay (as we shall see at Saintbury school in *The Guinea Pig*); it is the moderniser who departs from the true ethos of the school, while the traditionalist is more in keeping with the credo.

Goodbye Mr Chips appears to be just the sort of fantasy that would appeal to 'classless' American audiences ruefully regretting their lack of history and aristocracy, all the while tugging at their heart-strings as Britain prepared for war. Chips of Brookfield School, founded in 1492: 'The year that Columbus discovered America': a nostalgic appeal to a sense of history, to bring the US into the war? It didn't quite

work (or, rather, it took two more years, and the intervention of the Japanese).

The film makes a significant contribution to this thesis in as much as it acts rather like a commentary on the journey through teaching: from naïve rookie to seasoned professional, albeit in an English pre-war public school; from the neophyte struggling to assert his authority, to the man who stands his ground against the headmaster's modernising, but less progressive tendencies (steeled by the 'revolutionary' Kathy, perhaps): from the innocent to the wise, old, unflappable bird of his dotage.

How different is Mr Chipping from Dr Smart and Cicely Fytte? He has honour, is a model of respectability and is the embodiment of the public school tradition. Lorraine Noble, who worked on the MGM writing team at Denham, was hopeful that the film would encourage young men to enlist as teachers, and was proud that, at last, teachers would be shown in a good light:

Too often in past films, the school master, or "mar'm" (as we say in America) has been the subject of more or less innocent ridicule. Teachers sometimes complain of this attitude and earnest efforts have been made on both sides to understand each other better. For both film makers and teachers have a vast body of common interest. Both teach and mould the youth of a nation. Many people seem to think that films are exerting a greater influence over children than teachers whose real task it is. [...]

Irrespective of the effects upon new teacher enrollment, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* is a sincere effort to give the teachers what they have been asking for- a film about themselves. (Goodbye Mr. Chips! And farewell, England!, Sight and Sound, spring 1939, p27)

Chips almost personifies the old England that is about to be shocked out of its torpor by Hitler's duplicity (one is tempted to speculate that the award of the Oscar to Donat approximates one given to England (no

matter how well deserved), akin to those 'lifetime achievement' awards bestowed upon actors in their sunset years) but the master is once more a counterfeit- not a fraud within the diegesis of the film, as with Hay and Courtneidge's characters, but an American, idealised confection of what they took to be the English schoolteacher.

Jean Baudrillard describes the 'counterfeit' as 'the dominant scheme of the "classical" period, from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution' (Baudrillard 1983: 83). If I might borrow the notion, then the 'classical' period of British education might be seen as the pre-World War 2 era where children were better seen than heard, and teachers ruled inviolate. Their counterfeit is a modern sign, that 'dreams of the signs of the past and would well appreciate finding gain, in its reference to the real, an obligation: but what it finds again is only a reason...a simulacrum of symbolic obligation' (ibid: 85, 86). The prosthesis of the cane, the extended arm to chastise at a distance; the mortar board denoting post-graduate scholarship; the factory-cum-school for processing pupils into citizens. Children are signified as subordinate by counterfeit superiors.

So, was America politely applauding our empire's swansong with *Goodbye, Mr Chips*? Whilst a British film, it was made with American money (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer), and speaks to both sides of the Atlantic. The film was a dramatic departure from the fakery of Will Hay's various characters and Cicely Fytte, but a more dramatic turn would be heralded by the war and the expectations of a nation which would demand change. Soon, all would be gone with the wind, and a different kind of bulldog breed was straining at the leash as a new, perhaps wiser nation was built upon the rubble left by World War II.

Filmography

BOYS WILL BE BOYS (1935) U.K.

Credits

Director.....William Beaudine
Production Company.....Gainsborough Pictures
Writers.....Robert Edmunds, Will Hay and J.B. Morton
Cinematography.....Chas. Van Enger
Editor.....A. Roome
Original music.....Louis Levy, Bretton Bird and Charles Williams

Cast

Dr. Alec Smart.....Will Hay
Faker Brown.....Gordon Harker
Cyril Brown.....Jimmy Hanley

GOOD MORNING BOYS! (1936) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Marcel Varnel
Producer.....Edward Black
Production Company.....Gainsborough Pictures
Screenplay.....Leslie Arliss, Marriott Edgar, Val Guest, Anthony Kimmins
Cinematography.....Arthur Crabtree
Editor.....R.E. Dearing
Original music.....Louis Levy

Cast

Dr. Benjamin Twist.....Will Hay
Lady Bogshott.....Martita Hunt
Col. Willoughby-Gore.....Peter Gawthorne
Albert Brown.....Graham Moffatt

GHOST OF ST MICHAEL'S, THE (1941) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Marcel Varnel
Producers.....Michael Balcon, Basil Dearden
Production Company.....Ealing Studios
Screenplay.....Angus MacPhail, John Dighton
Cinematography.....Derek Williams
Editor.....E.B. Jarvis
Original music.....Ernest Irving

Cast

William Lamb.....Will Hay
Hilary Tisdale.....Claude Hulbert
Dr. Winter.....Felix Aylmer
Mr Humphries.....Raymond Huntley

GOOSE STEPS OUT, THE (1942) U.K.

Credits

Directors.....Basil Dearden, Will Hay
Producer.....Michael Balcon
Production Company.....Ealing Studios
Screenplay.....John Dighton, Reg Groves, Angus MacPhail, Bernard Miles
Cinematography.....Ernest Palmer
Editor.....Ray Pitt
Original music.....Bretton Byrd

Cast

William Potts/Muller.....Will Hay
Professor Hoffman.....Frank Pettingell
General von Glotz.....Julien Mitchell

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP (1935) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Albert de Courville
Producers.....Michael Balcon, Alexander Korda
Production Company.....Gaumont British Picture Corporation
Screenplay.....Albert de Courville, Daisy Fisher, Stafford Dickens, Con West
Cinematography.....Glen MacWilliams, Charles Van Enger
Editor.....R.E. Dearing
Original music.....Louis Levy

Cast

Cicely Fytte/Bertha Fytte.....Cicely Courtneidge
Joey.....Max Miller

Van Gaard.....William Gargan

GOODBYE, MR CHIPS (1939) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Sam Wood
Producer.....Victor Saville
Production Company.....Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer British Studios
Screenplay.....R.C. Sherriff, Claudine West, Eric Maschwitz and James Hilton
Cinematography.....Freddie Young
Editor.....Charles Frend
Original music.....Louis Levy

Cast

Mr Chipping.....Robert Donat
Katherine.....Greer Garson
John Colley/Peter Colley.....Terry Kilburn

CHAPTER 3. A NEW ENGLAND.

The return of a Labour Government in 1945 was a shock to many, including Winston Churchill: was this his reward for leading the nation to victory against the evil of Nazism? But those who had fought now sought a new England, one which reflected their own aspirations, which extended beyond wartime conquest. The Labour Party, so divided in the 1930s, now provided the vehicle for change, and together with the establishment of the National Health Service, education was to be the new battleground.

‘Red’ Ellen Wilkinson was the first education minister of the post-war government, and she was faced with two particular dilemmas. Firstly, should a tripartite education system of grammars, technical schools and modern secondary schools (as provided by the 1944 Education Act, and, as Norwood wanted, protecting grammars) be replaced by multilateral (comprehensive) schools? Wilkinson, ‘herself a product of a higher elementary school’, thought not and differentiated learning for those of different dispositions would continue (McCulloch 1998: 61–65). Nonetheless, secondary would now refer to the age range and not to ability.

Secondly, the school leaving age was to be raised from fourteen to fifteen; the massive increase in school numbers this would entail would be accommodated in prefabricated 'HORSA' huts (the Huttled Operation for Raising the School Leaving Age), a temporary expediency that proved anything but, as Britain's war-stricken resources petered out in the absence of American credit (American Lend-Lease provision was ended within a fortnight of VJ day (15th August 1945)– Britain would have to produce for export rather than provide for its beleaguered subjects (Kynaston 2007: 103)). Thereafter, the Labour government was faced with the unpalatable, and electorally unpopular, task of running a victorious country on austerity measures: 'It is clear that on the matters that most affect Britain today, the United States is nearly as hostile to the aspirations of Socialist Britain as to the Soviet Union' (*New Statesman*, quoted in Kynaston 2007: 134). Few of the wonderful, airy, new designs for schools offered up by architects were adopted and many inner cities had to convert the 'flinty Gothic institutions' that were old elementaries, with their 'almost reptilian dankness', into new, yet old modern secondaries (Burke and Grosvenor 2008: 77).

The shortfall in numbers of teachers would be addressed through an express training scheme which would introduce servicemen into schools after one year's training. Men of character, those self-same people who had put their lives on the line for principle, would train the new breed of democrats.

Far from recognising the requirement that moderns should have 'parity of esteem', Norwood insisted, in the Report of his name in 1943, that such esteem should be won, not granted. Thus, 'parity of conditions' (Ministry of Education, *The New Secondary Education* (1947), in McCulloch 1998: 64) should be the watchword.

If the pre-war teachers were presented as 'mad', the post-war period shone the spotlight on what it was to be a bad teacher. Social democratic Britain demanded a fresh look at education, and expected more from her teachers. In 1942, G. Patrick Meredith, a teacher of some twelve years experience and a lecturer

in visual education at the University College of the South West, wrote in *Sight and Sound* demanding that Britain woke up to the needs and potential of what he called the upcoming Neo-technic Age, which could liberate men and women from their toil: but first they must address one sphere in which little or no progress had been seen:

...there is one sphere which not only shows no signs of passing into the Neo-technic Age, but has barely passed from the Pre-technic Age into the Palaeo-technic Age, namely the sphere of education (...) in the vast majority of schools the basic learning process still consists in sitting at a desk and learning verbally a vast mass of material which cannot be understood without sight or touch; and this process is identical with the methods of a couple of centuries ago.

What of the teacher? We have an elaborate system for skimming-off a large percentage of the cream of talent emerging from our schools, pasteurising it for four years in the safe, tepid, antiseptic atmosphere of the university, or for two years in the even more antiseptic training college, and then bottling it up permanently in schools where none of its best possibilities are given the chance of realisation and where it mostly goes sour (...). Teachers and children alike are frustrated in school because our schools have all the features of a Nazi state in miniature. The power of the head is, in effect, almost absolute (though fortunately, there are some good heads that do not abuse it); the structure is authoritarian throughout and elements corresponding to the Race Myth, the Gestapo, the Brown House and the Concentration Camp can easily be identified. Only the mitigating influence of the English genius for not pushing things to their logical conclusion prevents this system from becoming the completely evil thing which it theoretically could be. But it is bad enough. In particular the average teacher is robbed of all real initiative and condemned to frustration. He is tied to an intellectual routine which wastes 90% of his intellect and kept in a state which alternates between

frenzied irritation and apathetic cynicism by having to act in turn as instructor, nursemaid, watchdog, postman, door-keeper, referee, parson, adding machine, thrashing machine and paragon of virtue. Again, the English genius surprisingly often finds a way through, and in schools up and down the country miracles of inspired exposition are to be found. But much of the cream goes sour. (Revolt in the classroom, *Sight and Sound*, winter, 1942, pp74-76)

I make no apology for quoting at length what the author himself admits is a 'dogmatic' piece of writing; it gives a flavour of the urgent need for change, as expressed in academic circles, at a time of great unrest. Meredith anticipates some opposition from teachers who may have become comfortable with their 'chains', but harnessing technology would liberate the teacher as surely as domestic appliances had liberated the housewife from drudgery. Not just new technology either, but new thinking- indeed, a new breed of teacher- was required. In 1944, the vice-chancellor of the University of Liverpool Arnold McNair wrote on behalf of the Board of Education:

Our problem is not one which can be solved by a mere readjustment of training facilities nor even by a modification of curricula and syllabuses. We must ensure that those who intend to be teachers, or otherwise to associate themselves professionally with the young, have the chance to enjoy a period of education and training which, above all else, will encourage them to live a full life themselves so that they may contribute to the young something which arises as much from a varied personal experience as from professional studies (p7, quoted in Grosvenor and Lawn 2001: 362).

This new 'civilising discourse' required people of 'intelligence', 'experience', 'standing', 'character', and 'maturity'. 'Keeness and singleness of purpose', the ability to organise, take responsibility, and inspire through vitality and conviction- these were the qualities sought by the Board, and in order to take

advantage of post-war demobilisation, they set up a one-year, fast-track training scheme for ex-servicemen (with a following two-year probation period). A new model of society, boasting a democratic, 'progressive Englishness', was to be created, with vital new teachers at 'the epicentre of social renewal and its particular discourse' (Grosvenor and Lawn 2001: 363-365).

By Baudrillard's second order of simulacrum, the counterfeit has given way to production, based upon the commercial law of value. The automaton gives way to the robot, and there is no longer a pretence at similarity to man. Signs 'will no longer have to be counterfeited, since they are going to be reproduced all at once on a gigantic scale. The problem of their uniqueness...is no longer a matter of concern; their origin is technique, and the only sense they possess is in the dimension of the industrial simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1983: 96, 97). Reference to the real is unimportant, only their equivalence matters. Indeed: 'Only the obliteration of the original reference allows for the generalized (sic) law of equivalence, that is to say the very possibility of production'. After McLuhan, the medium becomes the message, the sign is significant; in education, as in everything in this simulacrum, reproduction becomes the goal. In post-war Britain, the new concrete model, fashioned from the rubble of the bomb site, should be churned out on the conveyor belt. One size fits all.

Mr Perrin and Mr Traill (1948), director Lawrence Huntingdon.

A view of this new world order in education is provided by the drama *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill* (1948, Lawrence Huntingdon). Vincent Perrin (Marius Goring) has been a teacher at Banfield College for 21 years. He has eyes in the back of his head, knows instinctively when and which boys are misbehaving, but is uninspiring, pompous and dry of wit, and relies on repetition and petty punishments to drill his boys in the rules of mathematics. Into his world is drafted David Traill (David Farrar), ex-soldier, ex-Cambridge rugby blue, 'a breath of fresh air...from the outside world', according to headmaster Moy-Thompson

(Raymond Huntley). Traill will assist Perrin, who is required to show the new man the ropes. The contrast between the two men is marked; Perrin is punctilious, petty and sly. Traill, twenty years the younger man, is straight-forward, athletic and open. One thing they share, however, is an admiration for pretty doctor's assistant Isobel Lester (Greta Gynt), a woman Perrin sees as a future bride- if and when he gets round to popping the question. His prevarication will cost him dear. The more direct Traill has a hunter's instinct, and has designs on Isobel, unbeknownst to the senior master.

Tradition is a religion for Perrin. By dint of his seniority, he stakes first claim to the daily newspaper, hogs the two-bath bathroom to himself and goes out of his way to ensure Traill understands his place. Traill, however, has no respect for position, and will not be cowed. Whilst Perrin believes in distancing himself from his charges (familiarity with the boys will only lead to a lack of respect), Traill is a very hands-on practitioner, reacting strongly when a boy leaves an India rubber to melt on the stove; his rough reaction is quite shocking, but the boys learn quickly that this man of action is not to be trifled with. Perrin continues to receive poor behaviour and sub-standard work, as his boys take his 'punishments' with a pinch of salt: his 'kindness' in halving the punishment in a disposition is seen as a weakness.

The staff room of Banfield divides into two camps, with most siding with Perrin, but with the cynical Birkland finding for Traill: 'Pompo' Perrin is a 'prize bore', a 'pompous old idiot', and Banfield is 'rather like a decaying tooth- it doesn't bother you once the nerve is dead, but it gets a bit lively in the holidays!' The staff room is like 'an undertaker's parlour.' Finding at least one ally, Traill resists Perrin's pettifogging pedantry, and when criticised for his untidiness, leans across the senior master to collect a newspaper. Traill is not intimidated. Comber is on Perrin's side. He overtly criticises Traill's selection for scrum-half of a boy with a 'yellow streak' (Traill has done this deliberately, so as to get the boy to confront his demons). When Birkland later stands up for Traill, Comber accuses him of vulgarity: 'You shut your mouth, you dirty little council school tick.' Birkland: 'I shall do nothing of the sort, you sizzling, great big public school lout'. It seems Traill has found the fault-line in the thin crust of post-war consensual

teaching.

We are invited to compare and contrast the two schoolmasters. Vincent Perrin is a traditionalist, effete and pompous, a man who visits his mother as much as possible, and incurably indecisive; it will cost him Isobel's hand (he literally chokes on the word 'married'). David Traill devours life, is naturally strong and uncomplicated, dresses less formally, uses modern jargon, drinks, smokes and pursues Isobel with a directness that outstrips Perrin, and impresses Miss Lester. Perrin is bullied by headmaster Moy-Thompson, but will not stand up to him, only taking it out of those lower down the pecking order. When this fails to impress Traill, he punishes the boys (this trait is echoed in fellow teacher Comber who, when resisted by Traill, takes his frustration out on his wife.) As the film progresses, Traill loses respect for Perrin, who goes from being 'a bit irritating' to acting 'like an old woman', or squealing 'like a maiden aunt.' To Perrin, Traill deteriorates from being 'cocksure' and 'a trifle too pleased with himself perhaps' ('No', responds Isabel,' he is 'diffident' and 'modest') to being 'an arrogant young puppy!'

Perhaps the most significant difference between the two men is in their attitudes to the boys. Perrin's inability to inspire, and the boys' subsequent inability to learn, only results in him imposing more dispositions- and he never reflects on why the pupils, having been told something, have nonetheless failed to learn it. Traill is much more positive about the pupils: (to Isobel) 'You know where you are with boys. You treat them decently, they won't let you down.' His is an inspired vocation. He wants to 'do something for the kids that are coming on. Let a bit of fresh air into the stuffy classrooms that I grew up in', and 'take an interest in what they're doing, rather than holding their noses to the grindstone and keeping them there by brute force' (this is an improvement on the list of good things about teaching that he earlier had quoted to Birkland, which had included 'a good life', 'exercise' and 'long holidays', to which his cynical ally had replied that it was an 'odd notion to praise a job by reckoning how long you don't have to do it').

Banfield's disease is personified in headmaster Moy-Thompson, who professes a love for 'harmony', but

who bullies and threatens to get his own way. This disease will infect Traill too, if he stays more than a year, warn Birkland and Isobel. The dramatic climax of the film sees the jilted Perrin succumbing to derangement, and pursuing his rival with a confiscated bayonet. When confronted, Traill falls from a cliff top to the beach below. Perrin saves the injured junior master by carrying him onto higher rocks as the tide races in, but, exhausted, is himself swept away to his death. On recovery, Traill invades the heads imperious study to upbraid the bully for making the school 'a torment' that eventually led to Perrin losing his wits, and in saving him, his life. Traill will expose this sadistic regime: 'You're through Moy-Thompson, finished.'

A suitable epitaph for Banfield is earlier provided, unknowingly, at the prize-giving ceremony by local dignitary, Sir Joshua Varley: 'Brains are very good in their way, but it is the proud boast of our British schools that we breed not brains, but character.' All very well if that character is benevolent; disturbing if the normative character is sadistic.

Both Perrin and Traill have commendable qualities, but they are both 'oppressed and frustrated' as Arthur Vessolo puts it (*Sight and Sound*, autumn, 1948) 'hemmed in by their environment and by one another, soured, and with the ideals of their vocation grey and moribund inside them.' Nonetheless, they are very different men: Perrin, whilst brave, is simply a man out of time, in two senses— his type of teaching has fossilised and his type of honour is redundant; Traill is energetic, clear-eyed and fearless and here drafted in to breathe new life into school. Nonetheless, it should be noted that it is through Perrin's sacrifice that Traill survives: a useful reminder that even revolutions don't come into the world unfathered.

Vessolo thought the ending 'feeble and unpersuasive', but McFarlane was more conscious of the subtlety of Huntingdon's uninhibited use of melodrama: 'the film's effectiveness lies in the way it grows out of character and its reversal of our expectations in this matter. It is the timid Perrin who has been ousted by Traill in the affection of the boys and the school matron, Isobel Lester ...[Perrin] who rescues the manly

athletic war hero, lifting him to safety before being washed away himself' (McFarlane in Dixon 1994: 64).

McFarlane goes on to praise the director's 'typically swift storytelling and an observant eye for the way the milieu generates conflict'; this conflict fuels Perrin's rage and his sacrifice is that of the glorious amateur who gives his life for the new young professional. It is Traill, quite obviously, who gets the girl.

The Guinea Pig (1948), director Roy Boulting.

1948 also saw the release of the Roy Boulting film *The Guinea Pig*, starring a young Richard Attenborough as Jack Read, a lower middle-class/working class boy from Walthamstow whom we first encounter travelling by train to Saintbury public school. His father, a humble tobacconist, has his reservations: 'I only hope we done the right thing, mother.' Even in the carriage, Jack is made aware of his different background, when all the other new boys compare the schools they've come from. When asked, Jack reveals his old school was Middleton Road, Walthamstow, 'between the gas works and the cemetery.' Arriving at Saintbury, Jack meets Peck, a college servant, whom he addresses as 'sir'; 'You don't call me sir, I call you sir. I look after the luggage; now, you push offsir.'

Jack's impeccable yet unaffected good manners are once manifest as he asks directions for Cloisters House from a sports-jacketed gentleman who is just leaving his house. The man offers to show Jack, as he is heading that way himself. This man turns out to be none other than ex-Oxford and England rugby player Nigel Lorraine (Robert Flemyng), who, invalided out of the army, has taken up a position at Saintbury. Jack takes his leave by shaking the senior man's hand.

At Cloisters, Jack meets his house master Lloyd Hartley (Cecil Truener), and his wife. Again, Jack

extends his hand in common friendship. The master is somewhat taken aback. Jack is to be chaperoned by the effeminately-spoken Fitch, whose accent contrasts starkly with Jack's dropped aitches. On his departure from the room, Mr Hartley, to his wife: 'Well, what is this school coming to?'

Jack is a Fleming Report schoolboy, one who, through his intelligence, has been allowed to enter a public school. The Board of Education had set up a committee on public schools which concluded that they should be opened up to boys of Jack's ilk (the Fleming committee recommended 25% of public school places be granted to state schoolchildren selected by LEAs (Aldgate and Richards 2002: 112)). To Hartley, this is just an exercise in window dressing. Lorraine is less sceptical. Hartley believes he is giving Jack a chance— after all, he hasn't revealed Jack's origins to anyone!

To the senior boys, for whom Jack must 'fag', he is a 'street oik' ; this world is strange to Jack, who fails to respond with servility to the bullying of the seniors. Jack's humble origins are revealed time and again, in his accent, his failure to show deference, the way he mops up the gravy from his plate, his deplorable French accent. But he fights back, most notably on the occasion of the loutish Founder's Ceremony, when he is kicked 'up the arse', for which he delivers a V-sign to the statue of Henry VIII and is deposited by the other boys head first in the rubbish box. Blazer tattered and torn, and covered with all manner of slime, Jack throws muck back at his tormentors, who flee.

It is Jack who is required to answer for his actions to Hartley, who has privately despaired of the boy's 'outlook', and 'character'. Jack has been found guilty of wolf-whistling girls from this window. Now he must stand to attention while Hartley upbraids him for his behaviour. The Founder's Ceremony, the master tells him, is 'to knock any cockiness out of the new boy and put him on his proper level.' To Jack, the ritual was just 'silly', and an excuse to 'kick him up the arse'. Hartley despairs to Lorraine of Jack's disdain for 'custom' and 'tradition'; the younger master wryly observes: 'you will just have to give yourself time.'

Lorraine has an ally in Hartley's daughter, Lynne, who worries whether Nigel will cope. He is a man of

the world, while 'Saintbury is a little community on its own, cut off from everything.' 'Don't you think', she muses 'that in the future, schools will have to teach life, as well as history?' 'I don't think the average master here knows very much about life.' This is both a compliment to Lorraine (above average, in Lynne's eyes), and a condemnation of the antiquated regime of the public school, yet one so precious to her own father. This insight encapsulates the essence of the film's message. We are present at a time of momentous change; the war is not yet won, but already, we are looking to a new dawn.

Jack conspires to escape his torment by night, but is discovered by Lorraine who persuades him to stay: '... the education here is pretty good, if you can stick the other side of it.' As well as imparting knowledge, the school has turned out 'scientists, poets, soldiers, statesmen; you might add to that record.' Further, Lorraine declares that as a fellow 'new boy', he and Jack have a 'bond in common'. Jack protests that they're all snobs at Saintbury; Lorraine explains 'they've just been brought up in a different environment', and from his bragging of his father's footballing exploits, they might take him for a snob, too. Jack is aghast at the accusation, but the master has won him over, sealing their conspiracy with a deal: he won't tell the headmaster about this evening's events on one condition- 'that you stand up to the things you don't like here. It's a new world to you, Read, but I think it's got something to offer you.'

Lorraine's kindness is not unappreciated. We see Mr Read parcelling up six tins of Lorraine's favourite smoking mixture. Meanwhile, back at the school, Jack makes heavy weather of his Latin. In a display of insouciant perspicacity, Mr Hartley translates a quotation into English: 'The times are perpetually changing, and we with the times.'

When Jack returns home at Christmas, he waits in the front of the shop, before being invited into the back. Things have changed in Jack's life, and he is not so sure of his standing here, as at school. His father asks him how he's liking school, to which the boy replies that it's OK. At the family Christmas party, relatives gently rag Jack for his attending a 'snob' school, but now Jack finds himself defending

Saintbury, which 'has turned out some pretty famous people'. A pretty young girl, on leaving the party, is more gentle: 'You won't forget all your old friends, will you?' Jack is caught between two worlds, the community of family and that of school. His father, in a confidential moment, gives the boy the chance to quit, after his son has declared 'they don't like me, and I don't like them. Besides they don't fight fair,' but smiles to himself when Jack declares he 'will stick it out.'

The new term finds Jack in a more confident mood. No longer the new boy, he flings himself into his work and his play, earning himself house colours. In a seminal moment of the film, when the bully Tracy kicks a pile of rubbish Jack is sweeping up, Jack launches into him, only to have Lorraine intervene. The boys must resolve their dispute in the boxing ring, where, slogging each other to a standstill, the two combatants finally agree to shake and make friends. The dispute has been settled in a fair and manly way. Jack has survived his baptism of fire.

Lorraine appeals on behalf of Jack to Hartley, to try and get the boy his own study, but the older man will not be moved. They are not appropriate for boys of 'his background.' Lorraine protests that Hartley has not seen Jack's background, whilst taking middle class boys' backgrounds on trust. Hartley knows he is right, 'instinctively'. The battle lines are drawn between the old and the new. 'You know, Lorraine, you're always trying to alter things.' 'Well, why not, if they're out of date.' 'Are you suggesting that Saintbury is out of date?' asks the exasperated Hartley, to which Lorraine can only sigh 'Ah well...' 'Extraordinary chap', exclaims the traditionalist.

Victory in the war sees Saintbury's governors discussing the erection of a war memorial, to honour the school's dead. Headmaster Stringer would prefer to set up a scholarship fund for boys who could not otherwise afford to come to the school. Hartley and the bishop want to spend the money on a capital project, a material memorial. This issue takes a personal twist when it transpires that Jack would like to become a teacher: 'I think it's worth doing.' But without a degree, Jack would not be able to get a

teaching post, and a Cambridge scholarship is frankly beyond the boy, admits Lorraine. The conventional, paid route requires £250– £300 per annum. A scene in the chapel finds the camera focussing on a memorial to old boys lost in the Battle of Britain: what the governors must decide is the outcome of the educational battle *for* Britain.

At home with the Hartleys, the discussion turns to the Fleming initiative. ‘What have people of this type ever done to justify education? I don’t propose to have any more boys like Read in my house, and the Ministry of Education can go to the devil!’ Lynne protests to her father: ‘But surely, daddy, this scholarship idea is such a good one. It means that Mr Stringer can pick out the boys with a good brain.’ As concerns the war memorial, the daughter is adamant: ‘The living forget the dead very quickly. If we knew what they wanted us to do, don’t you think it would be to try and help the living?’ The Head agrees, claiming to have put Jack in Hartley’s house specifically because it was such an excellent house. But the housemaster is obdurate. The ‘experiment’ is doomed to fail, because the ‘housemasters are dead against it. It must fail.’

Things are coming to a head for Lorraine. He has been persevering with Jack, encouraging him in that public (and grammar) school staple of ‘abstract notions’ (see Norwood in McCulloch 1998: 54). And yet he confides in Lynne that he thinks he must leave. ‘There’s an attitude of mind here, Lynne, which I simply can’t stand.’ That attitude is exemplified in her father. ‘You can’t fly against a stone wall, Lynne.’ Later, he confronts her father. ‘Hartley, you’ve never given that boy a chance. You’ve damned him out of hand ever since he came here because you were unable to understand him.’ ‘How dare you talk like this?’ ‘I’m sorry, but it’s got to be said. You don’t like Read, and whenever he’s done anything good, instead of praising him you’ve patronised him. Well, if that’s going to be your future attitude to boys like Read, and whether you like it or not, they’re coming here, then I don’t feel I want to work with you.’ The older man doubts his loyalty. ‘I am [loyal]. I’m loyal to the things I believe in, and this plan will never succeed while men like you are trying every possible way to wreck it. And Saintbury, I regret to say, is

full of men like you, men who will not try and see what's going on around them.'

While Jack endures casual beatings for petty misdemeanours, such as burning a senior boy's toast, and being seen out with a girl, Lorraine takes it upon himself to visit Jack's parents. He explains Jack's potential, deems him 'worth it'. The parents ponder how to raise the £1,000 needed to send Jack to Cambridge. In the event, his mother decides to go out to work. Meanwhile, Hartley is obdurate in his insistence that the war memorial fund be spent on a material commemoration. How to get 'light [to] come in from outside?', as Lynne puts it. Lorraine has a plan.

At a tea party in Cloisters, Lorraine introduces Jack's parents to a shocked Lloyd Hartley. There follows a scene of catharsis, where Hartley, showing Mr Read around the college, learns that in fact, there is much in common between the two of them. Lorraine has forced Hartley to see where Jack is coming from, his background. Mr Read is candid to the point of unmeaning rudeness. 'I wasn't worrying whether our Jack wouldn't suit your school', declares the father, 'I was wondering whether your school would suit our Jack ...You see, I've always looked upon this as a sort of experiment which might or might not come off.' Mr Read has become convinced of Saintbury's qualities: '...this sort of school doesn't only go in for book learning. You teach them things here, Mr Hartley, that they don't learn at other places... Team spirit, for one thing, and self-confidence and how to get on with the other fella.' 'And good manners, I hope', interjects Hartley. 'Yes, that's one thing I always used to say about Hitler- he never had any manners.'

Thus Hartley and Read find common ground. Later, Hartley confides in his wife that he finds Read a 'good chap'. He has been moved to self-reflection. Dressing for the evening's dance, he notes that he has become quite old. Mrs Hartley rebuffs this statement, claiming he has hardly changed since they first met. 'Yes, in a way that's rather what I meant.'

A pensive Hartley watches as Jack escorts his wife onto the dance floor. He wanders off into the dining hall where he reads aloud a plaque on the wall displaying a quotation from Thomas Wolsey, in which the

founding principles of Saintbury are spelled out:

Twenty boyes being Sonnes of poore townsmen of Saintbury to be maintained out of the foundation of this Schoole. Of native genius as far as maybe and apte to learne. The rest to paye in custom with other Schooles of grammar.

So it is that Hartley discovers it is *he* who is out of kilter with what he took for a modernising principle, but which was in fact a founding ethos of the school.

When, at the governors' meeting, the bishop promotes the notion previously propounded by Hartley ('what is the point of trying to educate these boys amid surroundings to which they are quite unaccustomed? In the long run, what good will it do?'), it is the housemaster who is compelled to answer for fear that 'the school is in grave danger of making a mistake for which I should be largely responsible.'

Stringer interrupts the dance to announce the governors' decision; Hartley's intervention has been crucial. Beyond a plaque to Saintbury's war dead in the chapel, the remainder of the memorial fund will go to provide scholarships, and to send deserving boys to university. Cloisters house rewards Hartley with an engraved cigarette box, 'with affection and gratitude', and Jack leads three cheers for Mrs Hartley, whom Lorraine later explains to her, has been 'a mother, and a friend' to the boys. Hartley wants Lorraine to take over his house duties: 'It's not that I object to change, it's just that I can't change myself. That's the penalty of growing older. I suppose I've just got vain and pompous.' Lorraine is the man for 'the job that's coming, the job I can't do.' And he concedes; 'I want the things that are good in this house to remain, and in your hands, they would.'

Hartley is presently called upon to deal with a hullabaloo in the top dorm, which sees the master 'ragged', returning dusty and tattered- but rejuvenated. Lorraine reveals to Jack that Mr Hartley has recommended him for Cambridge, and that he is to stay on as the new housemaster.

‘Will ours be a jolly good show, darling?’ asks Lynne of Lorraine, by now her fiancé. ‘It’s got to be, Lynne. It’s got to be the finest show we can make it.’ ‘You’ll do it Lorrie, I know you will.’ ‘Well, we’ll try, we’ll certainly try.’

At first sight, *The Guinea Pig* might appear as a rather cloying apology for the meritocracy that was, after all, enshrined in the founding principles of the public school system, a system deliberately set up to favour the bourgeois against the interests of the Tudor nobility (Sinker 2004: 32). The working class characters (Jack and his family, friends and the porter only) appear as humble, bawdy or ingratiating: salvation comes from abandoning the natural for the affected. However, it takes its toll on Jack: he lives life in something of a ‘haze’ as described by working class children going to grammar school for the first time (Jackson and Marsden 1966: 111). But placed in the post-war context of a democratised Britain, we may see the narrative as a manifesto for a new nation that privileges character and intelligence over tradition and vested interest, although Arthur Vessolo found the film ‘entertaining with its formula and its convention’, whilst not addressing ‘fundamental issues’ (*Sight and Sound*, winter 1948–1949). Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the solution offered was that preferred by Cyril Norwood and his committee, set up by the Secondary School Examination Council (SSEC), of which he was chair, but which spoke directly to the president of the Board of Education R.A. Butler. This committee sought the survival of both public and grammar schools by promoting differentiated education for different ‘types’ of students (Simon 1991: 58–62). Nonetheless, as in *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill*, we have in Hartley and Lorraine two protagonists for the *ancien* and *nouvel* regimes. Further, whilst there is appreciation for the outgoing housemaster, there is no question that out he must go. In this gentle revolution, the velvet glove conceals a clenched fist. Hartley is pensioned off with his cigarette box; Lorraine and Lynne knuckle down to the task of moulding a new generation, new educators in a reformed school.

The Browning Version (1951), director Anthony Asquith.

This film presents us with a tragic character rather like Hartley, but one who had a more enlightened past. By his own admission, Andrew Crocker-Harris (Michael Redgrave) is the epitome of Novoa's 'serenity and organisation' (see above) and yet he is a failure. After eighteen years in his position as a classics teacher in a 'joyless prison' (as Jeffrey Richards calls it (2002: 117)) of a public school, he is to retire due to ill health. But early on, we become privy to the fact that his marriage is crumbling, his wife Millie (Jean Kent) having an affair with the younger, more dynamic (and martially named) Hunter (Nigel Patrick). It transpires that, although cut from very different cloth, Crocker-Harris believed that he and Millie could still find happiness: the love she sought (physical), and the love he favoured (platonic), could be met in the other. However, he has changed, from a master whose idiosyncratic mannerisms he deliberately cultured (and welcomed his pupils' ribbing) to one whose soul had died: the boys had stopped laughing, and had begun to fear him, nicknaming him 'the Himmler of the lower fifth'. Has this teacher simply forgotten his duty of care, or is his demise the result of an unloving wife? The film suggests the culprit is Millie, but Andrew blames himself for having done her the wrong of marrying her.

As the relationship disintegrates into barely concealed contempt, matters are exacerbated by the governors' refusal to grant him a pension; the romantic idyll, which Millie cynically dismisses as 'roses, roses all the way, tears, cheers and goodbye Mr. Chips', will not be realised (a reference, of course, to 1939's sentimental movie *Goodbye Mr Chips*). A life of punctilious attention to detail, at the expense of any feelings (or so it is thought by the majority of the boys) has left 'The Crock' a shell. Clocks and watches mark his passage as a master; for Millie, mirrors reflect the beautiful Clytemnestra who will murder her husband Agamemnon. Indeed, clocks and time are crucial to Crocker-Harris' nature. It is he who has drawn

up the school's timetable, a blinkered distraction which permits him to turn a blind eye to Millie's infidelity.

The cuckold Hunter has agreed to meet Millie, but when he learns of her cruelty (she dismisses a gift from pupil Taplow of the Robert Browning version of the *Agamemnon* as a cynical bribe) he decides to end the affair, and even arranges to meet up with Andrew when he takes up his new appointment. It transpires that Millie's one virtue is her honesty, and that Andrew has known about their affair all along.

Taking Hunter's advice, Crocker-Harris busies himself in his work while his wife takes her leave: no word of farewell is spoken. On the final day of school, Andrew stands up to his churlish headmaster (Wilfred Hyde-White), and reasserts his right to the final speech for his valedictory address; he boycotts his prepared speech, and opts instead for a confession, with disarming honesty and triumphal effect. Like Perrin's ultimate sacrifice (see above: *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill*), laying down his life for his fellow man, Crocker-Harris gains respect for his preparedness to confront himself as he truly is: a failed teacher in 'the noblest calling that a man can follow- the care and moulding of the young.' He has failed to give his pupils what they had a right to expect: 'sympathy, encouragement and humanity'. He is redeemed by his self-awareness; that the young, vibrant man who sought to modernise Browning's *Agamemnon* lost his way, to the detriment of his countless pupils, and his marriage.

Inside Taplow's gift of the Browning version of the *Agamemnon*, he had written, in Greek: 'God, from afar, looks graciously upon a gentle master.' The inscription is moving, and indeed, Crocker-Harris breaks down in tears as a result, we might suppose, of this small act of kindness intruding into his life of strict rectitude, where duty to the timetable has replaced duty to his wife. The tears, ironically, are not crocodile tears, but a release from the pent-up frustration and denial of his spirit which has taken such a toll on his life and his health, *and* his aptitude as a teacher. We learn that Millie was initially attracted to the man's ambition; that Crocker-Harris took it upon himself to amuse and captivate his students with his mannerisms; that before their marriage, he translated from the Aeschylus into rhyming couplets that made the story dramatic and vital (better than Browning's version, according to Taplow); that once upon a time, the couple with their 'two kinds of love' sought what they lacked in the other.

Ultimately, it is Millie's spiteful suggestion that leaves her without either husband or lover. Self-awareness has come too late to save his marriage, but Crocker-Harris the man, and the teacher, survives. He had become locked into what Edward Hall called a monochronic time-frame, referenced here in Hargreaves:

According to Hall, people operating with a monochronic time-frame concentrate on doing one thing at a time, in series, as a linear progression through a set of discrete stages. They focus their energies on completing schedules and dispatching the business as well as they can within those schedules ... There is little sensitivity to the particularities of context or the needs of the moment within this time-frame. It is the schedule and its successful completion that have priority. (Hargreaves 1994: 102).

The monochronic time-frame is peculiar to Western cultures and is predominant in bureaucratic organisations and with males. An example of Crocker-Harris' immersion in this system is seen when he conducts his final classics lesson; Wilson's lateness for chapel is duly noted and will be reported to his housemaster; Taplow will forego his lunchtime golf lesson in order to meet the master's duty of extra work. Hunter, in contrast, persists with his scientific experiment until he has achieved the satisfactory result, after which he gladly dismisses his students with half an hour left of the lesson. His relationship with the boys is much less formal, sensitive to context and task-oriented: a polychronic time-frame.

What is of special interest to me here is that the film suggests that the damage done is not simply personal; that the disintegration of the character and soul of Crocker-Harris affected him as a teacher, too. It suggests perhaps that the good teacher is one who maintains a healthy balance between the professional and the personal, and that maybe the 'modern psychological method', interested in 'human nature' as espoused by Andrew's replacement Gilbert is not just of benefit to the boys, but to the man and the teacher also. Without it, the drama that is classical literature, with all its tragedy, or farce, is, in Taplow's words, 'just a lot of Greek words, all strung together.' A clip from this film appears on the accompanying

DVD.

The critical response to *The Browning Version* was divided at the time of its release, but the consensus view now is that Asquith's film is something of a masterpiece. As a literary adaptation (Rattigan was the screenwriter) the film suffers none of the problems highlighted by Eric Ambler: 'The problem of the writer in the industry, indeed, is the problem of the director, the actor, the producer and everyone else concerned creatively with production. It is the problem of collaboration without loss of self-respect' (Armes 1979: 199). Happily, Asquith and Rattigan enjoyed a long, sympathetic and fruitful collaboration; they appear to be singing from the same hymn sheet when it came to *The Browning Version*. As Jon Fortgang explains in his Film4 review, 'the pair helped define a polished strain of English drama where domestic propriety among the middle classes concealed a hotbed of unarticulated desires' (www.Channel4.com/film/reviews, last accessed 20/12/09). Urban Cinefile, in a review dated 6/11/08, calls Rattigan's writing 'remarkable', while Asquith's direction is 'great ...[keeping] the focus tight and the characters silhouetted against the setting of a school where tradition, learning and not much visible emotion are the order of the day' (www.urbancinefile.com.au, last accessed 20/12/09), while Filmcritic.com describes (in 2005) Redgrave's performance as 'devastating', in 'a role of a lifetime'. Praise is fulsome too for the photography which is 'stellar', adding to 'the atmosphere [of the school as] of a near-afterlife' (www.film_critic.com, last accessed 20/12/09).

Yet in the essay by Geoffrey MacNab, which accompanies the 2005 Criterion Collection DVD of the film, David Thomson accuses Asquith of making 'addled movies that accepted a 1920s notion of the intrinsic appeal of wealthy and successful people'. I don't think this criticism applies to this film. Crocker-Harris is neither wealthy nor successful; indeed, he, like Perrin, represents the impoverished old guard soon to be replaced by the new, modernising intake of teachers personified here by Gilbert, and in the earlier film by Traill. Whether Rattigan and Asquith are conscious of the educational changes or not (and it is highly likely that as a son of an ex-prime minister Asquith would have been) The Crock's retirement is symbolic of the

ushering in of the new model of modern, child-centred teachers that fitted the post-1944 plan. A new production line, speeded up by the emergency training scheme, meant that Crocker-Harris was now as irrelevant as Chipping, Perrin or Hartley.

Mandy (1952), director Alexander Mackendrick.

This film, about a little deaf girl's struggle to make her way in the world, points up the qualities of a good teacher. Although the film largely concentrates on the conflicted parents (mother trying everything she can to get Mandy the help she needs, father embarrassed at having a disabled daughter, hiding her from the world), the film is more than an appeal for understanding: it shows the value of patient, consistent, child-centred education.

Mandy (Mandy Miller) is discovered to be congenitally deaf, a condition the specialist describes as 'interesting'. To parents Christine and Harry Garland (Phyllis Calvert and Terence Morgan) the news is devastating, and leads to a difference of opinion as to how the girl should be cared for. Harry doesn't want Mandy put into an 'institution' and for five years, his daughter is cared for at his parents' home.

We are afforded an insight into Mandy's isolation by a series of incidents which illustrate how her disability leaves her vulnerable to misunderstanding, and being misunderstood. She runs out into the road before the wheels of a lorry to rescue her dog, only to be upbraided by the shocked and angry driver. While playing on her bike in her back yard, children from the neighbourhood ask her for a go: her inability to hear leads them to accuse her of being 'stingy'. In the park, two children get Mandy to play 'piggy in the middle' with Mandy's ball and her in the middle, but she doesn't understand the game and quite naturally sees it as blatant teasing. Eventually she snaps and attacks the boy, his mother accusing her of being mentally sick.

Christine decides to act and visits a school in Manchester, Bishop David School for the Deaf, that Harry has previously dismissed as being unsuitable for his daughter. She meets the ill-mannered, abrasive teacher Dick Searle (Jack Hawkins) who shows her around, and the founder of Bishop David, Dr. Jane Ellis (Nancy Price), who, it transpires, is 'one of them' i.e. also deaf. The school is in a less than lovely setting and is old and rather grim, but the love bestowed on the children by the staff, and returned in kind by the children, convinces Christine that this is more than the 'barracks' that Harry will describe it as. Most importantly, it offers Mandy community, something she is sorely lacking in the cosseted world of her grandparents' home. Following an argument in which Harry hits her, Christine leaves home and takes Mandy to enrol in the school.

Dick Searle has his own problems in the shape of governor Ackland (Edward Chapman) who would sooner spend the limited funds on smartening up the school than pay for an extra teacher. The uncompromising Searle accuses Ackland of thinking of the school as simply 'a lot of buildings and a balance sheet and a reputation. I think it's just a lot of individual kids....kids.' He realises this argument is childish, but Ackland has had enough of Searle's 'rudeness and arrogance' and conspires to get rid of the turbulent master by fair means or foul.

Mandy finds it hard to settle in at the school; she has never experienced the community of children before. Christine decides to make Mandy a day student, an unusual step but one that is approved by Seale. Affording Christine special treatment is just the opportunity Ackland needs and he has Christine spied on, hoping to find some dirt on Searle (the master's ex-wife apparently said some very unflattering things about him: now Ackland needs proof of wrong-doing). When Dick starts giving home-tutoring to Mandy at their digs, the extra-curricular activity bears fruit as Mandy starts to make sounds. When she manages 'mummy', Christine is overwhelmed and kisses Searle: unfortunately, there is a witness who will dish the dirt to Ackland's spy, Davey.

Word gets to Harry, and he rushes off to Manchester. On the occasion of his last visit, he came away feeling useless in contrast to the teacher. Now he confronts Christine who admits that there was one kiss; when she breaks down, Harry runs back to his parents, with Mandy.

The denouement comes when Dick and Christine confront Harry at his parents' house. The pivotal moment is when Mandy's grandfather witnesses the girl speaking and he tells his son that he must decide whether he trusts his wife or not. Harry realises that Searle has done his job, and is more than the 'witchdoctor' he accused him of being. He also realises he can trust his wife, and Searle slips away as Mandy goes to play with children in her neighbourhood, able to tell them her name and thus gain access to their world.

In the opening shots of the film we hear Christine, in voice-over, introducing us to Amanda Jane Garland (Mandy): 'Amanda is Latin for one who deserves to be loved'. Annette Kuhn, in her article in *Screen* (*Mandy and possibility*, volume 33:3, autumn 1992, pp233-243), plays down the adult melodrama, finding the film immensely affecting to her as a child viewer, and as an adult. For myself, I think the film is much more than just Mandy's story: I think Mackendrick has woven a subtle tapestry of early fifties Britain in which we are invited to ask questions as to what constitutes society. Harry's mother holds court in a private world in which Mandy can be safe but isolated; her home is a comfortable but sterile bourgeois island in a bomb-damaged neighbourhood. In contrast, Bishop David is a 'gloomy and cavernous Victorian gothic' pile (Kuhn, 235) but appearances are deceptive; it may be shabby, but here there is community. Harry is desperate not to 'pitchfork' his daughter into an institution, but in denying her that community he sets her back years.

The tension between the impotent Harry and the 'witchdoctor' Searle is only finally resolved when the teacher's achievements are demonstrated by Mandy speaking, but there remains the question of Dick's relationship with Christine, which is left hanging in the air. Jane Ellis has warned Dick not to tutor Mandy at home for fear of malicious gossip, but he still takes Christine out to dinner on the night of Harry's

second visit to Manchester. Divorcee Searle purports to be aware of the danger of the vulnerable young woman becoming too close, but we are given the strong impression that he has feelings which go beyond the professional. How close is Searle to transgressing with Christine? (a similar issue is raised in *Black* (2005) where teacher Debraj Sahai is begged by Michelle McNally to kiss her; when he does, the dignity she gains as a woman is equal to the dignity he loses as a teacher, and he quits.) Searle is a good and effective teacher, but he is also a man of energy, passion and dedication, making him an attractive alternative to the younger, more dashing but weaker Harry. How much is he willing to sacrifice for his job? And how much is Christine willing to sacrifice for her daughter? What becomes obvious is that hearth and home are not enough; not enough for Mandy, and perhaps not enough for Christine.

‘The most significant thing about Mandy is the stately pace of the emotional discoveries– that the little girl is deaf, that the husband is inferior and that the world is cruel to the disadvantaged. The slow unfolding of emotional pain is combined with an insistence on the untrustworthiness of women.’ (Harper and Porter 2007: 61)

The film asks questions about these discoveries, old conventions and the man as provider. Interestingly, the older, less obviously virile male is more capable of giving the mother and daughter what they need. Perhaps the message of the film is that we all deserve to be loved, and not just Mandy.

Gavin Lambert felt that the film had been ‘lamed’ by centring too much on the adult drama, but the insights into Mandy’s world were revealing: ‘The deaf children, with their unnaturally alert faces, their sudden spurts of vitality and affection, their quick trust, their extraordinary patience with and politeness to each other and the adults, are wonderfully caught’ and he makes special mention of the performance of Dorothy Alison as the teacher ‘with its feeling of gentle dedication and love.’ His highest praise is for Mandy Miller in the title role, and the children of the Manchester Royal Schools for the Deaf, from whom Mackendrick has extracted ‘playing of a rare directness and intimacy.’

In reference to the performance of the children in the school, Lambert says that 'one is taken into a new world, all the more subtly different for being in so many ways the same.' It is also perhaps significant that Gavin Lambert's friend and colleague on *Sight and Sound* Lindsay Anderson was to make a dramatised documentary film, *Thursday's Child*, on the subject of deaf children shot at the Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children in Margate just three years later, a film which (again) Lambert describes as giving 'an idea of the methods of work involved, and the dedication on both sides, teachers and pupils, they demand [in this] particular, enclosed world' (*Sight and Sound*, summer, 1955).

Mandy is a very affecting film. As a scholar and as a grown-up, Kuhn (1992) struggles to accommodate her childhood (and adult) emotional response to her objective view but, in my opinion, the strength of *any* popular film is its ability to connect with its audience. Here is articulation, a coming together of the filmmaker's product with the needs of the audience, and for an essentially passive form of culture such as cinema, this is probably the most significant connection. It is difficult not to respond with emotion as the little girl learns to lip read and speak, but perhaps the beauty of *Mandy* is that it personifies this personal struggle to a backdrop of a society in change, where the new post-war England must re-evaluate what it means to be a functioning member of society, albeit fractured, and those who had previously been unheard must now be allowed a voice, and listened to. The teacher becomes midwife of this difficult delivery.

Nonetheless, Searle is a maverick, not a production-line teacher, and as such differed from Nigel Lorraine in *The Guinea Pig*, or David Traill in *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill*. He shares the dynamism of Hunter, and the child-centred approach of Gilbert (*The Browning Version*) but he seems singularly subjective, and, as we shall see, there were troubles ahead for those who might lack flexibility or self-reflection; and this at a time of serious material shortcomings which would compromise teachers elected to cure the ills of an ailing society.

Filmography

MR PERRIN AND MR TRAILL (1948) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Lawrence Huntingdon
Producer.....Alexander Galperson
Production Company.....Two Cities Films
Screenplay.....T.J. Morrison, L.A.G. Strong
Cinematography.....Erwin Hillier
Editor.....Ralph Kemplen
Original music.....Muir Mathieson

Cast

Vincent Perrin.....Marius Goring
David Traill.....David Farrar
Isobel Lester.....Greta Gynt
Moy-Thompson.....Raymond Huntley

GUINEA PIG, THE (1948) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Roy Boulting
Producer.....John Boulting
Production Company.....Pilgrim Pictures, The Boulting Brothers' Production
Screenplay.....Roy Boulting, Bernard Miles
Cinematography.....Gilbert Taylor
Editor.....Richard Best
Original music.....John Wooldridge

Cast

Jack Read.....Richard Attenborough
Lloyd Hartley.....Cecil Truener
Nigel Lorraine.....Robert Flemyng
Lynne Hartley.....Sheila Sim

BROWNING VERSION, THE (1951) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Anthony Asquith
Producers.....Teddy Baird and Earl St. John
Production Company.....Javelin Films
Screenplay.....Terence Rattigan
Cinematography.....Desmond Dickinson
Editor.....John D. Guthridge

Cast

Andrew Crocker-Harris.....Michael Redgrave
Millie Crocker-Harris.....Jean Kent
Frank Hunter.....Nigel Patrick
Frobisher.....Wilfred Hyde White
Taplow.....Brian Smith

MANDY (1952) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Alexander Mackendrick
Producers.....Michael Balcon, Leslie Norman
Production Company.....Ealing Studios
Screenplay.....Nigel Balchin
Cinematography.....Douglas Slocombe
Editor.....Seth Holt
Original music.....Ernest Irving

Cast

Christine Garland.....Phyllis Calvert
Dick Searle.....Jack Hawkins
Mandy Garland.....Mandy Miller
Jane Ellis.....Nancy Price

CHAPTER 4. TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS.

The great experiment in social democratic education might have succeeded but for serious shortcomings in resources, as mentioned above. Many of the schools which became Secondary Moderns were little more than elementary schools with a different name and without a massive rebuilding programme (which the nation could ill-afford) 'parity of conditions' (*The New Secondary Education*, in McCulloch 1998: 64) would prove elusive. Education minister Wilkinson's decision to let the grammars wither on the vine would be the Achilles heel of the tripartite system; the mimicking of the grammar school ethos in many of the more prosperous secondary schools, including streaming and external examinations, meant that the notion of an egalitarian scheme for all was threatened. With the exception of those 'better-heeled' schools, there became established an awareness that Secondary Modern meant second class; not different, but worse. Conservative working class aspiration, as typified by Jack Read's father in *The Guinea Pig* (1948), would always favour meritocracy over democracy, so long as it applied to 'their boy'.

On the national front, Britain was in transition. The Empire was crumbling as India set the post-colonial

ball rolling, and the Suez debacle seemed to prove that not only had the mother-country lost her children—she had lost her dominion: ‘In the aftermath of the crisis, no one could doubt that Britain’s days as a great international power had passed (Sandbrook 2005: 29). If the British school teacher was the personification of national values (as Percy and Norwood had imagined), would we similarly see him or her struggle to maintain control of the classroom?

Meanwhile, another threat loomed on the western horizon, as the teenager was born in America, and the generation gap beckoned the unwary or ill-prepared. Jazz, and later, rock ’n roll, would seduce the baby-boomer generation of (more) affluent youngsters who would reject the collective in favour of the individual.

It’s Great To Be Young (1956), director Cyril Frankel.

The film begins with the sign outside Angel Hill Grammar School being amended to take account of the new headmaster, ‘JA Frome MA’. This is a co-educational school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18, and it becomes clear from the fairly anarchic performances of both school orchestra and teacher Mr Dingle (John Mills) that this is a fairly relaxed regime. However, things are about to change. This term’s ‘voyage of discovery’ will find ‘our little ship’ under a new command, and Frome (Cecil Parker) nails his colours to the mast in most uncompromising terms: ‘If you work well, we shall get on together’. The reception of the new man is mixed among the pupils. Paulette (Dorothy Bromiley) thinks Frome ‘has a sad face’, indicative of having known tragedy, while Nicky Putnam (Jeremy Spenser) thinks he ‘looks perfectly normal to me’. To which Ginger Riley (Brian Smith) exclaims: ‘Normal? He’s a headmaster, isn’t he? I’ve never met a

normal one yet!’

Dingle has a very informal relationship with his students, stealing sweets from them, and referring to them as ‘my love’, and ‘angel’. It becomes clear that although Dingle also teaches History, he is too easily seduced by his love of music, and the children know how to manipulate him to their own ends. In contrast, Frome has a less benevolent eye: ‘While you’re in the school buildings’, he informs a hitherto noisy corridor ‘you’ll do your utmost to disguise the fact that you’re hooligans.’

In the staffroom, there are doubts expressed concerning the head cutting first XI practice, but Frome overhears the conversation, and delivers a witty rejoinder, which tickles Dingle: ‘The man’s got a sense of humour– I’m going to like him.’ But after lunch, Frome quizzes the music teacher on his attitudes to education. ‘The academic subjects are the ones to be emphasized I think, don’t you?’ ‘Well’ replies the master, ‘I think there’s too much emphasis on dates and facts and figures. That’s what’s wrong with modern schooling... I mean,’ continues Dingle, ‘what does it really do to a kid to teach him about the Congress of Vienna?... There’s more real education [in music] than a dozen booming congresses.’ Sadly for Dingle, Frome disagrees, and even has his axe poised over the school orchestra. ‘And you concentrate on serious music, on the classics?’ ‘Oh yes, exclusively, exclusively. Mind you, I like a spot of jazz myself, don’t you?’ ‘Personally,’ declares the Head ‘I find it detestable. In my view, it ruins character.’ And this just as the sound of jazz emanates from the gym.

The jazz orchestra is in full swing, but upon Frome’s appearance, grinds to a halt. Trumpeter Puttnam is castigated by the Head: As a prefect, he ‘is expected to keep control in the absence of masters.’ Riley mutters under his breath that Frome is a ‘miserable old twerp’, earning him lines from Dingle. On the Head’s departure, Dingle shows how jazz should really be played; children and master succumb to the delirium of the vibe; they are ‘solid gone’. When Dingle gives Ginger his lines– ‘I must learn to keep my mouth shut, then I won’t put my foot in it’– his bandmates rally round to do fifty lines each– an indication

of the collaboration that will be evidenced later.

In the staffroom, Frome reminds his colleagues that he demanded their 'full cooperation. Discipline must be tightened, and there must be a far greater emphasis on the primary purpose of the school. Study.' Frome has his sights on sport, but after the debacle of the gym, 'it had crossed my mind that we should disband the school orchestra'. In fact, Frome intends only to limit practice to outside of school hours, but this still provokes an angry reaction from Dingle, who kicks in a classroom door, breaking the glass.

The band members discuss Frome, and one of them describes the Head as 'an absolute philistine.' Puttnam turns his mind as to how to support the orchestra, low on funds and short on practice. They decide to busk in the street, targeting a queue for a boxing match. The queue is unimpressed by their classical rendition, but digs deep when they break into a joyous song and dance routine, 'rhythm is our business, rhythm is what we sell.' Dingle joins in, but is unaware that they have been secretly photographed.

In the staffroom, Dingle is in dispute with a fellow master, Routledge (John Salew), over the virtues of music. 'Do you know what's wrong with the world, my dim-witted colleague? No harmony. We spend too much time stuffing this (slaps fellow's head) or this (pokes his rotund belly) when it's this we should be worrying about (places palm on fellow's chest) the heart, the soul. More music, my friend, more music.'

Meanwhile, the boy Morris's father, who is in the music business, has set up a deal whereby the school can purchase new instruments on the 'never-never'. Dingle is unconvinced, until a girl takes up a clarinet and plays, and the teacher is won to the cause. However, when Frome gets wind of the impromptu rehearsal, he has the new instruments locked away. When Dingle confronts him, the Head wields a newspaper in which the photograph of the busking has been published. The headline is: 'Must our schools go begging on the streets?' Dingle has 'made a laughing stock of the school.' But how will the children

stand a 'dog's chance' of qualifying for the upcoming festival without their instruments? Frome retorts:

'Unless our pupils concentrate on their studies, they don't stand a dog's chance of qualifying for anything.

Scraping the violin will not win scholarships.' The argument between strategic and holistic education rears its

head (it will again, fifty years later in Nicholas Hytner's *The History Boys*). Dingle threatens his

resignation, but the Head calls his bluff, and, for now, the music man backs down.

Unbeknownst to the orchestra, Dingle pays the remainder of the deposit to Morris' father, but in order to be able to continue the instalments, he must take a part-time job as pianist in the local pub. At the same time, the children conspire to steal back the instruments, by making a copy of the storeroom cupboard key, and squirreling their booty off to the local scout hut, where rehearsals continue.

One evening, Dingle's colleague Routledge and wife decide to check out the local pub, which has gained a reputation thanks to a brilliant mystery pianist. When the master sees it is Dingle at the keys, he makes a swift exit; the Head must hear of this. The subsequent confrontation leads to Dingle tending his resignation; Frome is exasperated. Is there anything I can do? asks Mrs Castle, a female member of staff. 'The man is a born teacher' sighs the Head 'and an irresponsible, obstinate lunatic. There's nothing anyone can do.'

Traitor Routledge takes over Dingle's class, as the master clears his desk; his idea of teaching is to get the class to read chapters of a book, from which he will later ask questions. The class, in shock at Dingle's departure, send a delegation, led by Putnam, to see Frome. They try to argue that they should share the blame, but the Head is adamant that Dingle should take responsibility: 'It was his duty to maintain authority, not aid and abet you in your insubordination.' Frome will not listen to the protestations from the students, but ruefully admits, to Mrs Castle, that he failed to explain himself: 'I didn't get near them.'

There now begins a pupil revolt, to try and get justice for Dingle. Pickets, protests, civil disobedience, even a phial of tear gas are employed by the youngsters to try and get Dingle reinstated. A school inspector arrives, only to witness the protest in full flow. Frome tries to pick off Puttnam as a ringleader, demanding 'not another word' about the master. Puttnam obliges, and the school friends refuse to speak. When Routledge tries to bully pupil Crowther to his feet, up spring six taller boys, to intimidate the master into backing down. Children from other schools turn up, bringing provisions so that the lock-in might survive. Frome's last resort is to threaten calling in the police. With the threat hanging in the air, the hapless Head goes to visit Dingle in his digs, whereupon he lays the blame squarely at the music man's feet: 'This deplorable situation is as much your responsibility as mine.' Then adds: 'But you're lucky: you were born without a conscience. You're one of those quite irresponsible people who create trouble and then wash their hands of it. You not only encouraged defiance, you aided and abetted it.' Dingle doesn't take this lying down: 'But you handled it all wrong. You put everybody's back up from the start.'

Nonetheless, it is Frome and Dingle together who confront the protesters. Turning on his champions, he calls the children 'irresponsible idiots'. 'Since when has one man been more important than the whole school?' Puttnam is stung: 'We're only standing up for fair play, sir.' 'That does credit to your hearts, but not your heads,' replies Dingle, and he dismisses their avowed intention to fight on as 'sentimental rubbish.' And what makes them think that he hasn't another job all ready to go on to? Frome disabuses them of such an idea, however, explaining that Mr Dingle hasn't let them down, and it is he, the head, who 'has never been able to win [their] confidence and affection as he's done.' Frome tells the children that they have been behaving badly for the best reasons- just as he has. Can they help him rectify this wrong by persuading Dingle to return? Three rousing cheers ring out for the Head, as he and Dingle are carried shoulder-high as the siege is ended, and the music man reinstated.

Britmovie (britmovie.co.uk) describes *It's Great To Be Young* as a 'bubbly musical comedy' which

nonetheless requires 90 minutes of suspended disbelief. Certainly, there is no threat to the established order in the children's revolt and it soon evaporates once Dingle shows his disapproval. Paul Dehn in the *News Chronicle* (01/06/56) describes the film as 'falling between [the] two stools' of realism and musical farce, such that it becomes 'a roaring musico-realistic-farcical failure' while Isabel Quigley in *The Spectator* (08/06/56) found both the Angels and their mentor 'quite nauseating' – somewhat adrift of Frankel's own opinion of it being 'a joyous exuberant film'. The music was deemed inappropriate, 'the sugary American-style songs' striking 'an alien note in such emphatically British surroundings' (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1956, vol.23, no. 27, p91), strange given Mills' trumpet playing was dubbed by English jazz pioneer Humphrey Lyttleton.

Spare The Rod (1961), director Leslie Norman.

A thwarted riot rather than a siege is a feature of this early sixties drama, often dubbed a British *Blackboard Jungle*. An adaptation from the novel of the same name by Michael Croft, the film stars the popular entertainer Max Bygraves (who helped finance the movie (Hill, 1986, 105)) as the idealistic new teacher John Saunders (Sanders in the book) who, like Mr Traill (*Mr Perrin and Mr Traill* (1948)), has entered the teaching profession after a year's emergency training. He had been an gunnery instructor in the navy, but he is new to school, and is about to face a stern challenge. He fetches up at Worrell Street secondary modern in inner city London where he meets the headmaster, Mr Jenkins (Donald Pleasence) (who is described in the book as 'a dead man'); the head inhabits a squalid, overfull study that resembles a redoubt under siege. To Jenkins, the children are the enemy. Dour, and stricken by nicotine addiction, he advises Saunders: 'don't give them an inch'.

The new man is determined to treat his charges with a modicum of respect, however, and anticipates 'a very happy ship' (like Dingle in *It's Great of be Young*). In sharp contrast is jaded, battle-weary Mr

Gregory (Geoffrey Keen), an ex-master joiner who became a teacher in the slump of the thirties, and who advocates discipline in the form of liberal use of the cane. Pretty Miss Collins (Betty McDowall) shares Saunders' view, however, that the job entails teaching the new generation to 'do better than we did.' Gregory and Jenkins look less to teach (which is 'a mug's game') than to control. Miss Collins is a teacher who has developed her ideas at college, rather than in the school of hard knocks, like Gregory, and so is set up the competition between traditionalists and modernisers for the hearts and minds of the children.

While Saunders tries to make his lessons interesting (acting out *Julius Caesar*, whom he has likened to Hitler), Gregory wants to teach the youngsters a trade, something that will be useful. Saunders is 'the blind leading the blind' according to the older man, but the navy man knows something of life, and wants to dig deeper to understand the children. He discovers that the father of class monitor Harkness (Richard O'Sullivan) came back from the Burma railway a broken man: he understands the impact on the boy. He finds out that Doris (Annette Robertson), another member of class 2, comes from a poor family, her mother a regular at the local pub, her father unknown. But Jenkins is unimpressed by resorting to psychology: 'the mind of the modern child' could not be found at Worrell Street; here, they're dealing with 'animal instinct', and there are 'not enough teachers of the right sort, and too many children of the wrong sort'. Nevertheless, the fact that Saunders *is* the right sort is confirmed by a schools inspector who observes a class and is impressed by the faith he has in his pupils, and the spirit of possibility the lesson engenders.

Saunders finds his character put to the test when he meets Doris and her friend Margaret (Claire Marshall) outside the chip shop. Walking them home, Margaret invites the teacher up to meet her parents, but in fact, they aren't home. However, John and Margaret are not alone: two young sisters witness the teenager beckoning the master down onto her mattress. Saunders refuses, but at this point the parents return, a fight ensues and Saunders suffers a black eye. The next day in school, the atmosphere has

changed; it is as if the master has failed a test (by refusing Margaret? by succumbing to her invitation?) and the children are no longer responsive. Saunders warns his pupils that he's at the end of his tether, but they continue to torment him. Taking the cane that he has erstwhile refused to use, the master punishes the ring-leaders- *and* Harkness, who is implicated by his classmates. Saunders has lost his battle for a more civilised relationship '[A]s if sublimating sexuality into violence', according to John Hill (1986, 105); he has descended, he feels, to Gregory's level, proven when the latter offers his hearty congratulation for his reaction.

The remainder of the film sees Saunders trying to make amends. He defends Harkness when the boy is found guilty of breaking into a wine warehouse, winning Jenkins over; but the boy has an enemy in Gregory, who regards him as nothing but a bad lot. When two other boys lock Gregory in the boys' toilet overnight, and mock him mercilessly the next morning, it is Harkness who is in the sadist's sights. Gregory takes the cane to the boy, repeatedly beating the child on the legs. Saunders intervenes, sending the older man sprawling into the corner of the room. Gregory swipes Saunders across the face with the stick, whereupon the younger man breaks the cane in two. Thinking the new man has provided them with their means of liberation, the class riot, smashing up furniture, and threatening a bonfire. Saunders intervenes, asking them to join his side, against the mutineers. One by one, starting with Harkness, they come over. We are left to consider the fact that it was the master who first abandoned negotiation for force: the lesson has been well learned.

However, Saunders has crossed the line. Jenkins calls him to account, the younger man protesting the justice of his intervention. But the cardinal sin has already been committed: the teacher has sided with a pupil against a member of staff. The dichotomy, of teacher and taught, has been compromised, and Saunders must go.

The final scene sees the teacher heading off for pastures new on the recommendation of the schools'

inspector, who recognises his worth. Harkness offers the teacher a cigarette, which he accepts, and Margaret approaches him to apologise for her behaviour. The parents of a child in class 2 go out of their way to thank him for his efforts. 'See you next term, sir' calls one pupil; but will they? The issue is never quite resolved, as, although Saunders might appear to be wavering, we never discover if Jenkins has had a change of heart. A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD.

As such, there is no cosy rapprochement at the end of this film, which, according to *Monthly Film Bulletin* (v28. n330 (1st July 1961), 96) 'has too little time in which to make any genuinely constructive criticism [] and beats a painful retreat into rosy unrealism with a finale of discomfited villain, comforting heroine, grateful negroes [one grateful parent, actually (NJ)] and Christmas'. John Hill thinks the ending 'excessive' and 'overloaded', 'as if in indication of the difficulty it is having in tying up all the narrative elements' (Hill, 1986, 62).

Nevertheless, the movie retains 'a hard core of sincerity' in 'its attack on ill-equipped schools, semi-illiteracy, the disillusion and brutality of elements in the teaching profession [and] the sense of perpetual war between these elements and the slum children in their charge' (ibid).

I think *Spare The Rod* is a well-honed film, with good performances from Bygraves ('a warm and mainly engaging performance' *Variety*, 31st May, 1961) and Pleasence, and a strong supporting cast. The direction is pacey, the black and white cinematography dramatic. The film differs slightly from the book, with more emphasis (in the film) on the sexual tension in the classroom which, ironically, compounded problems of certification prior to release- the censors not wanting youngsters to be adversely influenced by scenes of juvenile delinquency and promiscuity, but reluctant to award it an X certificate (it was eventually released as an A) (Aldgate 1995: 13-31). Secretary to the British Board of Film Censors Arthur L. Watkins

commented:

It would be highly improper for children who are going to school next day, to sit and watch a story about masters who are frankly sadists, and who confess they are terrified to go into their classrooms because they have lost control.' ('Film Blocked by Censor' *News Chronicle*, 17/12/54, quoted in Harper and Porter 2007: 229-230).

Only in 1961, after the violence had been toned down, and with a new director, star and scriptwriter, did the film make the cinema screens. Even then, the evidence of Margaret's attempted seduction of her teacher had to be reduced to an implication. New BBFC secretary (from 1958) John Trevelyan explained his thinking in a letter to producer Victor Lyndon dated 5th December 1960:

We do not mind evidence of a schoolgirl "crush" on Sanders, even if it is implied that it is based on a precocious sexual knowledge and experience, but we could not have explicit sexual knowledge and experience of the kind indicated in the script in the "A" category. (BBFC file on *Spare The Rod*, quoted in Aldgate 1995: 27).

John Hill is disappointed for other reasons, finding 'a denial of worth and validity to working class forms of culture'. He goes on:

Education and advancement derives from an assimilation of middle-class norms; the 'reform' of working class youth from a contact with middle-class outsiders (teachers or youth workers) who occupy the parental role, either absent or weakly fulfilled by the children's own parents (1986, 112).

As an essay on the dilemma facing liberal teachers of how to control before one can teach, the film is

perhaps less successful than as a warning of the dangers of pubescent yet sexually aware teenagers, a theme taken up in *Term of Trial*. However, it is an honest attempt (as, I would maintain, is Croft's book) to address the problem of unruly children in post-war Britain, where the teaching profession was faced with the twin pressures of trying to deliver tomorrow's citizens for the New Britain, and possibly advancing modern, more liberal methods in the curriculum (and in punishment, or control). The phasing-out of the cane-as-prosthesis would lead to a re-evaluation of the body of the teacher, both on the part of the practitioner and pupils: as Giddens points out, the body is 'not simply an 'entity', but is experienced as a practical mode of coping with external situations and events... To be a competent [social] agent... means not only maintaining [...] continuous control, but by being seen by others to do so' (Giddens 1991: 56). At the same time the schools were dilapidated, space was at a premium and the numbers of male teachers in particular (as role models for fatherless children? as managers?) were too low. And all the while, this generation of teenagers looked to different peers, and across the Atlantic, for their inspiration.

Term Of Trial (1962), director Peter Glenville.

Graham Weir (Laurence Olivier) is a teacher in the co-educational East Secondary Modern School in the inner-city. It transpires he has been a conscientious objector in the war, and his eschewing of violence has blighted his teaching career (in contrast to the likes of David Traill, or invalided-out Nigel Lorraine in *The Guinea Pig*). Now, however, he might be able to gain the deputy-headship, if he can only control his drinking and the disruptive elements in the school. And navigate his way through the sexual minefield laid down by the besotted 15 year old pupil Shirley (Sarah Miles).

The Head of East prides himself on his school's progressive ethos; he announces a continental school trip, to Paris. Weir will go, but his beleaguered French wife Anna (Simone Signoret) will stay in her 'prison' of a home. The fault lines in their marriage are all too apparent; she is the strong one in their relationship,

he clingy and weak. Meanwhile, Weir must deal with delinquent pupil Mitchell (Terence Stamp), whom he faces down, only to find out later that his car windscreen has been smashed. Mitchell is seen harassing Shirley: the girl is destined to be the bone of contention between the handsome tearaway, and the safe, dependable teacher.

In the pouring rain, Weir gives Shirley a lift home. She reveals her ambition to become a secretary, but knows she stands little chance without out-of-school coaching. Weir offers to help, for nothing, subject to her parents' approval. Mr and, especially, Mrs Taylor are sceptical, but agree, while Shirley's precocious sister is suspicious of her motives, but she is warned not to 'pinch him'. Weir senses the tension between the girl and her family and she confesses to being ashamed of them.

In the pub, after school, the soon to depart deputy head buys Weir a drink; he's in need of one himself, after a day with that 'shower of delinquents.' 'Little swine, aren't they?' Weir isn't so condemnatory: 'Well, some of them are. But I suppose one mustn't blame them too much.' 'Nonsense. Kids are cruel little bastards; they'd crucify you for tuppence.' And concerning Mitchell: 'There's only one way to deal with him- belt him.' Again, Weir is conciliatory. 'I can't teach with hatred.' Raising his glass: 'Here's to the school.' 'To hell with the school.' The deputy can't understand how come a man with an honours degree 'ever got landed with this jungle anyway', when he could have procured a public school posting, but recommends Weir volunteer for everything, 'show you're keen, and a Christian.' 'Well, I am a Christian' concedes Weir, the closest he gets to explaining his conscientious objection. 'Be as hearty as a blasted scout-master. Don't get ulcers. Belt the little beasts. Happy hunting!'

When Weir returns home, it is to a frustrated, neglected Anna. She wonders that he can offer to help Shirley while ignoring her. Weir wonders why she married him; he knows why *he* married *her*; because, meekly: 'I love you.' 'Love doesn't last twenty four hours a day', replies his wife. There is a tension here, born of the fact that Weir spends all his time guiding the young, while Anna has not been able to provide

him with a child of his own. When he fatuously tells her that he is 'happy to be with you as you are', she rails: 'Don't be so bloody noble.' Why doesn't he beat her, she asks, but he won't fight: 'Don't give me any of that conscientious this and conscientious that. You're a coward, that's what you are, a bloody coward.' Just a way to get out of fighting in the war, she suggests. 'All the time it was just funk.'

On the way to school the next day, Shirley is tricked onto some derelict land where she is confronted by Mitchell and three of his gang. She is accused of being 'teacher's pet', and is threatened with a razor. Time for once is on her side, and she runs, late, into Weir's class. Mitchell is later seen passing a photograph to a friend; it's a snap he has taken of Shirley, through the toilet window. Weir, the pacifist, confronts the thug. He informs the class that in an essay, Mitchell has expressed admiration for dictators, and is not opposed to violence. 'Hold out your hand.' Shirley looks on, aghast. Mitchell refuses, and folds his arms. Weir beats them apart: 'Oh, so degenerate bullies are also cowards as well, are they?' Weir administers three strokes of the cane to each hand.

Weir finds himself answering to the Head. Why has the master broken his record of non-violence? Weir explains about the photo, but has to admit that there is no proof that Mitchell actually took it. Shouldn't Weir stick to teaching Mitchell and his like, rather than resort to prejudice? We feel Weir's pain at the injustice of the accusation.

Weir meets the boy Thompson, whom we first saw running to school at the beginning of the film. Or was he running away from someone? 'Please tell him to go away, sir.' Who? He is referring to his mother's 'lodger', a flash wide boy called Chard who has moved into the family home, and who is elbowing Thompson out. Will Weir intervene, or is he recognising that there are certain limits to his influence? On this occasion, he has to concede that as a paying lodger, Chard has the right to be in the boy's home.

That night, in the Green Arms, Weir is attacked (by friends of Mitchell?).

The next scene sees Shirley, dolled up to the nines, visiting Weir at home, as sister Jill has the house for a 21st birthday party. The girl asks Anna how old she thinks she looks, to which she replies 'about twenty'. 'I am about twenty, mentally and physically.' In his study, surrounded by books, his life's passion, she declares: 'You don't have much of a life, do you?' Weir tells the girl that she is like a child who doesn't know she's attractive. 'Am I attractive? I thought I was too pale?' A provocative question, given the darker complexion of his French wife.

Meanwhile, Thompson, once again thrown out by Chard so that the man can have some privacy with his mother, takes his revenge, lighting a fire under the older man's car; but Thompson is caught in the conflagration, and is rushed to hospital, badly burned. Is this what happens if Weir *doesn't* get involved with those in his care?

Shirley gives Weir a present: it is a telephone index, with her number already written in it. She kisses him, rather passionately, but on the cheek. Anna is aware of the attraction, but for Weir, who regards Shirley as a daughter-figure, it merely raises the question of adoption. Anna refuses, not wanting 'another woman's castaway' (no Mr Chips-like pupil-as-progeny confusion from her). A phone call summons Weir to the hospital; again, at a point of crisis in their marriage, the teacher opts for the role of guardian over husband.

The school trip to Paris allows Shirley to make her move on Weir. Feeling faint, she has to leave the Louvre for some fresh air, but stages a remarkable recovery with the master at her side. She confides that she likes being with him; he has charm, is refined, sad, romantic. He just hopes he's 'a good teacher.' 'Well, you certainly got through to me.' Significantly, Weir gives Shirley the money to buy herself a toy poodle, but in her mind, it is a present from the man she loves. Weir is afraid that, with Shirley looking older than she is, they might 'give the wrong impression.' Shirley: 'Are you sure it's the wrong one?' To

compound his naivety, he now takes the girl to the top of the Eiffel Tower, the most potent phallic symbol in the city of love. She rests her head on his shoulder. Back at the hotel that night, Shirley tells Weir: 'It's been the happiest day of my whole life.' Weir misses his cue and fails to kiss her goodnight; instead he tells her that she looks like a tired child. He goes off to a restaurant where a colleague embarks on a piece of casual infidelity, born of the merest eye contact. Shirley, meanwhile, cries herself to sleep.

Back in London, the party miss their connecting train, and have to stay a night in a hotel. A thunderstorm presages the doom that is to unfold; Shirley, frightened by the thunder, seeks shelter in Weir's room. Dressed only in nightie and topcoat, she flings herself into his arms. Weir calls her a child, but, removing the coat, Shirley declares: 'I'm a woman.' 'You're a young girl in my charge' he reminds her, and himself. 'I wanted to help you, as a father... I can't allow myself to think of you like that, not even for a moment (is a moment all it would take for his resolve to crumble?) ... I want to be your friend.' 'Then love me', says Shirley as they embrace. He smacks her gently on the bottom. 'You must forget this ever happened.' Shirley: 'I hate you!'

The next day, Weir sees Shirley kissing Mitchell on the train, a 'ridiculous exhibition'. At home, in front of Anna, the master is visited by a police officer following a complaint of an indecent assault in a London hotel. Not only has Shirley indicted him for the slap on her buttocks, but also that he 'got excited.' Weir is taken to the police station, charged, and bailed to appear in court in seven days. He seeks solace in first pub, then church. He visits Shirley's parents, but they know they have the law on their side: sneeringly, 'Goodbye, Mr Teacher.'

Anna interrogates her husband, who tells her the truth. Unfortunately, she discovers he has disclosed her inability to have children. Anna 'loathes' him, says his actions are 'true to form' and that Shirley must be a degenerate for fancying him. Weir strikes his wife, then apologises. She caresses him: perversely, the physical assault has given the neglected wife some self-esteem.

Wandering around Soho, Weir sees evidence of true degeneracy, in sex and guns, and depictions of violence. In the courtroom, Shirley paints a picture of *his* degenerate behaviour: 'He kissed me... He tried to touch me... He frightened me.'

Weir is found guilty of indecent assault, but the court is 'lenient' and awards an unconditional discharge. Weir is furious at not being exonerated. He has been found guilty for his morality, for the innocence, tenderness and love that God has given us before it is corrupted by the 'filth of the world'. Shirley breaks down and confesses that Weir didn't do anything: 'He couldn't hurt anyone.' 'And I really did love him.' She had told mum a 'bag of lies'.

At home, Weir receives hate mail, despite his discharge. Anna wants to get out, but Weir is determined to stay. 'At least I'm not in prison.' 'What do you call this place?' The Head wants him out, too: 'I don't want an immoral person on my staff' (completely ignoring the verdict and Shirley's confession). His class bang their desks upon his return, but what he takes for sympathy is in fact congratulation; they think he's got away with his affair with 'that iceberg Shirley Taylor'. A precocious girl flirts with him, but to no avail. 'Aren't I your type?' 'You're just nothing really, aren't you?'

Anna has packed her bags to leave. She 'would rather have been badly treated by some man with spirit than have to put up with your endless mush.' But Weir surprises her by telling her that Shirley's first accusation was true. Slapping her husband, Anna concedes that he 'got his own back'. 'No, for once I didn't live up to your estimation of me.' 'Men; they're all alike. Who would have thought it of you?' 'Most of them', answers her husband. 'I can see that I'll have to keep an eye on you from now on. You're a rotten hypocrite...but you're less of a mouse than I thought.'

'I am, Anna.'

This black and white film is the nearest to a British neo-realist teacher movie I have seen, with real locations, some hand-held camera work, unconventional shots (including feet on cobbles) and an attempt to remove the theatrical from the film making. How strange, therefore, that the lead character, Graham Weir, is played by Laurence Olivier. The effect is to re-theatricalise the film, which subsequently falls between two stools.

Nonetheless, as a study of morality, *Term of Trial* neatly juxtaposes the overt, official orthodoxy, with its licence and hypocrisy, with the covert conscience of the individual. Weir is constantly held up for comparison, to the deputy head for his attitude to control and punishment, to his adulterous colleague in Paris, to Mitchell with his animal vigour and sexuality, and to Shirley, in terms of the responsibilities of guardianship, and the sanctity of marriage. But all that happens is that he gets punished anyway. The hate mailers think he did it. His class wish he had. His wife is more impressed by having a paedophile for a husband than a mouse. His Headmaster sees him as immoral. To save his marriage, he goes along with a charade. His only unsullied relationship is between him and his conscience. In court, Weir sums up the moral dilemma of a man born out of time:

It is exquisite irony that I should be condemned by a society which presumes itself more moral than I. A society endlessly titillating itself with dirty books and newspapers and advertising and television and the work of cynical and indifferent minds (in Hill 1986: 107).

This is then the conflict, between an onanistic world and a man who is looking for something 'higher'.

However, as Hill explains, the film is actually ambivalent to the man: '[T]he suggestion ...is less that of Weir's nobility than his debilitating sexual inhibition...the lack of virility, or 'castration'...of its hero ...reinstates the very version of masculinity it has been at such pains to dispute.'(ibid, 108) So are we meant to sympathise with Weir, or revile him? *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960, Karel Reisz)

had made a hero (in the character of Arthur Seaton) of a man who acted rather than thought, the antithesis of Weir: we are glad when the teacher does hit back (at Mitchell, at his wife). Is the film therefore celebrating the descent into animal behaviour it purports to regret? I think it is fair to assume that the cinema goer would be more likely to empathise with Seaton than Weir, and that Weir's inability to resolve his anger in anything other than self-destructive ways makes him less of a man in this brave new world. Raymond Durnat is particularly critical of the movie. In *A Mirror for England*, he bemoans the fact that the film contains '[T]oo many reminiscences of other kitchen-sink movies [which] confuse a basically old-fashioned vision' and finds class prejudice at large:

we seem to be expected to applaud Teacher's 'courageous' stand before all those frightening boys and girls. Even those working-class kids who have a longing for higher things remain a rabble...It becomes an attack on the working-class for being disgusting...We have been persuaded that only a thin chalk line has been holding proletarian savagery at bay (Hill 1986: 210).

Lord of the Flies (1963), director Peter Brook.

What if the thin chalk line were erased? What savagery would ensue were children given their head, unchecked by the bridle of the teacher? Brook's 1963 adaptation of William Golding's novel of the same name addresses just this issue. It might seem queer in a thesis on the representation of teachers in film to focus on a movie in which they are notably absent, but sometimes obviation can highlight necessity. Nicolai Machiavelli found clarity of thought in his enforced period of *otium* to ponder the workings of *negotium*; thus was born *The Prince*. The lack of a teacher in *Lord of the Flies* might do more than many other films to prove their worth.

Two parties of schoolboys, evacuated from a nuclear-war zone, survive a plane crash on a tropical island. There appear to be no adult survivors, and the boys have to fend for themselves. One boy, Ralph (James Aubrey), finds a conch shell and a hanger-on in the shape of 'Piggy' (Hugh Edwards), and assumes benign leadership of one party, but a rival group appear, choristers gowned and chanting *Kyrie eleison*, (Lord, have mercy) : all the boys are from public school. Their elder, Jack (Tom Chapin), questions Jack's leadership but for now his place is uncontested.

Work is assigned, including foraging for food, keeping a fire alight and building shelters, but a division emerges, with the choristers neglecting their fire-tending duties for the thrill of the chase, hunting down a pig which they reluctantly share with the home-makers. Jack challenges Ralph's leadership but it is the asthmatic, bespectacled Piggy, a thinker not a fighter, who is punished. Ralph's inability to protect his comrade, and Jack's brazen aggression- 'bollocks to the rules; we're strong, we hunt'- finds favour with many of the boys, and Ralph feels his authority is threatened.

Isolation brings fear; a superstitious dread of an island 'beast', purportedly seen by two of the boys, and a common belief in the existence of ghosts plays into the hands of the martial Jack who wields his knife ever more threateningly. His choir now act like a paramilitary police force and Ralph looks weak in comparison. Following another hunt for food, the head of a slaughtered pig is stuck on a stake as an offering to the beast. The thoughtful Simon (Tom Gaman) finds the gift and watches as flies devour the rotting flesh. It is this boy who later discovers that the 'beast' is in fact a dead parachutist, but on his return to the beach, where an orgy of warlike dancing is taking place, he is taken for the mythical enemy and brutally killed by the hunters.

Next day, Piggy is in denial; it was a terrible accident. But Ralph is inconsolable: he sees it as murder. Steadily, Ralph's followers defect to Jack, leaving Ralph and Piggy more and more vulnerable. When Piggy's spectacles are stolen by a raiding party, Ralph goes with him to confront his rival. A fight ensues

and Piggy calls for reason: 'What is it better to be- a pack of painted savages like you are, or sensible, like Ralph? Which is better- to have rules and agree or to hunt and kill?' The answer comes when one of Jack's tribe, Roger (Roger Elwin), upends a huge rock from the cliff top, which crushes and kills Ralph's lieutenant.

Now the hunt is on for Ralph. Why is he being hunted? Is he the enemy? The new beast? The next meal? The scapegoat? At the moment of the kill, Ralph stumbles at the feet of a British naval officer. Civilisation has returned in a starched white uniform, and Ralph's tears flow, his head bowed in sobbing.

Peter Brook, on the DVD commentary, relates that the cast of boys were in total agreement with the censors' view that the film should not be shown to under 16s. It appears they were only too aware of the authenticity of the descent into savagery they brought to the screen. The director talks of the 'delicate' problem he faced of encouraging the cast to become more and more brutal in the day, while 'each night pulling them back into a form of school discipline, just to prevent them getting completely carried away, for their own sake as well as for the general discipline of the film making.' It is hard not to see *Lord of the Flies* as a post-Empire allegory for the absence of the civilising yet firm hand of authority, and the beastliness that then ensues (see India-Pakistan, Kenya, Rhodesia in Marr 2009). 'The beast' can be seen as the external threat which binds those within the stockade. Yugoslavia also springs to mind, with its distrust of both Moscow and Washington; remove the threat and the state tears itself apart. In cinema, M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village* (2004) explores a similar theme.

And yet Brook, on the DVD commentary, says that Golding's *Lord of the Flies* 'is not pessimistic about mankind': but

it is pessimistic about what we call culture and civilisation, and I was already

convinced at that time that what we call education, what we call western civilisation

has absolutely no true value whatsoever, that it is a great illusion... No child is an

innocent, white page; a child is a human being; a human being carries heaven and hell inside him, in his impulses... the aspiration of mankind for a higher quality of existence [is] true, but this is not to be found in the illusions given out by different social processes, the educational process that the British public school presents, the values that the established Christian church presents– it's not in these directions that evolution is to be found.

The four films described above take us on a worrying journey from the half-cocked juvenile rebellion of the Angels to the demonic savagery of *The Lord of the Flies*. The implication seems to be that our children are not the innocents we might wish them to be but, as Brook says, are possessed of the same elements of heaven and hell as adults. If the gentle admonition of the teacher is ignored, power can be wrested from their grasp and turn ugly in the hands of youngsters. School children are prone to revolt (*It's Great To Be Young*), seduction and thuggery (*Spare the Rod, Term of Trial*), even murder (*Lord of the Flies*) in the absence of a controlling hand. The thin, chalk line between civilisation and anarchy appears to be insufficient, and teachers are found wanting, be they well-meaning like Dingle or Saunders or fundamentally effete like Weir, unable to right the wrongs of society.

Filmography

GREAT TO BE YOUNG, IT'S (1956) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Cyril Frankel
Producer.....Victor Skutezky
Production Company.....Marble Arch Productions
Screenplay.....Ted Willis
Cinematography.....Gilbert Taylor
Editor.....Max Benedict
Original music.....Louis Levy

Cast

Mr Dingle.....John Mills
Mr Frome.....Cecil Parker
Routledge.....John Salew

SPARE THE ROD (1961) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Leslie Norman
Producer.....Victor Lyndon
Production Company.....Weyland Films
Screenplay.....John Cresswell, Michael Croft
Cinematography.....Paul Beeson
Editor.....Gordon Stone
Original music.....Laurie Johnson

Cast

John Saunders.....Max Bygraves
Arthur Gregory.....Geoffrey Keen
Mr Jenkins.....Donald Pleasence

TERM OF TRIAL (1962) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Peter Glenville
Producer.....James Woolf
Production Company.....Romulus Films
Screenplay.....James Barlow and Peter Glenville
Cinematography.....Oswald Morris
Editor.....Jim Clark
Original music.....Lambert Williamson

Cast

Graham Weir.....Laurence Olivier
Anna.....Simone Signoret
Shirley Taylor.....Sarah Miles
Mitchell.....Terence Stamp

LORD OF THE FLIES, THE (1963) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Peter Brook
Producer.....Louis M. Allen
Production Company.....Two Arts Ltd
Screenplay.....William Golding
Cinematography.....Tom Hollyman
Editors.....Peter Brook, Gerald Feil, Jean-Claude Lubtchansky
Original music.....Raymond Leppard

Cast

Ralph.....Jack Aubrey
Piggy.....Hugh Edwards
Jack.....Tom Chapin

CHAPTER 5. A LITTLE LIGHT RELIEF: comic teachers and laughable schools.

It is important, whilst looking at ‘artistic’ representations of teacher, that we remember there remained in British popular film a long-standing, comical critique of teachers and school in British cinema. The mickey-taking that had begun with Will Hay and Cicely Courtneidge continued post-war with *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, the St. Trinian’s films, the *Carry On* team and on TV, Billy Bunter the Greyfriars ‘owl’ and later, *Please Sir!* For all the advances in education, for all the attempts at finding a suitable education for all, teachers were still figures of authority, and schools could still be seen as open prisons. Nonetheless, the more child-centred, ‘psychological’ approach was about to bear fruit, and pupil power found gentle expression in several comedy films in which the teacher as inept rogue, or hapless fool, tickled the nation’s funny-bone.

The Happiest Days of Your Life (1950), director Frank Launder.

While hands were being wrung over the future of British education, there was still room for a good deal of ridicule at the expense of the profession, and none more so than in Launder’s 1950 classic featuring Alastair Sim and Margaret Rutherford. Nutbourne College (headmaster Wetherby Pond (Sim)) is obliged to billet Miss Muriel Whitchurch’s St. Swithin’s girls’ school during the Blitz, but the inappropriateness of this arrangement (a gaffe by the ministry) is highlighted when governors of a school Pond is keen to join and

parents of St. Swithin's descend on the school, and the rival heads sink their differences to conceal their mutual embarrassment.

Nutbourne is an ancient pile, but rather than history, it is steeped in tobacco smoke and ineptitude. New English teacher Mr Tassell (John Bentley) is joining the school (it's his first appointment, ex-army) and he is shown around the staff common room by Mr Billings (Richard Wattis), the maths master. 'According to history, it goes back to Henry VIII' Billings tells Tassell. 'According to the bank, it goes back to them, unless Pond keeps up with his payments'. The staff are a disreputable bunch. Mr Matthews, the second master, is decrepit, but a dab hand at *ecarte*. Monsieur Joue the French teacher, who prefers backgammon, 'suffers from insomnia', but of course, he's fast asleep. Billings' vice is the football pools. Mr Ramsden is the science master, known as 'the ghost of Nutbourne', and in keeping with his monicker, his is an ethereal presence in the film. The sports master, Mr Hyde-Brown is a cad, more interested in gambling, drinking and women than any curricular physical education; even school porter Rainbow is a crook, with useful connections to the black market.

Pond calls a staff meeting to declare that he has applied for the post of headmaster at Harlingham school ('but that's a decent school' exclaims Hyde-Brown); the 'call of duty' has bid him apply and, says Pond, 'I have always felt that the highest aim of the teacher was to sow the seeds of knowledge over ever wider and more fertile fields'. Nutbourne's recent exam results have shown it to be 'not abundantly fertile'. The governors of Harlingham are due to arrive to see Nutbourne and Pond in action. The head is naturally keen to make a good impression, and asks his teachers to assist him in his mission. Unbeknownst to Pond, however, the Director of Resettlement of the Ministry of Education is about to billet the staff and 100 pupils of St. Swithin's with Nutbourne; their Hampshire idyll is about to be turned upside down: St. Swithin's is a girls' school.

Up the drive march Miss Muriel Whitchurch (Margaret Rutherford) and her staff, and upon first sight she

declares the school 'an ancient mausoleum'. They are of the impression that Nutbourne is a girls' school, too, and puzzle over the school coat of arms (motto: 'Guard thine honour') and the regalia of huntin', shootin' and fishin', and gaming: very odd for a ladies' establishment. The penny drops with the arrival of Miss Harper ('the only decent mistress at St. Swithin's') and her crocodile of girls. Pond declares this to be beyond a mistake- it is 'an appalling sexual aberration'- but Hyde-Brown salivates at the prospect of 'popsy'; Billings reminds him that 'there are only two types of school mistress, chum: the battle-axe and the Amazon'. In fact, Miss Harper (Bernadette O'Farrell) is neither, and the masters fawn over her, but the stage is set for the confrontation of the two head teachers. Both draw up their battle plans with their staff. Pond: 'Gentlemen, we have a wooden horse in our midst'. Whitchurch: 'Possession is nine points of the law.' And indeed, the women manage to inveigle their way into dormitory and bedroom, leaving masters and boys sleeping wherever they can find space (the gym for the boys, the attic for the masters, the bath for Pond). Whitchurch and her able lieutenants Miss Jezzard (Muriel Aked) and Miss Gossage (Joyce Grenfell) take command, and the males are put in their, subordinate, place. An uneasy truce ensues, during which both schools try to pursue their own curriculum, albeit with chaotic results. In one scene, when the gong elicits a stampede both male and female, Pond is seen caught in the torrent, clinging to his blackboard in a cruciform, eyes to the heavens askance of his forsaken fate. Such is his sacrifice; yet he will rise again.

As often happens with neighbouring, warring factions, unity is forged in the face of a common, external enemy, here the imminent arrival of a party of Miss Whitchurch's parents, and the governors from Harlingham. What follows is a delightfully choreographed farce where the two parties are simultaneously shown around the school, the one necessarily oblivious to the other. The cat only escapes the bag when one of the governors takes it upon himself to inspect the rugby pitches, to discover field warfare between rival football and lacrosse teams. Pond and Whitchurch's goose is burnt to a cinder with the arrival of a man from the ministry, and coach loads of even more school children from yet another, co-educational school. The ill-fated couple plan their removal to Tanganyika (the post-Raj great white hope: see Marr

2009: 40), while Miss Harper and Mr Tassell cement a more romantic bond.

Geoffrey Macnab in *Sight and Sound* thought the film ‘tremendous’ and ‘far superior to their [Lauder and Gilliat’s] later St. Trinians efforts’ (XIX, issue 6, June 2009). Britmovie.com call the film a ‘lively, richly-characterised farce’ and *Monthly Film Bulletin* (vol. XVII, issue 193) agree, calling the movie ‘uninhibited and energetically handled... Occasionally slapdash, but frequently amusing’; the differences between Pond and Whitchurch certainly lead to a delightfully uncomfortable confrontation, the former being essentially conservative and self-serving and the latter ebullient and combative. The ‘message’, if one exists, appears to be that girls are now visible, here to stay and be educated, and no amount of male intransigence will stand in their way. Indeed, Charles Barr in *Screen* (*Projecting Britain and the British Character: Ealing Studios*, volume 15, no:1, summer 1974) suggests that ‘(I)f the school in *If ‘is England*’, then so is that in *The Happiest Days of Your Life*.’ Harper and Porter (2007) agree: the film ‘used laughter to negotiate the fears of parents and governors about the replacement of single-sex education by co-educational schools’ by ‘gently [poking] fun at the surviving rigidities of pre-war social attitudes’ (254). ‘Cinemagoers were able to laugh at the misfortunes of of the pompous, while sympathizing with the social struggles of the timid’ (ibid, 269). The children from the co-educational school, billeted at Nutbourne at the end of the film, perhaps spell out the future for both Pond and Whitchurch, but girls are in the ascendancy, which leads us nicely into a film that Michael Brooke at *BFI Screenonline* calls the ‘unofficial sequel’, *The Belles of St. Trinian’s*.

The Belles of St Trinian’s (1954), director Frank Launder.

The Belles of St Trinian’s introduces us to the school for wayward children that inspired a series of sequels, and 2007 and 2009 revivals. Featuring Alastair Sim as the magnificently unflappable Millicent Fritton (and her cad of a brother, bookmaker Clarence) and George Cole as the louche Flash Harry, the

real stars of the film are the demonic hordes of schoolgirls who terrorise the neighbourhood, the bane of ministers, police and society at large. The teachers are their partners in crime, sozzled, corrupt and living life outside of prison on borrowed time. The original story (and illustrations) are by Ronald Searle who conceived the idea while himself suffering terrible incarceration in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. The zestful anarchy conjured up in his mind must have been in stark contrast to his real conditions, and a psychological means of escape from the horror that surrounded him.

At St. Trinian's, teachers and girls are in cahoots but this sorority is born less out of symbiotic cooperation than of chaos; apparently founded 'during the General Strike of 1926', it was intended to provide the 'happiest, carefree establishment in the whole of Britain', a 'gay arcadia of happy girlhood', but the onset of war meant that their values of good manners and good taste were replaced by the 'black market values' epitomised by Clarence. Therein lies the source of the rot. Thenceforward, the market was king, and despite her sweet gentility, the insolvent Millicent is as interested in the money that accompanies the young daughter of the Sultan of Makyad as is her bookie brother. In fact, St Trinian's has been chosen for the princess because her father's racehorses are stabled in the same county. Courses for horses, one might say.

Millicent proclaims to the new girls that the school is 'one big, happy family', perhaps a 'teeny-weeny bit unorthodox- but...that's better than being old-fashioned, isn't it?' She then offers us the motif of the film, and the ethos of the school: 'You see, in other schools, girls are sent out quite unprepared into a merciless world. But when our girls leave here, it is the merciless world which has to be prepared.'

The mistresses' common room is enveloped in a fog of cigarette smoke; we can just make out the art mistress helping herself liberally to a bottle of gin; the maths teacher practicing her golf swing; the French mistress, dressed as a vamp; the inebriated geography mistress; and the English Literature teacher (Irene Handl): 'ello ducks, 'ow are yer? I 'ope yer like it 'ere'.

Out of earshot, the ensemble bemoan their lack of wages, and their desire to leave– except the maths teacher (Beryl Reid) who admits to having not ‘one single jolly qualification’. In fact, the school is under threat of closure, but that would expose the staff to the long arm of the law. If they all pull together, says Millicent, they might be able to scrape ‘the odd school certificate’.

Meanwhile, the police and the Ministry of Education conspire to take on the school. Two inspectors have disappeared, and the minister is a nervous wreck. A crime wave has hit the local area and Superintendent Kemp Bird is determined to address the problem, with the help of his assistant, Sergeant Gates (Joyce Grenfell), secreted into St Trinian’s as a games mistress. She discovers the fourth formers producing gin in industrial quantities in the chemistry lab, and overhears a telephone conversation between Clarence and his daughter Bella, discussing the merits of the Sultan’s horse, riding soon in the Cheltenham Gold Cup against a nag, *Blue Prince*, heavily backed by the bookie. It turns out *Arab Boy*, the Sultan’s horse, is a hot bet to win; there then follows a battle between the fourth form girls (who are backing *Arab Boy*), and Clarence and his henchmen who have a lot of money riding on his rival. Millicent gambles the school’s funds, and its future, on the Sultan’s horse, acting through the dodgy spiv intermediary, Flash, whose father sold race cards– and he ending up in a public school! The irony of the ‘exclusive’ school whose only entry requirement is cash is not lost on us, and Millicent’s affected gentility does nothing to disabuse of the bare fact that money is the common denominator in this brave new world.

Clarence and the sixth form, with the connivance of a bought-off stable lad, kidnap *Arab Boy*, but the fourth form steal him back. Battle is waged to prevent the horse racing. Despite the collusion of the sixth formers with the bookie, Millicent and the fourth formers, reinforced by the old girls, win over, and the school carries the day, with the Sultan arriving for prize giving day to offer his congratulations, and his gratitude.

‘Never before had the spectacle of women behaving badly– and not being punished– appeared on screen’ say Harper and Porter (2007: 101). So, is the film a joyous romp or a withering critique of the dubious morality of the public school? The answer is: both! Michael Brook at the BFI’s *Screenonline* finds:

glimpses of more sophisticated satire drawing upon images of (then) contemporary British society. Here, targets include “progressive” education (usually anything but) and the precarious situation faced by private boarding schools in the postwar years, extreme cash shortages affecting not only facilities and staff salaries but also basic necessities like food. It’s no wonder Miss Fritton turns to gambling...

Monthly Film Bulletin was fulsome in its praise: ‘This transportation of Ronald Searle’s awful school has been effected with the greatest possible success... in spirit perfectly faithful to the original... a huge charade, a rich pile of idiot and splendidly senseless images’ (vol. XXI, issue 240, 1954).

A huge British box office success, the third most popular film of the year (Harper and Porter 2007: 249), *The Belles of St. Trinian’s* is our first foray into girl power, and an opportunity for those Britons who for ten years had *not* been sending their children to fee paying schools to sneer at the criminal shenanigans therein. Here come the girls! A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD, and notes are in appendix 5.

Blue Murder at St Trinian's (1957), director Frank Launder.

'Maidens of St Trinian's gird you armour on
grab the nearest weapon, never mind which one!
The battle's to the strongest, might is always right
trample on the weakest, glory in their plight!
St Trinian's! St Trinian's! our battle cry,
St Trinian's! St Trinian's! will never die
Stride towards your fortune, boldly on your way-
never once forgetting there's one born every day
Let our motto be broadcast "get your blow in first"
she who draws her sword last always comes off worst'

We find St. Trinian's under military occupation, albeit not under their control: unable to cope and awaiting a new headmistress, Dame Maud Hackshaw, to replace the incarcerated Miss Fritton, the Ministry have sent in the army, but they too have fallen foul of the girls' charms. Having broken into the Ministry to steal the answers to a UNESCO competition, the girls win a trip to Italy: they decamp to Rome at the behest of Flash and his 'marriage agency', in order to win the hand of an eligible Italian prince- the ultimate academic achievement for 'our girls' mums and dads'.

The subplot involves a jewel thief, 'Gelignite Joe' Mangan (Lionel Jeffries) who ends up at the School where his daughter Mona is a pupil. To thwart the Ministry, the girls and Harry set up Joe as a ringer for the new headmistress, who is captured and hoist into the belfry; Joe is blackmailed into accompanying the school to Rome where he uses the opportunity to hide his stolen jewels in a water polo ball. Meanwhile Sergeant Ruby Gates (Joyce Grenfell) is shadowing St. Trinian's disguised as interpreter Ursula Blewitt, but she falls for crooked coach operator Romney Carlton-Ricketts (Terry-Thomas). As St. Trinian's ploughs mercilessly through Europe, Ruby rumbles Mangan. While the older girls try to seduce the prince, the little ones pursue Mangan to the Coliseum and retrieve the booty. On their return to England, Miss Fritton meets the children and pockets the reward, surrounded by new staff- a selection of ex-cons she's met in prison.

Blue Murder at St. Trinian's may not feature the school building and staff a lot, but the school as a terrorising/terrifying community still holds, this time exported to Italy, which one might imagine had suffered enough during the war. The location is significant, as few countries could boast such a reputation for shady market dealings. Also, British holidaymakers were beginning to look to the continent after the austerity of the post-war period.

This sequel is 'more sexually cynical... confident and self-reverential' than its predecessor (Harper and Porter 2007: 108). Certainly, the sexual element is more to the fore (personified by the casting of Sabrina as one of the older girls, Virginia), 'ready to say the unsayable about the manner in which an unscrupulous new woman could use her sexual appeal to get on in a man's world' (ibid, 259). However, this is not to approve of the horse-trading, but more to cast a critical eye on the vacuity of men. In that sense, it is no more offensive than, say, Julie Christie's *Darling* (1965), but with the strongest of impressions that these girls are no unwilling victims of the system.

Carry On Teacher (1959), director Gerald Thomas.

The headmaster of tired, old Maudlin Street Secondary Modern, Mr Wakefield (Ted Ray), is an enlightened man. A pupil, Stevens, has been told to report to him, expecting the cane. But the head has other plans: 'Caning you wouldn't tell me why you think it more important to lark about than attend to your lessons, would it?' 'No, sir.' 'I'd like to know. Go home and write me a letter about it.' Wakefield, unusually, has called a staff meeting on a Friday afternoon.

Miss Short (Hattie Jacques) hopes the meeting will be about discipline; time the head 'gave his jaw a rest and his right arm some exercise.' In fact, Wakefield has an announcement to make: he has been at Maudlin Street for twenty years, straight from training college, albeit only one term as the acting head, but now a post has arisen at a modern country school, close to where he grew up, and he intends to apply. But first the school must endure a visit from an educational psychiatrist (author of *Contemporary Juvenile Behaviour Patterns*) and an accompanying inspector, who will be looking at pupil behaviour and staff control: the consequences of such a visit could cost Wakefield his dream job. The staffroom is divided between those who believe in administering corporal punishment, like Miss Short, who dubs psychiatrist Alistair Grigg (Leslie Phillips) a 'lunatic', and those like Mr Milton (Kenneth Williams) who see the value of 'the psychological approach' and regard the use of the cane as defeat: 'extraordinary theory; you bend a child double in order to give him an upright character'. What is certain is that if the visitors see Maudlin Street at its normal worst, Wakefield won't get the job, but he must eschew the cane for the duration of the visit- for while the inspector agrees to differ, Grigg is firmly against it.

There then follows the usual Carry On romp, with teachers trying to present the most favourable aspect of Maudlin Street; plenty of innuendo, with psychiatrist Grigg falling for PE teacher Miss Allcock (Joan Sims) and the inspector, Felicity Wheeler (Rosalind Knight), discovering some sexual chemistry with science master Mr Adams (Kenneth Connor). The pupils come to the rescue, sabotaging the inspection, and the school's fake veneer of tranquility, in order to keep Mr Wakefield at Maudlin Street. The ringleaders are discovered planning their final disruption, but a girl confesses to their motive. The children gather beneath the head's window, chanting 'we want Wakey!' 'Have a good holiday, all of you', says Wakefield. 'See you next term!'

Monthly Film Bulletin, vol. XXVI, issue 300, 1959, thought the film 'predictable and occasionally pressed too hard' but 'still manages to register some adroitly timed humour ... with verve and evident enjoyment'

albeit 'severely limited by stock characterisation and a television style of presentation'.

Harper and Porter point up the difference between *Carry On Teacher* and *The Belles of St. Trinian's* and *It's Great To Be Young* 'in that the youngsters' rebellion is both serious and successful. Those in authority are outmanoeuvred, and the underlings (including the teachers) are shown to be faulty and desirous subjects' (2007: 194). That they may be, but this touching display of pupil power in a standard secondary modern proves that teachers who don't resort to intimidation need not be feared or loathed.

The Pure Hell of St Trinian's (1960), director Frank Launder.

In this film the girls find themselves in court, accused of having conspired to burn down their school. Found guilty, their fate is reprieved through the intervention of enlightened educationalist and doctor of philosophy (from the University of Baghdad) Professor Canford (Cecil Parker), who, with his headmistress Miss Matilda Harker-Parker (Irene Handl) in tow, seeks to establish a new school and bring the children 'back to the path from which they have strayed', through no fault of their own. They are 'a product of a corrupt age, the war, politics, the pursuit of the fast buck and the strain of trying to keep it tax-free have undermined their parents- they are beyond redemption, but the children may yet be saved.' The judge concurs, and gives the professor twelve months to turn the school around. The effect upon the Ministry of Education is to curtail the celebrations abruptly, and induce nervous breakdown.

In fact, the professor has a 'patron' who has a vested interest in the girls: the sixth formers will furnish a nightclub and a harem for an emir, assisted by gangster 'Alphonse' (Sid James). Back at the Ministry, the new minister (John Le Mesurier) applauds St Trinian's' unusual approach: 'In this day and age, an unorthodox approach to education is essential'. The problem lies with his junior civil servants who 'simply aren't moving with the times'. The minister green lights the professor's plan for a cultural tour of Greece,

little realising the educator has other plans afoot, to take the girls east (to 'Makrab' in 'Arabia'). When the junior ministers fly out to help, to prevent another Suez crisis (October 1956), the fourth form stow a ride, and it is they, rather than the army, who come to the rescue of the sixth form.

A gentle critique of the motives of governors and government alike, Harper and Porter thought the movie was 'intensely jaundiced in its presentation of sexuality and its financial discontents' (2007, 112).

The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery (1966), directors Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder.

This is another story with little of interest from our perspective, except perhaps the initial scene of the civil servants in the 'Ministry of Schools' celebrating a Labour victory in the General Election— because, they believed, the party would close down public schools, and with them, St Trinian's. The cleaner, a working class Tory, is disgusted, as the suited and booted public servants welcome the new minister and carouse the Red Flag— little knowing he is in a relationship with the headmistress (Dora Bryan), on whose behalf he grants the school of poor unfortunates a windfall of £80,000. The scandal is reminiscent of *Profumo* and *Christine Keeler* (1963) and the robbery references the Great Train Robbery of the same year. Once more, the cosiness between the criminal classes and public schools is implied, a theme dating right back to Will Hay's movies.

For all its attempts to be contemporary, the film lacks the charm of the original. It 'substitutes smutty sexual innuendo for the endearing eccentricity of Alistair Sim and Joyce Grenfell. Like 1960s town planning, which pulled down friendly terraces and replaced them with shopping precincts and high-rise flats, it now seems a dreadful mistake' (Murphy, 1992, 252). And *Britmovie* concurs: 'The fourth entry in the series based on Ronald Searle's cartoon schoolgirls has its moments but lacks inspiration and the presence of

Alastair Sim and Joyce Grenfell is sorely missed.'

Please Sir! (1971), director Mark Stuart.

In a film that hoped to cash-in on the popularity of the television programme of the same name, we find naive but well-meaning teacher Bernard Hedges (John Alderton) sticking up for his maligned and misunderstood pupils of class 5C; the kids haven't had a chance- they're 'desperately trying to express themselves'. 'Get knotted' quips a child who bumps into him.

5C are to be forbidden from attending a school camp, but Hedges champions their cause and agrees to accompany them. The children have to get their parents' permission first, however, and this proves to be a problem for slow-witted Dennis Dunstable (Peter Denyer). His classmates conspire to get the caretaker Potter (Deryck Guyler) to forge his father's signature, and Dennis is cleared for the trip. It is significant that in this secondary modern school, Dennis is not bullied but supported by alpha male Duffy (Peter Cleall) and his mates.

At the camp, Fenn Street find themselves sharing the rural idyll with children from a grammar school, Boulsters, one of whom wolf whistles a Fenn Street girl. Again, the youngsters unite to fight the common foe, even befriending and recruiting a gypsy boy, Nobbler. When Dennis is once again victimised, this time by the grammar school children, Fenn Street retaliate with a food fight. Then money goes missing from the Boulsters cabin, and the finger points at Fenn Street, but it transpires Nobbler has been trying to repay Dennis' kindness with a little guerilla warfare of his own. When Dennis' parents try to frogmarch him home,

Potter helps the kids thwart their plans.

David McGillivray in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (vol. XXXVIII, issue 444, 1971) thought the format did not translate well to the large screen, with the film playing up 'the original's already embarrassing tendency to use illiteracy, race and imbecility as primary sources of humour, while padding out its material to feature length with some laboured mugging and gross caricature.' Much was lost as Fenn Street moved to the country and 'though the series may originally have claimed some authenticity in its depiction of present-day pupil-teacher relationships' the 'pupils' had aged too much to retain credibility. All of which may be true, but which doesn't detract from a very nice feel-good movie where the working class children are supportive of each other and respond positively to being treated with respect.

So the comedic representation of teachers and schools continued in British films, but things had changed. The hapless frauds of the pre-war years have been replaced by somewhat more sympathetic characters. The chiefs-of-staff of Nutborne and St. Swithins are forced into an unholy alliance, but they know the writing is on the wall, and co-education was the future. Girls would feature as prominently post-war as boys had before, as seen in the series of St Trinian's films, where girls and mistresses form a criminal conspiracy against the outside world. *Carry On Teacher* and *Please Sir!* show mixed classes of working class youths in a much more positive light than the darker 'art' films such as *Spare The Rod* and *Term Of Trial*, and there is a healthy reciprocity of teachers and pupils in the former films that proved that the generation gap did not necessitate all-out warfare. However, storm clouds were gathering in intellectual circles as education was put under the spotlight as to how we were educating our young people, and what the outcomes would be.

Filmography

HAPPIEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE, THE (1950) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Frank Launder
Producers.....Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder, Mario Zampi, Stephen Harrison
Production Company.....Individual Pictures
Screenplay.....John Dighton, Frank Launder
Cinematography.....Stanley Pavey
Editor.....Oswald Hafenrichter
Original music.....Mischa Spolianski

Cast

Wetherby Pond.....Alastair Sim
Muriel Whitchurch.....Margaret Rutherford
Victor Hyde-Brown.....Guy Middleton
Miss Gossage.....Joyce Grenfell

BELLES OF ST TRINIAN'S, THE (1957) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Frank Launder
Producers.....Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder
Production Companies.....London Film Productions, British Lion Film Corporation
Screenplay.....Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat and Val Valentine
Original drawings.....Ronald Searle
Cinematography.....Stanley Pavey
Editor.....Thelma Connell
Original music.....Malcolm Arnold

Cast

Millicent Fritton/Clarence Fritton.....Alastair Sim
P.C. Ruby Gates.....Joyce Grenfell
Flash Harry.....George Cole

BLUE MURDER AT ST TRINIAN'S (1957) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Frank Launder
Producers.....Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat and Leslie Gilliat
Production Company.....John Harvel Productions
Writers.....Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat, Val Valentine, Ronald Searle
Cinematography.....Gerald Gibbs
Editor.....Geoffrey Foot
Original music.....Malcolm Arnold

Cast

Miss Amelia Fritton.....Alastair Sim
Sergeant Ruby Gates.....Joyce Grenfell

Flash Harry.....	George Cole
Joe Mangan.....	Lionel Jeffries
Captain Romney Carlton-Ricketts.....	Terry-Thomas

CARRY ON TEACHER (1959) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Gerald Thomas
 Producer.....Peter Rogers
 Production Companies.....Peter Rogers Productions, Beaconsfield Productions
 Screenplay.....Norman Hudis
 Cinematography.....Reginald H. Wyer
 Editor.....John Shirley
 Original music.....Bruce Montgomery

Cast

William 'Wakey' Wakefield.....	Ted Ray
Gregory Adams.....	Kenneth Connor
Alastair Grigg.....	Leslie Phillips
Sarah Allcock.....	Joan Sims
Felicity Wheeler.....	Rosalind Knight

PURE HELL OF ST. TRINIAN'S, THE (1960) U.K.

Credits

Director.....	Frank Launder
Producers.....	Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder
Production Companies.....	British Lion Film Corporation, Hallmark Productions, Tudor Productions, Vale Film Productions
Screenplay.....	Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder, Val Valentine
Cinematography.....	Gerald Gibbs
Editor.....	Thelma Connell
Original music.....	Malcolm Arnold

Cast

Professor Canford.....	Cecil Parker
'Flash' Harry.....	George Cole
Sergeant Ruby Gates.....	Joyce Grenfell

GREAT ST. TRINIAN'S TRAIN ROBBERY, THE (1966) U.K.

Credits

Directors.....	Sidney Gilliat, Frank Launder
Producer.....	Leslie Gilliat
Production Companies.....	British Lion Film Corporation, Braywild
Screenplay.....	Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat
Cinematography.....	Kenneth Hodges
Editor.....	Geoffrey Foot
Original music.....	Malcolm Arnold

Cast

Alphonse of Monte Carlo/Alfred Askett.....Frankie Howerd
Amber Spottiswood.....Dora Bryan
'Flash' Harry.....George Cole

PLEASE SIR! (1971) U.K.**Credits**

Director.....Mark Stuart
Producer.....Andrew Mitchell
Production Companies.....The Rank Organisation, L.W. International, Grade
Screenplay.....John Esmonde, Bob Larbey
Cinematography.....Wilkie Cooper
Editor.....Richard Best
Original music.....Harry Rabinowitz

Cast

Bernard Hedges.....John Alderton
Norman Potter.....Deryck Guyler
Eric Duffy.....Peter Cleall
Dennis Dunstable.....Peter Denyer

CHAPTER 6. CLASS WAR? The Long Sixties

ABC stands for antecedent – behaviour – consequences. Behaviourist psychologists suggest that inappropriate behaviour is triggered by a situation they call the antecedent, and that the behaviour usually has desirable consequences for the misbehaving student. Behaviour can be changed by changing either the antecedent and/or the consequences (Petty 1993: 93).

I remember reading Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* in the early 1970s, and feeling that my parents' generation had not only spent my inheritance, they'd also poisoned the well. The Bomb hung like the sword of Damocles over one and all; and because we were all going to hell in a handcart, why bother? It was the nearest to the end of history I had ever experienced (in my fifteen years on the planet). I knew nothing of the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis or the Kennedys, but I had a cool badge that said 'Light Up An Embassy', and I did know plenty of clichés. I also knew that someone had robbed me of my future, but perhaps all fifteen year olds think that. I had one after all, as it turned out: I was wrong. But the sense of disappointment and foreboding was hard to shift. It had all promised so much more.

When I began school, in 1961, I think I must have dressed pretty much like schoolboys would have dressed in 1951, 1941 and perhaps 1931. Jumpers knitted by my mum, short trousers, shirt and tie. Sensible shoes. When I left, in 1974, I had longish hair, wore floral, coloured shirts (contrary to school rules) and stack-heel boots; and a disposition to match. I'm sure every boy's adolescence is shot-through with arrogance, insolence and (half-soaked) rebellion: mine just coincided with the country's.

The 'long sixties', as Marwick has dubbed them, begins in the fifties with the birth of the teenager (as a self-regarding entity), rock n' roll and the American cultural invasion, but whilst the influence was unquestionable, the British revolution was distinct and separate; from the 'angry young men' of the early sixties, typified, in film, by Richard Burton as Jimmy Porter in *Look Back In Anger* (1959, Tony Richardson) and Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney) in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960, Karel Reisz), through the liberation of youth, women and sexual identity, to the disillusionment post-Grosvenor Square, and the industrial conflict of the early seventies: a song of innocence and experience. Christopher Booker's *The Neophiliacs* sums up the era as a descent into fantasy, a time of 'psychic epidemic' (after Jung, Booker 1970: 11) in which the quest for sensation, and technological innovation, bespoke a religious

vacuum in which man lost touch with reality, and forgot that true happiness lay in recognising the need to sublimate appetite for order (ibid: 310-312). For him, this was a time of social revolution, albeit one doomed to fail, as befits all fantasy cycles which must accord with the five stages of anticipation, dream-stage, frustration, nightmare, and death-wish (explosion into reality) (ibid: 71-2).

In his book *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), Ralph Miliband suggested that while working class children may gain 'access to higher education' 'far from destroying class hierarchies...[this] helps strengthen them. The infusion of new blood into the upper layers of the economic and social pyramid... is no threat to the system itself' (41). Rather like a sluice gate can be used to generate electricity, while at the same time relieving some pressure from the dam, a steady flow of dynamic new blood actually makes the dam more productive and safer (for the dam owner).

This was also the era of the shift towards child-centred teaching (after Plowden (1967)), the growth of the comprehensive school and, as a reaction, a stubborn, entrenched defence of the grammars. Some future critics would look back on this era as the root of all society's ills.

The films I am going to feature next come from the end of this period, and reflect, I would claim, a frustration that more was not achieved. We begin well, with the optimistic tale that is *To Sir, With Love*, (1967, James Clavell) before the storm clouds gather and teachers become positively dangerous to know. *If....* by Lindsay Anderson is a parable on justice, depicting the nation in the form of school; *Kes* by Kenneth Loach reminds us that the education given to many of our children does not address their needs and aspirations; *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Ronald Neame points up the potential for (malign) influence that comes with being a teacher.

To Sir, With Love (1967), director James Clavell.

Clavell's film is of interest for its portrayal of an old-fashioned secondary modern school and its depiction of a black teacher, new to the profession, and his insistence on the raising of standards and expectations in the classroom. The film is based pretty faithfully on the book by E.R. Braithwaite, albeit set ten years later, but with less emphasis on the author Ricardo's struggle against the 'polite' racism he encountered in late fifties Britain, which filled him, brought up to look to the mother country as a fount of civilisation, with a strong sense of betrayal: the greater 'because it had been perpetrated with the greatest of charm and courtesy.' (Braithwaite 1961: 38-42). Further, the film suggests that the innovations brought about by Braithwaite, as Thackeray, are his initiative, while in fact, Braithwaite happened to join a remarkable social experiment under the guiding hand of headmaster A.A. Bloom, whose ethos at his school, St. George-In-The-East, may be summed up thus: 'He is educated who is able to recognise relationships between things and to experience just relationships with persons' (Bloom 1952:136, www.michaelfielding.co.uk, last accessed 31/07/11). Further, the children would 'come to realise the self that is theirs and respect the self that is their neighbour's. And because there are neither carrots nor goads, there will be no donkeys, for when children are treated as we would have them be, they tend to reach out accordingly' (Bloom 1949: 171, www.michaelfielding.co.uk, last accessed 31/07/11).

At the start of the film, British Guyanan Mark Thackeray (Sidney Poitier) endures 'pantomime' working-class women accompanying his bus journey to East Ham where he will start his new job at North Quay Secondary Modern; they are coarse, and promiscuous in their language: one of the women turns out later to be a parent. The school is a forbidding pile, demarcated from the industrial landscape by a ten-foot wall, an old elementary school renamed for seniors. An un-uniformed pupil emerges from the outside toilet, smoking a cigarette. He greets Thackeray with informal friendliness, only briefly concealing the cigarette. The school interior is drab and sparsely furnished, devoid of character or any sign of children's influence. A female student (Pamela, Judy Geeson) runs from the classroom, bumps into Thackeray in the corridor, looks up, exclaiming 'Ooh!': the pupil-teacher dynamic is established. The black man is exotic, and sexual. The staff room is presently populated by one solitary teacher with a predilection for casually racist aphorisms;

Theo Weston 'welcomes' him by telling him that he is the new 'lamb to the slaughter...or should I say black sheep'. 'Just a teacher', responds the new man.

The head tells Thackeray that most of the children are 'rejects from other schools...we have to teach them what we can and as much as we can'. Expectations are low, Thackeray is on his own, and 'success or failure will depend entirely on you' says headmaster Mr Florian. The head is 'safe in an office' but, it is implied, useless for teaching support (in the book, he is a much more dynamic, proselytising figure, a man who genuinely believes in the children's worth, and who will on occasion join in classroom activity 'like a favourite visiting uncle with a pocketful of surprises' (Braithwaite 1961: 112)). Thackeray's class are uniformly (and comically) disinterested. The school has rejected the use of corporal punishment, but we learn that an order at home is usually accompanied by a blow: this puts the teachers 'at a great disadvantage'. Thus is set up the problem for Thackeray: how to control this unruly mob without resort to a physical deterrent.

Weston hates the children, whom he believes need a 'bloody good hiding'; education is wasted on them, and soon they'll be out-earning their teachers. Thackeray feels sorry for them, but Weston is unrepentant: they are about to become part of the 'great London unwashed'; 'illiterate, smelly and quite content. An education's a disadvantage in this day and age' bemoans the misanthrope. Alpha rogue-male Denham (Christian Roberts) seems to fit the bill.

The children come from troubled homes. Seales professes to hating his black father for the way he treats his white mother. A girl in class, Miss Clark, swears: 'Do you use such words when you're speaking to your father?' asks Thackeray. 'You're not my bleeding father' she retorts; but we might wonder who is. This teacher is not wanted *in loco parentis*.

Thackeray finally snaps when a girl burns a sanitary towel on the class stove. The boys are dismissed,

but the teacher lets rip at the girls for their 'foul language, your crude behaviour and your sluttish manner. There are certain things a decent woman keeps private and only a filthy slut would have done this.' The children are now 'the devil incarnate' (he tells fellow new teacher Miss Blanchard). But the incident makes him realise that these kids are nearly adults. The school books go in the bin: 'They are useless to you'. From now on, the job is to prepare his charges for life.

Thackeray as a teacher is an instrument of change, but the crucial aspect of this change is that he is a force for conservatism, not liberalism. His apparently iconoclastic binning of the books is not a prelude to a sixties 'free-for-all', but an acknowledgement that he is not teaching children, but young adults soon to be squaring up to the harsh realities of the real world. He fashions his lessons to make them relevant, allowing his pupils to dictate the syllabus. They may talk about 'life, survival, love, death, sex, marriage, rebellion, anything you want.' The *quid pro quo* is his insistence that the students afford him, and each other, respect: henceforth, the girls will be addressed as 'miss', the boys by their surnames and the teacher as 'sir' or Mr Thackeray. Long hair will be clean, as will their shoes. The girls respond, and, like the Athenian men in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the boys are shunned until they learn to 'act like gents'. Old-school Guyanese conservatism finds commonality with (largely) white working class tradition, even though Weston sneeringly dismisses it as an experiment in 'suburban formality'. And yet Thackeray concedes that it is the youngsters' duty to change the world, albeit peacefully, like The Beatles. Fashions change, and to prove it, the teacher proposes a trip to the Victoria and Albert museum, to view an exhibition. The class respond with enthusiasm at the prospect of a morning out of school, but also this extraordinary display of trust. They scrub up well so as to be virtually unrecognisable to their teacher, and behave impeccably.

In sharp contrast to Thackeray, PE teacher Mr Bell is a bully who forces overweight Buckley to try to perform a vault. The boy hurts himself, damaging the horse and classmate Potter goes to attack Bell with the broken leg; but Thackeray intervenes. He stops the attack, and later confronts the sadist Bell, telling him that he's heard Buckley is a 'pet whipping-boy' of his. The master goes to report the incident to the

head, and Thackeray, maintaining his standards, tears Potter off a strip for his retaliation. The boy, soon to be a man, has not behaved like an adult: he has lost his self-discipline. 'Are you a man or a hoodlum?' asks Thackeray, demanding the boy apologise to the master. 'You can't trust a teacher' sneers Denham.

The crisis is averted when Seales enters, late. His mother is dead. The youngsters buy flowers for the family, but a problem arises: the girls are reluctant to take the flowers to a coloured boy's home. But Pamela agrees to the errand- at least until Thackeray asks her to give her mother, who has been seeing men friends, a second chance. Pamela feels let down by the man who is the object of her schoolgirl affections. The girl comes from a broken home, with the parents divorced and her father living somewhere up North (in the book, killed in the war, an RAF tail-gunner: 127), and perhaps she sees the teacher as a father figure.

Nonetheless, the respect Thackeray shows the girls is in sharp contrast with the boorish juvenile contempt of their male classmates. For all his handsome virility, Thackeray is non-threatening and civilised. His role is that of a missionary, bringing light where there is darkness, an inversion of the colonial mentality of the British Empire and in contradiction to white racial stereotypes and prejudices. His platonic friendship with Gillian Blanchard (Suzy Kendall), who is blond, pretty and thus apparently vulnerable, refutes the image of negro as predator. He tames the little savages of the East End by example.

Ultimately, Thackeray wins the youngsters over, just as he is offered an engineering job, at long last. He gains Denham's respect in a boxing match, and is rewarded, when taking the Seales family their flowers, by finding the whole class waiting for him at the house. The end of term party sees Thackeray's class smartly turned out, as, more surprisingly, is the irascible Weston who concedes his colleague's victory. The teachers try to persuade Mark to stay, and the students give him a royal send off with Pamela getting to dance with him, Miss Pegg (Lulu) singing to him 'To Sir, With Love' and the presentation of a tankard. Thackeray is overcome; but when ill-behaved teenagers burst into his room, proclaiming they'll be in his

class next term, he tears up his acceptance letter from the engineering firm.

Looking down from the lofty perch of the early twenty-first century, the depiction of the changes wrought by Thackeray may seem somewhat simplistic, even comical: sneering, disaffected youth transform into scrubbed, smiling, polite new citizens. As such the film appears anti-working class, in as much as they are brought out of 'decadence' into civility. But it *is* optimistic, with the message appearing to be that these 'lost children' are not beyond redemption, if they are afforded a modicum of respect, and respect is demanded of them: in the book the master is told 'You treat them with kindness and courtesy' (Braithwaite 1961: 111). Kindness does not just mean sympathy, but alludes to being of a kind, that transcends skin colour. Thus, the film is also a rebuttal of the racial myths and prejudices peddled by the National Front, which organisation was gaining ground with a proportion of the white working class at this time, following Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech of April 1968 which predicted a loss of British culture and racial strife if immigration continued unabated. Here, however, the immigrant is not a threat but a means of salvation. Yet it is at a cost, with Thackeray's civility an 'understatement', according to John Hill, 'an assimilation of the character to an entirely conformist and unthreatening set of values' (Hill 1986: 113).

And *Monthly Film Review* was even more scathing:

If the film pretends to social realism by its frequent allusion to race prejudice, broken homes, ill-equipped classrooms and so on, its solutions have all the facile optimism of the most utopian folk-songs (October 1967: 156).

The New York Times was similarly unconvinced, calling the film 'a cozy, good-humored (sic) and unbelievable little tale of a teacher getting acquainted with his pupils, implying but never stating that it is nice for the races to live congenially together' (Bosley Crowther, 15.06.67). The pity is that the film focuses on the individual teacher and his trials and tribulations, and so conforms to the Hollywood charismatic-teacher stereotype (as in *Blackboard Jungle*) rather than Bloom's radical vision of a democratic,

empowering school.

Nonetheless, to accuse this film of being ‘Good old-fashioned sentimental nonsense’ (John Russell Taylor, *The Times*, 7th September 1967) perhaps betrays the reviewer’s impatience with the pace of the sixties revolution, which as the film points up (as does *Kes*), barely touches the working class. What it does do, by juxtaposing youth culture (the film includes Lulu, and the party house band are The Mindbenders) with the civilising effect of a caring teacher, is provides a surprising consensus, a meeting of minds, rather than the generation gap witnessed in the earlier sixties films. That the gap can be bridged suggests that with a positive mind set and a refusal to lower expectations, rough diamonds can be made to sparkle; but it takes effort and belief. And as a result:

Youngsters who might be thought backward because of failure to win entrance to a Grammar school or even to some other local secondary school, were exhibiting a degree of careful analysis which, though expressed without rigid observation for the rules of syntax, could not easily be bettered by many other children with greater advantages (Braithwaite 1961: 112–113).

Our next two films depict schools which, on the one hand, make no effort to wake up to the new Britain, and on the other, don’t believe in their pupils.

if.... (1968), director Lindsay Anderson.

Wisdom is the principal thing;
therefore get wisdom:
and with all thy getting
get understanding.
Proverbs IV:7

A proverbial film; a proverbial nightmare. What if....? Maybe the 'if' doesn't refer to Kipling's poem eulogising fair play, character and treating triumph and disaster as equal impostors; perhaps this 'if' recalls Primo Levi: *If not now, when?*; a call to arms, to hasten the revolution; or the Republican poster from the Spanish Civil War declaring : if you tolerate this, your children will be next. Or is it simply the conjunction of all conditionals, alluding to the consequences of our actions?. The following subheadings come from the film.

1. College House: return

The start of a new term, and amid the hubbub of trunks being hefted up staircases, and tins of beans being bullied off, Rowntree, the chief 'whip' (or prefect), appears, and brazenly proclaims his perverse nature for all to hear: 'Run in the corridor! Run!' New boy Jute, a character who acts as a *leit motif* throughout the film, strains to see his name on the form lists on the noticeboard. He asks for help, but is dismissively rebutted by Stephans, who informs him that, as a 'scum' i.e. a new boy, he shouldn't speak to seniors (in *Goodbye Mr Chips*, new boys are 'stinkers'). Brunning is assigned the arduous task of familiarising Jute with the ways of college.

We learn from our first encounter with Mick Travis (Malcolm McDowell) that while friend Johnny Knightly has been engaged in an 'experiment in asceticism', he has spent much of his holiday 'in the neighbourhood', fraternising with women in the East End, and whilst his attitude to those women is dismissive and patronising, nonetheless it is *their* company he has sought rather than the bosom of his family. If school is in loco parentis, Travis needs neither. He is a 'hair rebel', and the vacation has seen him grow a moustache, initially hidden beneath his scarf. Why does Travis wait until he returns to school to remove it? To make an impression, of course, and not just 'to hide his sins'. He aspires to be louche,

his appearance making him the most visible pupil, but dressed like the Invisible Man. The effect he achieves accentuates his adolescence. His aphorisms are preposterous, his fascination with rebellion naive (the pin-up of the black paramilitary is 'fantastic'), his silk pyjamas ridiculous rather than outrageous. His flirtation with violence and death (as witnessed later in his experiment in auto-asphyxiation) is juvenile and ill-considered (when cut: 'Blood! Real blood!'). But where Mick is persuasive is in his boyish good looks ('Malcolm must have been about 24 at the time' (Ryan ed. 2004: 116)), and in his instincts, which though warped by lack of real experience, are true. He may not know why he needs to connect to the real, but he can see the unreality of this fake authoritarian regime and its pettiness, the ugly, casual violence of its cadres: it is as suffocating to his nature as the plastic bag he voluntarily clamps to his face. And while he bides his time, and suffers iniquities against his person and his spirit, the scales of (in)justice are tilting more and more, requiring a measured and equal response. Meanwhile, he is an irritant, a fly in the ointment. He sticks his two fingers up at whip Denson, behind his back, and gestures aggressively to his face; makes lewd remarks to the housemaster's wife; goes out-of-bounds to steal and seduce. With friends Johnny Knightly and Wallace, he makes up the 'Crusaders', a little cell of sleepers who will bide their time, and await their hour.

Mr Kemp is the housemaster, and in his 'welcome speech' to the new boys, he refers to the coterie of masters and whips as their 'new family', and advises them to expect the 'rough and tumble' that accompanies any family. This is a dereliction of duty, which is handed down to the senior boys. Indeed, discipline is arbitrarily meted out by 'the whips', an ugly hunting metaphor to describe those whose job it is to keep the pack controlled and on course: these whips are fancily waistcoated bullies with licence to coerce and punish. Even the masters bow to their authority. Sinker tells us this role was created in the Indian madrasahs, a way of freeing up the head in order that he might rule unchallenged (Sinker 2004: 25). In fact, when Kemp gives Rowntree the stage, the friendly tone is jettisoned as the whip warns that a repeat of the 'disgustingly slack' attitude of the previous term will bring him 'crashing down on' offenders.

The arbitrariness of the violence rubs off on Stephans, who while not yet a whip, exercises some authority in the dormitory; he ostensibly breaks up a fight, only to condemn the victim 'a fat Jew'. Travis tells him to 'watch it'; and later, Johnny warns him that the day of his retribution is coming.

2 College: "Once again assembled..."

School is assembled in the chapel. We see for the first time the history master (Graham Crowden) mouthing the words to *He Who Would Valiant Be (To Be A Pilgrim)* with less than enthusiasm. And now, service over, the head (Peter Jeffrey) resumes his perfunctory duties in the quad, signing books, dispensing platitudes, gushing, but not listening. In the history lesson Travis and Knightly use the opportunity to make remarks about Stephans and his 'shag-spots': they are not above cruelty themselves; no heroes these. Enter, on his bike, the history teacher. He hands back their holiday essays. Whip Denson's is 'bad'; Travis' essay was lost 'somewhere in the Mont Blanc tunnel, but I'm sure it was good.' The master tries to engage the boys in imaginative discussion as to the origins of the First World War, but to no avail (this environment has *not* developed the boys' ability to think independently). A complete lack of response results in the teacher setting some writing. Meanwhile, the padre is teaching the juniors geometry, but not without whacking Brunning on the back of the head, for no reason, and then slipping his hand inside Jute's shirt to painfully tweak his nipple. No matter the subject, the lesson learnt is that there is never respite from cruelty and abuse, even from those who should be most trustworthy.

Oblivious to the corruption within these hallowed walls, the head is patrolling the grounds, pontificating on college to the whips.

'College is a symbol of many things (shot of ancient statue of august benefactor).

Scholarship; integrity in public office; high standards in the television and

entertainment world [director Anderson went to Cheltenham, where *if...* was filmed].

A huge sacrifice in Britain's wars (cue march past of combined cadet force, to a cursory wave of salute from the head). Of course, some of our customs are silly.

You could say we were middle class (trooping past groundsman with a lining machine; one of the few proles on the books?) but a large part of the population is in the process of becoming middle class, and many of the middle class's moral values are values that the country cannot do without. We must not expect to be thanked. Education in Britain is...a nubile Cinderella, sparsely clad, and much interfered with! (sniggers from the whips) Britain today is a powerhouse of ideas, experiment, imagination. Why, everything from pop music to pig-breeding, from atom-power stations to mini-skirts, and that's the challenge we've got to meet. There are boys in college in whom the muscles of creativeness are flexing, the pinions of imagination twitching: that's what makes my job worth doing; what makes college an exciting place' (cut to junior boys laying the tables for dinner).

The headmaster's speech, brilliantly delivered by Jeffrey, is a wonderful example of the dynamic, vital language used by the Young Turks of the early Sixties, those men and women of vision who got England to 'swing' (Booker 1970: 21-32). Put into the mouth of a man who has steeped himself in the tradition of school, the words become a parody, making the man a fool. The litany of the 'powerhouse of ideas' reads like a bourgeois wish-list; the world may be his boys' oyster, but it's been feeding in some fairly toxic waters. The reality of college is more akin to pig-breeding.

Meanwhile, Jute is being tested on his knowledge of the nicknames and slang current in school, and we are made to understand that the sneering prejudices of the public school are actively institutionalised, under threat of a beating. What hope of rebellion when faced with such punishment? Cut to Mick, listening to the *Sanctus* from the *Missa Luba*, a religious choral work melding boys' voices and African drums; significantly,

when the drumming speeds up into a frenzy, Travis takes the song back to the beginning. He is not yet ready for the revolution. He cuts pictures from his magazine; they depict a lion, in a tree, waiting.

We next see omega-male Biles being bullied by, amongst others, Jute's 'tutor' Brunning; he is tied upside down and has his head flushed in the toilet pan. 'Crusader' Wallace comes to his rescue, and unties the boy. We can gather that the regime of bullying, under the thinly-veiled threat of violence, breeds violent reaction against those lower down the pecking order: a hierarchy of intimidation.

In chapel, the boys rehearse the old litany 'Stand up, stand up for college', while Stephens' confession of 'dirty' thoughts receives the sinister indulgence of the perverted padre: reinforcement of control, both body and mind.

3 Term time.

The chapter begins with the one scene of unalloyed joy in the whole film, with new master Mr Thomas sharing an anarchic, disorganised game of rugby with the juniors. Still dressed in his customary tweed jacket, the man runs round in circles shouting 'run, run run', 'go now!' and 'feet, feet!' before disappearing beneath a ragged scrum of laughing boys.

In sharp contrast, Bobby Philips is scumming for Rowntree and his fellow whips; Bobby is openly reviled, but when he has left the room, the senior boys discuss him as though he was meat. Only Denson objects to their lascivious remarks, but we suspect he harbours similar, as yet unexpressed, appetites. Accused of 'purity', Denson replies that it is a matter of example: 'If we can't set an example, who can?' Mischievously, Rowntree arranges for Philips to be Denson's personal fag; this will test his resolve. 'Say thank you,' says Rowntree.

The Crusaders are in their study drinking vodka, and Johnny is reading out their stars from a women's magazine. Mick, an Aries, is warned not to go into battle this month for fear of 'not only being on the wrong side, but possibly in the wrong war'. Mick imagines a nuclear apocalypse. Wallace is more concerned with his impending baldness and bad breath, rather than Armageddon. Travis pontificates that 'there's no such thing as a wrong war: violence and revolution are the only pure acts.' 'War is the last possible creative act' he says, before imagining making love, once, to a beautiful woman from the magazine, and dying. The life-cycle of the mayfly. 'Do you know, in Calcutta, somebody dies of starvation every eight minutes' reads Johnny. 'Eight minutes is a long time' says Travis. Eight minutes is the length of the final chapter of the film.

4 Ritual and romance.

Rowntree delivers a lesson from Deuteronomy, chapter 4, on respecting the God-given laws of the chosen land of Israel. If these commandments, 'statutes and judgements' come from on high, and with them wisdom, who would dare propose a new testament? Travis looks askance.

The juniors are taking gym; Bobby watches Wallace on the high bars, admiring his athleticism, and the seeds of romance are sown. Wallace and Knightly fence in the gym, soon joined by Mick; as they spar, they spout heroic proclamations, including 'Death to tyrants!' Chasing Mick into the fives court, the Crusaders cut their leader: 'Real blood!' says Travis, incredulous.

While college house are engaged in a rugby match, Mick and Johnny abscond into Springfield and steal a motorbike. Taking to the open road, they find freedom, and The Girl, working behind the counter of a transport cafe. Rude and arrogant, Travis meets his match as The Girl, grabbed by the boy, slaps him

hard across the face. She joins him at the juke box, from where the strains of the *Sanctus* from *Missa Luba* emerge once more; she insists he look at her: 'I'll kill you'; and they sniff, snarl, swipe and wrestle like tigers, as the song reaches its orgasmic climax. Do they actually make love, or is it all in the mind? It doesn't really matter. The Crusaders' reality is so defined by image and imagination, the lines blur. 'I like Johnny', says The Girl: all three take to the bike to enjoy the exhilaration of real freedom.

5 Discipline.

The shot beginning this chapter of the film recalls the photography of Hungarian Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who was commissioned in the 1930s (Mietzne, Myers and Peim 2005: 91) to portray life at Eton. Many of his shots are unobserved and unposed, giving one the impression of an outsider's, or even a sniper's view. Here, Miroslav Ondricek, the Czech director of photography, adopts a similar stance, looking in at the school from without.

Denson is doing the rounds of the school, and mildly upbraids Mr Thomas for still working on his car. The whip then finds Wallace smoking in the armoury; he's been with Bobby, but the senior denies he has company.

The next scene finds Travis indulging in auto asphyxiation ('like drowning'), while Knightly and Wallace compare other ways to die. Meanwhile Kemp and the whips discuss the 'lunatic fringe' in the studies; whilst the housemaster proffers the thought that the headmaster is against too much thrashing, Rowntree's suggestion of decadence is sufficient to win the tacit approval of Kemp. The whips will have a free hand to administer discipline.

The Crusaders are summoned to the whips' study, where they are accused of being a general 'nuisance

to the house', and having the wrong 'attitude'. They are to be beaten. Denson takes the opportunity to lambast Travis for his indecency, but when Rowntree declares they have become a danger to morale of the house, Mick cannot conceal a smirk. Denson draws attention to the school motto on his blazer pocket: I serve the nation. 'You haven't the slightest idea what it means, have you?' Calmly, Travis answers: 'Do you mean that bit of wool on your tit?' Rowntree passes judgement, but asks if they have anything to say. Mick has:

The thing I hate about you, Rowntree, is the way you give Coca-Cola to your scum,
and your best teddy-bear to Oxfam, and expect us to lick your frigid fingers for the
rest of your frigid life.

The loathing in Rowntree's eyes reflects his disgust for a class traitor; for Travis' attack on Rowntree is an assault on those middle class values eulogised in headmaster's pep talk and chapel sermon alike: on patriarchal charity that requires a deferential recipient and an unbitten hand: on fake expressions of largesse that keep the powerful powerful, and the powerless in their place.

It is a mark of filial ingratitude that must invoke a father's wrath, and as Zeus punished Prometheus for daring to show man fire, and God had his own son crucified for giving man the key to everlasting life, so now the head of house must beat the wayward son into submission, for daring to question the unwritten rules of their game. One at a time, the three Crusaders must be 'crucified' on the beam, with Wallace and Knightly receiving four strokes of the cane each, but Travis getting ten. Down in the sweat room, the juniors seem to hear every stroke, and understand that their messiah is suffering on their behalf. Peanuts, the scientist, looks through his microscope and sees bacteria multiplying in their culture. And we know that in this culture of arbitrary violence and cruelty, such malevolence breeds hatred and a need for revenge just as surely: it is the zero conditional. Travis meekly thanks Rowntree before leaving the gym, but whilst beaten, he is not vanquished. After the crucifixion must come the resurrection.

6 Resistance.

While the seniors, in Latin class, learn of 'bleeding' a young whelp, Travis is in his study firing on montages of pictures on his wall. His chosen targets are significant. His first dart has hit the riot shield of a French gendarme; his second, the pneumatic breast of a beautiful woman which he has previously superimposed on the riot scene; his third aim is at a group containing a naked, kneeling model, a policeman, a politician and a faithful retriever at the knee of his beneficent master: the dog gets it, right on the snout; the fourth pellet finds Audrey Hepburn in a similar place; the fifth, her partner on the red carpet; shot six misses misses the priest and a phallic missile in a silo, and strikes a naked blonde on the buttock; shots seven and eight hit a surrendering civilian and a picture of Big Ben; nine and ten hit two glasses of Martini; eleven, a bowler-hatted consort to the Queen.

While the juniors are whipped into a house-thump frenzy by the prefects, the Crusaders drink vodka under the watchful gaze of a young Lenin. Travis takes a razor from his drawer, and cuts his hand. He does the same for Wallace and Knightly, the three becoming blood brothers; they swear: 'death to the oppressor'; 'the resistance'; 'liberty'. 'One man can change the world with a bullet in the right place', says Travis, and he fetches live bullets from his window ledge.

And all the while the college slumbers, unaware that the oppressed are about to rise up; Kemp sings a romantic ditty while his younger wife accompanies him, from the safety of her separate bed, on the recorder; matron sleeps the sleep of the just, a benign smile playing on her lips, her fingers stroking the mock tiger-skin of her chair cover. And in the dorm, and in love, Wallace and Bobby share a bed. Peanuts is star-gazing; Mick offers him a real bullet, but he passes it back. When Mick looks through the telescope, he finds The Girl, brushing her hair. She waves to him.

7 Forth to war.

‘The son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain,’ preaches the padre. ‘You’re all corrupt. You’re all sinful. You’re all meet to be punished.’ Or are they all just so much meat, to feed the dogs of war? The boys, in cadet uniform, listen in chastised silence. The one betrayal that can never be forgiven, says the reverend father, is desertion. Jesus Christ is their commanding officer, ‘and we are all deserters’.

And as men and boys go forth to war, Mrs Kemp wanders the boys’ dormitory, naked, stroking the wash basins and fingering the soap. On manoeuvres, the Crusaders are ordered about, forced to take the most tortuous route through the scrub, only to be charged by Peanuts and his troop, and their ‘yell of hate’. Mr Thomas attacks them with a thunderflash; ‘You’re all dead’, he quips. ‘I’ve won’. While the cadets take tea, the Crusaders take aim, first at the tea urn, then at the army lorry. When the padre marches up to Mick and his comrades and demands they hand over their rifles, Travis opens fire at point-blank range, then affects to bayonet the quivering Christian whilst screaming his own, convincing, scream of hate. The evaporation of the authority of the pompous priest is a joy to behold.

Back in the headmaster’s study, the three Crusaders are being dressed down. Again, Peter Jeffrey’s performance as the liberal headmaster is magnificent. ‘I take this seriously...very seriously indeed. The Reverend Woods might have been quite seriously hurt– do you realise that? Now, I want you to apologise to him, is that clear?’ (slides open the long draw over the fireplace; from which emerges the priest. The boys shake his hand. The head closes the drawer). He continues:

‘Now, you mustn’t think that I don’t understand. It’s a natural characteristic of adolescence to want to proclaim individuality. There’s nothing unhealthy about that. It’s a quite blameless form

of existentialism. This, for instance, is what lies at the heart of the great hair problem. I think you boys know that I keep an open mind on most things. And on one thing I am certain: short hair is no indication of merit. So often I have noticed that it's the 'hair rebels' who step into the breach when there's a crisis, whether it be a fire in the house, or to sacrifice a week's holiday in order to give a party of slum children seven days in the country. But of course there are limits; scruffiness of any kind is deplorable- I think you'll go that far with me. Now, the fees here are at present £643 per annum, which works out at about 15 guineas a week; this is no mean sum. It is the salary, for instance, of the average trainee supermarket manager- but on the other hand, it's no more than the cost of keeping a juvenile delinquent in borstal...'

We are allowed to draw our own conclusions as to the relative worth of public schools. The head wants the boys to give something back- service. 'Those who are given most also have most to give.' The boys are too intelligent to be rebels, and punishment would be pointless; instead they are to rewarded with a privilege- work.

The rebels are set to clearing up the neglected detritus of the *ancien regime*, stuffed, out of sight and out of mind, beneath the stage. A bonfire will consume the old wood, but a bonfire, after Cesare Pavese, can be the source of new growth: this is what gives the *paese* back to the peasant (*The Moon and the Bonfires*, 1949). This bonfire indirectly gives the rebels access to the tools of their liberation, as they find a large cache of weapons: rifles, machine guns, grenades and mortars. And more: locked away in a cupboard, among other biological specimens, is a fetus in a jar. The Girl takes the jar from Travis, but puts it back on the shelf. It represents controlled fertility; reproduction for use, rather than sex for joy. A dark allusion to the commodification and mummification of life, and the 'mummification' of woman. This she rejects as a threat to her life, not the focus of it.

As Wallace and Bobby Philips take a stuffed crocodile from beneath the stage, the dedication on the altar memorial entreats us to remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice; as has the reptile. A relic of empire, it is taken out and thrown on the fire (here perhaps a bonfire of the vanities, evoking thoughts of Savonarola and an end to Medici corruption).

8 Crusaders.

General Denson (presumably a relative to the whip of the same name) arrives for Founder's Day and processes into the hall to the strains of 'Stand up, stand up for college', the last line of which is 'we'll stand again for college who made us what we are.' An arcane ritual ensues in which the headmaster re-enacts the receipt of the benefaction that created the school, and then launches into a speech praising the forward-looking nature of the establishment. Now General Denson rises to speak, and eulogises tradition, and the concept of privilege as something worthy, if paid for.

Meanwhile, The Crusaders have set a fire beneath the old guard, and smoke seeps through the floorboards of the stage. All the much-vaunted qualities of honour and selflessness go out of the window, as the audience flees the fire in panic, but as they emerge into the quad, they come under fire from The Crusaders, accompanied by Bobby and The Girl, who have taken up position on the college roof. A hail of mortars and machine gun bullets spur General Denson into breaking open the armoury, and a shoot-out ensues: a Tory matriarch fires back, spitting: 'Bastards! Bastards! Bastards!'. When the headmaster calls truce, the firing briefly stops. His impassioned appeal for calm fails on two counts: firstly, he appeals to the boys to see reason; 'Boys, boys, I understand you.' But these are men, who in another (third?) world might have long been fighting for their cause. And, secondly, it is *The Girl* who withdraws the revolver from her belt to deliver the *coup de grace*, shooting him square between the eyes.

As the battle recommences we look straight into the eyes of Travis, who keeps firing right at us: if you are not with us, you are against us.

Talking about working class grammar school children in their book *Education and the Working Class* (1966), Jackson and Marsden highlighted the dilemma those children faced when they came up against the culture of the school (which itself emulated the ethos of the public school):

The essential choice which these 88 children [their survey sample] faced in the early grammar school years was the one between school and neighbourhood...it had to do with deep differences in response, feeling, judgement- which recoiled against common images of 'dominance' or 'leadership': school uniform, teachers' gowns, prefects, the Honours Board, the First Eleven, the Scout Troop, the School Corps, Speech Day, Morning Assembly, Expected Public Decorum. The children who drew back from this spent their evenings in youth clubs, or with cycling groups or roaming the parks and streets in large inclusive gangs (122).

The school was set up in direct opposition to what many of these children would have known, felt comfortable with, especially if they came from working class backgrounds. The role of school was to assimilate these pupils to an alien culture with different values. The great popularisation of culture that had marked the sixties, with its 'collective' image of the New Aristocracy (Booker 1970: 22,23), and the new 'classless' society that saw pop stars rubbing shoulders, and possibly other parts, with the gentry was at odds with this anachronistic agenda. This is the battlefield for the protagonists in *if...*

For College House, read England: 'a cruel, selfish, self-satisfied, petty, conformist, tradition-bound system held together by a structure'; it is 'filled with menace and neurotic hostility' (*Cineaste*, Vol.2, n4, 1/4/69). But the same reviewer takes Anderson to task for posing revolution this way, as a choice

between 'a moribund social structure or a self-defeating adventurist rebellion.' Jesse Prima questions the rebels' lack of making 'common cause' with other oppressed groups (in Cheltenham?), and labels the film 'an ideological first cousin to that American neofascist atrocity...WILD IN THE STREETS.' This notion is reworked in David Limond's chapter in *Visual History*, Keeping Your Head and Losing it in the Celluloid Classroom: (non)Sense and (Feminine) Sensibility in Two Films of Boarding School Life: *If...* (sic) and *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Mietzner et al (eds.) 2005: 147-163) in which he concurs with critic David Spiers that the film possesses 'fascist implications' because 'we find ourselves...fighting for pure instinct' (ibid, 154); which deep political analysis would condemn everyone from Spartacus to John Wayne (which is perhaps relevant: Anderson was a great admirer of John Ford.) I think it is more important to regard the director as a romantic and a poet. *If...* is meant to be regarded metaphorically, using Brechtian logic to inform, beyond the surface image:

I would call *If...* a realistic film- not completely naturalistic but trying to penetrate the reality of its particular world. I think Brecht said that realism didn't show what things look like but how they really are. (Anderson, quoted in Aldgate and Richards 2002: 208).

And the Crusaders' revolt is no fascist escapade:

Their revolt is inevitable, not because of what they *think* but because of what they *are*.

Mick...acts...instinctively because of his outraged dignity, his frustrated passion, his vital energy, his sense of fair play... (ibid, 214-215).

They are, in Anderson's eyes, 'traditionalists'. In a film rich with what Limond calls 'absurdist devices', there would be little more absurd than for Travis to whip out a prototype of The Little Red Schoolbook (published in 1971): the young don't need schooling in injustice; injustice is their schooling. The Crusaders may react to the 'officiousness, cruelty and harshness' of the whips (and that 'marks most hieratic, hermetic systems' (*Variety*, 11/12/68)) but they are not reactionaries; as witnessed by their confrontation

with the anti-Semite Stephans, Wallace's rescue of Biles and the befriending (but not exploiting) of Philips.

Another feature of the Madrassas was the encouragement of oblique behaviour, which contained rebellion could be of most service to the Empire. The Head understands this– this is why he eulogises the hair rebels as the ones most likely to step into the breach in a crisis. So long as they are, so to speak, inside the boat pissing out, rather than outside pissing in. This appropriation of original thought is a piece of smug sleight of hand that will reward the weekend revolutionary, and buy off all but the truly committed. The headmaster sees himself as a sixties renaissance man, his finger on the pulse, au fait with business studies and the mini skirt; but he knows nothing. He is 'a bland, self-satisfied, platitudinous pseudo liberal' (Aldgate and Richards 2002: 205). The litter of choice which fills his head and his monologues is so much tickertape. This culture over which he has gloated is a culture of hatred and prejudice, extolling bourgeois values, and epitomising might as right. The culture is as virulent as that in Peanuts' Petri dish, but this culture is toxic.

Our Crusaders bring Old Testament retribution into the head's 'New' Testament world. The film is more parable than polemic; when the three are 'crucified' across the beam, Travis is afforded the most cruel, and unjustified(?) punishment. Is this the fate of all sons who disrespect their fathers and spend their inheritance? Not so deferential these crusaders. This resurrection sees our Christian soldiers roll away the stone of the cave, to emerge armed with machine guns, Mills bombs and mortars; they set fire to the old, bring heavenly wrath down on the heads of the Pharisees (from the roofs of the college) and savage the hands that have beaten them. And when Mick turns his gun on us, we are left in no doubt that we, as passive onlookers, are as much to blame as the suited and booted dignitaries and their guests.

The school represents confinement, and the repression of the natural instincts. Neighbourhood is other. It's only when Mick and Johnny steal the motorbike and flee to the country that they elude their keepers, go wild (go native?) and get to mate with The Girl. The joy of their mutual liberation (the girl is allowed

from behind the counter, no longer a servant to men) is expressed in the ride around the field, the girl's arms out wide to embrace the world. The sexual urge, which is a natural need to recreate and to love is denied and perverted by the strait jackets of classroom and pulpit: the tender savagery of erotic love is mocked by the casual violence of the whips, and the martial tomfoolery of the corps. When corps nearly becomes corpse, Travis is obliged to apologise. Why is the chaplain in the drawer? Because he is a piece of the equipment of repression. What would the headmaster normally keep in the long drawer? A cane. The perverted priest is another coercive tool of the crusaders' oppression. Where else would he be kept?

All the old, petrified manifestations of the old, controlling regime must be put to the sword. The crusaders' revolt is an orgasm of life against those who would block it, (*zero de conduit*, perhaps?) sanction it, replicate it as code; our mutants will destroy the old to enable the new. Those who die represent the antiquated, corrupt empire, no matter what their age; those who use homosexuality as a repression, as opposed to the natural and free expression of Bobby and Wallace; those who will crucify boys on the beam, sooner than let them develop their own balance; those, like the headmaster, who seek to take the credit for any manifestation of individuality, whilst using those 'hair rebels' as a sluice to vent the pressure building up on the dam. Mick and his comrades want to destroy the dam; only then can the whole hideous edifice be washed from the face of the earth. They destroy their fathers: 'Bastards! Bastards! Bastards!' Indeed.

Lindsay Anderson, for all that he was a film director, had the instinct of a poet. And while poets may draw on anything and everything from their cultural treasury in order to speak the truth, so Anderson eschewed the 'natural' for a distillation of a poetic essence: 'It has always been my ambition to make films which can be described as poetic. The term 'poetic' implies the subjective, the personal, the emotional' (Anderson 2004: 54).

So was Anderson a revolutionary, making a political polemic in those angry days of 1968? Yes and no.

He was a son of the Empire, born in India and educated at Cheltenham, where the film was shot. But he had a keen sense of justice and, after Jennings, wanted to give a voice to the unheard. He was possessed of, and by, what Mark Sinker describes as ‘cold fury *and* tenderness’ (Sinker 2004: 16), an ambivalence which, for all his Scottishness, is typically English. Although *if...* was made in 1968, it is perhaps most significant that the values Anderson would challenge are those not of the post-war educationalists, but those of Norwood (see above), alluding to their dogged resistance to change, and persistence, at least in the public school sector.

Kes, (1969), director Kenneth Loach.

In *Kes* we meet young Billy Casper (David Bradley), who lives with his mother and bullying brother Jud in a mining village in Barnsley. But Billy will not go down the pit, and so is set up a confrontation between the alpha-male Jud and his ‘weedy little twat’ of a sibling. The boys have different fathers, but their contrast goes much deeper, and is symbolised in their diametrically opposite worlds. Jud is a miner, materialist, insensitive, who earns his subsistence from descending from the light down into the bowels of the earth. He is strong and handsome, and he knows it. He treats his brother, and his mother, with contempt. Billy is a scavenger, a dreamer, has a natural empathy with animals, and little connection with the world around him.

Taking a fledgling from its nest (at great personal danger), Billy contrives to train a kestrel, ‘Kes’. Rather like his kestrel, to quote sympathetic teacher Mr Farthing (Colin Welland), Billy is ‘flying in a pocket of silence’. And all the while enduring rogues and fools. He is constantly beaten down, but refuses to quit, soaring up again to hover over his drab and (for him) meaningless world. Billy earns the respect and dignity that is denied him through his bird; the admiring old man in the street, the kindly butcher who

gives him scraps. Which is why Kes is not a pet; he is Billy's alter ego, the proud self that Billy is never otherwise allowed to display.

It is impossible to grasp Billy's anomie, and his need to escape his environment (albeit vicariously through his bird) without understanding the wretchedness of his home life, and the uselessness of his school. At home he shares a bed with Jud, who goes out of his way to disturb his sleep, and treats him like a slave and errand boy. Jud is the bullying father-figure Billy could do without- his real dad left, was a 'wrong-un'. His mother is trying to scrape a living and have a life, which means Saturday night at the working men's club, and a few beers with the boyfriend, who similarly meets with Jud's disdain. Billy is left a couple of bob for pop and crisps. At school, Billy is surrounded by bullying bigger boys, and stupid teachers. The only exception appears to be Mr Farthing, who is the only one to take an interest in the boy. Billy has been in trouble, and we see him still engaging in petty theft, but we learn he is a victim of his circumstances. When he gets into scrapes, it's usually as a result of his being so tired from trying to fit his paper round, errands for Jud and care for Kes into his school day.

School means humiliation for Billy, and we first see this on the football pitch, at the hands of the ridiculous PE teacher, Mr Sugden (Brian Glover), who, today, is appearing as the 'slightly balding' Bobby Charlton, because 'Denis Law's in the wash this week' (referring to his replica strips). Most of the boys are kitted out in contemporary football shirts and shorts; the fat boys are squeezed into unsuitable and unflattering sports wear. Billy can't afford any kit, and so has to make do with whatever he can lay his hands on. Sugden lays into Billy: 'Casper, you make me sick. Every lesson it's the same old story, 'please sir, I've got no kit sir'. Every lesson for the last four years you've begged and borrowed [here Billy is close to tears] and skived and scrounged'. Today, he is thrown a hugely over-sized pair of shorts. Stripping off, Billy's body is thin, and his ribs are visible, compared to the fleshier bodies of his schoolmates. He is from another time, or another place: 'He's just come back from Biafra', a reference to the famine. When Sugden and golden boy Tibbert take turns to pick their teams (Sugden is Man Utd,

Tibbert is Spurs), it is Billy and the fat boys that are picked last. And then Billy is placed in goal.

Post-match humiliation continues apace, as Billy tries to avoid taking a shower. Sugden hits him, demands he strips off, and sends him into the stalls, only to turn the temperature down to freezing cold. Two boys are ordered to make sure Billy can't escape. Is Billy just being a grubby little schoolboy, trying to avoid water, or do the showers, the communal nakedness panic him? Another way of showing him to be other than the herd? Do they evoke images of the pit showers that he will avoid at all costs?

In the school assembly, the lesson, from Matthew 18, verses 10–14, is the tale of the prodigal son. Wherein the redemption for Billy and his kind? An outburst of coughing sends the Headmaster, Gryce, into a rage, and he picks on the innocent McDowell as the perpetrator. The master of this school, set in the industrial landscape of coal dust will rail against the tar in the lungs of the boys in his charge: he summons the 'smokers' union' to his study, for a ritual thrashing, and a small boy delivering a message to the Head is caught up with the culprits, and is forced into carrying their cigarettes: they know they will be searched. But before administering punishment, Gryce must first deliver a speech of such pomposity that the boys in the 'union' cannot help convulsing in fits of laughter. The speech is worth quoting at length, for the insight into the disparity between the generations, and the frustration it bears.

The Headmaster is a disappointed man. He remembers the slum schools, the hard times of the 20s and 30s, but this is a 'fine estate', and a 'wonderful school'.

I thought I knew something about young people [but] it's a waste of money [and a] waste of time [trying to teach them]. This is the generation that never listens. Because we can never tell you anything. You're the sophisticated ones, with all your music (so they *do* listen) ..and your 'gear' ..but it's superficial, it's a sheen, and there's nothing solid or worthwhile underneath' (the school is probably being

undermined as he speaks). ‘And why do I know this? Why do I know there’s been no advance in discipline or decency, or morals or manners? (not education, mark you) Why do I know it? Because I still have to use *this* (wields cane) to you boys every day. Why, in the 20s and 30s I could understand it (excuses his own generation). They were hard times, but they produced qualities in people that you lot will never have. I could be stopped in the street by somebody I taught then (was he *really* teaching in the 20s? No, he’s been a teacher for thirty years), and we’ll talk about the old days, and we’ll laugh about the thrashings I gave him. But what do I get from you lot? A honk (boys convulse; honking, hacking, coughing has brought them to this study) from a greasy-faced youth [behind the wheel] of a big second-hand car. I don’t know, I just don’t know...(open laughter from the boys; he really *doesn’t* know; it is tragic-comic). No guts, no backbone, nothing to commend you whatsoever, mere fodder for the mass media (as opposed to the pit, or the factory, presumably). And so, until someone produces a better solution, I’ll continue to use this cane, knowing fully well that you’ll be back for it time and time and time again (thus proving what an ineffective, but ritualised and brutalising punishment it is).

The Head searches the boys, finds the cigarettes on the hapless errand boy, and delivers a stroke of the cane to each palm of each boy in turn, Laughter turns to tears. ‘Now I hope that’s going to be a lesson to you [a figure of speech, but bitterly ironic in these circumstances: this man cannot teach anything but brutality]. I don’t suppose for one minute it will be [unless the lesson is the injustice of summary punishment]. I don’t doubt before the end of the week you’ll be back in here again for exactly the same crime [of being his whipping boys?], smoking. Perhaps once in a while it might sink in that you’re wasting *your* money, it’s *your* money that you’re burning, and it’s your hands that get caned when you come in here.’ So, the Headmaster’s study is no haven, no shelter from the storm; it is where the storm plays out (corporal punishment was abolished in state schools in 1987 in the United Kingdom).

Billy, McDowell and their colleagues return to their class, and teacher Mr Farthing: the contrast with the Head is remarkable. 'Where've you been?' Did they get the stick? 'Did it hurt.' 'I hope it didn't.' Farthing is trying to teach the class the difference between fact and fiction; can anyone define a fact? When asked for examples, Tibbutt is grassed up by a classmate for his smoking and girl-chasing, but Farthing won't let his class be used for baiting: 'I'm not interested in what he does outside of school hours, so long as he doesn't come into a lesson smoking a fag.' The difference between a teacher and a headmaster, or between a humanitarian and a misanthrope? Billy is caught dreaming, but Farthing chivvies him into contributing: what are his interests? Another boy informs the teacher of Billy's obsession with the hawk, and Farthing quizzes the boy with more and more open questions, to elicit the information from Billy.

Bringing him to the front of the class, while he retreats to the back, Farthing gets Billy to relate the tale of Kes, and actually teach the class about his training of the bird. Billy comes into his own; totally engrossed in his subject, Billy is animated, and the class engages. We see the true potential of Billy. Casper and Farthing leads a round of applause; perhaps the first accolade ever for the boy?

Billy is brought abruptly down to earth by McDowell teasing him about his family, and a fight starts. Farthing intervenes, and whilst being even-handed, takes McDowell to task for picking on the smaller boy. The teacher asks Billy why he thinks he keeps getting picked on: the boy doesn't know, but he is stung at the injustice of being singled out for his tiredness in class, and by the police on his estate. As for the school, well, the teachers: 'They're not bothered about us; if we fall asleep, they call us numbskulls [a reference to the comic strip from *the Dandy* that Billy enjoys reading].' 'They're always looking at their watches to see how long there's left of the lesson...They're not bothered about us, and we're not bothered about them.' Farthing asks if he can come and watch Billy flying Kes; the only adult to show an interest in the boy.

The climax of the story comes when Billy fails to place a bet for Jud, and the horses win their races. Billy has spent the stake on fish and chips. Jud tracks Billy down in the school, which again fails to provide him with the safe haven which is his due, but Billy escapes the bully by the skin of his teeth, only to find out later that his 'brother' will exact revenge on his sibling by killing his bird. A traumatized Billy demands his mother punish Jud, but she is powerless. He tenderly buries the kestrel in a railway embankment.

Billy's flying of Kes was 'the most exciting thing' Farthing had seen in his life. But Billy is indignant that some people think of the bird as a pet: 'It isn't a pet.' 'Hawks can't be tamed.' 'It's wild and it's fierce and it's not bothered about anybody. It's not bothered about me. That's what makes it great.' The same qualities that make Billy Casper great; if only he can keep his neck from the strangling hands that would throttle the life out of him, physically and metaphorically.

When Billy Casper is allowed to teach we witness a wonderful example of what Bernstein refers to as an 'integrated code'. Instead of knowledge being packaged into chunks, ready to be regurgitated, undigested, at exam time, in Farthing's class we find:

separate subjects [being] subordinated to integrating principles, where topics or themes are studied rather than subjects, where underlying principles are taught rather than facts, where understanding rather than recall of knowledge would be tested, and where the teacher-pupil relationship is an interactive learning partnership. Here the emphasis would be on discovery rather than rote learning. The pupil would be actively involved in the learning process (Ball 1986: 71).

Sadly, it is a fleeting visit to the oasis in Billy's desert of a life.

A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD.

Marjorie Bilbow in *Today's Cinema* (20/03/70) thought the film 'a gem', and 'As near perfect a work of art as could be expected to result from the free-wheeling spontaneity of the Garnett (producer)-Loach partnership' and Britmovie concurs: 'Its message may be bleak but, unlike in some of his later work, Loach never lets polemic or pessimism overwhelm a good story' (http://www.britmovie.co.uk/films/Kes_1969/; last accessed 24/04/11). Derek Malcolm is more laudatory: 'Kes is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable films about education, or the lack of it, ever made. It is perhaps naïve –that if you give a so-called dunce some kind of chance, the result can surprise him and certainly his teachers. The film's incidentals are as good as its main thrust, which is never sentimentalised and maintains the right to be angry as well as touching and funny (*The Guardian*, 22/06.2000).

Billy Casper is a tragic figure, a boy who has fallen through the net of the school's careers service, such as it is, and who equally is determined not to follow the community route to relative prosperity down the pit. His dreaming mind and his meagre frame have not fitted him for either the masculine world of physical work or further education, but he proves, through his self-education in the ways of the kestrel, that he is educable, to quote Bernstein, and intelligent. Billy's problem is that his stock of cultural capital is low, and of a foreign currency to that of his environment (Ball 1986: 55-57).

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (1969), director Ronald Neame.

Maggie Smith is the eponymous teacher in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969, Ronald Neame), a charismatic character whose pedagogical care of her charges is secondary to her political influence. Sure of her leadership, and in defiance of her headmistress, she holds court to a coterie of impressionable young girls, eschewing the curriculum to teach by force of her personality.

As the girls of the Marcia Blaine Academy flock to the school for another autumn term (in Edinburgh of 1932), Miss Brodie (Maggie Smith), perfect posture, immaculately dressed, cycles regally into their midst. Upon entering the college, her two rival suitors, Teddy Lloyd (Smith's husband, Robert Stephens) and Gordon Lowther (Gordon Jackson) show obeisance. The tributary portrait of the founder contains the quotation from Proverbs XXXI. 10: 'Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies'. And this sets the tone, for this college has in its employ teachers of dubious virtue.

As the girls (gray pinafore dresses, white blouses, school tie) and staff (men gowned, women smartly turned out) congregate in the dour, gray school hall, they sing *Lord Behold Us With Thy Blessing*, which contains the lines:

Break temptation's fatal power
Shielding all with guardian care
Safe in every careless hour
Safe from sloth and sensual snare.

The irony is that some of these girls are not safe, that 'guardian care' is absent from Miss Brodie's make up, exposing them to danger. Beautifully coiffured, she is to all appearances a willowy model of calm, but this conceals a broken heart; her true, damaged nature will be exposed through semi-comical Freudian slips, such as when, on joining her class, she notices that someone has opened the window too wide: 'Six inches is perfectly adequate. More is vulgar. Forsooth, one should have an innate sense of these things, of what is suitable.' Therein lies her power, her keenly-sought knowledge of what is suitable to innocent girls on the cusp of womanhood. And she wields her power arbitrarily. One new girl, Emily Carstairs, being 'inscribed' on Brodie's register, proudly proclaims her achievements in the Guides. But Brodie frowns, pulls back her shoulders and imperiously dismisses her merit badges thus: 'For those who like that sort of thing, that is the sort of thing they like.' The other new girl, Mary McGregor, has no interests, but that, the mistress intones, is what she is there for: to provide them with interests. McGregor receives the Brodie

beneficent smile while Carstairs does not: McGregor's blank slate is what appeals to the Jesuit in the teacher:

'Little girls, I am in the business of putting old heads on young shoulders. All my pupils are the *creme de la creme*. Give me a girl at an impressionable age and she is mine for life. You girls are my vocation...I am dedicated to you in my prime.'

Mary will join Sandy, Monica and Jenny as the *creme de la creme* of the Brodie girls. The teacher is aware that she herself is a maverick:

It is possible you will hear my teaching methods decried in certain quarters as being unsuitable for a conservative school like Marcia Blaine. That is to say, a school dedicated to the status quo...Staying the same to the point of petrification...I do not intend to devote my prime to petrification. Prop up your books in case of intruders...

In this way, she initiates the girls into a secret cabal within the school, the exclusive 'Brodie set', and she signals their induction by covering up a photograph of (Conservative leader of the National, 'consensus' government) Stanley Baldwin with a print of Giotto; her favourite, and hence 'best', painter. 'Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first.' She seduces by dealing in absolutes, the currency of adolescents. Caressing the dried, bleached flowers on the window sill (which are well past their prime, but ornate), she then relates the story of her unfulfilled love for a painter, Hugh, who died in the war in Flanders. The girls are in awe. When headmistress Miss Mackay (Celia Johnson) walks in, Brodie changes her story that of the battle of Flodden. The conspiracy against the school is cemented. Only Sandy (Pamela Franklin) questions Brodie's *volte face*, but her impudence is rewarded by the put-down that she should do as the teacher says, not as she does: the girl is, after all, 'a child, and far from *your* prime.' The ultimate Brodie slur. Her dominance is signalled by the ringing of the school bell, the usual end of scene punctuation in teacher films.

The love affair of Jean and Teddy now comes to the fore. He is married with six children, a Roman Catholic. He has painted her. Painting in this film amounts to having sex. He pleads human imperfection to excuse his weakness for her; she eulogises Beauty, Art and Truth. He concedes only the first two virtues: she 'bounced into bed with an artist but you were horrified when you woke up with a man.' He brusquely pushes her into the toilet to embrace her. She is affronted, but more so because he strips away her public mask to reveal the woman beneath.

While school and staff have dinner in the hall, the Brodie set have a picnic in the garden. She sets herself up as external to the establishment. But when Lowther comes out to invite her back into the staff room for a cup of tea, she accepts. The allure of keeping up respectable appearances is too seductive, although she slyly accepts Lowther's offer of a visit to his home at Cramond on Sunday- 'after church, of course.'

Brodie uses a walk through the streets of Edinburgh to give a history lesson- but uses the pretext of litter to explain that Mussolini has cleaned up the streets of fascist Italy. She urges the girls to walk erect with 'noble mien'. But her own nobility is about to come under scrutiny as the band walk past Lloyd's studio, and he runs out to greet them. He calls her 'dangerous' for her excursions to the art gallery; it is the 'consensus' view apparently. She admits to foregoing 'team spirit' for 'individualism'. When he invites her to return that weekend to his studio to see a picture (her picture) she declines, as she has a prior engagement at Cramond. The next scene sees her there, a picture of pastoral, gingham innocence, picking apples with Lowther. In contrast, when Teddy visits her classroom, he recalls their night at the studio, and declares his need for her. She pronounces her status as a teacher, first and foremost, but Lloyd is not to be discouraged. They kiss passionately, but are interrupted by an astonished Mary McGregor, who will later spill the beans, under duress, to friends Sandy, Jenny and Monica. When Miss Mackay happens upon Sandy play-acting the lingering embrace, the young woman repeats the performance, but the girls tell the

head it is an re-enactment of Violetta's love for Alfredo from *La Traviata*, that they have been to see on their weekend excursions to Cramond. Thus they have learned duplicity from Brodie. The questions are raised: what is a teacher? A moral force, or an unquestioned leader? Are they to be trusted, or obeyed? Are teachers asexual? Should they conceal their animal passion beneath a cloak of 'nobility'? And what do young people learn of life if passion is covert and decorum is all?

Brodie is summoned to Mackay's office. The head is dressed in sombre gray, Brodie in a colourful frock with a scarlet collar: 'Colour enlivens the spirit, does it not?' 'Perhaps you're right, though I wonder if the spirits of the girls need enlivening...Marcia Blaine is essentially a conservative school. We do not encourage the, er, progressive attitudes.' Mackay has noticed a 'precocity' in the Brodie set. Jean takes this as a compliment, explaining that she is in her 'prime'; she goes on to explain her view of education as a leading out from within the pupil: *ex* meaning out, and *duco*, I lead. The nod to 'Il Duce' (Mussolini) is unmistakable. When the head expresses the view that education might also be about putting something in, Brodie dismisses this as not education, but intrusion: preposition 'in' and *trudo* meaning I thrust; the sexual allusion is a careful bluff. But the real reason for the summons is Brodie's trips to Cramond, which have been remarked upon. Mackay paints Lowther as an innocent, the implication being that Brodie is predated upon the man and his estate. But the trips are 'expeditions for enrichment' (again, a wonderfully scripted bluff- enrichment is exactly what Mackay suspects, though in the material sense, and to the benefit of the teacher only). Impasse; but on Brodie's departure, Mackay enlists the support of secretary Miss Gaunt to report on any indiscretions that might come to her, or her brother's, notice: he is deacon of Cramond. The noose tightens.

In the library, Sandy and Jenny concoct a fictitious letter purporting to describe Brodie's *menage a trois*. They should be working, but for the Brodie girls, ordinary work equates to the school curriculum (the letter is secreted in a book.) We then see examples of the other type of teaching the girls experience at Marcia Blaine: physical fitness drilled to the whistle of an equine PE teacher; needlework from a spinsterish elder

mistress; chemistry from Miss Lockhart, soon to compound her friendship with Gordon; and singing, led by an earnest, joyful Lowther. At another picnic, the choirmaster tells the Brodie set that the deacon of Cramond deemed it unsuitable that he took an unmarried woman and the girls to a performance of *Hedda Gabler*; the knives are out, but Brodie dismisses such talk as so much 'provincial ignorance'. Brodie is aware the head seeks her removal, but that will take 'assassination'. Meanwhile, the girls are about to go up a year, out of the teacher's immediate sphere of influence.

Jenny is in Lloyd's studio, posing for a portrait, in the company of Mary and Monica. She has been groomed as a Brodie surrogate by her teacher, who regards her as being 'above the common moral code'. Sandy comes late, whereupon the others leave. Lloyd kisses her roughly, for making eyes at an artist. She is horrified, but she will return, and now *she* becomes the subject of his artistic and erotic attentions, naked on the couch: the ultimate taboo; teacher in sexual union with a pupil. But the painting, as all of Lloyd's, resembles Brodie, who has 'bewitched' him, and Sandy quits the art master's studio, hurt and humiliated.

In the meantime, Brodie and Lowther have been summoned to Mackay's office. The girls' fake letter has been discovered, and although it is recognised as a forgery, the fact that the girls have developed such vivid imaginations puts Brodie in the dock; she should resign as a consequence. While Lowther cowers, Brodie bristles; her bitter refutation is all the more remarkable for the fact that the accusations are true. But Brodie knows that Mackay has no proof, and she defends her innocence with injured vigour. Mackay has acted out of jealousy, and let her 'fetid frustration...overcome her judgement.' Brodie rails:

I am a teacher, first, last, always... I have dedicated, sacrificed my life to this profession and I will not stand by like an inky little slacker and watch you rob me of it and for what? For what reason? For jealousy! Because I have the gift of claiming girls for my own. Yes, I am a strong influence on my girls. I am proud of it! I influence them to be aware of all the possibilities of life of beauty, honour, courage. I do not,

Miss Mackay, influence them to look for slime where it does not exist!

But Lowther, confronted with a similar accusation by the deacon, has resigned as church elder and organist, which, as Brodie attests, is 'tantamount to a confession of guilt.' He wants to make her his wife, to be 'safe and happy'; but he cannot bring himself to call her his lover. Upset, Brodie storms back to her class, where she will show her new class holiday slides from fascist Italy. Lloyd meets her in the class, and realises Brodie is trying to groom Jenny for his bed. Outraged (found out?), she slaps the art teacher hard across the face.

Among her slides, there are some of the Ponte Vecchio in Florence where the middle aged artist Dante years fell in love with the fourteen year old Beatrice; Brodie wells up, and we are aware that this instant attraction was mirrored in her relations with Hugh. A passion she has been looking to resurrect since his demise in 1918. The while, Lloyd is painting Sandy.

Following a eulogy to Franco, the impressionable Mary McGregor runs off to fight in Spain, but she is killed; she has been seeking her brother, who unbeknownst to Brodie or Mary, is fighting for the Republican cause. The 'dedicated' and 'noble' girl has died from a folly she has learnt from her mentor. But Sandy knows, and will tell the headmistress in a determination to stem the poison. Lowther is to marry the chemistry teacher Miss Lockhart, and while Brodie has been fundraising for Franco, Lloyd is collecting for a wedding present for the happy couple. Jilted, he wants to hurt Brodie, and he reminds her that she is a leader, rather than a teacher, and a frustrated spinster to boot, well past her prime. Mackay summons Brodie once more, and dismisses her on the evidence of the Board of Governors, backed by information supplied by one of the girls. Jean has been 'accused of teaching treason and sedition to my students', but she knows not by whom.

'Do you think that you are Providence, that you can ordain love?' asks Sandy of Brodie. She reveals that she, Sandy, is Teddy's lover. And that Mary's brother was fighting *against* Franco: '...you were only

attracted to Mary because she had no-one else and she was so totally suggestible. She appealed to your vanity!’ The penny drops for Brodie; Sandy is her nemesis. ‘You’re dangerous and unwholesome and children should not be exposed to you!’ says the girl. ‘You really are a ridiculous woman.’ ‘Assassin!’ cries the fallen leader. ‘Assassin!’

The end of term (*Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing*) gives Mackay the opportunity to give the girls a valedictory address before sending them out into the world.

In this world, you will be called upon to make many moral decisions affecting not only your own lives but the lives of your families, friends, your acquaintances. We are confident, truly confident that the training you have received here in this school will have equipped you to face life’s quandaries with courage and character. For here at Marcia Blaine we have done our best to nurture the virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies.

The valediction, almost certainly unchanged year on year, is unaffected by the tragedy that was the influence of Miss Jean Brodie. Once more, the school takes credit where none is due; a sleight of hand, a detachment from reality befitting our eponymous villain.

Unhappily, Brodie’s is a dominant, and unquestioning personality. She favours the fascists in the Spanish Civil War, and uses her position to influence the girls, even to the extent of encouraging them to join up for the cause. She has had an unhappy past, but she will compensate for past misfortunes, now she is in her prime, even to the point of grooming girls to take her place in Teddy’s bed. This is a deliberate inversion of the liberal maverick of the American genre, who usually fights for the liberties of his students in a restrictive school milieu: Jean Brodie’s students, on the contrary, are treated to extra-curricular outings and tea parties, but she expects them to follow her political leanings and accept the danger she exposes them to without question. She feeds Lloyd’s paedophilia and at the same time inculcates extreme political

views. The consequences are tragic, at least for Mary, and delusional for the teacher. We are invited to question the autonomy of teachers, and to wonder as to the consequences when the 'reasonable independence' of teachers allows for the corruption of the young.

Hargreaves comments on individualism and personal care in schools:

Classroom care is often surrounded by other sentiments and orientations... which make its presence less obvious, its impact more complex. In particular, care is commonly bound up with other orientations toward ownership and control. Ownership entails more than care, nurturance and connectedness in the relationships that teachers develop with their classes. It suggests that teachers have prime, perhaps even sole responsibility for their classes; that students somehow belong to their teachers, like possessions... Sometimes, it seems, we can act as if we are being kind to be cruel. Control in social settings comprises the ability to regulate, determine and direct the course of one's life or other lives, and to avoid or resist intrusions and impositions by others which interfere with that ability. Control over one's own destiny and over the destinies of others has both positive and negative implications. The bounded classroom where the teacher has almost exclusive contact with and responsibility for the development of impressionable young minds is rife with control implications. (Hargreaves 1994: 174-175).

Brodie isolates her set, controls and grooms them. When care is divorced from responsibility, and coupled to romantic political manipulation, the teacher is no longer a force for good but a danger to her charges.

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is a good example of a film with a historical context which invites us to ask questions of both the time portrayed in the *diegesis* or world of the film, as well as the time of the film's making, which in this case was the revolutionary days of the late sixties, when many aspects of

education were being held up to renewed scrutiny, especially from below i.e. from the perspective of the student.

Marjorie Bilbow in *Today's Cinema* (26/2/69) found the film 'amusing' and 'literate', but it appealed 'to the intellect, not the emotions. I laughed, but was never moved.' Murf in *Variety* (19/2/69) is critical of the structure of the story, especially in the first two reels: 'Miss Smith's pseudo-sophisticated, scatterbrain, full-time, compulsive attempts to be "different" in her environment do not always ring true...it seems like the actors and lines are playing to an audience, not to themselves'. No more so, I would maintain, than any teacher to a class.

Unman, Wittering and Zigo (1971), director John Mackenzie.

This rare film (unavailable on DVD or VHS) was an early work of John Mackenzie, the director who would later make *The Long Good Friday*. The story is a cross between *Lord of the Flies* and *if....*, as, in this school, the pupils have the whip-hand and use their power to malevolent effect.

John Ebony (David Hemmings) is new to teaching. Following three years in advertising he now recognises teaching as his true vocation: 'I want to teach more than anything else in the world' he tells colleague Cary Farthingale (Anthony Haygarth). Farthingale is more cynical, and tells the young teacher (and Hemmings does look very young) that he is guilty of the knight-errant fantasy- 'a chap who rides out of the real world in search of fairy castles and finds a desolate tower at the arse-end of nowhere.' Certainly, Chantry School (established 1678) is in a lonely spot, a bus ride from town and likely to lack the stimulation needed by John's fashion-conscious wife Silvia (Carolyn Seymour), who, despite her name, suits the urban landscape more than this rural idyll. Ebony comes to the school part-way through the term, following the death of one Mr Pelham, who apparently fell to his death from the cliff top when walking in

fog.

Ebony's class are Lower Fifth B, an assortment of precocious younger boys and a scattering of older hands whose talents have not as yet secured their release. The new teacher has been told by Farthingale that these boys are in fact to be addressed as men: 'There are no boys at this school. They call themselves men- they insist upon it. Why not? They think like men; they talk like men.' Determined to show the students that he is in charge, Ebony attempts to demonstrate his power by punishing minor infractions with weekend detention but astonishingly, one pupil, Cloistermouth (Nicholas Hoyer), advises the master against this course of action: Pelham tried it, and they killed him. Ebony, incredulous and taken aback, orders the boy to the headmaster's study, but Cloistermouth refuses to go. He wasn't being insolent, only truthful.

When Ebony confides in Farthingale, the more experienced teacher is intrigued but doesn't take the story seriously: 'John, you're so simple-minded. It's just not done for a schoolmaster to die in term time- what do you think holidays are for?' The tale of Pelham's murder is just a juvenile prank. Nor is the headmaster sympathetic; when Ebony finds what the boys claim is Pelham's bloodstained wallet wrapped up in his desk and takes it to the principal, he is reminded that his duty is to the boys whom he is accused of neglecting, rather than opening a police investigation. Silvia, too, is dismissive of the threat, even when John finds a solitary shoe (Pelham's) in the bottom drawer of his desk, at home: to Silvia, her husband is a fool. Ebony is isolated, not only geographically, but socially. She, a sylvan force of nature, is choked by the stifling unnaturalness of her captivity.

John is determined to discover who killed Pelham and decides to go along with the boys' 'modus vivendi' of letting them do the bare minimum of work, even taking their bets to the bookie's, while he tries to find out who the ringleader is. He takes to drinking in town with Farthingale and Silvia is neglected. However, when the headmaster informs John that his services are not to be retained beyond the end of term, he

stops trying, or even caring: when pupil 'wet' Wittering is savagely attacked in his classroom, Ebony simply envelops himself in his newspaper and allows the assault to take place, right under his nose.

The boys' hegemony is only threatened when Ebony refuses to place their bets any longer. They decide to teach him a lesson. Initially, Terhew (Michael Cashman) and Lipstrob (James Wardroper) pay Silvia a visit but they don't follow through with their threat (though a knife falls from Terhew's coat as he leaves). Only later, when John and Cary have once more abandoned her for the town, do the boys return to ambush Silvia in the squash court and try to get Wittering to rape her. The hapless boy's inability to perform the foul act results in his classmates turning on him, affording Silvia the opportunity to escape. The hounds only retreat from their prey when she threatens to set off the fire alarm. She collapses, weeping.

Incredibly, the following day, the boys burst into the Ebony's cottage, not to continue their assault but to alert the master to Wittering's disappearance. Even more incredibly, Ebony agrees to help the boys in their search, abandoning his wife who chooses to leave him. Wittering is found dead on the rocks; a suicide note on his body relates the fact that Pelham's murder was his idea: he had hoped to appease his classmates and be welcomed back into the pack, but to no avail. The note also revealed that Ebony had been as bad as Pelham in failing to protect the boy. The would-be rescuers push brusquely past the negligent headmaster who equally has been found wanting in his duty of care.

Unman, Wittering and Zigo is a dark parable in which the pupils exert deadly influence over their masters. The teachers collude and neglect their duty; they are called upon to do the bare minimum, and not interfere with the boys' freedom, and they comply. This is an inversion of Bowles and Gintis' correspondence principle which has school as mirroring the institutional hierarchy of the wider society:

The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the

discipline of the workplace, but develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social-class identifications which are crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education— the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work— replicate the hierarchical division of labour. Hierarchical relations are reflected in the vertical authority lines from administrators to teachers to students. Alienated labour is reflected in the students' lack of control over his or her education, the alienation of the student from the curriculum content, and the motivation of school work through a system of grades and other external rewards rather than the student's integration with either the process (learning) or the outcome (knowledge) of the educational 'production process'. (Bowles and Gintis, in Ball, 1986, 38).

In fact, these students dictate their own curriculum, doing just enough work to get by, and feathering their nests through gambling. They even impose their own discipline over wayward students like Wittering (and perhaps the absent Zigo?) and intransigent teachers. They are less likely to be armed with *The Little Red Schoolbook* than Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

As a teacher, Ebony is unconvincing. It is inconceivable that a teacher could turn a blind eye to a savage beating of a pupil in his class, even if (in less than half a term) he has lost his zest for the job (although David McGillivray in *Monthly Film Bulletin* maintains Hemmings' performance 'succeeds in communicating the feeling of desperation that inexperience fosters': vol. 38, 444/455, 1971). He has gone from wanting to teach more than anything in the world to not caring about anything anymore. Even less believably, he is then willing to ignore the threat to his beautiful young wife to organise the search for the would-be rapist, on the premise that he is driven to discover Pelham's murderer. So, the plot is clunky and one can only suspend one's disbelief so far ('the nightmare violence is never entirely convincing')

ibid); nonetheless, there is a real sense of horror attached to this film, as the power relations of teacher and pupil are subverted to such an extent that a teacher's wife can be targeted for rape as a punishment for her husband's failure to cooperate. This is so amoral as to be shocking, the more so because the boys are so supremely confident in their right to take such a revenge, and the strength of their alibis.

Furthermore, the bullying of Wittering, and pedagogical neglect, predicts the tragedy of Columbine and the depiction of wrongs righted wrongly that we find in Ilmar Raag's *The Class* (2007). It highlights the fact that, while teachers' abuse of power is unacceptable, a relinquishing of power is no answer and leaves the door open to abominable sadism and aggression. Nature, in the educational sphere, abhors a vacuum; and nature, red in tooth and claw, surrounds and threatens John and Silvia. They are isolated: he a johnny-come-lately, non-U in a U redoubt, fresh from advertising (of all things); and she a sexy young mini-skirted thing in a frigid menopausal world of tweed. She quaffs the headmaster's sherry with a vulgar thirst born of discomfort; he relentlessly strives to upturn the Chantry applecart by talking of police investigations, unwittingly flouting the canon law of the school (such talk could seriously affect fees). The headmaster will not retain John's services; they will go to a Chantry old-boy, who, we assume, will understand and obey the unwritten class protocols of the college.

This era of film making marks a disturbing plunge into pessimism. Things had started brightly, with Thackeray, a charismatic outsider who would not be out of place in the American teacher-film genre, bringing light and hope to a dingy, drab East End of London. But the mood of optimism could not be maintained. If *if...* is England, the regimented and brutal hierarchy is not only cruel: it is also strangling free expression. We are invited to consider the consequences. Free expression and hope are not on the menu in *Kes*; Billy Casper is offered no means of escaping his blighted landscape: ill-educated, his only prospect is the pit. Only Billy's imagination can rescue him from his circumstances, as school has singularly failed him (the tripartite system that was meant to offer parity of conditions if not parity of esteem has

conditioned a generation to a life of labour). Success can be gained not by what you know, but who you know, and if you were lucky, or impressionable enough, to be one of Brodie's set, your future might appear glorious; and yet the children are offered a poisoned chalice. Unhappiness and untimely death are bequeathed by a controlling teacher whose manipulation of the curriculum and erasing of the lines between professional and private have disastrous consequences. Distance is erased by the pupils in *Unman, Wittering and Zigo*; they are in control of the classroom once the master has relinquished responsibility.

Filmography

TO SIR, WITH LOVE (1967) U.K.

Credits

Director.....James Clavell
Producer.....James Clavell
Production Companies.....Columbia Pictures Corporation, Columbia British
Productions
Screenplay.....James Clavell
Cinematography.....Paul Beeson
Editor.....Peter Thornton
Original music.....Ron Grainer

Cast

Mark Thackeray.....Sidney Poitier

Pamela Dare.....Judy Geeson
 Gillian Blanchard.....Suzy Kendall
 Theo Weston.....Geoffrey Bayldon

IF.... (1968) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Lindsay Anderson
 Producers.....Lindsay Anderson, Michael Medwin, Albert Finney
 Production Company.....Memorial Enterprises
 Screenplay.....David Sherwin, John Howlett
 Cinematography.....Miroslav Ondricek
 Editor.....David Gladwell
 Original music.....Marc Wilkinson

Cast

Mick Travis.....Malcolm McDowell
 Johnny Knightly.....David Wood
 Wallace.....Richard Warwick
 The Girl.....Christine Noonan
 Headmaster.....Peter Jeffrey

KES (1969) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Kenneth Loach
 Producer.....Tony Garnett
 Production Companies.....Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions
 Screenplay.....Barry Hines, Kenneth Loach, Tony Garnett
 Cinematography.....Chris Menges
 Editor.....Roy Watts
 Original music.....John Cameron

Cast

Billy Casper.....David Bradley
 Mr Farthing.....Colin Welland
 Mr Sugden.....Brian Glover
 Mr Gryce.....Bob Bowes

PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE, THE (1969) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Robert Neame
 Producer.....Robert Fryer
 Production Company.....Twentieth-Century Fox Productions
 Screenplay.....Jay Presson Allen
 Cinematography.....Ted Moore
 Editor.....Norman Savage
 Original music.....Arthur Greenslade

Cast

Jean Brodie.....Maggie Smith
 Teddy Lloyd.....Robert Stephens

Gordon Lowther.....	Gordon Jackson
Sandy.....	Pamela Franklin
Miss Mackay.....	Celia Johnson

UNMAN, WITTERING AND ZIGO (1971) U.K.

Credits

Director.....	John McKenzie
Producer.....	Gareth Wigan
Production Company.....	Hemmings, Mediarts
Screenplay.....	Simon Raven
Cinematography.....	Geoffrey Unsworth
Editor.....	Fergus McDonell
Original music.....	Michael J. Lewis

Cast

John Ebony.....	David Hemmings
Silvia Ebony.....	Carolyn Seymour
Cary Farthingale.....	Anthony Haygarth
The headmaster.....	Douglas Wilmer

CHAPTER 7. AN END TO CONSENSUS.

If the post-war period had sought to shift education away from (physically-enforced) control of pupils towards a more child-centred pedagogy, its zenith was the Plowden Report (on primary education) of 1967. Now the life of the whole child ('its physical and intellectual development, family and neighbourhood' (Cunningham, in Aldrich (ed.), 2002, p20) would be examined, in addition to, and prior to, the school and the curriculum. This social view of the child was different from the 'child as citizen of tomorrow' peddled in 1945: this was the child seen as a child; a holistic view. Corporal punishment was duly abolished in British schools (in 1986, effective from 1987) and it appeared a more enlightened, perhaps kinder pedagogy might ensue.

However, the forces of reaction were mustering, and found an articulate spokeswoman in the person of Mary Whitehouse. 'Her attack on the permissive society was also a reaction to many of the major political and social changes since the end of the war: the creation of the welfare state, the growth of consumerism, the rise of the working classes, the militancy of the unions and so on' (Sandbrook, 2006, 548).

A literary response came in the form of the 'Black Papers' (1969 onwards), a series of publications featuring various academics, politicians and writers critical of the Plowden approach and advocating a return to an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and resistance to 'trendy' education and 'left-wing' teachers, and the retention of selection:

In the Black Papers, Conservative-leaning educationists and academics condemned all these developments: 'Our notion that "progressive education" might be in some part to blame for lack of knowledge or for naïve and destructive political attitudes in its victims has been seen as common sense by many people' (C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson, cited in Paul Sharp, Central and Local Government, in Aldrich (ed.) 2002).

Cox would later, in 1988, be 'appointed chairman of the working group to establish a national curriculum in English' (*The Times* 30/04/2008). Meanwhile, it would be Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan who

would articulate this ‘common sense’ most eloquently at Ruskin College Oxford in 1976.

Researchers in universities began the quest for the source of the problem in the area of classroom practice; government commissioned an enquiry, and demanded an embedding of the basic skills in ‘a broader curriculum of high quality’ (ibid, p21). A National Curriculum was embedded in the 1988 Education Reform Act under Margaret Thatcher’s Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, and power was centralised at the expense of Local Education Authorities (see Derek Gillard at www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter08.html, last accessed 15/04/11). Teachers had to be held to account; ‘exploratory’ teaching styles did not deliver high enough achievement rates; the partnership of teachers and Her Majesty’s Inspectors had been too cosy. In 1993, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was created. From now on, standards would be raised by teaching to a set curriculum; SATs tests would monitor the required progress; league tables would tell parents if their school of choice was failing their children. The era of cooperation between government and teachers, which had begun with the granting of ‘reasonable independence’, was over. For teachers, they could fight, or cooperate (see Appendix 3 for contributions to the debate). Seduced by the carrot of a planned curriculum, and inducements to ‘super-teachers’, and threatened by the stick of being labelled as failing their pupils, the profession as a whole opted for collaboration; teachers were affiliates to a code.

Jean Baudrillard maintained that a third order of simulacra was that of simulation, based on the structural law of value. Now: ‘Only affiliation to the model makes sense, and nothing flows any longer according to its end, but proceeds from the model, the “signifier of reference”’ (Baudrillard 1983: 101). Serial reproductibility has been superseded by modulation. We now have ‘a universe of structures and binary oppositions... End of the theatre of representations, the space of signs, their conflict, their silence; only the black box of the code.’ (103) ‘From a capitalist-productivist society to a neo-capitalist cybernetic order that aims now at total control.’ (111). Baudrillard concludes: ‘[O]nce capital itself has become its own myth, or rather an interminable machine, aleatory, something like a *social genetic code*, it no longer leaves

any room for a planned reversal; and this is its true violence.’ (112). Now, ‘the question assimilates the answer...We live by the mode of *referendum* precisely because there is no longer any *referential*.’ (116) and: ‘*The referendum is always an ultimatum*’ (117).

Would popular films reflect these substantial changes in education?

The Wall (1982), director Alan Parker.

Codified education is exemplified in the Pink Floyd film, *The Wall* (Alan Parker, 1982). Largely introspective, and employing (in part) darkly fascistic animation drawn by Gerald Scarfe (goose-stepping hammers, cane-wielding teachers grinding children into worms through a mincer), this is ex-public schoolboy and Floyd bassist and songwriter Roger Waters’ ‘no-one understands me’ oeuvre.

The ‘wall’ is representative of the alienation felt by the main character, ‘Pink’, for the world that he has built up around him, says Alan Parker on the extra material supplied on the DVD. Artist Gerald Scarfe describes it as the barrier we construct to protect our vulnerability but which is threatened by our mothers ‘who know exactly where to get us... then by our teachers who can ridicule us in front of the class, and make us feel small and hurt.’

Pink’s maths teacher is an unconscionable bully who mocks him for his poetry (actually lyrics to Pink Floyd’s *Money* from *Dark Side of the Moon*). He leads the boy’s classmates in derisive laughter. The school is presented as a machine: hectored pupils trudge/march to a conveyor belt which transports them, vacant-eyed and desk-bound, into a mincer whereby their infinite diversity is turned into a homogenous pulp. The while, the children join in the song:

We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Hey! Teacher! Leave them kids alone!

When the children finally rebel, they tear off their masks and destroy the school before setting it ablaze. The malevolent teacher is seen being carried, struggling, towards the pyre, perhaps to be immolated on the bonfire of his own vanity. The teacher character makes a reprise later in the film as an animated puppet, being beaten by a dominatrix as he in turn thrashes a pupil. He then see him as a giant, inspecting the school from on high, his eye like a jeweller's eyepiece (a real Foucaultian nightmare of surveillance), before forcing the children through the school-turned-mincer, producing nothing more than pink, wriggling worms. This is not just education-as-control; this is education as a weapon of mass destruction.

The film traces Pink's isolation, from losing his father in the war, to his mother's too-close embrace, his estrangement from his wife and descent into madness and fascistic fantasy. We learn from Parker that the story purports to warn 'how societies disintegrate if we allow ourselves to become isolated from one another,' and the film ends with Pink condemned, by a grotesque judiciary, to the destruction of his wall. The films cuts to a post-apocalyptic vision of children of all races picking through the rubble in a London street; a young boy picks up an unexploded Molotov cocktail, pulls out the rag, sniffs the petrol and empties the bottle. The message is clear: (civil)war is not the answer, and we must learn to accommodate difference. From isolation comes fear, and from fear comes hatred.

Tellingly, Neil Jeffries at empireonline.com (accessed 13/02/11) found the film 'grabs your attention but doesn't know what to say once it's got it'; 'it's impossible to be sure what the hell is going on,' he complains. PT at timeout.com/film/reviews_ (accessed 13/02/11) could tell him: 'the movie is a matter of such stunning literalism: it's little more than kinetic sleeve art keyed slavishly to a slim concept-album

narrative’.

Well-meaning it may be, but *The Wall* is indulgent, deeply misogynist (women are either shown as stifling, faithless, cheap or dangerous– devouring labia feature strongly in Scarfe’s animation) and self-pitying. The project apparently derived from Waters’ increasing distance from his audience but the effect is to confirm the existence of Pink Floyd’s musical-bourgeois bubble, and to display the bass player’s poetry in a poor light compared to his song writing predecessor, Syd Barrett. Bob Geldof’s portrayal of the adult Pink fails to elicit sympathy and the conflation of war-scapes, rock concerts and fascist rallies leads one to suspect that Waters sees the hell of superstardom as somehow commensurate with the ultimate rite-of-passage of dying for one’s country.

Another Country (1984), director Marek Kaniévska.

A screen adaptation of Julian Mitchell’s play (he is the screenwriter), *Another Country* is set mainly in an elite public school in 1931. The main character is Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett) who seems to be based on Guy Burgess, one of the spies who defected to the Soviet Union in 1951 (Marr 2009: 136). Bennett is openly gay in a school where proven homosexual practice leads to expulsion, and disgrace (one young boy, Martineau, discovered *in flagrante delicto* by a master hangs himself) but he has fallen in love with a boy from a different house, James Harcourt. Guy’s closest friend is Tommy Judd (Colin Firth), a dyed-in-the-wool communist. Both young men seek to change their worlds, Guy by attaining top prefect (‘god’) status, which he believes will secure him a comfortable job in the diplomatic service, and Tom by promulgating revolution. What unites the friends is their antipathy to the school, its structures and in particular, the bullying figure of head prefect Fowler.

Tommy rejects the school’s ‘self-perpetuating oligarchy’, keeping his head down, reading *Das Kapital*, even

refusing to become a prefect. When Fowler looks to be about to be made head of house, Guy is approached by 'god' Menzies to try and get Tommy on board: if he will only agree to become a prefect, Fowler can be stymied. After much soul searching and the offer from Guy to deliberately lose the 'jacket pot' or corps parade through wilful scruffiness, bringing shame upon the house, Judd finally agrees, but by this time, Menzies has discovered Guy's affair with Harcourt and he knows the disgrace will enable him to confer 'god' status on another boy, Devenish, who will now be persuaded not to leave.

Guy has earlier told his house 'gods' that if he is punished by Fowler for losing the house the jacket pot, he will reveal all his homosexual activity, and the names of his partners to the housemaster Farquarson; 'god' Delahay is incensed; he is one of Guy's ex-lovers. But the disclosure of Bennett's trysts with Harcourt means Guy cannot use his blackmail for fear of getting himself and James expelled. Bennett is summoned to the 'house table' and he is brutally beaten.

As in *if...*, the real power structure at the school lies with the 'gods', not the masters. Following the tragedy of Martineau's suicide, the 'gods' have a meeting where the regret lies in the fact of the boy's discovery by a master who was not an old boy. Why did he have to interfere? The 'gods' could have dealt with it: 'prefects handle house matters, the 'gods' deal with everything else and masters should mind their own business.' Interestingly, unlike in *if...*, there is not unanimity amongst these seniors; most want to conceal the facts behind the tragedy, while Fowler wants to bring it all out into the open, and have a 'clear out' to bring about a 'clean house'.

In contrast, the masters are treated with contempt. When Guy meets James for dinner at an expensive restaurant, he reassures him that he will be safe, as 'they couldn't afford it in here.' The master who discovered Martineau and his lover should have known better than to prowl around the boys' changing rooms— an old boy would have known what went on there. The head is referred to only as the final source of sanction; the 'gods' are confident that all matters can be dealt with through their own policing,

without having to bother the judge. The contempt is born out of their class position, their wealth 'invisible', and the payment of fees confers on the masters the role of paid servant.

Tom and Guy are outsiders, the former because of his political convictions, the latter because of his sexual orientation. Judd cannot understand why the 'gods' confiscate his torches, when in his view, the only education worth having is reading Marx at bedtime: 'parents spend hundreds of pounds a year sending us to this prison so we can be educated, and we spend the entire time playing games.' For Guy, 'life is a ladder', and he is prepared to endure the 'ten years of hard labour in the salt mines of prep and public school' if, in the end, he gets to sit atop the 'stinking heap' as a 'god'. Both are true to their characters: Tom sees himself as a Bolshevik, one of the educated few who will lead the workers out of their servitude. He is conscious of the need to retain an unblemished reputation in the school, for while he might be the school joke, he is a 'respected joke', and the credibility of his creed is at stake. Guy's is an individual quest- he knows the route to the top can be tough, but as any Hollywood-be starlet appreciates, the hardship will be worth it ultimately. He lacks James' discretion, and so it is almost inevitable that he will come undone; it is equally obvious that the sanctimonious Tom is so out of the game as to be a useless ally. It is very significant that when the boys play cricket, the pair elect to be umpires, with Tom standing at square leg, detached and totally disinterested, while Guy is behind the stumps, adjudicating outrageously partially in favour of the bowler, who just happens to be Harcourt!

At the beginning of the film, we find the boys gathered around the school war memorial for a service of commemoration. They sing 'I Vow To Thee My Country', with the first verse eulogising patriotic sacrifice. But the second verse speaks of another country, metaphysical love which requires a giving of the self in much the same way. This is the country to which Guy, and Tom, owe their allegiance: their refusal to betray their beliefs is in sharp contrast to the 'political' manoeuvring of the 'gods'. It will cost Guy his career, and Tom his life, killed by the fascists in the Spanish civil war. School produces obedience, an essential for empire rulers, says Tom, whereas *their* imagination equips them to be empire *builders*. The

‘whole delightful, utterly despicable English background’ also breeds loyalty and treason, which, says Guy, are ‘relative’. Even ‘god’ Barclay has his doubts, but he is reluctant to give up his money, status and class which delineates him from the ordinary man. ‘God, if our parents only knew what actually went on here’ wonders Bennett. ‘They do know’, replies Judd. ‘The fathers anyway.’ The school is a place of learning, but learning the duplicitous unpredictability of life; it teaches cynicism, the need for allies, the politics of class (un)consciousness. If you swim with the current, do your time and fail to stand out, you may do very nicely. But the nail that stands up will be knocked down. ‘This place’, seethes, Judd. ‘This place.’

‘RR’ at timeout.com/film/reviews (accessed 13/02/11) thought that where the play (by writer and producer Julian Mitchell) ‘was long and more meditative, making suspension of disbelief at least possible, here it just seemed like nonsense’ and ‘the film persuades you that the past is indeed another country, while offering an unreliable guide to its landscape’. Vincent Cabey at the *New York Times* (29/06/84) found it a ‘well-acted, literate but insufferably smug little movie’ and attacks the film’s ‘portentous presentation’.

Teachers feature very little in *Another Country*, as mentioned earlier. The ‘gods’ perform the controlling role, as perhaps their privileged destiny dictates. Teachers are functionaries, there to fill in the perfunctory gaps in knowledge while the true education for life (knowing one’s place in the hierarchy, obedience, service) comes from the structure of the school system. As with *if....*, the realisation that private education, in the pedagogical sense, is almost incidental to the journey that is school is shocking to those of us who have no experience of it, but is what we suspect, to quote Judd, the fathers know, but the mothers don’t. The relationship between Guy and his mother is a delightful example of this innocence: she doesn’t even know he is gay– the only person in the whole film, it seems, to be ignorant of that fact. Guy’s homosexuality takes on a real significance in that if the school cannot accommodate this example of difference, what hope for the ‘imagination’ that Tom finds so lacking. For school, see society, just as with

if...; the liberal 'turning a blind eye' exemplified in most of the 'gods' is not so much a tacit acceptance of difference as a refusal to face it head on. As Tom says, liberals always crumble under pressure, so given the pressure of the changing times, there appear to be just two alternatives: the authoritarianism of Fowler or the revolution favoured by Judd. The film, set in 1931 (the time of the National Government) sits neatly between the wasted opportunity of the General Strike of 1926 and the outbreak of the Spanish civil war (1936), and the fight against fascism that would follow. And made in 1984, the year when Prime Minister Thatcher divided the nation between those who supported the striking miners and those who didn't, the message seems to re-echo from the 1969 advertising for Anderson's *piece de resistance*: which side are you on?

Wetherby (1985), director David Hare.

The role of education, and what it means to be educated, are questions raised, albeit as background, in David Hare's *Wetherby* (1985). A schoolteacher, Jean Travers (Vanessa Redgrave) witnesses the suicide of a man, John Morgan, in her kitchen, the night after she has met him for the first time at one of her dinner parties. He had invited himself, and everyone had assumed he was known to another. Morgan (Tim McInnerny), a student from the University of Essex with a penchant for jumble sales, Fromm, Nietzsche and revolvers, blows his brains out and sets in train a police investigation which eventually uncovers hidden depths to the story of the affable Ms Travers.

Very early in the film, Travers is asked for a chat by a pupil in her English class. Suzie Bannerman (Stephanie Noble) is concerned: should she carry on into the sixth form? 'Of course' replies Travers. 'It's just that everyone seems to end up unemployed', explains Suzie. 'You get a university degree, like in French, then what? Maybe you get to be a secretary, and that's if you're lucky. Honestly, I've really thought about it, and I don't really think it's worth it, you see.' Travers is taken aback. 'That's not what

education is though, Suzie. If you're always thinking 'I must use my education for a career', then you're already thinking of education in the wrong way. Education is a thing in itself, it's a way of fulfilling your potential, looking for ways of thinking about things, ways which, if you're lucky, will help not just your career but your whole life'. Susie looks incredulous: 'What way?' 'Well... ways of being more ordered, I suppose, having more discipline in the way you think, not always being bull-headed, learning not to rush into things.' 'Do you think uneducated people do that?' 'No I don't... not necessarily, I mean... sometimes.' 'Are they inferior for not knowing how to think?' 'No, of course not.' 'But if you have something.. what you call 'a way of thinking', which they don't, surely you're saying that you're superior.' 'No Susie, I wouldn't say that.' 'What then'. 'Different'. The girl won't let go: 'Better or worse?'

Others in Jean's life are no so conflicted. Her adolescent sweetheart Jim Mortimer (Robert Hines) flew off to Malaya with the R.A.F. rather than stay in Wetherby, and now C.I.D. officer Mike Langdon (Stuart Wilson) provides order and normality (there is also a suggestion that Jean might be having an affair with solicitor Stanley Pilborough (Ian Holm), husband of best friend Marcia (Judi Dench)). John Morgan's doctorate has meant he's up in Wetherby doing research at the branch of the British Library where Marcia works as a deputy librarian. He follows her into Jean's life. Morgan's Nietzschean simplicity also proves attractive to the liberal teacher (strangely, Jim left for the Far East twenty-five years ago and Morgan is a twenty-five year old PhD student. The coincidence might tip the balance for Travers).

Enter Karen (Suzanna Hamilton), an Essex student who was previously stalked and attacked by Morgan and yet bizarrely turns up for the funeral, is billeted with the teacher by detective Langdon. She has 'a faculty missing... no curiosity' according to Jean, who speculates that it was the young girl's detachment that may have driven Morgan to suicide. For his part, Marcia's friend and Jean's colleague Roger (Tom Wilkinson) has speculated that murderers may be noted by a desire for self-improvement: 'People who teach themselves things at home at night. Theories they only half understand... informal education... a fantasy life of singular intensity' (Marcia has earlier criticised the vacuous lack of ambition of her students).

Although Morgan is a suicide, and not a murderer, it seems as though we are being offered a choice between bland bourgeois contentment and violence. However, it is Langdon who solves the mystery: Jean was attracted to the uncomplicated fact of Morgan being a stranger, untainted by the petit-bourgeois squabbling of her friends, but when he responded aggressively to her advances, she, like Karen, pulls away. The following day, he returns to her cottage and kills himself.

The occasion of the dinner party gives Stanley, the town's 'official sanctifier of greed', the chance to pontificate on the damage caused by the government of Margaret Thatcher. 'Revenge. That's what it is, revenge- that's what she's doing... The Prime Minister. She's taking some terrible revenge for something... some deep damage, something inside, God knows what. For crimes behind the privet hedge... and now the whole country's suffering.' For Morgan, things are simpler. 'I only know goodness, and anger, and revenge, and evil and desire.' This simple clarity of feeling echoes down the twenty-five years for Jean, to happier, less complicated times. Morgan expands: 'We bury these words, these simple feelings, we bury them deep, and all the building-over that constitutes this century will not wish these feelings away.' Intellectual response and primal reaction; and we, in the middle, lost and lonely.

Back at school, Jean discovers young Suzie has run away to London- another response, perhaps, to the hopelessness and lack of warmth in society that her teacher has subsumed in carnal pleasure, be it sex or dinner parties.

'She said she couldn't see the point of school' says one of her boys. 'No? Well, sometimes I have that problem. Anyone else? Anyone else want to go? Right then... those of us still remaining, us maniacs, assorted oddballs, eccentrics, folk who still think education is worthwhile, I suggest we keep trying.'

Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* (19/07/85) thought Hare's theatrical background led to the film's pace being somewhat variable, though the setting was more harmonious: 'Mr Hare, who names the film for

the small Yorkshire town in which it takes place, has a better feel for how this should look than for the pace at which it should unfold'; furthermore, he displays a degree of 'theatrical obliqueness' in the screenplay. Nonetheless, the cast are 'superb' and Redgrave brings 'a crisp intelligence and a very deep compassion' to her character.

Wetherby is a bitter indictment of a society where value has been lost to price, and the victims find escape wherever it can be found, be it in the pub, dinner parties, adultery or in the darkness of oblivion. Resistance becomes just a sour flavour to the chattering classes. Education does not come out of this film unscathed, either: we may keep trying, but the reality could be that in such a cynical world, the likes of Suzie might indeed be better employed finding their own means of salvation.

Clockwise (1986), director Christopher Morahan.

Clockwise, directed by Christopher Morahan with screenplay by Michael Frayn, tells the story of Brian Stimpson (John Cleese) who, as headmaster of Thomas Tompion school, has become the first principal of a comprehensive to become chair of the prestigious Headmasters' Conference. He has achieved this feat through a punctilious adherence to time-keeping and organisation; his study's wall is adorned with the most complex planner, and his system is backed up on a computer. We gain the impression that both staff and students are at a loss as to the geography of the school, but Stimpson has all the information at his fingertips, and seems to know each child by name. He watches his charges from his eyrie, binoculars at the ready (personification of Benthamite/Foucauldian panopticism), and booms out admonitions to those pupils (and staff) who fail to meet his exacting standards. Nonetheless, although his 9.20 'executions' (whereby he may correct errant behaviour) are a thing of legend, and routine, it becomes apparent from the assembly that while Stimpson is a stickler for punctuality, he is no ogre; pupils are free to enjoy a light-hearted and convivial atmosphere. And the head is all too ready to apportion credit to the students for

their part in Thomas Tompion's historical achievement. The only people who seem to suffer from Stimpson's obsession are the members of his (neglected) family. Even his wife (Alison Steadman) is obliged to await the 9.20 hearing when she wants to talk to him.

There follows a farce worthy of Brian Rix, though the contrast between the earnest Stimpson's standards and what he can deliver come unravelled in the manner of Cleeze's other immortal comic creation, Basil Fawlty. A series of mishaps (which include missing a train, driving off without paying from a garage, enlisting the aid of a streetwise sixth former on a 'free lesson' and 'abducting' an old girlfriend) cannot yet prevent the now less-than-pristine clock-watcher from arriving at the conference in the nick of time (although the posse of police cars that await him outside hints more at time in the nick).

A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD.

Is *Clockwise* a critique of the OFSTED supremo Chris Woodhead's demand for external standards over internal quality? Perhaps. But Stimpson is well-meaning; he genuinely believes his achievement reflects on the school, and although he gives the token Marxist on the staff short shrift, there is never any suggestion that he undervalues his teachers: he just wishes they were more like him. The irony comes when we learn from his old flame (Penelope Wilton) that Brian used to be notorious for his inability to be punctual; his crusade is not so much marching in time to the government's drum, therefore, as more of an attempt to correct a personal flaw. Nonetheless, Stimpson's is a monochronic time-frame *par excellence* (see *The Browning Version*, above), one which, according to Edward Hall, 'bulldoze(s) through changes and imposes timelines which are insensitive to the peculiarities of circumstances and context, and to the interpersonal relations which comprise them' (in Hargreaves, 1994, 103). It is the car-crash between regime and circumstances that gives *Clockwise* its humour, of course. Stimpson may be an autonomous headmaster but he has feet of clay (literally, when the car he has appropriated gets stuck in a muddy field). Thus we

see teachers as real and imperfect, and succeeding despite, or perhaps because of their humanity.

Clockwise might appear to portray a conservative headmaster making an over-large comprehensive comprehensible (opponents of multilateral schools often portray them as being too large and impersonal to allow pupils individual attention) but Stimpson, on the contrary, has made the system work, albeit through his own idiosyncratic means, and the teachers and children seem *happy*. As a result, we sympathise with the head rather than despising him, knowing that his quirks work and no-one suffers. Nonetheless, Paul Clarke felt that Stimpson was a snob: 'with his pupils, wife and colleagues he adopts a patronising air of superiority, but with his social 'betters' he becomes a simpering suck-up' (<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/812662/index.html>: last accessed 29/05/11). I think Robert Ross is nearer the mark when he states: 'His [Stimpson's] fastidious attitude to everything sets him out as a pompous bore but... we see an endearing persona who merely keeps his life in order because he knows the problems that await him if he doesn't' (http://www.britmovie.co.uk/films/Clockwise_1986: last accessed 29/05/11).

In a decade of few teacher or school movies, *Clockwise* is a gentle depiction of a successful establishment with a rather driven principal; if anything, it hints at the dangers of compulsive behaviour and seems to suggest that for things to truly run smoothly, perhaps less rather than more attention to standards might be the key to individual, if not scholarly success.

Waterland (1992), director Stephen Gyllenhaal.

A water-colour portrait of Norfolk (and, bizarrely, Pittsburgh), which examines the life story and motivation of a history teacher Tom Crick (Jeremy Irons) who is being made redundant, along with his subject. His story/history is no longer seen as relevant to the vocational needs of the school's students. Tom and his

wife Mary (Sinead Cusack) attend a dinner party given by headmaster Lewis Scott (John Heard) who spells out the problem: 'Tom... I have parents, parents who come to me and say er..."how is teaching my son or daughter history going to help him or her get a good job"...what am I supposed to say to them?' 'You say to them...the truth...you say to them, we're not just in the business of turning out good job prospects [...] you say that what really matters is what we teach them about life and how to live it.' 'Yeah, that's for sure, they're not going to have a very good life if they can't get a good job.' He tries to soften the blow: 'Come on Tom, no one's trying to eliminate history...we're just trying a little merger thing here with social studies... something that might, if you go along with it, give what you're trying to do a real shot in the arm...' 'Foot' interjects Crick. 'You have to admit there has been a steady decline in the numbers of students opting for history. Frankly, you know, they're voting with their feet'. Tom disagrees, noting he has had in the last few weeks six requests to transfer *to* history. But Scott has his trump card up his sleeve: 'You're not teaching the curriculum, you're telling these children stories, about eels and stories about crazy brothers and ...'

Indeed, Tom has been challenged in the classroom, most notably by student Matthew Price (Ethan Hawke) who is possessed of a nihilism that sees little point in history when he is denied a future. The teacher has therefore supplemented his curriculum with the strange and disturbing contours of his own youth, and its present-day consequences, born of the flatlands of the Fens. It is a story of incest, murder, abortion and madness and, yes, an eel slipped into the knickers of Mary when she was his girlfriend. The stories are graphic ('dirty' in the view of some students) and uncompromising but Crick feels driven by his story-telling heritage and his inner pain to reveal the secrets that have blighted his life and those around him.

Several of the themes of *Waterland* have echoes in other teacher films. Hector in *The History Boys* has a similar problem with a headmaster who sees success in terms of exam results and Oxbridge entry; here, Scott looks to the vocational worth of the subject, and finds it wanting. Education for life, or education for

a vocational purpose? Straying from the curriculum is addressed in that film too, as well as *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Cracks*, amongst others, as is the too-close confidentiality of teacher to pupils.

As for the critics, Roger Ebert thought the film 'less than the sum of its parts' with 'the performances and the dialogue [being] worthier than the story itself' (<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19921106/REVIEWS/211060304/1023>: last accessed 29/05/11) while the Washington Post considered "Waterland" makes a valiant attempt to create a coherent movie from a highly interior, meandering novel' (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/waterlandr_a09e77.htm: last accessed 29/05/11).

From this writer's point of view, the most important question the film asks is to what degree teachers are required to give of themselves, and how much their role as guardians of children can be a substitute for parenthood (Tom and Mary are childless). By making his story flesh, with all its lust, tragedy, pain and mistakes, Crick goes beyond what is expected of him and receives complaints from his students. He fails to maintain his distance and brings his personal life into the classroom. Just as the sea encroaches on the reclaimed soil of the Fens, blurring boundaries between water and land, so Crick has allowed the boundary between the personal and the professional to dissolve. Nonetheless, from Tom's point of view, it is of utmost importance that his 'children' as he calls them (really young adults) are aware of the pitfalls that lie just beyond the school gates, the pike below the surface of the placid water: it is a warning that life has teeth, and it bites.

Clockwork Mice (1995), director Vadim Jean.

Cedarwood is a school for maladjusted children, the polar opposite of the public schools so often depicted in British teacher films. The teachers, too, couldn't be more different. No caps, no gowns; just a thick skin

concealing a love of their disturbed children. They might describe them as ‘nutters’, ‘little buggers’ and ‘shits’ behind their backs, but these teachers, both male and female possess the patience of Job, all the while trying to ‘respond positively’ to the children in their care, despite the constant swearing, disruption and random outbursts of violence and vandalism.

Steven Drake (Ian Hart) has just qualified as a teacher. He did his teaching practice at Stowe school, hardly the preparation he needs for Cedarwood. He is warned about the unruliness of the children, and tries to assert his authority with little Neil; no, he can’t carry on playing basketball. The boy responds by upturning desks and throwing a chair through the window, whence he makes his escape. Headmaster Swaney (John Alderton) takes it all in his stride: this is obviously normal behaviour in this school. Fellow teachers ‘Wacky’ (James Bolam) and ‘Laney’ (Art Malik) personify the hard and soft approaches to the kids, but ‘Polly’ (Catherine Russell) takes a more personal interest in Drake, egged on by fellow mistress ‘Fairy’ (Claire Skinner). ‘You’ll get used to it’ comforts Polly. ‘I’m not here to get used to it’ replies Steven.

The main child character in the film is Conrad James (Ruaidhri Conroy) who appears detached from the other children. We discover that his mother died three years ago, and his father is a patient in a secure hospital; he displays autistic tendencies, and desperately needs attention. Drake provides this through his own keenness in running, and after the teacher has challenged the boy to a race around the school (which Drake wins) he decides to set up a cross-country club. Soon, virtually the whole school can be seen joining in. Little by little, Drake’s investment of time and care pays off in the classroom and the pupils become more attentive and less disruptive.

Polly is having a much harder time of things. She finds the children’s behaviour exhausting, but her romantic interest with Steven provides a welcome release. He finds her weeping at her desk, offers her a shoulder to cry on and the relationship blossoms. However, after a hard fought squash match, when they

tenderly embrace, Drake can't help but bring up the topic of Conrad, about whom he has growing concerns. Polly explodes with anger and frustration: 'Fuck that place' she screams. She really doesn't believe they're making a tangible difference to the children, and she is determined to leave.

Meanwhile, Conrad's father has died, and the boy absconds to Stansted airport, where he steals a car and drives off. When the school hears of his disappearance, Drake and Laney drive to the local railway station: they suspect that the boy will have been drawn there. Sure enough, Conrad is on a bridge, and leaps onto the roof of a train. The two teachers try to follow the train and catch up with the boy as he leaps from train to station roof, only for the boy to vault into the path of another locomotive. Back at the school, the pupils gather round Fairy and refuse to go back into the building. They begin chanting Conrad's name, reaching a climax just as their friend dies under the train.

Drake determines to leave. He has failed Conrad, and he has failed as a teacher, but just as he is about to leave, Neil approaches him and throws his trainers down in front of the master. Drake duly puts on his running shoes and with Neil in tow, he sets off on one last run. As they race across country, they are joined by every pupil from the school.

Variety.com [accessed 05/02/11] finds 'nothing new' in the script, but concedes: 'Where director Vadim Jean and producer Paul Brooks score is in gussying up wafer-thin material and giving it a positive spin, rather than settling for a more familiar slice of downbeat British realism.' While *Clockwork Mice* is overall a sad little film dedicated to children with special needs, and the romantic subplot is a little clunky (on the final run, the children eventually lead Drake to Polly's narrow boat where the pair embrace), the tenderness of the teachers in the face of apparently insurmountable odds is a breath of fresh air, and is a heartwarming reminder of how effective 'responding positively' to children in care can be. Again, the outsider is deemed more effective than the frustrated, long-suffering, existing staff, but the short-term success of

Drake is in sharp contrast to his long-term failure with Conrad. It is this failure, which is perhaps inevitable given Conrad's history, which saves the film from being overtly sentimental. When Drake reads Conrad's story (after the boy has fled) which he has dedicated to his father, but also his friends at Cedarwood, and especially Drake, we understand that his teaching *has* had an impact, if only in alleviating, albeit temporarily, the boy's sense of solitude.

So, it appears that British cinema was showing some resistance to government policy, either obliquely, in praising hard-working teachers, as in *Clockwork Mice*, or more overtly as in *Wetherby*, *Waterland* and *Another Country*, but in political and academic circles, the fur was really flying. To attempt to give a flavour of the conflict between the Conservative government and educators, I have included in appendix 2 some of the texts written at the time which, I believe, shed light on the warring factions.

The films of the eighties and nineties are hard to categorise, but one thing I would say they have in common is a feeling of unhappiness. *The Wall* is fairly obviously a *crie de coeur* for Roger Waters, but at the same time it is a savage indictment of the education system and teachers. Is this all we do- force children through a mincer and reduce their individuality to homogenised pulp? *Another Country*, made at the time of the miners' strike, recalls the divisions of the thirties when anything seemed possible- socialism or fascism- and uses the school as a metaphor for a deeply-divided country. *Wetherby* points to a loss of hope, and disjuncture in our social and personal lives, while *Clockwise* is unusual in its depiction of a successful, happy comprehensive school, albeit that we learn that Stimpson's obsessive punctiliousness (a Thatcherite trait, one might suppose) is in stark contrast to his old habit of tardiness, and leads to ultimate humiliation. A timely reminder that one can legislate, but one cannot overturn nature. *Waterland* is a dark tale of love and loss, but at the heart of the story is the redundant teacher, made so because of curriculum demands in this brave new world where history is no longer a cutting-edge requirement (although, of course, it is, according to Crick, if you want to learn about life), while *Clockwork Mice*

draws attention to the limits of a teacher's influence, and so usefully reminds the world that it is not useful to portray teachers as gods. The *Harry Potter* films will mark a retreat into fantasy, but one which will provide J.K. Rowling with a useful vehicle from which to voice her concerns about education.

Filmography

WALL, THE (1982) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Alan Parker
Producer.....Alan Marshall
Production Companies.....Goldcrest Films International, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Tin Blue
Screenplay.....Roger Waters
Cinematography.....Peter Biziou
Editor.....Gerry Hambling
Original music.....Bob Ezrin, Roger Waters, David Gilmour

Cast

Pink.....Bob Geldof
Pink's mother.....Christine Hargreaves
J.A. Pinkerton (Pink's father).....James Laurenson
Pink's wife.....Eleanor David

ANOTHER COUNTRY (1984) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Marek Kaniévski
Producer.....Alan Marshall
Production Company.....Goldcrest Films International/National Film Finance Corporation
Screenplay.....Julian Mitchell
Cinematography.....Peter Biziou
Editor.....Gary Hambling
Original music.....Peter Storey

Cast

Guy Bennett.....Rupert Everett
Tommy Judd.....Colin Firth
Fowler.....Tristan Oliver
Harcourt.....Cary Elwes

WETHERBY (1985) U.K.

Credits

Director.....David Hare

Producer.....Simon Relf
Production Companies.....Film Four International, Greenpoint Films, Zenith
Entertainment
Screenplay.....David Hare
Cinematography.....Stuart Harris
Editor.....Chris Wimble
Original music.....Nick Bicak

Cast

Jean Travers.....	Vanessa Redgrave
Stanley Pilborough.....	Ian Holm
Marcia Pilborough.....	Judi Dench
John Morgan.....	Tim McInnerny

CLOCKWISE (1986) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Christopher Morahan
Producer.....Michael Codron and Verity Lambert
Production Companies.....Canal+ Image UK, Moment Films, Thorn EMI
Screen Entertainment
Screenplay.....Michael Frayn
Cinematography.....John Coquillon
Editor.....Peter Boyle
Original music.....George Fenton

Cast

Brian Stimpson.....	John Cleese
Gwenda Stimpson.....	Alison Steadman
Pat.....	Penelope Wilton
Laura Wisely.....	Sharon Maiden

WATERLAND (1992) U.K./U.S.A.

Credits

Director.....Stephen Gyllenhaal

Producers.....Patrick Cassavetti, Katy McGuiness

Production Companies.....British Screen Productions, Channel Four Films,
Palace Pictures, Pandora Cinema

Screenplay.....Peter Prince

Cinematography.....Robert Elswit

Editor.....Lesley Walker

Original music.....Carter Burwell

Cast

Tom Crick.....	Jeremy Irons
Mary Crick.....	Sinead Cusack
Young Mary.....	Lena Headey
Young Tom.....	Grant Warnock

CLOCKWORK MICE (1995) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Vadim Jean
Producer.....Paul Brooks
Production Companies.....Metrodome Films, Winchester Multimedia PLC
Screenplay.....Ron Woodruff
Cinematography.....Gordon Hickie
Editor.....Liz Webber
Original music.....David A. Hughes and John Murphy

Cast

Steve.....Ian Hart
Polly.....Catherine Russell
Conrad.....Ruaidhri Conroy
Swaney.....John Alderton

CHAPTER 8. HOGWARTS AND ALL.

1997 saw a landslide election victory for New Labour under Prime Minister Tony Blair. Hopes were high that ‘things could only get better’ (to borrow the title of D:Ream’s hit single which was used by Millbank as a soundtrack and call to arms) and indeed, when Blair was later questioned as to his priorities in his government’s bid for re-election in 2001, he famously answered: ‘Education, education, education’. In terms of investment, this pledge was honoured:

Between 1997 and the current academic year, the core “per pupil” funding has risen by 48% in real terms – or £1,450 more per year per child. By the end of next year, it will be a 55% increase. There are now about 35,000 more teachers than in 1997 – reducing pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes in primary and secondary. Teachers’ pay has risen by 18% in real terms, and heads have had a pay hike of 27% (Sean

Coughlan BBC News Education Reporter, news.bbc.co.uk 14/05/2007: last accessed 12/01/2011).

The problem appeared to be, however, that the ethos hadn't changed much.

Rather than get dragged into arguments over the few remaining grammar schools or tussling over school choice, the emphasis was on a drive to push up standards in all schools – such as introducing a compulsory literacy and numeracy hour in primary schools. But have test and exam results shown improvements?

In primary school tests in 1997, taken in the weeks before the general election, 63% of 11-year-olds reached the expected levels in English, 62% in maths and 69% in science. Nine years later, the test results were all up – 79% in English, 76% in maths and 87% in science in 2006 (ibid).

In a subsection called 'Comprehensive change' Coughlan asked the crucial question:

Is it enough? Looked at another way, that means that more than one in five children have spent six or seven years in primary school without learning to read and write properly... And teachers complain about the creativity of the primary years being lost to an obsession with testing and league tables (ibid).

Clearly, there was still much unhappiness in a profession that might have been expecting more support. The films of this period include the magical fantasies of Labour-supporting J.K. Rowling, but later we will see a return to portrayals of disturbingly dangerous and manipulative teachers once more. First up is a rather laggardly sequel which asks whether teachers should walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

Gregory's Two Girls (1999), director Bill Forsyth.

Eighteen years on from the tale of teenage love that was *Gregory's Girl*, and Gregory Underwood (John Gordon Sinclair) is now a teacher, working at his old school. He dreams of an illicit relationship with pupil Frances (Carly McKinnon) but in reality he is more prey than predator– the target of fellow teacher Bel (Maria Doyle Kennedy). When Frances indicates a desire to meet Gregory out of school, his dreams appear to be about to be realised, but in fact she and fellow student Douglas (Hugh McCue) need to enlist his help in exposing local employer (and old school friend of Gregory) Fraser Rowan (Dougray Scott) who is allegedly producing computer equipment designed for torture in third world countries under the guise of recycling IT.

Gregory is eventually persuaded to join Frances and Douglas once she has convinced him that the liberal ethics he teaches in his (English) class are just so much hot air unless he acts upon the evidence. Although he knows this must threaten his career, Gregory joins the two youngsters in putting fine words into action, abetted by peripatetic activist Dimitri (Martin Schwab).

The film addresses two pertinent issues concerning teaching: firstly, how ethical is it to engender concern about social issues if one is not prepared to act upon them? Secondly, how involved (politically, socially, sexually) should a teacher become with those in his/her care? In addition, there is the social issue of local jobs vs. social conscience: and how damaging to the lives of these very students and their parents if the nature of Rowan's nefarious trade is revealed? In the absence of those heavy industrial jobs that

Scotland used to rely upon, ‘benefactors’ like Fraser Rowan would be courted by government, with few questions asked (as is shown in the film). Gregory runs the risk of being less of a local hero and more a social outcast if he joins Frances and Douglas in their escapade, and if he consummates his erotic fantasies, he will surely end up on the Child Protection Register.

Gregory’s Two Girls is an amusing film, the humour of which is largely rooted in the teacher’s inner-conflict about doing the right thing. Should his conscience or his penis be his guide? Where Forsyth succeeds is in the way the two quandaries are conflated, so that Gregory is morally bound to act on his students’ revelations, but morally forbidden to act on his libido. From the point of view of this work, the film addresses the role of the teacher as moral guardian and asks whether it is right and proper to excite moral indignation in one’s students, rather than ‘just’ teach them, and if so, face and shoulder the consequences. Painfully, the film also suggests that had Gregory no sexual inclination towards Frances, he probably wouldn’t have become involved in unmasking Rowan: he would have carried on with his wet-dreams and New Internationalist-fuelled hair-tearing.

Variety (Derek Elley, 29/08/99) thought the film was a welcome return to form for Forsyth, albeit a little long in places: ‘...though “Gregory’s Two Girls” is no simple retread of his warmly remembered 1982 (sic) original, Forsyth still needs a strong guiding arm in the editing suite.’ Notwithstanding, he has not ‘lost his early gift for observational, character-driven comedy.’ Gary Panton at www.movie-gazette.com (last accessed 04/09/10) thinks the film ‘just falls flat in too many departments’ and ‘feels almost as outdated as it is unsexy’. ‘The whole thing, just peters out into a bizarre and unsatisfying ending’.

By the time of the new millennium, the books of Enid Blyton were similarly regarded by many as outdated. Her school books (involving the boarding schools Mallory Towers and St. Clares) provided a romantic view in which children enjoyed freedom and adventure, despite their temporary confinement.

J.K.Rowling performs a similar task for today's children with her stories about the adolescent wizard Harry Potter. The Harry Potter films are mentioned here because of their school setting and variety of teachers, good and bad, but they hardly qualify as 'teacher films' in as much as the characters and location (Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry) are almost incidental to the plots, which are morality tales for minors struggling through adolescence. Nonetheless, there are some points of interest to the reader.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001), director Chris Columbus.

In this first film, we learn that Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) has been adopted by his boorish, bullying aunt and uncle following the death of his parents. His mother's sister and husband are 'muggles', that is, untouched by the magic that ran through the blood of Harry's mum and dad, and Harry too, and they do everything they can to keep the boy from meeting his magical destiny, including incarcerating him in the cupboard under the stairs. But the staff of Hogwart's have other ideas; having delivered him to the muggles' door ten years previously, they now conspire to bring their cuckoo back for the education in wizardry that is his true inheritance. Thus humble Harry does not choose his exclusive life among the supernaturally rich and powerful: he is chosen. School is a sanctuary, a notion that is absent from most of the other teacher films reviewed here, but one which was a reality for some working class children in the early twentieth century. Harry's mental and physical safeguarding, albeit fictional and idealised, is nonetheless in keeping with this pastoral role.

Overseeing the whole school is Dumbledore (Richard Harris) who reigns with benign yet magisterial authority. Maggie Smith returns to a teaching role, but McGonagall is less Jean Brodie than her headmistress nemesis Miss Mackay. She is head of Gryffendor house, into which Harry and friends Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint) and Hermione Granger (Emma Watson) are inducted, courtesy of the Sorting Hat. Her rival is Snape (Alan Rickman), a goth with attitude, who leads Slytherin. He appears to conspire to

sabotage Harry's first game of Quidditch, a broomstick-bound cross between basketball and hockey, and thus reveals himself to be in possession of dark, as yet unrevealed motives. So, good teachers and malevolent teachers seem to be set up in opposition, with the pupils perhaps as pawns. But in this school, and maybe this is indicative of author J.K. Rowling's sympathies, or the time of the film's production, the students are as empowered as the staff, and whilst that does not in itself mean that Harry and his friends are safe, they are nevertheless more than a match for mischief makers.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002) director Chris Columbus.

This film finds our friends in year two at Hogwart's, but to get there, Harry has to thwart the efforts of Dobby the house elf, who will do everything try and stop the boy returning to what he calls his 'home'. When at last he succeeds, he becomes aware of a danger to the school posed by a monster in a hidden 'chamber of secrets' created by one of the four founders of Hogwarts, Salazar Slytherin. Slytherin was possessed of a eugenicist's disgust of 'mudbloods', or those who were not from a pure-blood magical parentage, and the monster, once free will ethnically cleanse the college on his behalf. Most at threat is Harry's friend Hermione, neither of whose parents are wizards. A series of petrified bodies fall victim to the monster, the basilisk, (including Hermione) before Harry is victorious, but not before encountering his nemesis Lord Voldemort, disguised in the person (preserved as a memory in a book) of one Tom Riddle.

There are several heart-warming democratic threads woven into this story. Firstly, Harry is not over-privileged and rich; he is a pupil at Hogwarts on the invitation of Dumbledore, and it is his muggle relatives who try every form of incarceration to prevent him returning to his friends. Secondly, although a pure-blood wizard, he rejects the quasi-Aryan bigotry of Draco Malfoy and his father Lucius, who is a governor, who would be happy to unleash terror on those not of pure blood. Thirdly, it becomes clear in the film that Harry may have become tainted by his parents' murderer Lord Voldemort, but he chooses the path of

righteousness. As Dumbledore says, 'it is not our abilities that show what we truly are: it's our choices.'

What is crucial to the movie as a school/teacher film is that the qualities that set Harry apart from Malfoy and his ilk are individual qualities he has developed as a result of the contact with other good, decent pupils, especially the Weasley family. He has not learnt these qualities at the hand of any teacher, but earns praise from the headmaster for his loyalty to those friends. School here is therefore a self-supporting community that operates to give Harry the love, friendship and family he lacks in the muggle world, but these gifts are hard-won, through adversity. It is as if to say that family in itself, in the shape, for example, of his malign uncle and aunt, is worth little: you can't choose your family. At the same time, school may harbour monsters and malevolent spirits, but it is something worth seeking out and protecting, when school represents the pupil body, and not just the bricks and mortar.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004), director Alfonso Cuarón.

This is the film in which we see Harry coming of age. He has to deal with many of the questions boys ask themselves as they reach puberty, albeit against the backdrop of the story of his godfather, Sirius Black.

Once more, we first find Harry at his aunt and uncle the Dursleys's house, but there is a visitor, the revolting Aunt Marge. She asks Harry's Uncle Vernon where he has sent the boy, and then enquires as to whether the school, 'St Brutus', is maintaining strict discipline. On cue, Harry concurs that he is beaten regularly, which meets with the approval of the sadistic relative: 'I won't have this namby-pamby, wishy-washy nonsense about not beating people who deserve it'. But when Marge attempts to explain Harry's waywardness as a case of 'bad blood' (echoing Malfoy's racism to muggles), and asks whether his father was a drunk, and compares his mother to a bitch, Harry reacts with fury, inflating the grotesque

misanthrope until she floats away like a bloated balloon into the night sky. Harry determines to leave, but when his uncle tries to stop him, Harry draws his wand, and holds it to the throat of his tormentor. Harry is about to break free.

Having taken the magical 'night bus' to the Leaky Cauldron pub, Harry is reunited with Hermione, Ron and Mr. Weasley, but this latter informs him that there is danger afoot: a crazed 'murderer' Sirius Black, has escaped from the prison at Azkaban, and it is believed he might be after Harry for thwarting Lord Voldemort thirteen years ago. Indeed, on the journey to school, the Hogwarts Express is halted by the soul-devouring dementors, guards of Azkaban, looking for the fugitive: they take an unusual interest in Harry before a fellow passenger intervenes; it is one Professor Lupin, the next Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher.

There follows an exciting unfolding of the story, culminating with an encounter with Black, who we have discovered was Harry's godfather, but far from being the traitor who led to his parents' demise, Black has only come to Hogwarts to find the real culprit, one Peter Pettigrew. In fact Sirius saves our friends when, on a full moon, Lupin follows his nature and becomes a werewolf, but their tussle appears to have cost Black his soul when the dementors find him: only the intervention of a mysterious, powerful wizard saves him and Harry.

Back at Hogwarts, the children appeal to Dumbledore (now played by Michael Gambon) that Black is innocent, but as the headmaster makes plain, who will believe a thirteen year old? 'A child's voice, however honest and true, is meaningless to those who have forgotten how to listen.' Their only hope is to turn back time, and with Dumbledore's connivance, and a time-turner given to Hermione by professor McGonagall, the three youngsters manage to rescue not only Black but also an innocent hippogriff under threat of execution by the Minister of Magic: bold hearts and a strong sense of injustice win the day, while the adults look like scaremongering fools. What is more, the mysterious, powerful wizard who turned up in

the nick of time to save Sirius from the dementors was no more than Harry himself, and not his father as he had thought. The boy comes out of the shadow of his father, and claims his role as his true legacy.

Before he makes his escape, Black reminds Harry that 'the ones that love us never really leave us... and you always find them... in here', and pats the boy's heart. This is Harry's inheritance. He is repeatedly told in the film that he looks like his father, James, but has his mother's eyes, but it is through Harry's misbehaving (a paternal trait) that he is finally victorious. Even the magic map given to Harry by the Weasley twins is activated by the incantation 'I do solemnly swear that I'm up to no good.' It is time for Harry to think and act for himself; blind obedience would not have saved Sirius or the hippogriff, and if the adults have forgotten how to listen to the children, maybe they have to act for themselves, rather than patiently waiting to be heard.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2005), director Mike Newell.

If *The Prisoner of Azkaban* was Harry's puberty movie, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* finds our hero having to make all-too-adult decisions. The TriWizard Tournament is to be held at Hogwarts, and each of three schools, including visitors from France (the Beauxbatons) and Bulgaria (Durmstrang), has to nominate a champion. Harry is underage at just fourteen years old, but his name mysteriously finds its way into the Goblet, and sure enough, he is chosen to take part in the challenge. Harry endures a lot of hostility from erstwhile friends, including Ron, before heroic acts in each of the three rounds restore his reputation. However, in the final challenge, which is to find the cup itself in a magical maze, Harry and Hogwarts champion Cedric Diggory are transported (via the trophy, itself a 'portkey') to a graveyard where Voldemort's henchmen await. Cedric is killed and Harry captured; his blood is added to a cauldron whence

emerges the revitalised Voldemort, but during a titanic struggle, wand to wand, Harry's parents appear and bid him let go, and he manages to get Cedric back to the field of combat at Hogwarts. The final piece of the jigsaw comes with the revelation that the son of Bartemius Crouch from the Department of Mysteries has escaped from Azkaban and has been engineering the whole competition in order to bring Harry back into contact with Voldemort, and restore the dark lord to his pomp. Crouch Junior is recaptured, but the threat of Voldemort looms ever larger in the background.

This TriWizard competition in the school sees the awakening of a more potent Harry. The story is gilded with an emerging sexuality, with the traditional dance as a mating ritual; the presence of exotic outsiders adds to the piquancy of rivalries for Hermione and Hogwarts pupil Cho, who has taken a shine to Harry. Sex (hinted at) and death (in reality) mark the arrival of full-bloodied adolescence, and the reappearance of Voldemort make flesh the hitherto stuff of nightmares. Yet another Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher is enrolled, here in the person of Alastair Moody, (Brendan Gleeson), but the spells he teaches are cruel and potentially deadly– not the stuff of children; Moody is ascribed the role of Harry's personal protector as Dumbledore senses the impending danger.

From our point of view, this film presents teachers in their most ineffectual light so far, as the young man Potter learns to stand on his own two feet and make his decisions for himself. The childish fun of magic has gone, replaced by destruction, torture and death: the film could be subtitled *Four Wizards and a Funeral*. As Hermione is about to leave for the holidays, she regrets that things will never be the same again, and it is true that innocence has been sacrificed, the better to protect them from the danger to come.

The *Harry Potter* movies occupy a dual-world where the interface between the magical and the muggle mirrors that of the normal and the freak. It is a familiar dichotomy expressed elsewhere in such films as *The Matrix*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *It's A Wonderful Life*, among many others. The down-trodden find their true

worth on a different plane, unbothered by the pressures and structures that would otherwise beset them: an escape to a kinder place familiar to every drug-user and disciple. The youngsters are still misfits, says Hagrid, but they are amongst friends.

Harry and his friends engage in a drawn-out struggle against the dark lord Voldemort who was responsible for the deaths of Harry's parents and threatens to overturn the benign witchcraft at Hogwarts. The school is a gothic maze of towers and turrets, cloisters and corridors in which ghosts reside, portraits talk and staircases swap landings at will. But the children, invited into this strange environment, never feel lost, scared or out of place: if Harry is typical, the dislocation in their lives has already been experienced, in the normal muggle-world. Jacqueline Wilson meets Enid Blyton. The adults are the sort of people proper parents would fight for their children to avoid: Hagrid, the groundsman-cum-teacher is a giant, hairy tramp, yet he is the pupils' best friend; Dumbledore is magisterial but weird; Snape is disarmingly sinister. But these freaks are kind, supportive and no threat to the students. The danger lies in Voldemort, and the epic struggle develops apace over four films. However, a more sophisticated threat is looming.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2007), director David Yates.

Accused of using his magical powers in the muggle-world, Harry is brought before a hearing of the Ministry of Magic. Harry is acquitted, but has attracted the attention of minister Dolores Umbridge (sic) who is then sent to inspect Hogwarts and bring it back on the straight and narrow. In a thinly-disguised stab at the OFSTED regime, Rowling has Umbridge impose a strict curriculum, a barrage of petty rules and teaching for exams- OWLS (the Ordinary Wizarding Level examinations) (rather than SATS). Umbridge (Imelda Staunton) uses torture and truth serums against the pupils, and even threatens Harry with the *cruxiatu*s curse. The children know they are being abused, but more, they are being let down, unprepared for the threat of the dark lord, and they decide to take matters into their own hands. When a 'failing' teacher is

sacked (though Dumbledore resists the minister's attempt to expel her from the grounds), the pupils begin to resist. They sign up for 'Dumbledore's army', and form an underground cabal, the Order of the Phoenix, training under the leadership of Harry himself. The location for their secret training is the Room of Requirement, only available to those in need, and sure enough, the room makes itself available to the renegades: 'It's like Hogwarts wants us to fight back', says Harry. Pupils' passivity is forfeit to the greater good.

A clip appears on the accompanying DVD.

Learning for exam outcomes v. learning for life: this theme is explored in earnest in Nicholas Hytner's *The History Boys*. It might be surprising to see it emerge as a key theme in a fantasy film, but J.K. Rowling obviously has her finger on the nation's pulse and it is tremendously encouraging to see the students fighting back against over-arching bureaucracy when their teachers appear to lack the courage. *The Order of the Phoenix* returns to the main theme of the battle against evil, but the point has been made: teaching for observable outcomes when detached from learning for life is foolish and dangerous. In fact, on the 20th October 2007, in an address to the Carnegie Hall in New York, J.K. Rowling made plain her message:

The Potter books in general are a prolonged argument for tolerance, a prolonged plea for an end to bigotry, and I think it's one of the reasons that some people don't like the books, but I think that's it's a very healthy message to pass on to younger people that you should question authority and you should not assume that the establishment or the press tells you all of the truth. (www.the-leaky-cauldron.org; last accessed 29/12/09)

Three cheers for Ms Rowling!

One final point must be addressed before we leave Harry and Hogwarts: given that most teachers and

most schools are not magical, aren't the Harry Potter films an irrelevance when addressing movies that look at representations of teachers and schools? The answer, of course, is no. The fact that the representations are so recognisable, despite the fact that Hogwarts is so different, actually drives home the point I have been trying to prove in this whole thesis; that despite changes in education, the continuities of image, custom and behaviour are so persistent as to be instantly recognisable. We have wise teachers (Dumbledore), kind ones (McGonagall), sinister ones (Snape), freaky ones (Hagrid), incompetent ones (Lockhart, Trelawney) and ones we just can't make out (Lupin, Moody), but we know them. And the school may be light years away from what Alastair Campbell somewhat disparagingly described as a 'bog-standard comprehensive' (2001, as reported on www.guardian.co.uk) but perhaps we remember school as being incomprehensible, arcane and rambling, a fount of bizarre rules and customs that seem miles away from *our* muggle world; but it too is recognisable, if not from our own experience, then certainly from our culture. Given that the Harry Potter films are known and loved worldwide, what does that tell us of the ubiquity of those representations? Caps and gowns, house systems, arcane games: these are not things commonly experienced by most of the viewers of the Harry Potter films, but they are understood. They are a part of Nóvoa's grammar of school; and they are indicative of a teacher-film memeplex (after Blackmore), sustained from the fakers of the thirties, the new breed post-war, through the long sixties and up to the present day, and are unquestioned, any more than people enquire as to why Father Christmas wears red or why we give up meat for Lent. They are signs, and they have significance, but the significance can lie outside of understanding, so durable are the signs.

Filmography

GREGORY'S TWO GIRLS (1999) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Bill Forsyth
Producer.....Christopher Young
Production Company.....Channel Four Films, Kinowelt Filmproduktion,
Scottish Arts Council Lottery Fund
Screenplay.....Bill Forsyth
Cinematography.....John de Boorman
Editor.....John Gow
Original music.....Michael Gibbs

Cast

Frances.....Carly McKinnon
Gregory Underwood.....John Gordon Sinclair
Fraser Rowan.....Dougray Scott
Bel.....Maria Doyle Kennedy

HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE (2001) U.K./U.S.A.

Credits

Director.....Chris Columbus
Producer.....David Heyman
Production Companies.....Warner Bros. Pictures, Heyday Films, 1492 Pictures
Screenplay.....Steve Kloves
Cinematography.....John Seale
Editor.....Richard Francis-Bruce
Original music.....John Williams

Cast

Harry Potter.....Daniel Radcliffe
Hermione Granger.....Emma Watson
Ron Weasley.....Rupert Grint
Professor Albus Dumbledore.....Richard Harris

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (2002) U.K./U.S.A./Germany

Credits

Director.....Chris Columbus

Producer.....David Heyman
 Production Companies.....1492 Pictures, Heyday Films, MIRACLE Productions
 GmbH & Co. KG, Warner Bros. Pictures
 Screenplay.....Steve Kloves
 Cinematography.....Roger Pratt
 Editor.....Peter Honess
 Original music.....John Williams

Cast

Harry Potter.....Daniel Radcliffe
 Hermione Granger.....Emma Watson
 Ron Weasley.....Rupert Grint
 Professor Albus Dumbledore.....Richard Harris

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN (2004) U.K./U.S.A.

Credits

Director.....Alfonso Cuaron
 Producers.....Chris Columbus, David Heyman
 Production Companies.....Warner Bros. Pictures, 1492 Pictures, Heyday Films, P of A Productions Limited
 Screenplay.....Steve Kloves
 Cinematography.....Michael Seresin
 Editor.....Steven Weisberg
 Original music.....John Williams

Cast

Harry Potter.....Daniel Radcliffe
 Hermione Granger.....Emma Watson
 Ron Weasley.....Rupert Grint
 Albus Dumbledore.....Michael Gambon

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE (2005) U.K./U.S.A.

Credits

Director.....Mike Newell
 Producer.....David Heyman
 Production Companies.....Warner Bros. Pictures, Heyday Films, Patalex IV
 Productions Limited
 Screenplay.....Steve Kloves
 Cinematography.....Roger Pratt
 Editor.....Mick Audsley
 Original music.....Patrick Doyle

Cast

Harry Potter.....Daniel Radcliffe
 Hermione Granger.....Emma Watson
 Ron Weasley.....Rupert Grint
 Albus Dumbledore.....Michael Gambon
 Professor Alastor 'MadEye' Moody.....Brendan Gleeson

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (2007) U.K./U.S.A.

Credits

Director.....David Yates
Producers.....David Heyman, David Barron
Production Companies.....Warner Bros. Pictures, Heyday Films, Cool Music,
Harry Potter Publishing Rights
Screenplay.....Michael Goldenberg
Cinematography.....Slawomir Idziak
Editor.....Mark Day
Original music.....Nicholas Hooper

Cast

Harry Potter.....Daniel Radcliffe
Hermione Granger.....Emma Watson
Ron Weasley.....Rupert Grint
Sirius Black.....Gary Oldman
Dolores Umbridge.....Imelda Staunton

CHAPTER 9. TEACHING IN A NEO-CONSERVATIVE AGE.

The Harry Potter movies brought gentle, Blytonesque respite from the representations of warped, jaundiced teachers that the British seemed to revel in. Perhaps film makers felt that to attack teachers when they were under such pressure from government might be akin to shooting fish in a barrel. Nonetheless, by 2006, Labour had been in power for nine years; prime minister Tony Blair had trumpeted ‘education, education, education’ as his battle cry; yet schools were still judged according to league tables, OFSTED still loomed large over the whole system and parents were still regarded as customers of a service. In other words, Labour inherited a battlefield churned up by the Tories, and saw it was good. Indeed, it could be argued the party has a habit of letting the Conservative party do their dirty work for them and then failing to revoke legislation. Nonetheless, the perception has been of a more sympathetic administration. Perhaps therefore it was inevitable that once more, teachers and schools should come under the critical spotlight, and in our first film, with the subject being a female paedophile.

Notes On A Scandal (2006), director Richard Eyre.

Meet Cate Blanchette as willowy, bohemian art teacher Sheba Hart, and Dame Judi Dench as cynical, diary-keeping colleague Barbara Covett. Hart is new to the school, drafted in by managerial headmaster (Tom Georgeson) as part of his 'reform through nurture' programme, and Covett takes a shine to her, despite their obvious differences: Hart is a family woman who yearns to rediscover the freedom of her post-punk adolescence; Covett is a misanthropic spinster with a taste for manipulation. In teaching philosophy, too: Covett: 'We serve them best if we teach them to read, write and add. They don't need to know about the basket weavers of Chile'. Hart: 'When you started, didn't you want to give them a real education, to help them overcome the poverty of their backgrounds?' Covett: 'Oh yes, of course. But one soon learns that teaching is crowd control'.

Invited to Sunday lunch, Barbara meets the family she will help destroy. She flatters Sheba's artistic endeavours; it becomes plain that the younger woman is unfulfilled, and this is the Achilles' heel Barbara will exploit. From the inch Sheba gives her, she embroiders a mile. When she spies on Sheba having sex with her pupil, Steven Connolly (Andrew Simpson), in the art room, Barbara uses the guilty secret to weave a controlling web around her protégé, knowing that should Sheba ever tire of her, she has enough dirt on her to have her sacked, or worse. There then ensues a tug of war between Covett, the Hart family and the boy, but when Sheba resumes the affair, and later gives the increasingly stifling Covett the cold shoulder, the older woman spills the beans to a work colleague, and Hart is arrested. The finger points at Covett for being complicit in a crime, and she is persuaded to resign by the headmaster. Thrown out of her home, Hart takes up temporary residence with Covett, only to discover that her host has been recording her strategies in a diary. And not for the first time; it appears Barbara has a history of manipulation and control, and indeed, the final scene of the film has her back in action on Parliament Hill, grooming her next unsuspecting victim.

Hart's affair with the boy begins when she recognises his artistic talent, and then agrees to extra-curricular tuition. It begs the question as to what extent a teacher should give of herself for her profession: obviously,

the special treatment she affords Steven leaves her vulnerable to the development of the sexual affair.

Steven only has to concoct a tale of an ill mother and an abusive father, and Hart is hooked; but she is a willing catch, a quarry needing to be hunted. She feels 'entitled' to be 'bad' after years of being a good mother and wife. Covett initially agrees not to tell the school, and the safeguarding fails. The story only leaks when the jilted Barbara takes her revenge.

Paedophilia has become the taboo of choice for the tabloids in the last ten years, but it is quite rare for a female paedophile to be the subject of a teacher film. There have been readings of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* that see a subliminal lesbian motive to her actions, and manipulation rears its ugly head once more in *Cracks* (2009), but it is less common for female teachers to be presented as predatory. Of course, the film panders to the fantasy of many a schoolboy, and perhaps it is true that society doesn't take female-on-male exploitation as seriously as it does male-on-female, but the child is vulnerable and the teacher is still *in loco parentis* (there has been a marked increase in the number of sexual offences committed on children by women in the last few years, largely as a result of the police at last recognising them as a crime ('Child sex abuse by women is significantly more widespread than previously realised, with experts estimating there could be up to 64,000 female offenders in Britain'; Mark Townsend and Rajeev Syal, *The Observer*, 4/10/09)). Nonetheless, others argue that to so describe a woman who has sex with a willing adolescent is miles away from abusing infants:

Looking at the case of Madeleine Martin, the 39-year-old RE teacher and mother of two, jailed for 32 months and placed on the sex offenders' register for sleeping with a 15 year-old-male pupil, do we seriously think that a female teacher sleeping with a male pupil is on a par with a male teacher sleeping with a girl pupil? I don't. And neither, I'd wager, would most 15-year-old boys. Barbara Ellen, *The Observer*, 29/11/09.)

Ellen justifies her stance by differentiating between what girls apparently want (validation) and what boys

transparently want (sex) whilst ignoring the fact that girls mature sexually earlier, and glossing over the 'grey area' that sex with a minor is statutory rape, regardless of gender. Nonetheless, the similarity between the real Martin and the fictional Hart is uncanny, even down to the fact that Martin has a 'failing marriage and a terminally ill sister' while Hart is married to an older man, and has a Downs syndrome son. In the film, the abuser gets ten months, the user is free to stalk again.

Of course, the main focus of the film is the insidious manipulation by the scurrilous Covett, brilliantly played by Dench who transforms Barbara, a woman with 'dowdy, economy class pretensions', 'from an amusingly arch spectator of life, the sole sharp-eyed dissident in a world fogged by political correctness, into a vicious hobgoblin convulsed by obsession and sexual jealousy' (Lisa Mullen, *Sight and Sound*, February 2007). From my point of view, however, what is more interesting is the fact that here we have teachers who are seen to be conflicted in their roles as guardians and mentors. Hart is 'hidden from herself', and the affair allows herself to be 'discovered', according to Blanchette in the DVD extras; but she does this with little regard for the boy, only warning him that they will get into terrible trouble should anyone find out: the typical paedophile's demand for secrecy. Covett, as the senior teacher in the staffroom, and a rebel to boot (she shows contempt for the headmaster's request for an end of year evaluation), might have been expected to take the novice under her wing, but maternal instinct extends only to her cat: Hart is her prey, and she the covetous huntress.

These displays of 'unteacher-like' behaviour are in sharp contrast to the role models the teachers are 'supposed to be', and at odds with U.K. government reports on safeguarding children (2005 and 2008). Are the pressures on teachers too much to take, without the resultant emotional/nervous breakdown? As mentioned earlier, Woods and Jeffrey (2002: 222) have noted the increased disillusionment of teachers as they are called upon to mould our young in an increasingly parent-lite world, whilst at the same time having their professionalism eroded through a fundamental lack of trust. Reasonable independence has been replaced by an externally-applied curriculum. Should teachers appear to their pupils warts and all, or are

they deserving of something of a pedestal? And if so, how will that convince, if they are treated with suspicion by the all-seeing eye of inspection and strait-jacketed by the demands of testing?

The History Boys 2006, director Nicholas Hytner.

It's 1983, and eight boys studying history at Cutlers' Grammar School in Yorkshire await their A-level results. They do remarkably well, qualifying them to study a seventh term with a view to sitting the Oxbridge entrance examinations. They have been ably assisted by tweedy, slightly foxed teachers Mr Hector (Richard Griffiths) and Mrs Lintott (Frances de la Tour) but these teachers' methods (eclectic and fact-based respectively) will not, so the headmaster fears, be enough to gain entry to the elite universities. To help the boys achieve their goal, they need 'edge', something to differentiate them from all the other hopefuls, and so the headmaster (Clive Merrison), a shrewd snob and 'corseted by the curriculum', enlists the services of sharp-suited Mr Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore) to hone their skills.

Thus we have a contrast between three differing teaching styles. Hector (real name Douglas) immerses his pupils in both high and low culture: W.H. Auden and Thomas Hardy share the curriculum with Gracie Fields and George Formby. His belief is that interest must be ignited in his boys, and they must engage with their subject. Lintott, a woman who despairs at the relegated role of women in history, is nonetheless a repository of 'facts, facts, facts'. Irwin, for his part, will teach the boys strategy: 'They're clever, but they're crass' frets the head. The new master's job is to get them thinking outside the box.

Hector's lessons have been assigned the name 'general studies', but as he asserts to his class, 'there's no such thing as general studies. General studies is a waste of time. Knowledge is not general, it is specific. And nothing to do with getting on. But remember, open quotation marks, "all knowledge is precious, whether or not it serves the slightest human use", close quotation marks.' A.E. Housman's edict sums up Hector's ethos. He is not impressed at the boys' attempt to breach the hallowed Oxbridge walls—it's just the 'hot ticket, standing room only' and continues to plough his own furrow.

We now become aware of a sub-plot to our story: sexual preferences. Hector has a predilection for a rather closer relationship with his students than is proper. His habit is feeling up the boys as he gives them a pillion ride on his motorbike. At the end of a lesson, he offers a lift to anyone interested, but there are initially no takers. Only Posner (Samuel Barnett) eventually volunteers, but he is overlooked. In the end, it is the religious Scripps (Jamie Parker) who accepts the offer. Posner only has eyes for alpha-male Dakin (Dominic Cooper), though Dakin is in a relationship with school secretary Fiona.

Meanwhile, Irwin has been given some of the boys' essays to look at, but he returns them claiming them to be 'dull'. And Dakin's is exceptionally dull. 'I got all the points' protests the boy. 'I didn't say it was wrong' explains Irwin, 'I said it was dull. Its sheer competence was staggering. (...) They're not even bad, they're just boring. You haven't got a hope.' When, later, the class is sat outside, discussing the outcomes of the Great War, and the boys successfully recite a list of historical facts, Irwin dismisses it as first class— if they want to get into a lesser university. 'But it's all true' protests Scripps. 'What's truth got to do with it?' answers Irwin. 'What's truth got to do with anything?' He takes the boys to a war memorial. 'All the mourning's veiled the truth. It's not "lest we forget", it's "lest we remember"... Because there is no better way of forgetting something than by commemorating it.' As with the war, so perhaps with history itself, we might conclude.

Hector's take on 'truth' is very different. When Timms (James Corden) complains that he doesn't

understand poetry, the master encourages him to 'learn it now, know it now, and you will understand it, whenever.' 'I don't see how we can understand it' complains the boy. 'Most of the stuff poetry's about hasn't happened to us yet.' 'But it will, Timms, it will. And when it does, you'll have the antidote ready.'

Knowledge, truth— it's money in the bank for Hector, stored up for life's rainy days; and not the price of admission to elite education. The connection the master makes between popular culture and his type of investment is exemplified when Timms and Lockwood (Andrew Knott) act out the final scene from *Now, Voyager* ; quoting from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, he recites: 'The untold want, by life and land ne'er granted, now, voyager, sail thou forth, to seek and find.' Life should be an adventure, not a mapped-out, escorted cruise for the over-privileged.

Irwin's quest for the different extends to Rudge (Russell Tovey) researching the Carry On films. It's 'cutting edge' according to the boy; 'not like your stuff' he tells Lintott. However, Irwin is intrigued by the wealth of cultural knowledge amassed by the boys through their lessons with Hector. 'Does he have a programme or is it just at random?' he asks. The answers come precociously thick and fast. 'It's just knowledge.' 'The pursuit of it for it's own sake.' 'Breaking bread with the dead, sir, that's what we do.' 'It's higher than your stuff, sir, it's nobler.' 'Only not useful. Mr Hector's not as focused.' 'No, not focused at all. He's blurred, sir.' 'Mr Hector's stuff's not meant for the exam. It's to make us more rounded human beings.' But Irwin is excited: the gobbets of information that have stuck from Hector's classes are just the stuff to distinguish these boys from the educated herd; they can be inveigled into their exams and interviews, but they will still have to perform. The penny drops for Lockwood when he tells the art mistress that it's not lessons in art appreciation he needs, 'it's lessons in acting. That's what this whole scholarship thing is. An acting job.'

Posner goes to talk to Irwin as he is bothered by his homosexuality, and more by Dakin's antipathy. Irwin has similar leanings, but as Mrs Lintott warns him: 'One of the hardest things for boys to learn is that a

teacher is human. One of the hardest things for a teacher to learn is not to try and tell them.’ Sadly, Hector lets his particular cat out of the bag when he is spotted fondling a boy on the back of his bike by a lollipop lady who reports him to the headmaster.

Hector meanwhile is accompanying the boys on a trip to Fountains Abbey where they’ve been discussing the dissolution of the monasteries, and he regales them with a monologue which sums up his view of education:

Pass the parcel. That’s sometimes all you can do. Take it, feel it, and pass it on.

Not for me. Not for you. But for someone, somewhere. One day. Pass it on boys.

That’s the game I want you to learn. Pass it on!’

On their return, Hector is summoned to the headmaster’s study. He has given his superior the perfect excuse for demanding his resignation. He foolishly pleads that ‘the transmission of knowledge is itself an erotic act’ to which the head reacts with fury: he has, after all, molested a boy in his charge. Hector takes himself to his classroom where he finds Posner waiting for a tutorial on Hardy’s *Drummer Hodge*, about a northern lad sacrificed on a southern battlefield (as these boys may yet be, perhaps?) and now we see Hector at his best, helping the boy tease meaning from the text. Posner asks him how old Hardy was when he wrote the poem. About the same age as Hector, it transpires. ‘A saddish life, though not unappreciated’ says the teacher; he is referring to the poet, but it applies equally to himself. Hardy, Posner and Hector are all ‘unkissed, unrejoicing, unconfessed, unembraced.’ The tragedy is that Hector *is* a good, empathetic teacher, but he is also a foolish, careless man.

Hector holds himself together in front of his class until he can contain his grief no longer, and breaks down in front of the boys, showing all-too-openly his human nature. When Lintott is told by the head of Hector’s misdemeanour, she is surprised and disappointed. Now the head has a pretext to get rid of the maverick. Hector has been ‘unpredictable, unquantifiable’, a thorn in the head’s flesh. As he tells Lintott,

‘there’s inspiration, certainly, but how do I quantify that?’

The difference between Hector and Irwin is highlighted when the two teachers share a general studies class where the topic of conversation is the Holocaust. Hector is appalled at the relativist approach some of the boys embrace, obviously a result of Irwin getting them to think contrary to the norm for novelty’s sake. Once more, the debate runs aground on what is true, and what is useful for examinations: the shocking implication, of course, is that if the Holocaust can be relativised, and explained, then, as Posner says, it can be explained away. Is this the future for history? The gobbet; the soundbite; tomorrow’s piece of trivia?

The boys revise and undergo mock cross-examination in readiness for their university interviews. Meanwhile Dakin begins to seduce Irwin, sharing an illicit cigarette with him out of sight of the headmaster. On the pretext of discussing how history happens, Dakin says he thinks people just decide to do things. His vanity, more than any sexual urge, forbids the possibility that Irwin could resist his charms, but Irwin is disabled by his cautiousness, and propriety as a teacher. Almost accidentally, through the influence of Hector, Irwin and his own predatory nature, Dakin has hit upon the winning formula: subjunctive history; ‘the mood used when something might or might not have happened. When it’s imagined.’ Irwin smiles.

As Lintott and Irwin wait to see the head, who is in conference with Hector, the mistress ponders on the role of fate in Hector’s demise. Strangely for a historian, she seems to merit happenstance, the ‘smallest of incidents, the junction of a dizzying range of alternatives, any one of which could have had a different outcome’ over agency or structure. ‘The utter randomness of things’ could teach the boys more about history, she says, than she has ever managed to do. When Hector emerges, he reveals to Irwin that the ‘sheer, calculated silliness’ of teaching the boys Gracie Fields songs and scenes from *Brief Encounter* was meant as an antidote to the threat of imbibing literature too reverentially. He also confides that he and the boys know of Irwin’s attraction to Dakin: ‘Don’t touch him. He’ll think you’re a fool.’

All the boys succeed in getting into either Oxford or Cambridge, much to the headmaster's delight. Dakin visits Irwin in his room, and tells him that his investigations have revealed that the master never was at Oxford. Another successful lie. The boy suggests the master might like to suck him off, to 'celebrate', but confesses to being confused: 'reckless, impulsive, immoral- how come there's such a difference between the way you teach and the way you live? Why are you so bold in argument and talking, but when it comes to the point, when it's something that's actually happening, I mean, now you're so fucking careful. Is it because you're a teacher and I'm 'a boy'?' 'Obviously that'. Dakin accuses him of fearing he'll turn out like Hector, a joke, but he tells him he won't. The offer is serious, and pressed home; eventually Irwin relents, and agrees to meet the following Sunday. 'We're not in the subjunctive any more' says Dakin, 'it's going to happen.'

Dakin has one last piece of manipulation up his sleeve. Through his relationship with Fiona, he knows the head has been making passes at the young woman, and so he strides into the principal's office and blackmails him into rescinding Hector's dismissal. All appears to be ending happily until Irwin agrees to take a lift on Hector's pillion, and in a crash at the end of the road, the senior master is killed. At a memorial service the headmaster is full of weasel words, eulogising Hector for instilling in his boys a love of language- exactly what he tried not to do, as he had told Irwin. In a final scene, we learn the fate of the history boys and of all their destinies, perhaps the most inevitable is that of Posner, the one who was never 'in the swim', who has become a teacher. 'And though I never touch the boys, it's always a struggle. But maybe that's why I'm a good teacher. I'm not happy, but I'm not unhappy about it.' 'Pass it on, boys... pass it on.'

A clip from this film appears on the accompanying DVD.

The cast of *The History Boys* is the same as performed the play at the National Theatre in London, and then toured it around the world. The play and the screenplay of the film were written by history graduate Alan Bennett. As a result of these factors, perhaps, the film does seem rather 'stagey', and some of the scenes are a little too theatrical. Nonetheless, the film highlights well the issue of the purpose of education, the two sides of the argument personified by Hector and Irwin.

On the DVD commentary, Nicholas Hytner explains that one of the reasons for setting the movie in the 1980s is that the seventh term Oxbridge entry study was later abolished. In a sense, this was a last window of opportunity for these unprivileged boys to achieve beyond their expectations. Hytner also describes it as 'the final battleground between Hector's romantic, idealistic view of education and the much more utilitarian, target-driven view represented by the headmaster', although the fact of the film's production in 2006, and the director's admission that, although 'the headmaster won', 'the battle still goes on' suggests this earlier statement may not be true.

The early eighties was a turbulent time in Britain. As Irwin says, as they wander the ruins of Fountains Abbey, 'if you want to learn about Stalin, study Henry VIII; if you want to learn about Mrs Thatcher, study Henry VIII.' This was a nation divided, as demonstrated by the miners' strike of 1984–1985, where so many supported the strikers in the face of a ruthless government hell-bent on breaking union power and a nationally-organised police force. 'Which side are you on?' became more than a slogan.

A visual manifestation of two ways of thinking is suggested in Hector's and Irwin's classrooms: Hector's is adorned with a massive, colourful collage of the *illuminati* of high and popular culture, while Irwin's has several orderly, largely monochrome charts. The two men's goals are wholly different, too: Hector wants to ignite a spark of enthusiasm, while Irwin wants to deliver results (that is his remit, of course). What is most interesting, of course, is that it is precisely the 'gobbets' mined from the left-field eccentricity of Hector that will distinguish these boys. Perhaps it is more useful to think of Hector as a long-term

educator, and Irwin as the quick-fix; but would Irwin, kept on at the school post-contract, change his style to more emulate the senior man?

Hytner's film encapsulates the polar differences of the time of its setting, but more importantly for us, the different ways of looking at the purpose of education. Is education a treasure chest to be delved into who knows when, or a means to an end, a way of booking a place on the gravy train? Do we educate to enrich the individual child, draw out from within and fit him or her to engage with the world as fully as possible, and for life, or do we simply equip the student with the ammunition to win this particular, initial battle which is getting qualifications and attaining rank. And if we do, how well equipped will that man or woman be to fight further battles, later on in life?

Philip French was full of praise for the film which he believed successfully negotiated the transition from stage to screen: 'There's no feeling of this being a filmed play (on the stage there was quite considerable use of video material), but the classroom remains central.' 'In fact, nothing deflects our attention from the movie's ideas and the central debates about what education is for, who owns history, and in a more general way how we are meant to conduct our lives', he adds (*The Observer*, 15/10/2006). Peter Bradshaw, in comparison, gave the film only two stars. He thought the film 'oddly contrived' resulting in a 'faintly directionless experience' which omitted the parental angle and ducked the issue of class (*The Guardian*, 13/10/2006). Stephen Holden from the *New York Times* thought the intellectual energy of the film 'feels like electrical brain stimulation', though it more resembled something of 'an academic vaudeville show' than a movie. While 'not a world-changing work of art' it was, he felt, a 'scintillating contrivance that is only as good as its epigrams.' I think this is a very fair point. Although the boys are meant to be bright and precocious, some of their lines are too contrived, and thus highlight the art of the writer, to the detriment of the diegesis of the film.

St Trinian's (2007), directors Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson.

'We are the best
So screw the rest
We do as we damn well please
Until the end
St. Trinian's
Defenders of anarchy'.

St. Trinian's is broke, and headmistress Camilla Fritton (Rupert Everett) is facing a winding up order from the bank. To add insult to financial injury, education minister Geoffrey Thwaites (Colin Firth) is about to make an example of the school: if he can bring this school to heel, the rest of the problem schools will follow (this is typical of the Conservative attitude to the unions as expressed and acted upon in the eighties). But he has met his match in St. Trinian's: the girls devise a scheme to steal Vermeer's *The Girl With A Pearl Earring* under cover of the final of Inter-School Challenge, into which the pupils have engineered their way, and then claim the reward money; they even manage to smear the minister *en route*. Through a healthy disregard for the rules, St. Trinian's is saved.

St. Trinian's is a bizarre mixture of new and old. Still present are the uniforms, matron, hockey and the shady underworld connections of 'Flash Harry' (Russell Brand reprising George Cole's character), but so much is brought bang up to date: a pill-popping secretary; designer tampons; 'Camilla' Fritton, and yes, Everett does style her on the Duchess of Cornwall. The pupils are now defined by tribes: Posh Totty, chavs, emos, geeks and first years, but all unite under the school banner. They may not love the school (cheers break out when head girl Kelly Jones (Gemma Arterton) announces that St. Trinian's may have to close) but all would rather be there than at 'normal' schools. Then there is the political edge alluded to above, with invasive inspections from the ministry (they were always trying to close the school in the old films, but there is a twenty-first century edge to their malice), and criticism of elite education. As Camilla says to niece Annabelle (Talulah Riley) over her father Carnaby (also Everett) sending her to Cheltenham

Ladies' College: 'For the life of me, I can't understand why he sent you there.' 'Yes, I was an utter fool to be taken in by the excellent teaching standards, and their consistently high performance in...league tables' replies her brother. 'In my experience, Carnaby' asserts Camilla, 'the teachers are insufferable snobs and the girls are all shits.' The girls at St. Trinian's, on the other hand, 'live in blissful harmony' with their teachers: in fact, these are still as reprehensible as in the old movies: the conniving headmistress, the militaristic games teacher, the siren; and the school is more of an occupied squat than a prison, only really a danger to outsiders.

Minister of Education Thwaite wants to set an example to disorderly schools across the country, and if he can bring St. Trinian's into line, the others will crumble. And he is a hardliner: 'I believe our nation's schools have been blighted by the false kindness of namby-pamby, touchy-feely policies for too long. Badly behaved children don't need an arm around the shoulder- they need a good kick up the arse'. Visiting the school on the occasion of a hockey match with Cheltenham Ladies' College, whose team is captained by Thwaite's daughter Verity, he is reunited with Camilla, with whom he had a scene at university. 'I've heard your school is a hotbed of anarchy, ill-disciplined...and your academic results are a disaster...You know Camilla, I think you'll find you and I both want the same things. We just happen to be sitting on different sides of the table.' 'Table?' replies Ms Fritton. 'Mortuary slab, I'd say, Geoffrey. You just want to straitjacket us with your limited curriculum which has become nothing more than state-circulated Chinese whispers, and you call it education.'

While the match is ongoing, the minister does a bit of snooping. He finds and samples a vodka still, and delirious, smashes a glass case containing 'back-biting wood ants', surely a reference to ex-OFSTED supremo Chris Woodhead, but comes to grief when the Posh Totty find him hiding behind their curtain. He ends up being thrown out of the window into a fountain, whence he emerges, shirt clinging a la Mr Darcy in the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*.

The school is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Both the bank and the minister want to close the school, and worse, Annabelle's father wants to take advantage, offering to turn the place into a 'boutique hotel' and give his sister a cut. However, the girls are not so easily dissuaded, and they determine to raise the necessary £500,000 by stealing, via the sewers, Vermeer's masterpiece which is on show at the National Gallery, and fence it to Carnaby. In an exemplary display of guile, cunning, dishonesty and girl power, the pupils overcome all odds, even managing to have the minister photographed at Camilla's bedroom window.

When this film came out in 2007, it was panned by the critics, with Philip French in *The Observer* (23/12/07) calling it 'raucous, leering, crude, and to my mind, largely misjudged' and Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* (21/12/07) slating it as 'a monumentally naff film, shaming and depressing in a way that British feature-film comedies have persisted in being, intermittently, all our lives. Cheesy, dated, humourless and crass, it's a nightmare of stunt-casting, and was apparently composed by a committee of suits'. Inevitably, the comparison is with the Alastair Sim original, but these critics seem to have missed the point: at least French had the decency to note, the preview he attended was hugely enjoyed by the 'girls aged from seven to 14 who found it hilarious' (for a more considered reaction to the film, see appendix 4). If the makers had reproduced the fifties 'Lilliputian' classic, it would have appealed to parents and critics, perhaps, but would have been totally irrelevant to young people today. And the fundamental feel of the film is one of girls doing it for themselves.

Criticism of the sexualised nature of the older girls is naïve (and forgetful- the earlier films have many a nymphet in short skirts with visible stocking tops and suspenders, and sexy starlet Sabrina was a feature of *Blue Murder at St. Trinian's*) and anyway the first years still resemble Searle's miniature minxes: the twins, Tania and Tara (Chloe and Holly Mackie) are typical, if incredibly ingenious. In fact, there is a clear demarcation between the youngsters and their older schoolmates as exemplified when the twins are going to

go down into the sewers to blow the gates, and tiny Tania take cigarettes from a packet. Head girl Kelly questions her: 'Tania! What are you doing? You're ten...*and* you're carrying high explosives'. 'It's not what you think, Kel', says Tania as they shove the filters up their nostrils. Tara: 'it's for the smell...we saw it on CSI.' 'Oh...' The demarcation is created by the girls themselves, as shown when Annabelle gets her St. Trinian's 'makeover', and she gets to choose her own style.

The main difference between these St. Trinian's and those from the fifties is their knowingness: they are as familiar with matters sexual as matters criminal, and to deny this aspect of twenty-first century girls would have been foolish and twee. There is a distinction between pre- and pubescent girls, and no-one exploits them. Furthermore, aside from Annabelle's initiation ceremony, there is little bullying on display; the thugs from Cheltenham are much more vicious, though they lack the imagination and thirst for revenge of our heroines. The school is their redoubt, and the teachers their collaborators rather than officers. You feel for the girls and admire their guile, and the conclusion is truly heart-warming, when the school is saved and the evil minister gets more than he'd bargained for, thanks to a mickey finn and the machinations of Camilla. Although they are partners in crime, one can't but admire the unity of purpose of teachers and pupils, and, notwithstanding the comedic theme of the film, wish that all schools could pull together with as much passion and determination: which makes *St. Trinian's* a real feel-good movie. As they voice over the end of the *St. Trinian's Chant*, 'don't let the bastards get you down...'

Happy Go Lucky (2008), director Mike Leigh.

Poppy (Sally Hawkins) is a thirty year old primary school teacher with an irrepressibly optimistic attitude; she shares a flat in London with her friend and lover Zoe (Alexis Zegerman), and lives life to the max: she works hard and she parties hard. When someone steals her bike, she decides she will take up driving lessons, and thereby meets Scott (Eddie Marsan), a misanthropic driving instructor who is a conspiracy

theorist and control freak. From the word go, Poppy's chirpy sense of fun acts as a goad to Scott who, for all his faults, takes his work very seriously; he demands she applies herself to her driving with something of his single-mindedness. She, meanwhile, takes up flamenco lessons at the same time: Poppy will be his greatest challenge yet.

Poppy's school is a bright, airy, colourful children's palace, with the pupils' art work seeming to decorate every available surface; the children are engaged and boisterous. However, one of them (Nick) is causing concern, having attacked another little boy. A social worker, Tim (Sam Roukin), is called in, and with the help of Poppy and her headmistress Heather (Sylvestra Le Touzel) he manages to get to the root of the problem.

Tim also manages to get Poppy's phone number, and they meet for a drink and end up back at his flat. When Tim is introduced to Zoe, the flatmate takes it philosophically, but when Scott meets him outside Poppy's flat, the instructor is spoiling for an argument and eventually flies off the handle; it becomes apparent that Scott's interest in Poppy goes beyond her driving abilities, but he has been unable to express it. A row results in Scott attacking Poppy in the car and Poppy terminating the lessons. The final scene has Poppy and Zoe on a lake in a rowing boat, calmly enjoying life without the stress that so beleaguered Scott's.

In this film we see three teachers at work. Poppy is seen teaching her children, and she is fun, motivating and fair. The flamenco teacher is passionate, firm but eventually forthcoming with praise for her class. Scott, in contrast, never praises Poppy. She can apparently do nothing right, despite the fact that she is driving reasonably well on busy London streets. Scott can only see her faults, and her choice of footwear (high-heeled boots) becomes a bone of contention- they are not suitable for driving, and Scott demands she wears more appropriate shoes. Her refusal to comply becomes a thorn in Scott's flesh. As a study of teaching methods, of course, Poppy's approach is the most successful, whilst Scott's intractability

proves fatal when working with someone like Poppy (although what he says is backed up by the Highway Code, his pedantry and inflexibility are his undoing).

If the flamenco teacher is firm but fair and somewhere in the middle of the teaching spectrum, Poppy and Scott are at the extremes. Poppy's life is almost a mirror image of her primary-coloured primary school existence; relentlessly cheerful, though not unaware of the darker side to life. Life for Scott is shades of grey; if Poppy's mission is to spread a little happiness, Scott's is to teach the world to drive- and to tell them of the conspiracy that is keeping people (like him) in their place:

The education system produces left-brain prisoners. The left brain is information, data.

It's dead. The right-brain is individuality. It's where the soul lies. The education system works like this: I'll give you a world view and if you repeat my world view, if you reconfirm my world view, you will pass your exams and you will go higher and higher and higher and you will become a policeman, a magistrate, a lawyer, a general, a politician, and you will be happy and you will succeed. But if you think for yourself, if you think outside the box, then you will be unhappy and you will fail.

That's how the education system works.

'Were you bullied at school, Scott?' is Poppy's facile reply. The fact that Scott's theory is so glibly dismissed must add to his fury; he might have hoped for an intelligent contribution to the discussion, if not agreement. And one might have expected this way of thinking might be more akin to Leigh's.

In the extras on the DVD, Mike Leigh says that for all her unusual optimism (none of her friends are so relentlessly cheerful) the audience, like every character in the film who meets her, will fall in love with Poppy. Yet Poppy's chirpy attitude is exhausting; she hardly ever lets up on her un-funny rejoinders and her rictus grin is never far away. In the absence of dialogue she maintains a monologue of inane quips,

laughs and snorts. Her indefatigable 'party' attitude meets with uncomprehending disbelief from all but her friends; she is like Eliza Doolittle on ecstasy. Whether he intended it or not, Leigh succeeds in making Scott, a negative, troubled racist, a much more appealing character than he should have been. Poppy sees the best in everybody and every situation, even to the point of trying to engage with a vagrant, at night, on derelict land, an action that might in reality expose her to the danger of attack and even rape. Ironically, it is Scott the 'safety first' driving instructor who finally attacks Poppy, but the incident doesn't appear to have substantially altered her attitude to life.

Mike Leigh in *Film Comment*, volume 44, number 6 says:

Happy Go Lucky is a film about teachers and being taught, after all. Scott, a character who has a great deal to say about education and pontificates about it, understands it not one iota. There's a very good teacher, Poppy. And this woman who's very good at teaching flamenco but doesn't know the first rule of teaching. Which is to leave your personal crap outside the classroom.'

As for Scott, of course, his car is his classroom, and that is where he gives full vent to his spleen when he should be teaching Poppy to drive. Sadly, in my opinion, Poppy's character is too unsubtle, making it difficult to fully empathise with her.

Philip French in *The Observer* finds the film to be 'funny, serious, life-affirming and beautifully performed' with Leigh displaying a 'lightness of touch' (*Observer*, 20/04/08). Peter Bradshaw (*Guardian*, 18/04/08) is similarly moved, suggesting that Poppy's unironic take on life is a refreshing change, and delighting in her 'ingenuous, childlike enthusiasm'. He goes on:

The happy-go-luckiness of the movie therefore asks us questions: why are we so comfortable with irony? Is it a dishonest cop-out? Do we affect to disbelieve in

happiness because we are afraid of being humiliated by life's reversals? Have we spinelessly given up on happiness, in art as in life?

Yet there is something very sad, almost desperate, about Poppy's efforts to inject primary school cheeriness into her personal world. Having said that, it is refreshingly different to have a teacher depicted in a positive, if unrealistic, light. She shines in contrast to the misanthropic Scott, and Poppy *is* a good and caring teacher who is not unconscious of life's darker side; but her naïve lack of self-regard and her blissful 'life in a bubble' optimism make her character less believable, and, it could be added, unbelievably annoying.

St. Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold (2009), directors Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson.

The end of the noughties brought us the sequel to Parker and Thompson's *St. Trinian's* remake. Pretty much the same cast were assembled, but with the notable addition of David Tennant as the evil Lord Pomfrey, and with Juno Temple as Celia more prominent than before. Notable by their absence are the bulk of the staff; there is very little screen time given to the teachers, although matron (Celia Imrie) and the bursar (Toby Jones) get a look in, and the bulk of the action lies outside the school grounds.

Camilla Fritton (Rupert Everett) has a murkier familial past than we ever imagined, an ancestor being a pirate whose treasure lies as yet undiscovered. The race is on to find the gold, but the girls are up against misogynist AD1 cult-leader Lord Pomfrey, whose commandos will stop at nothing to find the treasure. Two keys, one of which is in Fritton's possession, will give up the coordinates of the location of the treasure, so the girls set about finding the other, which is located in a boys' public school, and piecing together the clues. In a witty denouement, the 'gold' is 'unearthed' within Shakespeare's Globe theatre in London, where, it is discovered, the bard (actually a woman) has left a hitherto unknown play: *Queen Lear*!

The first hour of the film drags somewhat, as old and new characters are established, and some of the old gags are re-run, but once the girls find an enemy in Pomfrey and start to get stuck in, the pace picks up admirably. The cross-dressing scene where our heroines disguise themselves as (effeminate) public schoolboys is a delightful twist on a twist (recalling Everett's *Another Country*— and the fact that he is 'dragged-up' too) and there's a knowing wink to the audience with a cameo from Ricky Wilson of the Kaiser Chiefs (*I Predict a Riot*). All in all, once the film finds its feet (which is when the girls go into attack mode) it fulfils the expectations.

The original remake wasn't critically acclaimed, but reviews for the sequel were warmer. Xan Brooks found the film 'broad and ramshackle, cheap and gaudy' and 'relentlessly silly' (*Guardian*, 17/12/09), akin to a pantomime, while Derek Elley in *Variety* (variety.com, date 27/12/09, last accessed 03/01/10) thought it 'much improved' on its predecessor, though 'more a celebration of modern-day British "yoof" culture— in all its dumbed-down diversity— than a genuinely anti-establishment comedy.' These are fair criticisms, but I don't think it should be forgotten that the target audience is likely to be the now grown-up Spice Girls fans suckled on 'girl-power' — and anyway, pointing up (some) men's misogyny is never a bad thing.

Cracks (2009), director Jordan Scott.

If it appeared that the tone of British teacher films was becoming lighter and frothier, *Cracks* (2009, Jordan Scott) hurls us back to the dark side with a jolt. The film is set in the 1930s, and St. Mathilda's is a boarding school for girls situated on 'Stanley Island' somewhere off the coast of England. The headmistress is Miss Nieven (Sinead Cusack) but the film focuses on the demure, seductive Miss Gribben (Eva Green), known as Miss G to her 'team' of adolescent devotees. Miss G's duty seems to be teaching the girls to dive at the lakeside boards, though she bewitches her children with tales of adventure, urging them

to live life to the full, with desire as their life's compass. Into this isolated bubble comes the aristocratic Fiamma (Maria Valverde), a lonely young girl separated from her parents following a domestic scandal. Fiamma has travelled the world and has gained some experience and wisdom, unlike her new school 'friends', and earns the jealousy of the team who resent her intrusion, especially captain Di Radfield (Juno Temple). Her effortless grace raises the standard on the diving boards, challenges the leadership of Di and attracts the eye of Miss G.

There follows a double-plot in which Fiamma, after many set-backs, is accepted into the bosom of the team whilst Miss G's interest in the girl develops. At the fulcrum of both plots is Di who has hitherto been Miss G's favourite and bitterly resents the privileged cuckoo disturbing her nest. Di is aware that Miss G is showing her less interest and resents Fiamma for it, but she believes, as does the Spanish girl, that if Fiamma treats the teacher with more kindness, perhaps Miss G will return favour to the group. What Di cannot know is that because of the teacher's as yet unexpressed passion, Fiamma threatens their watery bubble: the flame of desire will evaporate the innocent domain of these innocent water babies.

Cracks start to appear when Fiamma recognises Miss G's tales of derring-do as mere stories lifted from the page—her intrepid adventures are in fact those of Mary Kingsley, quoted from her *Travels In West Africa*, published in 1897. Indeed, Miss G is herself a fake, a diving instructor afraid of open water, a fish out of water when she visits the island shop for groceries; she feels herself drowning in this alien environment, rushing back to the safety behind the walls of St. Mathilda's. Fiamma too has an Achilles' heel: she is periodically crippled by asthma attacks, relieved only by dragging on her inhaler. Miss G is aware of her problem but still pushes her to the limits of her safety in the lake. Asthma is said to resemble drowning.

Miss G's conquest of Fiamma comes following an illicit midnight feast which the teacher knows about, but allows, in contradiction to the school rules and the protests of another, older teacher, Miss Lacey. The girls

get drunk as they act out innocent, romantic fantasies while Miss G waits, only to break up the party as Fiamma is found incapable on the floor. The teacher takes the girl to her room where she kisses and fondles the powerless girl, witnessed by Di peeping through a crack in the door. The rape of Fiamma is Miss G's conquest. She has attained the prize she sought though without the girl's consent.

The following day, Fiamma does everything she can to distance herself from her violator. Miss G weepily confesses to Di that she must leave the school because of malicious lies spread by Fiamma: unsure and conflicted, Di decides to believe that Fiamma is the seductress and she and her team hunt her down and beat her mercilessly. As Fiamma gasps for life, struck down with an asthma attack, Miss G appears and cradles the ailing girl in her arms, while at the same time deliberately keeping the inhaler out of her reach. She girl dies. Di the huntress witnesses the scene.

The girls realise that despite their vicious attack, it is Miss G who has wilfully killed their classmate. In an act of symbolic rejection, they throw their scarlet sashes at her feet. Di tries to tell Miss Nieven the truth but the headmistress will not permit a scandal and declares the sad incident an 'act of God'; it is Di who must leave as Miss G holes up in the village.

Anthony Quinn at *The Independent* found the cast's descent into hysteria unconvincing: 'the film seems to be aiming for the ominous mood of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, but it's more like *Mallory Towers* meets *Black Narcissus*, as the outward poise of Miss G begins to crack and we glimpse the compulsive fantasist beneath' (04/12/09). Libby Waite at Britflicks.com [accessed 05/02/11] found the narrative 'enjoyable, if not entirely enthralling', 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie meets *Lord of the Flies*', set in a 'visually stunning landscape filled with reverence, jealousy and forbidden sexual desire':

The power of *Cracks* lies in the fact that it initially appears to possess a typical coming

of age narrative with an emphasis on sexual awakening. Although the darker turn that the film later takes is hinted at throughout, the innocence and ease with which Scott tells the story makes the sudden encroachment of evil all the more disturbing, even if the story itself is not entirely original— jealousy and infatuation placed in a school type environment do not often signify happy endings.

Comparisons with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* are obvious and many. Both films are set in the thirties; there is the connection with Spain; both films highlight the danger of manipulative teachers. Both films have a vicious and spiteful redeemer, here Di, there Sandy. Both films feature tragic and avoidable death, here Fiamma, there the hapless Mary MacGregor. Miss Nieven is similar to Miss Mackay at Marcia Blaine, eschewing ‘excessive ambition’, regretting the team’s lack of a ‘sense of proportion’ and covering up a scandal, and of course, Miss G and Miss Brodie are both beautiful and seductive to impressionable young minds. Where the films differ is in two respects: firstly, in *Cracks* there is not the political undertow of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (postcards from Italy appearing to show Mussolini’s ‘wedding cake’ palace might suggest Fiamma’s father’s fascist sympathies but it is never explicit); secondly, while there is certainly a suggestion of lesbianism in Jean Brodie’s attention to her girls, Miss G not only feels the desire but acts upon it, raping and murdering the object of her desires. The post-coital ‘little death’ is made flesh, albeit the following morning.

Miss Nieven will mask the cracks in the façade of respectability of the school in the same way as the Catholic church has seemed to ignore the abuse of children by their priests. The crack that appeared in the hermetic bubble of St. Mathilda’s *from the children’s point of view* will be sealed with the removal of Di, the (temporary?) absence of Miss G and the death of the worldly-wise Fiamma. The crack that appeared in the seemingly effortless persona of Miss G may never be repaired as the protector and guardian is revealed to be a killer, while the girls’ bubble of innocence has burst, never to be found again. To quote the tagline from the film’s publicity: innocence isn’t lost. It’s taken.

N.E.D.S. (2010), director Peter Mullan.

Perhaps the twenty-first century would bring us more enlightened and less doggedly negative teacher representations? No. *N.E.D.S.* (2010, Peter Mullan) is enough to make you choke on your Kiaora (or perhaps diet Coke these days). Set in the early- to mid-1970s Glasgow, with a stirring soundtrack to match (including the sensational Alex Harvey), *N.E.D.S.* describes the descent into the gang violence of non-educated delinquents of one John McGill.

John (Conor McCarron) is a high-flyer at school, and expects to be placed in the A-stream. He wants to go to university, become a reporter, perhaps even travel like his elder sister: to his horror, he finds he must share a classroom with low-achievers, and a master armed with a strap. John has been threatened by local thug 'Canta' even before he joins his secondary school but discovers he is protected by the fearsome reputation of his older brother Benny. He can easily call up retribution if needed. Meanwhile his home life is blighted by an alcoholic father (Peter Mullan) who abuses his mother verbally and, it is implied, sexually on a regular basis.

John's ambitions and determination to escape his environment lead him to willingly attend a summer school seemingly pupilled by an assortment of damaged odds-and-ends, but he make friends with middle-class Julian- until Julian's mother forbids John from seeing him. John responds by bundling up the football boots he was going to give Julian with lit fireworks and hurling them through their front-room window. It seems that his erstwhile friend's rejection is setting John on the road to delinquency.

John picks up a knife discarded in a fight in the school toilets. He practises his moves in his bedroom.

Like Machiavelli's *Prince*, he has learnt that it is perhaps better to be feared than loved. He starts to answer back to his teachers, one of whom (his Latin teacher) had previously 'rewarded' John for his top marks by labelling him a 'swot'. The teacher now demands an answer to a question; John feigns ignorance and provokes the master who delivers the strap to John's outstretched hand. John's smile (is that the best you can do?) earns him five more blows. Still smiling, John confides with his classmate: he knew the answer all along but he gains kudos from his refusal to cooperate.

Outside school, John is now drinking, smoking, dancing with girls and getting into gang fights. In one disturbing episode, after he has rejected a boy's appeal to join their gang, only to be challenged by the leader, he takes retribution on the boy. John is seen petting a girl but he breaks off to confront the new recruit; he punches him to the floor, calmly picks up a paving slab and drops it onto his victim's head; he goes back to continue kissing the girl.

John has lost his dream, and he loses his home when he pulls a knife on thugs who force their way in to attack him: as a result, his mother banishes him from the house. There follows a descent into vagrancy and glue-sniffing before John is rehabilitated at home and at school, but his father's violence and John's inability to exact revenge on him stymies John's redemption and he once more arms himself, gripped by an apparently suicidal death wish, venturing bare-chested into enemy gang territory. He escapes with his life but largely thanks to the timely arrival of his own gang.

Back at school, but in the remedial class, John is taken on a school outing to a safari park in a clapped out old minibus, which promptly breaks down in the lion enclosure. The ranger who arrives can rescue all but John and his earlier victim, who is now little more than a vegetable. Careless of their safety, John and his helpless companion walk off, right through a pride of lions: it seems as though neither he, nor his witless companion, have anything to lose.

Philip Wilding (empireonline.com, accessed 05/02/11) thought that Mullan had captured the ‘innate adolescent fear of empty playgrounds and thrumming schoolyards’ as ‘Social mores and peer pressure turn the young McGill feral’, and Philip French at *The Observer* (23/01/11) felt the film owed a debt to the films of Ken Loach and Terence Davies for its realism. Peter Bradshaw at *The Guardian* was more expansive: ‘it looks like an intensely personal project infused with passion and semi-resolved hurt. It’s arguably too long and there’s a touch of self-mythologising but with compelling flashes of rage and nauseous black comedy’ (20/01/11).

As an essay on the irresistible draw of neighbourhood over school, *N.E.D.S.* is a powerful warning that school’s influence might be greater were it more benign. Had John been nurtured in school rather than humiliated, encouraged rather than beaten, protected rather than exposed to danger, and offered opportunities to escape the violent gravity of his situation (and had he not been rejected by his middle-class chum), then his trajectory might have been different. The conclusion we have to draw is: if this can happen to a bright, articulate boy, what hope for those less gifted? Schooled in violence, the cycle of violence will turn in on its perpetrators.

From the dissolute inhabitants of the staffroom and headmistress’s study of St Trinian’s, to the groping of Mr Hector, the wicked manipulation of Barbara Covett and Miss G, and the vicious schooling of John McGill, it appears that, eighty years on, teachers are still mad, bad and dangerous to know.

Filmography

NOTES ON A SCANDAL (2006) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Richard Eyre
Producers.....Robert Fox, Scott Rudin
Production Companies.....Fox Searchlight Pictures, DNA Films, UK Film Council,
BBC Films, Scott Rudin Productions, Ingenious Film
Partners
Screenplay.....Patrick Marber
Cinematography.....Chris Menges
Editors.....John Bloom, Antonia Van Drimmelen
Original music.....Philip Glass

Cast

Barbara Covett.....Judi Dench
Sheba Hart.....Cate Blanchette
Steven Connolly.....Andrew Simpson

HISTORY BOYS, THE (2006) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Nicholas Hytner
Producers.....Nicholas Hytner, Damian Jones, Kevin Loader, Padraig Cusack
Production Companies.....Fox Searchlight Pictures, DNA Films, BBC Two Films, UK Film Council, National
Theatre
Screenplay.....Alan Bennett
Cinematography.....Andrew Dunn
Editor.....John Wilson
Original music.....George Fenton

Cast

Hector.....Richard Griffiths
Irwin.....Stephen Campbell Moore
Mrs Lintott.....Frances De La Tour
Dakin.....Dominic Cooper

ST TRINIAN'S (2007) U.K.

Credits

Directors.....Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson
Producers.....Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson
Production Companies.....Ealing Studios, Entertainment Film Distributors, Fragile Films, UK Film Council
Screenplay.....Piers Ashworth and Nick Moorcroft
Cinematography.....Gavin Finney
Editor.....Alex Mackie

Original music.....Charlie Mole

Cast

Camilla Fritton/Carnaby Fritton.....Rupert Everett
Annabelle Fritton.....Talulah Riley
Kelly Jones.....Gemma Arterton
Geoffrey Thwaites.....Colin Firth

HAPPY GO LUCKY (2008) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Mike Leigh
Producer.....Simon Channing Williams
Production Company.....Film4, Ingenious Film Partners, Summit Entertainment, Thin Man Films, UK Film Council
Screenplay.....Mike Leigh
Cinematography.....Dick Pope
Editor.....Jim Clark
Original music.....Gary Yershon

Cast

Poppy.....Sally Hawkins
Scott.....Eddie Marsan
Zoe.....Alexis Zegerman

ST TRINIAN'S 2: THE LEGEND OF FRITTON'S GOLD (2009) U.K.

Credits

Directors.....Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson
Producers.....Oliver Parker and Barnaby Thompson
Production Companies.....Aegis Film Fund, Ealing Studios, Fragile Films, Prescience
Screenplay.....Piers Ashworth and Nick Moorcroft
Cinematography.....David Higgs
Editor.....Emma E. Hickox
Original music.....Charlie Mole

Cast

Camilla/Captain Archibald/Fortnum Fritton.....Rupert Everett
Geoffrey Thwaites.....Colin Firth
Lord Pomfrey.....David Tennant
Annabelle Fritton.....Talulah Riley

CRACKS (2009) U.K.

Credits

Director.....Jordan Scott
Producers.....Kwesi Dickson, Andrew Lowe, Julie Payne, Rosalie Swedlin and Christine Vachon

Production Companies.....Antena 3 Films, Element Pictures, Future Films
 Screenplay.....Ben Court, Caroline Ip
 Cinematography.....John Mathieson
 Editor.....Valerio Bonelli
 Original music.....Javier Navarette

Cast

Miss G.....Eva Green
 Di.....Juno Temple
 Fiamma.....Maria Valverde
 Miss Nieven.....Sinead Cusack

N.E.D.S. (2010) U.K./France/Italy

Credits

Director.....Peter Mullan
 Producers.....Olivier Delbosc, Alain de la Mata, Marc Missonnier
 Production Companies.....Blue Light, Fidélité Films, StudioUrania
 Screenplay.....Peter Mullan
 Cinematography.....Roman Osin
 Editor.....Colin Monie
 Original music.....Craig Armstrong

Cast

John McGill.....Conor McCarron
 Mr McGill.....Peter Mullan
 Canta.....Gary Milligan
 Julian.....Martin Bell

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION: eighty years on.

Continuity and change.

In the case of education... institutions at all levels generally fulfil an important conservative role and act, with greater or lesser effectiveness, as legitimating agencies in and for their societies (Miliband 1969: 214).

It appears that the teacher-film memplex is an extremely resilient cultural organism. The task is to explain why it has been so persistent, given the undoubted changes that education has undergone; why is Nóvoa's 'grammar of schooling' still so relevant? The answer lies, I believe, in the nature of the educational culture of Britain, and its representation in popular films.

Firstly, school (most notably secondary school) can be an alien environment for the many pupils, and we experience this with Jack Read in *The Guinea Pig*, Jute in *if...* and Fiamma in *Cracks*, amongst others. Jackson and Marsden (1976) explained how a public-school ethos was adopted by grammar schools, which fostered a sense of 'otherness' in deliberate contradiction to the 'neighbourhood' familiar to bright working class children; these were then subjected to a middle-class curriculum and school ethos which challenged their loyalty to community. McCulloch (1998) has explained why the secondary moderns and then comprehensive schools aped the grammars, bringing in external examinations and streaming in an attempt to rescue them from second-class status. Differentiated learning has been sacrificed to status: parity of esteem is seemingly more important than parity of conditions (Thomas Tompion will be honoured due to the appointment of Brian Stimpson to the chair of the Headmasters' Conference in *Clockwise*— he has won at *their* game, not a different one). However, the class base of Britain has not significantly changed. Despite the clarion-call, real choice appears still to be predicated on income and influence.

Secondly, the teacher-pupil relationship is still imbued with power. As secondary students stay on later and

later, biological adults are still being treated as children. Control is a central concern (*Spare the Rod, Term of Trial, Kes, N.E.D.S.*) but it doesn't need to be. The only problem, says William Ayers, with assuming that "classroom management" is the first principle of teaching 'is that it's not true.'

In fact, real learning requires assertion, not obedience, action, not passivity. It is an intimate act, an ambiguous and unpredictable act. It is deeply human. Teaching demands connection between the knowledge, experiences, and aspirations of the students, and deeper and wider ways of knowing. Teaching is intellectual work—puzzling and difficult— and at its heart it is ethical work. It is idiosyncratic, improvisational, and most of all relational. All attempts to reduce teaching and learning to a formula, to something that is easily predictable, degrade it immeasurably.... Common sense ... is insistent in its resistance to contradiction or even complexity. It wants to be taken on faith— there isn't room for either reflection or objection. Take it or leave it. Films on teaching fall into step. They are all about common sense, and they immunize against a language of possibility— for students, teachers, parents, and the public (in Joseph and Burnaford, eds. 1994: 155).

Good teachers like Mark Thackeray (*To Sir, With Love*) will recognise the adult in the pupil and teach accordingly. Some will defer adulthood to maintain their malign influence (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Cracks*). Still others will find sexual fulfilment in an inexperienced, though precocious pupil (*Notes On A Scandal, The History Boys*) while others will resist (*Spare The Rod, Term of Trial*). Teachers are faced with teaching mature juveniles while treating them as children; at the same time, any attempts at liberalising the curriculum have been met with government diktat, inspections and league tables, and teachers have been placed under intense scrutiny. Insistence on inclusion and differentiation, while still insisting on ever-improving exam results has put teachers in an invidious position.

Thirdly, Clive Harber maintains that not only do schools not obviate inequalities and problems for children, they appear to exacerbate them (2009). Teaching in the last eighty years has always been linked to control, either physically within school walls, or with a cane, through the panoptic gaze of the teacher, or, more recently, closed-circuit television. Bestiality is kept in check through an education system which distrusts its users, saving them from themselves, and society from their excessive energy. The suggestion is that an absence of teachers leads to an absence of civilisation (see *Lord of the Flies*); but there is an alternative view which says that the very system (a metaphor for the country and bourgeois values) fosters brutality (*if...., Another Country*) or, if abused, allows for predation on those who are placed in our care (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Notes On A Scandal, Cracks*). Nonetheless, compulsory schooling contains and trains, and provides respite for those workers of hand and eye who know their offspring are being overseen, *in loco parentis*, and serves up the next cohort of trained workers from whom surplus labour value can then be extracted. Not so much an education system as a dairy.

Despite the obvious changes in the way teachers and schools have been represented over the eighty years, there is still a continuity of disquiet that imbues most British teacher films, and the issues of alienation, manipulation and sexual exploitation arise once more in the crop of films produced in the more teacher-friendly era of New Labour. Filmmakers once again have licence to criticise (although that critical social observer, Mike Leigh, chose this moment to praise), even though education reforms brought in by the Conservatives had largely not been reversed. Had a change occurred in teaching that could not be so easily overturned, and what of the future?

Market forces.

In the U.K., Professor Stephen Ball has produced a mass of evidence to support his claim that the policy itself is undergoing a process of privatisation. There has been created a new hegemony that is derivative of the 'old' public educational provision, whereby the Schumpeterian Workfare State has superseded the

Keynesian National Welfare State, initially through the political machinations of Thatcher's neo-liberal conservatism and latterly through Blair's Third Way, which has sought a partnership of a 'market-maker' state with the innovation and energy of the market. However, says Ball, this has led to destabilisation, with 'unrelenting criticism of public services, often by generalising individual failures' (Ball 2007: 20), disinvestment (or re-investment by private capital) and the commodification of 'forms of service, social relations and public processes into forms that are measurable and thus contractable or marketable, and in creating spaces for privatisation within the public sector' (24). While Ball emphasises that this process is ongoing and not yet concluded, he nonetheless warns that the private *arrivistes*, who have produced 'a dissemination of the discipline of perfection... a transposition (and sale) of the sensibilities and positivities of management from the private to the public sector', have not baulked at reneging on their contracts or selling them off when the anticipated profits proved less than expected. The social effect on teaching must not be underestimated either:

The use of benchmarking, National Curriculum levels of achievement, performance indicators and targets, etc. all contribute to this reification of educational processes or, as Basil Bernstein puts it, 'the contemporary dislocation, disconnects inner from outer, as a precondition for constituting the outer and its practice, according to the market principles of the New Right' (Bernstein 1996) (Ball 2007: 186).

This is no mere technical change:

-it involves changes in the meaning and experience of education, what it means to be a teacher and a learner, but is also part of a broader social dislocation... it is a process of social transformation... we may find ourselves living and working in a world made up entirely of contingencies, within which the possibilities of authenticity and meaning in teaching, learning and research, as well as other aspects of our social lives, are gradually but inexorably eroded (ibid, 186, 187).

The ‘new moral environment’ of the competition state and privatisation sets teacher against teacher, school against school but may yet spawn resistance and dissent from teachers and parents for whom ‘the tyrannies of improvement, efficiency and standards’ can never replace ‘education articulated in terms of ethics, moral obligations and values’ (191).

The former OFSTED supremo Chris Woodhead would like to see schools responding to their customers in a more direct, market-driven fashion; his advocacy of a voucher scheme has recently been supported by Professor James Tooley of Newcastle University. It was reported in *The Independent* (10/03/10) that Tooley claimed pupils were being turned into “a seething mass of bored, frustrated, alienated children” by today’s education system.

One of the most startling deficiencies of schooling today is that the majority of it is still carried out with 20 to 30 children of the same age in a classroom with one teacher. It is the factory model that was there when I was a child and my father and grandfather before me.

The article continues: ‘Professor Tooley advocates the dismantling of the current system and says private providers should be encouraged to set up their own schools....The academic says the advantage of a “competitive market” system of education is that it automatically sets up accountability “between sellers and buyers” Professor Tooley advocates a state-funded voucher system which would let parents buy a place for their child at a school of their choice.’ The writing is clearly on the wall for teachers and schools if this view of education as a ‘competitive market’ is espoused by the incoming coalition government.

However, the consequences for all of us might extend beyond what we regard as being the best way to spend tax revenue. If success is to be judged on performance, then the resultant pressure on teachers and then children could become truly monstrous. Matt Stone, co-creator of *South Park* grew up near Littleton,

Michigan, home to Columbine High School where Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered twelve fellow students and a teacher.

I remember being in sixth grade and I had to take the math test to get into honours math in seventh grade, and they're like: "Don't screw this up, because if you screw this up [...] then you'll just die poor and lonely. And that's it, you know what I mean? You believe in high school, and a lot of it's kids- but the teachers and counsellors and principals don't help things. They scare you into conforming and doing good in school by saying: "If you're a loser now, you're gonna be a loser forever". So with Eric and Dylan [...] And you wish someone just could've grabbed them and gone "High school's not the end of..." *Bowling For Columbine*.

Fear is peddled as the great motivator, and as the engine of mass consumption ("keep everyone afraid and they'll consume": Marilyn Manson in *Bowling for Columbine*), but fear can also lead to unexpected and tragic results (dramatically and horrifyingly evoked in Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* (2003) and explained in greater depth in *The Class* (2007), directed by Ilmar Raag.

If we are to avoid similar awful consequences, perhaps we should reverse the trend of quantifiable success in market terms and look instead to the rather more old-fashioned, but more profound, education of the individual child for his or her own's sake. 'In schools', says Bertman 'the need to advance has [...] spawned an epidemic of academic expediency. More so than ever before, cheating on exams and plagiarism have become common behavior in high schools and colleges. Material success is a powerful incentive for the young, especially when the time saved by cheating and plagiarizing can be devoted to pleasure. In a sensory society that measures time by its tangible results, learning for its own sake fast becomes an anachronistic value' (Bertman 1998: 76). Success, fame or infamy can cost just a few bullets, it seems.

Films such as *Wetherby*, *The History Boys* and even *St Trinian's* ask the question: what is education for?

If it is purely about passing exams or jumping through hoops, then quantifiable results are perhaps a reasonable means of assessing the quality of teaching. Linda Perlstein, in her book *Tested*, looked at how one American school, Tyler Heights Elementary School, Annapolis, coped with the *No Child Left Behind* agenda introduced into US schools by the George W. Bush administration to banish “the soft bigotry of low expectations” (Perlstein 2007: 136). What she discovered was that, in order to succeed, the school had to teach to the test. Students in the school would rehearse ‘brief constructed responses’ or BCRs, paragraphs which when repeated in the Maryland School Assessment exam would deliver a pass mark. The school’s success rate soared. The school was safe.

There remained problems, however. Firstly, there was the fact that the children were not necessarily learning, only repeating the BCRs. Secondly, aspects of the curriculum which were not tested would be neglected until after the examination period. Thirdly, teachers were becoming disaffected by the neglect of their natural ability and desire to teach. And yet surely there was a good, moral principal at stake here: making sure no child, regardless of class, race or gender would be allowed to fail.

Observers who aren’t conspiracy theorists detect a symbiotic relationship among many of the private-sector beneficiaries of the school accountability movement. President Bush’s brother Neil owns a company that sells educational software, including sales to school districts that pay for it with federal Title 1 money. Many believe that the relationship between the president and family friend Harold McGraw III– who ran Bush’s transition team and whose company, McGraw-Hill, is one of the biggest curriculum and test providers in the world– has a lot to do with the administration’s emphasis on scientifically based reading programs, such as McGraw-Hill’s Open Court. (Perlstein 2007: 193).

If, on the other hand, education is about learning about life, and learning to ask difficult questions rather

than providing pat answers, then teaching to the test could lead us into the sort of cul-de-sac Perlstein has found in Annapolis.

Science and witchcraft.

On *The Food Programme* (BBC Radio 4, 18/04/10) a man was heard describing the process of selecting good coffee; he said it was a combination of 'science and witchcraft'. In other words, there may be scientific procedures that need to be followed to correctly prepare, roast and produce the final product but without the human ability to detect and appreciate subtlety and nuance, the potential for a superior blend to reach our breakfast table would be thwarted. Teaching in postmodernity appears to have been reduced to a quantifiably reliable template which will deliver literacy, numeracy, even good citizenship whilst denying those meant to deliver it the trust and respect owing to other professionals. Distrust, and an outrageous dissimulation on the part of governments, feigning devolvement while tightening the grip on the reins, has squeezed the pips of the very people called upon to uphold and deliver those standards. Teachers are the mixture of science and witchcraft that allows learning to take place.

A man flying in a hot air balloon realised he was lost. He started to come down until he could see a man on the ground who might hear him. 'Excuse me,' he shouted. 'Can you help me? I promised my friend I would meet him a half an hour ago, but I don't know where I am, or where I am going.'

The man below responded: 'Yes. You are in a hot air balloon, approximately 30

feet above this field. You are between 40 and 42 degrees North Latitude, and between 58 and 60 degrees West Longitude.'

'You must be an engineer,' responded the balloonist. 'I am,' the man replied. 'How did you know?' 'Well,' said the balloonist, 'everything you have told me is technically correct, but I have no idea what to do with this information, and the fact is I am still lost.'

Whereupon the man on the ground responded, 'You must be a manager.' 'I am,' replied the balloonist, 'but how did you know?' 'Well,' said the man, 'you don't know where you are, or where you're going. You've made a promise you can't keep, and you expect me to solve your problem. The fact is you are in exactly the same position as before we met, but now it's my fault' *Total English Intermediate Students' Book* (2009), 122 (Harlow: Pearson Longman).

If the government managers insist on treating teachers as engineers, they are likely to end up with the same confusion and unhelpfulness as in my story. They will have the statistics but they won't know what to do with them. As education in Britain becomes ever-more privatised, the role of teacher could shift from educator to that of administrator, a clerk delivering a pre-packaged curriculum devised by commercial interests and policed by government. The irony is that whilst the criticism in the field of healthcare has been that the interests of the patient has been side-lined in favour of those of the deliverer, in education, free enterprise has realised that in schoolchildren there is a captive market which, with government collusion, can be milked to maximum commercial advantage. Teachers could find themselves policing a closed system which sees profit as the prime motive; the consequences for the teacher could be devastating, as cynicism, disaffection, even despair enter the collegiate psyche (see Hargreaves (1994), Perlstein (2007), Woods and Jeffrey (2002); and *The History Boys, Notes on A Scandal*).

The tyranny of the visual: a postscript for teachers.

In his book *Hyperculture* (1998), Stephen Bertman tells us of the danger to test pilots whose aircraft experienced (in some cases terminal) damage as they approached the speed of sound (5,6). The author uses the metaphor to warn of the dangers of today's ever-faster pace of life. We too are building up a pressure wave before us which, if we are not to sustain fatal damage, requires us to do some serious streamlining, or suffer the consequences. We could, of course, slow down.

Man, with his forward-looking eyes, is, it seems, almost genetically programmed to regard his life as a journey:

In sensory terms, [...] the biography of humankind is a visual story. The present and the future have a primacy that the past does not. It is a primacy based upon the sense of sight, for our understanding of time is conditioned by our perception of space. Our attitudes are thus colored not merely by the particular things we see, but by the very existence of sight [...] In evolutionary terms, the development of the human brain coupled with the frontal placement of the eyes made progress literally inevitable (32).

Bertman also ponders the anomaly of Plato's cave, wherein we troglodytes spend our lives enthralled by shadows cast on a wall by a fire behind us (20) rather than seeking the real light outside. O for the insight of blind Teiresias whose affliction nevertheless equipped him with wisdom. Warns Bertman: 'It will be insufficient in the future- indeed it will prove fatal- to become a species of observers entertained by stimuli. To realize the full potential of our minds we will need to oppose our biological inheritance and our very neurologic design, overriding the seductive stimulation of the optic nerve in order to look within.' In fact, according to 'Is Seeing Believing?' (*Horizon*, BBC2, 18/10/2010), 'only 10% of what we see comes through the eyes': the rest is stored in the brain. We see the world through the 'lens of the past', with

our brains constructing meaning based less on what we see than what we predict. Furthermore, there may be senses we are not even aware of, which we would do well to investigate and exploit, or else our evolution may atrophy.

We are seduced by what we see and fooled into thinking that what we see is real. Politicians seem more concerned with appearance than policy; pre-inspection schools receive a fresh coat of paint. Do you want to sell something old and shabby? Rebrand it in a shiny new wrapper. Even the most sincere house seller will smarten up their home whilst concealing the rotting floorboards under a delightful Persian rug. The visual is deafening. After Festinger, is it not possible that, even if school pupils enjoyed their school experience, the cognitive dissonance of negative cultural representations of teachers and schools might persuade those children they were wrong after all?

Andreou and McCall (2010) have produced valuable evidence that shows that visually impaired children can develop awareness of physical presence without the use of eyes. Further, they appear to be able to sense sincerity to a depth the visually gifted cannot usually fathom. Could it be that our reliance on the visual is actually a disabling factor in our perception of the world? The visual has grown to dominate our other senses in an exponential way, unhealthily feeding on the stimuli that surround us. It is like a cancer.

Are not films just another example of the tyranny of the visual? They could be, if we took them for real, but the beautiful thing about capturing something on film is that it forces us to realise that what was then produced was a fake, even if there is a poetic truth attached. If that reality then was fake, perhaps the reality we see now is tomorrow's fake. So long as we see films as something to use and reflect upon—artefacts, archaeological reminders, cultural fossils— we are unlikely to be unduly psychologically disturbed. If they are just more shadows in the cave, we have problems.

So, my premise is that films and the stories they tell are cultural memes, self-replicating cultural genes that reproduce themselves because that is their function. Representations of teacher and school are not

identical mimeographs, however, because they have to be recognisable to the audience, and people, and cultures change while some memetic material remains constant: the memplex (Blackmore, 2000). Thus mutation allows for different characteristics whilst the species remains recognisable.

However, where I would differ from Blackmore is in insisting that the meme culture is produced in someone's interest. In the 1920s, as we have seen, teachers were allowed 'reasonable independence' in exchange for moulding the sons of empire, but this somewhat ambitious and decorous requirement may have left the door ajar to fraudsters; Baudrillard's first order of the counterfeit (1983). Certainly, as Lawn tells us, the teachers' unions were keen to see teaching placed on a professional footing (1987). The post-World War 2 era saw the emergency teacher training scheme which sought to provide a new breed of master for *The New Secondary Education*, to borrow the title of the 1947 Ministry of Education pamphlet (McCulloch in Aldrich (ed.) (2002), 41); this can be equated to Baudrillard's second order of 'industrial simulacrum' (Baudrillard (1983), 96). Now, education is a market opportunity, an industry ripe for venture capitalism (after Ball, 2007). If we are indeed, as Baudrillard claimed, in the era of the third simulacrum, the code, then the prospects for teachers and pupils alike could be grim. Codes are non-negotiable; a pin number gives you access to your bank account if it is accurately punched into the ATM- if not, it doesn't. Computer programmes will grant or deny you services ('the computer says no'; *Little Britain* BBC Television). If teaching can be codified, teachers may become expendable, made redundant by pre-programmed packages that offer virtual pedagogy, tick-box testing thus obviating the most expensive piece of educational kit: the teacher. Even pupils' destinies might be determined by a binary opposition: pass or fail; good citizen or bad citizen. Hermetically-sealed education, supplied by the market, obviates unnecessary contamination of the final product by teachers less versed in pedagogical hygiene. Teachers administer the system, and they have a binary choice; to accept or move on to pastures new.

Of course, this is a dark and pessimistic view of teaching, and one I do not subscribe to. The evolution of all species comes about through change, when mutated forms suit their environment better than their

predecessor. Teachers, or for that matter any genetic or memetic species, cannot but mutate, and as we have seen in their filmic representations, that is inevitable. It follows that any system that prevents evolution must fail. Secondly, those who are taught (and those who teach) are not mindless machines: they have the capacity to reason, and use their education for their own purposes. For me, this is the crucial point: we must think less about education as training (though that may indeed be useful) and more about education as a fundamental human right. We must 'pass it on' for while at the moment there may be little hope of fundamental change, that will not endure. The anarchy of individual thought is beyond the control of the most Draconian government. It is liberating, and code-breaking.

I began this work with the hypothesis that representations of teachers and schools in popular British films might not only reflect our own experiences, but might also be constructed out of the culture which we imbibe daily, and that changes in those representations might reflect changes in education as seen through the cinematographic prism. So what has been the role of the filmmaker in this process? The simplest answer is, of course, to make films, but in the commercial market, that must mean making films that will make a profit. For a film to make a profit, I have suggested, the film must 'chime' with its audience: we are not talking here of 'art house' movies, government abjurations or documentaries. There must be articulation between film and audience, a connection between what is watched and what is known in the viewer.

In Britain, according to Andrew Marr, one aspect of our twentieth century democracy was a willingness to mock, gently, and criticise our lords and masters; we see less reverence than in more authoritarian regimes, for we feel, rightly or wrongly, that those who govern us are our servants, and not we theirs (*The Making of Modern Britain* and *The History of Modern Britain* (2009): BBC DVDs). The traditional role of the court jester who has licence to point up the folly of the great and the good can be seen to have been embraced by our filmmakers who 'though not legislators of the world, can at least offer a viable alternative

to officially sanctified versions of the truth' (Friedman (1993), xix) (notwithstanding the all-seeing-eye of the British Board of Film Censors) and this applies to films concerning education as much, if not more. There is enormous breadth to the critique, from the gentle derision of the St. Trinian's films to the fierce anger of Lindsay Anderson, and teachers and schools have been seen as warders and prisons as much as protectors and safe havens from a cruel and unrelenting world. But other, more subtle representations of teachers have evolved: the collaborator (Will Hay); the confidante (*The Guinea Pig*); the conflicted guardian (*Term of Trial*); the fossil (*The Browning Version*, *if....*, *Kes*); the manipulator (Jean Brodie and Barbara Covett); the cynic and the paedophile (*Notes on a Scandal*, *The History Boys*).

Films, as literature, can reach out to us and make connections with thoughts and emotions we may have thought particular to us, may express a feeling, a truth we hitherto had thought ours alone, and bid us take that thought, feel it, and pass it on. Cinema is not passive, anymore than is conversation, or any of our arts. If we emote, if articulation between filmmaker and viewer has taken place, then we may connect with minds and souls separated from us by time and place, yet find a common humanity. And pass it on, with interest, even if we cannot presently use it. As the poet Browning suggested: 'a man's reach should always exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?'

It is said we live and work in a postmodern world where old certainties are threatened. Hierarchical structures are apparently being replaced by horizontal maps wherein we can find multiple identities and roles. To reject or at least question this reading lays one open to accusations of being inextricably stuck in a modernist mindset. However, in the twenty-first century, where communism has ostensibly been trumped by capitalism in all but a small rump of backward-looking nation states, we nonetheless are duty bound to ask who the piper is: whose tune we must all dance to? In teaching, is it the state? The pupils? The parent? How to satisfy the market with its ever-increasing demands?

Perhaps the answer is to replace 'nowism' as Bertman calls it with a dose of the 'power of then':

‘...we must redirect education, insisting that “back to the basics” always includes a solid foundation of history and a solid core of traditional works, works respected not simply because they are old but because they embody “momentous questions of permanent relevance”, questions that can lead us to measure our own values against those of an earlier day. Such works can help us see that our own struggle for meaning is not an isolated one, but part of a larger continuum, and can sensitize us, through a study of alternatives and consequences, to choose our own path with greater wisdom’ (Bertman 1998: 200).

Whilst Bertman is undoubtedly thinking macroscopically, the educational microcosm could do worse than take note. The continuum from the beginning of compulsory education in 1870 to the present day (140 years and counting) has been cinematically reflected upon for more than half its span; this is a resource which allows us to consider ‘alternatives and consequences’ and which may well guide our path towards a more sensible future.

Teachers are under such intense scrutiny it’s a wonder they can function at all. Their ontological security has been damaged, their professional *umwelt* compromised and shame has been inculcated into their psyche as yet another self-reflexive rod with which to flagellate themselves (Goffman 1971 and Giddens 1991). Hargreaves’ ‘moving mosaic’ option for restructuring schools may be an appealing metaphor for the flexible, shifting relationships we must forge in the pixellated postmodern world (1994: 62), but moving parts generate friction and hence need lubrication or the engine will seize up. If we are going to ask our teachers to be willing cogs in this machine, first there has to be an injection of trust to keep things running smoothly.

On a psychological level, there are close connections between the sequestration of

experience, trust and the search for intimacy. ...We can see here a powerful basis for emotional disquiet... The loss of anchoring reference points deriving from the development of *internally* referential systems [my italics] creates moral disquiet that individuals can never fully overcome (Giddens 1991: 185).

Trust comes first. If teachers are trusted to play their part, then (and this is where postmodernism may be helpful) we might abandon the notion of their ability to perfect an imperfect system. Or any system. We are teachers, not politicians, nor gods. If we can replace the modernist idea of a perfectible future with a postmodern acceptance that we demand the best efforts of teachers without expecting miracles, and without blaming them for failing to right society's wrongs, then there may be space for teachers to breath a little easier, and even do their job.

'I am a teacher, first, last, always...' (Jean Brodie).

Ours is a quantitative age in which even quality has been quantified... In such a world, contemplation is so much useless "downtime" (Bertman 1998: 23).

In postmodern societies...the very nature and integrity of the self is placed in doubt... In the high-tech world of the instantaneous image, what once stood for the substantial self is increasingly seen as merely a constellation of signs... Human selves become things that people display and others interpret [one effect of which is the blurring of] boundaries between the self and the world.

In the postmodern world, therefore, the fragile self becomes a continuous reflexive project...

continuously “under construction”... the heightened orientation to the self can become a narcissistic one of self-preoccupation or as Baudrillard puts it, self-referentiality [marked by] a desperate and deliberate search for biographical meaning and personal narrative unity in an apparently disordered and chaotic social world– an orientation that is reflected in the educational field in increasingly popular research and professional development preoccupations with teachers’ narratives, teachers’ stories and teachers’ lives’ (Hargreaves 1994: 70–73).

Every image, every media message, but also any functional environmental object, is also a test...liberating response mechanisms according to stereotypes and analytical models. Today, the object is no longer “functional”...it no longer serves you, it *tests* you...Both objects and information result from a selection, a montage, from a point of view...They have broken down reality into simple elements that they have reassembled into scenarios of regulated oppositions...It is exactly like the test or the referendum when they translate a conflict or problem into a game of question/answer. (Jean Baudrillard 1983: 120, 121).

Let us see teachers as functional environmental objects. Their acceptability has been fashioned according to stereotypes and analytical models. They test their pupils according to binary code; they are themselves tested; they test themselves, daily. What is deemed suitable to be a teacher is every bit as coded as the curriculum they deliver; the conflict of what it is to be teacher has itself been translated into a game of question/answer. Meanwhile the teacher worries herself into a state as to whether she fits the bill. It doesn’t have to be this way.

This whole work has been concerned with the filmic representations of teacher narratives, stories and lives, and the schools with which they interact, but over a period where the certainties of modernity and high modernity have been challenged by the ‘moving mosaic’ of postmodernity (Hargreaves 1994: 62). British teachers now find themselves ground between the millstones of a state-controlled curriculum and a continuing self-reflection unlike any other profession: the certainties of modernity are the chaff of postmodernity. And yet despite the seismic changes that teaching has undergone, continuity persists in terms of teacher–pupil relations, the institution of school and the image of teacher: they are all instantly recognisable to the cinema-goer.

What has been cinema’s role in this continuity? Ellsmore (2005) claims: ‘Teaching is not made for the purpose of generating exciting cinema’, a truth which is beyond dispute. However, I would disagree with her assertion that: ‘Film is a poor medium through which to portray the work of a teacher’(ibid: 130).

She continues: 'Because a large constituent of the job is uncinematic– the bureaucracy of paperwork, lesson preparation, marking and meetings– this inevitably results in stereotypical and sensational representations' (ibid). Perhaps, but I am reminded of Alfred Hitchcock's borrowing of Truffaut's quote: 'What is drama, after all, but life with the dull bits cut out.' Whilst I concede that a film portraying marking and meetings may not make scintillating cinema, we must restate that neither I nor Ellsmore have chosen to study documentary films but popular representations for cinema (and, in her case, television). One third of our lives may be spent sleeping, eating and defecating: it would not make for good audiences. The popular cinema audience has an attention span similar to the schoolchild. Petty (1993) claims students' concentration has deteriorated after 30 minutes of a lesson (110). Hitchcock also commented that: 'The length of a film should be directly related to the endurance of the human bladder.' These psychological and physiological considerations must be taken into account when planning either a curriculum or a film.

So why is film a *good* medium to portray the work of a teacher? I would maintain that although we often don't see aspects of the 'behind the scenes' work of teachers we do learn much from the portrayals of teacher performance and interaction that is germane to the process of learning and the transmission of knowledge. Further, it does *not* detract from our learning if the message comes in the form of a stylised fictional drama: teachers and schools are the medium through which the educational message is transmitted (as well as being exemplars of good practice, role models etc.); films are a good medium through which we may reflect on the public perception of those teachers and schools, over time, with all its continuity and change. But we don't have to accept that these representations are 'true'.

Instead, we can endeavour to fight the tyranny of the visual, and break the code, as teachers who are *not* kow-towing to a government diktat, competing with each other for super-teacher status, swallowing whole the contrived collegiality of management, *nor* reheating a pre-cooked ready-meal curriculum. We can challenge the film representations; we are not all bullies and bottom-feeders, frauds and freaks, predators

and paedophiles. It's time to confront these representations, and confound them, but that can only be achieved, I believe, if teachers defy their emasculation (please excuse the gender bias in that word), earn the respect of our students and are afforded that reasonable independence that befits a *profession*. We must not just be the deliverers of someone else's curriculum, like some educational version of meals on wheels; we must aspire to be the greatest of chefs, with that mix of science and witchcraft at our fingertips. The Harry Potter generation might just demand it.

Appendix: Joseph and Branford (eds.) (1994) listed the multifarious roles played by 'teacher' (prior to preface).

Abuser, actor, adversary, advocate, animator, artist,
Baby-sitter, bad teacher, bore, buffoon,
Caricature, child, colleague, companion, controlled, controller,
Dentist, director of a play, disciplinarian, door closer, door opener, drill sergeant, dynamo,
Eccentric, elder, empowerer, engine, exception,
Father, female, fool, friend,
Gardener, good fairy, good teacher, guide,
Healer, helper, hero, heroine, human being, humiliator,
Ideal, inspiration, intellectual, interpreter, iron butterfly,
Joker, juggler,

Leader, learner, liberator, light breeze,
 Male, manager, martyr, matriarch, maverick, mechanic, member of mainstream culture, moral
 force, mother,
 Nonconformist, nonentity, novice, nurturer,
 Ogre, oppressor, orchestra conductor,
 People-pleaser, parent, pawn, pedant, plant, potter, presence, problem-solver, producer,
 professional, protector, puritan, pushover,
 Robot, role model,
 Sadist, saint, savior (sic), scholar, schoolmarm, scientist, smiler, soldier, stereotype,
 storyteller, supporting player,
 Therapist, tyrant,
 Victim, villain, visionary, voyager,
 Witch, woman, worker.

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