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THE HOLLYWOOD CURRICULUM:
TEACHERS AND TEACHING
IN THE MOVIES

by
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Approved by

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Fifty-one motion pictures (distributed widely in the United States over the past 60 years) are analyzed to construct a theory of curriculum in the movies grounded in the emerging field of cultural studies with particular ties to critical pedagogy. The social curriculum of Hollywood implicit in popular films is based on individual rather than collective action and relies on that carefully plotted action rather than meaningful struggle to ensure the ultimate outcome leaving educational institutions, which represent the larger cultural status quo, intact and in power. This dissertation ties Huebner's five frameworks for valuing curriculum with the author's interpretations of a number of commercial films to ground a discussion of the meaning of popular culture and its importance in a democratic vision for education. The films are viewed through four sets of interpretive lenses: viewing the "good" teacher through three of Huebner's value frameworks; viewing the "bad" teacher through Huebner's two remaining value frameworks; viewing the "gendered" teacher through the lens of feminist literature; and, viewing students through the lens of critical pedagogy. The author contends that popular culture constructs its own curriculum in the movies, a popular curriculum that remains largely unchallenged. The film texts are interrogated using the concepts of critical pedagogy. Interrogating the "Hollywood Curriculum" is to ask what it means as a culture to be responsive at both social and personal levels and to engage these films as both entertaining and potentially transformative.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The stories we hear and the stories we tell shape the meaning and texture of our lives at every stage and juncture. Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging to our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and our being known (1).

--Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings
Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education

It seems as though I have always been interested in popular culture, particularly television and the movies. Increasingly, what originated as a personal interest in the aesthetic dimensions of these particular mediums has become more centrally situated in theories linking mass culture and political struggle under the rubric of cultural studies. The literature of cultural studies is emerging with amazing rapidity. One unifying thread running through much of this research is the idea that scholars writing from this perspective using their own diverse methodologies openly state their point of view and take the further step of directly advocating change.¹ It is in this context that I

¹Writing in the "Introduction" to Cultural Studies editors Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler see participants in cultural studies research as "politically engaged participants" rather than chroniclers of cultural change (5) and see the role of

have begun to think about the way popular culture constructs its own curriculum in the movies through the on-screen relationship between teacher and student. The social curriculum of Hollywood implicit in popular films is based on individual rather than collective action and relies on that carefully plotted action rather than meaningful struggle to ensure the ultimate outcome leaving educational institutions, which represent the larger cultural status quo, intact and in power.

It is my plan here to use that research, coupled with a discussion of Huebner's five frameworks for valuing curriculum and my own interpretations of a number of commercial films, to ground a discussion of the meaning of popular culture and its importance in a democratic vision for education. Essentially, I will view these films through four sets of interpretive lenses: viewing the "good" teacher through three of Huebner's value frameworks; viewing the "bad" teacher through Huebner's two remaining value frameworks; viewing the "gendered" teacher through the lens of feminist literature; and, viewing students through the lens of critical pedagogy.

Students, parents and everyone else (except perhaps those adults who are able to observe teachers in various schools) have a very limited frame of reference for evaluating curriculum as it is played out in the classroom. Knowledge of this type tends to be based on personal experiences or on anecdotal conversations with others about their own personal experiences. I

cultural studies as "continuously undermining canonical histories even as it reconstructs them for its own purposes" (10). In Understanding Popular Culture John Fiske writes that the study of popular culture has recently begun to focus on popular culture as a "site of struggle" (20).

do believe, however, that general knowledge about the relationships between teachers and students, knowledge beyond the scope of the personal or anecdotal, is created by constructs of popular culture played out in the mass media. In "Working-Class Identity and Celluloid Fantasies in the Electronic Age," Stanley Aronowitz writes that individual and collective identities are constructed on three sites: "1. the biologically given characteristics which we bring to every social interaction; 2. givens that are often covered over by social relations, family, school; and 3. the technological sensorium that we call mass or popular culture" (197). Aronowitz maintains that "electronically mediated cultural forms" are the strongest components in the formation of cultural identities (205). Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner argue that film is a particularly potent form for establishing and reinforcing these social constructions.

Films transcode the discourses (the forms, figures, and representations) of social life into cinematic narrative.

Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality. That construction occurs in part through the internalization of representations (12-13).

In short, we borrow from the "scripts" of the films we see to help us create ourselves as characters and organize the plotlines of our daily lives.

This type of knowledge is far removed from the intentionally abstract musings frequently collected by professional theorists with a traditional bent

and packaged into convoluted manuscripts destined for arcane periodicals. Yet, the same theorists often write about these "electronically mediated cultural forms" and the mass audiences who enjoy them with unveiled contempt and a critical distance that implies an absence of familiarity with their subjects. Except for a few passing references to competing modes of inquiry, this work will unfold with the assumption that popular culture is an important and often overlooked source of social knowledge, and my arguments in the following sections, "Critical Theory and the Popular," "Struggle, Consent and Intertextuality" and "Applications for Popular Culture in Democratic Schooling," will fall under that assumption. In a subsequent section, "An Overview of Curriculum Theories," I will introduce a discussion of the value systems and curricular language employed by Huebner in "Curricular Language and Classroom Meanings." My purpose in combining Huebner's specific metaphors for curriculum with the larger discussion of meanings and popular culture is to explore the tension between static meaning concretized in most educational discourse and the dynamic way of viewing popular constructions in the context of on-going struggle.

By way of preview, let me say that my purpose in this writing is to reconcile the theoretical and the everyday by finding ways to ground the theoretical in the everyday. Let me borrow more eloquent language for this from Henry A. Giroux and Paulo Freire. In the introduction to Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life Giroux and Freire write that the book argues for:

...a theory of popular culture that embodies a language of both critique and possibility, a language that not only frees educators

from certain ways of defining public philosophy, leadership, and pedagogy but that also sheds light on some of the most pressing problems confronting schools and society, while simultaneously providing a vision capable of animating a democratic and popular public culture (viii).

The larger purpose of this work is to uncover several layers of meaning embedded in popular texts and reveal to teacher and student alike that even commercial Hollywood films are at once polysemic and complex.

While I may think about connections between the viewer and the film text in abstraction, I also live those connections in my day-to-day life and know that my relationship to the movies I watch is dynamic rather than static. I believe that films not only support multiple interpretations, but that those meanings read by the viewer will change over time. In accordance with theories of the postmodern, meaning(s) is not fixed; the "grand narrative has lost its credibility" (Lyotard, 37) and boundaries we have long accepted between "life" and "art," between "high art" and "low art," between socially constructed sex roles of the male and female and between academic disciplines have proved inadequate as the categories collapse under our critical gaze.

At the same time, film and literary criticism has frequently focused on gleaning *the* meaning from a particular text. Working from various theoretical models, scholars (and popular reviewers) have set out to convince readers that scholarly (and other published) interpretation represents the "true" meaning of the text. They frequently imply that this "true" meaning is inherent in the text and merely awaits their expert explication. While the

content and context of the text may set boundaries for possible interpretations, it is not correct to say either that those meaning(s) reside in the vision and voice of the author or intrinsically in the text itself. Meaning(s) resides in the space between the text and the reader where the images evoked by the first become inextricably linked to the context provided by the second. As John Fiske writes on Stuart Hall's theory of articulation:

To articulate has two meanings--one is to speak or utter (the text-centered meaning) and the other is to form a flexible link with, to be hinged with (the reader-centered meaning in which the text is flexibly linked with the reader's social situation). What a text "utters" determines, limits, and influences the links that can be made between it and its readers, but it cannot make them or control them. Only readers can do that. 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 (for texts must offer multiple utterances) as they construct and discover its points of pertinence in their social situation (146).

While the interpretations of some readers will undoubtedly be more persuasive than the interpretations of others, all interpretations should be treated as equally valid, if not equally persuasive, responses to the text. The responses of informed readers², the meaning(s) they find in the text, will

²The term "informed reader" is used here to describe a thoughtful viewer of the film text who considers thematic alternatives to the literal depictions on the screen. This is a viewer who consciously weaves his or her own experiences into the events of the film to create a

probably be more compelling and quite possibly more enduring than the responses of uninformed readers, but the facility of the reader in engaging the text does not influence the validity of the individual reader's interpretation.

I agree with Wolfgang Iser's argument that "the message travels two ways; the reader of the text 'receives' it by composing it" (21). Only by finding ways to describe the transaction between text and reader can we learn about the effects of the work. In making my argument that textual meaning(s) resides between the reader and the text rather than in the author or in the text itself, I do not wish to imply that every reader engages every text with the same intensity. Just as I contend that some readers, informed readers, will arrive at more compelling interpretations of a given text than others, I also want to add that some texts offer a richer array of possible meaning(s). For readers to arrive at compelling interpretations of a film text, the film must engage the reader with material that inspires intense interrogation, and the reader must approach the text with an aesthetic stance.

There are two central ideas related to the elevation of the reader that should be reiterated here: the "reader" of the text is ultimately another "author," and meaning(s) of the text resides between the text and the reader. Charles Eidsvik writes, "The film maker and viewer begin in the same place. They construct speculative-narrative worlds using the everyday languages of perceived reality as a base" (26). Think about that statement. The filmmaker and the viewer begin in the very same place, and both interrogate the text using their respective experiences as readers. The relationship between

series of concrete and abstract meanings for the film. The term is not used in the same sense as it is employed by Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," New Literary History. 2 (1970), p. 145.

readers and text is dynamic--it is a dialectic--and it is in the process of interrogating the text that readers find meaning(s). Louise Rosenblatt talks about the general resistance to elevating the role of the reader as a condition related to fear of "brash literary egalitarianism" (105). Learning to think about the reader as author and the author as reader also creates a precedent for collapsing the boundary erected between teacher and student, so that teachers allow themselves to become students in their own classrooms at the same time students gain the author-ity to share their own knowledge with teachers and other students.

Critical Theory and the Popular

The cultural studies explosion in academic institutions and among intellectuals writing internationally over the last decade is certainly not a spontaneous occurrence. While the influences on the movement are many, I shall consider two of them briefly here, along with a few words about cultural studies as a locus for considering popular artifacts of public culture. In Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity Douglas Kellner writes about Critical Theory as one of the most enduring products of the Institute for Social Research, a German research institute with a Marxist orientation often referred to as the 'Frankfurt School' (1). According to Kellner, the work of the 'Critical Theorists' is "distinguished by the close connection between social theory and cultural critique and by their ability to contextualize culture within social developments" (121). It was not until the 1930s, when members of the Institute were in exile in the United States, that they solidified their theories on mass culture. Kellner writes:

Adorno and Horkheimer adopted the term "culture industry", as opposed to concepts like "popular culture" or "mass culture", because they wanted to resist notions that products of mass culture emanated from the masses or the people. They saw the culture industry as involving administered culture, imposed from above, as an instrument of indoctrination and social control. The term "culture industry" thus contains a dialectical irony typical of the style of Critical Theory: culture, as traditionally valorized, is supposed to be opposed to industry and expressive of individual creativity while providing a repository of humanizing values. In the culture industries, by contrast, culture has come to function as a mode of ideological domination, rather than of humanization or emancipation (130-1).

The Critical Theorists conceptualized the culture industries against a cultural backdrop that included the rise of Nazism and America's massive World War II propaganda campaigns. It is not surprising that manipulation is central to their theories, and it is important to note that theories of audience manipulation have subsequently been granted their own academic corner in the communication discipline under the heading "persuasion."³

³In many academic institutions today departments dedicated to the study of communication, as it is generally called, have a comparatively recent history. Their traditions date back to rhetorical practices and theories of Ancient Greece, but more recently many scholars have aligned themselves unapologetically with the practices of contemporary social scientists, forsaking traditional methods of proof with the starkly positivist. I feel the need to include here a rather lengthy excerpt from Lowenthal's essay "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture" that Kellner labels a "sharp polemic" attacking "modern social science."

Empirical social science has become a kind of applied asceticism. It stands clear of any entanglements with foreign powers and

Cultural studies today is in many ways a legacy of British cultural studies, most particularly from work undertaken at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham in the 1960s and 1970s. Describing just what cultural studies means is difficult even when one restricts the discussion to one time period and location. Stuart Hall writes that the theoretical work of the Centre is more appropriately called "theoretical noise" because even the members of the collective working there did not always agree.⁴ After commenting on the disagreement, anger and silence that punctuated exchanges between colleagues at the Centre, Hall attempts to address areas of agreement about the nature of cultural studies.

Now, does it follow that cultural studies is not a policed disciplinary area? That it is whatever people do, if they choose to call or locate themselves within the project and practice of

thrives in an atmosphere of rigidly enforced neutrality. It refuses to enter the sphere of meaning. A study of television, for instance, will go to great heights in analyzing data on the influence of television on family life, but it will leave to poets and dreamers the question of actual human values of this new institution. Social research takes the phenomena of modern life, including the mass media, at face value. It rejects the task of placing them in a historical and moral context. In the beginning of the modern era, social theory had theology as its model, but today the natural sciences have replaced theology. This change in models has far-reaching implications. Theology aims at salvation, natural science at manipulation; the one leads to heaven and hell, the other to technology and machinery. Social science is today defined as an analysis of painstakingly circumscribed, more or less artificially isolated, social sectors. It imagines that such horizontal segments constitute its research laboratory, and it seems to forget that the only social research laboratories that are properly admissible are historical situations.

This excerpt is taken from p. 52 of the anthology Mass Culture, which was published in the United States in 1957 and included critiques of mass culture by Institute theorists.

⁴All of the material attributed to Stuart Hall in this section is taken from "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies" in Cultural Studies, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler. New York: Routledge. 1992.

cultural studies? I am not happy with that formulation either. Although cultural studies as a project is open-ended, it can't be simply pluralist in that way. Yes, it refuses to be a master discourse or a meta-discourse of any kind. Yes, it is a project that is always open to that which it doesn't yet know, to that which it can't yet name. But it does have some will to connect; it does have some stake in the choices it makes. It does matter whether cultural studies is this or that. It can't be just any old thing which chooses to march under a particular banner. It is a serious enterprise, or project and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the "political" aspect of cultural studies. Not that there's any one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something *at stake* [sic] in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope, is not exactly true of many other very important intellectual and critical practices. Here one registers the tension between a refusal to close the field, to police it and, at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them (278).

The Centre is important to me and is included here for several reasons other than its influence on international (and American) cultural studies. The Centre pushed studies of popular culture, particularly television and film, to the forefront and also addressed narrative research and questions about the nature of power through perspectives attentive to feminism and racial identity.

Finally, I turn to the burgeoning enterprise that today we call cultural studies. Cultural Studies, the anthology put together from the international conference "Cultural Studies Now and in the Future" held April 4-9, 1990 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has become sort of a handbook for students of cultural studies and one of its editors, Lawrence Grossberg, has become an intellectual cheerleader for the validation of the popular. In the introduction to their book, Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler argue that cultural studies is "anti-disciplinary" and certain to reside uncomfortably with other academic disciplines. They write:

The choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context. It is problematic for cultural studies simply to adopt, uncritically, any of the formalized disciplinary practices of the academy, for those practices, as much as the distinction they inscribe, carry with them a heritage of disciplinary investments and exclusions and a history of social effects that cultural studies would often be inclined to repudiate (2).

Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler write about the complexity and contentiousness of cultural studies. Because it is dependent on context for analysis, cultural studies cannot become entrenched; it must change its meanings and its uses to remain relevant.⁵ But, one consistency in cultural

⁵Certainly there are many, many people writing about the meaning of cultural studies and, relatedly, about the meaning of popular culture. There does seem to be a consensus, however, about the difficulty of defining those concepts with any degree of specificity. In the first chapter of Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life, for example, Giroux and Simon write:

...the concept of popular culture cannot be defined around a set of ideological meanings permanently inscribed in particular cultural

studies is its participants' commitment to openly subjective argument. Yet, in virtually all traditions of cultural studies, its practitioners see cultural studies not simply as a chronicle of cultural change but as an intervention in it, and see themselves not simply as scholars providing an account but as politically engaged participants (5). Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler argue that cultural studies is more than a theoretical enterprise, that it bridges theory and material culture (6). The absence of prescribed methodology and disciplinary boundaries in cultural studies offers me the opportunity to undertake this research in such a way that consciously exposes my own perspective instead of hiding my positions and my politics beneath a cloak of false objectivity. My project is intended to ground the theoretical in the everyday and, hopefully, to find ways to let teachers and students make meaning in their own lives as they claim ownership (and sometimes "authorship") of their own experiences. Popular film, rich in meaning(s) both fluid and diverse, offers an intersection for the theoretical and the everyday.

Struggle, Consent and Intertextuality

For the Critical Theorists the dialectics of culture--"the ways in which culture could be both a force of social conformity and one of opposition"--were a major concern of theorists writing about the culture industries (Kellner, 122). From the Critical Theorists of the Institute for Social Research

forms. On the contrary, because of their location within and as part of the dynamics of consent, the meaning of cultural forms can only be ascertained through their articulation into a practice and set of historically specific contextual relations which determine their political meaning and ideological interests (9).

to more recent devotees of cultural studies, the metaphor of struggle has been central to understanding the interaction between mass culture and its consumers. In offering suggestions for practitioners of contemporary cultural criticism, Kellner recommends a stronger commitment to critique of that dialectic. He recommends something much closer to what Hall terms "wrestling with the angels" as a metaphor for theoretical work (280).⁶ Kellner writes:

Rather than seeing its artifacts simply as expressions of hegemonic ideology and ruling class interests, it is preferable to view popular entertainment as a complex product that contains contradictory moments of desire and its displacement, articulations of hopes and their repression. In this view, popular culture provides access to a society's dreams and nightmares, and contains both ideological celebrations of the status quo and utopian moments of transcendence, moments of opposition and rebellion and its attempted containment. Recent studies of popular culture also show how social struggles and conflicts enter into works of popular entertainment, and see culture as a contested terrain, rather than a field of one dimensional manipulation and illusion (141).

Kellner's recognition of the complexity of any process designed to determine the meaning(s) of artifacts of popular culture opens up a space for discussing the consensual relationship between the consumer of popular culture and

⁶Similarly, in Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life Giroux and Simon write that "radical educators have attempted to analyze the terrain of schooling as a struggle of particular ways of life" (1).

product that is consumed and, by extension, the relationship between consent, pleasure and the popular.

Giroux and Simon construct a theory of popular culture based on three features. First, the concept of hegemony explains how the terrain of daily life can become a site of "struggle over and accommodation to the culture of subordinate groups." Second, the terrain of daily life is also a pedagogical process whose structuring principles are political and arise from the production of subjectivity. Third, hegemony is informed by consent, which specifies the limits and possibilities "of the pedagogical principles at work within cultural forms that serve in contradictory ways to empower and disempower various groups" (1989, 10). Giroux and Simon continue their discussion of popular culture and consent by exploring the dialectic of ideology and pleasure through a category they label "the persuasive." Generally, the persuasive refers to the hegemonic function of pedagogical processes to preserve dominant interests in tandem with the opportunity for resistance (14).

John Fiske introduces several interesting ideas that are worth discussing here before moving on to applications for the study of popular culture. First, there is the very notion of "the popular." What constitutes a popular text, or cultural artifact? Fiske is only one of many to point out that the postmodern world proscribes the separation between art and life, between "high" and "low" culture (1992, 154-5). The collapse of the constructed distinction between these categories opens up a wide range of cultural artifacts for interrogation. In Understanding Popular Culture Fiske says that popular culture is "made at the interface between the cultural resources provided by

capitalism and everyday life." He maintains that "popular discrimination," or the choices people make among the products of the culture industry, is related to issues of function rather than quality because it is "concerned with the potential uses of the text in everyday life. Three main criteria underlie this selection process: relevance, semiotic productivity, and the flexibility of the mode of consumption" (129). The popular text must be "producerly." By this, Fiske means that popular texts exhibit the dialectic, or struggle, discussed previously by Kellner and Giroux and Simon. "Producerly" texts, those that offer themselves for ready public consumption, reluctantly expose the weaknesses of their preferred meanings while trying unsuccessfully to repress or contradict meanings other than the preferred (104). Fiske writes:

The commodities produced and distributed by the culture industries that are made into popular culture are those that get out of control, that become undisciplined...their indiscipline is the indiscipline of everyday life, it is familiar because it is an inescapable element of popular experience in a hierachal power-structured society (104).

To analyze popular texts, Fiske argues, requires a "double focus." One must "focus on the deep structure of the text in the ways that ideological, psychoanalytic analyses and structural or semiotic analyses have proved so effective and incisive in recent scholarship" while also focusing "upon how people cope with the system, how they read its texts, how they make popular culture out of its resources" (105).

Finally, I want to offer up Fiske's notion of intertextuality as an eloquent complement to Grossberg's (et al) call for cultural studies to remain

"anti-disciplinary,"⁷ to Kellner's plea for dialecticism in critical studies of culture and to Hall's infusion of the personal into the study of the popular. Texts never exist separate from context. When a reader engages, or interrogates, a text, the act is never separated from that reader's own lived experience or from the other (and possibly competing) texts that reader has engaged. The text is incorporated into the reader's everyday life at the same time the reader's everyday life becomes part of the construction of the text.

Fiske writes:

Because of their incompleteness, all popular texts have leaky boundaries; they flow into each other, they flow into everyday life. Distinctions among texts are as invalid as the distinctions between text and life. Popular culture can be studied only intertextually, for it exists only in this intertextual circulation. The interrelationships between primary and secondary texts cross all boundaries between them; equally, those between tertiary and other texts cross the boundaries between text and life (126).

Similarly, I will attempt to dissolve the boundary constructed between theory and everyday life in the service of a critical pedagogy charged with infusing schools with democratic vision and making them cultural sites for promoting social justice.

An Overview of Curriculum Theories

Curriculum theorists run the gamut from pragmatists like Ralph W. Tyler, whose four step system takes the curriculum planner from selecting

⁷See footnote 1.

objectives to evaluation of their achievement, to Henry A. Giroux and Paulo Freire, who see curriculum grounded in an exploration of one's relationship to the world. These poles of theory range from an examination of ways to improve the efficiency of our present society with key beneficiaries being those currently in positions of power to an alternative view that explores the dynamics of power relationships as a means to create a more just society. Research by scholars like Jean Anyon has documented that in many cases curriculum is used to perpetuate the stratifications of represented classes.⁸ Many others have also written about the aptly labeled "hidden curriculum."

Because the stakes are high--in fundamental ways the stakes are our very way of life--the public discourse and debate over curriculum is often fierce even though the debated topic is frequently defined as something quite separate from curriculum. As Elliot W. Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance put it:

Controversy in educational discourse most often reflects a basic conflict in priorities concerning the form and content of curriculum and the goals toward which schools should strive; the intensity of the conflict and the apparent difficulty in resolving it can most often be traced to a failure to recognize conflicting conceptions of curriculum (1-2).

Those who speak the discourse of public education frequently do not bother to examine its conceptional underpinnings. Sometimes the culprit is our

⁸In "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work," for example, Anyon studies five elementary schools in contrasting social class communities. She identifies two as "Working-class Schools," a "Middle-class School," an "Affluent Professional School," and an "Executive Elite School." She finds that the school work assigned in the various schools seems to develop the skills the students will need as adults to work in jobs their parents currently hold, thus replicating and perpetuating the current stratification of social class. See the bibliography for a complete citation of this article.

inability to recognize the different meanings we attach to our common language, and other times it is a more fundamental difference in philosophy. Throughout it all theorists tend to ignore the validity of the personal in favor of establishing universal models. Hollywood, it appears, has its own model of curriculum theory, a model that exalts personal experience in a broad aesthetic-ethical-political sweep making curriculum and teaching one.

Throughout this dissertation I talk about curriculum in a language that arises from Dwayne Huebner's work in William Pinar's Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists, specifically from definitions found in "Curricular Language and Classroom Meanings" (217-235). Huebner identifies five "value frameworks" of curricular thought: technical, scientific, (a)esthetic, political and ethical. I have chosen to organize my own work in chapters two and three around the three value frameworks that are consistent with "good" teachers in the movies, (a)esthetic values, political values and ethical values. Huebner says that if educational activity were valued (a)esthetically, it "would be viewed as having symbolic and esthetic meanings" and might fall into at least three categories: in the first category it is "removed from the world of use"; the second category is focused on wholeness and design; and the third category involves symbolic meaning (226-7). Huebner says "Ethical valuing demands that the human situation existing between student and teacher must be uppermost, and that content must be seen as an arena of that human confrontation" (229). He adds that educational activity must not be seen as existing only between people but should instead include activity between students and other beings in the world. Huebner identifies political valuing in the context of power dynamics

in the classroom and cautions that "if power and prestige are sought as ends, rather than as means for responsible and creative influence, evil and immorality may be produced. Yet dreams and visions are not realized without personal or professional power" (224-5). This chapter will look at characteristics of "good" teachers in the movies and how those traits combine to create a stock character who fits into the Hollywood model.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

In this chapter I have provided a context for my research by grounding it in the emerging field of cultural studies and developing ties to Huebner's value frameworks of curriculum. Looking at commercial Hollywood films, I find a generic representation of the "good" teacher in the movies that is presented as a radical model. In fact, the Hollywood version of the "good" teacher merely tugs a little at the cornerstone of the institutional hierarchy. There are equally vivid representations of the "bad" teacher and the gendered teacher in these films.

Nevertheless, we are all consumers of this popular culture model of the "radical" teacher and undoubtedly construct our own notions about what it means to be a teacher, and what it means to be politically active, under the influence of this Hollywood ideal. For some of us that influence is predominant and for others of us it is slight, but the influence of popular culture is inescapable. There are, certainly, alternate discourses about teachers and teaching, including the overarching discourse education and curriculum theory. I have selected Huebner's five value frameworks for curriculum as one way of looking at the role teachers and teaching play in the films discussed here. The contrast between metaphors for teaching delineated in

Huebner's models and the more fluid meanings found from approaching these film texts as artifacts of popular culture exposes the tension inherent in these competing modes of inquiry and, additionally, the tension that exists within the latter mode when popular culture is viewed as a terrain of struggle. The purpose of this first chapter has been to lay out central questions about the role popular culture plays in our everyday lives and, more particularly, questions about how we can use the intersection between the popular and the personal as a place to create new meaning for the purpose of openly challenging the popular culture construction of curriculum and radical teaching.

In subsequent chapters I will begin to lay out the research I have completed by providing an overview of the themes found in the films used to analyze teachers and teaching in the movies. I have watched over fifty motion pictures on videotape and read synopses on several others that, although I have seen them previously, are not readily available on tape for review. Most are films that have had a theatrical release in the United States. Most of the films are American pictures. I have decided to focus on these movies because their general release in American theaters, accessibility in video rental stores, and telecast have made them part of this country's popular culture. These movies, which are listed in the filmography, reflect sixty years of film history and cover genres including drama, comedy, musical, horror, science fiction and action-adventure.

I will, in chapter two, construct what I term "The Hollywood Model" to outline the shared characteristics of the stock character presented in the movies as the "good" teacher. Who is the exalted teacher on the silver

screen? Typically, he or she is an outsider who is usually not well-liked by other teachers, who are typically bored by students, afraid of students, or eager to dominate students. The "good teacher" gets involved with students on a personal level, learns from those students, and does not usually fare very well with administrators. Sometimes these "good" teachers have a ready sense of humor. They also frequently personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in their students' lives.

In chapters three and four I will explore connections between Dwayne Huebner's value frameworks of curriculum and the Hollywood curriculum. Throughout these chapters I am talking about curriculum in a language that arises from Dwayne Huebner's work on aesthetic, ethical and political value frameworks for curriculum. This chapter will recall the characteristics of "good" teachers in the movies and demonstrate how teachers in the movies respond to curricular issues, ways that correspond to the three value frameworks described above. This chapter will explore the value frameworks in sections called "The Aesthetic Classroom," "The Ethical Relationship" and "The Political Language." Alongside this analysis of the films in the context of Huebner's metaphors, I will offer competing readings of the various film texts.

It is important to note that when Huebner's other two frameworks, scientific and technical, appear in these films, it is generally in a negative context associated either with a particular "bad teacher" or with school administration. In chapter four I will look at the role of the "bad" teacher in the movies and will incorporate Huebner's value frameworks into that analysis. Huebner describes the technical system as having a "means-ends

rationality that approaches an economic model. End states, end products, or objectives are specified as carefully and as accurately as possible, hopefully in behavioral terms. Activities are designed which become the means to these ends or objectives" (223). He writes that "Scientific activity may be broadly designated as that activity which produces new knowledge with an empirical basis. Hence, educational activity may be valued for the knowledge that it produces about that activity." (225). Again, as in chapter three, these films will also be discussed as artifacts of popular culture and competing interpretations of the film texts will be explored.

In chapter five I will look at the role gender plays in movies about teachers. Here I look more deeply into these films than Huebner's model permits, particularly into the few films that star women as the central character, and see the difference that the gender of the teacher character appears to make in the development of these film narratives. In subsequent sections, this chapter will discuss the role of nurture, the historic and contemporary constraints placed on women teachers, the teachers' acts of resistance in the contexts of dealing with administration and of political action and, finally, the divided lives that teachers have been forced to lead in our neighborhoods as well on our local movie screens. The work of feminist scholars has opened our eyes to the lived experience of women teachers. Their research provides a valuable contribution toward helping us understand the role gender construction and power relationships play in their lives and in their teaching. At the junctures of private and public, of self and culture, it becomes critical to look at the other forces that influence the way we think about women teachers. Certainly, one of these forces is

popular culture. Commercial films not only tell women teachers how other people construct them and re-articulate them as characters on the movie screen, these films also shape the way students and parents respond to teachers and the way women teachers respond to public opinion in the construction of their own lives.

Chapter six, which is the concluding chapter, will change focus from looking at the film texts' surface representations to asking even more pointed questions about the movies while making connections between images projected in these motion pictures and the notion of critical pedagogy. Here it becomes important to listen to student voices in films. Just what does it mean to be responsive at the social and personal levels? While teachers in the movies do serve as mediators who prepare students to meet the world that exists beyond the classroom, or as buffers that enable students to grow stronger before meeting that larger world, they are not effective in working with students to effect lasting change in the world, as the world is represented in these movies by hierarchical administrative and institutional structures. There is an opportunity for movies to do more than project an idealized model of teacher-student relationships; there is an opportunity to create a new Hollywood curriculum, one that engages in liberatory praxis.

Teachers in the movies wade into these waters, but they do not jump in and swim. Many of the Hollywood teachers jeopardize their jobs by tossing aside, if not openly flouting, school policies. Most try to transform their school's stated curriculum into a curriculum that better meets the needs of their students. Many take risks of one sort or another to try to connect with students on a personal level. Still, these Hollywood teachers are working on

easing transitions for their students between school and the world outside classroom walls instead of participating in transformations that could radically recreate schools and other societal institutions as agencies invested in creating justice. Time and time again as we watch individual teachers do battle with the hierarchy, we have the satisfaction (as an audience) of an implied win on some small front while the collective organizations remain largely intact. Thus, the individual figure Hollywood loves to glorify, the "little man" remains alone without the force of a collective to take truly transformative action, and the institutions remain unmoved.

Are we likely to see many of the teachers projected on the big screen at the local cinema or transmitted to the smaller screens in our own homes engage in praxis? No. Just as real teachers feel the tug of their personal compassion for and obligation to students being countered by the need to maintain their positions of authority in the school hierarchy, real movie writers and directors are torn between realizing their artistic or political vision and producing a "product" that studios know how to market and audiences find familiar enough to buy. That's precisely why the persistent incarnation of Hollywood's "good" teacher is a staple in films of all genres and time periods--the teacher in the movies is idealized enough to inspire viewers and manageable enough to leave the status quo intact.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLLYWOOD MODEL: WHO IS THE "GOOD" TEACHER?

Introduction

In the process of looking at over fifty films with teachers as either primary or important secondary characters, it quickly became evident to me that Hollywood dichotomizes teachers and teaching into the "good" and the "bad." In the case of "good" teachers, these characters are almost always written to conform to a pat standard I have chosen to label "the Hollywood model." In roughly half of the films I have watched, the teacher is a main character who is presented as a "good" force in the movies painted against a backdrop of institutional and societal woe and positioned as markedly different from most of the other teachers and virtually all of the administrators in their respective films.

Other people have written about these Hollywood teachers from different perspectives. In an article titled "Teacher in the Movies" Rob Edelman writes about teachers as they have been negatively stereotyped in some movies and characterized as positive role models in others. He sees "idealized" educators portrayed in two types of films:

...sentimental valentines to the careers of single-mindedly devoted teachers, anonymous human beings who over the years touch the lives of thousands; and [films about] instructors in tough urban schools whose colleagues are cynical, defeated by an educational bureaucracy and the antics of hostile students, yet who persist despite frustration

and heartbreak (28).

Edelman cites a lot of examples but pays too little attention to the types of relationships these teachers have with students. His article focuses mainly on summarizing film plots and categorizing the featured teachers by gender and film genre rather than digging beneath the celluloid surface. By searching for archetypal Hollywood teachers in distinctive film genres instead of looking at curricular issues, he underplays the overarching themes that connect many films that seem, on the surface, to have little in common. He does uncover the dramatic tensions between "good" teachers and "bad" teachers and between male teachers and female teachers, but there also political tensions in these films between the forces of social conformity and opposition, compelling tensions beneath the celluloid surface representing the poles cited by the Critical Theorists as "dialectics of culture."

William Ayers offers a more compelling analysis in "A Teacher Ain't Nothin' But a Hero: Teachers and Teaching in Film." Still, Ayers writes about only five films (Blackboard Jungle, Conrack, Teachers, Lean on Me, and Stand and Deliver), three of which are biopics¹, and his analysis focuses on viewing the featured teachers as saviors of students. His reading of these films is both highly personal and strongly political. He writes that these movies put teachers and schools in the position of saving children from drugs, violence, their families, and even themselves (147).

The problem is that most teachers are simply not up to the challenge. They are slugs: cynical, inept, backward, naive,

¹Biopic is a term commonly used for films based (often quite loosely) on biographical material.

hopeless. The occasional good teacher is a saint--he is anointed. His job--and it's always *his* [sic] job because the saint-teachers and most every other teacher in the movies is a man--is straightforward: he must separate the salvageable students from the others to be saved before it's too late, before the chosen few are sucked irredeemably back into the sewers of their own circumstances. Giving up on some kids is OK, according to the movies, but the bad teachers have already given up on *all* [sic] kids. That's their sin (147-8).

This analysis is interesting and instructive, but it is clearly only one critical interpretation of these films. In particular, I disagree with Ayers' reading of the relationships portrayed on screen between the teachers and students. Taken as a whole, these films are not saying that good teachers "give up" on the kids who are deemed unsalvageable. To the contrary, "good" teachers are deemed successful in most of these motion pictures precisely because they are able to "connect" with the most "difficult" students. The medium of film operates under many constraints, including time. The typical feature film runs somewhere between 90 and 120 minutes. It is a common narrative device in movies to use composite characters to represent entire populations. One might argue that the "difficult" student in these films actually represents an entire group of students. After all, in many of these films we may hear bells ring signalling class change and may see snippets of action in other classes, but the primary activity on-screen features the central "good" teacher and one class with several identifiable students. These constraints and narrative devices are not limited to movies about schools but, in fact, are

commonplace in movies about hospitals and athletic teams and courtrooms, to name a few examples.

Ayers also maintains that these films project a particular stance on teaching:

From Blackboard Jungle to Stand and Deliver, these popular teacher films are entirely comfortable with a specific common stance on teaching. This stance includes the wisdom that teaching can occur only after discipline is established, that teaching proceeds in states: first, get order; then, deliver the curriculum. The curriculum is assumed to be stable and good--it is immutable and unproblematic; it consists of disconnected (but important) bits and pieces of information (155).

While bits and pieces of this analysis are played out on-screen in some teacher movies, I would not make these final assessments based on viewing the five films discussed by Ayers even outside the larger context of the other films considered in this chapter. Hollywood's "good" teachers are generally not presented as part of the institutionalized curriculum--that's precisely what makes them "good"--but neither are they able to escape that dominant system. I think it is necessary to look further at the deep structures in these films and to recognize that "good" teachers in the movies are often presented as "radicals" who challenge the system while they are, in fact, not in the least bit radical and win only the occasional symbolic victory while effectively changing nothing about the corrupt infrastructures of the educational institutions depicted in these films.

These films are constructed with recognizable patterns, but there are competing interpretations to what Fiske terms the "preferred meanings" of each of these film texts (104). As I discuss the Hollywood model throughout this chapter, I will also call attention to the tension between the way motion pictures construct the "good" teacher, ultimately, as a tool of social conformity while positioning these teachers on the surface as representing opposition in the form of resistance to the "system." Clearly, there are several elements that are found over and over again in these films, elements that serve to define the "good" teachers while also drawing the inevitable contrast between these characters and the other "bad" teachers in the movies. Just who is the exalted teacher on the silver screen? Typically, he or she is an outsider who is usually not well-liked by other teachers, who are typically bored by students, afraid of students, or eager to dominate students. The "good teacher" gets involved with students on a personal level, learns from those students, and does not usually fare very well with administrators. Sometimes these "good" teachers have a ready sense of humor. They also frequently personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in their students' lives.

In my analysis of how Hollywood constructs the "good" teacher, I have used as examples films that have a teacher as one of their primary characters and that include a number of scenes showing that teacher in the classroom with students. I have also selected films that are widely available to general audiences. I have decided to include only those movies here because their general release in American theaters, accessibility in video rental stores, and telecast have made them part of this country's popular culture. No distinction has been made between private and public schools or between

grade levels because any of those distinctions would be artificial in the face of the overarching similarities between these motion pictures. The films I have watched span sixty years of film history and represent diverse film genres. Despite their great breadth, these films tell essentially one story about teachers--good teachers are projected on the screen as bright lights in schools of darkness. None of my work here attempts to reconcile the images these films project with the daily activities in school classrooms, but I do attempt to give some definition to the constructed reality that is the particularly Hollywood version of the "good" teacher and argue that the "leaky boundaries" of these popular film texts allow them to intertextually influence our lives inside and outside the classroom in ways that are undeniable if not precisely measurable.

Teacher as Outsider

That these teachers are portrayed as renegades of a sort situated outside the mainstream should not come as a surprise. After all, Hollywood has built its fortunes on rugged cowboys, the detectives of film noir, and underdogs or anti-heroes tugging at the cornerstone of the establishment. The movies have traditionally championed individualism so long as that "rugged individual" presented as the focal point of countless film narratives remains a loner without the power of a collective force. This construction allows movie heroes to inspire us with their resistance without letting them present a serious challenge to the dominant ideology of our cultural institutions. A quick survey supports this thesis. In To Sir With Love Sidney Poitier plays Mark Thackery, an engineer who is teaching because he has been unable to

find a job in his field. Bette Davis plays Miss Moffat in The Corn Is Green, a woman with an Oxford education in 1895 who moves to Wales to pull young boys out of the coal mines and put them in school. Jaime Escalante, played by Edward James Olmos, has given up a lucrative job in industry to teach barrio kids in Stand And Deliver, a true story. LouAnne Johnson's book about her teaching experiences has come to the screen as Dangerous Minds, a film starring Michelle Pfeiffer. In this film Pfeiffer plays Johnson, an ex-Marine hired to teach English in a special program for bright but "difficult" kids before she has actually earned her teaching certification. In Conrack, an autobiographical piece by Pat Conroy, Jon Voight stars as a white, liberal teacher sent to fill-in at a poor, all-black school on an island off the coast of South Carolina. In yet another biopic, The Miracle Worker, Anne Bancroft plays Annie Sullivan, a nearly blind woman hired to teach Helen Keller. In Teachers Nick Nolte plays Alex Jurrell, a disgruntled pseudo-hippie, near-alcoholic, who won't play ball with the administration or with the teachers' union. In The King And I Deborah Kerr's Anna is a foreigner. In Summer School Mark Harmon plays Freddie Shoupe, a P.E. teacher coerced into teaching remedial English. In Renaissance Man Danny Devito is Bill Rago, an unemployed advertising executive who ends up teaching Army recruits how to "comprehend." And, in Kindergarten Cop, Arnold Schwarzenegger's Detective Joe Kimball is an undercover cop who decides to become a teacher after posing as one. The list goes on cutting across film genres to clearly cast "good" teachers (and teachers who become "good") in the role of outsider, unliked by other teachers and administrators who perceive them as threats to the status quo.

While Hollywood ostensibly positions these teachers as outsiders, they are, in fact, characters who operate from positions of relative privilege. Consider for a moment that all of these characters are well educated. If their primary field is not always education, one cannot argue that Mark Thackery has a degree in engineering, LouAnne Johnson and Bill Rago have degrees in literature, and Jaime Escalante is trained in both math and computers. All of these characters are also members of a ubiquitous "middle class" that seems to envelop all of the depicted teachers while, in some cases, putting a sharp division between them and students from working class, inner city or, occasionally, even elite student populations. Rather than challenging notions about social class, Jaime Escalante, LouAnne Johnson and others are determined to deliver their students to the next rung of the meritocracy's proverbial "ladder of success" as if helping students fit into the system (and thereby legitimize it) is preferable to changing it.

Finally, there are a number of examples of white teachers working with classes in which students of color are the majority. When this is the case, the issue of privilege by virtue of skin color is never directly addressed. Consider the film To Sir With Love. Mark Thackery is a black man teaching mostly white students in a public school in London during the 1960's, but he has come to them from British Guiana (formerly British Gyana) where blacks are the majority and he is both better educated and more financially secure than most of his students and their families. There are plenty of examples of teachers trying to move "underprivileged" students into the "mainstream" but virtually no examples of "overprivileged" teachers offering critique, or

even serious acknowledgement, of their own relative privilege by virtue of their ethnicity, social class or education.

Personally Involved with Students

These teachers are frequently more closely aligned with their students than with other adults in the school. The teacher-student relationships as portrayed in films vary in their degree of intimacy but often involve some sort of "breaking the rules." To play this behavior out on a continuum from relatively benign to quite dangerous, let's start with Stand And Deliver. In this film Escalante provides a bright student, who is also a gang member, with three sets of books--one for his locker, one for his class, and one for his home--so that his friends won't see him carrying books and tease him. In Looking For Mr. Goodbar Diane Keaton plays Theresa Dunn, a teacher of deaf children. Dunn convinces a social worker to bend a few rules to help one of her young students get her own hearing aid. Robin Williams plays John Keating in Dead Poets Society. When one of his students at a prestigious, Northeastern prep school wants to try out for a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream despite his father's disapproval, Keating's challenge to "Seize the Day!" outweighs paternal admonitions with dire consequences. In Kindergarten Cop, Detective Kimball gets involved in a domestic situation when a child in his class and the boy's mother are being beaten by the child's father. Kimball goes so far as to beat up the father. In Teachers, Alex Jurrell returns a Driver's Education car that is stolen by one of his students for joyriding, covers for the same student who "misappropriated" a camera for a class project, and takes a female student to have an abortion--she was

impregnated by another teacher. And, in Sarafina!, Whoopi Goldberg's character Mary Masembuko asks a student to dispose of a gun hidden in her home when the teacher is taken away by soldiers for "questioning" during a State of Emergency declared by the South African Government. The students, many of whom are soon to face such "questioning" themselves, never see their teacher again. Most are tortured; some are murdered.

In these movies, it is frequently a measure of the teacher's success that he or she must break through to "reach" a very difficult or withdrawn student. That process invariably involves a complicated dance with steps forward offset by steps backward. The breakthrough can come only when the student and teacher develop sufficient trust--when the student realizes that the teacher really cares about the student. In the vast majority of cases, that student is male. This aspect of the cinematically constructed relationship between teachers and students is disturbingly reminiscent of the widely publicized 1992 report by the American Association of University Women entitled "How Schools Shortchange Girls." Several of the movie classrooms contain only male students.

These films clearly articulate a tension teachers face between responding to the needs of their students and advancing the agendas of their administrators and other school officials. While these films present almost all of the relationships between "good" teachers and their students as risky because they fall outside the express advancement of the "stated curriculum," there is actually very little that is subversive about these encounters and activities. With the very notable exception of Sarafina!, there is not much in these films beyond minor policy infractions. Conroy means well in Conrack,

for example, when he takes his black students trick-or-treating on the white mainland against the superintendent's orders, but the gesture is mostly symbolic. The teacher's righteous indignation and court-supported dismissal is ultimately little more than a minor blip on the already changing social landscape of his hometown. But, the short-term success or failure of a particular teacher is not the point in these movies. The point is that "good" teachers take these risks, even risks over relatively unimportant events, to prove that they care about their students. These movies are glutted with symbolic gestures on behalf of students in place of collective action linking teachers and students, a linkage that would demonstrate a very different sort of caring for students.

Teachers Learning from Students

Teachers in the movies usually end up learning valuable lessons from their students, or from a particular student. As a parting shot in The Blackboard Jungle, Gregory W. Miller, played by a very young Sidney Poitier, tells his teacher, Rick Dadier, played by Glenn Ford, "I guess everyone learns something in school--even teachers." Sometimes the lessons are simple niceties that make everyday life more pleasant, such as the lesson of friendship that his boys teach Mr. Chipping in Goodbye, Mr. Chips. Sometimes the lesson is that teachers make a difference. A lesson that causes Shoupe to believe in himself in the inane comedy Summer School, causes Kimball to become a "real" teacher in the formulaic action-adventure-comedy Kindergarten Cop, and causes the teachers in Educating Rita, Little Man Tate, and The Man Without A Face (played by Michael Caine, Dianne Wiest, and

Mel Gibson respectively) to find the meaning to live richer lives than they lived before special students came into their lives.

Unfortunately, the lessons these teachers learn are usually little more than bromides that might have appeared in elementary primers a hundred years ago. I am reminded of my favorite title card from the Charlie Chaplin film Modern Times in which the Little Tramp looks over at Paulette Goddard's character winningly and the card proclaims "Buck up. Never say die." These teachers repeatedly "learn" that by "caring enough" (whatever that means) and never giving up on the most "difficult" students, they can truly make a "difference." The celluloid world of teaching is filled with pretty platitudes that keep teachers isolated in the classroom toiling against a system that doesn't care and against students who don't come around until the final reel. By that time, the teacher is ready to quit, despite that implicit dictum, "Quitters never win, and winners never quit."

The threat of losing the teacher, or sometimes actually losing the teacher against his or her will, mobilizes the students, so that they can finally deliver their own lesson to the teacher. Theirs is an inspiring but intrinsically hollow claim that "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again" is the ticket after all. The students proclaim that their "good" teacher has reached them and helped them to "be all they can be." It is a proclamation celluloid teachers accept without question. It is a simple lesson that pleases an audience and assuages lingering public fears that, perhaps, inadequate (and inequitably distributed) resources and (often) irrelevant curriculum are problems that even the most dedicated individual teachers cannot overcome alone in their own classrooms.

Tension Between the Teacher and Administrators

The very best example of the antagonistic relationship between Hollywood teachers and administrators probably comes from another biopic, Lean On Me. In this film Morgan Freeman plays "Crazy" Joe Clark, the highly publicized principal with a bullhorn and baseball bat brought in to bring order to Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey. What casual viewers of the film may easily overlook is the first sequence of the movie. Twenty years before he became principal of Eastside, Joe Clark was a teacher at the same school. But, was it really the same school?

The film opens with Clark teaching a class full of white students. He has an afro, wears a dashiki, and uses games to encourage the students in the classroom to learn history. He is energetic in the classroom, but his hands, empty of the bullhorn and baseball bat to be seen later, are used to issue nurturing touches of encouragement to the students. Clark is called from his classroom by another black teacher to crash a meeting between the teachers' union and school officials where Clark is being sold-out, transferred because he's a troublemaker. He walks down a long, immaculate hallway in outrage, leaving the school for twenty years.

The film resumes with letters spelling "Twenty Years Later" on the lower half of the frame. The immaculate hallway dissolves into a littered passage filled with all types of graffiti. When the new image has completely replaced the old one, silence is interrupted by a heavy metal song that starts off with these words, "Welcome to the jungle." Students spill out into the hallway, and the contrast is complete. These students are almost all people of

color. When Joe Clark comes back into the picture at Eastside, he is the principal, an autocratic nightmare who blames the teachers in the school for poor test scores and poor control over students while issuing dictatorial platitudes in place of partnership. His single mission is to raise test scores so that the state does not take over the school from the municipality. Here's one example of the rhetoric he employs at his first faculty meeting at Eastside:

This is an institution of learning, ladies and gentlemen. If you can't control it, how can you teach? Discipline is not the enemy of enthusiasm...My word is law. There's only one boss in this place, and it's me, the HNIC.

When a white teacher mouths the letters HNIC with a quizzical expression, a black colleague informs him that that particular acronym stands for "head nigger in charge."

Clark leaves no doubt just who is in charge. At his first assembly at the school, he ceremoniously calls 300 of the "worst" students to the stage and tells them to leave school. When his security force has escorted the "losers" off the stage, Clark warns the remaining 2,700 students to shape up, or "next time it may be you." It should come as no surprise that Clark has been something of a darling to conservatives who want to blame anything or anyone except the system for "failures" in education. Clark tells the students that his program isn't just about test scores; it's about achieving the American Dream. He says, "If you do not succeed in life, I don't want you to blame your parents. I don't want you to blame the white man. I want you to blame yourselves. The responsibility is yours."

Perhaps the most telling episode in the film is the way Clark fires the music teacher who does not interrupt her class quickly enough and scurry to the door when the principal appears.² She is not cordial to Clark. She is agitated by the interruption in class time because, as she explains to him, she is preparing the chorus for their annual concert at Lincoln Center. He fires her in the hallway for "rank insubordination" after canceling the trip because it did not have his prior approval. Later he glosses over the incident saying, "What good is Mozart going to do for a bunch of kids who can't get a job?" without ever realizing that Mozart and the thrill of performing at Lincoln Center once a year may be the lifeline that keeps some of those kids in school and may provide the only taste of success they have ever known.

Most of the teachers in the movies have conflict with administrators over unorthodox teaching methods and their reluctance to come under their stodgy supervisor's control. At least five of the teachers in the films I watched lose, or come close to losing, their jobs. Others, like the venerable Mr. Chips, are routinely passed over for promotion. I chose Joe Clark as the primary example here because teacher Joe Clark would have never tolerated the brutality of principal Joe Clark, and principal Joe Clark would never have tolerated the free spirit of teacher Joe Clark. The starkness of the contrast makes this an exceptional example.

As dramatic, and sometimes melodramatic as the encounters between "good" teachers and "bad" administrators in the movies may be, there is really little substantive about the conflict, and there is never any positive

²Ironically, this same actor plays Carla Nichols, an unsympathetic assistant principal at Parkmont High School who hires LouAnne Johnson as a teacher in Dangerous Minds.

change that comes out of it. Most often these teachers enter the fray on behalf of a particular student or a group of students and take a position seen by administrators as counter-productive to the measurable outcomes they seek, good discipline and improved standardized test scores. The goals of these teachers and administrators are so completely different that they engage in their own respective diatribes without ever conveying one to the other what they really mean. Some of their monologues are eloquently phrased and some are backed by inspiring musical scores, but even when two characters are on-screen at the same time their lines are presented as monologue rather than dialogue because neither side chooses to listen to the other. It is a construction that benefits the powerful administrators by preserving for them the entrenched support of their bureaucracies while casting the well-meaning teacher back into the classroom with students who are presented as equally powerless.

A Personalized Curriculum

In the Hollywood model teachers frequently use everyday events to personalize the curriculum for their students. In some cases it is a teaching methodology that reveals a teacher's underlying curricular philosophy. Often this occurs in tandem with humor as a teaching technique. In Stand And Deliver Jaime Escalante enters class the second day wearing an apron and a hat of the type worn by short order cooks. He uses a large cleaver to chop apples and makes wisecracks to interest his students in percentages. He also tries to give his students a sense of ownership of the subject by telling them, all of whom are Chicano, that their ancestors, the Mayans, developed the

concept of zero, not the Greeks or Romans. He tells them that math is in their blood.

In another example, Mark Thackery ceremoniously dumps his copies of the text books in the garbage can in To Sir With Love when he realizes that his students are about to graduate and know nothing that will impact their adult lives. Thackery sets up a less hierarchical classroom structure built on mutual respect and conversation. When a student asks what they are going to talk about, Thackery replies, "About life, survival, love, death, sex, marriage, rebellion, anything you want." He tells them it is their duty to change the world and cites their hairstyles, clothes, and music as examples of their rebellion. He shares pertinent pieces of his own life with the students to let them know him as a human being instead of hiding behind the position of teacher. "I teach you truths. My truths. It is kind of scary dealing with the truth. Scary and dangerous." It comes as no surprise that, by the end of the movie, Thackery has decided to turn down an engineering job and continue to be a teacher in a working class London neighborhood.

There are many, many other examples. Some of the examples tend to focus more overtly on a teacher's teaching method. In Children Of A Lesser God, for example, William Hurt plays James Leeds, a teacher in a special school for the deaf. He uses rock music to convince the students to dance and sing as he leads them. For Hurt, this teaching method is a tool for furthering communication between himself and the students to develop a trusting relationship that can provide a foundation for addressing other issues. Other examples are more directly curricular. In The Blackboard Jungle Dadier brings in a cartoon version of Jack And The Beanstalk for thematic analysis,

and the resulting conversation is the first productive class period we have seen on the screen. Jurrell repairs the radiator in his classroom while reminding his students that "Learning is limitless" in Teachers. In Summer School Shoupe bargains with the students, agreeing to perform personal favors for them in return for their attention in class and time out of class spent studying. Perhaps the most poignant example comes from Conrack. Conroy bucks the system to take his students to the mainland for trick-or-treating on Halloween. These children have not only never heard of Halloween, they have never before left their island home. When they reach the superintendent's door, he greets them with a smile and gives the children fists full of chocolate kisses. The next day he sends Conroy a telegram with news of his dismissal as a teacher.

It is this element of the Hollywood model that contributes most directly to the construction of the "good" teacher as a "radical." In all of these cases, "good" teachers discard or modify the approved curriculum to try to find a social curriculum that is more relevant to their students' lives. While this effort may make these teachers "radical" in the eyes of the administrators who employ them and the larger public audience for Hollywood films, there is actually nothing very radical, or even progressive, about what these teachers do in their classrooms. They are, with few exceptions, non-political and are less concerned about social justice than about trying to help their particular students get their own slice of the capitalist pie.

Conclusion

The men and women who are "good" teachers in the movies are not perfect, but if you were to ask the students they teach what makes them different they would probably tell you that these teachers "really care" about their students and are willing to do right by them at great personal cost. For Escalante that cost is the wages lost when he leaves a lucrative job in the computer industry to teach in Los Angeles' public schools. For Conroy that cost is the loss of his job. For others it is the threat of losing their jobs. And, for Masembuko the cost of teaching her students the truth about their history and themselves is her very life. But, Masembuko is the exception. In her classroom the lectures become overtly political as she finds ways to make lessons on the dominant ideologies of other cultures throughout history illuminate the oppression her students suffer under apartheid.

For the other teachers, having a point of view seems out of the question. It is permissible for these "good" teachers to care about students and even to advocate for them on a limited basis, but their connections must stay personal and never enter the realm of the overtly political. Hollywood's "good" teacher is a mediator, or perhaps a buffer, but never a successful organizer. They help their students make difficult transitions into the "mainstream" of the dominant culture and even validate the meritocracy by helping some of their students "make it." Hollywood, like our educational bureaucracy, finds it acceptable for Jaime Escalante to challenge officials representing ETS, a company offering a standardized test in calculus, when those officials accuse Escalante's students of cheating, but it never seems remotely possible that Escalante might challenge the validity of the test itself

and the legitimacy of an educational system that assigns human worth on the basis of these scores.

The elements of the Hollywood model of the "good" teacher are constructed in the movies in ways that are intended to symbolize the "radical" or "progressive" teacher on-screen, but these elements may also be read as constraints that lock these same teachers into the role of fostering social conformity instead of organizing opposition. Remember, the "good" teacher is typically an outsider among teachers and also has an antagonistic relationship with school officials. By pitting the individual "good" teacher against the institutions of education in symbolic rather than meaningful action, the imbalance of power makes it impossible for the teacher, even with the tentative or limited help of students, to "win." Making the teacher an outsider precludes involving him or her in collective action with other teachers and also eliminates the possibility of dialogue between the "good" teacher and the representatives of educational bureaucracy. No matter how sympathetic we find the "good" teacher on-screen, the power imbalance between this individual hero and the forces-that-be is too great for him or her to topple the institutional hierarchy. We have also discussed the ways in which the "good teacher" gets involved with students on a personal level and learns from those students. Still, all too often that personal involvement is superficial, and the lessons are trite. Even when "good" teachers insinuate themselves into the personal lives of students with the intention of helping them, they get bogged down dramatic moments that sometimes make compelling individual scenes but never lead to lasting change. These films invert the slogan "the personal is political," and we see that in classrooms on

the silver screen personal angst, and even oppression, is not constructed in political terms. Similarly, the lesson that the "good" teacher learns from his or her students is often just another barrier to political action. By giving the "good" teacher the message that it is enough just to care about them and to stay in their classroom despite disappointment, the individual "good" teacher stays isolated and politically inactive. In the same vein, these teachers frequently personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in their students' lives, but a more "radical" approach would be to directly challenge the validity of the curriculum itself instead of merely trying to make the curriculum more manageable for their students. Finally, 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.

CHAPTER III

THE AESTHETIC-ETHICAL-POLITICAL VALUE FRAMEWORKS OF "GOOD" TEACHERS IN THE MOVIES

Introduction

In chapter one I described the Hollywood curriculum in Huebner's terms as broadly aesthetic-ethical-political, and in chapter two I have established the Hollywood model as a standard construction of "good" teachers in the movies. In this chapter "good" teachers are analyzed in the context of Huebner's applicable value frameworks with special attention accorded to the way Huebner's clearly delineated metaphors can be employed in reading these film texts alternately as narratives of social conformity or narratives of opposition. It is the "leaky boundaries" (Fiske, 126) of these popular texts coupled with the absence of boundaries between our lives and the viewing of these texts that make such intertextual interpretation not only possible but also necessary for making connections between ideas and experiences that allow us access to the richest interpretations of these texts.

In the movies teachers and students move around on-screen before us in a social context that is identifiable as neither Modernist nor postmodernist, despite the fact that these films play a pivotal role in creating our collective cultural subjective.¹ In these movies there is usually a social

¹To read more about ideas related to the collective cultural subjective see Casey on the "text in context" (1993), see Gramsci on "collective subjective" (1980), and see Fish on "interpretive community" (1980).

vacuum outside the schools and an ambiguous (though not specifically postmodern) social context inside the schools. The movies I am writing about are mostly mainstream Hollywood fare as opposed to European art films, independent productions or experimental films. Their narrative structures are generally linear and hero-centered. Their explicit signifiers (some of which were explored or alluded to in the previous section) are recognizable features in other films representing many different genres. Yet, there is more to be uncovered. It is the coupling of the explicit signifiers and themes with what I find implicit in these film texts that leads me to explore the aesthetic classroom, the ethical relationship (between teachers and students), and the limited political language (of teachers) in the movies.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Hollywood films about teachers and teaching are neither simply cooptative nor resistant; they function at a level of complexity in which they are both at once. The dramatic tension heightened in commercial films with traditional narrative devices and various production elements is much more obvious than the deeply embedded, but still very real, tensions beneath the celluloid surface that forms the basis for what the Critical Theorists term "dialectics of culture." Just as individual films may present elements affirming both social conformity and opposition, these films also present a multiplicity of meanings that may be interpreted aesthetically, ethically or politically. While some films appear to lend themselves more directly to interpretation from the perspective of a particular value framework, there is a great deal of overlap.

The Aesthetic Classroom

In "The Art of Being Present: Educating for Aesthetic Encounters" Maxine Greene challenges the superiority of the technical-scientific discourse of curriculum and affirms human consciousness as it is nurtured in the classrooms of the movies.

We need to think about the creation of situations in which preferences are released, uncertainties confronted, desires given voice. Feeling and perceiving and imagining must, at least on occasion, be given play. Perhaps most important of all: students must be brought to understand the importance of perspective, of vantage point, when it comes to interpreting their lived worlds. The idea of interpretations seems to me to be crucial, that and the realization that "reality"--if it means anything--means interpreted experience (123).

Giving students the tools to interpret their lives and the world outside them is central to the aesthetic classroom. Conroy takes his students to the woods away from the schoolhouse to teach them the names of flowers they have seen but not known their entire lives. He teaches the students to swim in a project that starts out as political--to empower them to meet the river that has claimed the life of someone from nearly every family--and turns into a transcendent time of play in the water beneath the blue sky and burning sun. During a summer school session Conroy introduces the class, a class comprised of 5th through 8th graders, to classical music via an old record player and an assortment of record albums. The children are unable to say Beethoven and call him "Bay-cloven," just as their mouths say "Conrack"

when they try to voice Conroy. Even so, they latch on to the image of death knocking at the door when their teacher plays the Fifth Symphony. Their awareness inspires Conroy, who, with a sheen of perspiration clinging to his pale skin, looks across at their dark faces with pride and says:

Bee-cloven'd be proud of you. Willie Mays'd be proud of you, and from now on, we're going to be proud of ourselves. We're going up the hill, gang. A foot may slip here or there, but nobody's gonna fall.

Later on, when Conroy tells his superintendent that he plans to take the same children trick-or-treating, the older man fails to see the value of such an excursion. "A trip like that isn't worth a pound of cow dung. Those kids don't need trips. They need fundamentals. They need drill and more drill." As Anyon has pointed out, whether these students need "drill and more drill" is not the point.² Society has adopted a system in which children who are poor and whose parents are largely uneducated are being trained in school for adult lives spent at repetitious factory and textile jobs. If school is unmeaningful, or even unpleasant, that is appropriate training for their working lives. At least it is appropriate training for those kids who grow up to find work. To teachers in the movies, however, trips and other aesthetic experiences are the fundamentals for all children. In Conrack Pat Conroy pays for taking his class trick-or-treating with his job. The superintendent has him fired. At the end of the movie as Conroy's boat is leaving the dock, the

²See footnote 8 in chapter one. In Anyon's research on what she termed "Working-class Schools," she found that all subjects were taught in a way that emphasized rote, mechanical work with very little explanation and contextualization.

students play Beethoven's Fifth Symphony while they grieve his loss as they would a death.

The film, apart from the aesthetic values propagated by Conroy, offers competing messages of oppressive social conformity and opposition to that oppression. Conroy is clearly heroic in his efforts to challenge the institutional hierarchy that dictates blatantly unequal educational practice in his community. Simultaneously, that hierarchy is presented as stable, and even comfortable, to most of the community it serves.

Sometimes aesthetic experiences are grounded in the everyday. Annie Sullivan uses the tactile features of water and grass and baby dolls to draw a response from Helen Keller. Other times aesthetic experiences are grounded in various disciplines. In Dead Poets Society John Keating's teaching comes from his own passionate love of poetry. He urges his students to "Seize the day!" On the first day of class Keating has his students rip the introduction out of their poetry books, an introduction that instructed students to evaluate poems by graphing them mathematically. At first the boys are reluctant, but soon they are ripping pages with abandon. Coming across on screen as the embodiment of raw energy, Keating jumps on his desk at the front of the class and proclaims:

I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things in a different way. See, the world looks very different from up here. You don't believe me? Come, see for yourselves. Come on. Come on. Just when you think you know something you have to look at it in another way. Even though it might seem silly or wrong, you must try. Now, when

you read, don't just consider what the author thinks. Consider what you think. boys, you must strive to find your own voice because the longer you wait to begin, the less likely you are to find it at all. Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation." Don't be resigned to that.

Reluctantly at first then vigorously, the students walk to the front of the class and take turns standing upon their teacher's desk.

Keating's infectious spirit gives the students the courage to audition for plays to call girls on the telephone for dates and to write poetry. Mr. Nolan, the Headmaster at Welton Academy and a former English teacher, calls Keating down for some of his unorthodox teaching methods in the following exchange:

Nolan: But, John, the curriculum here is set. It's proven.
It works. If you question it, what's to prevent them
from doing the same?

Keating: I always thought the idea of education was to
learn to think for yourself.

Nolan: At these boys' age? Not on your life. Tradition,
John. Discipline. Prepare them for college, and
the rest will take care of itself.

The unresolvable dichotomy between the aesthetic curriculum and the rigidly technical curriculum is played out in a symbolic battle over one student in this film, Neil Perry. Neil's father, a man of relatively modest

means, is constantly pushing his son to excel academically. His measure for that success is good grades and acceptance to an Ivy League college, followed by admission to a prestigious medical school. Although Neil does get good grades, his father continually pushes for more. He enrolls Neil in summer science courses. He forbids his son to work on the school yearbook or take on additional extracurricular activities.

Neil sees a flier announcing auditions for A Midsummer Night's Dream at a nearby school. He wins the role of Puck and proceeds with rehearsals without telling his father. Neil decides he wants to study acting rather than medicine. When Neil discusses the problem with Keating, the teacher encourages his enthusiasm but cautions him to discuss the situation with his father and make Mr. Perry see how very important this is to Neil--something the student is unable to do.

Opening night Neil gives a rich performance. His father appears in the audience, but Neil continues as if the magic he is creating on stage could dissuade Mr. Perry's determination to control his son's life. Mr. Perry pulls his son from the stage after the final curtain and takes him home, telling him on the way that he has been withdrawn from Welton Academy and will be going to a military academy. That night, as his parents sleep, Neil stands naked before an open window wearing his headdress from the play and whispers in the cold moonlight, "I was good." Later he creeps downstairs and shoots himself with his father's gun. For Neil, being forced away from the things that gave his life meaning was to have no life at all. Perhaps the only way Neil can exert his right to self-determination in his particular situation is to make this final choice. It is the contradictions inherent in these film texts

that allow for polysemic readings. In this case, Neil's death may be read as a final, defiant act of resistance or as an acknowledgement that the societal forces of conformity are too great and powerful to resist.

The Ethical Relationship

In almost all of these films there is a strongly "ethical" component to the relationship between teacher and student. As the term is used here an ethically valued curriculum functions in the sense identified by Huebner as "an encounter between human beings" (227). Far from the metaphors of education that denote the student as a "thing" to be acted upon, such as those described by Herbert Kliebard³, the relationship itself is the curriculum. Hollywood goes a step or two further by qualifying that relationship. As Kathleen Casey points out in her work with the narratives of women teachers, "nurture is necessary, but it is not sufficient" (318). Teachers also need authority, but legitimate authority can come only from students and must spring from the relationship between teacher and students.

Mr. Chips comes to mind immediately as a teacher who recognized the importance of personal relationships with students grounded in love and friendship. That recognition came over the years by having the boys over for Sunday afternoon tea in his home and visiting with their families and so on. During a scene early in the film Chips is recalling the difficulty he had controlling his class as a young teacher. In a flashback sequence Chips

³"Metaphorical Roots of Curriculum Design" appears in Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists on pages 84-85. Kliebard describes the metaphors of production, of growth and of travel.

punishes an unruly class by keeping them in late the afternoon of an important cricket match with a rival school. Their team loses, and Chips, admitting he was wrong, says to the boys, "If I've lost your friendship, there's little left that I value."

Similarly, Bill Ragos in Renaissance Man forms attachments with his students, the "squeakers," that overflow the traditional boundaries of the classroom. His students are a bunch of Army recruits who have been labeled the "Double D's" for "dumb as dogshit." Ragos' task is to teach them to "comprehend," an ambiguous goal never defined in the movie. Ragos is a former advertising executive who is on the job to appease the unemployment clerk and scrape together enough money to send his daughter to Mexico to see an eclipse and buy her a telescope. He does not want to be in the classroom any more than his students, but the master's degree he earned from Princeton years before ostensibly qualifies him to be there. In a very unconvincing scene, Ragos begins to "reach" his students by reading Hamlet aloud then having them supply parallel examples of similes, metaphors and oxymorons from their respective vernacular. Despite the intermittent one-lines and amusing situations, it is quite a stretch for the audience to believe that this collection of inner-city and rural "squeakers" develop such a quick and complete appreciation for the works of Shakespeare. Still, Ragos does develop an onscreen rapport with his students and devises ways to help them overcome personal obstacles and establish a sense of personal worth. All of this is achieved through the interpersonal relationship of teacher and students.

In Teachers Alex Jurrell speaks a strongly ethical language, and we see this philosophy played out in his relationship with a student named Eddie Pilikian. The school is being sued by a student who was graduated without learning to read or write. One of Jurrell's former students, a lawyer named Lisa Hammond, is handling the case. Jurrell has been working very hard to convince Eddie to take a remedial English class over until he really learns to read and to become interested in school. Eddie begins to warm to Jurrell, but there are other factors at play. Eddie is a pawn being maneuvered by his parents who are in the midst of a nasty divorce.

In a discussion during social studies class, Jurrell asks students what school does. Students answer that the things they learn in school have nothing to do with their lives. Eddie says, "C'mon, this place is a joke. Why're you being sued by some kid because you didn't teach him nothin'." Jurrell asks the students to communicate on that topic using any means they want, and Eddie brings in a series of slides that show teachers sleeping during class, security guards frisking a student, female students smoking in the bathroom, and so on. When it turns out that Eddie has taken the camera without permission, Jurrell covers for him, placing his relationship with Eddie above school regulations. The assistant principal, Roger Rubell played by Judd Hirsch, is skeptical. "Don't pull some of that Mr. Chips crap with me," says Rubell. "You're job is to get them through this school and keep them out of trouble. That's it!"

Later on, when Eddie's parents come into school furious because their son is taking the remedial reading course again, Jurrell argues the student's

case with the assistant principal who tells Jurrell to see that Eddie changes class. This exchange follows:

Jurrell: What are we going to do?

Rubell: You heard me. Drop it.

Jurrell: He can't read.

Rubell: He can read enough.

Jurrell: Enough? What the hell's that supposed to mean?

Rubell: Goddamn it, Alex. What the hell you want me to do? I am not wasting what little time and money I've got on one kid. For every Eddie Pilikian there are fifty, a hundred kids who learn here--and learn well. Now, we're not here to worry about one kid. We're here to get as many of those kids through the system with what we've got. Now that's reality, and you know it.

Jurrell: You can't see it, Rog, you can't.

Rubell: See what?

Jurrell: This is the same thing we're being sued about.

Rubell: Don't talk to me about being sued, Alex. I don't want to hear it.

Jurrell: This is the reason Lisa Hammond is down the hall taking depositions. We're not teaching these kids.

Rubell: I can't hear you, Alex.

Jurrell: We're not teaching these kids.

Rubell: I can't hear you.

Jurrell: We're doing it again!

Rubell: I can't hear you.

With that final statement, Rubell turns and walks out the door.

The school board finally settles the case rather than handle the bad publicity that would accompany a trial. That same board tries to frame Jurrell by implying that he has gotten a student pregnant because they are afraid that, should another suit against the school arise, he would be a loose cannon that might damage their case. At first Jurrell acts as if he will leave teaching. When the students in his class and his former student, Lisa Hammond, who is played by Jobeth Williams, rally around him, Jurrell decides to stay even if

he has to sue the school board to keep his position. In the excitement, a fire alarm is pulled. Outside Jurrell confronts Rubell and the school board representative, Ms. Burke.

Jurrell: The damn school wasn't built for us, Roger. It wasn't built for your unions, your lawyers, or all your other institutions. It was built for the kids. They're not here for us. We're here for them. That's what it's about. Kids.

Rubell: Alex, half of them aren't even coming back after the alarm.

Jurrell: But half will. I think they're worth it.

Burke: Jurrell, you're crazy. You know that?

Jurrell: What can I say? I'm a teacher...I'm a teacher.

With that final statement, the film ends.

Just how does Jurrell define "teacher"? Through the friendship and reciprocal personal responsibility he shares with his students. What Jurrell and the students value is not recognized as important to the other, "bad" teachers or to other characters who represent the teachers' union, the school administration or the school board. By having Jurrell personally concern himself with students and develop reciprocal relationships with him, he is

effectively isolated and occupied in such a way that effectively precludes Jurrell's mustering any serious threat to their institutional hierarchy. Still, the notion that Jurrell, as a character with the potential for self-determination in a cinematic democracy, *could* mount that resistance fuels the tension in the film text and provides pleasure to the audience.

The Political Language

The language of curriculum theory, much like the language of Hollywood, tends to intermingle components of the ethical and the political. One description of political values in curriculum is labeled by Eisner and Vallance⁴ as "self-actualization, or curriculum as consummatory experience." Their definition follows:

Strongly and deliberately value saturated, this approach refers to personal purpose and to the need for personal integration, and it views the function of the curriculum as providing personally satisfying consummatory experiences for each individual learner. It is child centered, autonomy and growth oriented, and education is seen as an enabling process that would provide the means to personal liberation and development (9).

What is the political project of teachers in the movies? It varies from film to film, but the project is typically one of the factors that motivates the

⁴In Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum Eisner and Vallance identify five conceptions of curriculum: the cognitive processes approach, curriculum as technology, curriculum for self-actualization and consummatory experiences, curriculum for social reconstruction, and academic rationalism (3).

teacher to teach. In The Corn Is Green, Miss Moffat is an extraordinary woman who has an Oxford education and a bit of inherited wealth. Early in the film she says, "When I was a quite a young girl, I looked the world in the eye and decided I didn't like it. I saw poverty and disease, ignorance and injustice, and in a small way I've always done what I could to fight them." The film is set in Wales in 1895. Moffat's political project is to bring young boys up out of the coal mines and keep them in school until they reach sixteen-years-old. Social class, she thinks, shouldn't keep the "nippers" from learning. She uses her inheritance to start the school.

The story centers on Moffat's efforts to help one particularly gifted local boy. Theirs is a complicated relationship, but eventually the boy settles down and decides to dedicate himself to his studies. After this star pupil, Morgan, has his interview at Oxford for a scholarship, he comes back home to await the results with great anxiety.

Since the day I was born, I've been a prisoner behind a stone wall, and now someone has given me a leg up to have a look at the other side. They cannot drag me back again. They cannot.

Someone must give me a push and send me over.

In true Hollywood fashion (this is an American film!) he wins the scholarship and other complications are resolved.

In Stand And Deliver Escalante tries to prepare his students to overcome the double barriers of ethnicity and class. He tells them, "There are people in this world who will assume you know less than you do because of your name and your complexion. But, math is the great equalizer." Escalante is right about prejudice. When his students score well on the Advanced

Placement Calculus test their scores are invalidated because of what the test officials term mysterious similarities in their answers. A repeat test proctored by test officials yields similar scores. As this film confirms, most political projects in the movies are only marginally political. Escalante wants his students to succeed in the dominant culture rather than to challenge or dismantle that culture. The dedicated teacher helps students learn to take the AP calculus test; he does not question the validity of that test or the validity of the practice of administering standardized tests to students.

In Sarafina!, the political involvement of teacher Mary Masembuko is central to this story about student resistance in the face of injustice in South Africa's Soweto. This is the only one of the films I have viewed in which the political project is central to the film, and that project is radical. Sarafina is a student in Masembuko's history class and relishes the lessons about her heritage. Like the other students, Sarafina recognizes from Masembuko's lessons that history exists in a cultural context. It is these lessons that help ignite student resistance at the same time they validate student self-worth. At one point in the film, Sarafina visits Masembuko in her home. The student watches as her teacher embraces her husband behind the house and says goodbye to him; it is implied that he is active in the resistance and living underground. While the two adults talk, Sarafina inadvertently finds a gun hidden in the kitchen beside the stove. In a subsequent conversation, Sarafina tries to find out from her teacher how she can respond politically to the injustice around her.

Sarafina: The boys, they can fight. What can I do?

Teacher: There are other ways, Sarafina.

Sarafina: Like what?

Teacher: You know what they say, "If you want to find a way, you must first know where you're going."

Sarafina: No way...

Teacher: That's not true. What do you want?

Sarafina: What do you want, mistress?

Teacher: Me? I want very many things. I want the war to be over. I want the hate to be over. I want my Joe to be back in my arms. I want quiet days and loving nights. I want babies. I want to come home to kindness.

Sarafina walks over to the gun, brings it from its hiding place and lays it on the table between them.

Teacher: Would you believe me if I told you this was not mine?

Sarafina: Yes.

Teacher: I've never even held it in my hands. It's Joe's.

Sarafina: He uses it?

Teacher: He has done.

Sarafina: I won't tell anyone.

Teacher: I meant what I said. I hate the killing. I hate the violence. But, I cannot stand aside and let others die for me. I will fight, too. I can't kill. Don't ask me to kill. It's the same old argument. What if they come for you...come to the door...kick it in? Do you reach for the gun? Do you shoot? Do I? I don't know. I don't know.

When the soldiers come to the door of Mary Masembuko's classroom and arrest her for teaching "additional material" to the "authorized syllabus," she goes proudly with her captors, probably not unaware that she is going to her death. She pauses once before she is pushed into the government vehicle to turn toward the student faces pressed against the classroom window and raise her clenched fist over her head.

Notably, Sarafina! is listed as a joint venture between U.S., British and French producing entities. Various filmic elements work at once to identify this movie as a South African narrative and to separate it from standard Hollywood fare. It is not only the location work and inclusion of elaborately

staged musical numbers that make this film exceptional; the film is separated from other movies about teachers by the directness with which it addresses politics.

While mainstream American films often contain an element of cultural politics embedded as a subtext in the overall narrative, Sarafina! offers a story that foregrounds political struggle as the teacher and her students directly challenge the government itself and along with it the dominant ideology of racism and other violations of human rights that the South African government represents. Masembuko, Sarafina and other students are clearly engaged in resistance against oppression rooted in inequalities perpetuated by governmental institutions.

In the other films discussed here the audience is allowed a measure of comfort at the implications of the struggle between the force of resistance (the "good" teacher) and the forces of social conformity (the "institution" and those representing it). It is easy to read the teacher as a wild-eyed idealist who manages to keep the institution honest or, at least, more humane in its dealings with students than it would be without the actions of the teacher who challenges its dominance. But, it is also quite possible for audiences to read that same teacher as a radical and to feel relieved that while the teacher may challenge the dominant educational institution, he or she will never demolish it. After all, many people find comfort in the sense of security they glean from the status quo, security in believing that institutions and ideologies are distant and benign. Hollywood's "good" teachers and the institutions in which they labor play out the "dialectics of culture" by offering a recognizable pattern of resistance and social conformity. Mary Masembuko

and her students know that ideologies are not benign and institutions are only as distant as they choose to be.

Hollywood teachers reveal their political projects in various ways. Anna in The King And I, a frothy musical, tries to improve the role of women in Siam and makes strong anti-slavery statements. Rick Dadier continues to teach in an inner city school even after he is beaten, his wife is frightened into premature delivery of their son, and he is stabbed in class. But, my favorite occurrence of the overtly political in the movies I have watched comes from a scene in Conrack. Conroy has just lost his job for taking the children in his class trick-or-treating. He is driving a beat-up van with big speakers mounted on top in a middle-class, white neighborhood in Beaufort, South Carolina. It is the neighborhood where he grew up. From a microphone inside the van he calls out:

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't mean to take you away
from your daily routine. I know you've got stores to open,
clothes to wash, marketing to do, and other chores. But, I just
lost my job, and I want to talk. My name's Pat Conroy. I was
paid \$510.00 a month to teach kids on a little island off this coast
to read and write. I also tried to teach them to embrace life
openly--to reflect upon its mysteries and to reject its cruelties.
The school board of this fair city thinks that if they root out
troublemakers like me, the system will hold up and perpetuate
itself. They think as long as blacks and whites are kept apart
with the whites getting scholarships and the blacks getting jobs
picking cotton and tomatoes, with the whites going to college

and the blacks eating moonpies and drinking Coca Cola that they can weather any storm and survive any threat.

Well, they're wrong. Their day is ending. They're the captains of a doomed army retreating in the snow. They're old men, and they can't accept a new sun rising out of strange waters. Ladies and gentlemen, the world is very different now. It's true this town still has its diehards and nigger-haters, but they grow older and crankier with each passing day. When Beaufort digs another 400 holes in her plentiful graveyards, deposits there the rouged and elderly corpses, and covers them with the sandy Low Country soil, then the old South will be silenced and not heard from again.

As for my kids, I don't think I changed the quality of their lives significantly or altered the fact that they have no share in the country that claimed them, the country that failed them. All I know is I found much beauty in my time with them.

My point is not that Conroy did nothing for the children in his class. Those children felt his love for them and returned it. Over the course of the film, Conroy shakes those children from a listless slumber, helps them connect with their world, and helps some of them dream of the world beyond the salt water that divides them from the mainland.

The point is well-taken, however, that one teacher projected as a light in a darkened schoolhouse is not enough. Without the power of a collective force, Conroy probably did all that he could do, and the character is right in realizing that his solitary effort is not enough. It is unlikely that commercial

Hollywood films will often offer audiences other, more radical narratives. As Kellner writes:

...mainstream Hollywood is severely limited in the extent to which it will advance socially critical and radical positions. Hollywood film is a commercial enterprise and it does not wish to offend mainstream audiences with radical perceptions and thus attempts to contain its representations of class, gender, race, and society within established boundaries. Radicals are thus usually excluded from Hollywood film or are forced to compromise their positions within accepted limits (102, 1994).

Watching one Hollywood teacher making a grand gesture and offering eloquent speeches may make us feel good about the teachers in the movies who do "care" and about ourselves as an audience, but it diverts our attention from the larger cultural issues these films could address but do not.

Conclusion

The Hollywood construction of teacher and the aesthetic-ethical-political language spoken by that model is not unrepresented in the professional discourse of curriculum, as Huebner and the others quoted in this chapter demonstrate, but it is virtually the only model of "good" teachers and "good" teaching present in popular culture. There must be reasons that his particular construction of teachers and teaching has been so pervasive and enduring.

In Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern, Douglas Kellner cites Ernst Bloch's argument that "radical cultural criticism should seek out those utopian moments, those projections of a better world, that are found in a wide range of texts"(109).⁵ Kellner writes:

Extending this argument, one could claim that since ideology contains rhetorical constructs that attempt to persuade and to convince, they must have a relatively resonant and attractive core and thus often contain emancipatory promises or moments (109).

In Hollywood films the "emancipatory promises or moments" are made manifest by the aesthetic-ethical-political language of "good" teachers presented onscreen. It matters less in these films that Mary Masembuko is murdered, that Conroy is fired, or that Anna leaves Siam to return to her native England than that these teachers stand in our stead to battle oppressive forces and fill us as well as their students with heartfelt, if ultimately fleeting, hope. When Jaime Escalante, Rick Dadier and Alex Jurrell reach out and "connect" with the most "difficult" of their students, we are given the message that in that process liberation from various sorts of oppression is possible for the student through that "connection" forged with the teacher and often, for the teacher a metaphysical emancipation accrues from that same relationship. This pocket of utopia arising in the connective space between (the "good") teacher and student satisfies the audience's need to

⁵Kellner adds that identifying utopian moments in apparently ideological texts was undertaking by Bloch in The Principle of Hope, which was translated into English in 1986.

maintain hope for a better world. The dramatic arrival at these utopian relationships is invariably foregrounded in these films against an unchanging background of oppressive institutional hierarchy or more general cultural oppression. While the foregrounded relationship may appear to contradict the backgrounded ideology, the dominant ideology of social conformity is never threatened.

CHAPTER IV

THE TECHNICAL-SCIENTIFIC VALUE FRAMEWORKS OF "BAD" TEACHERS IN THE MOVIES

Introduction

In chapter two I introduced "the Hollywood" model as the system that commercial films use to evoke images of the "good" teacher. At every level Hollywood's "bad" teachers arise in contrast to that outline. I have described the "good" teacher as an outsider, who is not well-liked by other teachers. The "bad" teacher is generally presented as neither liked nor disliked (by other teachers) but as part of the system embedded so deeply into the structure of the school as institution that he or she must be accepted, or at least tolerated. While the "good" teacher gets involved with students on a personal level and seems to genuinely like them, the "bad" teachers are typically bored by students, afraid of students, or eager to dominate students. The "good" teacher often has an antagonistic relationship with administrators while the "bad" teacher fits into the administration's plans for controlling students. Finally, as "good" teachers personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in students' lives, "bad" teachers wear standardized curriculum and end of course testing as a mantle to avoid personal contact with students.

When Huebner discusses his five value frameworks for curricular thought--technical, political, scientific, (a)esthetic and ethical--he argues that

none of the five values he proposes exists in a vacuum separate from the other four and that none is inherently "good" or "bad." Instead, Huebner points out the positive and negative aspects of each value framework. In chapter three I have proposed that Hollywood constructs "good" teachers as those who use some combination of aesthetic-ethical-political values in the sense Huebner writes of those frameworks. Recall for a moment Pat Conroy in the film Conrack. He obviously operates from each of those three frameworks. He brings aesthetic experiences to the classroom with his use of music and takes students beyond the classroom walls to experience the beauty of the world around them. He develops a personal relationship with students and visits in their homes. Coming to know his students and recognize their oppression at the behest of his own white culture leads Conrack to try to make them aware of the world outside their island and foster the origins of a political consciousness.

Hollywood films also present images of "bad" teachers, although, not surprisingly, they are seldom the central figures in commercial films. Instead, the "bad" teacher in the movies is generally presented as a counterpoint to the "good" teacher lionized on celluloid or as a potential foil for a band of spirited teenagers. In either scenario the "bad" teacher is clearly a supporting player, and in most cases that teacher exemplifies Huebner's technical or scientific value system. The exception tends to be instructors of physical education, who generally demonstrate none of the value frameworks but are nevertheless presented as "bad" teachers. Most physical education teachers are not shown in the process of teaching. They are yelling at students, otherwise humiliating students, or engaging in sexual escapades or ridiculous

hijinks. The "bad" teacher in the movies is also signified by the absence of the aesthetic-ethical-political value frameworks in their teaching.

The Technical Value Framework

Of these two value frameworks, the technical and the scientific, almost all of the "bad" teachers in the movies represent the negative side of technical values. Huebner presents the technical value framework as one centered on measurable outcomes. Technical values include an effort toward efficiency and a focus on evaluation with probable moves toward quality control. He writes:

Current curricular ideology reflects, almost completely, a technical value system. It has a means-ends rationality that approaches an economic model. End states, end products, or objectives are specified as carefully and as accurately as possible, hopefully in behavioral terms. Activities are then designed which become the means to these ends or objectives. The primary language systems of legitimization and control are psychological and sociological languages (223).

Huebner maintains that this curricular discourse, which is undoubtedly the dominant discourse, is both valid and necessary, but it is reductionistic to take the whole of human knowledge and individual expression and contort the richness of that experience to fit within the confines of this very narrow educational model. To do so "weakens the educator's power" (224). For administrators in the movies, the technical framework is clearly dominant and is centered on improving test scores and achieving order as the desired

ends. Whether implicitly or explicitly, these same goals are generally shared by "bad" teachers in the movies.

In Fast Times at Ridgemont High, Ferris Bueller's Day Off and Dead Poets Society bad teachers are presented as colorless men who drone unmercifully in abstraction about subjects students find boring. They expect order in their classrooms and use grades to enforce it. In Fast Times at Ridgemont High Mr. Hand, played by Ray Walston, locks the door when the bell rings and opens the first class of the semester by telling students that there will be a 20 question quiz every Friday and that their grades in the class will result from the average of their quizzes , their midterm and their final with each component worth a third. He is shown more often enforcing his rule against eating in class and needling a pothead surfer named Jeff Spicoli, played by Sean Penn, than talking about his subject, U.S. History. In Ferris Bueller's Day Off the situation requires even less of a presence on screen for "bad" teachers to be amply represented. Over the course of the film, there are several shots each of two teachers, one teaching economics and the other English. Both deliver meaningless monologue in a mind-numbing monotone as cutaway shots reveal students falling asleep or struggling to keep their eyes open. The scenes are brief, but the impression they leave with viewers is unmistakable.

In Dead Poets Society, the final scene shows Mr. Nolan taking over Keating's class creating an effect that is equally dynamic. In an early scene Mr. Keating had ceremoniously urged students to rip out the introduction to their poetry text because those pages dictated a means of assigning value to poems by graphing them mathematically instead of taking a more aesthetic

approach. As the final scene opens Mr. Nolan, who is the Headmaster at the school and has taken over Keating's class in the wake of the younger teacher's firing, begins anew following the outline in the text. Clearly, Mr. Nolan wants the boys to play by the rules and follow the assigned text uncritically instead of learning to think for themselves. That is his formula for having them arrive at the desired outcome--acceptance at a prestigious college. This scene reinforces themes from an earlier conversation cited in chapter three in which Nolan calls Keating down for letting the boys think for themselves. Nolan maintains that the curriculum at Welton Academy is "set" because it is "proven." After all, the faculty, alumni and students at this prestigious New England prep school have come to believe that the honor bestowed on the school--and their own personal accomplishments--rest atop the school's four pillars: Tradition, Honor, Discipline and Excellence. Their "means-ends rationality" positions them all to believe that their privileged status comes as their due in the meritocracy; no one ever recognizes that they are beneficiaries of a system created to make them reach the desired outcome time after time, generation after generation.

In Fame, Alan Parker's 1980 film about life at New York City's High School for the Performing Arts, we see the "bad" teacher represented by Mrs. Sherwood, an English teacher played in the movie by Anne Meara. The other teachers featured in the film teach in the arts--dance, acting and music. Sherwood is the only teacher in an academic area featured in Fame, and her character plays out the tension between the arts and academics through her relationship with Leroy Johnson, played by Gene Anthony Ray. The film unfolds in sections beginning with "The Auditions" and ending with "Senior

Year." Early on the audience meets Leroy Johnson when he accompanies a young woman from his neighborhood to serve as her dance partner during auditions. He's in, she's out, but Leroy's ride through the program is not altogether a smooth one because of his difficulty in Sherwood's class. This exchange occurs during the section of the film titled "Freshman Year."

Sherwood: Why are you here, Mr. Johnson?

Leroy: 'Cause I'se young and single and I loves to mingle.

Sherwood: Speak English.

Leroy: I speaks like I likes.

Sherwood: This is my homeroom. You'll speak as I like. I teach English. Now, if that's a foreign language, you're gonna learn it. This is no Mickey Mouse school. You're not getting off easy because you're talented. You'll work twice as hard. Now, I don't care how well you dance...

Leroy: Bitch (and something unintelligible).

Sherwood: ...or how cute you are, or how many colored tutus you have. If you don't give your academic subjects

equal time, you're out.

Leroy: Bullshit.

From this point, their relationship spirals downward. Leroy is habitually late turning in assignments, and Sherwood fails to work on the real problem: her student's poor reading and writing skills.

Leroy: I forgot it [his homework].

Sherwood: For two weeks?

Leroy: I told you. I done it, and I forgot it.

Sherwood: My hearing is fine. It's your homework that's missing. And, these couple of pages I have, they're unintelligible.

Leroy: It's a secret language, all right. It ain't meant for whiteys to understand.

Sherwood: This isn't a joke.

Leroy: I got lots of jokes.

Sherwood: This is garbage.

Leroy: My pen broke.

Sherwood: It's in pencil.

Leroy: That broke, too.

Sherwood: Hey, you can't learn to read; you can't learn to dance. You're flunking out.

Leroy: I can read.

Sherwood: Terrific, go ahead. Surprise us. Sarah, give 'im your book. Pay attention, class. Mr. Johnson is gonna read.

Leroy: I said I can read.

Sherwood: Then read.

Leroy: No.

Sherwood: Read!

Leroy: No!

Sherwood: Read!

Leroy answers her "No, you fuckin' bitch" and continues with his tirade before stalking out of class and breaking a series of glass bookcases in the hallway outside the door. Inside the classroom, Mrs. Sherwood smiles and puts upright a chair Leroy overturned on his way out. Later on, the audience sees Leroy on the street where he is presumably living. By dim firelight he struggles to read a manual for a Maytag washing machine. His is a life Mrs. Sherwood either cannot envision or does not care to envision. The next year begins with Leroy stopping by Sherwood's office as she stands on a ladder replacing book on an upper shelf. He has evidently turned in a book report on "The Best of Playboy," and Sherwood suggests 1984, Huckleberry Finn, Great Expectations and Treasure Island as more suitable texts. When Leroy answers that reading is "not my style," Sherwood pulls down a book and tosses it to Leroy. "Then try Othello," she says. "He's black. A thousand words in two weeks." Perhaps Mrs. Sherwood really believes that Leroy will respond to the material and find meaning in its pages because the character Othello is black. Not Leroy. Not at this point in his life. But, for Sherwood, all that matters is the outcome, the two thousand words.

There is one final altercation between Leroy and Mrs. Sherwood in a hospital hallway where her husband is a patient. He tells her that he must pass her class to graduate and join a professional dance troupe. She tells him that this is neither the time nor the place for that discussion. The scene ends without resolution. Both are angry. They are unable to find common ground. Evidently Leroy passes the English class because he dances in the graduation program in the film's final scene, but we do not have reason to

believe that he ever learns to read and are not sure, given the caustic presence of Mrs. Sherwood, that he should want to.

Teachers, a film that gives us an illustrative example of the "good" teacher in Mr. Jurrell, also provides a memorable "bad" teacher in the form of "Ditto." Ditto, played by Royal Dano, earns his nickname because of the way he hogs the hand-crank mimeograph machine each morning in the school office. In his classroom the student desks are placed in orderly rows facing away from his own desk. Students are in their seats and quiet before the bell rings. As the bell rings the students at the end of each row walk to Ditto's desk and pick up worksheets to pass forward to the other students sitting in their rows. Each class begins that same way. When the papers are in the hands of the students, they begin to work silently, and Ditto begins to snooze behind his newspaper.

Ditto's students and colleagues all know what goes on in his classroom. In this exchange in the teacher's lounge, a teacher has just asked the assistant principal to put a particular student in Ditto's class because the student has bitten that teacher and the assistant principal insists that he can't expel the student because to do so would violate the boy's civil rights. When Ditto begins to speak, Jurrell cannot pass up the opportunity to voice what everyone else probably believes. This scene brings the hero in Teachers face-to-face with the film's composite character representing "bad" teachers.

Ditto: Well, that's fine with me. I'll handle him.

Jurrell: You'd bore him to death.

Ditto: What's that supposed to mean?

Jurrell: What'dya think it means, Ditto? Your class is boring. Your students don't learn a thing. If it weren't for tenure, you'd be selling vacuum cleaners. Have I left anything out?

Ditto: I don't have to take that from you. I have received three consecutive teaching awards for the most orderly class.

Jurrell: Oh.

Ditto: Three consecutive awards for the most orderly class. And, what do you think about that, mister?

Jurrell: Gee, Ditto. Your shit don't stink.

It is no accident that later on when the cadence of Ditto's snore during class is interrupted and his eyes fly open before his final gasp, no one notices. His class is orderly, and students keep their eyes forward as they complete their worksheets. The bell rings, and students file out without noticing anything amiss. Another period begins and ends, and still another follows. Ditto, whom we finally learn is really named Mr. Styles, remains behind his desk when emergency medical technicians burst into the room. The school nurse sits quietly in one of the desks, which she has turned around to face the front

of the room, and smokes a cigarette. One of the medical technicians exclaims, "This guy is dead!" The nurse deadpans, "Really? How can you tell?" For Ditto, his technical value framework revolved around maintaining order and continuing his supply of worksheets for students to complete during each class. In the end, his objectives were met, but no one stopped to notice because no one really cared.

Perhaps the most compelling, and certainly the most extreme, examples of the technical value framework come from Class of 1999 and its sequel Class of 1999 II. The action of the first film takes place in Seattle's Kennedy High School and the free-fire zone surrounding the school. Free-fire zones are gang controlled areas that police do not enter. The film opens with the school principal Mr. Miles Langford, played by Malcolm McDowell, and other school officials meeting with Dr. Forrest, played by Stacy Keach. Forrest is head of a company known as Megatech and labels himself and his employees "automation and robotics specialists." He is trying to close the deal to provide Langford and the others from the "Department of Educational Defense" with three "super teachers." As Forrest puts it, these

artificially created tactical education units have been
thoroughly programmed in history, chemistry, all
mathematics, of course physical education, and also
come equipped with the optional XT6 hardware to
deal with discipline problems.

Almost immediately that optional hardware goes haywire, much to Forrest's delight.

Discipline is, after all, the name of the game in Kennedy High School in 1999. As the school day begins, the audience watches Cody Culp, played by Bradley Gregg, make his way through gang skirmishes to arrive at the school barricades. Culp has just been released from prison for gang activity and is trying to avoid being sent back. A loudspeaker message greets him at the school guard tower, "Welcome students to Kennedy High School. All weapons must be surrendered before entering the school grounds." Besides the students, the school is populated by swat team goons wearing Darth Vader style hats. We never see any teachers other than the three "super teachers" produced by megatech. When these teachers enter the classroom, they begin to subdue students by beating them to a pulp or, if they persist in their resistance, killing them. Once order is established, these teachers move toward their secondary objective. As the history teacher puts it, "I operate from a model of absolute zero tolerance."

Meanwhile, Cody and the principal's daughter have become interested in one another and set out to confirm their suspicions about the new teachers. They confront Principal Langford who, unable to ignore the growing body count of student casualties, in turn confronts Dr. Forrest. Langford learns that the "super teachers" are, in fact, reprogrammed military surplus "battledroids."

Langford: So, they've been waging war with my students?

Forrest: Isn't that what all teachers do? But, my people aren't just fighting, Miles. They're winning.

Langford: Whatever happened to education?

Forrest: The students can learn if they want to. They simply have to make the right choice.

Langford: Sure, learn or be killed. I want you to turn them off. I'm terminating this project.

Forrest: I'm afraid that's the bad news, Milesy. You see, once this program has been implemented, I'm afraid it can't be turned off. The bottom line is "kill the enemy."

With that, Forrest has one of the "super teachers," the physical education teacher, kill the principal. The three have effectively become the efficient killing machines originally intended. They take out the Megatech technicians monitoring their activities from a control center inside the school, wage war against the gangs (which, ironically, have united against the killer teachers), and finally kill Forrest before a few enterprising students dismantle the droids.

In the sequel to this film, the killer teacher turns out to be Dr. Forrest's "mental" son, who thinks he is a battledroid. Posing as a substitute teacher in various schools, John Bolin, played by kickboxing champion Sasha Mitchell, runs around saying things to other teachers such as "Discipline is necessary to maintain order. Order is necessary to prevent anarchy" and "If you allow a

student to gain control of a situation, the result is anarchy." Before he kills unruly students, Bolin usually manages a silly one-liner. At one point in the film, for example, he says the following before incinerating a student: "You've been more than a bit of a discipline problem. Now we're going to have to do something about your attitude. In fact, you're on permanent detention...School's out."

Class of 1999 and its especially inane sequel may seem to be vastly different from the other films cited in this section. Still, they share several elements in common. Schools are driven by adults who do not care about students on a personal level but instead care only about measurable outcomes. For administrators and teachers alike, those outcomes are discipline and, sometimes, test scores. In most of the films, "bad" teachers do not literally kill students who get in their way, but in the end is it such a different thing to kill their spirits?

The Scientific Value Framework

Huebner writes that "Scientific activity may be broadly designated as that activity which produces new knowledge with an empirical basis" (225). In terms of curriculum values, Huebner acknowledges that a "packaged curriculum" may be useful to produce information and determine how students respond to a particular curriculum but warns against the narrow conception of "educational activity valued only for the change produced in students or for the support it brings to teachers" (226). While most "bad" teachers in the movies are presented as caring only about achieving perfect discipline or some vague notion of academic outcome, there is one

compelling example of a "bad" teacher who manipulates the scientific value framework for his own benefit.

In Real Genius, Dr. Jerry Hathaway is a brilliant, though greedy, professor of physics at Pacific Tech. Hathaway, played by William Atherton, has assembled a team of top science students, including a 15-year-old prodigy to help him with "The Crossbow Project." The students, who include Chris Knight, played by Val Kilmer, and prodigy Mitch Taylor, played by Gabe Jarrett, do not realize that their research is feeding a lethal CIA military project and is being turned over by their professor to a military contractor for big bucks.

Hathaway's utter disdain for other people is evident throughout the film. At the beginning of the movie, when he goes to a science fair to tell Mitch that he's been accepted into Pacific Tech and will be part of Hathaway's own research team, Hathaway confides in the boy, "Mitch, there's something you're going to have to understand. Compared to you, most people have the IQ of a carrot. We're different than most people, Mitch...better." Later, near the end of the film, Hathaway hands out the final exam in one of his classes.

Hathaway: All right. We have exactly three hours for this.
And, remember, we believe in the honor system
here, boys and girls, though it will be readily
apparent to me how many of you have absorbed
this material and how many of you haven't. Take
one [paper] and pass them back just like your IQ was
normal.

For most of the students on the research team, creating new knowledge is intrinsically worthwhile. Knight, in particular, turns his research into amusement by designing elaborate pranks and planning pleasant surprises for his fellow students. For Hathaway, the "bad" teacher, the motivation is quite different. Dr. Hathaway seeks recognition as the "best" and a pile of money to go along with it. He does not care that "The Crossbow Project" is designed to use lasers to kill humans from battle stations locked in space. All Hathaway seems interested in is remodeling his expansive Victorian home, accumulating a lot of costly fixtures and trinkets, and being sure that at least one of the students on his research team will act as his flunky. Clearly, he represents only the most negative aspects of the scientific value framework.

The Special Case of Gym Teachers

Instructors of physical education merit a separate section in this discussion of cinema's "bad" teachers. Most gym teachers are relegated to this category without the benefit of any particular curricular value framework because most of them are not depicted in the process of teaching. In Teachers we see Mr. Troy usher an attractive student into his office next to the gym then look around to be sure there are no witnesses to their assignation. Later, he is presented in tears before school officials as we learn that he has impregnated not one but three students at the school. In Class of 1999 it is no accident that one of the killer droids placed in the school as "super teachers" is a physical education teacher. In one scene he nearly kills a student on the wrestling mat before actually killing another one on the high-gloss wood floor of the basketball court. Two films, however, merit special attention.

In Porky's, a raunchy "coming of age" flick set in Angel Beach, Florida in the late fifties, there are an assortment of physical education teachers to discuss. Boyd Gains plays Coach Bracket, a 23-year-old teacher who ogles students and two other teachers before ultimately admitting he is the "worst coach that ever lived" and joining up with a rowdy group of students involved in a dangerous prank. Miss Walker is a sexy teacher who wears shorts that reveal more than they should and appears in the film mainly to entice Bracket and the male students without ever uttering a line. Miss Lynn Honeywell, played by Kim Cattrall, is the main object of Bracket's desire. At first he thinks she is a virgin. Later a colleague urges him to get Honeywell into the boy's locker room during class one day, and Coach bracket quickly learns why Honeywell has been dubbed "Lassie." She becomes aroused by the smell of the boy's locker room, makes sexual advances toward Bracket and begins to howl loudly while they are engaged in intercourse. Students and teachers alike hear them from the gym below. Most of the students laugh, but Beulah Balbricker, played by Nancy Parsons, is not amused.

Of all of the physical education teachers in the film, Balbricker has the most screen time. She is the object of fat jokes and pranks and is known by everyone as "Kong." Like Honeywell, even her name evokes a particular image that is used to identify her character. Throughout the film a group of boys have been spying on girls in the shower through secret holes in the wall. One day, after some of the girls discover them, one of the boys sticks his penis in the hole. Unbeknownst to him, Miss Balbricker has entered the shower. She is appalled by their behavior and grabs the boy's penis as if she can use it to pull him through the wall and take him to the office. Later, after he has

escaped her grasp, she tries to convince the school principal that she could identify the penis in a line-up. Finally, she is arrested for pouncing on the boy she suspects as the culprit and trying to pull down his pants to identify his penis. Throughout the film Balbricker is presented as a joke, as a "bad" teacher out to "get" students.

Betty Buckley plays a more complex character in Brian De Palma's 1976 horror film Carrie, which is based on a best-selling novel by Stephen King. Buckley's Miss Collins tries at first to protect a high school student who has begun her first menstrual period in the showers after gym class. Carrie, played by Sissy Spacek, is the daughter of a deranged religious fanatic. She has not been given any information about menstruation and is obviously terrified. The other girls in the class begin to pelt Carrie with tampons and sanitary napkins while chanting, "Plug it up. Plug it up. Plug it up." Miss Collins breaks through the circle of girls, pushing some of them forcefully away. Carrie is hysterical, but Miss Collins slaps her across the face, and the slap is accompanied by a sound effect worthy of the most outlandish martial arts picture. After hitting the girl, Miss Collins croons, "Now relax...calm down..." and cradles the student like a child.

The dualism in Collins' character is evident throughout the film. She punishes the class for ridiculing Carrie by forcing them to work out 50 minutes after school in a grueling regimen for a week or take suspension and miss the prom. When one student challenges the punishment, Collins slaps her hard across the face. Yet, she also admits to a school administrator that she shared the contempt and disgust that the girls felt for Carrie during the locker room scene. On the one hand, Collins tries to help Carrie. On the

other hand, she cannot completely hide her own revulsion when confronted with the girl. Carrie trusts the teacher at first, but she later has second thoughts after a group of students play a cruel prank on the girl at the prom. It turns out that Carrie has amazing telekinetic powers. She slaughters many of her classmates, electrocutes an English teacher who made fun of her in class during an earlier scene, and crushes Miss Collins with a suspended set piece. Is Miss Collins "bad" or merely ambivalent? As Carrie walks out of the fiery high school gym alone wearing a blood-soaked dress, the answer seems to present itself.

Conclusion

There is no room for ambiguity in the Hollywood curriculum. "Good" teachers are set apart from the rest by their undivided commitment to students in the school setting. For Miss Collins failure to commit to Carrie completely and save the pitiful girl relegates her to the ranks of the "bad" teachers. For Miss Balbricker, to be unattractive and unsympathetic is to be "bad." For Bracket and Honeywell, to have needs of their own and human failings is to be "bad," or at least unworthy. And, for the other "bad" teachers, the label means even more. To be a "bad" teacher in the movies is to place measurable outcomes--be they test scores or orderly classrooms or big payoffs from secret military weapons--above unselfish interaction with students.

In addition to the technical and scientific values presented in these films, there are at least four other modes in which "bad" teachers are represented, most appearing in tandem with Huebner's two relevant value frameworks. Throughout the films there are many examples of the boredom

of schooling, the "bad" teachers' limited tolerance for difference, the suppression of the erotic, and the use of technical surveillance in schools.

In most of the films "bad" teachers are also presented as "boring." Recall Ditto for a moment. When he dies, no one notices for hours. As a teacher, he was not only boring, he was bored. He "tuned out" long before the current crop of students appeared in the rows of his classroom. We never see the faces of his students, and neither does Ditto. In other movies, in Ferris Bueller's Day Off for example, we see many shots of students dozing in class or mugging before the camera or trying to communicate with other students as the teacher drones on about remote ideas or disconnected facts that have no relevance to the lives of the students in the classroom. In the movies "good" teachers care and try to make their classes interesting, and "bad" teachers are the opposite. Those "bad" teachers don't even seem to care about their own subjects, so why should their students?

The majority of these films feature white teachers and white students. Intolerance for difference is seldom an issue because the Hollywood classrooms are basically homogeneous. It is the "good" teachers who attend to issues of race if not gender. Conrack challenges his superintendent over segregationist policies, Escalante and Clarke deliver a message that being different means you have to be "better" than the white competition to "succeed," even Anna in The King and I tries to convince her monarch employer that women are not property and neither men nor women should be enslaved. That is the province of the "good" teacher. "Bad" teachers respond as Mrs. Sherwood does to Leroy. She ignores his heritage and personal background just as she glosses over his literacy problems. This

white English teacher cavalierly tosses her student a copy of Othello and expects him to find resonances between the text and his own life because the main character and the student are black! Sherwood's myopia is overwhelming. Her lack of sensitivity transcends indifference and skirts overt intolerance.

Just as Mrs. Sherwood ignores Leroy's difficulty reading and writing, she also manages to marginalize his greatest talent, dance. She denies the value of the body and supports a mind-body dualism that hierarchically elevates cognition above movement. In the case of Leroy, there is also an implicit suppression of the erotic in this enforced dualism. Dance is the means through which Leroy is able to form relationships, particularly relationships with female dancers. He is as spectacularly successful on the dance floor as he is miserably unsuccessful trying to perform in Sherwood's class.

Other times in these films, teachers represent an explicit suppression of the erotic. Balbricker stands before one of the peepholes male students have discovered on the other side of the girls' shower, and she obscures a particular student's view of the naked female students. Dr. Hathaway shows up at a party Chris Knight has arranged and stops the "nerds" from getting together with the women Knight has invited from a nearby "beauty college." Mitch Taylor is practically pulled from the arms of a "nerd" co-ed by his professor, who tells the boy he has made a mistake by not spending his evening working on the assigned project. The suppression of the erotic and the denial of the importance of the body and of its pleasures is simply one more way these "bad" teachers try to control their students. These teachers are not

concerned about sexually transmitted diseases or even some vague notion of morality; they are trying to use their positions to exert control over students and reassert their own dominance.

The metaphor of school as prison is not a new one, and modern technical surveillance makes the task of spying on students easier than ever before. Armed guards, suspicious public address systems and massive chain link fences and gates are commonplace in these films, but the theme is best expressed in Class of 1999. These battledroids turned substitute teachers are the ultimate technical surveillance machines. Their eyes record images of their students and transmit those images to a secret command station hidden deep inside the school building. Never mind the metal detectors at the front door or even the watch towers at the school gate, those artifacts seem almost commonplace if not reasonable.

It is the idea that a researcher could be able to put killing machines in the schools under the guise of technological advancement that should give us pause. At first this storyline seems farfetched, but how far is it really from the traditional metaphors we employ relating school and prison to this newly contested terrain that links school and battlefield with disastrous results? In any case, it is the "bad" teachers and their counterparts the "bad" administrators who use devices of technical surveillance to further separate themselves from students as they also increase the power and control they have over students at school.

The intertextuality that weaves these films together at the same time it weaves them into our larger cultural canvas and into our own lived experiences causes us to look beyond the basic patterns and metaphors linking

these films to Huebner's clearly delineated value frameworks to explore less readily visible patterns embedded in these film texts. Many of these films are targeted at teenagers and young adults. Why does this demographic group appear to respond to these images and characters in such a way that causes filmmakers to repeat the patterns over and over again until a formula is established? It seems evident that the audience, all of them students or former students, find pleasure in seeing the "bad" teacher ridiculed, scapegoated and even killed onscreen by students who take up the fight audience members either left off or never entered. The recollection of "bad" teachers (or parents or bosses) from their own lives who have had the ability to exert power over them at will is enough to align an audience with the student or group of students onscreen who are battling oppressive forces represented in the films by the "bad" teachers.

The crime committed by these "bad" teachers, whether they are killer androids, boring economics teachers or out-of-control gym teachers, is that they are one-dimensional representations of the oppressive force of social control. They are the front line warriors in a celluloid war against student freedom and self-determination. In these films student resistance efforts propel students past the front line amid the delight of the audience, but the larger conflict remains unresolved. Students, like the "good" teachers who join them seldom accomplish much in the battle against the institutional hierarchies backing up the "bad" teachers. The shows are entertaining, but when the applause fades away dominant forces of social conformity are still intact and shoring up for the next skirmish with the forces of resistance.

CHAPTER V

DIVIDED LIVES: THE PUBLIC WORK AND PRIVATE PATHOS OF WOMEN TEACHERS IN THE MOVIES

Introduction

Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings write that good stories allow us to "both know and imagine our world" (1). Whether or not the stories are "good," stories are used by most of us to construct some meaning for our existence and to find ways to form connections with other people. Our very lives become stories when we move from the feeling of them to thinking and talking them. And, as Fiske points out, these stories of our lives are inextricably linked to the stories we hear about the lives of others. This chapter will discuss how feminist scholars have positively influenced the way we understand teacher's lives with regard to gender, an influence generated largely through the use of narrative research techniques, at the same time the narratives of popular cinema continue to either ignore women teachers or to recast them in stereotypical roles. There is a remarkable intertextuality between the research conducted by feminist scholars on women teachers' lives and the lives of women teachers in the movies.

Over the last decade and a half there has been an active group of researchers in various disciplines working on narrative research projects. Some of these researchers have moved from traditional ethnographies into a more critical (and inclusive) stance, some have come out of oral history traditions and still others come from various feminist perspectives. What is

important is the commitment these researchers share to letting research "subjects" become "participants" by giving them a voice in the research project. When researcher and subject become less divided by hierarchy and enter into dialogue, participants in research projects are given what Kathleen Casey terms the "response-ability" to establish their own "author-ity" (23, 1993). In another article Casey writes, "The social relations of research are transformed when teachers are presented as subjects in their own right, not as mere objects of research. Teachers can be seen as authors of their own lives, and, in their roles as educators, as co-authors of their students' lives as well" (301).

It is an undeniably feminist principle that people have the right to name their own experience. But, there are also benefits to the research itself for undertaking this type of inclusive project. Researchers report¹ that listening to other people describe their experiences in interview situations adds to the richness of the analysis and introduces ideas that would have otherwise never occurred to the writer. I do not mean to suggest that there is not a role for the researcher in the process. Of course, someone must make decisions about meaning and context in addition to performing necessary groupings and editing. My point is simply that "objective" observers are, in fact, as "subjective" as the objects of their gaze. Including research subjects as participants in an intersubjective dialogue creates a richer discourse that openly acknowledges the complexities of our subjectivities.

My purpose here is not to theorize the self; others have devoted extensive energy to that process (Casey 1993, Denzin, Flax, and Witherell to

¹See Casey and Nelson.

name a few). I will, however, draw parallels and outline discrepancies between the recounted lived experience of women teachers and the cinematic depictions of women teacher's lives. To that end, I do need to demonstrate that there is a reason to draw connections between the lives of women teachers constructed in their own narratives and the social construction of women teachers in popular culture, in this case popular culture represented by commercial films.

Witherell argues that the process of forming the self involves a dual process: the social formation, which comes out of the ways we "define and are defined by our social and cultural contexts"; and, the relational formation, which gives us "our sense of self in connection with other selves and the meaning systems that evolve from our mutual predicaments and possibilities" (85). Writing on the subject of interpretive biography, Denzin makes an even more direct case for investigating connections between the lived experience of women teachers and the characterization of women teachers' experience in the celluloid world of the movies.

Lives and biographical methods that construct them are literary productions. Lives are arbitrary constructions, constrained by the cultural writing practices of the time. These cultural practices lead to the inventions and influences of the gendered, knowing others who can locate subjects within familied social spaces where lives have beginnings, turning points, and clearly defined endings. Such texts create "real" persons about whom truthful statements are presumably made. In fact, as argued

above, these texts are narrative fictions, cut from the same kinds of cloth as the lives they tell about (26).

Denzin goes on in a later section to say that "Ethnographies, biographies, and autobiographies rest on *stories* which are fictional, narrative accounts of how something happened" (41). I think the key in working with stories, throughout the process of piecing together stories from multiple storytellers and even from different formats of storytelling, is to never lose sight of the context in which the story is told. In the introduction to Studying Teachers' Lives, Ivor Goodson points out that one possible consequence of engaging in "life story work" is to "de-politicize" inquiry by working at the individual level and being cut off from "wider social forces" (9). This is precisely why it is critical to ground the work at the individual level in analysis that examines the broader social context influencing that lived experience; what are the social forces tugging at the corners of the particular that make it *that* particular.

In the course of my research on teachers in the movies I have viewed a number of "Hollywood" films that have teachers as central characters. In previous chapters, I have analyzed the films using Huebner's five value frameworks of curriculum and looked that the characteristics that were common to the "good" teachers who have starred in these films and the "bad" teachers who have generally played smaller roles. It becomes my task now to look more deeply into these films, particularly into the few that star women as the central character, and see the difference that the gender of the teacher character appears to make in the development of these film narratives. In subsequent sections, this chapter will discuss the role of

nurture in teachers' work lives, will discuss the historic and contemporary constraints placed on women teachers, will discuss the teachers' acts of resistance in the contexts of dealing with administration and of political action and will discuss the divided lives that teachers have been forced to lead in our neighborhoods as well on our local movie screens.

The films I use to frame my ideas in this chapter have been divided into three categories. The films in which the "good" teacher is the primary character or one of the primary characters are as follows: Bright Road; The Children's Hour; The Corn is Green; Dangerous Minds; Good Morning, Miss Dove; The King and I; Looking for Mr. Goodbar; The Miracle Worker; Rachel, Rachel; These Three and Up the Down Staircase. The film in which the teacher is not, perhaps, "good" but is the central character is The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. The films I have chosen to discuss here in which the woman teacher is a supporting character to the male teacher starring in the film are as follows: The Blackboard Jungle, Hoosiers, Lean on Me, Only the Strong, Stand and Deliver, Summer School and To Sir With Love. While these films may fit loosely into the model established in chapter two, they are important to consider separately in terms of their presentation of the gendered teacher.

Tying everything together are stories. Witherell writes of "...the narrative structure of the self that is woven within an intricate tapestry. The tapestry is composed of interlocking patterns of cultural-historical, individual-biographical, and interpersonal-relational threads" (84). Each thread is a story or, perhaps, many stories.

Nurture

The ethic of care. From Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking work In a Different Voice to the work of Witherell and Noddings cited here, including stops between and since, there have been many words written about the ethic of care. Witherell and Noddings write that it is

...our belief that to take seriously the quest for life's meaning and the meaning of individual lives is to understand the primacy of the caring relation and of dialogue in educational practice. Our use of the term *caring relation* [sic] assumes a relational, or connective, notion of the self, one that holds that the self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relations with others (5).

The maternal seems to be embedded in the ethic of care, but conceptually they are not the same thing. While scholarly discourse and the films considered here are ambivalent about the concept of "teacher as mother," teachers themselves and teachers in the movies are generally committed to caring for children. Casey finds that commitment to care a recurrent theme in her analysis of the life narratives of women teachers.

Even though the life histories which I will discuss contain conflicting evaluations of the maternal in education, in these narratives women teachers consistently talk about students in I-thou terms. This seems to me to be a distinctive and essential

element of any feminist definition of nurture in education (318, 1990).²

The ethic of care Casey finds among the teachers she has interviewed, a notion that has been largely written out of public discourse on education (Casey 301, 1990), is also common to most of the women teachers presented in commercial films.

Of these teachers who are the central characters in films and portrayed as "good," most teach students who are prepubescent. In the cases of Looking for Mr. Goodbar and Rachel, Rachel, having the central characters work with small children clearly removes sexual tension from the classroom. Those particular teachers, Theresa Dunn played by Diane Keaton and Rachel played by Joanne Woodward, are presented in psychosexual crisis throughout large portions of the film, and their onscreen personas are shown nurturing innocent, young children as a counterbalance to the other scenes. The first day Theresa enters a classroom of hearing impaired children, she sits down on their level to talk with them. Her demeanor is kind, reassuring, and she touches the children. Touch is also part of Rachel's interaction with her students. Most of this film centers on Rachel's mental instability and sexual insecurity, but the classroom scenes reveal a kind, typically competent teacher. Rachel is both playful and tender with the small children she teaches. She believes the best of the little ones, and she sings to them during naptime. She realizes that her role as a nurturer is different from their

²Another theme Casey finds in the narratives, interestingly, is that "nurture is necessary, but it is not sufficient" (318, 1990).

mothers' but not unrelated. At one point Rachel muses, "It may be that my children will be temporary, never to be held. But, so are everyone's."

Rachel and Theresa Dunn spend most of their screen time out of the classroom. Rachel spends her summer vacation losing her virginity in a relationship that is destined to end and avoiding the tentative advances of a female colleague. Theresa Dunn, in a script based on a "true" story,³ spends her evenings cruising singles bars and winds up dead long before she learns to elude her Catholic guilt, to live with the trauma of a childhood illness and resulting deformity or to get beyond an affair with her married college professor that ended badly.

For the teachers who spend the bulk of their screen time in the classroom, the story there is pretty much the same. Certainly, Miss Moffat's nurture in The Corn is Green is rooted in political action and Annie Sullivan's in The Miracle Worker springs from a desperate attempt to save a child from isolation, but the net result is not much different in terms of tangible pedagogical exchanges between these teachers in the movies and their students. In the classroom projected on the silver screen, it is the relationship between the teacher and student, the "caring relation" exhibited by the teacher, that is paramount. And, so it is for women teachers working in real classrooms. In her analysis of teachers' narratives, Casey found over and over again that teaching is much more for these women than paid employment. "Many women define being a teacher as a fundamental existential identity...These women work for children, not for those who pay their wages" (206, 1992).

³The novel, which has the same title, was written by Judith Rossner.

Teacher as Mother...Teacher as Other than Mother. The research of feminist scholars has opened discussion on many areas related to the social and psychological meanings of motherhood, to the social construction of gender and to the many values associated with women's paid and unpaid work. Rather than attempt to pull bits and pieces from vast sets of literature to demonstrate connections between motherhood, the feminization of teaching and the social construction of woman as teacher, I will instead limit myself to what I think are direct connections between our apparent ambivalent regard for the "teacher as mother" metaphor and the manifestation of that ambivalence in cinematic portrayals of women teachers.

It did not surprise to me to find that women teachers represented as central characters in the movies tend to work with younger children while men teachers tend to work with high school (as well as college) students. It would present a more accurate representation of actual statistics to find women teachers the majority in both settings. Hollywood decision makers, however, respond to the market forces that label male stars more "bankable" than female stars, and they put men in the lead roles with greater frequency than they do women.

Recall here "the Hollywood model" of "good" teachers outlined in chapter two. The "good" teacher is usually an outsider, not well-liked by colleagues. He or she gets personally involved with students, learns from those students, and has an antagonistic relationship with administrators. Often these teachers personalize the curriculum to meet the everyday needs in their students' lives, and sometimes they have a ready sense of humor. Women teachers presented as "good" fit the model in all of the critical ways.

The only gender-based difference at this level is that the women teachers in the movies do not tend to be equipped with a ready sense of humor.

To find the influence of gender on the construction of teachers in popular film, it is necessary to look at deeper levels than this model provides. What is it that makes Bette Davis' Miss Moffat different from Robin Williams' Mr. Keating (in Dead Poets Society) and Anne Bancroft's Annie Sullivan different from Nick Nolte's Alex Jurrell (in Teachers)? I assure you it is more than the dollar value of their paychecks unadjusted for inflation.⁴

There are the unavoidable connections for Miss Moffat and Annie Sullivan between their role as teacher and the maternal manifestations of their characters. Neither Moffat nor Sullivan have children of their own, and both characters are forced to address issues of parenting within their respective films while the men cited above do not. This is not a coincidence. Women teachers in the movies regularly deal with this issue in one way or another, either explicitly or by implication, while it is not an issue for the male characters. In The Corn is Green Miss Moffat takes a particularly talented boy from the coal mines and pushes him academically. This boy, Morgan, is like a son to her, a fact she reveals after he complains about all of the extra work she gives him. Morgan asks, "How can you be interested in a machine that you put a penny in and if nothing comes out you give it a good shake?" Miss Moffat tells him that she has spent two years on him because she has "great interest" in him. She confides that she stays awake in the middle of the night making plans for him. It is an emotional scene. Later,

⁴Bette Davis' film was released in 1945, Anne Bancroft's in 1962, Nick Nolte's in 1984 and Robin Williams' in 1989. I do not know what each actor was paid for starring in these film but suspect, nonetheless, that my point is well taken.

after Morgan receives a scholarship to Oxford, the school Miss Moffat attended, she hides the fact that a local girl is pregnant with his baby. To keep Morgan in school, Miss Moffat first pays off the girl, Bessie, then finally adopts the baby to rear as her own child. Is it Miss Moffat's own displaced ambition that propels her to urge Morgan forward in place of herself and Bessie? Not insignificantly, the baby she adopts is a boy.

Nancy Chodorow's widely read book The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, uses object-relations theory and feminist analysis to explain why it is almost exclusively women who mother. The cultural norm is for women and men to take for granted "women's unique capacity for sacrifice, caring and mothering, and to associate women with their own fears of regressions and powerlessness." At the same time, men are seen as having the ability to aid separation and integration into the wider society and are associated with "idealized virtue and growth" (83).

Applying Chodorow's premise to an examination of the interplay between gender and teaching, it becomes clear that the nurturing behavior of women teachers is accompanied by unstated negatives that lie beneath the surface and add tension and complexity to the relationship between students and women teachers while men teachers are able to integrate nurturing behaviors into their relationships with students without instilling a similar fear of "regressions and powerlessness." Obviously, children bring their prior relationships with gendered adults into the classroom with them. In Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern Patricia Waugh writes:

Most men and women in this society will have been
"mothered" in early infancy in terms of a fairly exclusive

emotional attachment (though the actual *forms* of this will differ according to variations determined by historical factors including class, education, region, state intervention, etc.). "Father" tends to appear as breadwinner/support though not as a primary pre-oedipal figure; so, while mother *appears* (as in Freud and Lacan) to be part of the "natural" order, father is conceived in the terms of the "culture." "Mother" will thus carry our ambivalence not only about dependency but about the "natural," and she will continue to be experienced in part as tied to regression to a pre-social, primitive state whose emotional uncertainties undermine our "sophisticated" secondary socialization (63).

For children, the first years of school provide a transition between the private world of the home and the public spaces beyond. Madeleine Grumet writes poignantly about the difficulty women teachers experience when they try to shut off their inclination to nurture in order to comply with the stated curriculum supplied by their institutional hierarchy. In the following passage from Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, Grumet writes about the role teachers play in helping children fashion an escape from their dependency on their mothers.

It is the female elementary schoolteacher who is charged with the responsibility to lead the great escape [of children from their dependency on their mothers]. At the sound of the bell, she brings the child from the concrete to the abstract, from the fluid time of the domestic day to the segmented schedule of the

school day, from the physical work, comfort, and sensuality of home to the mentalistic, passive, sedentary, pretended asexuality of the school--in short, from the woman's world to the man's. She is a traitor, and the low status of the teaching profession may be derived from the contempt her betrayal draws from both sexes. Mothers relinquish their children to her, and she hands them over to men who respect the gift but not the giver (25).

All of this brings us back to Annie Sullivan.

In The Miracle Worker Annie Sullivan spends most of the movie in a battle with Mrs. Keller over young Helen. The girl was left blind and deaf after an illness in her infancy. She has passed the age when other children are learning in school, and her whims control the household. Helen does not have a common language with anyone in her family; her father hires Annie Sullivan to live with the family and teach his daughter. Over Mrs. Keller's frequent objections, Annie uses firmness to arrive at the point of nurturance. The teacher introduces the student to language and, thus, gives Helen the tool she needs to extricate herself from her mother.

It is near the end of the film that Annie helps Helen make the connection between the letters she is signing in the girl's palm and the water they are pumping from the outdoor well. In her joy at the discovery, Helen leaves Annie for a moment to stand with her parents on the front porch. She hugs her parents but only stays briefly. The connection has been broken. The scene ends with Helen leaving her mother and father to go back to her teacher. Later that night Helen comes into her room and kisses Annie. The

film ends with Annie cradling the girl in a rocking chair and signing "I love Helen." The connection between Helen and her mother no longer has the primacy it once did; and, the connection between Helen and Annie has been made and secured, establishing teacher as maternal but not mother.

Constraints

Historic and contemporary. It is evident that women teachers in the movies emerge as images constructed for our viewing pleasure. Most of the characters present on the list of women teachers who are central characters in films are "pretty, young things" or, at least, attractive women. Even the rare older woman, such as Jennifer Jones' Miss Dove, is shown in classroom flashbacks as a younger woman, a worthy object of the gaze. Laura Mulvey and Teresa de Lauretis have both written about the politics of representation in the cinema and the effect of woman's presentation as an object of the masculine gaze. Indeed, in films like Hoosiers, To Sir With Love, Summer School, The Blackboard Jungle and Only the Strong women teachers are included in supporting or minor roles only as the love interest or potential love interest for the male teacher who is the film's central character. In the terminology of screen narrative, they provide "complication." John Berger writes about representation in the larger sense in Ways of Seeing.

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is

male: the surveyed is female. Thus she turns herself into an object--and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (47).

Is it any wonder that the traditional image of the stereotypical schoolteacher wears a blouse buttoned up to her neck, a skirt that falls far below her knees and a severe hairstyle? If she must be looked at as she stands in front of the class, she certainly does not want to be actually seen. To invite the gaze of students or visiting administrators is to challenge the constraints placed on women teachers to keep them from behaving like other women. While she was researching the life histories of women teachers teaching in Vermont between 1900 and 1950, Margaret Nelson writes that she posted a copy of regulations for rural schoolteachers on her bulletin board. The rules, which she calls typical, were as follows:

Teachers will not dress in bright colors. Dresses must not be more than two inches above the ankles. At least two petticoats must be worn. Their petticoats will be dried in pillowcases.

[Teachers] will not get into a carriage or automobile with any man, except her brother or father. Teachers will not loiter at ice cream stores.

Teachers are expected to be at home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., unless in attendance at a school function.

The teacher will no smoke cigarettes or play at cards.

She will not dye her hair under any circumstances (178-9).

Perhaps most telling of the rules above is the edict that teachers must dry their petticoats in pillowcases. These women were not to be considered human beings like the rest of us; their "unmentionables" must literally be

neither mentionable nor visible. It was common practice during the time period Nelson studied for women teachers to be dismissed when they married, or, if they were allowed to marry, they were not generally allowed to remain in their teaching position when they became pregnant.

Through her analysis of interviews with fifty women teachers and her examination of pertinent written documents, Nelson has uncovered evidence that the constraints placed on teachers were not uniform and that their daily lives in the classroom were not always as imagined by those of us who look back through the filter of history. The teachers themselves provided anecdotal evidence that marriage, and even pregnancy, were not always grounds for dismissal. Often the terms of their employment depended more on the availability of qualified teachers than on proximity of their own due dates (173-6). Several of the women interviewed mentioned that they brought their children with them to school on a regular basis because other childcare was not available (175).

Nelson was even more surprised to find evidence in the interviews that these young women schoolteachers had to deal with what appears to be an old problem that has been given a relatively new name, sexual harassment (171-6). Just like the teachers in the movies who present unfailingly virtuous images publicly while privately living life as human beings, real life teachers in Vermont chafed at the restrictions placed on them. Nelson writes:

One teacher said she "outwardly" conformed to the requirement that she act "like a lady"; she added "inwardly I rebelled." another teacher summed up the effects of these policies in a poignant way: "Teachers were a thing apart," she

sighed, "you couldn't do anything that other people did" (179). Nelson cites Tyack and Strober⁵ for their assertion that the feminization of teaching had an effect on the constraints placed on teachers. They feel that adult men would not have been treated the same way as these women teachers (179). Still, the question arises why did these women teachers who benefitted from a labor shortage by being able, in some cases, to teach after they married and while pregnant comply with other restrictions placed on them? Nelson reports that although the teachers interviewed for her project may have minded the restrictions, they still recalled them with a certain pride, and "they link them with both protection and status" (180). Negotiating between their public and private selves amid the constraints imposed upon them from their supervisors and their communities has historically been a perilous balancing act for women teachers.

As some of the historical constraints on women teachers have relaxed, new restrictions have emerged. Sandra Acker points out the inequities in career opportunities for women teachers according to the age level and subject they teach as well as the size and type of school in which they are employed. Teachers in secondary schools, for example, have greater opportunity to increase their salaries by taking on management responsibilities (10). Notably, the one teacher in the movies who takes advantage of that opportunity, Raquel Ortega, the math department chair in the film biography Stand and Deliver, is portrayed as a bitter, negative

⁵Nelson's footnote reads "Tyack, D.B. and Hansot, E. (1982) *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1920-1980*, New York: Basic, p. 192."

woman who tries to hamper the creativity and downplay the accomplishments of the film's central character, Jaime Escalante.

There are also larger societal issues to consider. Casey and Michael Apple point out that teachers have become scapegoats as economic crises place millions of people in positions of unemployment or underemployment. Rather than consider changing the economy, vocal constituencies cry out for changing the school curriculum (172). Later in the same article in a section called "The Teacher as Female Worker", Casey and Apple write about changes in the job market related to changes in the sexual division of labor. Jobs filled by women are structured so that there are greater attempts to control the content of the job and how that job is performed (179-80). It is little wonder that, as Casey writes, women teachers often identify with their students on the basis of their mutual powerlessness (1990, 306). But, as we shall see in the next section, women teachers have not let the constraints of their workplaces and communities shackle them into immobility; both in the Hollywood movies and in American classrooms, women teachers have found and formed pockets of resistance.

Resistance

Administration and political action. The literature on teachers' acts of resistance seems rather slim when placed next to writing about the oppression and victimization of teachers. Still, there are scholars writing about the troubled relations between women teachers and administrative hierarchies and about the political action of women teachers, and this same discourse is occasionally found in motion pictures. Nelson finds that the

teachers interviewed for her project often converted the rules that constrained them into something they could use to their own advantage.

Rather than a simple mark of their oppression, these restrictions became a resource, the basis for the accumulation of influence within the community, the school and their personal lives. The fact that they could even abandon them, on occasion, suggests that we should see teachers as a relatively powerful and inventive group (184-5).

Still, it would be wrong to infer from Nelson's work that women teachers' dissatisfaction with their position in the workplace, their very real feelings of oppression at the hands of administrators, are mitigated by being able to manipulate on occasion the rules that signify that oppression. Casey finds that one of the reasons women who are progressive activists leave teaching is their persistent problems with school administrators, problems that have not been studied in great detail. Casey writes:

Perhaps the most serious omission in the literature on teacher retention is its neglect of the antagonism between teachers and administrators, a major explanation in these narratives. This exclusion is partly due to the widespread and unquestioning adoption of an administrative perspective by writers on the subject; it is also caused by the not-unconnected selective filtering of women's experiences through male, and in some cases, masculinist perspectives (206, 1992).

That antagonism is a major theme in the motion pictures that star men; not coincidentally, many of the films with male central characters are also more recent films.

Among the recent films, however, there is a very telling scene that shows a woman teacher vent her frustration with the amazingly authoritarian tactics of principal Joe Clarke in the biopic Lean on Me. This is the only scene in the film to feature the music teacher, Mrs. Elliott, but it is a powerful example. Clarke has taken over a failing inner city school. Twenty years earlier, he was a teacher in the same high school when the hallways were clean, and the students were middle class and white. In this scene, Clarke has called Mrs. Elliott into the hall after bursting into her class and interrupting a rehearsal to demand that she teach the entire student body the school song.

Clarke: Mrs. Elliott, I don't like being ignored like that.

Elliott: I'm sorry, Mr. Clarke, if you weren't getting enough attention, but I'm trying to train a chorus.

Clarke: And you don't think the school song is important enough to warrant a little interruption. Is that right?

Elliott: The school song is fine, but we were doing Mozart. I was right in the middle of a difficult part. If you would like us to respect your work, you could try to appreciate ours.

Clarke: Who do you think you're talking to?

Elliott: A man who seems to be threatened when any other

adult in this school does something that the children like.

The two continue to bicker in the hallway. On a whim, Clarke cancels the students' annual concert at Lincoln Center and charges Mrs. Elliott with "rank insubordination" for not clearing the trip with him personally, that despite the fact that she filed the appropriate paperwork with his office staff.

Clarke: You've questioned my judgement, my competence, my intelligence...

Elliott: Look, I don't want to get into this. You are the one who comes around here to bother me. You are a bully, a despicable man. I have nothing to say to you.

Clarke: All right, let's just accommodate that, Mrs. Elliott.
You're fired.

Elliott: You need a psychiatrist.

Clarke: Get out. Right now...

Elliott: Fine. Fine. Fired...fired. You will hear from my lawyer.

Mrs. Elliott is left in the hallway beside the open door to her classroom to slap her hand futilely against the cinderblock wall. Joe Clarke strides purposefully down the hallway with his bullhorn pointed back at Mrs. Elliott, calling to mind the proverbial "eyes in the back of the head" that such authoritarian figures often claim to have.

As the character Joe Clarke so ably demonstrates, there are clear limits on a teacher's autonomy, not to mention limits on her resistance. Nelson writes:

Schoolteachers could violate rules, but they could not change them. To the extent that they embraced restrictions as a source of personal empowerment, they eliminated the possibility of achieving a collective basis for effective resistance. Outward conformity to the norms of lady-like behaviour--though paired with inward rebellion--limited the terms in which the battle for occupational improvement could be waged (185).

Of course, there are examples of individual acts of resistance. In her book I Answer With My Life: Life Histories of Women Teachers Working for Social Change, Casey found numerous examples of women committed to political action, even though many of those same teachers might not have labeled themselves activists. She identified an existential discourse of Catholic women religious teachers, a pragmatic discourse of secular Jewish women teachers and a signifying discourse of Black women teachers. The metaphors are different for the different groups of women, but the commitment to children is tangible. Yes, these teachers nurture children, but that nurture is expressed as "political responsibility, not domestic duty" (306, 1990).

What is the political project of teachers in the movies? It varies from film to film, but the project is typically one of the factors that motivates the teacher to teach. Hollywood teachers reveal their political projects in various ways. Although most of these films are produced before the "second wave" of the American women's movement, they can be read as feminist

texts. Several generations of young girls sat in darkened movie houses watching women schoolteachers in roles that must have appeared remarkably autonomous and important. That these characters appeared more self-determining in that context than they do through our contemporary, feminist lenses was, of course, not a concern to the original audience. Anna in The King And I, a frothy musical, tries to improve the role of women in Siam and makes strong anti-slavery statements, but her political positioning is integrated into the narrative largely to provide conflict between the teacher and the king to intensify their relationship. The Corn Is Green, which has been cited before, offers a better example. Miss Moffat uses her Oxford education and her inherited wealth to bring young boys up out of the coal mines and keep them in school until they reach the age of sixteen. There is also, implicit in many of these films, the notion that the ethic of care women (and "good" male teachers) bring to the classroom offers important progressive dimensions that transcend classroom teaching to become counter-hegemonic. In this sense, the act of caring for children is double-edged and reinscribes women teachers at the same time it offers a serious critique to the dominant ideology of educational institutions, an ideology that views schools as a giant sorting machine used to direct children to their respective slots in the world of work.

Ah, if only flesh and blood teachers could command the resources and take advantage of the fortuitous good fortune that accrue to Hollywood's anointed ones. While there are parallels between the representation of women teachers in films and the lived experience of women teachers working in American classrooms, there are few, if any, actual teachers whose

work for and nurture of children is repaid with the immediacy and intensity accorded teachers in the movies.

Divided Lives

Public work and private pathos. Undercutting all of the other categories are the divided lives that are imposed on women teachers in the movies and in local classrooms. Historically, women have been asked to choose between caring for the children of other women and having children of their own (Nelson, 173), a decision not forced upon men teachers. Still, I think the divisions between public and private are much deeper than the categories we assign to our lives at work and our lives outside of work; there is more to this issue than labeling women as "married" or "not married" and "mothers" or "not mothers." We must consider the ways in which women teachers are asked to deny their experience as women in their teaching.

Grumet writes:

Convinced we are too emotional, too sensitive, and that our work as mothers or housewives is valued only by our immediate families, we hide it, and like Eve, forbidden to know and teach what she has directly experienced, we keep that knowledge to ourselves as we dispense the curriculum to the children of other women (28).

It seems to be this larger bifurcation addressed above by Grumet that is played out in films with "unmarriagedness," "childlessness" and a litany of other maladies acting as metaphors for the ways in which women teachers are

forced to alternately draw upon and deny their femaleness, as in being asked to nurture but not to mother the children they teach.

In films, most women teachers are single and childless, or their marital and maternal status is not revealed to the audience. While many of the men teachers portrayed in films are also single, some are not, and the issues are different. In the movies male teachers are allowed to have happy, full lives outside of the classroom *and* to be heroes at school. For the male teachers with empty private lives, or with serious personal problems, the implication by the end of the film is usually that the emptiness will be filled or the problem resolved. Often, the heroism demonstrated in the classroom by the man teacher is parlayed into a solution for his personal deficits.

For women teachers, the opposite is true. Hollywood plays out the stereotype that women cannot balance a successful career and private life and must, instead, choose one over the other. Or, as is often the case for women teachers, they must pay for professional success with personal misery. In Dangerous Minds Michelle Pfeiffer plays LouAnne Johnson in a heroic story based on Johnson's autobiographical book on teaching. From the beginning of the film we learn that Johnson is in dire financial straits following her divorce. During a later scene in a dim stairwell outside a rundown apartment, Johnson makes a home visit and tries to keep a bright student from leaving her class to attend a special school for pregnant girls. The teacher confides in the student about beatings she received from her former husband and tells the girl she had an abortion with the implication that her

own personal life is wretched. "Sometimes you start out wrong and just keep going," Johnson says.⁶

Consider the film Little Man Tate as another example. Dianne Wiest plays Dr. Jane Grierson, a former child prodigy who heads the Grierson Institute and devotes her life to studying academically and artistically gifted children. She meets Fred Tate, played by Adam Hann Byrd, and is so impressed with his abilities that she wants him to live with her for the summer and attend college classes while she makes a documentary about him. Jodie Foster directed the film and plays Fred's mother, a waitress named De De Tate. The two women spend most of the film vying to gain physical and emotional control over Fred. Jane's attempts to "mother" Fred while he spends the summer with her are alternately ridiculous and frightening. She feeds him a macrobiotic diet, ostensibly for his stomach ulcer, and the food causes him to vomit. On another occasion she is furious when the boy eats dinner without her.

Most tellingly, Jane does not know what to do when Fred had a bad dream. His real mother, De De, is shown in an earlier scene crawling into bed with him to comfort the boy. Jane is portrayed as an egghead without common sense. The sterility of her elegant home and her failure to sustain emotional ties with others is played off against her successful academic career. Of course, it is not surprising that the film manages to reconcile Fred's real mom and his surrogate in the final frames, but discerning viewers will, I

⁶Interestingly, the film as originally shot included scenes with actor Andy Garcia playing a romantic interest for Pfeiffer's character. Including such a character might have helped expand on the typical portrayal of the "gendered" teacher. Those scenes, however, were cut before the film was released and insured that the character of the woman teacher would conform to the stereotype prevalent in other films.

think, find the resolution a little too pat and will also find that the stereotypes preceding the final scene linger after the film ends. This is only one example of the private pathos of women teachers in the movies; there are many others.

One need only consider Theresa Dunn's multiple one night stands and excessive use of drugs and alcohol, Rachel's mental instability, and Martha Dobie's tragic death in The Children's Hour. Shirley MacLaine stars as Martha and Audrey Hepburn as Karen Wright in this 1961 version of Lillian Hellman's play about two teachers who become the victims of one of their students' lie. When they punish one of the students in their boarding school, the girl tells her grandmother that the two women are lesbians. The old lady gossips, causing most students to withdraw from school. The teachers are in financial ruin, and even Karen's fiance begins to question the relationship between the two women. Martha is forced to acknowledge that her feelings for her friend do exceed the bounds of friendship and hangs herself, even though the little girl's lie has been publicly exposed. The film ends as Karen walks silently past her fiance, the old woman who perpetuated the lie and other townspeople at Martha's funeral. Significantly, Karen is alone.

Conclusion

If the forced split between the public and private is the defining feature of women teachers in the movies and a very real factor in the lives of actual women teachers, it seems appropriate to consider in conclusion the elements with which we began: the self and public culture. Waugh writes that the development of selfhood balances the necessity of separation against the

process of individuation, a process that occurs in the relationship with the primary parenting figure, who is generally the mother.

The ability to conceive of oneself as separate from and mutually independent with the mother develops with the ability to accept one's dependency and to feel secure enough to be able to relax the boundary between self and other, to allow for the ambiguity which resides at the *interface* between subject and object...If selfhood is conceived in terms of disidentification with the mother and identification with a father who symbolizes the larger culture, it is the father who is seen to carry the reality principle (72).

According to Waugh, this configuration constructs "truth" in the "real" world of knowledge in such a way that necessarily devalues the "personal" and provisional "truths" of the familial world. Flax points out that similar arguments by feminist theorists about our early primary relations and the repression of "relational aspects of our subjectivity" demonstrate a pattern that is necessary for replicating male-dominant cultures (232). While Waugh and other feminists have embraced postmodern discourse as a relaxation of (artificial) boundaries around categories and an opportunity for redefining the patriarchy, Flax cautions that postmodern theories may not be the panacea others hope.

A feminist theorist might well ask whether certain postmodernist deconstructors of the self are not merely the latest in a long line of philosophic strategies motivated by a need to evade, deny, or repress the importance of early childhood

experiences, especially mother-child relationships, in the constitution of the self and the culture more generally. Perhaps it is less threatening to have no self than one pervaded by memories of, longing for, suppressed identification with, or terror of the powerful mother of infancy (232).

Instead of proclaiming the self fictive, Flax suggests that the self is social and, in important ways, gendered. She adds that a feminist deconstruction would locate the self and its experiences in "social relations, not only in fictive or purely textual conventions." There is a political purpose to her work; Flax sees the self, or concept of it, as a "lever" to be used against essentialist or ahistoric notions of the self. The problem with postmodernist discourse, finally, is its difficulty in discussing terms like "freedom" and "emancipation," terms connected to broader issues of justice and power that are so very important to all women (232-3).

Casey, too, struggles against the narrow notion of the postmodern self. Her analysis of the life histories of women teachers draws on Bakhtin's theory that only in relationship to the other can the self be defined. When faced with the stories of living, breathing participants, Casey arrives at her own way of thinking about the self.

Unlike the alienated persona of post-modern discourse, the self is not a jumble of fragments; she can articulate her own coherence. Acting within the limitations constructed by others, she nevertheless has some choice, and she has some power (23-4, 1993).

I like this description of the self. Casey writes about a self with purpose, not a rigid set of values and tasks and certainly not a self exhibiting an absence of values. Casey's women teachers tread the ground between those poles. She has choice, she has power, but she also faces limitations.

The work of feminist scholars has opened our eyes to the lived experience of women teachers. Their research provides a valuable contribution toward helping us understand the role gender construction and power relationships play in their lives and in their teaching. At the junctures of private and public, of self and culture, it becomes critical to look at the other forces that influence the way we think about women teachers. Certainly, one of these forces is popular culture. Commercial films not only tell women teachers how other people construct them and re-articulate them as characters on the movie screen, these films also shape the way students and parents respond to teachers and the way women teachers respond to public opinion in the construction of their own lives. It is my hope that revealing the implications of gender in these films will help to free women teachers from the tyranny of the images these films project.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND STUDENT VOICES

Summary

Throughout earlier chapters I have tried to make connections between a group of Hollywood films about teachers and teaching and Huebner's value frameworks of curriculum and to also inject that discussion with various, more fluid, theories of popular culture and social critique. I have established a generic representation of the "good" teacher in these Hollywood movies that is presented as a radical model when, in fact, the "good" teacher in the movies may tug a little at the cornerstone of the institutional hierarchy, but it is never shaken. Similarly, I have identified equally vivid representations in these films of the "bad" teacher and the gendered teacher. These celluloid images influence our individual and collective constructions of what it means to be a teacher and about teaching. As Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner write in Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film:

Films transcode the discourses (the forms, figures, and representations) of social life into cinematic narrative. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality. That

construction occurs in part through the internalization of representations (12-13).

Recognizing the role popular culture plays in our everyday lives and asking questions about how we can use the intersection between the popular and the personal as a space for creating new incarnations of teachers is crucial, as is empowering ourselves to openly challenge the very limited construction of curriculum and radical teaching in popular culture.

In chapter two I lay out "The Hollywood Model" as a means of outlining the shared characteristics of the stock character presented in the movies as the "good" teacher. You will recall that the "good" teacher is generally an outsider who is usually not well-liked by other teachers or by administrators. The "good" teacher gets involved with students on a personal level and, by inviting a reciprocal relationship, learns from those students. These teachers also frequently personalize the curriculum to meet everyday needs in their students' lives. Nevertheless, these teachers, who are ostensibly "radical" or "progressive," serve, in the tradition of Hollywood film, to legitimate dominant institutions and reinforce traditional values identified by Ryan and Kellner as individualism, capitalism, patriarchy and racism and use the formal conventions of film to imply neutrality as they do so. Ryan and Kellner write:

The conventions habituate the audience to accept the basic premises of social order, and to ignore their irrationality and injustice. The mapping of personal life stories over structural social issues like war and crime makes the existing order seem moral and good. And

personal identification with representations of public order creates the psychological disposition for inducement into voluntary participation in a system of exploitation and domination (1).

Ryan and Kellner are writing generally about various genres of films released between 1967 and 1987 to argue that Hollywood films are not "monolithically ideological" because analysis, such as that I have undertaken with teachers and teaching in the movies, can take films into a "plural social and political terrain" (2). These films draw on the dramatic possibilities presented by the tension that exists between the forces of resistance and those of social conformity to present undercurrents of radical opportunity, and the excitement those themes possess, in a context of entrenched institutions and dominant ideology, which carries with it the weight of stability.

In chapters three and four I develop connections between Dwayne Huebner's value frameworks of curriculum and the Hollywood curriculum. In chapter three I move from the Hollywood model of the "good" teacher and draw parallels to Huebner's (a)esthetic values, political values and ethical values. Similarly, in chapter four I draw parallels between Huebner's scientific and technical values and the "bad" teacher in Hollywood movies. In both chapters my discussion expanded on Huebner's clearly delineated value frameworks to discuss the concept of curriculum in film more broadly by looking at embedded themes and patterns and making connections between various films and theories of popular culture, particularly the Critical Theorists' "dialectics of culture" and Fiske's notion of intertextuality.

Intertextuality becomes increasingly significant in chapter five when I look at the role gender plays in movies about teachers. Drawing as heavily on the work of feminist scholars who have examined women teachers' lived experience as on the films that purport to convey a sense of that experience, I find some startling parallels between the research and the movies. Looking at the role of nurture, the historic and contemporary constraints placed on women teachers, the teachers' acts of resistance in the contexts of dealing with administration and of political action and, finally, the divided lives that teachers have been forced to lead in our neighborhoods as well on our local movie screens has reinforced that these films, like the films about men teachers, offer compelling moments of inspiration that, however sentimental and melodramatic, give the audience moments of pleasure without threatening their security with the status quo.

It becomes my task now to ask even more pointed questions about the movies and make new connections between images projected in these motion pictures and the notion of critical pedagogy. I also want to introduce interpretations of several films that may be termed "radical." These films, which openly attack oppressive educational institutions, rely on students to voice their discontent themselves and try to tear down the infrastructure of their schools. In several cases these students literally blow up their schools when the issues they raise are not substantively addressed.

Prophetic Voice and Critical Pedagogy

Part of what's missing in these films is a prophetic voice for teachers as the concept is explored by David E. Purpel in The Moral & Spiritual Crisis in

Education: A Curriculum for Justice & Compassion in Education. Purpel suggests that the prophetic tradition could provide a mechanism for addressing cultural problems.

The educator as prophet does more than re-mind, re-answer, and re-invigorate--the prophet-educator conducts re-search and joins students in continually developing skills and knowledge that enhance the possibility of justice, community, and joy...In order to encourage "prophecy," educators themselves need to be "prophets" and speak in the prophetic voice that celebrates joy, love, justice, and abundance and cries out in anguish in the presence of oppression and misery (105).

Such "prophecy" cannot be generated on behalf of students; it must arise in tandem with the students' own vision. It is impossible for a liberator to maintain a position over those to be liberated without remaining a part of the oppressive hierarchy, without, in effect, remaining an oppressor. Following the model of liberation theology, the cure for poverty is for everyone to embrace poverty, not to raise the poor into affluence (see Gutiérrez, Boff, Lebacqz, and Pieris)¹. Similarly, Paulo Freire says the following in Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either

¹For convenience, books by these particular authors have been listed in the bibliography section of this paper.

the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both (105).

Teachers must join with students to effect liberation. For teachers, Freire argues, transformation brought about by liberation must come from dialogue, which he defines as "the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world."

Teachers in the movies wade into these waters, but they do not jump in and swim. Many of the Hollywood teachers jeopardize their jobs by tossing aside, if not openly flouting, school policies. Most try to transform their school's stated curriculum into a curriculum that better meets the needs of their students. Many take risks of one sort or another to try to connect with students on a personal level. Still, these Hollywood teachers are working on easing transitions for their students between school and the world outside classroom walls instead of participating in transformations that could radically recreate schools and other societal institutions as agencies invested creating in justice.

Are we likely to see many of the teachers projected on the big screen at the local cinema or transmitted to the smaller screens in our own homes engage in praxis? No. Just as real teachers feel the tug of their personal compassion for and obligation to students being countered by the need to maintain their positions of authority in the school hierarchy, real movie writers and directors are torn between realizing their artistic or political vision and producing a "product" that studios know how to market and audiences find familiar enough to buy. That's precisely why the persistent

incarnation of Hollywood's "good" teacher is a staple in films of all genres and time periods--the teacher in the movies is idealized enough to inspire viewers and manageable enough to leave the status quo intact.

Giroux is one of the most recent and most vocal advocates of critical pedagogy as a tool for revitalizing democratic public life, but he is certainly not the first. Giroux is quick to point out that John Dewey wrote about the role of education in securing the democratic process as early as 1916 in Democracy and Education. This theme is articulated convincingly by Henry A. Giroux in his discourse on critical pedagogy (1989, 1991, 1992, 1994). He begins his essay "Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy" with a rallying cry that has been repeated so often its ring has become a little hollow:

American public education is in crisis...At stake here is the refusal to grant public schooling a significant role in the ongoing process of educating people to be active and critical citizens capable of fighting for and reconstructing democratic public life (1992, 199).

Giroux, writing here with Freire, calls for teachers to practice their craft as "transformative public intellectuals" in schools configured as cultural sites for teachers and students to work together to produce knowledge that is "both relevant and emancipatory" from sources including popular culture (1989, ix).

Part of this argument for critical pedagogy means meeting students where they are by valuing the knowledge they already have. Clearly, students construct meaning before they enter the classroom. Giroux and Simon write, "By ignoring the cultural and social forms that are authorized by youth and

simultaneously empower and disempower them, educators risk complicitly silencing and negating their students" (3).² Kellner argues for an expansion of the concept of literacy with attention to fostering competencies that he considers important to students' everyday lives. He says that modern pedagogy organized around acquiring the skills of reading and writing are focused on a narrow conception of literacy that is particularly applicable to print culture.³ Instead of merely expanding the range of desirable competencies to combine "great books" with, say, balancing a checkbook and analyzing a popular film, Kellner builds his theory of critical media literacy on Giroux's program of critical literacy, which is based on "a discourse of emancipation, possibility, hope, and struggle."⁴ Particularly, Kellner is

²From "Popular Culture as Pedagogy of Pleasure and Meaning" in Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life.

³The debate over the primacy of written or oral competencies is not a new one. Ironically, the oral tradition, which is in many ways more closely related through storytelling traditions to the dominant forms of popular culture, is revered in ancient civilizations. The notion of the spoken word as an integrated whole, and of the written word as an inferior counterfeit of it, goes all the way back to Plato. In the Phaedrus, Socrates recounts the story of the Egyptian King Thamus, who is offered the gift of writing by a deity named Theuth. Thamus declines the gift saying, "This discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners souls, because they will not use their memories...They will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality" (278-9). Socrates goes on to comment, "...when [words] have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves...Is there not another kind of word or speech far better than this, and having far greater power?...I mean an intelligent word graven in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent" (278-9). Plato recounts Socrates in The Dialogues of Plato. Trans. Benjamin Jowett, 1892; Oxford University Press, 1920.

⁴Kellner is writing in "Reading Images Critically" from Postmodernism, Feminism, and Cultural Politics: Redrawing Educational Boundaries and he cites Giroux in Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life, 1988.

discussing the need for competencies in reading images critically, and he chooses print advertisements as his examples.

These examples pose in a provocative way the need to expand literacy and cognitive competencies in order to survive the onslaught of media images, messages, and spectacles which are inundating our culture. The goal will be to teach a critical media literacy which will empower individuals to become more autonomous agents, able to emancipate themselves from contemporary forms of domination and able to become more active citizens, eager and competent to engage in processes of social transformation (63).

All of which are competencies necessary for those same individuals to engage in fully participatory democracy as it is envisioned by Giroux. Giroux and Freire write in the introduction of Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life that commitment to a democratic society through the ideals of freedom, equality and justice provides the unifying elements in a curriculum that should otherwise celebrate "diverse voices, experiences, histories, and community traditions that increasingly characterize many countries" (x). Their notion of critical pedagogy is neither a repudiation of "great books" nor an uncritical embrace of popular culture but instead arises from a:

...need to reclaim a cultural literacy for each and every person as part of a democratic idea of citizenship that dignifies and critically engages the different voices of students from both dominant and subordinate groups in ways that help them to

redefine schools as part of the communities and neighborhoods they serve (x-xi).

They recognize that multiple perspectives must be acknowledged and interrogated for students to become critical citizens rather than merely "good."

Pedagogy does not fall solely under the purview of schools. Giroux and Simon point out that there is the possibility for pedagogy at any site where a practice "intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning" (1989, 230). There are many of those sites visited by students during the hours they are out of school and others that compete with the stated curriculum during the school day. All of these sites may be connected to what Giroux calls the "pedagogy of representation." In Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture Giroux says that it is important for viewers to identify the ways in which representations are constructed to help us understand the past through the present while also sanctioning a particular vision of the future.

...a pedagogy of representation is not wedded to the process of narrating an authentic history, but to the dynamics of cultural recovery, which involves rewriting the relationship between identity and difference through a retelling of the historical past. Such a pedagogy is rooted in making the political more pedagogical by addressing how a critical politics can be developed between a struggle over access to regimes of representation and using them to re-present different identities as part of the reconstruction of democratic public life (89).

For teachers there are very specific challenges and opportunities in giving students the tools they need to make sense of their lives in a postmodern image culture. To do so requires dialogue. One place to begin that dialogue is through an exploration of the meaning(s) of artifacts of popular culture.

But, through looking at these films critically and using them in the classroom as a starting point for discussing issues related to curriculum (power), gender roles, racial identity, sexual identity, politics and a variety of other topics relevant to students' lives. These films, as is possible with any number of other artifacts of popular culture, provide a meeting place for experiences from students everyday lives and theories of meaning that they illustrate. It requires student and teacher working in concert to create opportunities for this sort of critical pedagogy to ignite a classroom. When students begin to realize their own value as human beings and realize that they possess the power to make meaning(s) and create change, a democratic vision may be realized. It's an argument made well by Giroux and Freire in Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life:

At its best, the language of educational theory should embody a public philosophy dedicated to returning schools to their primary task: to be places of critical education in the service of creating a public sphere of citizens who are able to exercise power over their own lives, and especially over the conditions of knowledge production and acquisition. This is a language linked to the imperatives of a practical hope, one that views the relationship between leadership and schooling as part of a wider struggle to create the lived experiences of

empowerment for the vast majority (viii).

There is an opportunity for teachers to assume leadership in this process, but the opportunity carries enormous risk. In the closing paragraph of his essay on teachers and teaching in the movies, Ayers articulates the tension that exists between the ideal teacher in films working to save students and his own notion of outstanding teachers finding salvation for all.

Outstanding teachers need to question the common sense--to break the rules, to become political and activist in concert with the kids. This is true heroism, an authentic act of courage. We need to take seriously the experiences of youngsters, their sense-making, their knowledge, and their dreams; and in particular we must question the structures that kids are rejecting. In other words, we must assume an intelligence in youngsters, assume that they are acting sensibly and are deriving meaning from situations that are difficult and often dreadful--and certainly, not of their own making. In finding common cause with youngsters, we may also find there our own salvation as teachers (156).

For teachers, this means they must choose students over schools and other societal institutions and, in doing so, explore radical alternatives to the status quo. It is an obvious choice but not an easy one to make.

Alternative Visions of Schools and Schooling in the Movies

Often in films that feature teenagers as the central characters school is little more than a locus at which students' lives converge and might be

interchangeable with any number of other locations, such as a mall or another "hangout." There are, however, a few films that depict the school as an overt terrain of struggle where students form a collective group of opposition and begin resistance activities against the educational hierarchy and, by implication, the larger societal institutions of control represented by their school and school personnel. Unlike the "good" teacher who goes up against "the system" and unleashes a bit of temporary chaos without really effecting lasting change, these students dismantle the system that oppresses them. Another system of oppression will undoubtedly rise in its place, but it is equally certain that these students will continue their rebellion.

I would like to cite as examples four films, Class of 1999, Class of Nuke 'em High, Pump Up the Volume and Rock 'n' Roll High School. Class of 1999 has already been discussed in some detail during a discussion of the "bad" teacher in chapter four, but it is important, I believe, to frame a separate discussion of the final minutes of the film. After the battledroid "teachers" have orchestrated a gang war between the "Razorhawks" and the "Blackhearts" to try to kill the students, the leaders of the two gangs instead join forces to wipe out the battledroids. Cody, the main character in the film who has recognized early in the movie that something is wrong with the new teachers, calls them "Three inhuman teaching monsters" and calls out to his rival, "You've gotta know who your real enemies are. I'm going in there to waste some teachers. Now, are you with me?" The others join up, realizing that their "real enemies" are not teachers in any traditional sense but instead the system that puts killing machines in schools to eradicate insurgence. The electronic sign in the hallway reads "Welcome to Night School," and the

audience is certain that lessons taught this evening will be different than ever before. The leaders ride motorcycles through the hallways, a theme repeated in several of these films, and fight the battledroids whose various attachments include a flame thrower device from the "female's" head, a machine gun mounted on the gym teacher's arm, and a giant claw on the third droid's arm that decapitates a student as he gleefully intones, "I love to mold young minds." This school has been transformed from prison to battlefield, and finally the students begin to win. Losses have been heavy, but Cody and his girlfriend Christy finally walk out of the school at dawn. The school is burning behind them conveying a message that the only way to change the system is to destroy it.

As with Class of 1999, it may seem difficult at first to take seriously either Class of Nuke 'em High or Rock 'n' Roll High School. Both are low budget films with low production values, unsatisfactory scripts, generally poor direction and acting. In comparison these two films elevate Class of 1999 to near classic status. But, there is an interesting theme that cuts across all three pictures. In each film students are the victim of largescale conspiracies that endanger their health, curtail their freedom or both. In Class of 1999 the battledroids dressed up as teachers at the behest of school officials hurt and murder students as a matter of course. In Class of Nuke 'em High students at Tromaville High School⁵ have been exposed to nuclear contaminants. The Tromaville Nuclear Facility, which is located next door to the school, failed to report an underground leak. There are the typical school and teacher clichés throughout the film--a crotchety teacher with her hair in a gray bun, thick

⁵Troma is the name of the production and distribution company responsible for this film.

glasses and a shrieking voice--and new plot points arising from the "atomic high" students get after smoking marijuana grown at the nuclear power plant. Finally, some students begin to recognize their plight and protest the conspiracy that covered it up, a protest that loosely links the school and the plant. When a timely nuclear blast blows up the school, the students cheer. A voice announces over a public address system (from where?) that Tromaville High will be temporarily closed for remodeling.

At Vince Lombardi High School, also known as Rock 'n' Roll High School, the scene is similar even if the issue is different. Here Riff Randall, played by P.J. Soles, is a self-proclaimed rock 'n' roller with "more detentions than anyone in the school's history." The film pivots on Randall's altercations with Ms. Togar, played Mary Woronow, the new principal who arrives after her predecessor has been carried out in a straitjacket. We learn very quickly that Togar hates rock 'n' roll even more than she detests Randall and the other students she cannot control. Their interplay goes something like this: Randall blasts rock music from the school public address system, Togar sets out to get her, Randall skips school to get tickets to see her favorite band the Ramones, Togar burns Ramones' records in a bonfire. And, so it goes until the Ramones show up at the school just as a banner flies from the upper story of the school proclaiming it "Rock 'n' Roll High School." The students take over the school and again blast rock music, the Ramones of course, over the public address system. Even Mr. McGree, the one teacher featured regularly in the film exchanges his dry, pedantic lecture on Beethoven for a brisk dance with Riff Randall. When he rips off his clothes, he has underneath a Ramones tee-shirt and jeans. Outside Ms. Togar stands

behind her bullhorn and is backed up by police reinforcements. Finally, she forces Randall to come out of the building.

Togar: And just what do you have to say for yourself, young lady?

Riff: I've seen the error of my ways. I'd first like to say to all students everywhere that you may think the school is yours for awhile, but it is always run by the principal and her administration.

Togar: Oh, that's nice.

Riff: Vince Lombardi High is your school, Miss Togar. So, you can have it.

Togar: Well, I'm very happy to see that you've come to your senses. And, what would you have done with the school anyway?

Riff: Rock the roof off it. Hit it Marky...

She cues the Ramones to begin the song "Rock 'n' Roll High School." The students begin to dance madly as the adults grimace at the sound and at the appearance of the Ramones. The adults have cooperated with Togar throughout to rid the school and the teenagers' lives of the evil influence of

rock music, and the students respond to their conspiracy by literally blowing up the school. The film ends as it began with a principal, this time it is Ms. Togar, being carried away in a straitjacket. And so, the cycle continues. Despite the relatively low quality of the film, these students tell a story about students operating collectively as a force of resistance against the opposing forces that try to control them; this is a storyline that is clearly attractive to the audience it targets, an audience comprised mainly of students.

While the three films discussed above might be described as fantastic tales that greatly amplify the circumstances surrounding the students' sense of angst and oppression and offer greatly exaggerated resolutions, there is one film in the group I have listed that seems to resonate more directly with the high school experience. Christian Slater plays Mark Hunter, a high school student whose radio alter-ego is variously known as "Hard Harry" and "Happy Harry Hard-on," in Pump Up the Volume. Mark, whose dad is a school administrator, is new in town and has not made any friends at his new school, Hubert H. Humphrey High School. Unknown to his classmates, he is the guy they begin listening to at night over the airwaves of a low power radio station that he sets up illegally in the basement of his home. As Mark speaks openly about sexual frustration and the alienation and oppression of youth, students gather at the darkened school baseball field where the reception is good. Soon students are passing around audiotapes of various broadcasts and calling or writing the mysterious voice, a voice that seems to speak for all of them, for advice. There is a "good" teacher in the film, Jan Emerson played by Ellen Green, who tries to get Mark to share his feelings about a composition he has written for her writing class and asks him

to write for a school publication she advises. Emerson's good intentions are not enough to deal with the depth of despair that students at the school feel, and the school publication, "The Clarion," is not a forum that will allow Mark to address the issues he is able to address over the airwaves.

The illegal radio show and the tapes circulating in the school do not go unnoticed. The principal, Miss Crestwood played by Annie Ross, is ruminating in the teacher's lounge in a scene that could have been scripted from virtually any student's imagination.

Crestwood: This school is judged on one category, only academic scores. The lesson of modern education is nothing good comes easy. No pain, no gain.

Murdock: Excuse me, everyone. Miss Crestwood, would you want to listen to this? It's the third tape this week. Unbelievable!

They listen to a bit of the tape the shop teacher has confiscated, and the younger teachers, including Jan Emerson, begin to laugh.

Crestwood: Jan, it's no laughing matter. And, in a way, Crestwood is right. As "Harry," Mark begins to address issues that the school administration and, more directly, the school counselor, are unaware of or prefer to ignore, including teen pregnancy, being gay in a straight world and suicide. "Harry" gets a letter from a student that reads:

Hello Hard Harry--

Do you think I should kill myself?

I'm Serious

"Harry" calls the letter writer and asks him why he is considering suicide.

Student: I'm all alone.

Harry: Oh, hey, look...maybe it's okay to be alone sometimes. I mean, uh, everybody's alone.

Student: You're not.

Harry: I didn't talk to one person today not counting teachers.

The student, who we learn was named Malcolm Kiser, does take his own life. "Harry" allows that "Being young is sometimes less fun than being dead," and his character's popularity continues to grow with students just as most of the adults begin to get more and more threatened by his broadcasts. His trademark "So be it!" appears on the school wall in spray paint, and there is a thriving black market in old tapes. Listening to "Harry" seems to be the one thread that really unifies diverse groups of students. At school they dissolve into stratified cliques, but at night they are unified as "Harry" voices their universal discontent as well as their passion.

Finally, the guidance counselor, who has been a particular target of "Harry's," calls in federal investigators and the Federal Communications Commission at the same time he and Crestwood have scheduled an emergency meeting for parents. Ironically, Mark's father is one of the school administrators scheduled to speak. There is a very heated atmosphere at the

school. The parents are talking in no uncertain terms about going after "Harry." An honor student who has been portrayed throughout the film as a "super-overachiever" walks to the front of the room.

Page: My name is Page Woodward, and I have something to say to you people. People are saying that Harry is introducing bad things and encouraging bad things....well, it seems to me that these things were already here.

Crestwood: Please go and sit.

Page: My god. Why won't you people listen? He's trying to tell you that there's something wrong with this school. Half the people that are here are on probation of some kind.

Crestwood: Page!

Page: And we're all really scared to be who we really are. I am not perfect. I've just been going through the motions of being perfect. And, inside, I am screaming.

Crestwood: Page, you were a model student.

Page: Why won't you listen?

As the girl leaves the stage a few people mutter that they should listen to her and a few others call her back. Instead, Page makes faces at the mass of news reporters outside the school and implores "Harry" not to listen to them. With the "feds" in pursuit, Mark and his friend Nora ride around the suburban neighborhoods and the desert canyons broadcasting on the road. As "Harry" makes his final broadcast students gather at the baseball field outside the school, and inside the building his dad learns that the principal weeded out students with low SAT scores but kept them on the rosters to get the money allocated for them. Just as the FCC officials and police close in on Mark and Nora, the jeep they are driving roars onto the baseball and they merge into the crowd gathered there. The film ends with the promise that many more teenagers will follow in the path "Harry" blazed. Against a dark screen, we see electronic flashes of light and hear voice after voice illegally sign-on.

Even though Pump Up the Volume offers viewers an alternative voice, the scenes preceding the final moments of the film, scenes that contribute to the "resolution," fall back on a device that has become numbingly familiar in other films--demonizing and ousting the principal, ostensibly in an amelioration of schools. In this case getting rid of the "mean" principal to make schools more humane offers a forced resolution, and a false one at that, while avoiding the more profound issue of the teenagers' alienation, an issue that cannot be resolved easily if at all. Mark and the kids listening to "Harry" are concerned about issues of life and death from their own personal perspectives and in a larger cultural context. Critical

pedagogy may not be able to remove the overlay of existential angst that the students long to overcome, but deconstructing images that exacerbate that angst and finding personal empowerment in the process of deconstruction can teach them that their alienation is, in fact, shared.

Although the focus is different in the films introduced in this chapter, these films echo the themes identified in almost all of the other movies. "Good" teachers mean well but are either too deeply connected with the dominant ideology to change it or are unwilling to launch the sort of direct challenge that is necessary to break the bonds of an oppressive system oppressive. Jan Emerson, like many of the other "good" teachers, means well, but she merely provides a buffer to ease some of the pain students feel and to help them through their transition into the world of work outside the school. There is no prophetic voice in Hollywood's teachers. There are no groups of teachers in the movies who address moral, cultural and aesthetic issues in a sense that is consciously political and no schools that promote social change instead of individual change. There is no commitment to struggle against the dominant ideology in their teaching and certainly no recognition that the dominant ideology goes far beyond "bad" or "mean" teachers. The films fail to make the fundamental connection that politics is everywhere and schools are cultural sites teeming with possibility for direct political action.⁶ There is pleasure but no praxis in these films. And, it is the students who see this more clearly than anyone else. Ferris Bueller knows

⁶I want to point out that this glaring absence in Hollywood films cannot be directly connected to "real" teachers teaching in "real" classrooms. As Kathleen Casey's work so ably demonstrates, there are many teachers who are political activists, whether or not they so identify themselves.

that school is boring, and he won't miss anything important or fun by staying away. Mark Hunter knows that school personnel are not addressing the issues that really matter to students, the matters of life and death. And, students know that the system under which all of this operates is inherently corrupt. In the film School Ties a wealthy, Northeastern prep school has recruited a working class, Jewish quarterback as a scholarship student to help their football team. The film is set around 1960. David Green, played by Brendan Fraser, and Charlie Dillon, played by Matt Damon, become friends then rivals over a girl, over the quarterback position and over grades. Dillon cheats on a test and, instead of taking the blame, tries to blame Green. Because Green is the outsider, everyone initially believes Dillon. Finally, Dillon's roommate, who has known the truth from the start, tells what he knows and Green is cleared. As Green walks out of the headmaster's office, he sees a black limousine picking up Dillon in the cold hours near dawn. Dillon rolls down the window.

Dillon: You know something, I'm still gonna
get into Harvard. And, in ten years,
nobody's gonna remember any of this.
But, you'll still be a goddamn Jew.

Green: And you'll still be a prick.

With that the limousine drives away, and David Green is left alone to suffer through the rigors of St. Matthews and further trials as he attempts to enter an Ivy League college. He knows that instead of surely breaking through the

system, he may be validating it, but, in the absence of a collective resistance movement, he has few ready options.

From their position on the underside of the educational hierarchy, students see the oppressiveness of the system quite clearly. And, as the movies so vividly tell us, the "good" teachers at least partially share that view. Because of the intertextuality that exists between our lived experiences and the movies that become part of those experiences, it is difficult if not impossible to say how the one form influences the other. Recently I sat in a theater lobby munching popcorn and waiting for a friend who was supposed to meet me for a movie. Two high school students lounged behind the counter waiting to sell tickets and snacks. It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, and business was slow. Unaware that I could hear them, the young man said, "School is so pointless. I spend most of my time there just daydreaming. I mean, it is so pointless." The young girl said, "Yeah?" He replied, "Pointless." She thought a moment. "You know, every time I take a test, like, the next week I don't remember a thing...I know what you mean." Soon they moved on to other topics, but it struck me that their dialogue could easily have been excised from any number of movies about high school students and their experiences in school.

Students in the movies find schooling largely meaningless, and the "good" teachers who attempt to help them find meaning in the experience come up against an institutional hierarchy that discourages or forbids that type of interchange between teachers and students. The Hollywood curriculum allows teenage wish fulfillment in the form of schools being blown up or burned down and allows us to pretend, if only for a couple of

hours, that a "good" teacher working alone can fix the damaged system if he or she is committed enough. These films dichotomize teachers and teaching into the "good" and the "bad" and present a reductionist view that being "good" enough is, in fact, good enough. The undercurrent of resistance that runs through the films is enough to satisfy audience by giving them hope that something better, an alternate vision, is possible without ever threatening the comfort they take in the dominance of the status quo. These dreams conjured by a distant light projected on a widespread screen reassure us with their powerful resolutions that things aren't really so bad despite newspaper headlines and nightly newscasts and conversations with our friends and neighbors to the contrary. In the movies, children are not hungry and sick, poverty is not a trap, only "certain" students use drugs and alcohol, teenage sex is usually played for laughs and violence is neither random nor widespread. These themes, if they appear at all, are orchestrated into traditional narrative structures in such a way that lets us believe these problems do not affect us. These problems are real, just as the films that belie them are real. To turn the films into something useful, even instructive, means to claim the images for ourselves through discourse and dismantle the "good" teacher and "bad" teacher of their respective pretensions. To think about these films and talk about these films is to give our experience with the movies meaning. And, perhaps, from this discourse will come change.

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