EDUCATION MOVIES AND THE PROMOTION OF ONE DIMENSIONAL THINKING: A MARCUSEAN EXAMINATION OF FILMS MADE BETWEEN 2005 AND 2017

by

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THE CREDITS: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without question, my greatest thanks are to my family. They grew accustomed to not seeing me for long periods, time I spent at the bottom of the garden in 'the shed' where I wrote much of this thesis. I emerged from time to time for 'refuelling', only to quickly return to the writing den. Including the essay writing period before this thesis, this meant that for five years much family life was either put on hold or was adjusted around periods of doctorate work. My children were nine and eleven when I started this process, both are now teenagers - the oldest is about to start A Levels and beginning to think about university herself. Many trips out happened without me; many playful times with Dad were cut short or didn't happen at all; and many times the answer to 'will you be finished soon?' was always 'not for a while yet.' I thank both my children for their calm acceptance of all these things – I hope I can return the favour one day. Most of all however, I thank my wife, Donna, for her incredible patience and understanding – not just in taking on even more roles and responsibilities in family life, but also in listening to me expanding endlessly on ideas and my latest thinking. Few would have such reserves of good will and kindness. It is absolutely true to say I would not have reached this stage without her.

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Graham Birrell, May 2019

PREFACE

CONTRIBUTION TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I have spent twenty-two years as an educator – firstly as a primary school teacher and secondly as a teacher-educator at university: without question, completing the Education Doctorate has been the most significant piece of professional development of my career. On a professional level, its impact has been multi-faceted. In terms of subject knowledge, my understanding of theory, epistemology, methodology and method has become far deeper. The most practical impact of this has been on my teaching, which has become significantly more research-informed. My sessions were always linked to research, but the new knowledge I developed from writing the thesis and completing the seven modules of the doctorate have enabled me to embed research tools, approaches and understandings in a way my previous teaching lacked.

In explicitly developing my research-informed teaching, the most obvious improvement has been my knowledge and understanding of not just Marcuse, but also critical theory more widely. However, although critical theory was the framework I chose for this thesis, it only formed one module on the EdD, which also included significant analysis of numerous methodological approaches and epistemological issues. All of these have helped my teaching to becoming richer and deeper in terms of greater insights into theoretical frameworks of how knowledge is developed and understood. By 'weaving' a deeper methodological layer into my teaching, it has given it an added depth of analysis and insight, helping my sessions to probe more intensely into education and its place in the world.

Undertaking the EdD has also had a significant impact on the development of my professional life. It has already helped me to widen the spread of courses that I lead or make a contribution to. For example, I now lead a 'Film and Education' course on the third year of an undergraduate degree in the Faculty of Education. The course involves assessing the importance of movies generally, plus watching and critically assessing films specifically. The understanding I have developed about individual school movies, plus theory and culture more widely, has played a pivotal role in the development of the module. Without undertaking this thesis, it is impossible to imagine I could have taken my career in that direction. Furthermore, thanks to presentations of this thesis to other areas of the university, I am now being asked to lead seminars on film and culture in other university faculties.

In addition to the course noted above, since undertaking the EdD I have also begun teaching and leading courses involving research methods, politics and history. An example of this is that I have twice been asked to present to new EdD cohorts on methodology. Upon successful

completion, it is my hope to increasingly be in a position to undertake more of this kind of teaching, including the supporting and supervising of postgraduate students, assisting them in their own understanding of research and theory. However, even if this does not happen, the insight into research methods and methodology has already been of significant benefit to my ability to support students through research projects: I already supervise dozens of undergraduate students through their dissertations and my approach to these has significantly developed via the knowledge I have gained during the doctoral process.

The last and perhaps most significant impact of undertaking the doctorate is what I hope will be its role in beginning a more research-orientated phase of my career, one where I aim to make a significant contribution to the research life of the faculty, including academic publications. The understanding and insight I have gained from the EdD will be of immeasurable benefit to me in aiming to make this fundamental shift in my university career. I recognise and appreciate the critical importance of the doctoral process in making this step – not from a technical perspective of a line on a CV, but from the development in my thinking and my understanding of research and its role in viewing all vagaries of life, humanity and society.

In summary, for these reasons I return to the opening words of this brief section to reassert that no matter what the final judgement of this thesis may be, the EdD has already made a more profound contribution to my professional development than any other activity in my career. It has proven an important turning point in my professional life, one that will shape my teaching and my research for the remainder of my time in education.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how recent movies have depicted schools and teachers in the United Kingdom and the United States. Deploying methodological tools outlined by the Frankfurt School critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, it analyses the messages of twenty-first century film-making in the school genre, asking whether such films reinforce or challenge neoliberal perspectives of education. To address this, ten films are assessed against Marcuse's most significant and well-known philosophical concept - 'one-dimensionality' - modes of thinking in 'advanced capitalist societies' where critical spaces and alternative ways of seeing the world are closed down. To analyse whether films contribute to a 'one-dimensional' perspective of education, key Marcusean constructs are utilised, concepts that Marcuse argued contributed to the death of critical thinking. The films are analysed through the main written method of the Frankfurt School – the dialectic. Through the combined dialectical analysis of ten films, literature in the field and through exploration of critical theory and Marcuse, this thesis argues that movies play an important role in the consolidation of neoliberal perspectives of education, and that awareness and examination of the impact of popular culture should remain a significant feature of any critical society. In so doing, the thesis also aims to critically contribute towards a recent 'renaissance' in the consideration and application of Marcuse's scholarly output.

CHAPTER 1

THE DIRTY COMMUNIST DOG: INTRODUCING MARCUSE AND THE MOVIES

Renaissance Man: Herbert Marcuse and One Dimensional Society[1]

In the late 1960s, a Jewish academic at the San Diego campus of the University of California, received a number of disturbing letters. One wondered whether 'Hitler wasn't right after all', another hoped he would soon be 'eliminated', and a third, signed 'Ku Klux Klan', said: 'you are a very dirty communist dog. We give you 72 hours to live in the United States. 72 hours more and we kill you' (Juutilainen, 1996). Around the same time, California Governor and future President, Ronald Reagan, called on the University authorities to keep the academic concerned away from students for fear of corrupting their minds; a group of one-thousand San Diego citizens took out an advert demanding his firing; an American patriotic organisation offered to buy out his contract; and his effigy was hung on a flagpole outside San Diego City Hall with an accusatory placard placed around its neck (Juutilainen, 1996; Kellner, 1984, p.463).[2]

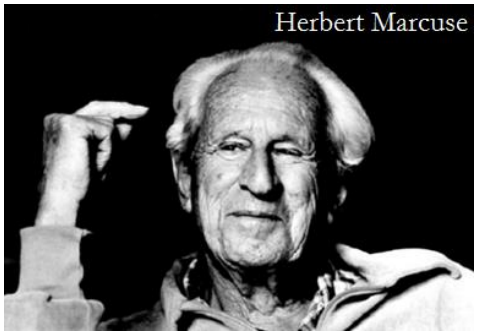
January 1969: San Diego Town Hall Flagpole

The recipient of this opprobrium was Herbert Marcuse, an unassuming German émigré from the Nazis. Explaining the abuse was that at the time Marcuse, a critical theorist, was the most famous and controversial thinker in the world. In a way few philosophers have achieved, Marcuse crossed over the line from academic heavyweight to media celebrity, his fame's wide bandwidth illustrated by the fact that even Prince Charles read his work and he was asked for an interview by Playboy, which Marcuse refused unless the write-up took up the centrefold. (Juutilainen, 1996)[3]

Marcuse's work, particularly the book with which he is most associated, *One Dimensional Man,* sold in their hundreds of thousands and were read by millions, most especially by those engaged in the student protests of the late 1960s.[4] He became for some an international 'hero for youth in revolt' and 'as much the subject of quasi-religious adulation as Jagger, Lennon or Dylan'; but for others a 'pied piper who has corrupted the minds, morals and manners of the young' (Kellner, 1984, pp.1-2; Jefferies, 2016, p.309). It was his association with revolution that meant for many

[1] This thesis deploys film titles in its subheadings. They are <u>not</u> intended as contributors to any analysis, nor to provide any important or 'deep' commentary on any topic under discussion. They are offered as mere rhetorical flourish.
[2] The American Legion represents former military personnel and is known for its very patriotic stance on issues.
[3] In a sign he perhaps hadn't fully grasped Marcuse's central points, Prince Charles said that whilst on royal tour in Australia with his father, they 'inspected troops during the day and read about bourgeois mystification in the evening' (Jay, 1996, p.xxii).
[4] Marcuse was referring to 'man' the species here, not 'man' as in the male of that species. This is stated here because on occasion this thesis also uses the term 'one dimensional man' with the same intention.

in his adopted country, Marcuse posed a direct threat to the American Dream. His writings challenged the capitalist order dominating America and other western nations, his belief that only the end of capitalism could save America from itself, appeared revolutionary and dangerous.


Herbert Marcuse

Yet as quickly as his star rose, the sun set on his academic reputation with remarkable speed. By 1987, only eight years after his death, his name was barely a footnote in Jacoby's review of American intelligentsia; by 1995 none of his books, including *One Dimensional Man*, were even listed in the Times Literary Supplement's list of the hundred most influential books since World War II (Jacoby, 1987; Whitfield, 2014, p.103). By the centenary of his birth, he was described as 'unknown', his work 'out of fashion and virtually unread' – there is even no physical sign at the University of California at San Diego that its 'most famous scholar' ever worked there (Aronowitz, 1999, p.133; Fokos, 2007). Marcuse's ideas, especially after the fall of European communism, appeared obsolete and consideration of his work became eclipsed by 'fashionable debates' surrounding post-structuralist French scholars (Kellner, 1994, p.245). Other critical theorists' reputations, especially Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, outlasted Marcuse with regular biographies and anthologies keeping their names high in citation lists (Jennings & Eiland, 2014; Müller-Doohm, 2014). Adding a final nail in the coffin, the unofficial leader of the student protests, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, even declared they had all read 'too much Marcuse' (Whitfield, 2014, p.104).

The reason for his fame – his unofficial role as intellectual guru of the counterculture – was arguably the key factor behind his reputational demise: he was so intimately connected with that movement that its collapse led to collateral damage in his own academic legacy, which was so 'locked within the dramas' of that period (Kellner et al, 2009, p.1).

However, there has recently been an attempt at a 'Marcusean Renaissance' (Kellner, 1994). As well as a six-volume collection of his work, a number of books have been published re-assessing his legacy and re-applying his theoretical ideas in the twenty-first century, including to education (Kellner, 2001a, 2004a, 2005, 2006 and Kellner & Pierce, 2010, 2014; Abromeit & Cobb 2004; Feenberg, 2004; Abromeit & Wolin, 2005; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007; Kellner 2009a; Farr, 2009; Reitz, 2013). One of these speculated that there may again come a time when people wanted 'a society more just, more egalitarian, more helpful to the world's poorest peoples, less warlike, less

racist and less frantic in the pursuit of money….if that time comes, those who take part in the movement will want to read the writings of Herbert Marcuse' (Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xli). That time arrived sooner than imagined, for a year later the sub-prime mortgage scandal led to the biggest global depression since the 1930s and a worldwide reassessment of capitalism. This accelerated the return to Marcuse, with many scholars arguing the crisis and its consequences made his analysis of advanced capitalism more relevant than ever (Farr, 2008; Box, 2011; Carneiro, 2016; Sculos & Walsh, 2016; Clark, 2017; Lamas et al, 2017; Kirsch & Surak, 2017).

This thesis contributes to this return to Marcuse by deploying key Marcusean tools to examine an area of society that critical theory considered a vital cog of the capitalist machine – popular culture. Marcuse wrote extensively about culture, including in all the works in his most influential period of scholarship, and it played a starring role in arguably his most significant contribution to philosophical thought: one-dimensionality.

One Dimensional Man's central argument was that a multidimensional world, governed by critical thinking and awareness of alternative was being replaced by 'one-dimensional' thinking, of 'societies without opposition', where people could no longer see the facts 'in their true light and call them by their name'; they proclaimed the existing capitalist reality as their own, not realising this totality held them captive through oppression and injustice (Marcuse, 2002, pp.122/xxxix). In the one-dimensional society, critical thinking had died and challenges to capitalism's dominance eradicated. The people, trapped in an extended form of false consciousness, no longer simply believed capitalism could not be defeated - *they no longer wanted it to be defeated*.

For Marcuse, in the one-dimensional world, culture played a vital role in this delusion – through it constantly confirming the triumph of the status quo, the people never experienced alternative and had become pacified and obliging fall-guys for the capitalist machine.[5] Where once culture supported an ability to critically assess the world through challenging political and social reality, a one-dimensional world was created and supported by culture helping to destroy criticality by merely confirming and celebrating the capitalist totality. Helped by the tools of culture and mass communication, the population had become captured, not just by the totalitarian capitalist regime, but also by each other, as it formed one giant club, thinking and saying the exact same one-dimensional things (*ibid*, pp.239-242). So strong, in fact, were the tools of mass communication in supporting capitalism, Marcuse even believed the system might collapse without them (*ibid*, p.250).

[5] Like much of the scholarship of the critical theorists, including Marcuse, the term 'culture' is used in this thesis in its aesthetic sense, e.g. art, music, literature, film etc.

This thesis explores whether the one-dimensional concept finds resonance in recent education movies and their portrayals of schools, teachers, pupils and the system within which they function: do such films contribute to one-dimensional thinking through validation of dominant perspectives in education, or do they challenge those through the promotion of critical thinking and alternative?[6] To do so, the thesis analyses ten recent education movies, exploring these using five Marcusean tools that Marcuse believed created and sustained the one-dimensional world. The analysis of these films is conducted through the method deployed by Marcuse throughout his life – the dialectic – critical writing looking beyond and behind something's *existence*, which Marcuse claimed was usually what the 'dominant interests' wanted you to see, into its very *essence* – what it actually is (Marcuse, 2002, p.xlvi). Through dialectical writing, Marcuse believed critical thinking was kept alive and the one-dimensional society confronted.

Cinema Paradiso: The Importance of Movies

Financial and viewing statistics alone illustrate the global reach of the film industry and justify the study of its impact on society, including the extent to which movies may influence people's perception of the world. Worldwide cinema receipts in 2017 were $41.1bn, including $11.9bn in America and £1.4bn in Britain (MPAA, 2019; BFI, 2019). In 2018, 1.3bn people watched films at American cinemas and the British watch five billion movies annually (MPAA, 2019; BFI, 2011).

The British Film Institute argues that economic impact is not even what matters most about the role of films; this, they claim, is movies' 'cultural contribution' (BFI, 2011, p.3).[7] Individual films are cultural artefacts of the age in which they were produced and are viewed and digested, arguably with limited criticality, by millions, occasionally billions. As such, movies are just as worthy of analysis as policy documents, oral interviews, observation or any other data source offering insight into the social and political constructs governing our lives. Numerous scholars attest to this, arguing that understanding how movies affect societies is of significant importance (Adkins & Castle, 2014; Dalton, 2010; Giroux, 2001a; Giroux, 2008; hooks, 2009; Kellner, 2003; Kellner, 2009b; Kimmerle & Cress, 2013; Silberman-Keller et al, 2008).

In their production and consumption, movies help uncover how we perceive the world. Regarding the former, 50,000 screenplays are registered annually with the Writer's Guild of

[6] When this thesis uses the term 'movies' it means cinematic films made for distribution to a wider audience via movie theatres.

[7] The BFI is the official body representing the British movie industry.

America; however, Hollywood studios only release about 150 movies annually, meaning a screenplay has only a tiny chance of ever being filmed (Meslow, 2011).[8] This reveals how the production of a movie is neither random nor thoughtless - significant consideration is given by studios on which scripts to produce and which to discard. This fact alone makes analysis of *any* movie justifiable; for in their choices, studios offer an immediate viewpoint as to the kinds of stories and narratives they believe will find a receptive audience in the wider populace.

In turn, by attending cinemas, buying DVDs or streaming online, we offer validation to those narratives, providing a continuous cycle of cultural interpretation and verification of the world. This production/consumption symbiosis is also contemporaneously 'water marked' - movies offer insights into how particular periods understand their own contemporary world: the 'film noir' of the 1940s and early 1950s arguably reflected concerns over the fast-changing, post-war world; the rise of science fiction in the 1960s echoed obsessions with the space-race and how technology was transforming our world; and high-concept films of the 1980s spoke to societies increasingly preferring style to substance, glamour and consumption over depth or meaning.[9]

The education movie genre also has significant potential to offer insight into the societies and periods in which they were created. Despite this, the role of film in shaping and highlighting attitudes towards education is a relatively under-researched area (Cohen, 1999, p.148; Gregory, 2007, pp.7-8). This thesis attempts to contribute to a reduction in this gap via an extensive analysis of recent educational movie-making.

Inception: Establishing and Addressing the Research Questions

To do so, it is important to establish the investigative ground this thesis will cover, by outlining its lines of enquiry and the structure employed to explore them. The first[10] enquiry centres on which perspectives of education are reflected in recent films: to what extent do they reflect current political attitudes towards education and do they help establish and entrench those attitudes? Such an analysis is in keeping with Marcusean philosophy, particularly that of *One Dimensional Man's* notion of the merging of culture with the views of the dominant, creating one-dimensional people unaware of alternative. This enquiry examines the extent to which education movies contribute to such a 'one-dimensionality' in regard to attitudes toward education.

[8] This is the organisation representing the interests of film and television writers seeking access to the US market.
[9] High-concept films are movies with a single, over-arching, easy-to-identify concepts.
[10] The word 'first' here does not denote hierarchy, nor will the enquiries be dealt with chronologically in the body of the thesis.

The second enquiry explores the contribution of critical theory, particularly the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, to an analysis of films about education. Through this, it aims to establish the extent to which Marcusean philosophy is still relevant in examining the world, including popular culture. To undertake such an analysis, a thorough examination of key Marcusean ideas is necessary, including how they, and critical theory more widely, have been critiqued.

If there is a drift towards 'one-dimensional' thinking in society, including in education, it is important for this thesis to understand what views of the world that one-dimensionality may take. The final line of enquiry therefore explores recent education movies within their historical and political context, specifically the neoliberal milieu in which capitalism has evolved into new forms. It will examine the extent to which the genre has evolved in line with neoliberal aspirations and ask what contribution, if any, the films make to the survival of the neoliberal policies governing education and beyond.

To address these research enquiries, the thesis adopts the following structure. Since an understanding of neoliberalism is both historically and methodologically important to the thesis, it opens with a chapter analysing how it has been applied to education policy in Britain and America in the past four decades.[11] The objectives of this centre on establishing neoliberalism as the dominant belief-system in education and as the only candidate for potential 'one-dimensional' thinking regarding the education world. The chapter seeks to achieve this through demonstrating thorough knowledge and understanding of neoliberal education and its consequences. Achieving this makes it possible later in the thesis to analyse the extent to which education movies support one-dimensional, neoliberal perspectives, or whether such films challenge them and keep multidimensional thought alive.

To help understand existing scholarship in the area, including how it too may have considered themes explored in this thesis, chapter three examines research about education movies through a literature review. This review analyses perspectives held in the scholarly arena, centring on stereotyping, race, gender and ideology. It also reviews research into whether or not on-screen images have any impact on the attitudes and behaviours of audiences. Through this analysis, the review also establishes the gaps in the scholarship regarding education movies and how this

[11] Britain and America have been chosen because the films selected for analysis come from those countries – see chapter five for a full discussion and justification of how the films have been selected.

thesis can address them. The review enables this thesis to be aware of existing research about education movies, to recognise arguments consistently discussed in the field, to consider those not yet proposed or extensively examined, and to provide an opportunity to place this new work on the 'research map'.

Following the literature review, the methodological framework of the thesis is established. Particularly supporting an exploration of the second enquiry line, this constitutes a brief overview of critical theory before extensively examining the key Marcusean concepts forming the analysis tools later deployed in scrutinising the films. In addition, the chapter will examine the method used by both Marcuse and the analysis in this thesis – dialectics. Criticality and depth of understanding will be demonstrated through recognition of key arguments made against Marcuse and critical theory.

After a brief chapter justifying the film sample, the data analysis is then provided in four thematic sections, each based on Marcusean tools identified in the methodology chapter as helping to create the one-dimensional society. In combination the four sections make a contribution to all three lines of enquiry, and through this analysis the thesis will ultimately be able to consider whether or not the educational movie genre has helped create and sustain one-dimensional perspectives of education.

As will be discussed in the methodology chapter, Marcuse, like other members of the Frankfurt School, believed in praxis - a practical form of theorising seeking to change society through critique. However, unlike his colleagues, not only did Marcuse remain hopeful throughout his life about praxis' success, he was also the only member of the School to not just write about practical action, but to engage in it personally through taking part in protests. Inspired by this, the seventh chapter offers this thesis' own praxis, by making an additional, highly practical, contribution to understanding the movies. Deploying the tool of critical storytelling, in the form of a short film-script, its aims are to present an alternative narrative and to further reveal what has been hidden by films produced in the neoliberal period.

The thesis concludes by returning to and resolving the original lines of enquiry, particularly by offering an overall judgement into first the role of education movies in supporting a potential 'one-dimensional' society, and secondly by offering an evaluation of the relevance of Marcusean philosophy in understanding and appreciating the world.

A Room with a View: Placing Myself within the Thesis

Before addressing the remainder of this thesis however, it is important to recognise my own subjectivity. Like most, my interest in movies began with simply an enjoyment of occasionally going to the cinema. I have always liked the whole experience: the anticipation, the pre-film sharing of 'movie buzz', the trailers, the moment when the curtains pull apart and the lights dim, the first bars of the audio, the feature itself and the post-film dissection. About six or seven years ago however, this occasional trip to the movies became a more serious hobby, one I shared with a friend also working in education.

A couple of years into this hobby, at a time when my friend and I were beginning to rather pompously regard ourselves as transitioning from 'film fans' to 'film buffs', I began my EdD. Two modules in, I read *One Dimensional Man*. Despite being over half a century old, its arguments appeared stubbornly relevant, even prescient, with regard to understanding our increasingly complicated and unhappy world. I was already beginning to take films far more seriously as tools of manipulation and influence, but Marcuse's views on culture gave this realisation a substantive and theoretical basis I decided was worthy of further investigation.

Even before any element of this thesis was constructed however, I recognised the potential for my own partial role within it. After over twenty years of professional experience of working in education as a teacher, teacher educator and education scholar, it is inevitable that I bring long-standing perspectives into the process. I am also reflectively aware that my original interest in Marcuse may stem from my own political outlook. Therefore, at every stage I have been highly conscious of any internal bias I may have begun with and sought to present a logical and theoretically sound argument that lifts this work out of opinion and into academically rigorous deliberation. Part of this process has included recognising the flaws in Marcuse and in critical theory more generally. However, it also includes deploying a highly rigorous approach to choosing the movie sample and not simply selecting movies to suit pre-ordained perspectives.

Nevertheless, like Marcuse this thesis makes no pretence at neutrality. It aims to present an argument and to take a position. In places, some will disagree with those arguments; however, providing the arguments remain grounded in objectivity, this is a consistent position for writing from a dialectical perspective. This thesis aims to shine a light into dark corners, to reveal that

which has been distorted and above all to consider alternative perspectives and to encourage critical thinking about the world. Dialectical writing means taking a definite stance: even if the reader does not always agree with the sentiment, the process of being challenged and reconsidering positions means they have been forced into critical thinking. This process in itself is a challenge to any one-dimensional world.

In 1937, in one of Marcuse's earliest pieces of writing, he argued that culture was essentially a battleground for a person's soul (Marcuse, 2009, pp.65-99). At its best it allowed a chance for critical examination of society and of the dominant capitalist codes governing how people led their lives. At worst, culture becomes a place where critical thinking goes to die, replacing any pretence of challenge with a smiling face of reflection reinforcing and supporting the status quo. By 1964, Marcuse argued the battle for the soul was being lost, culture's critical edge was gone and the one-dimensional society was the result - culture and capitalism were merging into one totality.

In its most essential form and with regard specifically to education and its representation in recent movies, the following thesis examines whether Marcuse was right.

CHAPTER 2

OFFER WEAPON: A HISTORY OF NEOLIBERALISM AND EDUCATION IN BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

Arrival: Neoliberalism and its place in the thesis

One of 2016's most critically acclaimed movies was the science-fiction story, *Arrival* (Orr, 2016; Villeneuve, 2016). Twelve giant oval spacecraft land across Earth, their purpose unknown. Louise Banks is a celebrated linguist brought in by the US military to decipher the aliens' language, an impenetrable series of inkblot-like circles. In a pivotal scene, Banks, having finally decoded the circles, feels confident enough in their language to ask the reason for their arrival. In response, the aliens 'write' the adjacent circle.

The commanding officer snaps, '*what does it say*?' Banks hesitates, not through ignorance, but through knowledge of the significance of the translation, before eventually uttering: '*offer weapon'*. Unsurprisingly, this leads to significant consternation. But Banks suggests a non-malevolent alterative – could it simply be a language confusion? Could they instead mean 'offer tool'? Whatever the interpretation, we know the world will be changed forever by the alien offering.

This chapter examines another offering, a theory that has also radically transformed the world – neoliberalism. It may not have been from another galaxy, but its own 'arrival' has also meant the world is now perhaps irreconcilably altered. It too talked in a language that at first seemed unfamiliar and that took some time to decode. When it did, its ideas were also interpreted as either weapons of mass destruction or as tools to improve our lives.

This chapter argues that an understanding of neoliberalism is vital in being able to critically evaluate recent American and British education movies and the role they may play in sustaining the prevailing ideas of the societies they depict. If this thesis is to ultimately address whether or not culture helps create a one-dimensional world in education, it must first outline what that 'one-dimension' actually might be, i.e. what ideas and beliefs about education are held by the dominant. Such is the supremacy of neoliberalism in Britain and America, that this chapter argues neoliberalism is that 'one-dimensionality' and to fail to recognise and analyse this would make any understanding of the one-dimensional world impossible. This examination of neoliberalism - specifically its ideas, origins and applications - therefore also forms the first substantive chapter because it foreshadows the remainder of the thesis. This is not merely sensible in methodological terms for identifying the context for any potential one-dimensionality,

but is also valuable ahead of the literature review. First, because the analysis in this chapter provides historical context for the films discussed in the review, and secondly because the review can consider the extent to which neoliberalism's ideas have previously been analysed in education movie scholarship.

The Theory of Everything: Neoliberalism and Education

Many scholars argue the past forty years of education policy in America and across large parts of Britain have been dominated by neoliberalism - or as Chomsky calls it, 'capitalism with the gloves off' (Chomsky, 1999; p.8; Giroux, 2004 & 2011; Tomlinson, 2005, p.2; Ball, 2006, pp.35-41 & 2008, pp.5-6; Apple, 2006 & 2011; Robertson, 2007; Chitty, 2014; p.47). [12] Such is neoliberalism's ascendency and so powerfully do its supporters proselytise about its qualities, some even argue it has become a quasi-religion, with a powerful belief it can cure all ills (Apple, 2013, p6; Torres, 2013, p84).

Although a precise definition is disputed, neoliberalism's antecedents lie in a fundamental rejection of the post-war Keynesian, demand-side economic consensus and are characterised by a belief in the supremacy of market-based solutions to political, economic and social issues, relying chiefly on choice, competition, performance objectives, deregulation and privatisation (Apple, 2001, p.411; Harvey 2005, p.2; Robertson, 2007, p.6, Ball, 2007, p.18). Its dominant application across public policy has led some to regard neoliberalism as an ideology or 'doctrine' in its own right (Giroux, 2004, p.xxii; Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p.144; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, p.2; Ball, 2012a, p.23).


Friedrich Hayek

Similarly, others argue neoliberalism's all-pervasiveness has led to it becoming part of the 'social imaginary' where its goals of 'entrepreneurship, self-reliance, sturdy individualism...(and) untrammelled pursuit of self-interest' have re-shaped individual behaviours to such an extent that neoliberalism's perspectives seem 'natural' (Evans & Sewell, 2013, p.38). This remaking of the human soul is entirely in keeping with the 'manipulation of man' around the concept of humans as *homo economicus* - self-interested financial improvers - a classical-liberal idea revived by neoliberalism's intellectual godfather, Friedrich Hayek (Olssen, 1996, p.360; Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p.147).

[12] 'large parts of Britain' because it is important to note at this early stage that many neoliberal education reforms have never been established in the Scottish education system and specific examples of any divergence in Scotland will be pointed out at source during this chapter. In the interests of complete clarity, 8% of British pupils attend a Scottish School, 10% of all British schools are in Scotland, and 11% of British teachers work in a Scottish school (DfE, 2019a; Scottish Government, 2018; Welsh Government, 2019).

Neoliberalism has flourished in Britain and America thanks to the embrace of 'wild neoliberal triumphalist fantasies' by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (Jessop, 2002, p.169). Such was their embrace of neoliberalism that the seminal study of the theory has concluded that future historians will regard their victories as a 'revolutionary turning point in the world's social and economic history' (Harvey, 2005 p.1; Google Scholar 2019a). Other scholars take a similar line on the profundity of Reagan and Thatcher's impact (Phillips, 1998; Klein, 2007; Giddens, 2013; Troy, 2013; Evans, 2013; Farrell & Hay, 2014; Morgan, 2016).

Reagan and Thatcher's successors continued with the neoliberal experiment in education and the reforms enacted have coalesced around the same tenets, which have spread around the world like a 'virus' infecting one country after another (Ball, 2008, p.61; Priestly, 2002, p.121; Sahlberg, 2010). These tenets are: school choice for consumers (parents), including the creation of new types of school; quantifiable measurement of schools, via testing, in order to provide quality assurance information to parents and accountability to the government; vouchers/per pupil funding that forces schools to compete with each other for students in order to remain financially viable; promotion of the ethos of private enterprise, through privatisation and/or adoption of private sector approaches; and the re-orientation of curricula around educating pupils to become efficient future employees in the economy (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p.254; Ball, 2008a, pp.61/148-150; Sahlberg, 2012). These neoliberal pillars were enacted in the 1980s, but their antecedents in education can be traced even earlier.

Patriot Games: Calls for National Renewal

Many of neoliberalism's key educational ideas first appeared in the publication in Britain of the first '*Black Papers*' in 1969 in which a number of thinkers demanded attention was drawn to the 'national urgency' of the failing state education system (Cox & Dyson, 1969, p.6; Benn, 2011, p.63). The papers forged a '"new right" political identity' through their articulation of a series of 'demons' relentlessly targeted in 'fearsome and often inaccurate detail' in policy papers and the media (Ball, 2008a, p.80; Tomlinson, 2005, p.21; Ball, 2006, p.29). Together with right-leaning think tanks, such as the Centre for Policy Studies and the Institute of Economic Affairs, the *Black Papers* gained considerable influence in the educational thinking of the 1970s and helped stimulate a significant ideological shift (Ball, 2008a, p.80).

Renewing attacks on progressive teaching and egalitarianism, a new set of *Black Papers* were published in 1975 which coincided with a furore surrounding the William Tyndale School in London, which was accused of descending into chaos after establishing a radical form of child-centred pedagogy (Davis, 2002, p.275). The publication of the inquiry into the affair coincided with Jim Callaghan's arrival as Prime Minister. Seeing an opportunity to choose a policy area to make his own, the result was the 'Secret Garden' speech, a crucial turning point making education 'fair game for politicians' (Ball, 2008a, pp.81-82; Sheldon & Keating, 2011; Chitty, 2014, p.45; Benn, 2011, p.65). By calling for a 'Great Debate' about education and increased government intervention, the die was cast for a radical shift in power and ideology (Callaghan, 1976; Tomlinson, 2005, pp.26-27).[13]

If the *Black Papers* and the Secret Garden Speech were turning points in Britain, a similar landmark moment came in America in 1983, with the 'all-time blockbuster' of education reports, the Education Department commissioned '*A Nation at Risk*' (Ravitch, 2010, pp.22-24; NCEE, 1983). The report painted an apocalyptic picture of American education, claiming 'the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people' (NCEE, 1983, p.9) It claimed standards had declined sharply since the 1960s and unless addressed, America's economy would significantly suffer and be overtaken by competitors.

This link between the economy and education, regularly made by neoliberalism's advocates, has been highly disputed and many scholars are extremely critical of the report's poor use of statistics to conflate the two, particularly as later Congressional and government reports confirmed the data in the report were inaccurate (Berliner, 1995, p.3; Guthrie & Springer, 2004, pp.8/22; Harris et al, 2004, p.38; Wolf, 2004; Koretz, 1986; Stedman, 1994). However, partly thanks to its deliberate hyperbole, the report had an astonishing national impact. *The Washington Post* alone featured it in over one-hundred articles in the year after publication and it is argued the only education story to gain more media attention was the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court decision banning segregated schools (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p.14). The report's impact on the public saw a significant drop in confidence in schools, from 50% reporting 'high confidence' before publication, to only 38% five months later (*ibid*, p.12).

[13] In fact, so closely did the 'Secret Garden' speech mirror Black Paper thinking, that the final set of Black Papers, published in 1977, claimed Callaghan had 'attempted to steal our clothes'. (Ball, 2008a, p.82)

The impact of *A Nation at Risk* on local and national government policy was even greater. The constitutional position before Reagan was that education was devolved to the fifty states and the Federal Department of Education was only created in 1979 (McDonnell, 2005, p.21; Reese, 2011, p.45). Reagan won the Presidency in 1980 on a platform that included a promise to scrap the new Department, but the report's enormous impact led to precisely the opposite – a greatly enhanced role for central government (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p.11; McDonnell, 2005, p.26-27; Wong & Nicotera, 2004, pp.87-88). The consequence this centralisation continues to be played out in American education, as over the following decades the Federal government enacted ever more vigorous reforms, the alleged failures of which all 'eventually lead back to *A Nation at Risk*' (Ravitch, 2010, p.22).

The Mission: Standards and Market-based Reforms

A Nation at Risk gave momentum to a new 'standards' agenda that spread through the states (Ravitch, 2011, p.53). Within a year, thirty-five had enacted new educational requirements and over 250 state task-forces were created to recommend changes (Vitteriti, 2004, p.73; Guthrie & Springer, 2004, pp.13-14). By 1988, nearly every state had enacted new laws in step with the report's recommendations, particularly regarding the setting of highly ambitious performance standards for English and Maths (Ravitch, 2010, p.31). Labelling himself 'the Education President', George Bush Sr. continued the federal spotlight on schools, beginning with immediately calling a Governors' Conference, only the third in US history and the first since Franklin Roosevelt gathered one to discuss the Great Depression (Berube, 1991, p.91; Viteritti, 2004, p.73). The result was a set of 'National Educational Goals', including targets for 100% of American students to be literate and for 90% to graduate from high school.[14]

The goals were shaped into a reform package, '*America 2000*', marking a clear neoliberal slant on education policy: it demanded schools be 'more accountable', that new kinds of school be

[14] In American schools to 'graduate from high school' means to complete all twelve years of compulsory school and for many states to have also successfully completed an assessment such as the 'General Educational Development' or GED tests.

created, that a national testing program be instituted to assess progress in standards and that students should be allowed to transfer to any school, including private, and take state-funding with them (Reese, 2011, p.325). Signalling a shift towards a neoliberal, consumer-driven approach, *America 2000* declared: 'A Nation at Risk must become a Nation of Students' (Alexander, 1993, p.12).

This attempt at 'mimicking corporate America' failed to get through the Democrat-controlled Congress, but was resurrected in 1993 under Bill Clinton as '*Goals 2000*' (Ravitch, 2010; p.31; Viteritti, 2004, p.74). As Governor of Arkansas, Clinton became known as one of a new breed of 'Education Governors', moulded by *A Nation at Risk* and the Governors' Conference, a reputation he enhanced through policies such as forcing Arkansas teachers to be tested for competence (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p.12; Reese, 2011, p.325). *Goals 2000* used the carrot of extra federal funding to entice states into setting challenging educational standards and the result was a 'frenzy of reform' where almost every state developed new academic criteria and the means of measuring them (Viteritti, 2004, p.75; Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p.28).

At the same time as the *America/Goals 2000* debates, a highly influential book by John Chubb and Terry Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, was published, championing free-market approaches as the panacea education needed (Chubb & Moe, 2011, p.217; Google Scholar, 2019b). Chubb & Moe were strong advocates of vouchers and inspired by the national debate, two high profile voucher programmes in Milwaukee and Cleveland were instituted in the mid-1990s, followed soon afterwards by schemes in Florida, Colorado and the District of Colombia.[15] Despite mixed evidence of their benefits, by 2016 seventeen states and sixty-five school jurisdictions were using voucher systems (Epple et al, 2017, p.446; Rouse & Barrow, 2009, p.17; Wolf, 2009; Berliner & Glass, 2014, p.42).

Chubb & Moe also re-stated the proposition that new types of schools be created to provide competition for existing schools. They proposed schools sitting outside the jurisdiction of school districts, running their own admissions procedures, and that, in return for observing minimum sets of requirements and regulations, would be provided with a licence or 'charter' (Chubb &

[15] Vouchers are one of the most popular reforms advocated by advocates of neoliberal education as they theoretically create a consumer-driven, choice based marketplace through promoting competition between schools for the vouchers, which commonly equate to the cost of educating one child for one year. (Epple et al, 2017) Vouchers are arguably *the* original neoliberal proposal, famously stemming from Milton Friedman's seminal 1955 article *The Role of Government in Education.*

Moe, 2011, p.224). These schools would compete with public schools for local pupils, forcing them to improve or face closure.[16]

This proposal for what would later be called charter schools already had a precedent in England, thanks to the 'gothic monstrosity' of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (Wilby & Crequer, 1988).[17] Thatcher's first two terms saw relatively few educational changes, but this changed with the appointment of Kenneth Baker as Education Secretary, who declared left-wing notions of education, including 'the pursuit of egalitarianism' as over (Tomlinson, 2005, p.52; Chitty, 2014, pp.47-48; Ball, 2008a, p.86). Over the next decade, the Conservative government was 'gripped by a frenzied need' for education reform, beginning with the ERA (Chitty, 2014, p.51). Ball identifies six elements of neoliberal thinking contained within the act: extended choice via the introduction of Grant Maintained Schools and City Technology Colleges, increased teacher accountability, a national curriculum, SATs tests (the results of which could be used to place schools into 'league tables') and the passing of budget responsibility from councils to schools through 'Local Management of Schools' (Ball, 2008b, p.186; Ball, 2008a, p.89).[18] ERA significantly enhanced the role of free-market ideology in education, with schools increasingly expected to differentiate themselves in an educational marketplace (Tomlinson, 2005, p.51; Chitty, 2014, p.51).

Over the remainder of the 1979-1997 Conservative government and then continuing into the 1997-2010 New Labour era, ERA inspired a 'policy ratchet' of ever-increasing government interventions, all aimed at improving the functioning of an education marketplace governed by choice and competition (Ball, 2008b, p.185). As a consequence, schools became 'colonised' by a need to do whatever was necessary to succeed in the market, but in so doing the heart of what education once stood for was 'gouged out and left empty' (Ball, 1999).

[16] When used in an American context, a 'public school' is the name given to a school who remain under the jurisdiction of a publicly-funded and democratically governed local school district.

[17] The vast majority of ERA only applied to England and Wales – only 11 out of its 238 sections applied to Scotland, almost all of which were regarding higher education.

[18] Grant Maintained Schools and City Technology Colleges were a precursor to academy schools as they were funded directly by the government and therefore were subject to significantly reduced control by local education authorities: as such they anticipated the Chubb & Moe model almost precisely. See pages 28-29 for further discussion on academy schools. SATs stands for Standardised Assessment Tests, which are assessments in English, Maths and initially in Science, first introduced at the end of Key Stages 1-3 (7, 11 and 14 year olds) to indicate both the educational outcomes of pupils, but also as a means of allowing parents and educational authorities to determine and compare the success of schools. Local Management of Schools allowed schools to set and control their own budgets, significantly reducing the power of local education authorities. These specific reforms were not applicable in Scotland; however, Scotland does have its own national curriculum, Scottish headteachers are also responsible for their own schools' budgets and since 2017 Scotland have their own version of SATS, the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA), which pupils take at ages 5, 8, 11 and 14. However, pupil results from the SNSAs are not collected into league tables and only national level data is made available to the Scottish Government.

Denting hopes it would reverse the Thatcherite/neoliberal education legacy, the New Labour administration instead accelerated the disintegration of the post-war settlement in education (West & Pennell, 2002, p.219; Tomlinson, 2005, p.90; Chitty, 2014, p.258). Over the thirteen-year New Labour administration there were twenty-one education acts, nearly twice as many as the entire 1900-1979 period. Such was the 'astonishing' drive to legislate and to control education it has been labelled 'the Blairite project of total schooling' (Ball, 2008a, p.7; McNamara et al, 2000, p.474). New Labour placed an unremitting focus on 'narrow mechanical objectives' via the introduction of strict targets for SATs and GCSEs, which in combination with an expanded role for Ofsted, led to 'hyperaccountability' for schools, seeing them shift their focus to short-term goals and to practices raising quantifiable outcomes (Wragg, 2004, p.50; Mansell, 2007, p.79).[19] This relentless focus on metrics has seen schools become 'exam factories' obsessed by test scores (Coffield & Williamson, 2011).

The preoccupation with quantifiable metrics has arguably been even greater in America, symbolised most potently by George W. Bush's first legislative measure, the 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Congress had been impressed by the so-called 'Texas Miracle' under Governor Bush, where a high-stakes testing and accountability policy produced enormous gains in Texas state tests (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008, p.77).[20] However, prefacing what would happen under NCLB, subsequent studies demonstrated not only had the Texas tests significantly narrowed the curriculum, but that large elements of the gains had come from forcing lower-attaining, often minority, students to drop-out of school early (Klein et al, 2000; Haney, 2000). When using national NAEP assessments, the 'Texas Miracle' evaporated entirely, its gains replicated in many other states during the same period (Ravitch, 2010, p.96).[21]

Entirely in line with neoliberal educational theory, NCLB's main feature was a punishing testing and accountability regime, demanding 100% of pupils be 'proficient' in reading and maths by

[19] The 'Office for Standards in Education', a quango established in 1992 that inspects state-funded educational providers in England, judging them against published criteria to ensure they are meeting minimum standards and to provide market information to parents on local school performance. The Welsh equivalent is called Estyn. Scotland also has a school inspection system, Education Scotland (pre-2011, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education), but this does not provide grades to schools and parents.
[20] Which had only been in place since 1991 as one of the responses to America 2000.
[21] 'National Assessment of Educational Progress', sampling tests used to measure the educational outcomes of various groups and ages of American pupils. They do not provide data at pupil or school level, concentrating on wider, representative, samples.

2014. To retain federal funding, all schools were required to annually test pupils in Grades 3-8 and once again in high school, to demonstrate they were making 'adequate yearly progress' (AYP) towards the 2014 target.[22] Any school not making AYP was subject to increasingly punitive corrective measures, starting with naming and shaming as a 'school in need of improvement' and ending with closure or re-opening as a charter school (Hursh, 2007, pp.297).[23]

The 100% proficiency target was clearly the central 'toxic flaw' in NCLB and by 2007 even neoliberal reform's strongest supporters regarded it as ridiculous (Hess & Finn, 2007, p.327). By 2008, 30,000 schools were 'approaching an abyss' after missing AYP so regularly they faced extinction or privatisation (Ravitch, 2010, p.104). The effects on teaching were predictable, with extensive curriculum narrowing and teaching to the test (McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Berliner, 2011, p.287; Au, 2011; pp.29-30). Despite this, improvements on national tests were modest, with gains actually faster *before* NCLB (Ravitch, 2010, p.109-110). By the time it was replaced in 2015, arguably NCLB's only beneficiaries were companies such as Pearson who had made billions selling the forty-five million tests needed annually by US schools (Toch, 2006, p.5).

Dangerous Liaisons: Privatisation

The rise of the testing industry was one of a number of ways in which neoliberalism led to privatising policies applied to education on both sides of the Atlantic. Faced with budget reductions and political messages constantly eulogising the private sphere, American schools increasingly turned to the business sector for funding - by the turn of the century they received an estimated $2.4bn annually through advertising, sponsorship and marketing (Molnar, 2013, p.16; Molnar 2004, p.2). For example, in return for technological equipment, one third of all American middle and high schools daily forced their students to watch ten minutes of '*Channel One News'*, which contained two minutes of advertising (Angulo & Green, 2007, p.105).

Through both Conservative and New Labour governments, British schools were also becoming increasingly commercial spaces, with private companies ranging from Tesco's to Barclays targeting hundreds of millions of pounds annually on school products in return for positive public relations and customer loyalty (Wilkinson, 2016, p.60). This implicit privatisation was eclipsed however, by 'exogenous' privatisation, specifically the estimated £1.5bn annual

[22] In most American states this equates to ages eight to thirteen.

[23] A charter school is the US equivalent of an academy school, e.g. it is funded directly by the government and operates outside of the jurisdiction of the local educational authority – in the US these are 'school districts' run by education boards of control.

outsourcing of education services, including all 2003-2015 Ofsted inspections, to private sector operators (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p.9; Ball, 2007, p.40). Eventually, even schools and local education authorities (LEAs) became available for outsourcing: schools in Surrey, the West Midlands and Norfolk, plus all or parts of fourteen LEAs have been run by private companies (Ball, 2007, pp.51-53; Ball, 2008b; Hatcher, 2006, p.603).

'Endogenous' privatisation – importing the tools and practices of the private world – has played an even bigger role (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p.9). One of the clearest signs of New Labour's embrace of the market was the introduction of new kinds of schooling, to the extent that by 2010 there were nearly twenty different types of secondary school (Chitty, 2014, p.87). By far the most radical of these was the academy, a re-awakening of the City Technology College/Grant Maintained School policy of schools outside of local-authority control with greater freedom from regulations surrounding admissions, curriculum and staffing.[24]

Begun in 2002, academies were conceived as replacing stubbornly poorly-performing secondary schools, all re-opening with new buildings, a new name and £2m in seed funding from business 'sponsors' (Ball, 2008a, p.207). The intention was they would be run like businesses by their sponsors, utilising entrepreneurial tools of the corporate world (Adonis, 2012, p.56-57; Woods et al, p.237; Ball, 2007, p.171). By the end of the New Labour government, only 203 academies had opened and because of problems finding sponsors prepared to inject private capital, the financial requirement for sponsorship was dropped.

Although small in number by 2010, the political and legal infrastructure had been largely created that meant the Coalition government's policy of mass 'academisation' became possible. Rather than targeting failing schools, *all* English schools were now expected to become academies and highly punishing accountability regimes were created to forcibly academise 'failing' or 'coasting' schools and place them inside privately-run academy trusts (Francis & Hutchings, 2017, p.25). By 2019, over 75% of all English secondary schools had become academies (DfE, 2019b).

Because of their privately-governed arrangements and their context within neoliberal aspirations of providing choice for parents and competition between schools for their children, academy policy has been identified as a particularly clear example of educational privatisation (Hatcher, 2006; Ball, 2009; West & Bailey, 2013). In addition, the Coalition government and its

[24] Academy schools are only found in England.

Conservative successors have created over 500 'Free Schools', with an expectation their founders will utilise 'business-style efficiencies and entrepreneurialism' in order to provide even more choice and competition in the marketplace (Higham, 2014, p.3).[25]

In terms of raising achievement, the success of academies and free schools is highly disputed (Gorard 2009; Machin & Vernoit, 2011; Wrigley & Kalambouka, 2012; Francis & Hutchings, 2017). However, their impact in other ways is more profound. Through the injection of private ethos and governance, it is argued they 'drastically blur' historical lines between state and private worlds, contributing to an increasingly undemocratic education system (Ball, 2007, pp.171). Furthermore, it is argued there is evidence they play a substantial role in an ever more iniquitous education system, including through the segregation of advantaged and disadvantaged pupils via middle-class use of social capital to manipulate admissions criteria in order to ensure their children obtain places in high-achieving schools (Gorard, 2014, Green et al, 2015).

In America, academy policy is mirrored by charter schools. Similar to academies, beginning with Minnesota in 1991, the schools are inspired by the Chubb & Moe model of providing competition for existing schools through increased parental choice (Ravitch, 2010, p.126). In 1994, the Clinton administration provided federal funding to promote their spread and by the end of his Presidency over 2300 were in existence. The Bush and Obama administrations continued their expansion, and even natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina were exploited to increase their number, with the New Orleans 'Recovery School District' becoming the first school jurisdiction in the country to become 100% charter (Klein, 2007, p.5; Perez & Cannella, 2011, pp.59-61; Saltman, 2015 p.21). By 2019, forty-three states had enacted laws allowing charter schools, educating 3.2m children in 7000 schools (NAPCS, 2019).

Charters are arguably an even stronger privatisation agent than academies. In a radical departure from state-education first principles, thirty-five states allow charter holders to make a profit and by 2012 25% of charter school pupils were in such institutions (Miron & Gulosino, (2013, p.ii).[26] Corporate donors and organisations such as the Gates, Walton and Broad Foundations have also

[25] Free schools are brand new academies, but can be opened by any individual or group subject to a successful bid to the Department of Education.

[26] In some states, for-profit charters constitute a majority of the overall total, with Michigan the highest at 79%.

poured billions into charter school chains and choice-promoting pressure groups, but in contrast to traditional charity, these 'venture philanthropists' expect a 'social return' on their 'social investment' (Ravitch, 2010, p.200; Saltman, 2009, pp.53-54; Scott, 2009; Recknow & Snyder, 2014 p.189; Kretchmar et al, 2014).[27] As well as promoting free market values, they disproportionately support distinctively neoliberal forms of education, such as 'no excuses' schools, that relentlessly pursue gains in test scores via extreme-discipline environments (Kretchmar et al, 2014, p.745). Such schools are part of an increasingly prevalent advocation for 'grit' and resilience which, although regularly covered in positive sentiments about 'life-skills', are arguably more about ensuring pupils don't buckle under the intense pressure of high-stakes test environments (Stokas, 2015; Golden, 2017). It could also be suggested this is an exercise in trying to mask the significant downsides of neoliberal education on those it purports to support.

Like academies, evidence for the success of charter schools is very mixed, with nationwide studies split on their impact on achievement. A 2009 evaluation found only 17% offered 'superior education' compared with public schools, but was updated by its authors in 2013 to suggest charters overall performed marginally better (Raymond, 2009; Raymond et al, 2013). Opacity is repeated at local level: several studies suggest charters outperform public schools in some states (Witte et al, 2007; Booker et al, 2008; King, 2009; Hoxby and Murarka, 2009; Kane et al, 2011); but some suggest a negative picture in others (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Zimmer et al, 2008; Chingos & West, 2015). A meta-analysis of the voluminous literature found that overall, charters may have a small advantage in maths, but none in literacy (Betts and Tang, 2016).

However, the evidence strongly suggests that any minor academic advantages to be gained are offset by alarming trends in charter practices. A number of studies detail disturbingly high rates of pupil and teacher attrition in many charters, possibly explaining routes to higher achievement via exclusion of 'poor performers' (Miron & Applegate, 2007; Woodworth et al. 2008; Skinner, 2009; Stuit & Smith, 2010). Similarly, other research suggests a deliberate filtering-out of pupils with SEN or EAL (Buckley & Sattin-Bajaj, 2011; Scott, 2012; Baker, 2012). Equally troubling are accusations that charters are significantly re-segregating American pupils - those in urban settings disproportionately enrol minority students, whereas charters in rural and suburban areas attract white families (Garcia, 2008; Frankenburg et al, 2010; Heilig et al, 2011; Kotok et al, 2017).

[27] The Bell & Melinda Gates Foundation 2017 annual financial statement (the latest available) reveals it has an endowment of $50.7bn, mainly via Microsoft. The Walton Family, the founders of Wal-Mart, are collectively the wealthiest family in America, with an estimated collected worth of $175bn; their latest tax return (2017) lists their foundation as currently worth $4.9bn, even after donating $0.5bn in the previous year. The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is valued at $3bn, which comes via founder Eli Broad's $7.4bn insurance fortune. (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2018; Walton Family Foundation, 2018; Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation, 2019)

Darkest Hour: Conclusions

On both sides of the Atlantic, the neoliberal era has seen a sustained assault on state education. The attack is not just in policy form, for the period has also been characterised by a 'discourse of derision' from politicians (Ball, 2012b, p.100). From a Labour Education Secretary declaring they 'wouldn't touch some schools with a barge pole' to Conservative politicians saying they 'would rather go out on the streets and beg' than send their children to local comprehensives, British schools have been under attack from all sides (Benn, 2011, p.75; Tomlinson, 2005, p.117).[28] America was no different, with a straight line of attack drawn from *A Nation at Risk* treating US schooling as 'an act of war', to Barack Obama accusing schools of 'stealing the future' from their pupils (Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004, p.14; Obama, 2010). This discourse sought to portray schools as requiring radical remedies and attempted to hide failures of government policy by blaming schools for problems created elsewhere (Apple, 2001, p.416; Rothstein, 2008; Reese, 2011, p.327; Ball, 2013, p.33).

Despite relentless disparagement on one hand and imposition of market-based policies on the other, the paradoxical result of neoliberal education policies has been a vastly expanded role for the state, with both British and American governments gaining significantly greater power and domination (Tomlinson, 2005, p.51; McDonnell, 2005; Ball, 2008b, p.3). The effect of this 'controlled decontrol' is hugely significant (Ball, 2007, p.171). Teachers have become an 'oppressed' group as the state employs ever-increasing methods of surveillance, audit and punishment to ensure pupils make progress - mechanisms labelled as 'terrors of performativity' - a culture so pervasive that some argue it is better described as exploitative (Benn, 2011, p.70; Ball, 2003, p.216; Robertson, 2007, p.14). The effect is also found on parents, who have shifted from collegiate partners with schools to 'vigilantes and complainants', ever watchful and responsive consumers constantly attentive to market failure and success (Tomlinson, 2005, p.54).

Despite its almost messianic belief in choice, neoliberal education has ironically homogenised educational options. By creating an overwhelming need to 'perform' in tests, schools 'coalesce under the same things, e.g. standard curriculum, standard pedagogy, standard approaches to everything, so you are left with no difference and therefore no choices' (Apple, 2001, p.417) Some argue this has led to the ultimate standardisation, a 'Post-Fordist' state of 'New Taylorism', where teaching and learning in all schools is reduced to the same thing - ever higher test scores

[28] These particular examples are from Estelle Morris and Oliver Letwin.

(Ball, 2007, p.182; Au, 2011, p.25). This results in a fundamental 'retooling' in the role of the teacher, from professional educator to mere technician (Ball, 2003, p.226; Gray, 2007).

Therefore, in answer to the hypothesis established at the start of this chapter, it is difficult to see how the neoliberal period in has been anything other than a destructive weapon in the vast majority of British and American schools. Indeed, some argue destruction is its core aim, whilst others describe its policies as 'catastrophic' and 'the ruination of public education' (Harvey, 2007; Fielding & Moss, 2011, p.3). The neoliberal milieu has seen a re-imagining of the purpose of education and its place in society; where schools were once integral parts of their communities, they have become increasingly detached and under the control of private interests and aspirations, thus increasingly democratically divorced from local stakeholders (Saltman, 2009, p.60; Apple, 2011, p.21; Ravitch, 2010, p.222). The role of teachers and of teaching has been reshaped, the idea of education itself remade. Such has been the number and impact of the reforms, they signify a different 'cultural totality….a new order of things' where 'value replaces values' (Ball, 2007, p.185; Ball, 2004, p.16). Without doubt, this 'totality' represents a revolution that will be very difficult to undo, even if any attempt is ever made to do so.

Such is neoliberalism's pre-eminence, there can be little question that this 'totality' is the foremost candidate for any 'one-dimensional' thinking in education. No other perspective has influenced government to anywhere near the same extent and there has been an object failure to put forward popular alternatives (Apple, 2001, p.412; Tomlinson, 2005, p.27; Rizvi and Lingard, 2009, p.37). The domination of neoliberal education and the absence of candidates to replace it, is arguably symbolised by the Thatcherite 'TINA thesis' - there is no alternative – an implicit attempt at destroying multidimensional thinking brought into sharper focus by the main theme of this thesis.

However, just because neoliberalism is the dominant system of thinking in education, this does not necessarily mean that a 'one-dimensional' world of thought has actually been created, or if it has, *how* it has happened and what role education movies may have played in its establishment. The methodology chapter will therefore outline how Marcuse believed one-dimensional societies were formed and the data analysis will then determine whether films in the neoliberal era have contributed to such a one-dimensionality in education. However, before these chapters, the thesis will first consider existing scholarship to determine what other research has identified as the impact and role of the education movie genre in society.

CHAPTER 3

NOT QUITE MY TEMPO: THE SCHOLARLY RECEPTION OF EDUCATION IN THE MOVIES

This literature review supports the thesis in the following ways. First, through demonstrating deep knowledge and understanding of the field, it evidences existing scholarship regarding education movies and, in so doing, identifies research echoing or challenging arguments contained within this thesis. Secondly, through this process, the review identifies gaps in the scholarship that this thesis can contribute to filling, therefore aiding claims to originality. Finally, even if not *explicitly* mentioned, it also explores the extent to which one-dimensional ideas find resonance or critique in the literature.

The review is divided into four themes: concerns about stereotypical images; accusations that education movies subconsciously reinforce negative perceptions of race and gender; how films reveal ideological aspects about the nations in which they were created; and finally, an examination of whether screen images have any influence on audiences, thereby completing a potentially vicious circle of societal reflection and reinforcement.

These themes further the aims of the thesis for the first two explore scholarship's examination of whether or not education movies discourage critical, multidimensional thinking; the third examines the extent to which research has previously considered the potential connection between movies and wider theoretical and ideological constructs of society; and the final theme explores whether or not culture *can* affect people's attitudes – if it can't, the Marcusean belief that culture reinforces dominant modes of thinking would need to be significantly questioned.

Finding Neverland: Typecasting Teachers

Over one hundred pieces of research were identified for this review and not one specifically discusses Marcuse or one-dimensional thinking. However, the scholarship does feature numerous concerns that education movies promote a particular form of one-dimensional thinking relevant to the aims of this thesis – stereotyping. In assessing films' pigeon-holing of teachers and schools, scholarship is significantly concerned about the consequences of what effect the simplistic cinematic narratives of teachers and schools may have on attitudes in the wider populace.

A number of studies have specifically listed stereotypes of teachers in movies: these are collated in the table overleaf. Although sometimes labelled differently, several reoccur: heroes, failures, dictators, sleazes and idiots.

Swetnam, 1992	Burbach & Figgins, 1993	Glanz, 1997 (on Principals)	Bauer, 1998
• Chronically Flawed • Autocrats • Pied-Pipers • Jerks and Clowns • Superhumans • Social Workers	• Youthful Idealist • Dedicated, Tough Love • Exceptional Teacher for an Exceptional Situation • Incompetent Buffoon • Anyone Can Teach Teacher • Powerlessness Teacher • Teacher in a Moribund Career • Adversary • Sexpot	• Autocrats • Bureaucrats • Buffoons • Villains	• Authoritarian • Anti-Authoritarian • Idealistic • Seductive • Hip • Clueless
Smith, 1999a (on Principals)	**Raimo, Devlin-Scherer & Zinicola, 2002**	**Bulman, 2002**	**Gregory, 2007**
• Saviour • Supportive Father • Dupe • Clueless • Opportunist • Pimp	• Guardian of Culture and Liberator • Iconoclast and Subverter • Alien-Culture Bearer • Agent of Change • Learner • *Compassionate* Mentor	• Incompetent • Outsider • Cowboy	• Mr. Chips • Untouchable, Heartless, Authority • Oddball Pedant • Teacher who Antagonizes Students at First But Earn their Respect in The End • Cool Teacher Who isn't a 'Regular' Teacher But Who Does Better than Regular Teachers • Joins Students to Subvert the System • Hero • Dufus Who Bumbles, Fumbles or Blusters • Sleazy, Malicious Lecher or Manipulator

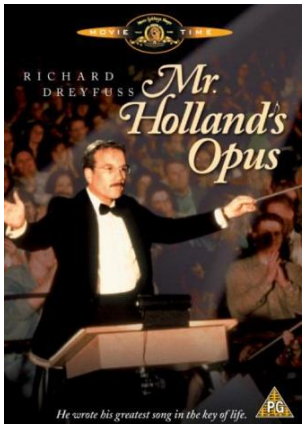
Analysing 165 films, Dalton goes further, arguing cinematic teachers can be distilled into just two categories: the 'Hollywood Model' and 'The Bad Teacher' (Dalton, 2010, p.23). The former are outsiders, renegades standing-up against convention, school leaders and other teachers who view with them suspicion or disdain. They are often personally involved in their students' lives, not for nefarious reasons, but because they are willing to go the extra mile to make a difference.

Thanks to a highly personalised curriculum, students learn hugely from Hollywood Models, such as Sidney Poitier as Mark Thackeray in *To Sir with Love* (Dalton, 2010, pp.27-47). In contrast, 'The Bad Teacher' is a proud member of a failed establishment seeking to remove student individuality through monotonous regimentality. In contrast to Hollywood Models, they are bullying, afraid, dismissive or bored of their students (Dalton, 2010, p.63). The Bad Teacher is a soldier in a 'celluloid war', placed to win our support for the narrative of student self-determination (Dalton, 2010, p.85).

Although it could be suggested that to reduce all filmic depictions of teachers to just two basic descriptions may be too simplistic, one scholar goes even further, arguing Hollywood has created a single formula for the ideal educator. Breault's 'Celluloid Teacher' is a radical pedagogue whose approach alienates colleagues; demanding, but in a human way, they connect students to the outside world; they get to know students personally and are completely student-centred, whom they believe should 'find their own voice'; and school is their world, with outside commitments subservient to their one true calling - teaching (Breault, 2009, pp.308-309). This super-stereotype seems favourable to real teachers, but Breault argues that despite its 'shiny chrome and paint job' it is an unflattering fantasy (Breault, 2009, p.314). Celluloid Teachers such as John Keating in *Dead Poets Society* achieve overnight miracles - a series of incredible 'one-night stands' - but this establishes an impossible standard for real teachers, whose reality is day-to-day struggles and invisible minor victories sustained through relentless effort over years (Breault, 2009, p.310).

Researchers also identify stereotypical plots. Rehm detects three: 'Dark Films' depicting teachers having tragic consequences; 'It Really Happened' adaptations of true stories; and 'Tutorials', where a teacher becomes part-therapist, part-mentor to a single student (Rehm, 2015, pp.19-20). Rehm believes these storylines offer positive depictions through visions of passionate, risk-taking and empowering teachers (Rehm, 2015, pp.23). Trier however, in also naming three plots, is not so approving. 'The Resentment' (located in urban contexts), and 'The Lullaby' (set in suburbia), speak to fears of economic and social degradation, a way of life lost and fears for the future; the last, 'The Saviour', are tales of against-the-odds achievements (Trier, 2001, pp.129, 133). Contrasting with Rehm, Trier argues such portrayals are sordid fantasies impossible for teachers to replicate (Rehm, 2015, pp.23; Trier, 2001, pp.130, 133; Swetnam, 1992, p.31).

Bulman identifies three further narratives: 'The Private School Film' depicts resentment of the wealthy and a celebration of being true to yourself; 'The Suburban Film' represents frustration with conformity; and 'The Urban Film' fantasises about saving poor children through norms of 'common sense' and the 'right' kinds of behaviours and attitudes (Bulman, 2002, p.254). Flynn et al go furthest, arguing a single 'grand narrative' can be identified: teacher tries a particular teaching style; it fails and the students rebel; the teacher has an epiphany and changes approach, students make huge gains; but this comes at a cost to their teacher (Flynn, et al 2009, p.93). However, as the 'grand narrative' is based on only ten US films from over fifty years of cinema, this may again be an over-simplification, this time based on a pre-determined sample.



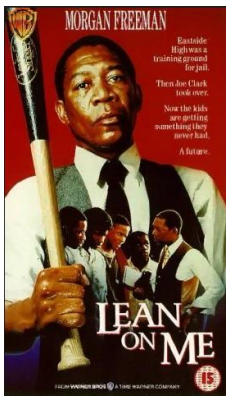
Liston argues almost all education movies depict one or more of four 'traditions' of teaching: conservative, progressive, radical or spiritual (Liston, 2015, p.57-64). The Progressive school film mixes with the Hero-Teacher stereotype to create '*the* way to educational salvation', a classic example being *Mr. Holland's Opus* (Liston, 2015, p.64). Conservative, Radical and Spiritual ideas are observed forming part of the progressive educator's armoury, or by standing firmly against them in the form of old-school teachers (*ibid*). Liston argues these combinations are helpful in demonstrating there is not one path to success, a useful tool to deploy against politicians arguing the opposite (Liston, 2015, p.72).

Super(man) Returns: The Hero Teacher

One aim of this thesis includes an examination of whether attitudes towards teachers are gained by depictions of cinematic educators; the most common stereotype identified by scholars suggests this may have positive consequences – the hero teacher (Heilman, 1991; Thomsen 1993; Farber & Holm, 1994a; Farhi, 1999; Ayers, 2001; Paul, 2001; Carter, 2009; Benton, 2013). LouAnne Johnson in *Dangerous Minds* illustrates the typical plot device these scholars identify: unconventional, often new and unqualified, standing in stark contrast to useless colleagues, the hero or heroine encounters students thought unteachable. Through sheer determination (often at the expense of their personal lives), inspirational approaches, love for students and rebellion against leaders, these teachers make an enormous impact, before leaving at the end.

Some contend the hero narrative is so strong that education movies are actually Westerns, the star teacher is the sheriff or gunslinger, walking into town and sorting out the bad guys before departing at the end of the movie (Farhi, 1999, p.157; Breault, 2009, p.311; Benton, 2013, p.99). Others identify an extreme version – the saviour, in some guises even becoming a saint, martyr or Christ-like figure (Burbach & Figgins, 1993, p.68; Ayers, 2001, p.201; Gregory, 2007, p.14; Trier, 2010a; p.22; Carter, 2009, p.61). Hynes identifies cinematic 'Stations of the Cross' in hero-teacher movies: the 'disastrous first class', the 'bitch session about bad students and idiotic directives', the 'embittered veteran', the 'climactic confrontation' and the 'tear-jerking moment of redemption' as our hero reaches the kids (Hynes, 2006).

Farhi argues the hero-teacher is of such longevity, it has even undergone its own evolution, exemplified by differences between the 1967 original of *To Sir with Love* and its 1986 sequel. In



the former, Thackeray is simply a hard-working teacher, not performing miracles, just plugging away with a group of loveable rogues – but in the latter he literally puts his life and job on the line for his deeply-troubled students (Farhi, 1999, p.159). Thomsen argues the evolution has gone through eight iterations, starting with the 'benevolent guardian of truth' (Mr. Chips), going through 'the flawed idealist' (Miss Brodie) and the 'militant leader' (the baseball-bat wielding 'Dirty Harry of education', Joe Clark, in *Lean on Me*), before ending with the 'unorthodox nonconformist' (Mr. Keating) (Thomsen, 1993, pp.75-79; Ebert, 1989).

Scholars also identify a more recent development of the movie super-teacher – the anti-hero. The vengeful Jim McAllister in *Election* and the immoral Elizabeth Halsey in *Bad Teacher*, have pushed the hero-teacher trope into new territory (Ellsmore, 2005, p.33-37; Dalton, 2013, p.78). Bulman also posits a corrective to the hero-teacher model, arguing they only appear in urban films; in suburban examples, students are the heroes because Hollywood believes the latter's middle-class background means they don't actually need saving (Bulman, 2002, p.253).

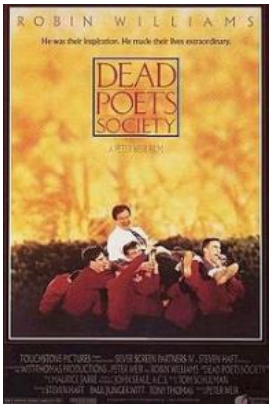
Pulp Fiction: harmless stereotypes?

Some scholars argue research has been too quick to criticise common teacher characterisations and 'righteous dismissal' prevents full understanding, including why stereotypes are so resilient (Vandermeersche et al, 2013, p.90-91; Dyer, 2006, p.353). Others believe there is some truth in the depictions, which contain some positives, particularly the hero, which shows audiences that teachers can form meaningful and supportive relationships with students (Duncan et al, 2002, p.43; Farber & Holm, 1994a, p.171; Shouse, 2005, p.360).

The clear majority of scholars, however, do not hold such positive perspectives. The most straightforward criticism is that education movies are simply unrealistic and nothing more than 'fairy tales' (Beck, 2012, p.91; Breault, 2009; pp.306/311; Duncan et al, 2002, p.43; Kelly & Coughlan, 2011, p.46). One consequence is the near impossibility for real teachers to live up to reel teachers, setting unrealistic expectations from the public and from themselves (Farhi, 1999, p.158; Trier, 2001, p.133; Breault, 2009, p.314; Carter, 2009, pp.86; Dunne; 2013, p.631). Many

contend the films aren't actually about teaching anyway, which is rarely shown and of very poor quality (Swetnam, 1992, p.31; Farhi, 1999, p.157; Carter, 2009, p.75-76, Dunne, 2013, p.632).

Many scholars also contend that the hero-teacher model reveals society's celebration of individualism (Hill, 1995; Bulman, 2002, p.253; Breault, 2009, p.312; Flynn, et al 2009, p.93; Dalton, 2010, p.27; Benton, 2013, p.99). Some argue this doctrine is exemplified by the heroic teacher often battling not just students, but peers - collaboration is rarely depicted and the route to success is portrayed as through individualistic actions (Benton, 2013, p.103; Dalton, 2010, p.27). Explicitly dismissing collectivism, teachers and school leaders are usually incompetent, disinterested, officious or dictatorial; the majority 'are slugs - cynical, inept, backward, naïve, hopeless' who all stand in contrast to the 'anointed' one (Ayers, 2001, p.201).



The cult of individualism is also revealed in the teaching approaches celebrated, such as teachers imploring students to 'find their own voices' and to break free from conformity (Breault, 2009, p.309). Some argue *Dead Poets Society* is the ultimate example, for it worships 'the ideology of the unique, private vision of a Donald Trump buried in the tropes of Walt Whitman' (McLaren & Leonardo, 1998, p.143). For others, its celebration of self-image makes Keating a Pied Piper, 'the perfect pervert teacher', twisting self-determination into a cult of personality, his individualism 'just another brand of authoritarianism' (Heilman, 1991, p.420; Swetnam, 1992, p.31; Dettmar, 2014; Dunne, 2013, p.632; Bauer, 1998, p.304).

Given the significant discussion in the literature surrounding the simplistic pigeonholing of teachers and schools, it is necessary for this thesis to also consider whether more recent movies continue the cinematic trend. Chapter six explores this further, asking whether the movie industry has recently adopted a more rounded perspective of educators or whether the depictions remain grounded in myth and distortion. If the former, this may be sign of multidimensional thinking, if the latter, it could be reinforcing a sense of one-dimensional attitudes towards those in the education field.

Little Women: Depictions of Gender

For many scholars, the cult of individualism also has gender dimensions and such writers argue that education movies reveal and reinforce deep-seated sexism. Revealingly, screen teachers are

disproportionately far more likely to be male than their real-life counterparts (Swetnam, 1992, p.30; Beyerbach, 2005, p.269; Flynn et al, 2009, p.90). Similarly, the central character being celebrated is often a man, sending out the message that students can be saved 'if enough caring and charismatic men tum their attention to the task' (Farhi, 1999, p.157; Farber & Holm, 1994a, p.170). In contrast, female teachers are often 'deviants' obstructing the charismatic male teacher, or represent the types of terrible teacher or leader that heroes must fight against (Beyerbach, 2005, p.283; *ibid*, p.171, Smith, 1999b, p.52). Damagingly, when female teachers are shown, it is commonly in sexual contexts. Bauer goes so far to argue they are *always* about sex: even when not explicitly about sexual relationships between teachers and students, they are about 'how to control libido through channelling it into proper social norms' (Bauer, 1998, p.303).

Many scholars are similarly concerned about sexualisation and objectification of women in education films. Female teachers and students are regularly sex objects, 'images constructed for our viewing pleasure'; 'property…a challenge for the principal male characters'; even in some cases, such as Elizabeth Halsey, as willing to prostitute themselves to get ahead (Burbach & Figgins, 1993, p.72; Dalton, 2010, p.96; Farber & Holm, 1994b, p.32; Dalton, 2013, p.82). Such is this narrative's proclivity, it has even been argued that where teaching was once depicted as a profound calling, it is 'now represented as a sexual proposition' (Bauer, 1998, p.302). Yet in contrast to male counterparts, female teachers who act on sexual desire are punished (Dalton, 2010, p.20; Dalton, 2013, p.81).[29] Similarly problematic is that female teachers, such as Principal Mullins in *School of Rock*, are regularly shown in the opposite sexual pigeonhole – the dour, non-sexual being, dressed in conservative clothes and plain hairstyles (Dalton, 2010, p.97).


School of Rock: Principal Mullins

Some scholars argue the sexism of education movies also comes through in common story-arcs. In 'blatantly sexist' narratives, female teachers are often 'rescued' by male colleagues; male school leaders are often redemptive and transformational figures, but female leaders are regularly villains (Beyerbach, 2005, p.78; Ayers, 2001, p.206; Smith, 1999b, pp.52-56). Conversely, women are often submissive to authority, but the leaders of resistance to officious (often female) leaders are men (Dalton, 2010, p.99; Farber & Holm, 1994a, p.171; Farhi, 1999, p.157).

[29] *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Looking for Mr. Goodbar* or *Mona Lisa Smile* all provide good examples of this.

Even when heroines are shown, in stark contrast with male counterparts who usually have supportive partners, women are depicted as having 'divided lives' and either alone or struggling with personal relationships; suggesting that women cannot cope with multiple roles: 'you'll learn to steer clear of fillies, for fear they may not last the distance' (Dalton, 2010; p.102; Flynn et al, 2009, p.92; McWilliam, 1996, p.2).[30] Worse, in direct comparison with masculine equivalents, it is argued leading female characters are more likely to be in abusive personal or pedagogical relationships with students (McWilliam, 1996, p.2). For some scholars, examples of this double-standard are *Dead Poets Society* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*: Mr. Keating's philosophy of *carpe diem* leads to a pupil's suicide, but he is depicted as the innocent; whereas Brodie is a dangerous ideologue for inspiring an ill-fated student to go and fight in the Spanish Civil War (McWilliam, 1996, p.2; Heilman, 1991, p.418).

Although the potential creation of one-dimensional thinking with regard to education is not specifically about gender, concerns over representations of women does reveal scholarship's concern with how education movies can reinforce dominant and hard-to-shift attitudes in society. For example, in an implicit nod to the one-dimensional concept of culture helping construct how society should be 'viewed', Dalton calls depictions of female teachers a 'tyranny' for they influence how society perceives and responds to them (Dalton, 2010, p.110). More optimistically, she hopes women can use the images to reveal the discrimination they face, but it is revealing that so late into its existence, Hollywood retains a sexist perspective towards the construction of education and society.

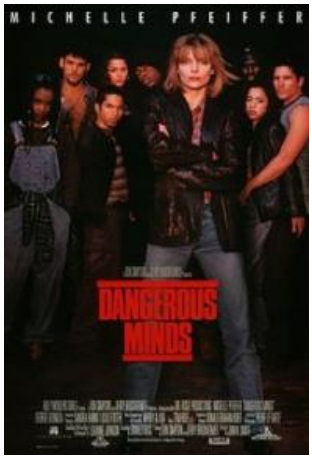
Do the Right Thing: Depictions of Race

Concerns over how education movies reinforce dominant attitudes towards women is mirrored in literature discussing race. A significant section of the scholarship identifies how racial prejudices are 'deeply entrenched' and perpetuated in education films (Hughey, 2010, p.489).

Some scholars claim the 'white-flight' from American cities in the second half of the twentieth century was exacerbated by TV shows and films mythologising the suburbs against 'sordid

[30] For example: LouAnne Johnson (Michelle Pfeiffer) in *Dangerous Minds,* Katharine Watson (Julia Roberts) in *Mona Lisa Smile*, Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank) in *Freedom Writers* or Roberta Guaspari (Meryl Streep) in *Music Of The Heart*.

fantasies of inner-city degeneracy and moral decrepitude' (Logan, 2013, p.163; McCarthy, 1998, p.32).[31] In this regard, several American scholars note racial distinctions between films set in urban contexts and those elsewhere (Flynn et al, 2009; Trier 2005; Sealey-Ruiz 2011; Simenz 2007). Finding implicit resonance with one-dimensional notions and the promotion of uncritical thinking, scholars argue education movies feed perceptions of inner-city schools as graffiti-daubed 'war zones' with metal detectors, security guards and CCTV 'as prevalent as light fixtures' (Wells and Serman, 1998, pp.189-190). An example of this is *Dangerous Minds*, labelled by one scholar as 'blatantly racist' for its hackneyed depiction of a school populated by out-of-control black and Hispanic pupils, whose lives are dominated by gangs and drug-dealing (Ayers, 2001, p.212). It is argued the film confirms 'the racist unconscious of dominant white culture by equating urban schools with images of menacing, poor youth of color and with the culture of crime' (Giroux, 2008, p.2).

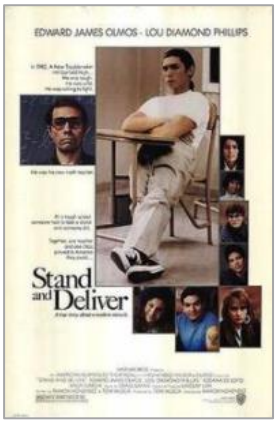


Also featuring an idealistic teacher in an urban school populated by violent, often non-white, anti-social pupils, it is argued 1955's *The Blackboard Jungle* provided the template for how race would be framed within education movies (Golub, 2009, p.29). Coming only ten months after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, for some the film predicted a dark future of violent, mixed classrooms and spoke to concerns about how to teach 'poor, minority' children (Walker, 2010, p.1951; Golub, 2009, p.29). *The Blackboard Jungle* also set a precedent regularly repeated in future education movies: 'the great white hope' (Wells and Serman, 1998, p.186). This racial form of the teacher-hero is a version of the white-saviour trope found in numerous Hollywood movies: the white-saviour arrives with 'superior skills, ethics, and cultural values than those of the ethnic and racial other', who must acknowledge the limitations of their racial backgrounds and recognise the path to redemption is the adoption of white cultural-norms (Reyes & Rios, 2003, p.9). Scholars suggest *Conrack, The Principal, Dangerous Minds, Music of the Heart, Finding Forrester, Half Nelson, Freedom Writers* and *Precious* belong in this category (Breault, 2009, p.309; Carter, 2009; p.80; Hughey, 2010; Dalton, 2010, p.13).

[31] It is useful to note at this stage that schools in American inner-cities are disproportionately far more likely to be non-white than those in suburban or rural areas, as more than half of US cities are now majority non-white, rising in some to over 80% of their populations being of BAME origin (Frey, 2011, p.1; Rastogi et al, 2011, p.15). Correspondingly, non-urban areas are less diverse than the national average (Frey, 2011, p.11-12). Allied to that is a picture of remaining 'intense racial separation' in US schools: 37% of American children are taught in schools where 90-100% of their peers are the same colour (Orfield et al, 2016, p.9).

Analysing *Freedom Writers*, Hughey assesses its racial impact through an analysis of 119 online reviews (Hughey, 2010). He argues they solidify 'a white supremacist weltanschauung' observed in the film by providing a racially charged framework depicting the pupils as 'criminals' or 'degenerates' and the teacher as the 'proverbial "bad-culture-breaker"' (*ibid*, pp.485-486). Hughey contends that along with other white-saviour films, *Freedom Writers* demonstrates 'whiteness' as 'redeeming and pure', with cultures of hard work and determination; in contrast to non-whites who are 'lazy', 'welfare queens', 'the pathological other' and 'dysfunctional' (*ibid*, pp.491-492; Dumas, 2013 p.543; Breault, 2009, p.315).

Similarly, Giroux argues 'whiteness' in education movies is 'the archetype of rationality, authority and cultural standards' and a code for order and control (Giroux, 1997, pp.46-47). In contrast, the strong association of black and Hispanic children with criminality and danger makes it clear 'whiteness' is 'vulnerable and under siege' (*ibid*). Bulman believes Giroux misreads this, arguing 'middle-class values, not whiteness' are celebrated in film, claiming Americans don't have the cultural language to understand class and often misname it as racism (Bulman, 2002, p.274). Pimentel however, supports Giroux's perspective, arguing movies like *Dangerous Minds* and *Stand and Deliver* depict a social reality that 'whiteness' gains its status not just by representing 'goodness', but by standing in contrast to 'blackness' and 'brownness' – which often frame non-white people as criminals and stupid (Pimentel, 2010, p.53).[32] Shouse however, attacks accusations of racism against *Stand and Deliver* as 'simplistic' and 'exaggerated' (Shouse, 2009, p.45).



A small minority of hero-teacher films buck trends by having non-white characters in the 'saviour' role. But it is argued they are either negative 'despots' (*Lean on Me*), or feature in films either reproducing the 'dominant racial knowledge that informs racist discourses' or are 'flirts with ultimate white supremacist logic' (Glanz, 1997, p.295; Pimentel, 2010, p.54; Giroux, 2000, pp.501/506). Some maintain it is common for black characters to be the oppressive leader against whom the white hero must fight, with a glaring example being Mr. Grandey in *Dangerous Minds*, one of the 'celluloid principals from hell' (Wells & Serman, 1998, p.187). Originally the Vice-Principal in LouAnne Johnson's autobiography, the raising of a black person to the lead

[32] Based on a true story, *Stand and Deliver* depicts a teacher who enables his Hispanic students to succeed at calculus despite overwhelmingly low expectations of the rest of the staff and the authorities – for example, the students are forced to retake a test, as the latter don't believe Hispanic pupils could have gained the scores they achieved without cheating.

villain is one of a number of racist distortions it is argued filmmakers made, providing evidence of Hollywood's racialising of true stories (Simenz, 2007, p.82; Giroux, 1997, p.49).

It is also contended that dimensions of racial privilege can be seen in the hegemonic curricula of movie teachers. In *Conrack,* Jon Voight teaches poor black children about classical music, art, baseball, even how to clean your teeth. It is suggested the film connects black people with low intelligence, with the 'solution' being white people and their white, canonical knowledge (Ayers, 2001, p.204). Even when the central teacher is non-white, such as the Hispanic Jamie Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*, it is argued they still teach a culturally euro-centric canonical curriculum (Beyerbach, 2005, pp.279-280). Giroux agrees the film utilises a 'privileged cultural currency' but suggests that at least it raises serious questions about racial discrimination (Giroux 2012, p.49).

Similarly, when education movies stand against racism, it is maintained this is merely part of 'a "feel good" racial reconciliation' or 'racial redemption' helping white people feel better about racial injustice (Hughey, 2010, p.488; Dumas, 2013, p.531). For others, there is a wilful disinterest in examining causes of racial inequality on screen, for that runs counter to the narrative film-makers want to tell –white teachers save black kids (Giroux, 1997, p.49; Giroux, 2000, p.505; Dumas, 2013, p.535). After all, 'one dedicated teacher, by half-killing himself, can change the injustices of American culture…and thus obviate the need for systemic reform' (Carter, 2009, p.74). It is even alleged that some recent education films demand we should 'move on' from blaming racial discrimination, a type of 'born again racism' perpetuating prejudice by ignoring it – something labelled by critical race theorists as 'deracialised discourse' (Apple & Swalwell, 2011, p.372; Dumas, 2013, pp.543/545; Gillborn, 1995, p.20). The dialectic in chapter six, will examine a similarly deflective phenomenon – how education films attempt to dress themselves in a cloak of progressive ideals, including of race, despite their plots having blatantly racial undertones.

Troublingly, it does appear there is evidence to suggest the overall impact of education movies on audiences is that they can promote discriminatory perceptions. Trier found students on his teaching course held an image of urban, black, schools uncannily like that depicted in the movies: aggressive pupils in trouble with the law, dilapidated buildings, and absent or uncaring parents (Trier, 2005, p.175). Similarly, Robertson suggests the films led to a belief amongst the white pre-service teachers she interviewed that black children actually do need 'saving' (Robertson, 1997,

p.136). Linking directly with the aims of this thesis, these findings provide further evidence that education movies *can* contribute to one-dimensional and non-critical thinking about different aspects of society.

High Society: Ideology, Politics and Class

Thus far, the structure of this review has reflected the literature in the field, which is dominated by discussion on stereotyping, race and gender. As already identified, these have resonance with aspects of this thesis, such as how the consistently stereotypical depictions of teachers may support one-dimensional perspectives of their real-life counterparts. However, as identified in the previous chapter, a key enquiry of this thesis is concerned with the origins of political constructions of teachers, schools and pupils, including the theoretical antecedents of how these are formed. In this regard, the field is noticeably less developed than considerations of discrimination and pigeon-holing.

Nevertheless, some scholars do identify how education movies reveal political aspects of the societies in which they were made, acting as 'ideological tools, disguised as entertainment' (Liston, 2015, p.37). For some, such films regularly centre on making 'good' or 'bad' choices, revealing ideological dimensions of victim-blaming, e.g. the problem is not society's, rather people's initiative in working hard and making 'good' decisions (Freedman & Easley, 2004; 78; Trier, 2010a, p.26; Beyerbach, 2005, p.271; Dumas, 2013, p.543). In the *only* research identified by this review that explicitly analyses education movies through neoliberalism, it is argued recent documentary films such as *The Lottery* reveal the origins of the 'good choice/bad choice' stance are neoliberal choice-based policies providing correctives to 'cultural and educational shortcomings' (Apple & Swalwell, 2011, p.379; Dumas, 2013, pp.532/541).[33]

A small number of other authors place education movies within broader political contexts. Liston suggests that although Jamie Escalante in *Stand and Deliver* is clearly motivated by injustice, his intensive preparation of his students for state tests demonstrates not only his inability to see that capitalism is the problem, but along with conservative values, his belief it provides the solution (Liston, 2015, pp.68-71). Others agree, arguing a sad irony of a film about fighting oppression is the only way depicted for disadvantaged students to beat the system is to conform to the rules of its game (Dalton, 2010, p.11; Giroux, 2012, p.49).

[33] *The Lottery* features predominantly black families entering publicly-held lotteries to get into New York City Charter Schools: Dumas labelled the film '*The Hunger Games* in reverse' (Dumas, 2013, p.536).

Thanks to its denigration of public schools and clear celebration of charter schools, *Waiting for Superman* is stated as another example of how ideology is revealed in education movies, becoming 'little more than a commercial' for privatisation policies (Apple & Swalwell, 2011, p.379; Trier, 2013; p.70). Education movies have also been framed with right-wing ideological contexts: the explosion of the genre in the 1980s and 1990s coincided, as noted in the previous chapter, with concerns over a 'crisis' of falling academic and behavioural standards (Heilman, 1991, p.421; Thomsen, 1993, p.82; Bauer, 1998, p.303; Beck, 2012, p.91). It is argued the clichés of the teacher-hero film support right-wing agendas: failed teachers, failed schools, wilful ignorance of social problems and tough-love educators preaching anyone can do it if they try hard enough (Trier, 2013, pp.23-24). Bulman argues that teacher-heroes are the personification of 'compassionate conservatives' and the typical plot-twist where the hero nearly gives up teaching represents the 'neoconservative impulse to retreat from state efforts to solve social problems' (Bulman, 2002, p.269). Similarly, Bulman also argues education movies conceal political and social origins of problems in schools – low investment, inadequate healthcare, bad housing, and lack of employment; thereby promoting a sense these issues don't matter (Bulman, 2002, p.258). This deflection strategy is something chapter six will also explore in significant detail through its analysis of more recent movie-making.

Dead Poet's Society comes in for particular criticism with regard to ideology. Giroux argues it should be politically analysed through the lens of 'transnational capitalism', because it celebrates 'the privatized ego of ruling class boys without any reference or analysis of how dominant social forms work' (Giroux, 2012, pp.40/44). Others agree, contending the depiction of students challenging the system is nothing more than 'a pseudo-carnival, a bourgeois excursion on the wild side' as the film celebrates ideological stratification of people and ignores how society constrains people by race, class and gender (McLaren & Leonardo, 1998, pp.139-141).[34]

The dominance of the conservative-leaning school film is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that left-leaning films, such as *Half Nelson*, stand out (Trier, 2010a, p.24). Dan Dunne teaches his pupils to question the ideological constraints in society, which Dalton argues, in a corrective of

[34] Intriguingly, these authors' arguments may be strengthened by the fact *Dead Poet's Society* has been celebrated by business school scholars as a model way to teach about traits of entrepreneurialism (Neck et al, 2007).

her own 'Hollywood Teacher' model, offers an 'unprecedented and remarkable' revisionist antidote to the ideological messages of the teacher-hero sub-genre (Dalton, 2006, p.33; Dalton, 2010, p.84). Flynn et al also name *Half Nelson* as the film departing most from their 'grand narrative' of education movies (Flynn et al, 2009, p.87).

Similar to race and gender, education movies' tendencies to promote mono-dimensional and uncritical perspectives of the world can also be seen in their depiction of class. Giroux argues that films such as *Dangerous Minds* suggest that for 'working-class kids to succeed in life, they need the cultural capital of white middle-class or upper-middle-class people' (Giroux, 1997, p.49). In an analysis of fifty-seven films, Bulman argues education movies fit into three class-based dimensions: urban films about working-class children, suburban films centred on the middle-class and private school stories about the upper-class (Bulman, 2002, p.253). For suburban and private school movies, Bulman suggests the positive central theme is the finding of your true self; but in contrast, in urban movies working-class children are expected to seek meaning, success and redemption through the adoption of middle-class values and cultural capital (*ibid*, p.254).

Some scholars argue that class injustices are deliberately ignored so the deceptive message of 'if you work hard you can do anything you want' comes through without complexity (Beyerbach, 2005, p.281; Apple & Swalwell, 2011, p.372; McLaren & Leonardo, 1998, pp.143-144). Again, implicitly echoing one-dimensional thinking, others go further, arguing education movies are attempts to protect the 'dominant ideology of…the existing class structure' (Dalton, 2010, p.19). This is achieved through middle-class notions of education dominating cinematic teaching and through the portrayal of working-class students as dysfunctional with their teachers on a 'middle-class mission of civilising the unwashed' (Beyerbach, 2005, p.280; Barlowe & Cook, 2015, p.38).

Bulman maintains working-class movie pupils 'represent what middle-class people fear most' about poor children – the absence of family values leading to violent delinquents rejecting social institutions (Bulman, 2002 p.257). He argues education movies reinforce political messages that moral solutions are required to address inequality, *not* social or economic policies: echoing arguments made about race, people are poor because they have made bad choices and all they need is motivation, better attitudes and work ethic (*ibid*, p.258-259). Dalton however, finds Bulman's analysis flawed because no matter the class structure of the school or students featured, the institutional educational structures displayed are rarely threatened (Dalton, 2010,

p.31-2). Some scholars see no problem with education movies showing 'ghetto youth' being asked to adopt middle-class values anyway, arguing schools can only succeed if such students reject the attitudes of their heritage (Shouse, 2005, p.362).

Similarly, other scholars believe education movies reflect not just on-going political attitudes and trends towards pupils, but also to their teachers. Ellsmore argues British films can be seen through the lens of Hargreaves' four ages of teacher professionalism (Ellsmore, 2005, pp.2-20; Hargreaves, 2000). *Carry on Teacher* typifies the 'pre-professional' period when governments left schools alone; *Please Sir!* exemplifies the 'autonomous professional' age of increased expectations, but through methods teachers thought best; *Clockwise* is characteristic of the 'collegial professional' during the comprehensive experiment, but also marked the beginning of the 'post-professional' period of increased scrutiny of schools (Ellsmore, 2005, pp.2-16).

Some contend we can even observe changing priorities and tones of individual politicians in education movies. Smith argues *Lean on Me* was a 'product of the hallucinatory Reagan era' that believed only strong leadership was needed to solve complex societal problems (Smith, 1999a, p.15). Bauer believes the Bush Sr. presidency harked back to the golden age of tradition and high canon reflected in *Dead Poet's Society*, whereas the Clinton period ushered in sentimental and idealistic films such as *The Mirror has Two Faces* (Bauer, 1998, pp.305-308). In Britain, it is argued we saw this on the small screen with the Blair government's focus on 'superheads' taking shape in *Hope and Glory* and *Ahead of the Class*, with *Waterloo Road* reflecting a shift towards therapeutic approaches under Gordon Brown (Blake & Edwards, 2013, p.784). Such trends perhaps suggest the movie industry shapes its products to fit with the perspectives of the dominant, providing further evidence of its trends towards the encouragement of one-dimensional thinking. Whether recent movies have continued such "follow-my-leader" approaches will also become an important point for analysis in chapter six.

Deep Impact? The Effect of Screen Portrayals on the Public

However, these trends count for little if the public either ignore or are uninfluenced by the messages in education movies - or even disagree with them. If this is the case, it could be logically posited that movies play little or no part in creating any one-dimensional thinking in

regards to education. A key enquiry of this thesis would therefore be easy to address – films can have almost no part, if any, in entrenching views about schools and teachers. It is therefore not only justifiable, but vital to examine literature that specifically addresses whether or not audiences can be influenced by screen depictions. There are no studies specifically about education movies, but an examination of literature examining exposure to other cinematic and televisual genres can aid an understanding of whether such films have any effect on audiences.

Understanding the effect of the big and small screen has been of such long-standing concern that its study, Cultivation Theory, is the third most used theoretical framework in communication studies (Bryant & Miron, 2004; Howitt, 2013; Greenfield, 2014; Perse & Lambe, 2016). Most famously discussed in the field is the much contended link between screen violence and its prevalence in society (Ferguson & Kilburn, 2009). Other than concern over violence, studies suggest screen exposure *does* have multiple effects, ranging from improved attitudes towards homosexuality and mental health, to more negative impacts such as irrationally increased fears of crime and a raised risk of developing mental health problems, ADHD or obesity (Riggle et al, 1996; Kimmerle & Cress, 2013; Gerber et al, 1978; Hammersteimer et al, 2005; Swing et al, 2010; Braithwaite et al, 2013).

Complicating many studies about screen effects is the difficulty isolating screen-time from all other factors; however, some have achieved this by examining localities before and after they could receive television signals. A study of rural Indian villages found significant decreases in the acceptance of domestic violence and a significant rise in positive attitudes towards daughters, including a 12% increase in school enrolment (Jensen & Oster, 2009, p.1057). The authors contend this may have been caused through exposure to urban lifestyles, values, and behaviours (*ibid*, p.1091). Using the same method in Indonesia, another study found a less positive link between screen time and behaviours, with television causing a significant drop in social activity and trust of peers (Olken, 2009, p.1). A similar study examined US localities before and after they could receive the right-leaning Fox News (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007). The study examined twenty-eight states between the 1996 and 2000 Presidential elections and concluded Fox increased the Republican vote by 0.4-0.7% in each; which in Florida equates to 10,757 votes, a state deciding the election in favour of George W. Bush by a 537 majority (*ibid*, p.1212).

The studies reviewed above are about television, and scholars argue the introduction of mass television viewing in the 1950s resulted in the impact of movies on audiences becoming a relatively neglected area of the field (Adkins & Castle, 2014; p.1231). However, research suggests

they can have a significant effect on attitudes. For example, studies on *JFK* found that after viewing, people were significantly more likely to believe in conspiracy theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination and were far less likely to vote or donate money to political parties (Elliot, 1992; p.2; Zimbardo et al, 1995, p.237). Similarly, exposure to films about healthcare made American viewers significantly more likely to support reforms such as Obamacare; films depicting non-traditional families made people more tolerant and liberal; *Malcolm X* improved people's racial consciousness; *The Cider House Rules* made people more supportive of abortion; and *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty* made audiences more sympathetic to government intelligence agencies (Adkins & Castle; 2014, p.1242; Mazur & Emmers-Sommer, 2003, p.157; Davis & Davenport, 1997, p.50; Mulligan & Habel, 2011, p.79; Pautz, 2015, pp.120). However, the methodology in all the above involved showing participants movies and completing before and after questionnaires or interviews, suggesting more longitudinal evidence is needed to assess whether films have lasting impact on attitudes.

Although there are no studies demonstrating a causal link between fictional screen depictions of education and attitudes, some studies find a positive connection between non-fiction educational programmes and educational achievement, with *Sesame Street* being a well-studied example (Mares & Pan, 2013; Fisch & Truglio, 2014). Studies on other professions also suggest that links between fictional depictions of education and public mind-sets are highly likely, including research suggesting that screen depictions of doctors have a significant impact on attitudes towards them (Quick, 2009). One study even revealed that a well-known fictional doctor received over 250,000 letters from viewers asking for medical advice: if the reality/fiction line is so easily blurred, it is reasonable to suggest similar confusions may be directed towards schools and teachers from viewers of educational dramas (Cho et al, 2011, p.142).

This review has already identified how such a link may materialise in education with some teacher-educators finding their students' perceptions of pupils and their backgrounds are shaped by movies, with these studies also discovering many teaching students freely admit their wider perceptions of school came from films, with some even creating 'teacher fantasies' of their future careers around them (Trier, 2001, p.128; Trier, 2005, p.175; Robertson, 1997, p.136). Media impact on the wider population might also be seen in a phenomenon observed in both Britain and America, where surveys suggest the public rate local schools far more positively than those

nationwide, with scholars suggesting that when people have no personal information about schools they base their views on cultural depictions (Swetnam, 1992, p.30; Thomsen, 1993, p.81). Although there is limited conclusive, empirical evidence linking screen depictions of education with attitudes towards real teachers, this has not prevented *both* politicians and academics

maintaining there is a link. For example, during the post-war period, politicians and establishment figures became deeply concerned with the impact of education movies on the public, exemplified by a US Senate investigation into juvenile delinquency singling out *The Blackboard Jungle* as 'giving a further push' to normalising brutality and violence (US Senate, 1956, p.54). Banned in some American states, the film had a profound effect on audiences and censors, alarmed by the violent portrayal of inner-city schools and fearful it could inspire copycat behaviour from viewers (McCarthy, 2007, p.317, Simmons 2008, p.389; BBFC, 2017; Golub, 2015, p.3).

A seminal study of screen effects on viewer attitudes suggests that perhaps such fears are justified, arguing constant 'highly selective, synthetic, and purposeful' images of realistic 'facts' act as a 'Trojan Horse' on our consciousness, to the extent we may no longer know if our understanding of life is based on reality or on fiction (Gerber & Gross, 1976, pp.178-179; Google, 2019c). Some scholars explicitly argue education movies act as this 'Trojan Horse' on public attitudes, and many argue education movies blur the lines between reality and perception by consistently promoting and reinforcing negative public perceptions of teachers and schools (Swetnam, 1992; p.30; Thomsen, 1993, p.83; Burbach & Figgins, 1993, p.65; Breault, 2009; p.306; Blake & Edwards, 2013; p.796; Dunne, 2013, p.631).

It is argued that education movies have significant impact as their 'corrosive as acid' images gain 'immortality' through constant repetition (Gregory, 2007, pp.13). Others believe they reinforce unachievable ideals of practice by privileging entertainment over reality (Dunne, 2013, p.631). Similarly, many contend their overall effect is profoundly negative because they feed the 'public's willingness to believe the worst' about schools and result in the sheer impossibility of real teachers living up to the 'fantasy myths' seen on screen (Breault, 2009, p.306; McLean, 1995, p.20; Swetnam, 1992, p.31; Thomsen, 1993; p.82).

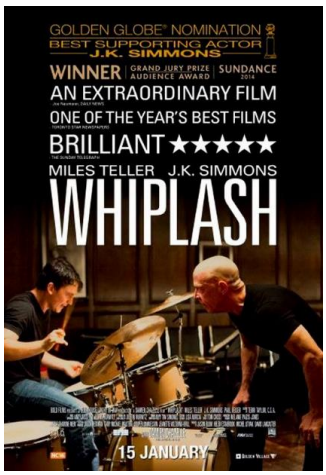
A number of other studies also implicitly suggest movies can create one-dimensional thinking about education. Gregory argues people rarely 'power up their critical resistance' when watching

education movies, which act as 'the thickener in gravy: the longer the cultural gravy simmers the thicker it becomes' and the more entrenched their narratives become (Gregory, 2007, p.13). Similarly, Giroux argues it would be a mistake to dismiss education movies as entertainment or fantasy, believing they operate as emotive cultural performances where the 'coordinates of dominant power are often constructed and the "'state of things' seem evident, unquestionable"' (Giroux, 2008, p.1). He believes it is vital to consider how films reveal how power operates in society through the construction of the interests and anxieties of the periods in which they are produced (Giroux, 2001b, p.595). Giroux also argues education movies act as propaganda for anti-democratic forces wanting to use schools as test-centres that 'warehouse the poor' (Giroux, 2008, p.9). Some scholars argue Giroux's analyses are too quick to jump to political and ideological conclusions, but others are clearly more sympathetic, arguing recent education movies are part of a right-wing project to create a 'new common sense' in education (Kellner, 2001b, p.232; Vandermeersche et al, 2013, p.90; Apple & Swalwell, 2011, p.369).

Most clearly implying they can support a one-dimensional outlook, Dalton argues education movies are 'powerful tools for identifying the dominant discourse in a given culture over time' and through doing so, promote conformity *into* that dominant discourse by providing the 'script' for our lives (Dalton, 2010, pp.10-11/19). Although some films depict symbolic challenges to the system, she argues even these eventually portray schools as places where 'the status quo has been protected and the dominant ideology' maintained (*ibid*, pp.12/19). Similarly, Dunne contends that although films often portray schools as places of individual emancipation, larger social issues relating to power are left unchallenged, therefore reinforcing 'hegemonic and elitist attitudes by uncritically reflecting the status quo' (Dunne, 2013, p.631).

Of all scholars, Giroux perhaps goes furthest in suggesting education movies diminish critical thinking and promote one-dimensional perspectives. He argues films do more than just reflect and/or perpetuate the status quo, but actually construct reality by 'shaping habits of thinking', fashioning identities of civic life and by putting particular ideas and values into public conversation (Giroux, 2008, p.1; Giroux, 2001b, pp.589-591). Perhaps ironically, Giroux is also more optimistic about the possibilities created by education movies, arguing we must use them *against* the viewpoints they promote: by revealing how they seek to control and shape society, they can help people to challenge how 'power operates within the realm of the cultural' (Giroux, 2001b, pp.588/592; Giroux, 2008, p.9).

Raging Bull: Conclusions and Identification of Gaps



Arguably the most successful recent education movie is *Whiplash*, which centres on the toxic relationship between a student and his teacher at a prestigious fictional music conservatory.[35] One scene acts as a useful metaphor for the academic reception of education films. Fearsome tutor Terence Fletcher is coaching the jazz band ahead of an important competition, Andrew Neiman is a drummer who dreams of becoming the next Buddy Rich. The band practise the Hank Levy piece giving the film its name, but nothing Neiman does satisfies Fletcher, who constantly interrupts to tell him his beat is 'not quite my tempo'. Again and again the scene repeats: Neiman performs, Fletcher interrupts. Neiman plays too fast, too slow - but never gets it just right. At first Fletcher is polite and calm, but eventually he erupts - hurling a chair at Neiman before striding over, slapping him in the face and shouting: 'if you deliberately sabotage my band, I will fuck you like a pig' (Chazelle, 2014).

There may be no authors in the literature on education movies that have threatened porcine sexual violence towards filmmakers, but the scene is symbolic of a fractious relationship where one party is deeply upset with the other. Just three articles identified for this review felt the education movie genre was a positive force for discussion on education - two written by the same author (Shouse, 2005; Shouse 2009; Rehm, 2015). Slightly more common, but still rare, is an expression of positivity towards an individual movie, but dominating the literature is a dislike ranging from subtle to excoriating admonishment. In a damning summary of the field, one author tried to identify their top ten education films, but stopped at five because there simply weren't enough 'good movies out there' (Hill, 1995).

In fact, the damning critical judgement in the scholarship arguably calls into question Marcuse's central premise of a one-dimensional society where critical thinking was evaporating. Moreover, in a clear attempt at ensuring critical thought is kept alive, the extent of the criticality in the field is further demonstrated by the fact scholars now commonly use education movies with pre-service teachers to deconstruct depictions of education in order for them to adopt a critically reflective approach towards their future profession and the societal contexts in which it operates

[35] Directed by Damien Chazelle, who later made *La La Land, Whiplash* made $49m at the box-office and secured three Oscars from five nominations, including the Best Supporting Actor award for JK Simmons as Terence Fletcher.

(Robertson, 1995 & 1997; McLaren & Leonardo, 1998; Trier, 2001, 2005, 2010 & 2013; Paul, 2001; Raimo et al, 2002; Giroux, 2004 & 2008; Soetaert et al, 2004; Marcus & Stoddard, 2007; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; Fennell, 2013).

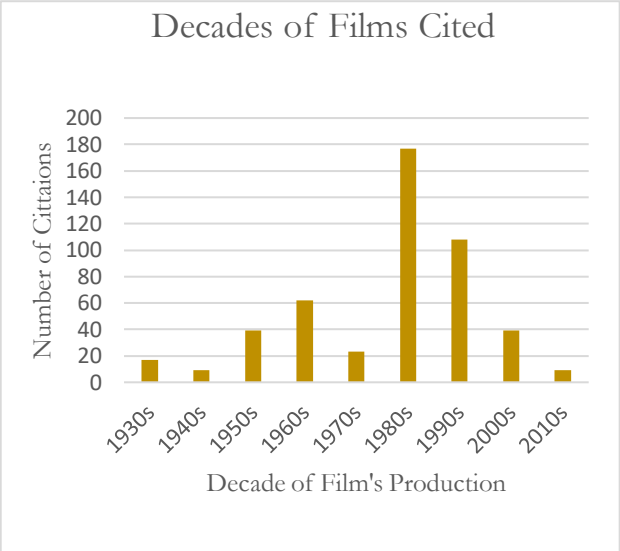
However, this charge against Marcuse is arguably a rush to judgement. For throughout the scholarship, although never explicitly described in Marcusean terms, is a consistent anxiety that education movies *do* deceive and distort the perception of schools, teachers, pupils and the society in which they exist, to the extent that the perception of them in society may become the same as that depicted on-screen. Indeed, many scholars use them with student teachers precisely *because* they fear such a process occurs.

Nevertheless, just because the scholarship is highly fearful of how this form of popular culture shapes attitudes towards education, it does not necessarily mean researchers in the field agree a 'one-dimensional man' is being created. A conspicuous example of this, which forms the opening gap identified in this review, is that neither Marcuse nor his ideas are ever mentioned in the research – or indeed are any other Frankfurt School scholars. Therefore, the one-dimensional idea has only limited echoing in the field. The scholarship is arguably closest to 'Marcusean' thinking with regard to the notion of culture reinforcing one-dimensional perspectives of race and gender; but its limited focus on politics and ideology, another significant gap in the field, means the research is underdeveloped on the interplay between popular culture and political doctrines. In an additional gap identified by this review, this is particularly the case regarding ideological constructs of capitalism and neoliberalism, with only a handful of articles seeking to explore education movies within those frameworks.

Possibly part of the explanation for the absence of political frameworks is simply the small number of studies in the field. Such is the limited size of the scholarship that a significant number of pieces are dominated by references back to each other, suggesting a possible element of groupthink. Another gap in the scholarship is the fact that the research is disproportionately focused on films made in the twentieth century - particularly on a small number of movies made in the 1980s.[36] The graph overleaf illustrates this through a collation of the release date of all films cited in the reading identified for this review.[37] As can be observed, there is almost nothing

[36] In particular, these are *Dead Poet's Society, Stand and Deliver, Lean on Me* and *Teachers*. Further graphical analysis of how often movies are cited in the field can be found on page 95.

[37] This graph counts every time a movie is mentioned in the literature, e.g. if the same film from 1985 is referenced in ten separate studies, it counts as ten separate citations on the y axis. However, if a film is mentioned multiple times in any given study, it still only counts as one citation in the graph.



from the past decade, suggesting a need to update the field through analysis of far more recent movie-making. Similarly, a final gap comes from the fact that the majority of the studies are about a single movie or are a broad discussion of a concept, with individual films cited as examples. Only a few analyse a wider sample of movies; even then it is very rare for a justification of the selection to be made, suggesting an element of confirmation bias may be present.

The remaining chapters provide an attempt to address those gaps. As will be discussed in chapter five, taking inspiration from the lack of research into recent movie-making, the films chosen for analysis are all from the last fifteen years and to avoid any traps of confirmation bias, a rigorous process has been used to select them and to avoid choosing films on the basis they confirm pre-existing views. Using recent movie-making offers the potential to examine whether or not the main criticism of the education movies genre identified in this review are still prevalent or whether the genre has evolved into new forms. However, before this, the following chapter outlines the methodology through which those movies will be analysed via an exploration of what the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, most particularly that of Herbert Marcuse, says about the connection between popular culture and constructions of society, including relationships between ideology and power.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD ACTING: CRITICAL THEORY, HERBERT MARCUSE AND THE DIALECTIC

4.1 BOYZ 'N THE HOOD: THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL AND POPULAR CULTURE


Hail, Caesar! 'Marcuse' is sat to the right of the fireplace

In *Hail, Caesar!,* an Oscar-nominated comedy written and directed by the Coen Brothers, George Clooney is Baird Whitlock, an intellectually limited 1950s Hollywood idol drugged and kidnapped from the set of the big-budget epic from which the film takes its title. Awakening in a beautiful Malibu house, Baird finds a study group in full swing, attended by middle-aged men in woollen jackets and tank-tops.

> 'What are you studying?' asks Baird.
> 'All kinds of jolly stuff. History…' replies one.
> 'Economics' says another.
> 'They're the same thing isn't it?' Snaps a third.
> 'Don't you agree?' Adds a fourth (Coen & Coen, 2016).

A small dog yaps at Baird's feet, 'quiet Engels,' snaps one of the men, before the meeting acrimoniously descends into whether all bosses are parasites. Suddenly an older man, hitherto quiet, clears his throat. Clearly held in reverence, the others instantly quieten and turn theatrically towards him.

> 'Man is unitary,' he says in a thick German accent, 'a simple economic agent. Man's institutions are split, expressing contradictions that must be worked through in a causative predictable way. History is science. This is the essence of the dialectic' (Coen & Coen, 2016).

The kidnappers turn out to be communist scriptwriters who, in revenge for being exploited by the studios, write Marxist vignettes into movies. Their esteemed colleague is revealed as none other than Herbert Marcuse, one of the leading and most controversial thinkers of the Frankfurt School. Given their contempt for the 'culture industry', it is ironic Marcuse should star in a film, albeit one comically pricking the Hollywood myth. Ironic, but also revealing. Key parts of Frankfurt School theory identified the ability of capitalism, with assistance from the culture industry, to absorb criticism and pacify the masses – the Coen Brothers are arguably using Marcuse against himself in a precise illustration of how this happens.

In response, the real Marcuse may have signposted them to his notorious essay, *Repressive Tolerance*, which argued capitalism maintains its domination by allowing limited forms of disobedience, providing an illusion of freedom of speech and thought (Marcuse, 1969a). Marcuse's Frankfurt

School colleagues, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer might also have referred them to their 'signature work', *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which argued movie laughter was 'an instrument of fraud' used for deriding challenges to the dominant (Bronner, 2011, p.11; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p.140). Frankfurt School scholars might have concluded that the content and financial success of *Hail, Caesar!* means its pastiche of the culture industry is a sign of capitalism's all-consuming strength - dissent is part of its preservation.

Hail Caesar! provides an insight into one of the overriding concerns of the Frankfurt School and Herbert Marcuse - how the culture industry may sustain capitalism. As established in the introduction, key enquiries for this thesis centre on the extent to which education movies establish and entrench dominant perspectives of education, particularly those regarding neoliberal capitalism. This chapter therefore outlines why the critical theory tradition, in this case particularly that of Herbert Marcuse, provides an appropriate methodological framework for this thesis.

The tool the Frankfurt School and Marcuse used for their dissections, the dialectic, is also deployed to analyse the films. Dialectics do not seek to make truth claims based on empirical evidence; instead, they make philosophical arguments based on the author's perspective of the world. For Marcuse, the dialectic was the refusal to accept things at face value, the difference between what things pretend to be and what they actually are, the revelation of the distortion, the dirty underside of the shiny exterior. It is the art of critical thinking writ large – its increasing absence from society a crucial element of one-dimensional thinking. This chapter outlines why this makes the dialectic an ideal instrument through which to look at cultural items created by one of the most successful industries of the capitalist state.

In outlining and justifying the methodological perspectives of Marcuse and critical theory in more detail, this chapter is split into four sections. It is important to understand the epistemological tradition to which Marcuse belonged, so the first briefly scrutinises the Frankfurt School both holistically, but also specifically via an examination of two seminal pieces – Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Culture Industry* and Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.[38] The second, longest, section examines Marcuse's specific theoretical contribution and identifies five analytical tools that will be used in examining the movie sample in chapter six. The third section examines the dialectic and the fourth addresses key criticisms of Marcuse and critical theory.

[38] *The Culture Industry* is the fourth chapter in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Mad Max: The Frankfurt School


Some of the original members of the Frankfurt School

A central enquiry of this thesis is to explore the contribution of Marcusean theory to an analysis of popular culture. However, to fully undertake this it is vital to first explore the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Failing to acknowledge that Marcuse was not merely 'identified' with a theoretical tradition, but was actually an employed member of an institution with cohesive epistemological and methodological frameworks, would be a significant gap in any examination of his work. 'The Frankfurt School' describes a number of scholars working for or associated with *The Institute for Social Research* in Frankfurt, and its creation and advancement of 'critical theory'.[39] Today, its most well-known member is Jürgen Habermas, but the number of scholars identifiable as 'critical' is enormous, for other 'critical' theories such as 'critical race theory' and 'critical pedagogy' have antecedents in theory and method.

Although sometimes strained, critical theory sits within postmodern views of the world, attacking modernist interpretations of history, culture, science and research (Jay, 1996, p.xvii; Best & Kellner, 1991; Agger, 1991; Ashton, 2003). This position is not without tension however, for critical theory is not necessarily a brand-new philosophical framework, more the revision of an earlier, modernist one - Marxism (Callinicos, 2007, p.247; Stirk, 2005, p.31; Tormey & Townsend, 2006, p.169).

Marx saw the history of the human world as one of constant struggle between opposing social groups (Marx,1848). Whether it be between nobles and serfs, guild masters and apprentices, or factory owners and factory workers, Marx believed history unfolded from the endless conflict between different strata of society. Although Marx himself never used the term, this theory of history is known as historical materialism, with its central premise being that human society has progressed based on the tensions arising from the fundamental need to survive by producing and reproducing the material needs necessary for human existence (Marx, 1845).

[39] The school opened in June 1924, funded by Felix Weil, the Marxist son of the world's wealthiest grain trader. As well as the Frankfurt School scholars discussed in this section, celebrated past members also include Erich Fromm, Franz Neumann, Leo Löwenthal and Friedrich Pollock (Jefferies, 2016, p.1).

Historical materialism saw humanity progress via a constant battle over the control of the economic 'base' of society – the material means of production, including technology, capital goods and human labour (Marx, 1859) One result of this had been the division of the latter into social hierarchies, specifically class. Under advanced capitalism, Marx saw historical class conflict distil into a struggle between just 'two great hostile camps, two great classes directly facing each other – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat', the former controlling the means of production, the latter producing goods and services through their labour (Marx, 1848).

Marx and his followers saw historical materialism not simply explaining the history of society, but also its future, with Marx's most famous prediction being that through the ever-squeezing of wages and its own inherent economic instability, capitalism's internal antagonisms created its own gravediggers, meaning revolution was inevitable (Marx, 1848; Marx, 1857). Capitalism's demise would come at the hands of an insurgent and expanding proletariat who, with nothing left to lose 'but their chains', would unite against 'the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation (and) exploitation' (Marx, 1848; Marx, 1873).

Historical materialism saw history in more than just economic terms however, for whoever controlled the economic base of society also controlled its 'superstructure', e.g. culture, law, media, education, art and politics (Marx, 1859). Through such control a vast system of oppression and domination was maintained that enabled the rich and powerful to sustain their hegemony over the powerless. Although Marx himself never wrote a systematic critique of art or culture, his theories inspired a rich vein of Marxist cultural analysis that continues to this day through scholars such as Frederic Jameson and Terry Eagleton. A highly traditional Marxist analysis of modern movie-making would seek to understand their meaning through the prism of class and/or how movies might endorse the pre-eminence of the ruling strata of society, and/or how they could be considered in terms of their historical nature, i.e. of indicators of capitalism's entrenchment or potential revolutionary collapse.

Much of the later analysis in chapter six can indeed be considered to sit within this tradition. For example, consideration will be given to how recent movies do or do not preserve the viewpoints of the dominant; in addition, their revolutionary potential will also be considered, particularly in their promotion or otherwise of critical thinking about education. This is also entirely in keeping with the neo-Marxist perspectives of critical theory, which in the early years of the Frankfurt School, was simply code for the Institute's Marxism, used to avoid antagonising the governments

they relied upon (Kellner, 1990, p.20). However, like the key critical theorists, including Marcuse, this thesis departs from canonical Marxism, not just because it places more emphasis on the importance of culture in preserving the status quo than Marx ever considered, but also because, as chapter two outlined, neoliberalism in itself can be considered as a 'revolutionary' challenge to the existing order, thus justifying an analysis beyond traditional class-based Marxist positions. Chapter six will argue that any answer to neoliberalism needs to come from an expansion of critical thinking more widely, not just from a revolutionary working class.

Nevertheless, because of its use of critical theory, this thesis can be regarded as grounded in neo-Marxism and is inspired, like the foundation of the Frankfurt school itself, by Marx's call for a 'ruthless critique of everything' (Bronner, 2011, p.27). Established outside the traditional, conservative German university system, the Institute was founded in 1923 in order to adjust Marxism to explain revolution's absence in the West and to establish a 'supradisciplinary' analysis of capitalist society (Jefferies, 2016, p.75; Kellner, 1990, p.20). Max Horkheimer, the Institute's second director, arguably did most to establish the theoretical ground for critical theory.[40] As well as deploying familiar Marxist tools such as reification and alienation, Horkheimer took the Institute's philosophical foundations back to German Idealism, especially Hegel, in order to examine the 'totality' of society and in so doing was the first to conceptualise critical theory, defining it as 'concern for reasonable conditions of life', with its ultimate purpose 'to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Stirk, 2005, p.31; Jay, 1996, p.41; Jefferies 2016, p.141; Horkheimer, 1972, pp.199/244). [41, 42] This return to Hegel was in fact one of the reasons for Marcuse's employment in the Institute in the first place, having completed his post-doctorate on the German Idealist (Jefferies, 2016, p.146).

The Frankfurt School argued a significant cause of society's enslavement was positivism, which claimed rational truths were possible, that knowledge was discoverable through the application of scientific approaches and the purpose of research was to achieve this via verifiable means

[40] Under its first director, Carl Grünberg, the Institute was 'an orthodox Marxist institution' focused on traditional conceptions and pre-occupations of Marxism (Jefferies, 2016, p.36).

[41] Although discussed by previous philosophers, including Kant, 'totality' is most associated with Hegel, who saw truth emerging from a series of processes of thinking, each of which preserved aspects and notions from ideas previously overcome or consumed. The 'totality' of understanding therefore contains elements of all previous ideas and knowledge, e.g. nothing can be understood without appreciating what had come before it (Jay, 1984, pp.53-58). Further discussion on Hegel can be found on pages 79-81.

[42] Reification derives from Marx's 'commodity fetishism', whereby capitalism strips individuals of their humanity through standardisation and mechanisation, turning them into tradable commodities (Lukács, 1971; Marx, 1990, p.165, Bronner, 2013a, p.42). The Frankfurt School argued reification, all-pervasive in capitalist societies, turned the world upside down, with humans becoming objects and, thanks to consumerism, objects worshipped as almost living beings (Stirk, 2005, p.36; Jefferies, 2016, p.87). Reification's end-game is alienation, or 'transcendental homelessness', the process whereby people increasingly become estranged from their working or personal lives, as capitalism turns them into 'an appendage of the machine' (Lukács, 1972, p.41; Bronner, 2011, p.40).

(Giddens, 2004, p.138-139). The Institute took a 'polemical hostility' to positivism, believing it was a defender of the oppressive status quo and an opponent of critical thinking by failing to recognise the social structures controlling society - 'creating' knowledge blindly through that myopia resulted in the reproduction of that society (Stirk, 2005, pp.32/65, Giroux, 2001a, p.15, Jefferies, 2016, pp.144/145; Kellner, 1990, p.21). A major tool of positivism, reason, was an enemy Marcuse and other members of the Institute battled on all theoretical fronts (Jay, 1996, p.60; Giroux, 2001a, p.13; Jefferies, 2016, p.231). They argued that during the Enlightenment reason had collapsed via instrumentalism into irrationality, celebrating arriving at goals but unconcerned what those goals actually meant (Jefferies, 2016, p.329; Swingewood, 2000, p.132; Horkheimer, 1974). In a foregrounding of Marcuse's central argument in *One Dimensional Man*, the result was man had become dominated by uncritical thinking: his calculations 'witless' and passive' (Horkheimer, 1974, p.98). The consequence was that capitalism was stronger than ever, imprisoning people in 'ever more pervasive' networks of domination – *reasoning* it was the only acceptable version of the world (Jefferies, 2016, pp.231/333). For the Institute, this schema of domination, via justification of any number of barbarisms, led to reason's logical extreme - the gas chambers (Jay, 1996, p.265).

Furthermore, standing strongly apart from other theoretical traditions, critical theory also initially strongly advocated taking practical action or 'praxis' to re-make society - changing the world through critique (How, 2003, pp.20-21; Jay, 1996, p.82). Their praxis never advocated doctrinaire lists of activities, rather ceaseless searching for verification of theory through practice (Swingewood, 2000, p.132; Held, 1980, p.25).

However, two key long-term problems saw the Institute's belief in Marxist alternatives and praxis become increasingly problematic: emerging evidence of the failures of Marxism as practised, particularly Stalin's Terror, plus the increasingly remote prospects of revolution in the West (Kellner, 1990, pp.20/25; Bronner, 2013a, p.45; Kellner, 1984, p.126). The Nazi-Soviet Pact proved the 'final straw' - the Institute mystified how a Marxist nation could accommodate itself with fascism (Bronner, 2011, p.28). The new reality caused a pessimistic existential crisis, a black-hole from which most of the Institute perhaps never escaped: if Marxism was not inevitable, and even if it arrived, it may be as totalitarian as capitalism, what exactly was the praxis the School was fighting for? (Kellner, 1984, p.126) As discussed in the second section of this chapter, Marcuse was arguably the only fugitive from this negative dead-end, for not only did much of his work remain optimistic about the eventual death of capitalism, but unlike his Frankfurt School colleagues he was determined to play an active and leading role in its demise.

The Big Sleep: The Frankfurt School and the Culture Industry

As already noted, a central argument of Marcuse's one-dimensional concept was that culture and the dominant were merging into one – the latter used the former to dull people into believing alternative forms of life were unnecessary. To assess the aim of this thesis centring on understanding and deploying such Marcusean theorising regarding culture, it must briefly acknowledge the antecedents of those beliefs. Marcuse's ideas were not created in a theoretical vacuum – he built on approaches to culture already explored within the Frankfurt School, whose scholars were the first to systematically critique mass cultural devices, their output on the subject so large that a summary is arguably an impossible task (Jay, 1996, p.175). Nevertheless, two seminal pieces of critical theory offer insight into how critical theory sought to understand how culture and society interact – both were written before *One Dimensional Man* and, borrowing a movie analogy, can be observed as prequels to Marcuse's work.

Walter Benjamin's 1935 *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* is arguably unique amongst Frankfurt School scholarship for taking a positive perspective towards popular culture. Benjamin argued mass reproduction had forever shattered art's once powerful 'aura', which had placed a 'parasitical dependence on ritual' between art and the masses, a veneer of reverence preventing critique (Benjamin, 2008, p.24).[43] The aura's removal led to a sharper 'distinction between criticism and enjoyment' (*ibid*, p.36). Film was the greatest example: theatrical productions were once impossible to critique thanks to the almost mystical nature of the theatrical experience, but now millions watched films in movie theatres thousands of miles from their creation, allowing audiences to critique every detail, blowing apart the 'prison-world' dominating society (*ibid*, p.37).


Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

For Benjamin, instead of movies entrenching the views of the powerful and of the system that supports them, he saw them as offering an escape from their dominance – criticism could now be allowed to run amok, free from restraint. Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno however, adopted a radically different stance and as the second section will outline, it was a position Marcuse was far closer to in his attitude towards the effects of culture. Adorno and Horkheimer weren't opposed to

[43] Similarly, Benjamin's close friend, Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht, called this the *Verfremdungseffekt*, or 'alienation effect' which meant there was always a distance between the audience and the production, which failed to penetrate the viewers' subconscious.

all culture: they believed 'high', pre-modern art often highlighted antagonism to the status quo; they also celebrated opposition in Dadaism, Picasso's surrealism and Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions (Bernstein in Adorno, 2001, p.6; Kellner, 2003, p.29; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p.130; Jefferies, 1996, pp.131-132). However, crystallising in *The Culture Industry*, published in their seminal 1944 work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of popular culture, particularly movies, was excoriating, arguing it perpetuated social injustice by reconciling the masses with the status quo via pacification and brainwashing (Adorno, 1967, p.109; Jay, 1996, p.211).[44] They argued three 'pillars' perpetuated capitalism: 'automobiles, bombs and movies': the first provided the illusion of freedom, the second crushed resistance, the last celebrated and preserved the system (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p.120).

Adorno and Horkheimer pulled the strands of popular culture into one totality, 'The Culture Industry', its nomenclature part of its exposure as a means of production just like any other, with the result an iron-system of control hijacking the minds of the masses and preventing revolution (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, pp.120/136; Giroux, 2001a, p.24; Swingewood, 2000, p.132). The culture industry, they argued, created reified profiles of people in order to create schematic products, resulting in formulaic movies crushing human individuality and difference (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, pp.123-126). Adherence to these formulas meant real life became 'indistinguishable from the movies', revealing films' secret – 'obedience to the social hierarchy' (*ibid*, pp.126/131). Capitalism celebrated liberty and choice, but for Adorno and Horkheimer the culture industry reflected its bitter truth: 'everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same' (*ibid*, p.167).

The movie formulas were so pervasive that people were held captive by illusions of success, 'helpless victims to what is offered them', subverted into believing in the 'very ideology which enslaves them' (*ibid*, p.133). Movies had become a new opium of the people, pacifying and destroying opposition: 'by craftily sanctioning the demand for rubbish it inaugurates total harmony', they argued, becoming a vital part of a system designed around 'breaking down all individual resistance' (*ibid*, pp.134/138). They even had an unlikely symbol for how Hollywood taught people that all resistance to the views of the dominant was useless – the hapless Donald

[44] Their highly contrasting perspective on popular culture should arguably be considered in its historical context. After six years exiled in New York, Horkheimer moved the Institute to Los Angeles in 1941; but living in the heart of show-business meant they were captive members of arguably *the* most capitalist part of the behemoth (Jefferies, 2016, p.220). In fact, for Adorno and other members of the 'Weimar on the Pacific' not naturalised citizens, Hollywood literally became a prison as immigration restrictions prevented them travelling more than five miles from their homes and placed them under an 8pm-6am curfew (Müller-Doohm, 2014, p.299).

Duck, always ground down in the end, getting 'his thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their punishment' (*ibid*, p.138). If they took even cartoons so seriously, it is reasonable to suggest that were Adorno and Horkheimer to assess education movies, they would argue such films did nothing other than cement and spread attitudes towards schools and teachers held by the powerful.

Dialectic of Enlightenment marked an important shift in the Institute's theoretical contribution: in a departure from conventional Marxist analysis, Horkheimer and Adorno did not situate their analysis within class structures (Jefferies, 2016, p.212; Jay, 1996, p.178; Swingewood, 2000, p.132).[45] Furthermore, the book saw the replacement of Adorno and Horkheimer's belief in praxis with a belief that practical realisation of philosophy was a form of instrumental reasoning (Jay, 1996, p.267). This departure marked a point when the positive disappeared from much of the Frankfurt School's scholarship as they capitulated to 'radical despair' of an end to capitalism's domination and the development of existing ideas rather than the creation of new ones (Kellner, 1984, p.3; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxvi; Held, 1980, p.366; Jay, 1996, pp.255-256).

Although, the next section details how Marcuse's theoretical perspectives on culture were far closer to Adorno and Horkheimer than Benjamin, in some ways *Dialectic of Enlightenment* marked the point at which Marcuse and the Institute parted company (Kellner, 1994, p.251; Stirk, 2005, p.25; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxvi). First, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, the 1950s and 1960s would see Marcuse's most productive phase and secondly, albeit with some revisions, Marcuse's version of critical theory would arguably stay closest to its hopeful and praxis-orientated roots.[46] In sentiment at least, Marcuse arguably remained closer to Benjamin's optimism; put simply, what arguably distinguishes Marcuse's career as a thinker and activist from Adorno and Horkheimer is that, unlike them, he never gave up (Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, pp.xxxix).

At the very moment that his former colleagues appeared to be retreating into the darkness of despair, Marcuse stepped forward and entered his most productive period. It has been important in this section to acknowledge the theoretical tradition to which Marcuse belonged. Not just because its omission would create an absence of thorough contextual understanding, but also

[45] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* also saw Adorno and Horkheimer tone down some of their Marxist language for fear of upsetting their American hosts: between the 1944 German edition and its 1947 English version, the words 'capitalist', 'proletarian' and 'exploitation' were replaced with 'entrepreneur', 'worker' and 'suffering' (Stirk, 2005, p.23).

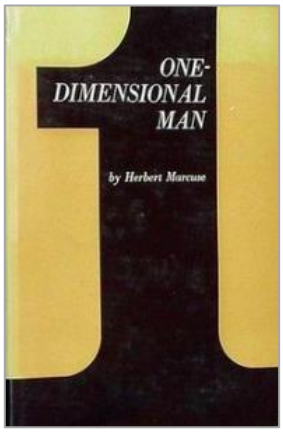
[46] It is interesting to speculate that arguably one factor in Marcuse's departure from his former colleagues is because he chose to remain in the American capitalist mecca after World War II, thereby never placing any physical distance between himself and the most extreme incarnation of capitalism on the planet.

because in many ways he arguably remained closer to critical theory's radical historical foundations – something possibly most true in the period in which Marcuse became the most widely discussed philosopher in the world (Kellner, 1984, p.1). The next section analyses the key elements of that period and identifies theoretical tools from within it that will be deployed in analysing recent products of the culture industry. It will be through those tools that that this thesis will ultimately answer whether or not recent movies promote one-dimensional perspectives of education, reinforcing contemporary political attitudes and policies.

4.2 CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON: MARCUSE AND ONE DIMENSIONAL THINKING

Marcuse's theoretical contribution has been categorised into three stages (Habermas, 1980, pp.1-12; Kellner, 1984, p.363). The first began with Marcuse undertaking an habilitation under Martin Heidegger and attempting to weld Heideggerian phenomenology with Marx (Kellner, 1984, p.33). However, finding this impossible, Marcuse used Hegel instead, a linkage of the two German philosophers which anticipated Marxism's "return to Hegel" following the 1932 publication of Marx's previously unpublished *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marcuse, 1987; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xvii; Marx, 1844a).

Marcuse's second theoretical period began after joining the Institute in 1934 and saw his work most closely in tune with Frankfurt School colleagues, particularly in helping them return to Hegelian methods of analysis and thought (Jefferies, 2016, p.146). This was most clearly outlined in *Reason and Revolution,* with Marcuse positioning the historical origins of critical theory in clearly Hegelian viewpoints, reclaiming him for the left and countering contemporaneous beliefs that Hegel provided philosophical underpinnings to National Socialism (Marcuse, 1960; Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, p.9; Jefferies, 2016, p.147). After moving with the Institute to the United States, Marcuse's adopted country put his academic and linguistic knowledge to use in WWII through his employment in the forerunner of the CIA as an analyst of fascism (Kellner, 1984, p.95).[47]



Marcuse's third and most productive period began after he left the US government in 1951 and saw the production of books and essays that made him both notorious and a 'worldwide intellectual phenomenon' (Cobb, 2004, p.163). Without question, the most influential of these was *One Dimensional Man*, the 1964 work for which Marcuse is most known and which made him 'the darling of the New Left' and the object of 'quasi-religious adulation' (Kellner, 2006, p.32; Jefferies, 2016, p.309). The book, 'the most influential social theory' of the 1960s and 1970s, is for some 'the fullest and most concrete' articulation of a theory of society the Frankfurt School ever produced (Kellner, 2002, pp. xxxvi/xix).

[47] When Marcuse joined it was still known as the Office of Strategic Services. Communist critics later used this to condemn Marcuse as an American stooge (Jefferies, 2016, p.253).

Although *One Dimensional Man* was a critique of 'advanced industrial societies' generally, its key themes are dominated by analysis of capitalism and the need to understand its survival. Its central premise was that capitalism remained dominant because in societies in the grip of its advanced stages, a 'one-dimensionality' had formed, where all ability to think critically and see a life beyond capitalism was eroded. Marcuse outlined a 'paralysis of criticism' that created societies unable to imagine an alternative because they no longer thought it necessary, their acquiescence to capitalism meaning they could not see how it oppressed them (Marcuse, 2002, pp.122/xxxix).

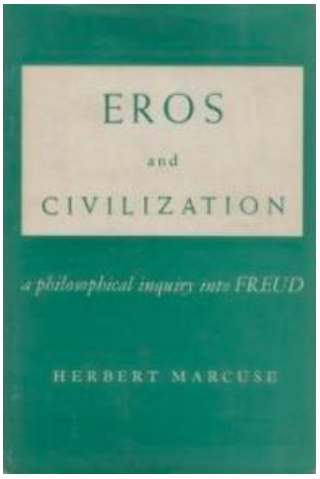
Marcuse argued the commercialisation of the advanced capitalist world had helped kill all critical thinking; people no longer recognised their oppression, because they were too busy recognising 'themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment' (Marcuse, 2002, p.11). Instead of people's minds being filled with fighting injustice, instrumentalist thinking had created a 'positivist cleaning of the mind', meaning only consumer goods and 'facts' matter - the 'factors' behind 'facts' were of no consequence, the one-dimensional man had come to accept them (*ibid,* p.187). Dominated by circular discourses where 'self-validating hypotheses incessantly and monopolistically repeated, become hypnotic definitions or dictations', one-dimensional thought became harder to resist (*ibid*, p.16).

Marcuse contended that in the one-dimensional world even our imaginations are infected and reified by the system, as they become possessed by 'images of domination and death', owned by mutilated individuals who cannot imagine 'a pacified existence, a life without fear', people who had lost the capacity to understand how other forms of life were possible (*ibid*, p.254). Societies were populated by people unable to see contradictions in the everyday world around them – instead all they believed was what everyone else believed, and what they believed was what the dominant and their partners in the culture industry told them. The people hadn't stopped thinking, but their thoughts were no longer their own: one-dimensional people not only lost their individuality and freedom, they had also lost the ability and inclination to care (Kellner, 1984, p.236).

One-dimensional thinking however, was only the end result of a series of processes that Marcuse identified in advanced capitalist societies. This thesis deploys these processes as tools through which to explore the movies chosen for analysis in this thesis - all are taken from works produced in Marcuse's most seminal scholarly period. Four are processes that Marcuse believed helped create one-dimensional thinking, a fifth that he believed challenged it. In their deployment, the thesis analyses whether the films contain evidence in support or contradiction of these key ideas and

therein whether they promote or challenge one-dimensional thinking in education. Answering this first requires a consideration of the main theoretical arguments of the five tools; within each, their key ideas are distilled into a significant issue the data analysis will explore through the dialectic of chapter six.

Surplus Repression



Marcuse outlined the concept of surplus repression *in Eros and Civilization,* a 1955 response to Freud's 1930 *Civilization and its Discontents*. The book has been called Marcuse's 'most provocative', 'most visionary' and 'most Marcusean' work (Stirk, 1999, p.73; Farr, 2009, p.39; Habermas, 1980, p.7). Freud saw humanity as a never-ending battle between two instincts: the 'pleasure principle', e.g. happiness and sexual pleasure, and the 'reality principle', e.g. work, monogamy and social restraint (Freud, 1930, p.3-4). Freud believed the latter is necessary in preventing disorder and that both are biologically unalterable, meaning a non-repressive society is impossible (Marcuse, 1966, p.17; Jefferies, 2016, p.283).

Marcuse refused to accept this biological determinism, re-evaluating Freud through Marxism's socio-historical factors (Giroux, 2001a, p.32; Kellner, 1984, p.163). Whilst agreeing some suppression was necessary, Marcuse argued that advanced capitalism established an enhanced level of the reality principle - the 'performance principle' – crushing happiness between the reification and alienation of workers and a never-satisfied capitalist economy constantly looking to expand (Marcuse, 1966, pp.44-45; Jefferies, 2016, p.284). The difference between the amount of suppression needed to prevent anarchy and 'the restrictions necessitated by social domination', Marcuse called 'surplus repression', the inevitable consequence being alienated workforces existing in totalitarianism (Marcuse, 1966 pp.35/45).

A prime example of surplus repression was simply how hard people were forced to work, one of the 'principal repressive factors' imposed by the reality principle (Marcuse, 1966, p.152). Marcuse argued the battle against scarcity in advanced capitalist societies was over, so it should no longer be necessary to work so hard and for so long, releasing the pleasure principle from its shackles (*ibid*, pp.151-153). Human instinct in such societies should be free to pursue love, play, sexual pleasure and work concentrating on issues like 'abolition of toil, the amelioration of the environment, the

conquest of disease and decay, the creation of luxury' (*ibid*, p.212). Without question, these utopian arguments foregrounded the 'flower-power', 'free-love', counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s (Kellner, 1984, p.286). Moreover, the book saw a break from orthodox Marxism; although still an analysis of an alienated society oppressed by capitalism, Marcuse saw the solution not in a revolutionary working-class, but via humanity's escape from repressed instincts (Farr, 2009, p.42; Jefferies, 2016, p.290; Kellner, 1984, p.165).

Although *Eros and Civilization* was written before Marcuse had fully developed his theory of one-dimensionality, not only did he return to its main themes in almost all his later work, including *One Dimensional Man*, but it was clear how the ideas of the pleasure and performance principles foregrounded his key theory. It is also possible to see how Marcuse sought to integrate the book into his evolved thinking, particularly one-dimensionality, through the 'Political Preface' to the 1966 edition, written two years after *One Dimensional Man*. In this Marcuse described the performance and pleasure principles in new terms - the 'erotic and political dimensions' - suggesting this was more than just a battle between instincts or desires, but a deliberate attempt by capitalism to keep people tied to the machine through the eradication or absorption of all pleasurable activities; in so doing creating one dimension of never-ending work and toil (Marcuse, 1966, p.xxi).

Eros and Civilization was optimistic this one-dimensional perspective could be defeated, for the tightening of the performance principle's noose logically suggested it was reversible, releasing the pleasure principle to create non-repressive societies (*ibid*, pp.95/129-139). Developing the Freudian battle between *Eros* (life instinct) and *Thanatos* (death instinct), Marcuse believed a 'liberated Eros' could come to the fore and provide a way out of the disaster of instrumental reason itself, which drove *Thanatos* to horrific conclusions such as the Holocaust (*ibid*, p.53; Habermas, 1980, p.9).

The data analysis will consider:

The extent to which education movies reinforce one-dimensional thinking through the celebration of surplus repression. Are teachers and pupils' lives shown maintaining the possibility of happiness and pleasure over domination, control and exhausting working conditions?

Repressive Desublimation and Happy Consciousness

The optimism in *Eros and Civilization* that the 'political dimension' could be restrained, shifted starkly to pessimism in *One Dimensional Man*, which outlined how multidimensionality was being

removed in advanced capitalist societies. Marcuse argued that a vital part in the creation of one-dimensional thinking was the culture industry and the tool of 'repressive desublimation.'

'Higher' culture once kept alive multidimensional, critical thinking because it contained elements of 'sublimation' – the smuggling-in of socially unacceptable social criticisms into socially acceptable cultural products, such as paintings, music and novels:[48]

> by making suffering and sorrow into eternal, universal forces, great bourgeois art has continually shattered in the hearts of men the facile resignation of everyday life….it has planted real longing alongside poor consolation and false consecration in the soil of bourgeois life. The art raised pain and sorrow, desperation and loneliness…this exaggeration contains the higher truth that such a world cannot be changed piecemeal, but only through its destruction (*ibid*, pp.59-60/67; Marcuse, 2009, p.73).

For Marcuse this was all part of a constant battle for man's soul between capitalism and culture, the former commodified individuals into economic drones; the latter used 'the soul as a protest against reification' by challenging this reductive view of the world (Marcuse, 2009, p.80). However, Marcuse believed that in advanced capitalist societies most culture prevented external revolt by creating internal placidity, escapism and retreat from social change, meaning 'reality was rarely disturbed by its ideals and its truths' (Marcuse, 2009, p.89; Marcuse, 2002, p.60). At least 'higher' culture showed 'another dimension of reality' was possible; but in contemporary societies that second dimension was no longer present – there had a been a 'flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality through the obliteration of the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements' (Marcuse, 2002, pp.67/60). A 'repressive desublimation' had occurred; instead of challenging the oppressive world, culture celebrated and confirmed it – even Bach had become mere 'background music in the kitchen' (Marcuse, 2002 p.67).

Understanding how Marcuse believed repressive desublimation works helps appreciate how it may play out in education movies. The process was three-fold. First, though 'higher' culture still existed, its challenge went unnoticed because it was now incorporated into the capitalist totality, culture had become 'affirmative' of the capitalist world; for example, using classical music in adverts had seen 'music of the soul' become 'the music of salesmanship' (*ibid*, pp.60/68). Through repressive desublimation, cultural items become 'other than themselves; they are deprived of their antagonistic force, of the estrangement which was the very dimension of their truth' (*ibid*, p.67).

[48] Although a term he used commonly, Marcuse was not specific about what he meant by 'higher culture'. He comes closest in *One Dimensional Man*, describing it as 'pre-technological culture in a functional as well as chronological sense' and citing seventeenth century Dutch painters, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, nineteenth century English novels, Thomas Mann and Flaubert's *Madame Butterfly* as examples (Marcuse, 2002, pp.62/65).

Secondly, repressive desublimation had taken hold through new cultural forms - television, movies, advertising and mass media - serving as props for social domination (Giroux, 2001a, p.24). 'Irresistible' products of the entertainment and information industries indoctrinated and manipulated 'prescribed attitudes and habits', reproducing the attitude of the producer in the consumer (Marcuse, 2002, p.14). Soon the indoctrination 'becomes a way of life…a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour' where alternative ideas are eradicated (*ibid*).

This second constituent of repressive desublimation clearly resonates with the central aim of this thesis, and the third element suggests Marcuse's view of education movies would be damning, for he argued that the technological tools of the communication and culture industries were hijacked by the socially dominant, resulting in people's occupational *and* personal lives becoming colonised by oppression.[49] In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse argued culture's technological tools were so subsumed into the social domination of advanced societies, it was almost impossible to draw a distinction between people's lives and those they saw or heard on 'screens, radios and stages' (*ibid*, p.61). The blurring of the lines was so extreme, even people's language was infected:

> Describing to each other our loves and hatreds, sentiments and resentments, we must use the terms of our advertisements, movies, politicians and best sellers. We must use the same terms for describing our automobiles, foods and furniture, colleagues and competitors - and we understand each other perfectly (*ibid*, p.198).

When talking to others, Marcuse argued people felt compelled to speak in the exact same, one-dimensional way, to desire and decry the same things; and we know what these are 'because we watch TV, listen to the radio, read newspapers and magazines' (*ibid*). The result? We don't speak our own language, but that of our 'masters, benefactors and advertisers': what we think, see and feel is what *they* think, see and feel (*ibid*). The consequence was 'culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives' with individual thought absorbed by mass communication (*ibid*, pp.xlvii/7).

But instead of recognising their subservience, the people were willing victims. Marcuse argued this new society was seductive, for repressive desublimation helped create a new tool sustaining the one-dimensional realm: the happy consciousness.[50] Although Marcuse believed the modern world

[49] Marcuse called this 'technological rationality' and first outlined this process *in Some Implications of Modern Technology* two decades earlier – arguing that once technological innovations become ubiquitous they alter what is regarded as rational (Marcuse, 2004, p44).
[50] Marcuse's use of the label is a development of 'unhappy consciousness', a term first used by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* to describe someone with a divided soul, almost two people in one, with their self-consciousness existing in a tension between the two, with 'the gazing of one self-conscious into another' (Hegel, 1998, pp.126-7).

was one of 'the progressive enslavement of man by a productive apparatus' ruining the lives of its inhabitants, not only were people not revolting, they were in an advanced form of false consciousness - active supporters of the system enslaving them, 'submitting to the peaceful production of the means of destruction' (Marcuse, 2002, pp.148/xxxix). But why? Marcuse argued the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were no longer in opposition - both shared an equal interest in the preservation of capitalism and the working-class regarded the interests of the dominant as their own (*ibid*, p.xliii). Advanced capitalism achieved this by making labour less physical, by shifting the balance of occupations from blue to white-collar jobs and by culture and mass communication creating 'false needs' through constantly reinforcing the messages of capitalism (*ibid*, pp.7/26-32). Here repressive desublimation and culture met and sustained the happy consciousness: 'mass media have little difficulty in selling particular interests as those of all sensible men' (*ibid*, p.xxxix).

Marcuse argued the combination of rising living standards and cultural indoctrination meant people believed 'the system delivers the goods' (*ibid*, p.53). But instead of reduced workloads, people's acceptance of the 'insanity' saw them working ever harder in order to buy the consumer goods they were told would make their lives happier (*ibid*, p.87/194). However, people did so without realising this leads them to exist in a world of complete social control and irrationality where false consciousness becomes 'their true consciousness' (*ibid*, pp.11-13). Marcuse argued the false needs weren't just physical goods, but also thoughts, feelings and aspirations, meaning physical *and* mental lives were held hostage by the desires imposed upon them (*ibid*, p.53).

The result was 'the atrophy of the mental organs for grasping the contradictions and the alternatives...the Happy Consciousness comes to prevail': the people had become 'preconditioned to exist as slaves and be content in that role' (*ibid*, pp.44/86). To exist in happy consciousness was to believe life was constantly getting better - cars provided freedom, washing-machines reduced drudgery, films made us smile; it was increasingly impossible for people to become autonomous human beings, thanks to the creation of a world of one-dimensional unfreedom 'protecting rather than cancelling the legitimacy of domination' (*ibid*, p.162).

The data analysis will consider:

- If the films help create one-dimensional thinking through providing examples of repressed desublimation where culture promotes, stabilises and normalises systems of oppression and domination.
- Whether or not the films are part of the promotion and sustenance of a happy consciousness imprisoning teachers, pupils, parents and the public to conform to one-dimensional perspectives of education.

Repressive Tolerance

One Dimensional Man painted a bleak view of the capture of the human mind - surely *some* people were still capable of critical thinking? Too few, argued Marcuse, who saw the lack of activism against the system as perhaps capitalism's 'most singular achievement' (*ibid*, p.xlii). Happy consciousness could play only one part in the explanation - it *was* impossible that everyone was dulled into smiling submission to the system, the civil rights protests against racism being an example.[51] However, for Marcuse, part of the explanation for happy consciousness provided the answer for the absence of wider revolt – freedom and toleration. The people believed they *did* exist in a multidimensional world where they were free to think and act critically, for their few 'satisfactory liberties' – including supposedly free-thinking cultural items such as movies - led them to happily assume they had far more rights than was actually the case (*ibid*, p.79). One supposed liberty was the right to engage in 'traditional ways and means of protest'; but for Marcuse these were not only ineffective, but 'perhaps even dangerous because they preserve the illusion of popular sovereignty' (*ibid*, p.260).

Marcuse theorised this in 1965 in his most 'provocative' work: *Repressive Tolerance* (Marcuse, 1969a; Stirk, 2005, p.27; Kellner, 1984, p.281). Through sanctioning - 'tolerating' - non-dangerous levels of protest in social and cultural forms, dominant states could claim its citizens existed in freedom, hiding the one-dimensional totalitarian aspects of its core; furthermore, states promoting tolerance could also demand tolerance of their own oppression - a 'demand for silence' (Farr, 2008, p.237; Sculos & Walsh, 2016, 516). Once something to celebrate, tolerance had become repressive and ideological, favouring and fortifying 'the conservation of the status quo of inequality and discrimination' (Marcuse, 1969a, p.123).

A 'repressive tolerance' had become pervasive - we tolerated 'the radically evil', people's 'systematic moronisation' by propaganda, endless 'massacres, violence and suppression' - all serving to maintain the totalitarian whole (Marcuse, 1969a, pp.82-83/100). Universal toleration was questionable when administered by 'manipulated and indoctrinated individuals' no longer able to distinguish between their own thoughts and those of their masters (*ibid*, p.90). Media and cultural

[51] However, it could be argued the majority of the civil rights protests weren't a challenge to capitalism – most protestors were looking for an equal say in the American Dream, not to bring it down (Jefferies, 2016, p.319).

forms played their part in this conditioning, including by endlessly treating 'stupid opinions' with equal respect as intelligent ones, where the 'misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with education, truth with falsehood' (*ibid*, p.94).

Marcuse had a radical solution for this problem – a reduction of tolerance. People should be unprepared to tolerate their suppression and although ethics demanded all violence should be eradicated, it was unreasonable to expect people to remain non-violent in the face of violent oppression (Marcuse, 1969a, pp.102-103). In fact, the oppressed had a 'natural right' to use extra-legal means if legal ones were ineffective: 'law and order are always and everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy; it is nonsensical to invoke the absolute authority of this law and this order against those who suffer from it' (*ibid*, p.116). Marcuse went even further, arguing in some cases 'extreme suspension of the right of free-speech and assembly is indeed justified' as was censorship of items creating false consciousness. (ibid, pp.109-11).[52]

The data analysis will consider:

Whether any critiques and challenges to the status quo and one-dimensional thinking contained in the films are actually parts of a repressed tolerance, examples of safe critique endorsed by the capitalist state, providing an illusion of confrontation to systems of domination, ultimately merely serving to preserve that domination.

Challenging One-Dimensional Thinking – Great Refusal

Violence and curtailing free-speech are arguably hypocritical and counter-productive tools to fight oppression and one-dimensional thinking - *Repressive Tolerance* was the only time Marcuse advocated such approaches. Far more consistent in his work was another, more positive weapon against the one-dimensional world, a weapon emanating from the 'radical, utopian streak' that distanced him from former colleagues (Stirk, 2005, p.25; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxiii; Davis, 2004, p.45). Theoretical gaps had grown between Marcuse and the Institute ever since the war, exacerbated by Horkheimer's fear that radical theorising would lead to funding cuts from the West German government (Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxvi; Jefferies, 2016,

[52] Coming in the middle of a Cold War pitting the 'free' west against 'unfree' communism, this was incendiary theorising. It was arguably unsurprising that Marcuse's Brandeis University professorship was not renewed in 1965 (Kellner, 1984, p.462).

p.305). 'Hunkered down in their office building in Frankfurt', they appeared to have given up on praxis-orientated utopian thinking (Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxx). Marcuse however, remained committed to such positive approaches and believed, if practised by enough people, they could defeat capitalism and the one-dimensional society. He even gave it a name - Great Refusal.[53]

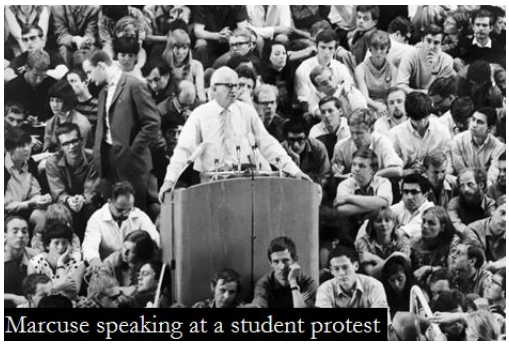
Marcuse first used the term in *Eros and Civilization* as 'the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom - "to live without anxiety"' (Marcuse, 1966, p.150).[54] The first examples Marcuse provided were psychological – unrestricted erotic instinct to defeat surplus repression, fantasy and imagination to fight instrumental reason (Marcuse, 1966, pp.160/170). However, in *One Dimensional Man,* Great Refusal became not about individual liberation, but how entire peoples can defeat oppression through multiple forms of 'protest against that which is' (Kellner, 2004c, p.90; Marcuse, 2002, p.66). In further revisions to traditional Marxist perspectives, Marcuse did not see those protests coming from the working-class, but from 'outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted'; groups existing on the margins, refusing to be absorbed, like the working-class, by the all-powerful machine (Marcuse, 2002, p.260). This meant revolution would not come from class conflict but from wider social dissent, a phenomenon through which some argue the Great Refusal is practised today in protests such as Occupy or the Arab Spring (Funke et al, 2017).

Marcuse believed 'ghetto populations' and student groups posed the best forms of revolt thanks to the depth of their refusal, rejecting 'the rules of the game that is rigged against them, the ancient strategy of patience and persuasion, the reliance on the Good Will in the Establishment, its false and immoral comforts, its cruel affluence' (Marcuse, 1969b, pp.7/11). In Paris in May 1968, hundreds of thousands of student protestors, many carrying placards daubed 'Marx, Mao and Marcuse', appeared to confirm Marcuse was on the brink of being proven correct, with their dissent inspiring millions of trade unionists to take part in strikes across France (Elliot, 2009, p.45; Kellner, 2004b, p.7; Jay, 1996, p.xii).

The events inspired similar protests across the world with Marcuse's writings becoming 'devotional reading' (Jefferies, 2016, p.320). In conjunction with their brethren in the anti-war and civil rights movements, the Great Refusal appeared on the verge of achieving genuine reform and Marcuse joined in, becoming the only Frankfurt School scholar to cross the line from theorist to activist. He

[53] Denoting it as a proper noun, Marcuse always capitalised the first letters of the term, a typology repeated in this thesis.
[54] In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse recognised the originator of the term - the founder of Surrealism, André Breton.

spoke at numerous student protests, marched in rallies, took part in occupations and later campaigned for the release from prison of his former student, Angela Davis, and East German activist Rudolf Bahro (Kellner, 1984, p.281; Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, pp.13-15).


Marcuse speaking at a student protest

Marcuse's radical praxis saw the break from former colleagues become decisive, casting further light on his unique theoretical contribution. Calling for 'a strategy of hibernation', Habermas called the protestors 'left fascists'; Adorno said 'the barricades are a game' and Horkheimer, whose later views Marcuse regarded as 'beneath criticism', supported the Vietnam War (Müller-Doohm, 2014, pp.463/453; Adorno, 2012, p.269; Slater, 2015, p.89; Stirk, 1992, p.179).[55] In 1969, Adorno even called in the police, the symbol of state domination, to break up a protest in the Institute; Marcuse's response illustrating his belief in radical action and hope for a better world:

> 'we cannot abolish from the world the fact that these students are influenced by us (and certainly not least by you) – I am proud of that...I do believe that there are situations, moments, in which theory is pushed on further by praxis…I would despair about myself (us) if I (we) would appear to be on the side of a world that supports mass murder in Vietnam, or says nothing about it, and which makes a hell of any realms that are outside the reach of its own repressive power' (Adorno & Marcuse, 1999).

By the 1970s, Marcuse became realistic about the counterculture's revolutionary prospects. Although optimistic that capitalism was ultimately doomed, the 'New Left' weren't ready to take advantage - they were too isolated from the majority of the population, who remained 'apathetic, if not thoroughly hostile to socialism' (*Marcuse*, 1972 p.4). A particularly troubling aspect was an 'anti-revolutionary consciousness' amongst the working-class who, blinded by happy consciousness, actively resisted insurgency (*ibid*, pp.5-6; Kellner, 1984, p.298). Nevertheless, Marcuse never lost his belief that capitalism and its one-dimensional world would collapse and that multiple acts of Great Refusal, which would certainly include cultural items such as movies, would contribute to their demise. He rejected the charge this was delusional, asserting he would 'not be deterred by one of the most vicious ideologies of today, namely, the ideology that derogates, denounces and ridicules the most decisive concepts as merely "utopian" and "only" speculative' (Marcuse, 1969c, p.20).

The data analysis will consider:

The extent to which any film in the sample provides an example, even in a single scene, of Great Refusal, championing critical, multidimensional thinking and standing up for the oppressed against the powerful.

[55] Horkheimer believed the Vietnam War was justified in confronting Chinese expansionism (Jefferies, 2016, p.348).

Marcuse's unique theoretical contribution cannot be fully appreciated without understanding his undimmed, radical belief in praxis. In deploying dialectical writing in critiquing movies, it could be argued this *entire* thesis is an act of praxis. However, inspired by a specifically 'Marcusean' sense of direct-action orientated critical theory, an additional chapter has been added after the analysis of chapter six, one that seeks to engage particularly explicitly in praxis. This takes the form of a short film-script aimed at uncovering the neoliberal educational world in ways that chapter six will argue movie-making has failed to achieve. Combining meanings of Great Refusal found in both *One Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization*, this is a piece of Great Refusal issuing a protest 'against that which is' through the deployment of 'fantasy and imagination'.

The Verdict: Negation or Beautification

In combination, surplus repression, happy consciousness, repressive desublimation, repressive tolerance and Great Refusal constitute vital elements of the overall concept of one-dimensionality and its potential elimination. Surplus repression keeps people disciplined and tied to the machine; happy consciousness sees them believe that machine is worth it; repressive desublimation reinforces the delusion by using culture to propagate and celebrate the views of the dominant; repressive tolerance provides the illusion people can escape from it at any time, but Great Refusal is the actual means through which oppression can be destroyed. By scrutinising the film sample against these precise themes in chapter six, by engaging in a piece of praxis in chapter seven aiming to illuminate the potential for multidimensional thinking in education movie-making, and by concluding in chapter eight, the remainder of this thesis addresses whether or not the films are part of culture's creation and perpetuation of one-dimensional thinking, whether they challenge it, or indeed whether the methodological concept itself is in need of revision or removal.

The analysis will start from a standpoint that it remains possible that such recent cultural items *can* encourage critical thinking. Marcuse himself, despite fearing repressive desublimation's effect on culture's ability to refuse, remained hopeful of culture's facility to challenge the status quo. Great art contained 'the rationality of negation' he said, arguing culture could play a key role in creating a 'new sensibility' that saw a dialectical 'negation of the entire Establishment', where poverty and toil were replaced by play, sensuousness, calm and beauty (Marcuse, 2002, p.66; Marcuse, 1969b, p.23). In such a world, culture would be freed from subservience to the state, again becoming the piercing eye, ending 'the commercial unification of business and beauty, exploitation and pleasure'

(Marcuse, 2002, p.26). However, without negation, culture always risked becoming affirmative, serving purely to 'beautify and justify the established order' (*ibid*, pp.92/114-115).

Marcuse also passionately believed in another form of challenge to the one-dimensional state, championing and utilising it throughout his life – the dialectic. For Marcuse, like other Frankfurt School scholars, to write and think dialectically *was* to engage in multidimensional, critical thinking – to do this was to automatically deny the one-dimensional society and to confront the attempts of the dominant to impose their viewpoints on the people. This thesis also adopts dialectical writing and the next section defines and outlines the aims of the dialectic method.

4.3 FACE/OFF: THE DIALECTIC

The Frankfurt School and dialectics are so interwoven it is arguably impossible to have one without the other: in a real sense the critical theory of the Frankfurt School *was* dialectics. Marcuse never used any other method, nor ever wavered from championing it as the most appropriate tool to analyse the world (Kellner, 1984, p.366). Employing dialectics is thus a methodologically consistent tool in any Marcusean analysis.

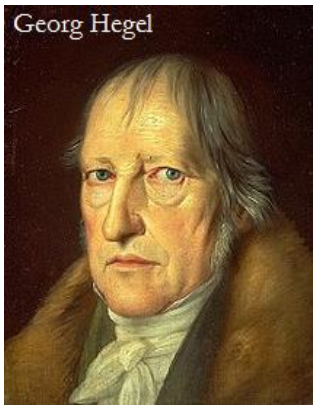
Put most simply, for Marcuse, dialectics was critical writing and thinking that sought to look beyond things 'existence' - the things they purport to be - and instead to examine their 'essence', the things they actually are (Marcuse, 2007, p.66). Dialectics does this by uncovering the hidden codes and messages that have been smuggled into their forms and distorted from view - it peels back the layers until the beating heart is revealed. This therefore makes dialectics an ideal methodological tool through which to examines films. Movies, through multifarious narrative devices, are designed to tell stories, to adopt positions and to persuade audiences to accept their perspectives – without critical, dialectical, thinking, audiences stand in danger of consuming these as a fait accompli, adopting films' views as their own. In a Marcusean sense, without dialectical thinking the spread of one-dimensionality is arguably inevitable.

By using the dialectical method, this thesis aims to uncover what may lie behind the stories, positions and perspectives of recent education movies. The dialectic of chapter six is therefore not merely appropriate in terms of critically appraising the motivations and messages of the films, but in itself is also an act of multidimensional thinking.

This section consequently seeks to arrive at a more in-depth understanding of dialectics. It will achieve this by first examining the historical and methodological context of dialectics. Understanding this context is important because Marcuse did not 'invent' dialectics - the method has connections with philosophical approaches dating back to the classical period. To demonstrate a rigorous methodological insight into dialectics, it is necessary to briefly outline its contextual underpinnings. However, there is a specific Marcusean understanding of dialectics, so the second half of this section examines what Marcuse himself believed dialectics should accomplish. It ends by providing a brief summary of the key dialectical ideas this thesis utilises.

The Descendants: Idealist, Marxist and Frankfurt School Dialectics

Dialectics are rooted in Ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Socrates and Plato. The former, famously through 'Socratic Dialogue', challenged truth claims through critical analysis; the latter used it in written forms to provide an 'awakening insight into truth' (Fink, 2012, pp.3/13; González, 1998, p.129). The dialectics of Marcuse and the Frankfurt School however, are more grounded in German Idealism. Kant developed a dialectical schema of transcendental knowledge, with questions examined through the mind via reason, as opposed to empiricists who began with objective and scientific facts (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p.43; Strydom, 2011, pp.18-19). Hegel rejected Kantian dialectics as too concerned with phenomenological approaches and too divorced from issues of historical context – for Hegel, the *totality* of historical reality had to be understood (Farr, 2008, p.235; Morrow & Brown, 1994, p.94). This totality existed as limitless contradictions, their resolution creating new realities and new conflicts (*ibid*). Hegel's endless dialectic lead to a state of unconditional understanding – the 'Absolute Spirit' (Hegel, 1991, p.15).



Famously, this process has seen Hegelian dialectics labelled as thesis-antithesis-synthesis. However, Hegel only used the term once - to reproach Kant for its use (Müller, 1958). Nevertheless, Hegel's dialectics generally do consist of three parts: the 'moment of understanding', the 'negatively rational moment' and the 'speculative' or 'positively rational moment' (Hegel, 1991, pp.79-81). The first sees concepts in their stable state, the second challenges this and the third reaches resolution, becoming the new understanding. In theorising the process, Hegel placed emphasis on *aufheben,* a German word with a double-meaning of rescinding *and* preserving at the same time, e.g. understanding is changed, but its new form still contains its origin (Kellner, 1984, p.73).

Although once a 'Young Hegelian', Marx believed Hegelian dialectics were flawed (Steadman, 2016, p.80). Marx thought Hegel was too interested in abstract ideas and dialectics must be concerned with 'the material world' (Marx, 1873). This spoke to two key differences: first, whereas Hegel saw the mind and logic driving historical change, Marx believed the socio-economic material base of society took primacy; secondly Hegelian dialectics tended to interpret the past, whereas Marx's analysis of social contradictions sought to outline what future this materialist base might create (Kellner, 1994, p.251). These meant Marx thought Hegelian dialectics were famously 'standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again' (Marx, 1873). Marxist dialectics

recognised the existing state, but sought to analyse 'the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up…and (dialectics) is in its essence critical and revolutionary' (*ibid*). For Marx, the central materialist analysis was the dialectic of class struggle, with the final result being revolution (Marx, 1859). This reinterpretation of dialectics is known as historical materialism.

In a move the Frankfurt School and Marcuse later strongly opposed, interpretations of Marxism after its author's death, led by Engels, 'became obsessed' with dialectically reconciling Marxism to positivist conceptions of scientifically verifiable claims held to empirical standards (Engels, 1883; Kellner, 1984, pp.58-59). Instead of interpretivist perspectives of social and historical development, Engels' historical materialism saw human civilisation inevitably evolving into civilisation's final phase - communism (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p.95). Gradually, including revisions by Lenin and Stalin, historical materialism congealed into a set of fixed rules, an uncompromising method with increasingly reductionist outcomes adhering to orthodox Marxist perspectives (Bronner, 2013a, p.33; Kellner, 1990, p.16). This dogma became omnipresent following publication of Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, which saw dialectical materialism, or 'diamat', become the state doctrine of the USSR. Any attempt to shift from the rigid theoretical framework, such as Lukács' criticism of scientific Marxism, *History and Class Consciousness*, was condemned and grovelling apologies - or worse fates – extracted. (Lukács, 1971; Bronner, 2011, p.21).[56]

Initially, the Frankfurt School aligned itself to scientific perspectives of Marxism, adopting dialectical approaches accordingly (Jefferies, 2016, p.73). This resulted in 'exasperating arguments' over 'correct' interpretation (Jay, 1996, p.12). Horkheimer however, shifted the Institute away from all scientific and positivist approaches, advocating dialectical methods denying the existence of 'neutral facts', believing these only justified, rather than challenged the world (Horkheimer, 1931; Jefferies, 2016, p.145). Implicitly rejecting diamat, Horkheimer argued dialectics 'did not, indeed could not, pretend to have discovered ontological first principles…it remained willing to operate in a perpetual state of suspended judgement' (Jay, 1996, p.54). This meant the Institute's dialectics, including Marcuse, began to depart from reductionist perspectives analysing everything through 'simple exercises in decoding class references' (Horkheimer 1972, p.242; Jay, 1996, p.178).

Inspired by Lukács, who believed society must be analysed as 'a contradictory totality', Horkheimer shifted the Institute towards Hegelian perspectives of dialectics (Held, 1980, p.201; Morrow &

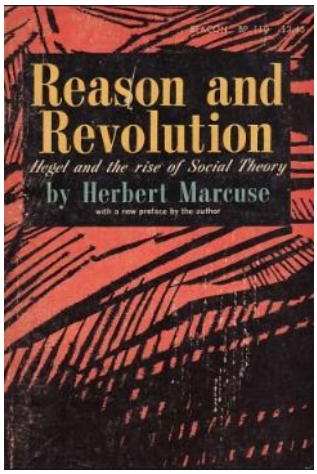
[56] The Institute maintained a 'discrete silence' on the USSR and Stalinist dialectics until Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism*, the first time a Frankfurt School scholar went public in criticism (Kellner, 1984, p.198). Signposting his preference for Hegelianism, Marcuse rejected the Soviet-scientific approach as a 'petrification of the dialectic' and unhistorical, resulting in the dialectic becoming a codification of ideology to be interpreted by a communist party purporting to be the only repository of truth (Marcuse, 1958, pp.129-130).

Brown, 1994, p.95; Jay, 1996, p.294). However, the Institute's return was not unconditional, as they believed Hegelian dialectics contained two flaws. First, Hegel's method offered an exploration of how history unfolded without analysing how the dominant controlled and oppressed the powerless; secondly, the last 'moment' of Hegelian dialectics, the 'positively rational moment', was problematically exactly that – *positive*; 'dialectics,' argued Horkheimer, 'is not identical with development' (Jefferies, 2016, p.101; Horkheimer in Arato & Gebhardt, 1978, p.107). Adorno was particularly scathing of attempts to articulate positive conclusions to dialectics, devoting an entire treatise to the subject – *Negative Dialectics* (Stirk, 2005, p.47; Held, 1980, p.201). Adorno believed dialectics must examine ideological factors behind historical processes to negatively reveal how 'the most powerful interests realise themselves' (Adorno, 1967 pp.30).

The Fighter: Marcusean Dialectics – the Challenge to One-Dimensionality

The previous discussion outlined the theoretical background to Marcusean dialectics and helps this thesis to vitally acknowledge how Marcuse's method was shaped by what had come before. To this regard, like Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse also rejected positive dimensions to dialectics and strongly subscribed to the idea of negation (Kellner, 1984, p.73; Jefferies, 2016, p.147). This is a methodological position the dialectic of chapter six also adopts – although this thesis must not discount the possibility of positive in education movies, it starts from a position that without negation, the power of film to act as propaganda becomes a live threat.

Like his colleagues, Marcuse also didn't agree with Hegel that history was a 'mere succession of events' and he reconceptualised Hegel's dialectics through Marxist approaches analysing contemporary social antagonisms (Raulet, 2004, p.115; Kellner, 1994, p.251). However, Marcuse didn't believe that Marx offered an alternative to Hegel, merely assimilatory correctives taking into account what the latter couldn't yet know – capitalism's contradictions were becoming clearer (Marcuse, 2007, p.70). In fact, far from rejecting him, Marcuse's dialectics are 'rooted' in Hegel's emphasis on totality, history and uncovering essence behind existence (Farr, 2008, p.235; Kellner, 1984, p.141; Kellner, 2002, p.xxviii). This merging of Hegelian and Marxist thinking was Marcuse's most significant contribution to dialectics and his studies, especially *One Dimensional Man*, are sustained attempts to bring this assimilation to fruition (Kellner, 2002, pp.xiii-xiv; Kellner, 1994, p.251; Carneiro, 2016, p.588). This is an approach chapter six also adopts by not just analysing the films, but also through scrutinising the film industry, society and wider links of both to ideology.



The clearest exploration of Marcuse's 'deep commitment' to Hegelian/Marxist dialectics comes in the preface to the 1960 edition of *Reason and Revolution*, which outlined the liberative goals Marcuse believed were central to his dialectical method (Kellner, 1984, p.141; Davis, 2004, p.47). Hegel, he argued, believed the totality of everything had to be understood as 'a life or death struggle' with the conditions of their existence (Marcuse, 2007, p.65). Marcuse argued dialectical thinking therefore had to begin with Hegel's belief that 'the world is unfree; that is to say, man and nature exist in conditions of alienation, exist "other than they are"' (*ibid*, p.66). Dialectics were therefore not the process setting people free, but the method that revealed how they weren't - any attempt to prevent people thinking dialectically was not just faulty, but also immoral, because it reinforced the status quo and kept people 'enslaved to the prevailing state of affairs' (*ibid*, pp.70-71).

For Marcuse, dialectics meant comprehending how 'things really are', not what they profess to be (*ibid*, p.66; Kellner, 2002, p.xxxiv). Marcuse believed dialectics must challenge conformist logic and expose the contradictions of 'facts' and 'common sense' in all their 'internal inadequacy' in order to demonstrate that 'unfreedom is so much at the core of things' (Marcuse, 2007, pp.64/66). Indeed, Marcusean dialectics go further than simple negation – dialectics must be a weapon of mass destruction, exposing *and* destroying injustice before it can wreak more mutilation (*ibid*, p.69). Any Marcusean analysis, including that of education movies, therefore needs to start from the standpoint that through exposure, the survival of the essence of any product of advanced capitalist societies should be far from guaranteed.

Marcuse argued that Hegel thought a world of complete freedom could never be achieved, thus dialectics could never achieve its ultimate objective (Marcuse, 2007, p.66). Marcuse's unique contribution to dialectics was to go even further, arguing that under advanced industrial societies thought had stopped even attempting to achieve freedom – one-dimensional thinking had replaced dialectical thinking.[57] In *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse warned that dialectical thinking was becoming 'alien to the whole established universe of discourse and action' because capitalist

[57] Marcuse's concern with dialectical 'dimensions' pre-dated his most famous work by decades. His 1932 analysis of Hegelian ontology explored the 'two-dimensionality' of Hegel's distinction between 'essence' and 'appearance' (Marcuse, 1987, pp.83-84). A 1936 essay used the term 'one dimensional' to denounce the 'world of facts' as exemplifying thinking preventing 'metaphysical or critical transcendence' (Marcuse, 2009, p.47). Later, Hegelian 'dimensions' were given a Marxist retouch in *Reason and Revolution*; the first dimension being the complex social relationships creating an unfree world, the second its contradictory elements that make their revolutionary transformation possible (Marcuse, 1960, pp.295-296).

societies seem financially and technologically advanced enough 'to absorb all alternatives' (Marcuse, 2007, p.64). In *One Dimensional Man* however, Marcuse argued dialectical thinking was now almost entirely eliminated.

Marcuse's response to this crisis was a reassertion of 'the power of the negative' - dialectic thinking - only this could 'name the things that are absent' in order to reveal the ideological frameworks governing the world and defeat one-dimensional thinking (Marcuse, 2002, p.70-71). Only 'the freedom of negative thinking' could free peoples' consciousness in order to begin 'the struggle against the established society' (*ibid*, p.227). The end of capitalism only occurs if people wake-up, until such time 'history relapses into the darkness' (*ibid*). For Marcuse, the dialectic was both revolution and the means of destroying the one-dimensional society (Kellner, 1984, p.74).

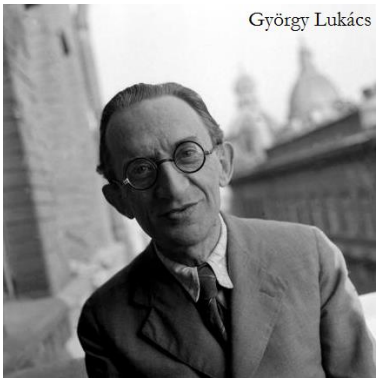
Summary

It is methodologically helpful to finish this section by briefly summarising the main perspectives and aims of Marcusean dialectics that the dialectical analysis in chapter six seeks to utilise:

1. Through the adoption of sustained critical writing the dialectic aims to play its own part in challenging one-dimensional thinking.
2. Like Marcuse, the dialectic in this thesis is governed by the 'power of the negative'. Negativity not in an emotional sense, but in the power of negation to reject the unthinking adoption of films' intended messages at face value.
3. The dialectic in chapter six examines the films in their Hegelian totality in order to uncover their true essence. This specifically means a consideration of not only the film industry that produced them, but also the society in which that industry operates. A central part of this considers the ideological perspectives that are revealed by a dialectical examination of the films.
4. Finally, by revealing this totality, the dialectic in this thesis aims to further the cause of freedom by revealing the chains that bind people's thoughts to the educational status quo, allowing them to break free from their enslavement.

Nevertheless, these aims are not pursued in ignorance of the potential limitations of Marcuse specifically, or the Frankfurt School more generally, including the dialectical methods they pursued. Recognition of those limitations is therefore the subject of the final section of this chapter: recognising criticisms of the critical method ensures this thesis avoids both methodological flaws and also the hazards into which Frankfurt School scholars have been accused of falling.

4.4 VICE: CONSIDERING METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS



In 1962 Lukács claimed Frankfurt School scholars had 'taken up residence in the "Grand Hotel Abyss"….a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity. And the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainments, can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered' (Lukács, 1971, p.22). Although their writing was theoretically intricate, ultimately they enjoyed a 'nihilistically detached yet aesthetically pleasurable life without mounting any real challenges to the miseries of the real world' (Gunderson, 2015, p.29).

The charge of extreme pessimism is common and arguably the most significant criticism directed towards Frankfurt School scholars – a devotion to negative dialectics was potentially epistemologically gloomy to begin with, but Soviet Marxism's failure and the 'crushing disappointment' of revolution's non-existence in the west saw the Frankfurt School become obsessed by hopelessness (Gunderson, 2015, p.29; Swingewood, 2000, p.132; Held, 1980, p.364-346). The lack of alternative provided a theoretical cul-de-sac – what was the point of critical theory if all it did was criticise without offering escape? (Bronner, 2011, p.112) In a withering synthesis of this argument, one scholar claims the planned follow-up to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, on positive dialectical doctrines, never happened as its authors 'no longer had anything positive to say' (Bronner, 2013b, p.108).

Marcuse did not escape criticism. *One Dimensional Man* appeared to 'celebrate pessimism' and in considering the book Fromm argued 'one can do a good deal of damage by persuading others that the most progressive and radical theory has no better advice to give than to be proud of one's hopelessness' (Jay, 1996, p.217; Fromm, 1992, p.129). However, charges of endless gloom arguably miss the point: critical theory *must* analyse the darkness 'in order to bring these conditions and events to consciousness' (Gunderson, 2015, p.32). From this perspective, even Adorno's 'melancholy science' is a positive call for an end to totalitarian thinking (Adorno, 2005, p.15; Jefferies, 2016, p.325). More radically, seen through the lens of critical theory itself, attacks on criticism are arguably further evidence of 'the absorption of critique by the system' (Carneiro, 2016, p.583; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, p.506).

However, because of his utopian optimism and his identification with the protests of the 1960s and 1970s, Marcuse can arguably be excluded from the blanket criticism. His work has been argued as a call to action involving 'an affirmation of thinking and of life and a hopefulness that knows also that hopefulness without negation – an awareness of what must be negated and the risks of that task – is naïve' (Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxxiv, Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, p.12; Gunderson, 2015, p.30; Böhm & Jones, 2009, p.xiv). Even Habermas, whose work has been framed as partially an attempt to reclaim critical theory from the dead-end of 'blackness', has defended Marcusean negative dialectics in this vein, arguing that in contrast to others, Marcuse's work was centred more on enjoyment of life rather than struggle for existence: 'with him negative thinking retained the dialectical trust in determinate negation, in the disclosure of positive alternatives' (Gunderson, 2015, p.30; Habermas, 1980, p.2-3).

If anything, the charge against Marcuse is he slipped into the opposite direction, where people 'wanted concrete guidance, Marcuse provided only utopian speculation along with warnings about revolutionary posturing' (Stirk, 2005, p.27). Orthodox Marxists dismissed his utopian thinking as anti-Marxist and even sympathetic scholars are critical of his 'magic remedies' (Jefferies, 2016 p.323; Bronner, 2013a, p.341). *An Essay on Liberation* arguably fell into this trap in 1969 by overstating the radical potential of the counterculture struggles; however, not only did *Counterrevolution and Revolt* offer a more cautious note on the protests, but Marcuse denied they were part of a utopian imaginary anyway – the struggles were very real (Kellner, 1984, p.285; Raulet, 2004, p.112; Marcuse 1969b, p.8).

Furthermore, it can be asked whether Marcuse's 'resolutely utopian' traits are actually a significant problem (Kellner, 1984, p.156). Alongside dialectics, Marcuse justified utopian thinking as one of the two great weapons against the status quo and this 'fantastical sense of hope that the future could be better than the past or present' sets him apart from other Frankfurt School scholars (Marcuse, 2009, p.xxiv; Feenberg & Leiss, 2007, p.xxiii). His work also avoided a 'naïve' utopianism advocating easy answers - utopian thinking was part of the difficult job of criticism - understanding alternatives meant refusing to accept oppression (Böhm & Jones, 2009, p.xiv).

A key feature of Marcuse's theoretical contribution, his call for action, alternative and praxis has also been questioned; the most serious aspect being his complex relationship with democracy, which he called 'the most efficient system of domination' (Marcuse, 2002, p.56). 'If democracy means self-government of free people, with justice for all,' Marcuse argued, 'then the realization of

democracy would presuppose abolition of the existing pseudo-democracy' (Marcuse, 1969b, p.47). There is no defence of democracy in *any* of Marcuse's output, instead either ambivalence or outright rejection for fear it would ideologically evolve into fascism (Kellner, 1994, p.255; Whitfield, 2014, p.105). The "democracy problem" is most obviously present in the 'carelessly formulated' arguments of *Repressive Tolerance* which appeared to condone both violence and censorship – arguments that look even more uncomfortable given the slightly 'apologetic features' of Marcuse's critique of the USSR in *Soviet Marxism* - opinions playing into the hands of those wishing to paint Marcuse as a dangerous radical (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, p.24; Stirk, 2005, p.27; Kellner, 1984, pp.227/283).

In pressing for acts of Great Refusal against the capitalist superstructure, it is therefore legitimate to ask what forms Marcuse wanted refusals to take and what their end game should be. For some, this isn't helped by his definition of Great Refusal being 'vague and insubstantial' and 'cynicism masquerading as a super-radical theory' (Jay, 1996, p.296; Fromm, 1992, p.129). The Great Refusal has been reconceptualised as Munch's *The Scream* and in this light is a compelling, but perhaps rather empty shout of frustration rather than organised blueprint (Holloway, 2002, p.69). Even sympathetic critical scholars such as Douglas Kellner, the world's leading authority on Marcuse and editor of the aforementioned six-volume collection of his work, criticises the Great Refusal and his work more generally as lacking detail and 'particularity' (Kellner, 2004b, p.11; Kellner, 1984, p.367).

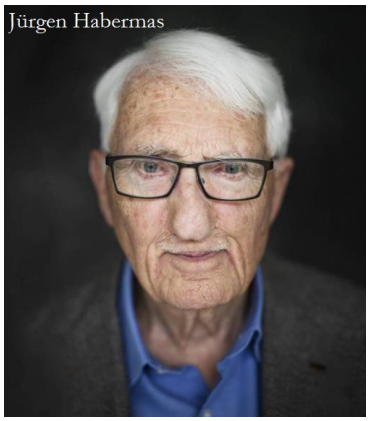
Nevertheless, the need to build organisational capacity to the Great Refusal was something Marcuse discussed in later writings and criticisms of its nebulousness are not necessarily reasons to prevent analysis of potential examples (Marcuse, 1972, p.36; Funke et al, 2017, pp.15-16). True, a definitive list of what counts as Great Refusal may make this easier, but Marcuse arguably did provide an outline – his exhaustive critique of the authoritarian and oppressive nature of capitalism. Part of that outline, and directly relevant here, is his consistent belief that culture plays a vital part of the Great Refusal (Marcuse, 1966, p.171; Marcuse, 2002, p.66; Marcuse, 1969b, p.36).

Marcuse's attitude to what kinds of culture could 'count' as Great Refusal has also come under scrutiny. Like his colleagues, Marcuse was frequently hostile to popular culture and many scholars regard his privileging of 'high culture' problematic and elitist (Kellner, 2003, p.29; Davis, 2004, p.50; Giroux, 2001a, p.125; Bernstein in Adorno, 2001, p.20). Marcuse was arguably too quick to dismiss mass cultural items and failed to recognise some *can* offer radical challenge to systems of oppressions (Bronner, 2011, pp.111-113; Kellner, 2003, p.29). For others, this limits Marcuse's

analysis of capitalism more generally, arguing he disliked it not due to the 'suffering it imposes on some oppressed group but because it appears to fail to satisfy the neurasthenic sensibilities of a cultural elite' (Geuss, 1981, p.82). Others reject an analysis of the public as 'dupes', manipulated by the culture industry: TS Eliot had his 'Hollow Men', Marcuse had his 'One Dimensional Men', both symbolic of their flawed disdain for the stupidity of humanity (McLaren & Leonardo, 2001, p.263; Berman, 1983, p.28-29).

However, despite obvious preferences for 'high culture', Marcuse not only made it clear this could become as 'affirmative' of capitalism as more popular culture, but that both modern art and popular culture *could* demonstrate 'refusal' qualities (Marcuse, 2009; Marcuse, 1972).[58] Furthermore, unlike 'puritanical' commentators such as Aldous Huxley, Marcuse was not critical of popular culture from reactionary standpoints, but because its hijacking by the system meant the bonds of repression were becoming tighter (Jay, 1996, pp.215-216).

Any difficulty in pinning down Marcuse's attitude to culture is an example of another common critique – inconsistency (Kellner, 1984, p.360; Zilbersheid, 2008; Farr, 2009, p.15). The most obvious example is his dramatic shifts from optimism to pessimism and back again between *Eros and Civilization*, *One Dimensional Man* and *An Essay on Liberation*, including different interpretations of oppression and liberation (Whitfield, 2014, p.106). Marcuse has been robustly defended on this however, not just because these criticisms ignore changing historical contexts, but also because they are a methodological misreading of dialectics itself, which by its nature examines social reality in all its forms and from a multitude of approaches (Farr, 2008, p.234; Kellner, 1984, p.364).



The final consistent criticism of Marcuse is one levelled at other Frankfurt School scholars – the dialectical paradox. Awkwardly, a scholar adept at pointing this out was one of Horkheimer's successors as Director of the Institute, Jürgen Habermas, who criticised his former colleagues for engaging in the dialectical 'performative contradiction' of declaring critical thinking dead through relentless critical thinking (Habermas, 1987, p.119). In exactly this regard, the theological philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre challenged *One Dimensional Man*'s central premise: 'if its thesis were true we would have to ask how

[58] For example, *in Counterrevolution and Revolt* Marcuse praised the 'radical songs of protest', the poems of Allan Ginsberg and the 'lyrics and music' of Bob Dylan (Marcuse, 1972, pp.116-p.117).

the book came to be written and we would certainly have to enquire whether it would find any readers' (MacIntyre, 1970, p.62). This seems a misreading of Marcuse however, who does not say one-dimensionality has become the full Hegelian totality, merely we should be vigilant against the strong drift in society towards this epistemological concept (Kellner, 2002, p.xxvi).

Nevertheless, Habermas wonders how Marcuse manages to use reason to criticise reason – an idea that 'cannot consistently account for its own possibility' (Habermas, 1980, p.10). Habermas has distanced himself from Marcuse and his dialectical cousins, arguing the exit from the 'total system of delusion' is to not see all reason as evil with 'insight achieved only in flashes by isolated individuals' (Habermas, 1992, p.82). Habermas himself, however, has been criticised for the 'normative despair' of closing-down critical spaces and he arguably misconstrues Marcuse anyway, whose attitude towards reason was not one of total hostility, seeing it as 'the highest potentiality of man and existence' (Marasco, 2015, pp.7-8; Giroux, 2001a, p.12; Marcuse, 2009, p.100). Just as Marx saw technology as the problem *and* the solution, Marcuse shared a similar relationship with reason: *vernunft* (critical reason) was the way out of *verstand* (instrumental reason) (Marcuse, 1960, pp.43-44). It is worth giving Marcuse the final word here in explaining his dialectical use of reason, one arguably summarising his theoretical and methodological contribution:

> It may even be justifiable, logically as well as historically, to define Reason in terms which include slavery, the Inquisition, child labour, concentration camps, gas chambers, and nuclear preparedness...If so, the idea of Reason itself is at stake; it reveals itself as a part rather than as the whole. This does not mean that Reason abdicates its claim to confront reality with the truth about reality. On the contrary when Marxian theory takes shape as a critique of Hegel's philosophy, it does so in the name of Reason...by driving Reason itself to recognise the extent to which it is still unreasonable, blind, the victim of unmastered forces. Reason, as the developing and applied knowledge of man – as "free thought" – was instrumental in creating the world we live in. It was instrumental in sustaining injustice, toil, and suffering. But Reason, and Reason alone, contains its own corrective (Marcuse, 2007, p.69).

In the one-dimensional society, reason was used to justify the oppressive status quo: through dialectics, reason could be reclaimed to bring back the multidimensional world.

Fight Club: Addressing the Marcusean Challenge in the Remainder of the Thesis

Herbert Marcuse had an unusual obsession – hippos (Jefferies, 2016, p.312). Visitors to his office would be amazed to see how this infamous revolutionary had surrounded himself by his collection of stuffed toys of the semiaquatic animal and in his spare time he would often visit the real things at the San Diego zoo (Juutilainen, 1996; Fokas, 2007). His interest stemmed from his belief that

hippos represented that the impossible *was* possible and in this they symbolise a distinctive feature of Marcusean critical theory - his determination to never give up hope that a better world could be realised through the power of thinking critically (Juutilainen, 1996). Forty years after his death, this need for a 'stronghold of hope' has arguably never been greater (Gunderson, 2015, p.35). Another key feature of Marcusean theory was his radical, praxis-orientated belief in the emancipatory possibilities of dialectical thinking and the totalitarian consequences of its absence. Marcuse never stopped challenging for a world where dialectical tools reveal the difference between what ought to be and what is, to prevent life where the 'whole and the parts' are the same (Marcuse, 2007, p.64; Funke et al, 2017, p.12).

Using the Marcusean tools identified in this chapter, the remainder of this thesis seeks to take Marcuse up on that challenge. Marcuse and the Frankfurt School's supradisciplinary concern with how the dominant construct and maintain their power, including the fundamental role of the shaping and taming of culture, makes their critical theory a justifiable philosophical framework for this thesis and the analysis it contains (Kellner, 1990, p.20). Given their consistent and shared interest in mass cultural forms and the culture industry more widely, the use of critical theory is particularly justified in exploring ten products of that industry. However, understanding the flaws identified in the final section provides a cautionary opportunity to avoid falling into the traps in which Marcuse and colleagues arguably found themselves. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of Marcuse and critical theory don't negate the use of these as tools through which to examine *anything* that is part of the construction of capitalist society.

In his final scene in *Hail Caesar!*, the fictional Herbert Marcuse offers Baird Whitlock some insight on culture, capitalism and revolution: 'our understanding of the true workings of history gives us access to the levers of power' he says. 'Your studio, for instance, is a pure instrument of capitalism. As such it expresses the contradictions of capitalism and can be enlisted to finance its own destruction' (Coen & Coen, 2016). If this wasn't contained for our amusement within a comedy, its message deliberately negated through its humourous belittlement, this might have some real bite; the real Marcuse was just as clear, but a lot more serious, arguing movies were one of the ways 'the ruled strata can be educated to diversion and substitute gratification…in authoritarian states sadistic terror against enemies of the regime has found unforeseen modes of organised discharge' (Marcuse, 2009, p.138). It seems appropriate to finish with Marcuse in a dialectic with himself; it will be for the rest of this thesis to decide whether the real Marcuse was right.

CHAPTER 5

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT: SELECTION AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE FILM SAMPLE

A vital precursor to the analysis in the remainder of the thesis is to first identify and justify the selection of movies that will be scrutinised. This brief chapter therefore provides an outline of the objective process used to define the film sample.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison identify three factors by which research 'stands or falls': methodology, instrumentation and 'sampling strategy' (Cohen et al, 2013, p.143). Similarly, Punch argues sampling is as important to qualitative research as quantitative research, and Savin-Baden and Major say it requires 'deep thought, planning and reflection' (Punch, 2009, p.162; Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.314). To achieve this rigour, Newby argues there must be a 'framework of sampling': 'target population' (all potential data sources), 'sampling frame' (selection criteria) and the sample itself (Newby, 2010, pp.231-233).

Applying Newby's framework, a 'total population' was identified by noting all films meeting the following self-imposed definition:

'A film that offers a commentary on schools, teachers and/or teaching as a central part of its narrative device'

This definition means a large number of films *based* in schools, but not necessarily *about* schools, were excluded, such as the Harry Potter films. Following Cohen, Manion and Morrison's advice to start this process early, a long-list of films meeting this definition was immediately identified, resulting in a target population of ninety-one films (Cohen et al, 2013; p.143; Appendix 1).

Ten was chosen as an appropriate sample size - small enough to make in-depth analysis possible, but large enough to make general and plausible arguments (Cohen et al, 2013, pp.161-162). To arrive at the final sample, 'sampling frame' criteria were applied. Two overall approaches to criteria sampling have been identified: probability and non-probability (Cohen et al, 2013, p.143; Newby, 2010, p.233). The former is grounded in quantitative research with large sample sizes and is therefore inappropriate here. Researchers identify a number of non-probability approaches, many by the same name, or near-identical but differently titled:

Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28	Hayes, 2000, p.18	Newby, 2010, p.255	Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013, pp.155-161	Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p.315
Snowball or chain	-	Snowball	Snowball	
Opportunistic	Opportunity	-	-	Opportunistic
-	Quota	Quota	Quota	-

Confirming/ disconfirming	-	-	-	Confirming/ disconfirming
Random Purposeful	Random	Self-selecting	Volunteer	-
Stratified purposeful	Stratified	Case Study	-	Unique case
Comprehensive or criterion	-	-	-	Comprehensive
Politically important	-	-	-	-
Homogenous	-	-	Purposive	Homogenous
Maximum variation	-	-	-	Maximum variation
Intensity	-	-	-	Intense case
Extreme or deviant case	-	-	Dimensional	Extreme case
Typical case	-	-	-	Typical case
Critical case	-	-	-	Critical case
Theory based	-	-	Theoretical	Theoretical or concept
Combination	-	-	-	-
-	-	Specialist	-	Reputational case

Examining extended definitions of these, an approach combining homogenous and critical-case sampling was adopted. Homogenous sampling 'focuses, reduces, simplifies', by selecting a small group with 'similar and defining' characteristics (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.315). Critical case sampling is the process that selects a particularly chosen number of cases that allow the researcher to best make generalisable, but logical deductions allowing for 'maximum application of information to other cases' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.28). The thesis has chosen them in combination because critical case sampling enables the opportunity for a cohesive, homogenous sample to illustrate phenomena 'dramatically', which is methodologically in keeping with the purpose of dialectical writing aiming to expose alternative thinking with clarity and purpose. However, to provide objective rigour in sample selection and to avoid confirmation bias, detailed below are clear criteria of homogeneity which have been applied in identifying the final sample.

To arrive at the sample, the target population was reduced via a 'sampling frame' of type, country, release date and reception (Newby, 2010, p.232). Type simply means 'feature films' -

excluding documentaries on consistency and comparability grounds. Applying the 'focuses, reduces, simplifies' maxim, 'country' was defined by only including British or American films - exploring multifaceted societal and educational issues in more than two countries is unnecessarily complex, but given similarities in the British and American social and educational systems, an analysis of these two countries is justifiable. 34% of the long-listed films are British, a percentage maintained in the final sample by including three British films.

Regarding release date, the literature review identified a significant gap in the field concerning analysis of films since the 1990s. It is therefore justifiable to examine far more recent movies to analyse whether the literature is now out of step with recent depictions of education or whether the issues identified in earlier films either persist or perhaps have evolved into a new phase. The third criterion was therefore only to include films from the past fifteen years.

For the final criterion, reception, only films making a 'cultural impact' were included. Defining 'cultural impact' was achieved through three variables:

1. *Critical reception* – 'fresh' or better on Rotten Tomatoes *and* 'generally favourable' or better on Metacritic.[59]
2. *Audience reception* – 6.5 out of 10 or above on IMDb.[60]
3. *Revenue* – $50m worldwide gross or one of the top fifty highest grossing films of the year in country of origin.[61]

To be eligible for inclusion, each film had to meet at least one of these variables. Each film did not need to meet the same criteria as this could arbitrarily reject significant films; for example, if all films had to meet a revenue minimum, a large number of films in the long-list with long-term resonance on audiences would be excluded.[62]

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[59] Rotten Tomatoes is a review aggregate website with reviews collated from members of writing guilds or film critic associations. It has 26m unique visitors monthly (alexa.com, 2017). Its colour-coded rating system is:

'Certified Fresh':	70-100% (with eighty plus reviewers, including five from 'Top Critics')
'Fresh':	60-100% (without above)
Rotten':	0-59%

Metacritic is a review aggregate website of movies, games, music and TV critics. Its colour coded rating system is:

'Universal acclaim':	81-100
'Generally favourable':	61-80
'Mixed':	40-60
'Generally unfavourable':	20-39
'Overwhelming dislike':	0-19

[60] An online database of films and TV, which includes a public rating and review system. The rating system is an average mark out of 10, but without labelling or colour coding. IMDb is the 44th most visited website in the world (alexa.com, 2019).

[61] Worldwide cinema receipts and DVD sales, plus yearly ranking by cinema receipts in year of release (the-numbers.com, 2019).

[62] For example, *The Shawshank Redemption* was an initial box-office failure – its first theatrical run losing Columbia Pictures over $10m. However, its cultural impact is enormous – for example, it featured at number four in Empire Magazine's 2018 list of the Top 100 movies of all the time and was at number one in a 2015 YouGov poll of Britain's favourite films (Empire Magazine, 2018; YouGov,2015).

Applying the criteria to the long-list left a short-list of twenty films, from which the following ten were selected. Some hit cultural impact factors very clearly - by financial gross (*Wonder, Bad Teacher*), or critical and/or audience reception (*Half Nelson, Notes on a Scandal, Precious*); others offer an explicit commentary on schools in their plots (*Freedom Writers, Won't Back Down*); others were selected as their inclusion is merited through offering the sample a broad and/or original range of narratives (*The Falling, The History Boys, Coach Carter*). In the table below, green highlighting indicates meeting 'cultural impact' criteria.

Film[63]	Year of Release	Studio	Cultural Impact Criteria[64]				
			Critical Reception		Audience Reception	Revenue	
			Rotten Tomatoes	Metacritic	IMDb	Gross	US/UK Rank[65]
Wonder	2017	Lionsgate	84%	66	8.0	$330m	24th/57th
The Falling	2015	Metrodome	72%	71	5.4	$1m	-/157th
Won't Back Down	2012	20th Century Fox	35%	42	6.5	$7m	152nd/-
Bad Teacher	2011	Columbia	45%	47	5.7	$233m	29th/39th
Precious	2009	Lionsgate	91%	79	7.3	$95m	65th/83rd
Freedom Writers	2007	Paramount	70%	64	7.6	$64m	74th/163rd
Notes on a Scandal	2006	Fox Searchlight	87%	73	7.4	$60m	125th/42nd
Half Nelson	2006	ThinkFilm	90%	85	7.2	$7m	200th/199th
The History Boys	2006	Fox Searchlight	66%	74	6.9	$14m	199th/50th
Coach Carter	2005	Paramount	64%	57	7.3	$77m	36th/96th

All ten films meet the four 'sampling frame' criteria and seven meet at least two of the 'cultural impact' variables - five meet all three. The films generated $888m in revenue, were nominated for twelve Oscars, seven Golden Globes and nine BAFTAs, and have an average rating of 71% on Rotten Tomatoes, 66 on Metacritic, and 6.9 on IMDb.

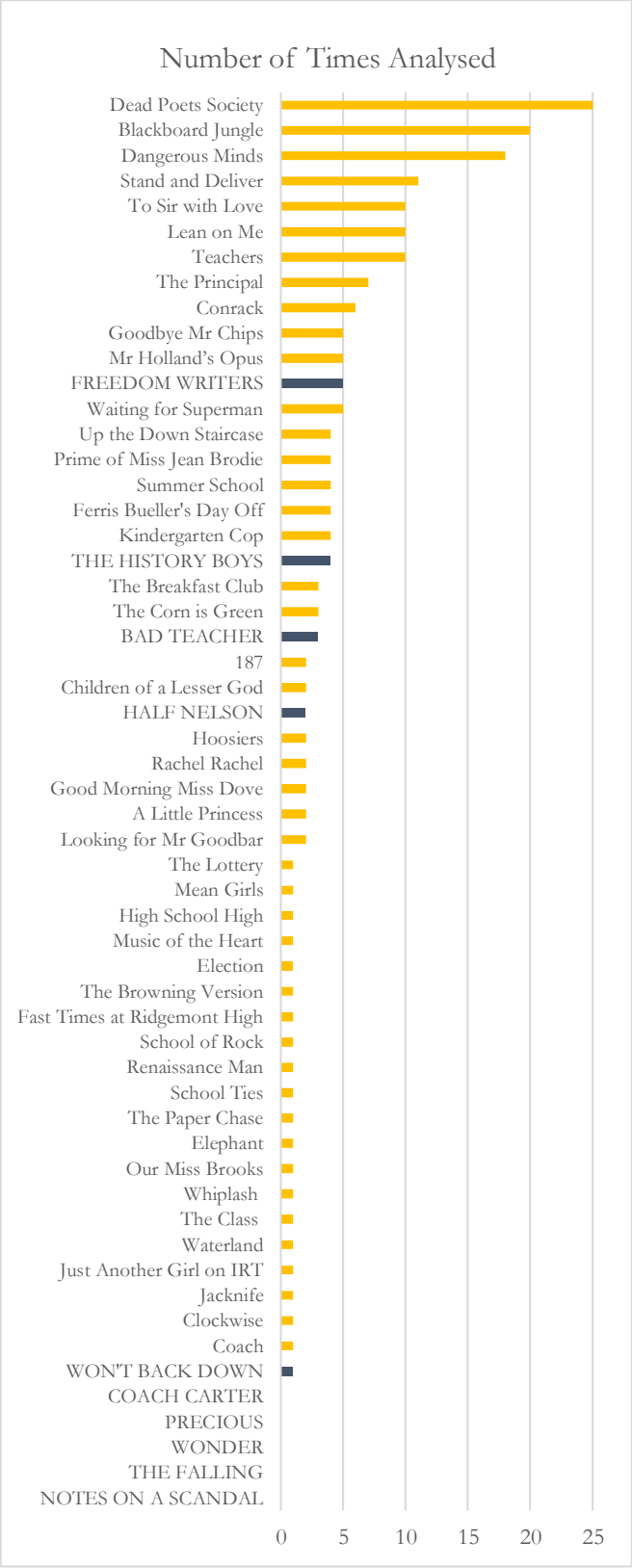
The sample also provides further opportunities for original analysis because it utilises films rarely used previously. Using research identified for potential inclusion in the literature review, the

[63] A synopsis of the plots of these films can be found in Appendix 2.

[64] All figures correct as of May 23rd 2019.

[65] '-' indicates the film was not released in that country.

adjacent chart displays the number of times *any* film featuring on the long-list has previously been analysed. As can be seen, the literature has disproportionately concentrated on a small number of films - the sample does not use any of these. The sample films have only been discussed in fifteen previous pieces of research - five have never been considered at all, providing clear evidence of originality.



Ready Player One: Conclusion

It is important to recognise that despite the rigour of this selection process, any attempt to reduce a large initial sample may include an unavoidable level of subjectivity in the final choice, providing a potential limitation to this study. Nevertheless, in limiting this and in assessing the final film selection, I have considered two evaluative frameworks regarding final samples. First, Miles & Huberman suggest four key questions:

1. Is the sampling relevant to your conceptual frame and research questions?
2. Will the phenomena you are interested in appear? In principle, can they appear?
3. Does your plan enhance generalisability of your findings, either through conceptual power or representativeness?
4. Can believable descriptions and explanations be produced, ones that are true to real life? (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.34)

Secondly, Curtis et al suggest qualitative research samples must be: based on focused criteria; small and intensive; flexible; conceptually driven by the theoretical framework; explicit about the selection criteria; and designed to make analytical generalisations (Curtis et al, 2000, p.1002). The selected sample is able to respond positively to both these frameworks.

CHAPTER 6

THE DIALECTIC OF THE CELLULOID SCHOOL

6.1 TRUE GRIT: PERFORMANCE REGNANT

This dialectic is split into four sections, its structure allowing for critical analysis of the film sample using the Marcusean concepts identified in chapter four. Sections will follow on whether the sample supports how the dominant wish education to be depicted; on how protest is framed; and on how the movies affect attitudes towards education. First, however, the analysis considers the overarching principles of how the films suggest teachers and pupils should live their lives: most particularly, are they governed by surplus repression, where the pleasure principle - the pursuit of leisure and relaxation – is subsumed and dominated by the performance principle, where playing your hard-working part as a cog of the neoliberal-capitalist machine is both inescapable and natural?

Marcuse saw life as a battle between the pleasure and performance principles; in advanced capitalist societies however, the latter was victorious – the result was surplus repression, a system of oppression and needless grind, subjugating the masses. 'Under the rule of the fully developed performance principle,' he argued, '…society emerges as a lasting and expanding system of useful performances' with even the framework of law and order deployed to maintain the primacy of those performances (Marcuse, 1966, p.89). Such societies, which were 'acquisitive and antagonistic…in the process of constant expansion', saw human satisfaction only through their labour – work controlled and dominated by others (*ibid*, p.45). Humans needed to 'submit if they want to live…men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions' and all pleasure had to be 'diverted for socially useful performances in which the individual works for himself only in so far as he works for the apparatus' (*ibid*).

Although Marcuse had not yet formulated his theory of the 'one-dimensional' world when he wrote *Eros and Civilization*, the antecedents of his thinking were clearly present through the labelling of the performance and pleasure principles as 'two different dimensions, characterized by different mental processes and principles' (*ibid*, p.12). To achieve 'a new starting point' for society, where individuals lived free from repressive tools creating 'the mental basis for domination and exploration', Marcuse argued people's lives had to be manoeuvred away from the dimension of work, toil and performance, towards the dimension of pleasure, 'to make life an end-in-itself, to live in joy, a life without fear' (*ibid*, p.xiv). However, it was clear to Marcuse that the lives of the vast majority remained governed by performance; although not yet labelled as 'one-dimensionality', in societies celebrating exertion as the only means of personal fulfilment,

the drift to a one-dimensional society was likely since 'the majority of the people in the affluent society are on the side of that which is - not that which can and ought to be' (*ibid*, p.xxii).

In such a society, this drift to one-dimension is accentuated by 'pleasure' becoming incorporated by performance, examples of the former there only to support the latter through pacifying the masses and dulling their critical awareness: 'a society governed by the performance principle must…learn to forget the claim for timeless and useless gratification' (*ibid*, p.47). With regard to education, the films in the sample support such a view of the world by privileging lives governed by performance over pleasure in three ways: through offering celebratory visions of education ruled by performance; through warnings of what happens when schools and teachers fail to respect performance's primacy; and by depicting threats of what follows when teachers foolishly allow pleasure to take priority over their teaching commitments. In combination, this section will therefore argue that the films reinforce one-dimensional perspectives of societies governed by surplus repression and the primacy of performance over pleasure.

A prime example is *Coach Carter,* based on the true story of a basketball coach returning to his former school in a deprived, gang-ridden part of Richmond, San Francisco, to turn a team of lazy, arrogant, wannabe-gangsters into championship all-stars. Carter is an incredibly strict disciplinarian, insisting on obedience and maximum effort at all times. He also warns his players that for him, academic achievement counts as much as sporting prowess. To keep their places, they must maintain a 2.3 grade point average and attend all their classes.[66] Thanks to his discipline-inducing values and astonishingly demanding practice sessions involving endless drills and thousands of push-ups and suicides, the team win their first sixteen games under his regime, qualifying for the state championships for the first time.[67] However, before the tournament Carter discovers many players have poor attendance and grade records. In response, he implements a 'lockout' by placing chains around the doors of the school gymnasium and cancelling all matches; resulting in significant media attention and uproar in the local area.

A school board meeting is held and despite Carter's threats to resign, it ends the lockout, no matter the players' grades. Carter returns to the gym to collect his things, but finds the chains broken and the doors open. Inside, the team are sat at desks on the court, their heads reverentially bowed in silence, pouring over their books. A succession of players speak, each

[66] American High Schools grade all work against a set of criteria from 0.0-4.0. They are not easily comparable to British assessment systems, but 2.3 is roughly equivalent to what we would describe as C+.
[67] A basketball drill that involves running to each horizontal line on the court in turn, returning to the base line on each occasion.

confirming they are now fully paid-up subscribers to Carter's performance-enhancing methods. The final word goes to part-time gangster Timo Cruz, who has had a fractious relationship with Carter, improved only after he visits Carter's house covered in his drug-dealing cousin's blood, shot dead by rival gangsters. Throughout, Carter cryptically asks Cruz about his 'deepest fear', now Cruz tells him:

> Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us…we were all meant to shine, as children do. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same….sir, I just wanna say thank you. You saved my life (*ibid*).[68]

Once revering those who seek lives on easy-street, Cruz now worships at the feet of the high-priest of hard yards.

Coach Carter: Carter discovers the players studying in the gym

This seems highly inspiring – ability and achievement, even in challenging circumstances, are unlocked by hard work and discipline, instilled by teachers prepared to dedicate the necessary commitment. Yet this initial reading must be challenged. Whilst certainly true that sustained effort and commitment can lead to success, the realities of inequality mean this is no magic pill. Yet other than Carter and his punishing demands, *nothing* in the boys' lives change: neighbourhoods aren't rejuvenated, jobless parents don't find work, they join no social or community-action projects and gangs continue roaming the streets selling drugs. *Coach Carter* suggests addressing these issues is unimportant – individual effort and determination are the only things required. The team are metaphors for what we must all become to successfully compete in the marketplace – drilled lean machines, respondent to orders and self-motivated. After all, if these feral boys from the 'hood can do it, what excuse can there be for anyone else?

Coach Carter sells a dream that through your own efforts you can succeed and your life can be one of wish-fulfilment and limitless personal development. For these students, the film provides further evidence of the glorification of making 'good choices' identified in previous scholarship (Freedman & Easley, 2004; Trier, 2010a; Beyerbach, 2005; Dumas, 2013). For the focus is on individuals being in charge of their own destinies, with any failure to succeed down purely to personal inadequacy rather than wider societal problems.

[68] Apart from the final line, this is a direct quotation from activist and campaigner Marianne Williamson, who in January 2019 announced her candidacy for the Presidential Election of 2020.

In its forceful attempt to espouse the need for all individuals, even society's most ill-disciplined, to become effective and efficient members of both the educational world and the capitalist workforce, the film is a visual manifestation of one of the ways that Marcuse argued the performance principle remained dominant: by advanced capitalist societies celebrating (and demanding) the need for constant, unending economic 'progress' (Marcuse, 1966, p.40). But this advancement does not see benefits spread equally, because in pursuing relentless economic wealth, 'progress perpetuates domination and toil' for the majority (*ibid*). This truth also contained a bitter irony, for just like *Coach Carter* it sells the myth that access to success is spread equally – just so long as you keep trying hard enough.

Coach Carter is not the only film revealing how the performance principle maintains its dominance over pleasure and in so doing advocating old-fashioned hard work as the solution to educational under-performance. In *Freedom Writers,* Erin Gruwell is a teacher in a similar high school setting - this time in Los Angeles. Once high-achieving, integration has brought the racial tensions of the streets into the school's classrooms and on her first day Gruwell watches despairingly as her pupils self-segregate and sit in separate racial groups. Over numerous scenes we learn of her pupils' desperate home lives and how this contributes to an atmosphere of suspicion and fear: gang-warfare, murders, violent assaults, gunfights, drug-dealing and homelessness dominate their lives.

Thwarted by her school's heartlessness, including its unwillingness to provide resources, Gruwell takes on not one, but two part-time jobs to fund class texts such as *Romeo and Juliet,* trips to museums and meals in expensive restaurants. Rather than exhausted by such commitments, Gruwell seems energised, willing to make any sacrifice to improve the education of her pupils, who respond by properly engaging in school for the first time, particularly through writing heartfelt diaries documenting their troubled lives.

Gruwell is the Queen of the Performance Principle and is prepared to sacrifice all personal pleasure external to her professional performance. What kind of cost Gruwell is prepared to pay becomes clear when she returns home one night to find her husband with his bags packed, claiming life is impossible in the shadow of his incredible wife. He asks who she would choose between, him or her class? He represents pleasure, the class represent performance – Gruwell's reply confirms she chooses the latter, in doing so becoming a martyr for her one true love.

Explicit in *Coach Carter* and *Freedom Writers* is a celebration of the capitalist cult of individualism identified in chapter three (Hill, 1995; Bulman, 2002, Breault, 2009; Flynn, et al 2009; Dalton, 2010; Benton, 2013). Against all the odds, especially the backgrounds of their pupils and other teachers' inability or unwillingness to deploy the same levels of effort, their students are transformed thanks to Carter and Gruwell's magical formula of dedication and commitment. Gruwell and Carter act as 'lighthouses' highlighting the way for pupils caught in the storm, their beams of light pointing the way to their safe capitalist harbour. Literally *anything* can be achieved by individuals if they simply try hard enough – the films' 'proving' of this invites us to wonder why actual teachers seem unable to achieve similar results. Through this, the films continue a movie tradition of near-impossible expectations placed upon real teachers through comparison with celluloid colleagues (Farhi, 1999; Trier, 2001; Breault, 2009; Carter, 2009; Dunne; 2013).


Won't Back Down: Malia Fitzpatrick attempting to read from the board

However, one film in the sample takes the opposite approach, by making the *lack* of teacher commitment a central narrative feature, celebrating the power of performance through warnings about its absence. *Won't Back Down* depicts an attempt to turn a failing Pittsburgh school, Adams Elementary, into a charter school. In its opening scene, a girl is trying but heart-breakingly failing to read from the board in front of the class. Her teacher, 'Deborah', is unbothered by her plight, preferring to look at her phone - from her computer we learn she has also been internet shopping.[69] In the next scene the girl's mother, the film's main protagonist Jamie Fitzpatrick, asks Deborah if she would help her daughter with her reading after school:

> 'School's over at three,' Deborah snaps.
> 'For real?'
> 'Yeah, for real' (Barnz, 2012).

Deborah is castigated throughout as precisely the kind of work-shy teacher preventing schools and children from reaching their full potential. She is demonised by other teachers as a 'checked out zombie'; ironically admired, for: 'no ordinary deadbeat could pull off the highest salary and the lowest job performance in school history seven years running' (*ibid*). Deborah isn't the only teacher vilified for laziness, and the film claims a key cause is teacher unions deliberately preventing even those who want to work hard from doing so. Jamie and a teacher at the school, Nona Alberts, are the instigators of the takeover, which Nona tells parents will create a school

[69] We never learn Deborah's surname – it is not even in the credits.

'where even at 3pm if the students have any issues or problems then it's up to the teacher to stay, which we can't do now because of teacher union rules' (*ibid*). Later, in a meeting with fellow teachers, she claims unions 'won't allow us to spend the time that we have to spend with them. They won't do it' (*ibid*).

Echoing neoliberal agendas identified in chapter two, charter schools are eulogised as the answer to educational underperformance (Ravitch, 2010; Baker et al, 2012; Miron & Gulosino, 2013). Charters' political supporters argue that a key aspect of their 'success' is the fact that many are non-unionised and therefore free from workplace regulations preventing the hard-working environment that allows teachers and pupils to thrive (Ravitch, 2010, p.124; Berliner & Glass, 2014, pp.78-82). In Won't Back Down, Jamie and Nona are inspired into action by exactly such a school, following a failed attempt to enrol their own children into a celebrated local charter, where the Head Teacher argues his performance-enhancing staff prefer non-union status because they 'want their freedom...freedom to put in extra time with their kids. You know, freedom to stay after school if they want' (Barnz, 2012).

Marcuse argued that in societies dominated by the performance principle 'the organism must be trained for its alienation' (Marcuse, 1966, p.47). It is possible to see some of this coaching at work in these three films which underpin neoliberal demands for ever higher 'standards' and performance from teachers - in so doing reinforcing perspectives of a profession in need of reform. We see performance, either by its presence or absence, as a silver bullet, righting all social and educational wrongs. Hard work is redeeming, vital to self and system improvement. Any adjusting is to be done by individuals, who must raise their game to stay ahead, maintaining their status in the high performance society.

The messages of the films support a perspective where all pleasure is put on hold in order to pursue 'the socially useful performances' described by Marcuse. The idea of 'socially useful' has a particularly pernicious sense however when considering education, for almost any educational policy or directive, such as ever higher SATs, GCSE or state-test scores, or the introduction of phonics as the prescribed method of teaching children to read, or even the governance of schools by privately run companies - *all* can be justified as being 'for the children', no matter the cost. If all teachers followed the examples of Carter and Gruwell in furthering such goals, the majority of teachers and pupils would soon be on their knees or worse, but the teachers in *Won't Back Down* tell audiences that if they don't, the cost will be measured in failed young lives.

Crimes and Misdemeanours: Pleasure Vanquished

The films' support for surplus repression and for the 'dimension' of performance is confirmed not just in their celebration of the latter, but in the denigration of pleasure. Marcuse advocated for a society where the pursuit of pleasure becomes the primary function of its inhabitants, but this is not the aim of many of the remaining films, in which pleasure is stigmatised and defamed. This is done in two ways, both of which connect with concerns over educational under-performance.

The first links the concept to ineffective teachers: what is striking about the vast majority of teachers in the films is how hard they *don't* work and how incompetent those same teachers often are. Excluding workaholic Erin Gruwell, there is not a single scene of lessons being prepared or of teachers working at home; only one shows a teacher marking work, but only for comedy value when Elizabeth Halsey, the eponymous subject of *Bad Teacher*, writes 'stupid point', 'stupider' and 'are you fucking kidding me?' across various papers (Kasdan, 2011). Instead, whenever we observe teachers outside their class they are *entirely* unconcerned by burdens of work - in fact most have nothing but free time. When children arrive or leave school we see teachers doing the same; in *The History Boys,* Hector puts on his coat and motorcycle helmet immediately on hearing the bell and offers the boys a lift home. In this and other films, teachers are depicted relaxing and/or gossiping in staffrooms, offices, coffee shops, restaurants – even during lessons. In an extended scene in *Notes on a Scandal*, two teachers spend an entire Sunday together, eating, drinking, dancing and putting the world to rights, without a word about getting ready for the school week ahead.

Although divorced from the reality of teachers' lives, this is innocent enough. Yet this loses its innocence when contextualised against the incompetence of these same teachers' pedagogical abilities. Two are disciplinarians ruling classrooms through fear; another a prim woman who bores her pupils, a fourth an indecisive spinster bullied by colleagues and held up for ridicule; a fifth an over-eager woman derided as 'the pig in knickers'; a sixth an ignorant buffoon who tells his colleagues how delighted he was to visit an Ethiopian restaurant as it means 'they finally got their own cuisine'; and a seventh, a god-fearing PE-teacher-cum-sergeant-major more interested in converting pupils to Jesus than to athleticism (Eyre, 2006; Kasdan, 2011).

Yet these are merely the entrées in a feast of dysfunction when compared with the second way the films stigmatise pleasure – amorality. If Carter and Gruwell are 'capitalist lighthouses' then many teachers in the films are the opposite – pedagogical Sirens, calling fellow teachers, even pupils, to their dooms on the rocks.

For example, three of the central teacher characters use drugs, including on school premises. The serious addiction of Dan Dunne forms a key component of *Half Nelson* and the film hinges on his near overdose in the girls' toilets at school, saved only after being discovered by Drey, the lead pupil character. He also smokes crack in a cheap hotel room with prostitutes; during a date with a colleague, whom he later sexually assaults whilst high; and even during a break from his parents' dinner party.

Halsey, whose pedagogical approach initially involves making her class watch famous education movies while she recovers from hangovers, also takes drugs throughout *Bad Teacher*, but her main use of pleasure is sexual. In a desperate attempt to attain a life of leisure, she pursues a wealthy colleague, despite his being in a relationship with a fellow teacher. Plus, in pursuit of a $5700 bonus for the teacher with the highest state-test scoring pupils, she takes the state's test-administrator back to his office with promises of sex, before drugging him and stealing the unissued test papers.

Yet even Dunne and Halsey's misdemeanours pale into insignificance against other teachers. Sheba Hart, who accurately admits her teaching ability in *Notes on a Scandal* is 'bloody hopeless, and everyone knows it', is unable to control her classroom or her desires and embarks on a sexual relationship with a pupil (Eyre, 2006). Barbara Covett, a martinet hated by pupils, abets Sheba's situation in an attempt to pursue a romantic relationship with her. Both the leading male teachers in *The History Boys* also have highly inappropriate relationships with pupils: Hector molests the boys on his motorbike during lifts home and Irwin flirts with another, from whom he later accepts sexual propositions. Completing the cycle, one of the boys, Posner, later becomes a teacher, exclaiming 'though I never touch the boys, it's always a struggle. But maybe that's why I'm a good teacher' (Hytner, 2006). Repressed paedophilia seems an unusual


Notes on a Scandal: art teacher Sheba Hart and her pupil lover, Steven Connelly

definition of effective teaching, but by this stage the line between the two concepts has long become blurred.

Unsurprisingly, these teachers' pursuits of pleasure is met with near universally negative consequences. Hector is killed in a motorbike accident in which Irwin is injured, Sheba Hart is imprisoned, Barbara Covett forced to take early retirement and Dan Dunne is unable to continue working. Only Elizabeth Halsey's pleasure seeking ends positively, keeping the state bonus by blackmailing the test-administrator and landing a new job as school counsellor. Whilst it would be unusual to see characters 'rewarded' for immoral behaviour, the connection between pleasure-seeking, deviance and punishment is plain. Marcuse may have argued that humans should be free to pursue play and sexual pleasure, but here are films adamantly denying this should be extended to teachers.

This connection is maintained in pupil characters. *The Falling* is a tale of sexual awakening and oppression in an all-girls school in late 1960s Britain. However, rather than liberation, sex comes with serious health warnings, for pleasure brings only death, destruction and unnatural attraction. A teacher falls pregnant and is forced to leave the school; another is emotionally damaged following an abortion from a similar situation years earlier. But their sacrifice is nothing compared to Abi, the best friend of the main schoolgirl character, Lydia, who becomes pregnant following her first sexual experience. Abi falls ill and suffers two distressing fainting episodes, the second resulting in her unexplained death. The trauma results in Lydia becoming the ringleader of an outbreak of mass psychogenic illness, characterised by theatrical fainting, which sees several girls hospitalised and interviewed by a psychiatrist. Throughout, a confused and increasingly isolated Lydia becomes unhealthily close to her brother, and after her eventual expulsion from school the two begin a sexual relationship.

Remarkably, this isn't the only film featuring incest. *Precious*, a biopic of a maltreated teenager, sees the eponymous lead character forced out of her mainstream school for becoming pregnant following systematic sexual abuse from both parents. Teenage motherhood also features in *Coach Carter,* and although this time through a loving and healthy relationship between one of the basketball team and his girlfriend, it still leads to the breakdown of their relationship over arguments over whether or not to have an abortion.

An Education: Repression Reflected

Marcuse argued that in capitalist societies the continual restraint of pleasure by the forces of performance was 'the great traumatic event in the development of man', a process of submission continuously reproduced in order to maintain the dominance of the few and the suppression of the many through the performance principle's perpetuation of toil (Marcuse, 1966, pp.15). In their celebration of performance and denigration of pleasure, the films in the sample offer support for one-dimensional thinking through promoting the victory of the 'political dimension' of work and toil outlined by Marcuse. In the celluloid battle between the 'performing teacher' and the 'pleasure teacher' it is clear who must win - the triumph of the 'political dimension' is emphatic: Marcuse's hope for an 'erotic dimension', a 'Liberated Eros', is thwarted - Eros is repugnant and deviant, their demise to be applauded.

Yet the consequences of performance's victory on teachers is not reflected in the films. Marcuse argued that as a consequence of the dominance of performance, surplus repression had caused subjugation and 'social domination' (Marcuse, 1966, p.35). Part of that 'social domination' for real teachers, is the sheer amount of work they must undertake in the neoliberal education system: American and British workforces are amongst the most over-worked in the western world (OECD, 2018). Taking Britain for illustration, government figures reveal teachers work over fifty-four hours a week – an increase of 10% in only three years – and 81% of British teachers have considered leaving because of excessive workloads (Higton et al, 2017, p.6; NEU, 2018a). Surplus repression is writ large in their lives, caused by the neoliberal policies of the past forty years.

Yet the films do nothing to illuminate or question this problem. Instead they extol the benefits of working *even* harder via positive examples of teachers who make this 'correct' choice and highly negative examples of those who don't. Hard work is depicted as virtuous and natural, its absence a direct cause of failure. The performance-enhancing 'political dimension' overcomes all obstacles: don't worry if your background is one of poverty, inequality, violence and social dysfunction – discipline and work ethic, from yourself and your teachers, pulls you through. This will not be possible however, if your teachers exist in the 'erotic dimension' for their main priority is pleasure, and they may be too high or too aroused to help you take your place in the capitalist economy.

The celebration and mythology of exertion deliberately ignores socio-economic factors causing social dysfunction and in so doing continue a cinematic tradition identified previously in earlier films (McLaren & Leonardo, 1998; Bulman, 2002; Carter, 2009; Beyerbach, 2005 Apple & Swalwell, 2011). America and Britain have two of the highest levels of inequality in the world, leading to significant social challenges, but none of the films question the structural causes of the social problems they portray, or dare to suggest capitalism might be responsible (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; Stiglitz, 2013; Dorling, 2014; Piketty, 2017). There is no multidimensional, critical thinking in these movies about the causes and solutions of social issues. Instead of suggesting changes to society are required, we view the fetishisation of toil and industry: capitalism glossing over the consequences of capitalism by arguing for more capitalism.

Part of this gloss is the absence of visual depictions of the actual neoliberal policy causes of 'performativity' identified in chapter two as dominating teachers' lives (Ball, 2003). However, this is unsurprising for as Marcuse observed, although advanced technology should allow for people to work *less*, not more; capitalism regards this as anathema - a threat to economic competitiveness – and instead of freeing space for pleasure and relaxation, capitalism demands ever high levels of performance (Marcuse, 1969b, p.42). Like their screen colleagues from older education movies, thanks to the clear moral and professional superiority of performance-orientated teachers over their pleasure-consumed colleagues, the movies act as a clarion call demanding ever higher performance – a constant cry for 'improvement' justifying surplus repression and a society in thrall to the political dimension.

However, the movies in this sample suggest traditional cinematic narratives of teachers have shifted and the weighting of the scales between depictions of performance and pleasure have changed. Chapter three illustrated how the hero teacher was the most common narrative device (Heilman, 1991; Thomsen 1993; Farber & Holm, 1994a; Farhi, 1999; Ayers, 2001; Paul, 2001; Carter, 2009; Benton, 2013). In twenty-first century movies, the followers of the cult of hard work are no longer the dominant partners, for the deviant anti-hero teachers obtain as much screen-time. However, the superiority of the ultra-dedicated educator remains unquestioned, for their position is bolstered through positive comparison to those colleagues inhabiting the 'erotic dimension'. The child-molesting, drug-taking, pupil-chasing, lazy, anti-hero teachers represent a warning to those teachers refusing to take their primary commitments of toil and devotion seriously. Reinforcing the message are similar notes of caution for schoolchildren– sexual experimentation might get you killed, commit incest, become a paedophile, fall pregnant or see

your teachers imprisoned. Add the lazy pupil-failing teacher to the mix and we create a potent message steering us away from dangerous paths of pleasure, firmly towards the highway of performance.

Marcuse argued that surplus repression was 'the result of specific societal conditions sustained in the specific interest of domination. The extent of this surplus repression provides the standard of measurement: the smaller it is, the less repressive is the stage of civilization' (Marcuse, 1966, pp.88-89). Chapter two and this section have illustrated some of the ways that teachers across much of Britain and America live within this framework, their lives dominated by policy and pedagogical tools all aimed at driving 'standards', in the form of test scores, ever higher. To borrow from Marcuse, at this stage of civilisation, teachers in the two countries may have never been so repressed. Yet the lives of the teachers depicted in these films bear no resemblance to the day-to-day working conditions of actual teachers in the two countries. None offers a commentary on the challenges the profession faces in keeping teachers from leaving or of the extraordinarily high levels of stress they face. None places a question mark over the limits of what teachers can realistically achieve in the classroom without fundamental issues in society being addressed first. Instead these films suggest teachers have plenty of spare capacity to try harder - *all problems* can be overcome by those that do. In so doing, they echo the messages of the neoliberal state and provide potent evidence for its one-dimensional characteristics.

Furthermore, in replicating the messages of the dominant, these cultural artefacts also foreground the arguments presented in the next section of the analysis, exploring how culture, through repressive desublimation, can reinforce one-dimensional perspectives of the world by confirming, rather than challenging, the viewpoints of the dominant.

6.2 DAWN OF THE DEAD: REPRESSIVE DESUBLIMATION

Marcuse argued that in advanced capitalist societies, culture was 'desublimated' or stripped of its antagonistic qualities. Popular forms of culture revealed how the views of the dominant and culture were merging – the 'essential gap between the arts and the order of the day' was closing, the former becoming the mouth-piece of the latter (Marcuse, 2002, pp.75/67). This, argued Marcuse, was a central feature of the one-dimensional society – instead of pointing out the injustices of the world to a subjugated populace, culture, particularly popular culture, told them the system not just worked, but worked in everyone's favour (*ibid*, pp.60-61). In consequence, any chance for culture to act as 'Great Refusal is in turn refused: the "other dimension" is absorbed into the prevailing state of affairs' and the one-dimensional society created (*ibid*, p.67).

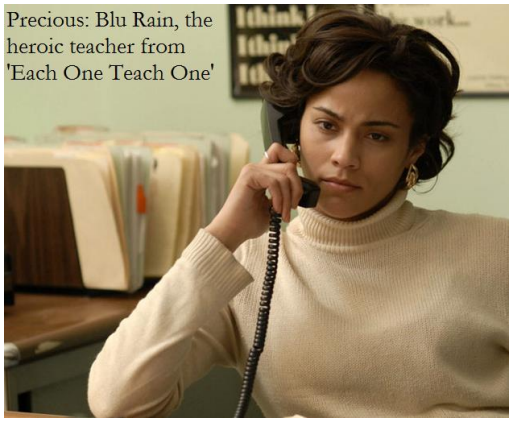
As artefacts of the neoliberal era, the films offer insight into whether or not this phenomenon is present with regards to education: do they reflect how the dominant wish education to be regarded, or instead, is that construct challenged? This section examines how the movies reflect some of the overtly political constructs of teachers, schools and society created in recent decades. By clearly supporting those constructions, this section argues the films strongly support one-dimensional thinking, including neoliberal education; however, it also argues that the concept of repressive desublimation needs updating to recognise neoliberalism's radical and transformational agenda.

Attack of the Clones – Depictions of Failing Teachers

The scenes of lazy and amoral teachers discussed in the previous section should also be considered as reflecting neoliberalism's 'discourse of derision' towards schools and teachers and the reforms it advocated in response (Ball, 2012b, p.100). Throughout the neoliberal period American and British societies have been led to believe that schools were populated by failing teachers and poor leaders unable or unwilling to drive improvement: they were letting-down pupils, who were leaving school without the knowledge and qualifications needed to compete in the 'global marketplace' (Apple, 2006; Alexander, 2009, pp.448-455).

Nevertheless, some teachers in the first section appear to strongly contradict the discourse of derision, particularly Erin Gruwell and Ken Carter. These aren't the only effective teachers in the sample: Hector, Irwin and their colleague, Miss Lintott, although unconventional, help all

the boys get to Oxford in *The History Boys*; in *Won't Back Down,* Nona Alberts transforms from disillusioned teacher to inspirational Principal and her colleague, Michael Perry, is also a hugely motivating educator. Furthermore, the eponymous heroine of *Precious* is transformed when she attends 'Each One Teach One', a one-class 'alternative school' for students outside mainstream education run by an inspirational teacher called Blu Rain. Formerly unable to even read titles of pre-school books, Precious improves her literacy to levels where, like Gruwell's students, she keeps a therapeutic diary of her traumatised life.


Precious: Blu Rain, the heroic teacher from 'Each One Teach One'

However, these positive teacher depictions cannot be divorced from their contexts which, continuing a tradition identified in chapter three, involve deploying 'good teachers' to emphasise the problem of 'bad teachers' (Dalton, 2010). For example, Precious only arrives at Each One Teach One because her out-of-ideas principal decides her pregnancy means she must leave high school; her Maths teacher is so chronically unable to control his class that Precious resorts to hitting another pupil to help maintain order; and despite being illiterate, Precious reveals she got an A- from what we must assume is an ignorant English teacher. Continuing filmic traditions, despite her heroic status Miss Rain's teaching also appears extremely limited – including asking her charges to write the alphabet on the board and dramatically exhorting Precious to 'just write' (Carter, 2009, p.75-76, Dunne, 2013, p.632). But no matter, because Blu Rain demonstrates to all failed teachers that determination and believing in yourself are all it takes. Echoing Carter's incredible achievements with his tamed basket-ballers, if she can achieve miracles with students no other school would even teach, then what exactly is so complicated for real teachers?

Similar confusions of comparison, context and effectiveness are seen in *Won't Back Down*. Michael Perry's high effectiveness not only underscores the immoral ineptitude of teachers like 'Deborah', but the comparison is underpinned by political propaganda, for he is a *Teach for America* graduate, a teacher-training organisation beloved of neoliberal education reformers (Sondel, 2015). Considering he works at a school whose educational diet from other teachers is disparagingly compared by Jamie Fitzpatrick with restaurants serving 'rat tails', Perry illustrates what neoliberalism's foot-soldiers can achieve in schools where children have been badly let down by unreformed educators.

Political framing also explain teacher comparisons in *Freedom Writers*. Gruwell's saintliness is accentuated through comparison with Head of Department Margaret Campbell and colleague Brian Gelford, both blatant racists. 'This was an A-list school before they came here,' Gelford says, 'and look what they turned it into' (La Gravenese, 2007). Don't worry about the disruptive black students he tells Gruwell, because eventually they will simply 'stop coming'. Campbell has equally poor expectations, refusing Gruwell permission to use a set of new texts as her students 'won't be able to read them…if I give your kids these books, I'll never see them again' (*ibid*). Campbell and Gelford represent the system-failure depicted holding back schools. This is revealed particularly clearly when Gruwell requests to teach her class the following year. However, local board of education rules dictate that without 'seniority' she cannot teach juniors, so she appeals to the district superintendent.[70] Seniority and tenure are key targets of American neoliberal reformers, who believe the system keeps incompetent teachers in the classroom (Ravitch, 2010, pp.172-176). Campbell attends the meeting deciding the outcome and makes an impassioned speech against Gruwell, diminishing her achievement as impractical: 'what if every teacher performed in this way?' She asks, posing a question the film invites us all to answer – *if only all teachers* could be a lot more Erin and a lot less Margaret (*ibid*). Naturally, Gruwell gets her wish and teaches her class as juniors – again, we are asked, why can't all schools take such an approach?


Freedom Writers: Brian Gelford and Margaret Cambell

Ken Carter is similarly held back by incompetence. He asks the Principal to instruct her teachers to complete reports on his players' academic progress, but their repeated failure to do so leaves an exasperated Carter roaming school corridors looking for his charges. One star player should be in science, but his teacher illustrates the failure of his colleagues by treating the lack of attendance as a joke and of no concern. When Carter finally gets the reports back, their dismal assessments prompt him to initiate the lockout - given his tremendous achievements with the same students, we are left to conclude that Carter's colleagues fail miserably to live up to his shining example.

[70] In US high schools, the junior year is the penultimate year group – Gruwell's class are sophomores, the year before. The 'seniority system' in many American school districts dictates who can teach which year groups and is strongly connected to employment rights. It was first designed to provide a protocol for what would happen in situations where a school district needed fewer teachers, e.g. those teaching longest – those with 'seniority' would not be first for redundancy. Several US states have legislated against it (Annenberg Institute, 2011). A similar situation applies to 'tenure', where American teachers can be significantly protected from the threat of being laid-off if they gain this status.

Bad Teacher however, dispenses entirely with good-versus-bad teacher conventions, with *every* teacher represented problematically. Elizabeth Halsey's teaching is no better than her morality, but even when she decides to raise her game to win the state bonus, her strategy relies on testing, intimidation and humiliation. Her colleagues are little better: Scott Delacorte is a moronic, maths-hating supply teacher; Lynn Davies is a mono-tonal simpleton; Sandy Pinkus either sleeps or speaks in movie quotes; and Russell Gettis is an overweight PE teacher who can't climb ropes. Only Amy Squirrel appears half-decent at teaching, but she is a disturbed and anally-retentive irritant, whose history of mental illness is used to belittle her abilities.

Striking in the films' depictions of teachers is their consistency with the negative depictions identified in the literature review (Swetnam, 1992; Burbach & Figgins, 1993; Ayers, 2001; Gregory, 2007; Breault, 2009). The capture of the film industry by the viewpoints of the opponents of British and American education is now so long-standing that the merging of culture and ideological depictions of teachers can be seen as a three-decade project. When politics and culture say the same thing for so long, it becomes increasingly hard for the public to even see there are two dimensions, let alone think in them.

These views of teachers across the films suggest Marcuse was appropriate in judging repressive desublimation, particularly through culture, as helping create a 'truly conformist' society (Marcuse, 2002, p.79). Through culture, Marcuse argued, a 'new totalitarianism manifests itself precisely in a harmonizing pluralism, where the most contradictory works and truths peacefully coexist in indifference' (*ibid*, p.64). In the films' depictions of teachers, we can observe how culture achieves this. Instead of creating 'another dimension of reality', as Marcuse claimed culture once achieved, these cultural items instead provide an echo chamber for the views constructed of teachers in the neoliberal era (*ibid*, p.67). This suggests either lazy and uninformed film-making, or that those views are so entrenched that Marcuse's concern about the one-dimensional society is not without basis.

Dances with Wolves: Political Constructs

So strong has this repressive desublimation become in some films, it has lost any pretence at subtlety, with some drawing nakedly political conclusions regarding the reasons for teachers' failures. This chapter's first section detailed how *Won't Back Down* strongly supports neoliberal calls for deregulation, including of employment rights, by accusing unions of turning teachers

into lazy failures; but this isn't the only instance unions are denigrated. As well as championing the seniority system, in *Freedom Writers* Margaret Campbell argues that Erin Gruwell continuing with her class would be a 'violation of our union charter'; in *Bad Teacher*, the Principal claims he can't investigate Halsey's drug-taking because unions would make his life 'a living hell'; and in *Coach Carter's* board meeting deciding the lockout, an officious teacher objects, claiming there is nowhere in his contract demanding he completes Carter's progress reports (La Gravenese, 2007; Kasdan, 2011).


Won't Back Down: Nona Alberts attempts to persuade felllow teachers to back the school take-over

Won't Back Down takes anti-union agendas to extraordinary extremes. When the local teacher's union hears of the planned takeover, it posts leaflets in the neighbourhood spreading lies about the proposal. Later, ahead of a crucial school-district board vote, the union reveals Nona caused serious brain injuries to her son by improperly strapping him into a car she crashed. A union official even attempts to bribe Jamie Fitzpatrick by securing her daughter a scholarship at a private school if she drops the takeover. Corruption also infects teachers who, obsessed by their union-negotiated rights, are interested in money more than children. At a meeting to persuade her colleagues to support the plan, they descend into arguments about pay, union protections and seniority. An exasperated Nona shouts:

> You know what, who else is in this for the money? Put your hands up, come on. I know I'm not the only money-grabbing bastard in the room. Put your hands up. I mean, seriously, why else are we doing it if not for the money?...It's not that anyone in this room wanted to teach right? And getting a school where we could actually do what we wanna do, who needs it right? You know what, feel free to blow past the dream school part and skip to the cash figures on page seven (Barnz, 2012).

This cinematic assault on teachers' motivations suggests that capitalist first-principles on the right to pursue personal wealth do not apply to educators, who naturally come round, recognising that far from offering protection, their hard-won rights actually *prevent* them achieving their full pedagogical potential – a perversion of logic blatantly desublimating neoliberal agendas. This is represented most acutely by Michael Perry, a once strong union supporter, who has a dramatic on-screen conversion in a staff-meeting with the bribe-offering union official, backing the proposal because teachers 'want change because it's what's best for our students' (*ibid*). Perry becomes a born-again neoliberal, inspiring real-life teachers to

embrace change, not resist it. But this is not the last spiritual conversion in *Won't Back Down* for preposterously even one of the crooked union officials not only eventually supports the take-over but abandons the dark-side in order to return to teaching.

Won't Back Down's film poster says the film is 'inspired by actual events': this is referring to the enacting of 'parent-trigger' laws in several American states, aimed at expanding the parental-choice agenda by enabling schools to be converted into charters following parental petitions. This is no bottom-up revolution however, for many parent-trigger groups are funded by privatisation-promoting organisations such as the Walton, Broad and Gates Foundations (Lubienski et al, 2012, p.5). *Won't Back Down* also doesn't reveal that at the time of its filming, parent-trigger laws were entirely untested and those watching it now may also be unaware of how they have continued the breakdown of democratic governance of education in the neoliberal era (Lubienski et al, 2012; Rogers et al, 2015). It is not coincidental that the production company behind *Won't Back Down*, Walden Media, is owned by Phillip Anschutz, a conservative billionaire known for funding pro-free market, right-wing organisations. Walden has a reputation for only making wholesome feel-good films or movies explicitly promoting conservative causes and was also responsible for *Waiting for Superman*, which, as discussed previously, is particularly reverential towards neoliberal policy solutions, including charter schools (Brown, 2015, p.62).

Further reflecting explicit neoliberal messages, *Won't Back Down* depicts government as the enemy, deliberately standing in the way of improvement. The local school board are officious pen-pushers, rejecting proposals on petty grounds and obsessed by stopping anyone wanting better schools. Bureaucrats tell Nona and Jamie that even after completing the four-hundred page application, the take-over process could take five years; to speed this up, Nona doorstops the superintendent, a woman calling herself 'the queen bureaucrat', but is told the system is so surreal she reads Kafka to make herself feel better (Barnz, 2012).

The lesson from the films is that unions, regulations and bureaucracy harm teachers and schools. This speaks to neoliberal arguments demanding increased freedoms – freedom from constricting and burdensome regulations, freedom from oppressive employment regulations, freedom to have job 'flexibility', freedom from stifling government. For Marcuse however, freedom was a slippery concept. Politicians sold the idea of freedom, but in the one-dimensional society this had become a repressive ideology resulting in 'toil, poverty and

stupidity' thanks to the 'terrifying harmony of freedom and oppression' - because the people *believed* they were free, they failed to notice their chains (Marcuse, 2002, pp.43/128). In the films' affirmation of neoliberal agendas, we can observe how culture provides reiteration of such illusions, for the 'freedoms' the movies wish for are in reality freedom for teachers to work even harder, freedom to remove teachers who define education differently from 'results' and above all freedom to forget there was ever an education system believing in something beyond neoliberalism's aspirations.

Inglourious Basterds: Depictions of Leadership

Unions and government are not the only management pariahs in the films – school leaders are portrayed with near universal opprobrium and, like their classroom colleagues, their characterisations remain entrenched in stereotypes identified in previous research (Glanz, 1997; Smith, 1999). Wally Snur in *Bad Teacher* and Felix in *The History Boys* are idiotic clowns, the former a dolphin-obsessed innocent, the latter a supercilious fool labelled the 'awful warning' by Miss Lintott. *The Falling's* Miss Alvaro and *Half Nelson's* Principal Henderson are martinets; and *Precious'* Principal Lichtenstein and *Notes on a Scandal's* Sandy Pabblem are bureaucrats more interested in procedures than children.

Many of the school leaders' low expectations further demonstrate culture's support for systemic education reform. Principal Holland of the long-failing Adams Elementary in *Won't Back Down*, exemplifies this when he tells Jamie: 'every kid can't rise to the top I'm afraid' (Barnz, 2012). *Coach Carter's* Principal Garrison reinforces such images of leaders whose poverty of ambition has failed multiple generations: when Carter asks for her support in persuading teachers to complete the progress reports, she instead lectures him about how Richmond High has been graded in the bottom 10% of California schools for seven years, meaning only a third of his team will graduate from school.[71] Carter's response calls-out this culture of low-achievement:

> 'Your job is to win basketball games, Mr. Carter. I suggest you start doing your job.'
> 'And your job is to educate these kids. I suggest you start doing yours' (Carter, 2005).

After Carter implements the lockout, Garrison angrily confronts him and his 'extreme methods', but in response he claims the school's low expectations called for extreme action.

[71] The measure Principal Garrison quotes as demonstrating this, the Academic Performance Index (API), was a real-life accountability measure for California's public schools and like most neoliberal education tools was calculated on test scores. Because of this, the API was extremely effective at identifying and stratifying schools by demographic background, but ineffective at assessing actual competence (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). API was replaced in 2017.

Naturally, the audience is invited to sympathise with Carter, for he has already demonstrated what can be achieved with pupils failed by ordinary educators.

The simplistic depiction of teachers and near universally negative portrayal of their educational leaders contributes to a total effect of donkeys led by donkeys. The movies are either in agreement with political narratives of failed schools or are shamelessly exploiting those constructs for financial motivations. If the former, the movie industry has a disregard for political criticality, if the latter then money matters more than truth, even if that contributes to the lowered reputation of the profession. In either case, the industry clearly believes the public will spend money on films portraying teachers and their leaders in negative lights, suggesting political onslaughts against the profession have created a narrative ripe for filmic exploitation.

The Social Network: Depicting Class

In what might well be a Hollywood first however, there is a film in the sample that bucks the trend, a film where the head teacher and *all* the teachers are wonderful role models. *Wonder* is about the Pullmans – Isabel, Nate, daughter Via and son Auggie, a boy with a facial disfigurement attending school for the first time. Four teachers have prominent roles - all are warm, caring and effective. None have a dark side and no 'bad teacher' is needed to inflate their standing. The Principal, Mr. Tushman, is kind-hearted and highly effective. But don't mistake kindness for softness, for when Auggie is bullied, Mr. Tushman suspends the ringleader and stands up to his pompous parents.

Wonder: Isabel and Auggie Pullman with Principal Tushman

Explaining this hagiography is that Auggie attends a private school. Throughout, *Wonder's* celebration of such middle-class privilege is a badge it wears with pride. The Pullmans live in an enormous New York brownstone, their wealth so taken for granted we never learn where Nate, the only earner, works.[72] We celebrate this family, their lifestyle and their school – at no time are we invited to ask how fortunate they are in being able to send their children to such highly exclusive educational settings, let alone

[72] A quick perusal of New York real estate agents would suggest that a house of the size belonging to the Pullmans would fetch about $6m in the district it is located.

question this buying of privilege in a city where so many live in poverty. In fact, the only time children less fortunate appear is at summer camp, when Auggie and his friend are set upon by boys they refer to as 'hicks', who taunt Auggie as 'Gollum' (Chbosky, 2017). They are saved when other rich kids turn up to join the ensuing fight, returning the movie to a reassuring equilibrium where everyone knows their place.

Careful examination uncovers messages about the educational values *Wonder* believes are worth spreading. Auggie's teacher writes 'precepts' all over his classroom, which pupils read out. Some appear attempts to silence debate - 'Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen'; others have distinct menace - 'Mr. Browne is watching you' (*ibid*). All the teaching shown is entirely didactic, testing is prominent and the curriculum is filled with classic traditional texts. *Wonder's* educational message is an idealised celebration of a conservative America, lost in the failed progressive school system.


Precious: Mary, Precious' abusive mother

Contrast this with *Precious*, also set in New York. Precious lives in a dilapidated housing project with her violent and abusive mother, Mary. A visit from Principal Lichtenstein to talk about Precious' school move leads to Mary physically attacking her daughter because she thinks it will result in her welfare being stopped, her reaction indicating what the movie thinks is the attitude of some working-class people towards education:

> School ain't gonna help no-one. Take your ass down to the welfare. Who the fuck she think she is? So I guess you think you cute now, right? Uppity bitch. You should have kept your fucking mouth shut...you gonna send a white bitch to my motherfucking buzzer? Talking about some higher education? You're a dummy, bitch, you will never know shit. Don't nobody want you. Don't nobody need you (Daniels, 2009).

Multiple scenes portray poor, always black, people as a dysfunctional underclass. Precious' classmates at Each One Teach One, all from poor backgrounds, bring their own stereotypical label – drug-abuser, single mother, immigrant, illiterate. People in Precious' neighbourhood sit menacingly on street corners, children aren't in school and in the Halfway House Precious eventually moves to, welfare-to-work posters depict babies asking 'Mommy, will we always be on welfare?'

Precious also takes class comparisons to another level, one where capitalist celebrations of celebrity, commercialism and individualism are depicted as the alternative to Precious' circumstances. Several dream sequences portray Precious as a movie star, a famous model or as a singer, dancing under spotlights. These are real dreams for Precious, who has already revealed 'I wanna be on the cover of a magazine' (*ibid).* Although her own wish does not come true, three of the film's leading roles are played by real-life famous performers whose dreams have – Mariah Carey, Lenny Kravtiz and Mo'Nique; underlining notions that lifestyles of the rich and famous are ones to which we should aspire. *Coach Carter* and *Freedom Writers* also cast famous singers, their presence a physical embodiment of the very lives their characters will never lead, but one dangled in their faces every day by consumer societies believing dreams of a better life are more important than addressing the reasons why people live in poverty and disadvantage.[73]

The History Boys offers a class comparison of a quite different kind - its main premise the attempt to gain a place in the über-privileged world of Oxbridge. Red-brick alternatives are sneered at throughout – we laugh at Felix when he embarrassingly reveals he only went to Hull, Hector timidly divulges he attended Sheffield and Irwin tells the boys their conventional thinking means 'Bristol welcomes you with open arms. Manchester longs to have you. You can walk into Leeds' (Hytner, 2006). The fact these are all Russell Group universities accentuates the encouragement of elitism. The boys drip with AE Houseman quotes and their idea of fun is performing scenes from classic films or risqué French role-plays. It isn't coincidental that the pupil engaging least in these improbable antics is the one most clearly from a working-class background - a figure of fun, noticeably less intelligent or witty than his peers.


The History Boys: Irwin, Hector and Ms Lintott

But also consider what the film chooses to *not* discuss. It is set in a grammar school, whose selective admission criteria result in significant discrimination against those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Gorard & Siddiqui, 2018; Lu, 2018). Furthermore, the seventh-term entrance system at the film's centre was abolished precisely because private and grammar schools were far more able to prioritise the considerable resources required for the seventh-term tutoring

[73] In *Freedom Writers*, the R&B singer Mario plays 'Andre Bryant', one of Erin Gruwell's dysfunctional black students who also sells drugs in his spare time. In *Coach Carter*, the singer Ashanti plays 'Kyra', the teenage girlfriend of one of the basketball team who falls pregnant.

depicted at the heart of the film. The movie is also set in 1983, when Thatcherism was devastating traditional industries, including Sheffield's steelworks - but this is completely ignored. Compare this with another film set in Sheffield in the same period, *The Full Monty*, where laid-off steelworkers are proud, hard-working men, eager to work and not rely on benefits.

Another British film, *Notes on a Scandal*, contains a more subtle, but perhaps more pernicious depiction of class. Sheba Hart has a perfect middle-class life: she lives in a large Georgian townhouse with her university professor husband and two children, and has a second home in France. In contrast, her pupil-lover, Steven Connelly, lives in a block of flats on a housing estate. The story of their affair is one of middle-class pin-up laid low by working-class scamp. He does the chasing, flirting with Sheba in art classes and telling her about his abusive father and seriously ill mother, later revealed as lies intended to weaken her resistance. When his mother discovers their affair, she exposes her family's thuggish core by interrupting the Harts' middle-class idyll to physically attack Sheba, only stopping when her husband drags her away with the prescient words 'there's nothing for us here' (Eyre, 2006).

Until here, Steven's role has been prominent, but his final appearance is when he too resorts to yobbish type, standing menacingly outside Barbara Covett's flat forcing her to rush inside. In the film's final quarter, all loose ends are resolved apart from Steven's, who entirely disappears, the affair's consequences on his life of no interest. Now we only care about the impact on Sheba who, forced to live with Barbara, has a breakdown. Steven's story remains silent, the fact he is a child likely to be scarred by this momentous event unimportant, for the experiences of the fallen middle-class anti-heroine are what matter. Instead, we are invited to feel sympathy for Sheba and are pleased when her husband takes her back, for she is a victim of a devious lesbian and a teenage scally with the ultimate notch on his bedpost.

The Mirror Has Two Faces: Dual Constructs of Reality

Marcuse argued that through repressive desublimation modern culture contained 'the rationality of the status quo', with fictional cultural characters not 'images of another way of life but rather freaks or types of the same life, serving as an affirmation rather than negation of the established order' (Marcuse, 2002, pp.61-62). If Marcuse was right, we would expect to see the character depictions in the films to conform to stereotypical, long-standing and conservative perspectives

of people and groups in capitalist societies. To an extent, this indeed holds true of the characterisations contained within these films. For example, their depictions of class can be viewed as particularly affirmative of the status quo. The pathologising of poor people and the celebration of privilege is common; the pitiable backgrounds of poor pupils regularly contrasted with the obviously middle-class status of teachers, who demonstrate the civility and superior moral framework of the class to which their students should aspire.

Yet in other ways Marcusean repressive desublimation requires an upgrade. For Marcuse, repressive desublimation was at the centre of the one-dimensional society, where critique had died in large part thanks to 'the conquest and unification of opposites' found in popular cultural forms that confirmed existing social orders and their inherently oppressive constructs (Marcuse, 2002, p.75). However, Marcuse was discussing a world before neoliberalism, a world the political consensus wanted to *preserve* and its cultural leaders wanted to celebrate. What Marcuse did not foresee was a generation of leaders who *didn't* want to preserve the old world, but instead radically transform it under neoliberal principles. Education is a key battleground of this brave new world. This means the repressive desublimation seen in the films is of a new kind - not the confirmation of the old order, but the support for the creation of a new one. Failing teachers, schools in crisis, dysfunctional youth, ineffective leaders, malevolent bureaucrats – these are the creations of a generation of reform-minded politicians and it is these the films desublimate, not images of schools and teachers held in the pre-neoliberal era.

This reveals the culture industry can quickly adapt to new constructions of capitalism. If anything this paints an even bleaker view of culture than that depicted by Marcuse. He wrote about a conservative world, resistant to change and unwilling to reform – in these circumstances, if culture sought to replicate the world, it was relatively straightforward because the target barely moved. But the neoliberal period has seen such a frenzied pace of reform that culture has needed to be fleet-footed in its response. And in that response the desublimation of the films remains the confirmation of the dominant and oppressive one-dimensional order governing the current educational lives of schools, teachers, and pupils, even if that dominant dimension is in radically different clothes from the ones worn when Marcuse was alive.

In any society aiming to espouse democratic values this is a dangerous development. When culture shifts and adapts like a chameleon to whatever way the political wind is blowing, it becomes a mouthpiece for the political class. In consequence, spaces for debate and alternative

become narrower and quieter. Such moves see the culture industry transformed from critical commentary to propaganda, little better than the promotional films of the old Soviet bloc. The result is equally problematic, for if both political and on-screen stories say the same thing, the chance for alternative educational visions to be taken seriously become increasingly remote.

Even if repressive desublimation requires a rethink for a new age, the central premise still contains a powerful warning. Marcuse cautioned that the one-dimensional society had appeared to have seen the 'conquest of transcendence' – no longer were people able to look beyond the visions offered by the dominant (Marcuse, 2002, p88). No matter that the popular culture examined in this thesis does not necessarily want to confirm and celebrate the 'old status quo', but instead seeks to justify the 'new status quo' – the radically-reformed (and still fast changing) neoliberal world - the problem remains that the films provide evidence of culture repressively desublimating the views of the dominant and by doing so are contributing to the hiding of transcendent thinking and the enabling of one-dimensional perspectives of education.

Neoliberalism's attack on the old educational world however, does not mean it did not need to avoid change altogether. Indeed, the education off-shoot of critical theory, critical pedagogy, is based entirely around imagining and advocating for radical transformation of education, which many of its scholars argue has long supported systems of oppression (Giroux, 2001a, Apple et al, 2011). Similarly, critical race theory, as part of its diverse range of theorising, examines whether education systems support another system of oppression - racism. The third section therefore considers whether some of the direct challenges presented in the films have merit – are they, in fact, examples of Marcusean 'Great Refusal' - genuine screams against oppressive society, or something more sinister, part of a 'repressive tolerance' of safely sanctioned and sanitised protest, providing non-threatening challenge to a system aware its apparent approval of dissent is the best means of its survival?

6.3 TOUCHING THE VOID: GREAT REFUSAL AND REPRESSIVE TOLERANCE

Marcuse argued that acts of Great Refusal were dissent 'against that which is' – *anything*, big or small, protesting against the injustices of oppressive societies and multidimensional thinking (Marcuse, 2002, p.66). When looked through a Marcusean perspective, protests against the education system could certainly be judged as acts of Great Refusal and undeniably, there are *many* narratives and scenes in the films when dissent is worn as a prominent badge of honour, clearly signposted for audiences to draw conclusions that something is amiss with the world.

However, Marcuse also argued there was another form of protest in advanced capitalist societies, for 'repressive tolerance' had resulted in the toleration of *some* forms of dissent. But, argued Marcuse, these were a safe protest - even in allegedly democratic systems, with constitutionally guaranteed 'civil rights and liberties', he saw most dissent only providing forms of protest that maintained the unjust status quo (Marcuse, 1969a, p.92). Such protests offer only benign challenges to the oppressive state, granting it the ability to claim it allows debate. In turn, this impression of criticality and freedom ensures passivity in the populace – after all, how could an intolerant state be so tolerant towards opposition? Consequently, such protest supports the continued existence of one-dimensional societies, blinded to continuing injustice and oppression by a misguided belief that if things were so bad surely people would have demonstrated about it by now?

This section uses these two lenses to examine how protest is framed in the films. Are they genuine challenges to oppression and the dominant, or merely tools perpetuating one-dimensional thinking?

The Imitation Game: Progressive Causes

As chapter four noted, Marcuse regarded the civil rights movement as one way the Great Refusal was practised in American society. Its causes are also present in many of the movies, with indignation against racial inequality permeating their narratives. For example, a central premise we are invited to draw from *Coach Carter* is that despite being handicapped by the disadvantage of their surroundings and the poverty of low-expectations, poor black pupils can achieve academic as well as sporting success. The story depicts black empowerment and


Coach Carter: Timo Cruz's drug-dealing cousin is shot

emancipation. Yet such sentiments are refuted by numerous contradictory messages littering the film, including a catalogue of stereotyping: 'black people play basketball', 'black people are violent and threatening', 'black people live in crime-riddled neighbourhoods', 'black people dominate gang culture' and 'black people are drug-dealers'. A full-house of pigeonholing is arguably completed by nearly every adult female conforming to the 'angry black woman' label.

Black characters even engage in self-stereotyping: a pregnant black teenager asks her friends for name ideas for her unborn child, one suggests LaQuisha, to which another's reply is soaked in racial categorising: 'LaQuisha? Okay, the ghetto called and they want their name back. Girl, LaQuisha? Be for real. You might as well call the baby Food Stamp' (Carter, 2005). In contrast, white characters' lives represent the lifestyle to which black people should aspire. For example, the boys attend a party at a fabulously opulent house owned by white people, where one receives the ultimate prize - sleeping with a white girl. Negative comparisons are confirmed by the cheerleading teams – the all-black Richmond troop are unfit and badly co-ordinated, their all-white rivals lean-machines in perfect gymnastic unison.

Such hypocrisy means *Coach Carter* is no Great Refusal, but it is not alone in issuing double-handed racial protests. For example, Martin Luther King is invoked in no less than four films - each used to imply the movie continues his work. *Won't Back Down* spells this out particularly blatantly when Michael questions Jamie's unreceptive attitude to direct action:

> Really? You don't believe that? Like civil rights? The Selma to Montgomery marches - all that was a waste of time? It sends a message. I mean, that's what you're doing isn't it? (Barnz, 2012).

The assault on failing schools is also linked to other liberation causes, including the man who inspired Martin Luther King to follow non-violent protest. In a rousing speech to fellow parents, Jamie ends with 'like Gandhi used to say, "we must be the change we wanna see"!' (*ibid*). It would be surprising if Gandhi and King agreed with removing schools from locally-elected bodies and giving them to private corporations, but the 'Rosa Parks Charter School' Nona and Jamie try to get their children into suggests filmmakers have no qualms about making spurious connections between neoliberalism and civil rights, and are only following a well-

trodden path of several leading neoliberal politicians, who have consistently declared education as 'the civil rights issue of the day' (Duncan, 2009, Gove, 2013).[74]

Won't Back Down also adopts the language and arguments of other progressive causes. Jamie keeps a box to place figurines representing the eighteen teachers needed to back their proposal – on the side is written 'YES WE CAN!' Speaking after Jamie's 'Gandhi speech', Nona tells the parents that projected prison numbers are based on how many pupils drop-out of school:

> Seven out of ten kids who leave Adams can barely read and we wonder why Adams kids end up in Penn State Prisons instead of the University of Pittsburgh. And you know what I want to say to those prison folk? I wanna say, hands off my kid (Barnz, 2012).

This is a pernicious twisting of the 'school-to-prison pipeline' debate: school policies are a concern, but those centre on no-excuses approaches, commonly favoured by charters, leading to dramatic increases in school expulsions and increased likelihood of young people entering lives of crime (Simmons, 2016; Mallett, 2016). Blaming schools is a deflection strategy hiding more accurate reasons behind the exploding American prison population – the War on Drugs, punitive sentencing and a racist criminal justice system (Alexander, 2012).

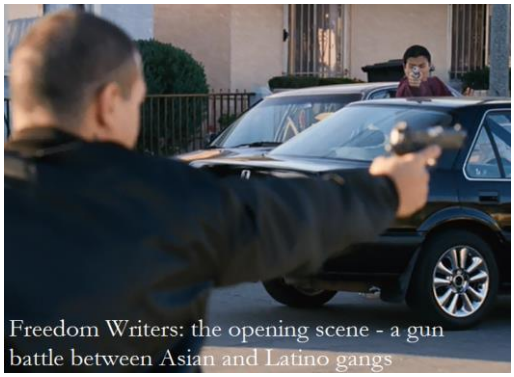
Marcuse argued that one of the clearest signs of the emergence and confidence of the one-dimensional society was when culture seemed able to incorporate challenges to the status quo and even transform them into cheerleaders for oppression (Marcuse, 2002, p75). This is precisely what can be observed in *Won't Back Down*. Falsely aligning itself with liberation and awakening, the film is in reality a tool of neoliberalism seeking to limit teacher autonomy and freedom, to privatise schools and to condemn their pupils to an educational diet limited to testing and preparation for joining the free-market economy. Worse, by blatantly supporting charter schools, the film celebrates an educational phenomenon identified previously as turning the clock back on discrimination by racially re-segregating American schools (Garcia, 2008; Frankenburg et al, 2010; Heilig et al, 2011; Kotok et al, 2017).

Marcuse's concerns about culture absorbing and re-imaging challenges to the status quo can be seen in other films in the sample. In addition to the attempt to connect to the Freedom Riders in its title, links with injustice are a central theme in *Freedom Writers*.[75] Erin Gruwell buys her

[74] Arne Duncan was Barack Obama's Education Secretary from 2009 to 2015; Michael Gove was the British Secretary of State for Education from 2010 to 2014

[75] The Freedom Riders were civil rights activists who travelled in mixed buses into segregated southern states in the early 1960s to protest about the non-enforcement of Supreme Court decisions ordering the integration of public transport.

students the *Diary of Anne Frank* and we are constantly invited to compare their diary-keeping with Anne's and to believe that their experience of the streets is akin to hiding from the Gestapo. In defeating the oppression faced by Gruwell's pupils, we are therefore asked to believe the film's cause is not only that of the Freedom Riders, but is also akin to defeating Nazism. The final inverted 'proof' is left to Bryan Gelford, whose bad-guy status means anything he believes is wrong: 'how dare you compare them to Anne Frank? They don't hide. They drive around in the open with automatic weapons' (La Gravenese, 2007).

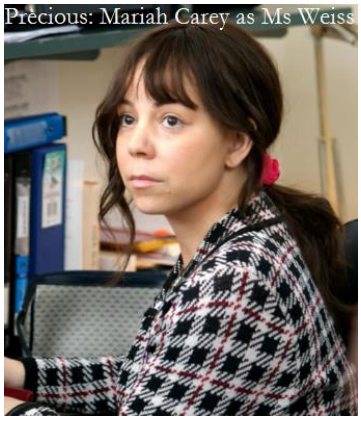

Freedom Writers: the opening scene - a gun battle between Asian and Latino gangs

But again, there is no Great Refusal here. *Freedom Writers* appears concerned about gang violence's impact on young people, but its target for blame is deeply misplaced, for we are invited to believe the fault lies with racial minorities themselves. Multiple scenes of gun-wielding non-white characters appear to suggest Bryan is right - black people are depicted as violent drug-dealers and members of rival racially-defined gangs roaming the streets in a turf-war. Within seconds of the opening, Eva, the lead Latino character, is shot at by Asians while narrating 'we fight each other for territory. We kill each other over race, pride and respect. We fight for what is ours' (*ibid*). The turf-war even continues at school, where the races segregate in the schoolyard as well in their classrooms, the former the site of an extraordinary scene of race-on-race violence over a minor slight.

Such racial stereotypes continue problematic filmic trends identified in the literature review, including the erroneous impression of black people this gives to their future teachers (Wells & Serman, 1998; Ayers, 2001; Trier, 2005; Giroux, 2008; Breault, 2009; Hughey, 2010; Pimentel, 2010; Dumas, 2013). *Freedom Writers* does argue that racism remains endemic in American society, but does so from the standpoint that the problem lies with black people and that solutions are provided by whites who, continuing a narrative found in earlier films, are framed within this nightmare as saviours and victims. Gruwell continues the 'white-saviour' tradition identified in chapter three, rescuing black people from circumstances they cannot change themselves (Breault, 2009; Carter, 2009; Hughey, 2010; Dalton, 2010). Similarly, the only white student, Ben, is polite and civilised, exhibiting the positive behaviour traits to which his violent black classmates should aspire. Equally misplaced, the most explicit verbal racism in the film is directed at whites, such as when Eva says she 'hates white people' because they run the world.

This is not an authentic questioning of white-power however, for the audience are constantly asked to see Gruwell as representing the virtues her ethic minority pupils so patently lack.

Outwardly, *Precious* also wears numerous progressive credentials, including through an extended dream sequence where civil rights leaders and events, including Martin Luther King, are invoked. There are other obvious nods to the movement: 'Each One Teach One' is named after a phrase used by slaves spreading literacy one person at a time; and it is housed in Hotel Theresa, a once-famous hotel used by the civil rights movement and its leaders. Yet reinforcing the black, underclass image permeating the film, racial tropes appear throughout. The only food Precious eats are pigs-feet or fried chicken – both stereotypically associated with black people. Precious says she wants a 'light-skinned boyfriend' and sees a white girl reflected when looking in the mirror. Yet, rather than commentaries on the effect of projections of 'whiteness as beautiful' on young black women, we see casting choices for key 'redemptive' characters that reinforce racial hierarchies and provide a triple-dose of white-saviour narrative: the nurse who delivers Precious' baby, her social worker and Blu Rain are *all* played by 'light/white' actors (Griffin, 2014). In echoes of *Coach Carter*, non-white characters, including Precious, lust after white or 'light skinned' people, reinforcing images of 'whiteness as beautiful' instead of challenging them. Unsurprisingly, even at the end of the film Precious *still* announces she wants 'light skin'.


Precious: Mariah Carey as Ms Weiss

For Marcuse, one particularly clear indicator of how one-dimensional thinking can come about is when even progressive movements 'threaten to turn into their opposite…(if) they accept the rules of the game (Marcuse, 1969 p.83). This can be observed in these films. In their exploration of racial issues there are no Great Refusals, only carefully controlled faux rebellions whose presence allows both the films and the wider population the opportunity to say they care, and governments the chance to claim we live in freedom. There is no examination of how society, particularly white society, creates and perpetuates racial injustice; no evaluation of the cause or impact of segregated neighbourhoods and school systems. *Freedom Writers* exemplifies their complete disinterest in historical context when Eva declares: 'I don't even know how this war started. It's just two sides who tripped each other way back. Who cares about the history behind it?' (La Gravenese, 2007).

Despite their claims to liberation, the films are merely longer versions of the half-baked self-righteousness of *Bad Teacher's* Scott Delacorte when he declares 'I just hate slavery so, so much. Slavery's the worst. If I could go back in time and undo slavery, I would' (Kasdan, 2011). In their desire to offer happy, simplistic, endings, the films' suggest that emancipation is straightforward - determination on the part of students and their teachers. Worse, we see blame placed on poor and black people, or their schools, or both, for failing to achieve academic or racial emancipation. Not only does this speak to themes of 'performance' identified in the first section of this chapter, it also talks directly to narratives of 'grit' and resilience identified in chapter two, deflecting attention from root causes of problems towards suggestions its victims must navigate their own way out of the circumstances enchaining them (Stokas, 2015; Golden, 2017). Furthermore, by arguing heroic teachers can address the symptoms of discrimination, an impression is created that schools are the means of solving racism's problems, rather than wider society tackling the issues causing it in the first place - art thus becomes a site where political responsibility goes to die, the camouflaging of context signifying its failure of multidimensional, critical thinking.

Rather than Great Refusal, the films in this sub-section sit far more comfortably within a Marcusean sense of repressive tolerance, in which he argued that 'what is proclaimed and practiced as tolerance today, is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression' (Marcuse, 1969, p.81). Repressive tolerance however, had more than one edge. Not only did Marcuse warn against hollow protests, accusing them of propping-up oppression by giving it the impression the dominant tolerated dissent and multidimensional thinking, but he also argued the people themselves had become too tolerant, which in turn supported their 'pacification of existence' (Marcuse, 1969, p88). If Marcuse was correct, our toleration and celebration of such films, should be withdrawn. In 'tolerating' these cultural criticisms, the underlying factors of injustice are not even discussed, let alone undermined - leaving as Marcuse indicated, the cause of the oppression untouched.

Silver Linings Playbook: Challenges to the Machine?

Perhaps revealingly, aspects of wider social critique beyond racism are rare in the films. Given their celebration of elitism and promotion of middle-class values, neither *Notes on a Scandal* nor *The History Boys* offer significant critical social commentary beyond the social taboo of pupil-teacher relationships. Although we are invited to sneer when the latter's Headmaster criticises

Hector's teaching for not being 'quantifiable', it is hard to take this protest seriously when so many other scenes in the film glorify passing tests. Similarly, Irwin's teaching *does* revolve around asking the boys to think unconventionally, but these are attempts to help them stand out in Oxbridge applications, thus tools to help them join elites, not challenge them.

Two films however, offer stronger challenges worthy of consideration as acts of Great Refusal. In *The Falling* we are invited to consider traditional schooling - represented by Miss Mantel and Miss Alvaro, two cold, rule-obsessed disciplinarians - as a justifiable target of the rebellion forming the film's central narrative. This reaches its apogee at an assembly where Miss Alvaro reveals an investigation into the fainting outbreak following Abigail's death has discovered nothing untoward. At this, Lydia stands up and shouts:

> You'll never get rid of me. You all know something is wrong. Are you not going to fight for the truth? What have you been reduced to? Inertia? You're all asleep. To be free, you must be conscious. Kill the system! It's killing you! (Morley, 2015).


The Falling: Lydia's protest in assembly

But *The Falling* offers neither Great Refusal nor an insurrectionary ending akin to *If.…*, another school film set in the same period, for in the next scene, Lydia reveals to her friends that she made up her fainting and believes she is going mad - the scene after that she sleeps with her brother.[76] Instead of a system driving someone to dramatic acts, the film presents a grieving, yet egocentric revolutionary, leading a rebellion that ultimately nobody joins. Throughout, we doubt Lydia's sincerity, her relationships and finally her sanity. Joining her revolution wouldn't be wise - unsurprisingly, by the end she is friendless. Instead of disappointment at the oppressive school system's victory, we mainly feel relieved it has not given in to hysteria. Furthermore, any lingering concerns we may have about the approach of the school merely provide succour to reformers arguing schools in the past were long in need of reform anyway.

Of all the films, *Half Nelson* undoubtedly comes closest to Great Refusal and without question Dan Dunne is the teacher most unambiguously promoting critical thinking amongst pupils.[77]

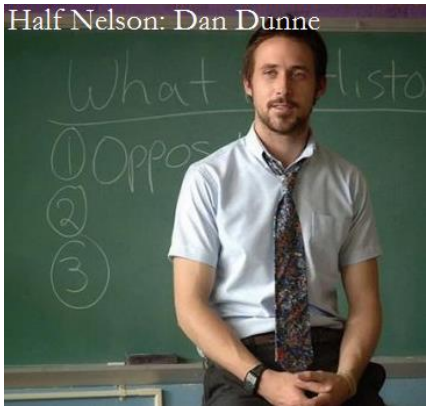
[76] Also finishing with a climactic assembly, *If….* ends in an orgy of violence where a group of oppressed students take revenge on the teachers and pupils who tormented them by machining gunning them from the rooftops of the school.
[77] Interestingly, given the methodological nature of this thesis, Dan's teaching is based on dialectics, which he tells pupils is about 'opposites. It's two things that push against each other in opposite directions' leading to change (Fleck, 2006). He is also trying, but failing, to write a children's book on dialectics.

Arguably one of the 'outcasts and outsiders' that Marcuse saw Great Refusal emanating from, Dan also seems determined to educate his pupils into how domination and oppression are revealed and potentially defeated (Marcuse, 2002, p.260). Students investigate famous anti-establishment events, each featuring extended flash-backs.[78] Plus, in easily the most dramatic example of constructions of society being challenged in any of the films, he shows them the 'Operation of the Machine Speech' by 1960s countercultural activist Mario Savio:

> There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels; upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop and you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all (Fleck, 2006).

Dan asks his class: 'what is this machine that he's talking about? It's keeping us down. What is it?' To which they reply in turn: 'prisons', 'white' and 'schools'. Dan agrees, adding: 'the school, exactly. The whole education system is part of the machine' (*ibid*).

Half Nelson also avoids common plot devices noted in the literature review. Dan is no hero teacher and his only attempt at 'rescuing' a pupil ends in abject failure after he confronts Frank, a black drug-dealer attempting to recruit Drey into his operation. But Frank is not the stereotypical criminal of other films - articulate and non-violent, he merely points out Dan's hypocrisy and gives him a lecture on racism.



Yet even Dan Dunne's Great Refusal remains under-cooked. His drug addiction is not necessarily the problem - this could symbolise his alienation in a society totally opposed to his worldview. Dan's sexual assault is more difficult to overlook, as is the fact once again black people are shown in dysfunctional capacities - drug-dealers, prisoners, single-parents and prostitutes. Any empathy we also had for Frank evaporates when he uses Drey to deliver drugs, ensuring any raid captures her, not him. Finally, even Dan's teaching becomes long-winded, repetitive and boring. If Dan is indicative of the quality of American revolutionary leaders, don't be surprised if its children grow up preferring capitalism.

[78] These are the *Brown vs Board of Education* Supreme Court decision banning school desegregation, Harvey Milk, the Attica Prison uprising and the CIA-assisted coup in Chile. Dan also teaches his class about the left-wing union leader, Cesar Chavez, the originator of the slogan 'yes we can'.

Lost in Translation: Pseudo-Art and Counterrevolution

In *Repressive Tolerance*, Marcuse railed against newscasters who discussed murders of civil rights workers in the same tone used to read the weather (Marcuse, 1969a, p.98). The effect of the films analysed in this thesis is similar. They provide a means for film-makers and the paying public to pretend they care passionately about injustice, without ever actually doing anything about it: we go to the cinema, watch the movie, discuss with friends how truly terrible it is these circumstances remain….and then we talk about the weather. Ultimately, they offer no meaningful threat to societal structures, no Great Refusal. Marcuse argued the only response to intolerable conditions in life was to be utterly intolerant towards them - if necessary, violently so - but these films are about as ferocious as a shrug of the shoulders. Overall, they don't wear real clothes of injustice, damaged by decades of resistance, instead they are draped in disneyfied princess costumes – fake, plastic and irritating.

For Marcuse, such soft-centred rebellions helped support the one-dimensional society by pre-emptively removing most forms of protest – when people believe their society is open to dissent and perhaps even encourages it, they are far less likely to significantly challenge the system. Marcuse argued one of the ways culture achieved this was that oppressive societies used all forms of mass communication, including culture, as 'instruments of domination' where dissent was blocked before it had fully taken shape (*ibid*, p.95). For Marcuse, only dialectical thinking could truly enable people to become fully autonomous and recognise the one-dimensional world around them. But for this to happen, they would first have to be 'freed from the prevailing indoctrination' which surrounds them (*ibid*, p.98). One of the problems preventing this however, was that the people did not recognise that mass communication tools, including culture, were being used as part of the indoctrination, making them receptive to their deceptions and distortions.

For Marcuse, in becoming 'instruments of domination', culture had fundamentally changed. Where once it revealed and stood proudly against oppression, confronting it with images and words against its tyranny, Marcuse argued that art had subjected itself to history and lost, confirmation rather than denial - becoming 'pseudo-art' (*ibid*, p.89). It is worth considering this label for these films. When protests are featured, they are empty and phoney insurrections, devoid of context, obfuscating of perpetrators and quickly forgotten. The ultimate emptiness of the films' protests revealed by the fact that their release changed nothing, either in threat or in

actualité. No government dogmas were criticised and no policies were altered by their production and dissemination. The movies led to no long-lasting national discussions or outcries - if the one-dimensional society exists, it helps maintain its survival by hiding its presence from the misinformed public through the pretence of rebellion in such cultural artefacts.

In fact, so naked are some of the messages of *Freedom Writers, Coach Carter* and *Won't Back Down,* they can perhaps be regarded as something beyond a repressively tolerated dissent. Marcuse argued capitalist states were live to threats against their dominance and engaged in counterrevolutionary actions in response (Marcuse, 1972, p.1). Marcuse took art's power as a force for counterrevolution extremely seriously, arguing that when all it did was 'beautify and justify the existing order' it became a tool of an oppressive status quo (Marcuse, 1972, p.92). So explicitly do these films speak to celebrations of go-getting individualism, victim-shaming and denigrations of 'failing' education, and so explicitly do they attempt to smuggle these behind clothes of progressivism, that their counterrevolutionary, *not* revolutionary credentials should be acknowledged.

Protests in *Freedom Writers, Coach Carter and Won't Back Down* all suggest neoliberalism may provide the answer in education. Equally, what is noticeable about all ten films is that there is absolutely no protest regarding the actual impact of neoliberalism on the school systems they represent. Thanks to the tools of repressive tolerance, those watching may be deceived into believing this is simply unimportant – since films offer a variety of protests, the absence of concern about contemporary education policy means there cannot be a problem. In this regard, these films may also be considered as tools of useful diversion, deceiving the populace into believing that yes, there are things worth protesting about in regards to education, but neoliberalism isn't one of them.

This impact on the population's consciousness is the central subject of the final section of this dialectic. The potential success of the films' indoctrination qualities or counterrevolutionary aspirations is ultimately dependent on one thing – their impact upon the cognisance of the viewing public. If that impact is minimal or non-existent then any concern over either the films' brainwashing capabilities or their role in the one-dimensional world is misplaced. If that impact is significant, there is reason for all those who believe in critical thinking to be alarmed.

6.4 OBLIVION: THE HAPPY UNCONSCIOUSNESS

The previous three sections of this chapter were highly specific in their analysis, subjecting the movies in the sample to a forensic and detailed dialectical examination that critiqued the films first on an individual basis, before assessing common, shared concepts. This final section adopts a different approach, for it examines a concept that requires a more holistic appreciation of the films, a greater analytical understanding of their *collective* impact upon the population as a whole – their contribution to what Marcuse called the 'happy consciousness' of the people.

For Marcuse, happy consciousness was ultimately how capitalism survived. Previously, *unhappy* consciousness prevailed – the subjugated populace remained aware, including through culture, of how the system worked against them, but were powerless to change its oppression (Marcuse, 2002, p.59). In advanced capitalist states however, Marcuse argued that unhappy consciousness had become 'happy consciousness': thanks to ever-increasing wealth, plus the failure of culture and mass communication to expose people to capitalism's damaging effects, most now believed the system worked (Marcuse, 2002, p.87). Marcuse argued, this led to the 'acceptance of the misdeeds' of the societies in which happy consciousness existed and the growing destruction of people's ability to be critical of the capitalist world (Marcuse, 2002, p.79). This made happy consciousness a vital element of the one-dimensional society.

However, more than half a century has passed since Marcuse conceived happy consciousness and it is justifiable to ask whether the capitalist system survives through the same means. It is reasonable to expect people's consciousness of ideological systems to develop over long timeframes and for those systems to need to adapt in order to maintain their supremacy. This thesis maintains that it is has arguably done precisely that - through its evolution into neoliberalism. In consequence, it could be suggested that the concept of happy consciousness requires updating. 'Consciousness' implies awareness and wakefulness. It suggests people have a good understanding of policies and wider systems governing their lives. A populace governed by a 'happy consciousness' may be mistaken in their acceptance of the society in which they live, but at least that decision is based on some degree of cognisance. Marcuse implicitly acknowledged this when he argued that in advanced societies people believed in capitalism because they thought it 'delivered the goods' – believing in something starts with understanding it exists in the first place (Marcuse, 2002, p.53).

Yet it has been argued that people don't even realise they are living in neoliberal regimes. The authors of one study for example, found that only a third of the audience at their keynote lecture at an education conference had even heard of neoliberalism: 'the equivalent of living under communism or democracy without having heard such terms' (Baird & Elliot, 2018, p.533). Similarly, I recently asked a group of two-hundred undergraduate students on a highly-regarded initial teacher education course if they had heard of the term – only six had done so, only two could identify *anything* about it, and none knew the profession they wished to join was deeply affected by its practices. If this is the case for highly educated people, including those who study or work in education, it is understandable if the cognisance of others is far worse. It is difficult for people to live in 'happy consciousness' with neoliberalism if they don't even know what it is or how it affects them.

This final section therefore suggests Marcuse's concept should instead be reframed as the 'happy unconsciousness' and examines how the movies in the sample support its creation in education. This critical exploration does not seek to examine happy unconsciousness through the messages of individual films; instead, it considers the film sample as a collective, asking whether they lull people into unconsciousness through the fantasies of reel education, thereby unwittingly accepting oppressive perspectives of real education. It does so by first exploring how movies hide and distort aspects of neoliberal education and then by identifying reasons why the film industry might do this. It finishes by considering happy unconsciousness more widely and how it is manifested in societies increasingly mired in confusion and ignorance.

Hidden Figures: How Movies Contribute to Unconsciousness of Neoliberal Education

We want to believe we are discerning critical animals, capable of resisting carefully packaged on-screen perspectives. However, chapter three already identified how movies can have a powerful effect on viewers' attitudes. For example, many scholars argue that our images of wars are generated to a significant degree from movies - the Vietnam War and *Platoon* or *Forrest Gump* being a particularly good example (Lembcke, 2000; McMahon, 2002; De Carvalho, 2006). Similarly, consider for a moment how adults gain their impressions of teaching - where do they come from? Attitudes towards schools form in complex ways, often contaminated by memories of our own or our children's schooling. But for all bar a tiny number, it cannot possibly be from observing recent, real, classrooms. The only time most see teaching taking place is on screen. Consider therefore, someone whose mind is wiped of all previous knowledge and information -

indulge this fantasy further by imagining they are reintroduced to the world *only* through films. What impressions might our subject form from the movies in the sample? How would our patient's consciousness about education be developed?

The previous three sections outlined how our patient is likely to form an opinion of education closely aligned to the attitudes of neoliberal reformers. They would learn of numerous problems needing solving: the majority of teachers are ineffective and many are uncaring ogres, idiots, racists or even paedophiles; the low expectations of those teachers and their schools are to blame for generational educational failure; but this incompetence isn't surprising, because they are led by corrupt, officious clowns who have presided over years of mediocrity. In addition to inept leaders, bureaucracy and petty union-enforced regulations have the system in gridlock. However, there is good news – news that might make our patient feel contented, because there are some teachers who are dedicated and highly effective. Their success reveals teaching isn't complicated – all it takes is hard work and endless belief in children. In fact, these pedagogical stars reveal that many of society's problems, including racism and poverty, *can* be addressed, perhaps even solved, by schools. If only *all* teachers were equally effective.

These are the same messages of the neoliberal state. It is therefore difficult to escape a conclusion that the movie industry has been a cheerleader for the neoliberal educational revolution. Thus is revealed, for education at least, the danger of a desublimated cultural world so feared by Marcuse, where the state's aspirations are incorporated 'into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale' (Marcuse, 2002, p.60). However, this tells only part of the problem, for what is arguably even more striking about the films are the education narratives our patient would never learn. These narratives are the consequences of the neoliberal policies, identified in chapter two, that have been implemented since the 1980s to address 'failing' British and American schools. These narratives are becoming harder to ignore in real life, but are as yet untold in cinemas.

In no film is there any sense of the reinvention of schools as 'exam factories', with pupils, teachers and schools endlessly justifying their existence through high-stakes tests (Coffield & Williamson, 2011; Ball, 2007, p.182; Au, 2011, p.25). American and British schoolchildren are the most tested in the world, taking a stream of practice and real assessments with hugely important consequences (Alexander et al, 2009, p.313; Hart et al, 2015). As chapter two discussed, these are so wide-ranging that education itself has been redefined: what matters is

what is tested, meaning curricula are narrowed to assessed subjects (McMurrer & Kober, 2007; Berliner, 2011; Au, 2011). Consequences for non-'core' subjects are profound, with timetable allocation dramatically reduced and student numbers studying them in schools and universities falling (Johnes, 2017; Jeffrey's, 2018).

In no film is there any reflection of the extensive debate surrounding the privatisation of significant elements of the American and British school systems discussed previously (Hatcher, 2006; Ball, 2009; Saltman, 2009, p.60; Ravitch, 2010, p.220-223; West & Bailey, 2013). Once the future of only pupils depended on tests, now their schools' status as fully public-sector organisations are at stake. Schools 'underperforming' on such measures are forcibly handed over to private organisations, their link with democratically elected bodies broken, their senior leaders usually removed.

In no film is there a sense of the effects of this accountability culture on schools and teachers, creating a 'Society of Control' aimed at ensuring data graphs of pupil results curve ever upwards (Wood, 2014, p.227). Schools and teachers, under relentless pressure to deliver results are kept on perpetual states of high alert; in Britain the vast majority of the system is enforced by high-stakes government inspection organisations and although America has no nationwide inspection system, their teachers are no strangers to audit cultures, ever watchful for troublemakers and 'under-performance' (Apple, 2005). Predictably, American and British teachers report high levels of stress and workload caused by pressures to 'perform'. A recent survey of 7000 British teachers revealed a concerning picture: 78% felt constantly judged; only 12% could relax and 81% were too tired for hobbies; 84% believed the job had impacted on their wellbeing; 78% had suffered recent workplace stress; 64% felt their mental health had deteriorated and 3% had self-harmed in the past year; 41% had seen a medical professional with job-related problems and 65% were seriously considering leaving the profession (NASUWT, 2019). Unsurprisingly, teacher recruitment and attrition has become a significant problem: 31% of new British teachers leave within five years - 41% in America (Foster, 2018, p.10; Ingersoll et al, 2014; p.23). Coupled with this are reductions in people wanting to become teachers in the first place: 240,000 fewer Americans joined the profession in 2014 compared to five years earlier and Britain only recruits 80% of the secondary school teachers it needs (Sutcher et al, 2016, p.3; Taylor, 2018).

In no film is there an analysis of how the neoliberal system affects pupils. 49% of British secondary teachers report knowing pupils who are suicidal because of exam pressure, 81% know students self-harming for the same reason (NEU, 2018b). In America, hospital admissions for suicidal teenagers have doubled in under a decade (Plemmons et al 2017). In both nations, such are the concerns over anxiety that schools are increasingly implementing 'well-being' strategies to address poor pupil mental health. Furthermore, many children are being denied an education at all; chapter two noted the high levels of student attrition in some charter chains - pupils either unable to cope with high-intensity approaches or literally 'disappeared' off school-rolls for fear they would drag down scores. Britain faces similar problems, with 8000 pupils annually 'off-rolled' by secondaries fearful of their impact on GCSE results (Nye and Thomson, 2018).

And in no film, despite their apparent concern with matters of race, is there any sense of how American schools are being re-segregated - they are now *more* racially segregated than on the day Martin Luther King was assassinated (Orfield et al, 2014, p.2). As chapter two noted, charter schools are a key contributory factor and the spread of parental choice more widely has allowed parents to increasingly educate their children away from those of a different background (Orfield et al, 2014, p.34; Billingham & Hunt, 2016). In Britain, segregation by poverty is also a real and growing concern, with evidence suggesting neoliberal 'solutions' such as academies exacerbate the problem (Gorard, 2014).

So our fictional patient would never learn that there is indeed a crisis in many quarters of British and American education - not one caused by schools, but by the policies put in place to 'fix' them. They would never learn that teachers are exhausted and stressed; children are sick, taught by non-specialists, segregated from those who don't share their background and because choice is not extended to children in neoliberal education, funnelled into ever-narrower subject options. Without identifying neoliberalism as the cause of these problems, the possibility for a wide-scale public rebellion against it remains limited – there is little prospect that such an awareness will come from movie theatres. From films at least, our patient remains unconscious of educational reality.

Marcuse argued happy consciousness formed through other factors, not just culture: rising living standards and the appearance of liberty lulled them into believing the system was benevolent and successful. Mass media, including news and advertising, constantly reinforced that misapprehension. These created desires and needs that had proved 'the most effective and

enduring form of warfare against liberation' and thus the perpetuation of capitalism (Marcuse, 2002, p.6). Equally, even if happy consciousness has become unconscious, we must recognise that education movies can only play one part of its creation and its sustenance of the status quo. Nevertheless, that part cannot be easily dismissed. When we watch we learn nothing of the damage caused by the neoliberal education revolution. Instead, like our patient, our minds become distracted by stories alien to the actual lives of teachers and pupils; fictions dulling us to the real objectives of the dominant.[79] The consequence is their contribution to the deception of the public and its unwitting complicity in the preservation of neoliberal education and one-dimensional thinking.

Dazed and Confused: Explaining the Complicity

A significant factor in explaining the absence of neoliberal educational stories is money. As Michael Eisner, the CEO of Disney from 1984-2005, once wrote in an internal memo: 'we have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective' (Rubens & Rubens, 2008, p.163). As money remains the key determinant in what movies get made, financial factors partly dictate the stories depicted – or their absence. Put simply, a capitalist industry, concerned about pleasing shareholders and staying ahead of competitors, puts profit over nuance and accuracy. Few films will ever be made challenging an economic model working in their favour: why question a system that enables the extraordinary wealth of movie studios? Those hoping for numerous critiques of capitalism by some of its biggest winners will remain disappointed.

In recent years however, the drive for profit has seen the major studios further narrow their range of film-making and become even less likely to take financial risks on films challenging the status quo. Safe-bets - remakes, sequels and franchises - dominate the market: the recent *Jumanji* remake earned Sony $1bn, the four new *Star Wars* films generated $5.2bn for Disney, and the (so far) twenty-three Marvel films have grossed $23bn.[80] Films continue to rely on proven formulas that squeeze out opportunities for more original storylines. *Wonder* and *Bad Teacher*, which collectively grossed well over half a billion dollars, prove the value of comedies and uplifting dramas. *Freedom Writers, Notes on a Scandal, Coach Carter* and *Precious,* collectively earning $300m, prove even harder-hitting dramas can succeed so long as they have reassuring endings,

[79] Even teachers have shown themselves highly susceptible to the distraction, consistently voting *Dead Poets Society* as their favourite school movie in opinion polls (Bradshaw, 2008; Vaughan, 2013).

[80] Figures provided are income, not profit, and include DVD sales. All figures provided are from the-numbers.com.

an undercurrent of morality and don't question things too far. However, *Half Nelson* and *The Falling,* taking only $8m between them, suggest more 'challenging' films are only ever likely to be released to a small number of theatres and once there will find limited audiences.

The box-office receipts of the sample are indicative of a movie-going public preferring illusionary diversions rather than probes into the darker recesses of the construction of society. Many people arguably prefer to remain numb to education's problems and so won't watch films demanding intense and critical thinking about deep-rooted issues, so in turn they don't get made. Thus is created a vicious circle of credulity, a deceptive bubble cocooning people from reality – from consciousness. As the world becomes more unsettled, the bubble becomes stronger: the movie-going public seeks solace in films offering happy and fantastical distraction, the movie industry is only too happy to provide them. Such a world is glimpsed by the genres of the fifty highest-grossing movies of the last decade: twenty-five are fantasies, ten are superhero films, five are science-fiction stories and a further five are action films (IMDb, 2019).

A bubble of unconsciousness applies to education movies as much as any genre. Although there has been an explosion of education movies since the Reagan and Thatcher years, when their focus on education sparked public interest, they too are fantasies or superhero films, providing illusions of myth, folklore and escapism.[81] The education movie recipe of the last forty years, which the films in this thesis have not departed from, remains consistent with six ideological ingredients: there is a problem with schools and teachers; society's problems are not caused or exacerbated by government policies; how those policies effect schools is unimportant; the answers lie in simple solutions rather than complex long-term changes; and schools can fix society, so why don't they? The stories may be different, but the message remains the same – education is broken, but the super-structure is unblemished. At best this provides unstated validation of neoliberal thinking, at worst, a direct echoing of its ideas. Although they cannot match the profits of the major blockbusters, the recipe provides good returns from a willing public comfortable within the bubble – the near $900m the sample films earned suggests the genre is unlikely to depart from the recipe soon.

By making a constant stream of diversionary films making little critical commentary on how society is ideologically constructed, or worse, by justifying conventional thinking when they do, the movie industry helps maintain the happy unconsciousness in education and beyond, thus

[81] An issue demonstrated by the fact only 20% of the films identified for the long-list were made pre-1980 (Appendix 1).

preserving and enhancing one-dimensional thinking. Consider historical lessons from other strands of society when contemplating this perspective. Where were the films damning segregation and racism *before* the 1960s? Why were countless films made during the Cold War celebrating capitalism and decrying communism? Why have movie villains started becoming Muslims? Why do only half of current films pass the Bechdel Test?[82] Name five films exploring sexism as a key narrative feature. Name one film about the eighty-three million Americans without any or adequate health insurance. Where are the films questioning why in the richest country in the world, forty-three million Americans live in poverty? Or a feature-film analysing why 2.3 million Americans are in prison or why the incarceration rate of black people is six times higher than white people? Stories that don't get told are as important as those that do.

Films like *Precious* provide a useful moral cover for the industry, allowing it to maintain it has both a heart and a conscience, but the profit motive takes precedence. Movies are more likely to achieve strong returns if they provide comforting narratives giving audiences what they want, not what they need - encouraging radical dissent is best discouraged if your motivation lies with the preservation of a system celebrating wealth as the ultimate indicator of success. If what people want is to be kept happy rather than to engage in critical issues about education, than ignorance and somnambulance are likely to follow. The movies in this thesis are happy to provide them.

A final factor in how it could be argued happy unconsciousness is an accurate definition of our times, is in the rise of confusion. In the political sphere, politicians increasingly utilise complexity in two ways: by deliberately creating it and by claiming they have the road-map escaping from its grasp. For example, in Russia, Putin has been accused of retaining power by deliberately spreading conflicting stories to keep everyone permanently bewildered and the Trump Presidency has achieved the same thing - his telling of 'alternative facts' arguably a deliberate tool of distraction making it hard to focus on anything for long (Pomerantsev, 2011).[83] When Trump's lawyer says 'the truth isn't the truth' we can be sure that whatever it is, it is probably slipping from our grasp (Pilkington, 2018).

[82] A film passes the Bechdel test if two named female characters have a single conversation that isn't about a man. Statistics taken from Bechdeltest.com, 2018.

[83] *The Washington Post* has been fact checking all Trump's claims since becoming President and as of May 23rd 2019 he had made 10,111 false or misleading claims – an average of over twelve per day of his presidency (Kessler et al, 2019).

The internet and social media concentrate the effect. 'Fake news' is created and spread easily, and there is such a barrage of competing voices we no longer know who or what to believe. Exacerbating this are moves away from traditional print journalism and growing distrust of the news media. Even when we do read the news, we don't believe it: 51% more Britons distrust print media than trust it; only 32% of Americans trust the media and only 28% think it supports democracy (EBU, 2017; Gallup, 2016; Gallup 2018). This vacuum of uncertainty provides an ideal opportunity for regressive forces to assert control and shape 'reality'.

Politicians selling simplistic policy solutions in response to complexity are one way those forces utilise confusion to their advantage and in a world of misperception and personal exhaustion, we are so focused on being unfocused that any number of their policies can come and go with little lasting scrutiny. In either supporting those narratives or in creating their own, movies play an equally duplicitous role. Politicians, eager to say they have made a difference in education, identify unsophisticated policies as the 'answers', the process ultimately leading to failure and harm because the reality of education is so much more complex. Movies are natural partners in this illusion. Long distrustful of the public's willingness to watch, comprehend or enjoy complexity, films' preference has long been for neatly-packaged simplistic narratives providing answers to neatly-packaged problems. Culture and politics therefore find harmonious agreement – complexity is the enemy of narrative.

In such a scenario, unconsciousness reigns. In education movies, culture and politics have made comfortable bedfellows. The result is that a rounded appreciation of the nature and possibilities of education remains limited. This societal and cultural ignorance has not only made it far easier for education to be reformed under the auspices of neoliberalism, but it has also meant that the very negative consequences of those reforms remain substantially hidden: the prospect of the triumph of one-dimensional thinking in education becomes a real possibility.

Awakenings: Returning to Sentience

Writing over fifty years ago, Marcuse identified the problem in societies where 'truth' becomes increasingly abstract or opaque. In democracies with a 'totalitarian organisation' he argued the ability to say what you liked and for all views to be tolerated and be considered on equal merit created 'a mental attitude which tends to obliterate the difference between true and false, information and indoctrination, right and wrong' (Marcuse, 1969a, pp.97/99). Part of the

problem with tolerance, argued Marcuse, was our 'toleration of the systematic moronisation of children and adults alike by publicity and propaganda' (*ibid*, p.83). This 'moronisation' had predictably damaging consequences, for it resulted in 'manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters' (*ibid*, p.90).

For Marcuse, the solution was one many found uncomfortable: a reduction of tolerance on all views (Marcuse, 1969a). But in the light of the ideological constructs identified in the movies in this research, it is worthwhile wondering if Marcuse had a point. Education movies need to be assessed against concerns regarding the deliberate spreading of misinformation and the hiding of complex reality. In the absence of clarity, it becomes easier to bring 'certainty to chaos' through destructive policies, or if the consequences of those policies are ignored and thus perpetuated. It would be an exaggeration to say *only* movies create obscurity in the educational field, but they are an important contributory factor enabling politicians to reform education free from cultural inquisition - or worse, with the culture industry's support. Inspired by Marcuse, perhaps we shouldn't tolerate education films spreading stupefication, distortion and mistruth. We shouldn't tolerate the obfuscation of hugely significant problems in education policy behind distracting and deceitful cultural camouflage. We shouldn't tolerate the false blaming of schools and teachers for societal issues caused elsewhere and we should consider the consequences of allowing these messages to infect the population without the possibility of redress.

All pieces of art, movies included, have the power to act as cultural validators to wider societal perceptions; their creation standing as a symbol that an attitude, idea or impression is 'important enough' to be made into a film and to be taken seriously as a topic of wider discussion. Equally, the absence of particular issues is an indicator there is nothing yet to become concerned about – until we see them on the big screen, the issue 'hasn't made it'. So until films are made about the now long-standing reality in many British and America schools, we are left only with the lullabies from the films in the sample and their older forebears. Yet, like Marcuse, we should remain hopeful of art's power to awaken as well as to anaesthetise. He never lost faith that art *could* provide the means for people to understand the oppression in which they live. A year before his death, Marcuse wrote: 'art can be called revolutionary if…it represents, in the exemplary fate of individuals, the prevailing unfreedom and the rebelling forces, thus breaking through the mystified (and petrified) social reality, and opening the horizon of change (liberation)' (Marcuse, 1978, p.xi). Movies, like all culture, may help sustain the happy unconsciousness, but they *can* also inspire escape from its grip.

Take for example, a contender for genuine Great Refusal, the 2016 Palme d'Or winning, *I, Daniel Blake;* a scream of outrage against a benefit system demonising and degrading the poor, forcing people into food banks, destitution, prostitution and early death. The film was made six years into the state-shrinking assault on the welfare-state initiated by the Coalition Government, the policy neither a secret nor unpopular (Parker, 2015). Yet the visualisation of the welfare cuts' hidden pernicious effects caused a prolonged debate that played a significant role in the right reducing its attack, including its complete absence from the 2017 Conservative Manifesto. We can only hope that such a film is made about education, exposing the world as it really is to a somnolent and confused populace, puncturing the happy unconsciousness to which they have succumbed, helping them to return to unhappy consciousness and the conditions needed for the end of neoliberal education. Until that time, we must each offer our own Great Refusals. To that end, the next chapter seeks to play a small part in offering another vision of education to that of the misleading and concealing movies analysed in this thesis.

CHAPTER 7

PRAXIS

There Will Be Blood: Critical Storytelling

Chapter four identified how Marcuse, unlike other Frankfurt School scholars, remained consistently committed to praxis - actions where 'struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality (and) culture' (Marcuse, 1969b, p.23). Such actions can be considered as Great Refusals, activism for 'a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the form of the society itself' (*ibid*). In keeping with a particularly Marcusean idea of critical theory, this thesis therefore also adopts its own praxis. Inspired by the topic under discussion, it does so through critical storytelling, specifically a film-script aiming to puncture the bubble of the happy unconsciousness.

Although Marcuse did not personally use critical storytelling, his work cited examples of fictional writing, particularly Thomas Mann, which he regarded as acts confronting oppression. (Marcuse, 1969b, p.36; Marcuse, 1972, p.90; Marcuse, 2002, p.62).[84] Fictional storytelling also has links with other writers associated with the Frankfurt School. As well as being a chronicler of storytelling's importance, Walter Benjamin was an extensive practitioner, particularly in exploring what is and what might be (Hale, 2009, p.347; Benjamin, 2016). Furthermore, friend and collaborator of the Institute, Berthold Brecht, was one of the most influential critical storytellers of the twentieth century, his plays famous for direct political critique. Brecht created the 'epic theatre' movement, distancing himself from regular drama aiming primarily at entertainment. For Brecht, the latter offered false commentaries and temporary suspension of belief; he sought long-lasting emotional change in audiences, coining the term 'dialectical theatre': a *permanent* mind-shift taken back into their everyday lives (Barnett, 2015, p.36). Brecht labelled this the 'estrangement effect', in which the audience understood the world better, particularly historical conjunctions between context and social reality (Silberman et al, 2019, p.5). Providing illustration that Marcuse saw revolutionary, as well as oppressive potential in culture, in *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse called the estrangement effect the chance for culture 'to teach what the contemporary world really is behind the ideological and material veil, and how it can be changed' (Marcuse, 2002, p.70).

Although not a Frankfurt School scholar, Hannah Arendt shared their over-riding concern with authoritarianism. Storytelling was arguably Arendt's 'primary route to critical understanding',

[84] Marcuse's doctoral dissertation *The German Artist-Novel*, devoted a large and sympathetic section to Mann, particularly *Death in Venice* (Kellner, 1984, pp.28-30). In exile in 'German California', as Mann called it, the author was also a friend of many critical theorists, particularly Adorno, whom he asked for advice on musicology for *Doctor Faustus* (Müller-Doohm, 2014, pp.315-319).

with her 'dialectical and circling' storytelling allowing her to 'think without a banister' (Gallagher, 2011, pp.51-52; Arendt, 2014, p.43; Arendt, 2018). For Arendt, storytelling was not about demanding agreement or providing 'answers', but an attempt of 'actively engaging with others in their place, on their terms' (Jackson, 2007, p.26).

In recent research, critical storytelling has become closely related to critical race theory (CRT), which utilises it to 'challenge, displace or mock' established narratives of racial power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.49). CRT scholars use storytelling to offer countering accounts to 'the 'master-narrative' of racism dominating society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, pp.27-28). They argue 'counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform' (*ibid*, p.32). Storytelling is also becoming an established methodological feature of education research. Gallagher argues it is 'centrally important' because much education research is focused on the lived experiences of those involved in teaching and learning, providing a means through which to provide clarity and meaning: after concepts and ideas have been 'pulled apart' by objective research methods, storytelling can put 'research back together as a partial and intersubjective critical experience' (Gallagher, 2011, pp.49/53). Similarly, other educational scholars reject objective/subjective divides between traditional forms of research and narrative writing – arguing that since the former makes few definitive claims to objectivity, the latter is no less valid (Spindler, 2008, p.21; Barone, 2001, p.152).

Critical storytelling has been described as a 'method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told' (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.32). The following script aims to achieve this in regards to the experiences of pupils and teachers living under neoliberal education. In doing so, it acts as my own piece of Marcusean Great Refusal, a work aiming to expose their lived experiences in a way the films analysed in this thesis fail to achieve. This failure has created a gap of understanding, a gap the script seeks to fill – an act of Great Refusal using a movie against the movies.

The script's particular focus are the consequences of the obsession with quantifiable metrics that chapter two identified as a key feature of neoliberal education. Its setting is a primary school, chosen for no other reason than my own two-decade educational career has been based in that field. This means that although the script is fictional, it is not fictive, for it is based on a 'cultural intuition' gained from theoretical and practical knowledge of the field (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p.563). Nevertheless, the script makes no claims on 'truth'; indeed, it deliberately deploys a

fantastical vehicle to make its points – horror. This genre is arguably appropriate for thinking about current issues in American and British schools, but it also allows for playful exaggeration to illuminate the realistic. The script seeks to shine a spotlight in the hope any viewers could, in a Brechtian sense, have their beliefs permanently effected by the experience. To borrow from Gallagher, the thesis thus far has 'pulled apart' the issues, the script seeks to bring them back together again - into sharp and disturbing focus.

The Education of Alasdair Soter

Staffroom of Eris Primary School. A clock says 7.43am. Staff mingle. Amidst the hub-bub, two teachers sit talking.	
Helen Newsom	How was your weekend?
Emily Ryerson	Saturday thinking about work, Sunday doing it.
Helen Newsom	Sounds familiar. [*Looks around*] Where's Ella?
	A man enters and sits down - a cue. Quiet descends.
Alasdair Soter	Good morning everybody.
	The staffroom door opens, a woman enters, flustered.
Ella White	Sorry Alasdair, nursery hold-ups.
Alasdair Soter	[*exasperated*] Ella, you know briefing starts promptly. Anyway, there are three foci this week – first, I'll be talking to you individually about the results of last week's mid-term assessments. I've spent the weekend analysing them….there are areas to address. Second, you'll know Caroline Brown is coming in from the authority tomorrow. We'll be observing everyone's lessons. Ruth and I will be coming around this afternoon to make sure classrooms look as they should. Finally, I'd like to remind everyone about Wellbeing Day this Friday. As you know this is part of the way we're addressing rising anxiety in your classes. We need the kids in the best frame of mind possible for end of year tests.
Later that day. Alasdair and his Deputy, Ruth Becker, are outside a door labelled 'Year 4, Mrs White'. Entering, they find the desks pulled to the sides and the children sat in two groups facing each other, engaged in lively debate. The atmosphere is raucous, but controlled. The children look highly motivated.	
Alasdair Soter	Mrs White, come with me. Mrs Becker, could you supervise the class. *Ella follows Alasdair out the room looking anxious.*
Alasdair Soter's office	
Alasdair Soter	Ella, what's going on?
Ella White	We're finishing our topic on food and debating whether governments should control people's diets.
Alasdair Soter	It was just before lunch, you should have been teaching Maths.
Ella White	Yes, but we were so busy with tests last week this was the only time we had.
Alasdair Soter	Did the lesson involve written work?
Ella White	No, but look at how much learning they were doing.
Alasdair Soter	Can you prove it? Can you show they made progress today?

Ella White	Come on Alasdair, you saw how engaged they were.
Alasdair Soter	The main thing I saw was no Maths. Given your class' Maths data that should be your priority…….Look, I was going to do this later, but Maths isn't the only problem. Your class haven't made the progress predicted. I don't see this changing. I'm sorry Ella, but we won't be renewing your contract at the end of the year.
Ella White	What? Please Alasdair……you can't do this.
Alasdair Soter	You'll find something else quickly; you know how pressed schools are to find teachers.
It's dark. Alasdair is working at his desk; a clock says 7.34pm. A knock on his door – the caretaker	
Frank Brady	I'm off. I've done the lights and locks, only the alarm left.
Alasdair Soter	Thanks Frank. See you tomorrow.
Reception. A clock says 8.16pm. Alasdair is locking up. He sees light coming from the gym at the end of the main corridor.	
Alasdair Soter	Bloody hell Frank *Alasdair walks towards the gym - he hears a faint screeching noise coming from within it. As he gets closer the noise becomes louder – its uncomfortable sound highly grating. He arrives at the gym's double-doors. He realises his heart is beating faster and his breathing is shallow. He takes a deep breath and opens the doors. A single light is on. Standing in its spotlight effect is a young girl, about 16, with short, red hair, dressed in school uniform - black skirt, white blouse. Her right hand is raised up to a blackboard, as she runs her nails down its length. She turns towards Alasdair and stops, her eyes look straight at him. She has dark eye make-up and several piercings. She then raises her left hand out to the front to reveal a cut across its width. Blood comes from the wound. Terrified, Alasdair switches on all the lights, dazzling him. When he refocuses, the girl and the screeching noise have gone.*
A flashback. A classroom and a young male teacher holding a copy of Oliver Twist. On the wall is a display entitled: 'This Term's Topic - The Victorians'.	
Teacher	So when Oliver goes to get the dead woman with Sowerberry, Dickens writes that in the area she lived the 'very rats, which here and there lay putrefying in its rottenness, were hideous with famine.' What does he mean?
Boy	It's so poor even the rats have nothing to eat?
Teacher	Right…but why did Dickens have so many poor people in his stories? Nobody else did.
Girl	Did he want to tell people about the conditions they lived in?
Alasdair's office. Alasdair and a woman are pouring over the documents covering his desk.	
Caroline Brown	Looking at this data you were right to let Ella go Alasdair. Alasdair?
Alasdair Soter	[*very distracted*] What? Sorry, yes.
Caroline Brown	Look Alasdair, give this your full attention. You've got about six months until your next inspection…..this data is borderline. You've got two teachers

	on long-term sick and two more under-performing. Stay focused……What are you doing in Year 6 to get them ready?
Alasdair Soter	Normal – booster classes in Maths and English, plus during PE, and Music
Caroline Brown	Practice tests?
Alasdair Soter	Twice a week.
Caroline Brown	Good. Consider doing the same in Year 5 – you'll be pleased of it this time next year.
Alasdair and Caroline are in an infant classroom. The children are copying the learning objective into their books in silence, as directed by instructions on the smartboard. Sunlight pours through the windows.	
Caroline Brown	Which is the booster group in here?
Alasdair Soter	That one [*points to a table*]
	She walks over. Alasdair scans the room. One boy, sat beside the window, back to the sun, stares at him intently. Alasdair smiles at the effect the sunlight has on him, making it appear he has a corona. Caroline returns.
Caroline Brown	Things going well in here, let's move on.
	They head to the door. Alasdair looks back - the boy is still staring at him. He is taken aback to see the boy still has the corona, even though the sun is no longer behind him.
Evening. Alasdair walks into a bar and sees the person he has come to meet.	
Iris Loring	Hey! Alasdair!
Alasdair Soter	Iris, great to see you!
	Cut to the two at a table, drinks to hand.
Alasdair Soter	Look, I'm sorry I didn't call. It was just when you left we didn't know what had happened…..I felt like I couldn't.
Iris Loring	Don't be daft, we've been friends too long. When did we meet on that new Headteacher's course - 15 years ago?
Alasdair Soter	So what happened?
Iris Loring	You know, usual – dodgy data.
Alasdair Soter	But it was so quick.
Iris Loring	It's always quick. Enough about me…..you?
Alasdair Soter	[*sheepish*] No, good. Everything's, great, just great.
Outside the bar	
Iris Loring	Don't be a stranger; let's do this again.
Alasdair Soter	Definitely. Delighted to see you so well.

	They say goodbye and walk off in different directions. Eventually Alasdair comes to a quiet residential area. In the background we hear a faint screech similar to the one that came from the gym. He becomes paranoid, noises from houses and people far off make him jumpy. The screech gets louder; he walks quicker. He arrives at his road, nearly home. He turns into his front drive. On his front lawn stands the girl – staring at him in silence, this time both wrists raised up to show him. He rushes inside, double-locking the door. His wife is there.
Brid Soter	Good grief, what's wrong?
Alasdair Soter	Go to the window. Look outside.
	She does so, pulling the curtains apart.
Brid Soter	What am I looking at?
	Alasdair looks - the girl has gone.
Another flashback; same teacher as before. Pinned to the blackboard is a large copy of 'Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward' by Luke Fildes.	
Teacher	Why did so many people go to see this? What's so shocking?
Boy	Because it shows poor people?
Teacher	Right. What does Fildes say about the poor though? Where are they?
Girl	Queuing.
Teacher	What for? Where did people go when they had nothing left?
Girl 2	The workhouse
Teacher	Good. So why such a fuss?
Boy 2	Because no-one showed it before. He wants us to feel angry.
Teacher	That's right. It was hidden away. Fildes brought it into the open.
The school gates, Alasdair greeting parents and children as they arrive. He looks on edge.	
Mrs Johnston	Mr. Soter, Could I talk to you for a minute please? About Eliza?
Alasdair Soter	Can you make an appointment Mrs Johnston?
Mrs Johnston	It's just we're worried about her grades.
Alasdair Soter	Mrs Johnston, she's seven. She shouldn't worry about her grades and neither should you.
Mrs Johnston	So why does she keep getting them?
	Alasdair struggles, partly because walking towards him is the boy from the infant class - around him a corona.

Alasdair Soter	Look, Mrs Johnston, make an appointment. *Alasdair hurries into the school*
The Gym - assembly. The children singing 'Give me oil in my lamp'. The song ends. An anxious looking Alasdair stands up – projected behind him are the words 'Wellbeing Day'	
Alasdair Soter	Here at Eris, our number one priority is that each and every one of you are happy and enjoying life and school. *Alasdair is struggling. He is squinting –disrupting his flow.* Mrs Becker, could you turn the projector off, it's very bright….yes, we're looking forward to today's activities and… *The projector goes off, but this wasn't the light causing problems. He sees dozens of children have coronas. He begins to hear the faint screech.* and…all....of...them *He looks out the windows. Standing in the playground is the girl. Alasdair stops talking, staring. Children and teachers look confused.* Mrs Becker…could you take over please? *Alasdair quickly walks out the gym.*
Alasdair rushes into the entrance way. He looks out to the playground - nothing. He turns to the receptionist.	
Alasdair Soter Mrs Ford Alasdair Soter	Mrs Ford, no calls. No appointments. You've got those new parents coming at eleven. Rearrange it. *Alasdair hurries into his office and shuts the door. Beads of sweat are on his face. He sits at his desk, head in hands. He types 'Eris schoolgirl suicide' into his computer. He clicks on the first link, a local newspaper. On the screen:* **'Local School Marks Anniversary of Death of Troubled Teen** A special service was held today at Achlis Secondary School to mark the first anniversary of the suicide of student Aisa Carter. Friends planted an oak tree and Head Teacher Juliet Taylor unveiled a plaque at its base. Mrs Taylor described her as a 'popular girl who is greatly missed'. Aisa had moved with her family to Achlis four years ago from the town of Eris, in Allenshire. Local sources said she appeared troubled from the beginning….' *Alasdair stops reading and slumps into his chair.*
Another flashback. Same teacher. The class are in the hall, all dressed in Victorian clothes. Several children are on the stage, one reads a speech. The others are stood listening, some holding banners saying 'SIGN THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER', 'FOR EVERY MAN, A VOTE', and 'SECRET BALLOT'. At the back of the hall a man sits on a chair holding a clipboard.	

Boy	Three and half millions have peaceably asked their rulers to do justice; and their rulers have turned a deaf ear to that protest. Three and a half millions of the slave-class have held out the olive branch of peace to the privileged classes on the principle of equality before the law; and the privileged have refused to talk with them! The same class is to be a slave class still. The people are not to be free. *Cheers come from the 'crowd'. The teacher smiles. The man at the back sits stony faced.*
A family home. A man, woman and boy watch TV. Around the room are photos, some include a young girl with long blonde hair. Some are just the boy or the girl. There is a knock at the door.	
Rob Carter	[*Standing up*] You expecting anyone?
Kate Carter	It's probably for you Will. [*looking at the boy*] *The father goes to the hallway and opens the door.*
Rob Carter	Mr. Soter! What are you doing here? *Cut to later. TV is off, the boy elsewhere.*
Lucy Carter	How did you find us?
Alasdair Soter	The Appletons. I knew….Aisa and Lily were friends. I've come to say I've only just found out…. about Aisa…I wanted to say how sorry I am.
Rob Carter	Well it's good of you to come.
Alasdair Soter	No, no, of course. *A long awkward pause.*
Alasdair Soter	(*Struggling*) Do you have any, any idea why?
Rob Carter	She had been unhappy for a long time.
Lucy Carter	When she was a little girl she was always so cheerful. But things changed at about five or six. She became more and more introverted…..anxious about everything. We used to speak to her primary school teachers about it.
Alasdair Soter	Yes, of course, I remember.
Lucy Carter	Things just got worse at Secondary. She never came out her room, then the red hair, the piercings. She started seeing a counsellor, but it made no difference.
Alasdair Soter	Was there anything else we could have done?
Rob Carter	You did all you could Mr. Soter. I mean, you even tried giving her a new start in another primary school – what more could you have done?

Alasdair at home, alone. He sits in the half-light of an open laptop. A high-pitched noise. He shoots up. He edges toward the window - nothing. He realises the noise is just the fan from the laptop. He sits down. His phone rings. He picks it up trepidatiously. Answering, his voice breaks.	
Alasdair Soter	Ah Iris it's you...no, no everything's fine…yes I'm free…great, there's something I've got to talk to you about…okay, see you in thirty minutes.
Same bar as before. Alasdair and iris are in a booth.	
Alasdair Soter	You know her Iris - Aisa Carter.
Iris Loring	Aisa?
Alasdair Soter	You know that stuff I told you when you took Aisa for her last year of primary? How unhappy she was, everything we'd tried had failed, needing a new beginning etc.
Iris Loring	Yes
Alasdair Soter	It was true, but that wasn't why I asked you. She was going to do badly on her final tests. I wanted her off the books….to bump up overall scores.
Iris Loring	Everyone's doing stuff like that Alasdair.
Alasdair Soter	Not you Iris. Everyone knew you took in the kids with troubles, the lost causes. That's why I asked. *Long pause*
Iris Loring	Why do you think you're seeing her?
Alasdair Soter	I don't know. God, I don't know what's going on. I'm going crazy.
Iris Loring	Not crazy Alasdair, no.
Alasdair Soter	What do you think she wants?
Iris Loring	Why don't you ask her? She's outside.
Alasdair Soter	What? *Alasdair sits bolt upright. He realises he can hear the screech, its sound becoming clearer over noises from the bar. He looks outside the window. In the empty courtyard garden is the girl. He looks again at Iris.*
Alasdair Soter	[*Terrified*] What's going on?
Iris Loring	I gave everything to teaching Alasdair. Not long after I left they discovered I had heart failure – didn't last much longer. I guess you could say they broke my heart. [*smiles*]….Go….let her help you. *Alasdair resists, but the compulsion to comply is overwhelming. He walks outside and slowly approaches the girl.*

Alasdair Soter	Aisa? *He edges closer, terrified. She remains in the same position as always. Eventually he stands directly in front of her.* Aisa? *The girl moves her hand slightly upwards. With great effort Alasdair takes it in his. Suddenly he sees a bright light, which then seems to separate, like a prism, into multiple colours. Then everything goes black.*
A final flashback. The teacher and the stony-faced man in an office, speaking fractiously	
Man	Why was there no written work in the lesson?
Teacher	It didn't need it - you could see how much they were learning.
Man	Can you prove it? Can you show they made progress today?
Teacher	Come on Pete, you could see how engaged they were.
Man	You can't measure engagement on these new tests Alasdair.
Alasdair's office. He stares into space, in a trance.	
Mrs Ford	Mr. Soter? Mr. Soter. *Alasdair comes to, startled. The receptionist is at his door*
Mrs Ford	Mr. Soter, the Crosbys are here – the new parents?
Alasdair Soter	Right. Yes. Thanks. *Cut to Alasdair with the Crosbys outside a classroom.*
Alasdair Soter	This is reception. We place big emphasis on learning through play in here. *He opens the door.*
Mrs Crosby	Can I go in? *Alasdair doesn't answer. He is staring at the children. The coronas have gone – instead Alasdair sees every child's aura. They are iridescent, every colour of the rainbow, swirling and intermingling. He is spellbound.*
Alasdair Soter	Yes, of course. *The Crosbys enter the classroom, mingling. Through it all Alasdair remains transfixed.*
Mr. Crosby	What's next Mr. Soter?
Alasdair Soter	[*Coming to*] Sorry, yes….Year 1. *They walk next door. Alasdair mumbles….*

	This is where we start to think about more academic approaches. *He opens the door. The parents enter. Alasdair smiles - more multi-coloured auras. But then, suddenly, he sees that for some, greys swirl amongst the bright colours. In one or two, greys are dominant.*
Mrs Crosby	How is music regarded in the school? *Alasdair ignores her and rushes out the room*
Mrs Crosby	Mr. Soter? *He barges into the Year 2 class. Bright colours still permeate the room, but amongst them are more and more greys. Alasdair enters every year group in turn. The greys become progressively more dominant. Finally he stands before a door with 'Year 6' on it, nervous. He eventually opens it and walks in - the class are taking a test. The children's auras are almost totally dominated by greys. They swirl slowly and lifelessly. Many have a few bright colours amongst them, but for others they are completely gone.*
Alasdair Soter	Children, put your pencils down. The tests are over.

CHAPTER 8

FINAL SCENE: CONCLUSIONS

Although Marcuse always remained optimistic of capitalism's long-term demise, it currently appears under limited imminent threat, with opposition fragmented and of little consequence. In the forty years since Marcuse's death, capitalism has arguably entrenched itself even further: the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of communism in Europe; the last major Marx-inspired power, China, has adopted many of capitalism's tools in reforming its economy; major left-wing parties, seeking 'third-ways' of government, drifted towards a reconciliation with neoliberal capitalism; and 9/11 saw a 'closing of the political universe' in order to unite behind the western-capitalist way of life against literal versions of Islam (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004, p.16). Despite the 2007-8 crisis, capitalism remains so stable that two authors involved in the 'Marcusean renaissance' argue, 'this is not to say that the world we live in, like that of Marcuse, is one that is simply in crisis, but rather that, across the various spaces in which it is grasped in thought, it is not in crisis enough' (Böhm & Jones, 2009, p.xiii).

To coin a phrase, for many there really is no alternative. It would therefore be understandable if people came to the conclusion that capitalism was indeed the 'natural' form of how society should be constructed – or put another way, the only dimension of the world worth considering. Education is a prime example of how alternatives have been diminished and this thesis has outlined how culture plays a part in the process. Depictions of incompetent schools and teachers 'reveal' a system no longer fit to be left to its own devices. Charges against zealous bureaucrats, constricting red-tape and corrupt officialdom lead audiences to assume that traditional governance structures of schools prevent an effective education for millions. The heroism of some however, tells viewers that redemption is possible, but only if teachers adopt rugged individualism, channelled into unending dedication and hard work, with little or no room left for rest and relaxation. Such teachers provide evidence that schools *can* address any problem, including poverty and racism, if only all teachers made education their first priority. The fact schools don't do this deflects blame from governments and onto educators – social injustices remain not because politicians create them, but because teachers won't fix them. In combination, education movies tell a story, repeated over decades, of a system needing radical reform.

Yet this story is significantly out-of-date. The system *has* been reformed – dramatically reformed. However, the movie industry has yet to catch-up with the consequences of the neoliberal education reformation, for the daily experiences of teachers and students in the test-based school system are yet to make it to cinema screens. A double-effect of reinforcement is thereby created – narratives justifying reform, but absence of their effect reinforcing ignorance and inaction.

Therefore, answering this thesis' first line of enquiry, recent education movies do reflect the current, dominant political attitudes towards education and because those messages are so consistent with their older cinematic brethren, they are likely to entrench such attitudes in audiences. In so doing, this thesis agrees the movies reinforce a new 'common sense' towards education, believing only neoliberalism provides answers to complicated and long-term issues (Apple & Swalwell, 2011, Torres, 2013; Apple, 2013). So if the one-dimensional concept has viability, if there is a world where people think in the same uncritical ways, then for education at least, movies help nourish it.

However, this assumes such a world exists. Yet movies like *I, Daniel Blake* suggest audiences are willing to engage with deeply critical movies challenging neoliberal constructions of society. The overwhelming commercial and critical success of *Black Panther* suggests millions will pay to watch films challenging conventional representations of people. Although not yet in cinemas, critical thinking towards neoliberal education *is* also present on screens. The release of the charter school championing *Waiting for Superman* prompted the 'Grassroots Education Movement' to produce *The Inconvenient Truth about Waiting for Superman*, which they released on DVD and the internet.[85] This counter-narrative helped limit the damaging effects of the documentary by challenging its use of research data and exposing its alignment to corporate groups wishing to privatise American education (Trier, 2013; Bruhn, 2014). Similarly, on the small screen, the entire fourth season of *The Wire,* one of the most acclaimed television programmes in history, was devoted to education, featuring numerous narratives questioning high-stakes testing and the irrelevance of a test-based curriculum to the lives of children from backgrounds of poverty and racism (Trier, 2010b).[86]


The Wire: Season 4

These cultural artefacts suggest screen culture has not lost the ability to think critically. Factoring in the near universal hostility in scholarship towards education movies identified by this thesis, this collectively suggests that critical thinking remains active in both cultural and academic forms. Indeed, for this thesis to use critical thinking to argue that the one-dimensional society exists

[85] The title inspired by *Waiting for Superman's* production by the same director who made the famous Al Gore climate change documentary.
[86] *The Wire* centred on the drugs trade in Baltimore and the local police force's attempt to contain it. Each series focused on a different element. Rolling Stone Magazine named *The Wire* the second-best TV show in history and season 4 has a 98% rating on Metacritic, which equates to near universal critical acclaim from professional reviewers (Sheffield, 2016).

would be to engage in the kind of 'performative contradiction' so dismissed by Habermas (Habermas, 1987, p.119). There are also encouraging signs that these challenging cultural artefacts may also be reflective of an emerging global trend towards increasingly critical conversations and behaviours. As well as the Occupy and Arab Spring movements cited in Chapter 4 as potential signs of Marcusean Great Refusal, protest movements such as Extinction Rebellion or the Greta Thunberg-inspired School Climate Change protests can also be seen in a similar light and authors are increasingly making the claim that climate change and capitalism are intertwined – a protest against the former can therefore be seen as a potential protest against the latter (Klein, 2015; Wright & Nyberg, 2015). Furthermore, although it is problematic to describe them as 'anti-capitalist', huge protests against Brexit in the United Kingdom and against Trump in the US and around the world, suggest the power of criticality is alive and well.

Thinking specifically about education, there are also encouraging signs that politicians are even reconsidering some of the key tenets of neoliberal reform. For example, in Britain it is now official Labour Party policy to scrap the academies programme, SATs testing and Ofsted, with its leader exclaiming that 'the language and methods of the market have invaded our schools', with the result being that 'the idea that education has value in and of itself has been in retreat, replaced by the more limited notion that the only point of education is to meet the needs of the economy or business' (Corbyn, 2019). Similarly, in the United States, two of the leading candidates for the Democratic nomination for President are campaigning on tickets opposing voucher systems and to row back on several charter reforms, including ending federal funding for their expansion and enacting laws preventing them from making profits (Sanders, 2019; Warren, 2019). The lack of national power (or even opinion poll leads) of these three politicians means that it is far too premature to predict the imminent demise of neoliberal education; nevertheless, the existence of these policies alone suggests that critical thinking retains its power to challenge the damaging status quo.

So although this thesis presents a case that education movies contribute to one-dimensional educational thinking, it does not conclude that society holds educational ideas in only one dimension, or that all alternative thinking has been eradicated. Nevertheless, such a perspective is entirely in line with Marcusean thinking. Marcuse argued the one-dimensional concept 'focused on tendencies' and 'there are large areas within and without these societies where the described tendencies do not prevail – I would say: not yet prevail' (Marcuse, 2002, pp.xlvii-xlviii). The one-dimensional society was therefore not a 'global, totalising, theory', instead it merely sought to

contrast 'one-dimensional and multidimensional thought and behaviour.' (Kellner, 2002, pp.xxv-xxvi). For Marcuse, the theory sought to highlight drifts and patterns of thought - there are many one-dimensional people, but 'the people' are not all one-dimensional.

Eat Pray Love: The One-Dimensional Diet

To help understand the 'drifts' towards one-dimensional thinking in education during the past four decades and the role movies have played in creating it, we can compare our cultural diet with our actual physical diet. Edible diet affects our physical and mental health – ingest the wrong foods and we may suffer from a range of ailments. Equally, our consumption of cultural artefacts, including movies, can affect our attitudes and behaviours. A diet of foods high in fat and sugar will have consequences; similarly, a cultural diet containing near identical messages will arguably lead to a closing-down of the awareness of alternative and the risk of one-dimensional thinking. But a multidimensional diet is possible - even for those who have slipped into poor dietary habits – for people can choose to consume a range of foods. Equally, you can consume a range of cultural products, including those encouraging critical thinking.

However, this metaphor has limitations. First, any trip to a supermarket reveals a range of healthy options – such choice is not so easily available culturally. It is difficult to raise people's critical functions with regards to education if the menu options are almost all versions of the same thing. Secondly, people are aware that food affects their health and so they can change diets if they wish; in contrast, people may have little cognisance of how cultural diet affects their outlook, including on education. Another form of ingestion is therefore required to fully illustrate the role of culture in affecting attitudes, an ingestion that occurs without us realising and where its impact remains almost unknown.

Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) is a key part of the manufacture of Teflon. As well as cooking pans, it is used in waterproof clothing, food-wrapping and stain-protecting chemicals for items such as sofas and carpets. When employees at a DuPont factory started getting the same chronic illnesses, the company began collecting blood samples - all contained PFOA. They compared them with blood samples from across America and around the world. *Every* sample contained PFOA – in fact, it is now believed that 99.7% of Americans have PFOA in

their bloodstreams, a figure likely to be replicated worldwide (Soechtig, 2018; Calafat et al, 2007). This is concerning as PFOA significantly enhances the risk of various cancers, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, hypercholesterolemia, pregnancy-induced hypertension, diabetes, infertility, ADHD and delayed puberty (Hoffman et al, 2010; Joensen et al, 2009; Fletcher et al, 2010; Fletcher et al, 2012; Steenland & Woskie, 2012).

Exaggerating similarities between the ingestion of education movies and worldwide poisoning should be avoided, but there are parallels worth considering. In both, the ingestion originates from products sold as life-enhancing experiences; in both, the contamination has taken place over decades; both change the host, one physically, the other mentally; and for both, the vast majority are unaware of the contaminant's impact. Caution is needed in taking the metaphor too far, but as already noted in chapter two this has not prevented authors from describing the effect of neoliberalism on education as 'poisonous' or as a virus spreading around the world (Sahlberg, 2010; Giroux, 2014). Another scholar even argues that another once-hidden mass contamination – the Flint water scandal – is 'minor compared with how many children are poisoned every day' in schools dominated by neoliberalism. (Hursh, 2017, p.392).[87]

If such a contamination has taken place in people's perceptions of education, it needs to be addressed and people's awareness of how movies shape their thinking needs to be developed. This thesis therefore concurs with numerous educators advocating the need to include film literacy in education courses at schools, universities and colleges, developing people's awareness of how films can act as dangerous hidden toxins affecting understanding of the world (Adkins & Castle, 2014; Dalton, 2010; Giroux, 2001a; Giroux, 2008; hooks, 2009; Kellner, 2003; Kellner, 2009b; Kimmerle & Cress, 2013; Silberman-Keller et al, 2008). Such an experience is in itself a challenge to one-dimensional thinking, a demand that people think critically about cultural tools.

Primary Colors: Contributions to Originality

As well as providing evidence of what can be revealed through a dialectical examination of cultural artefacts, this thesis also makes a number of claims to originality, particularly via addressing the second and third enquiry lines established in the opening chapter. The second centred on the role of Marcusean theory in understanding the world, questioning whether it

[87] In April 2014 Flint, Michigan changed its water supply to the Flint River, but then failed to treat the water so it wouldn't be contaminated by the ageing lead pipe system in the town. This resulted in over 100,000 Flint inhabitants becoming exposed to long-term lead poisoning, leading to President Obama declaring a Federal State of Emergency.

remained relevant and rigorous. The third and final enquiry centred on exploring education movies through neoliberalism.

Offering this thesis' clearest claim to originality is that no previous piece of scholarship has used Marcuse and one-dimensionality to analyse any aspect of movie-making, let alone those specifically examining depictions of schools. This is arguably explained by the fact that Marcuse only rarely mentioned movies specifically, preferring to discuss popular culture in generic terms. This has perhaps led scholars to deploy other critical theorists, particularly Adorno and Benjamin, when analysing popular culture. Considering Marcuse's extensive output on culture, this is a significant omission, ignoring how Marcusean concepts can be considered in analysing one of the most widespread cultural products.

The second significant contribution to originality is that this is the first academic work to make a sustained attempt at updating Marcusean thinking for the neoliberal era. Marcuse died only twelve weeks after the election of Margaret Thatcher in May 1979 and as a consequence his work does not explicitly address neoliberalism or its consequences. Perhaps reflecting his overlooked status since his death, surprisingly few attempts have been made at linking Marcusean thinking to neoliberalism and this thesis is the first piece of scholarship to deploy Marcusean analysis to specifically examine neoliberal constructions of education.

Looking at neoliberalism's impact as a whole, some regard the 'TINA thesis' as a perfect neoliberal example of Marcuse's concern with a 'paralysis of criticism' and others see the need to perform acts of radical praxis in the neoliberal state as more important than ever (Carneiro, 2016, Caivano et al, 2016; Lamas et al, 2017). However, the most significant attempt at updating Marcuse for the neoliberal epoch comes in the extended introduction to the final book in Douglas Kellner's six volume collection of Marcuse's written output. Written with Clayton Pierce, it argues that Marcuse's analysis of how capitalism adopts counterrevolutionary forms predicted its radicalisation towards neoliberalism (Kellner & Pierce, 2014, p12). It also claims Marcuse foresaw something even greater than the neoliberal capture of public services – capitalism's occupation of humanity itself. By reconstituting life entirely around aggressive free-market reforms demanding people see themselves as 'investment machines', living entirely within the bounds of what they produce and consume, they argue Marcuse anticipated capitalism's assault on human subjectivity through the neoliberal hijacking of our souls (Kellner and Pierce, 2014, pp.4/51-52).

One particularly successful tool of this counterrevolutionary behaviour with regard to education, whole-heartedly assisted by movies, has been neoliberalism's adoption of the language of progressive forces. Neoliberal education reformers cloak their policies as attempts at alleviating the conditions of the poorest in society, via obsessions with 'closing attainment gaps' or as attempts to help schools become 'engines of social mobility' or, as discussed in chapter six, as framing education as a 'civil rights issue' (Reay, 2012; Stahl, 2015). Neoliberalism does not do this for altruistic reasons, but because it wants all children to become effective economic agents, obtaining the requisite characteristics to enable them to blindly take their place in the consumer society. In conditioning them into believing that education is purely a preparation for work, that without an exhaustive set of qualifications they cannot achieve economic success or happiness, neoliberal education teaches children to judge themselves purely as rational economic units, to see themselves only through the consumer goods they own, the houses in which they live and the salaries they receive. There may have been a privatising, corporate take-over of schools, but there has also been a hostile take-over of the minds of the young. In reinforcing these perspectives of education's purpose, movies help entrench first neoliberal education, and then in turn, neoliberalism more widely, by implanting the belief in the young that no other form of life is possible.

Therefore, particularly with regard to education, this thesis concurs in considering neoliberalism as a counterrevolutionary phase of capitalism. So successful has this counterrevolution been in education that all forms of educational alternative are either dismissed or eradicated by neoliberalism's proponents. This speaks directly to this thesis' final claim to originality, that neoliberal approaches to education are so embedded in education films that these movies are part of a wider discourse in which for large numbers neoliberalism is assumed as the only way of educating our children and young people, or put another way – one-dimensional thinking about education *is* neoliberal education.

By reassessing and updating Marcusean concepts through neoliberalism, particularly repressive desublimation and happy consciousness, this thesis has helped illustrate how such counterrevolutionary aspects occur and how the culture industry has helped to endorse them. In updating Marcusean concepts for the neoliberal age, this thesis makes a final claim to originality by helping to justify these ideas' continued relevance and helping them transcend their association with a long-dead period of failed revolt.

Brief Encounter: Final Thoughts

The Marcusean revival however, still has some way to travel. This can be illustrated by the fact that those undertaking an internet image search for 'Marcuse' may be in for a surprise. Alongside pictures of a German philosopher in his twilight years are numerous photographs of extremely well-defined men in very brief briefs, many with 'Marcuse' displayed across the waistband. Despite attempts to revive Marcusean thinking, it appears that historical memory of the leading philosopher of the 1960s now competes with underwear companies for survival. However, Marcuse swimwear and Marcuse philosophy do have one thing in common - both strip items down to their bare essentials, revealing what has been hidden, exposing the contents to the world for critical consideration. This thesis has performed such a role in the examination of ten education movies, dialectically revealing their concealed roles in supporting damaging forms of education. In so doing, the movies are part of what Marcuse called the 'obscene merger of aesthetics and reality' where the objectives of the former become indistinguishable from the aims of the dominant (Marcuse, 2002, p.252). Such cultural items lose all claim to independence and become mere 'avatars' doing little more than creating societies 'reducing and even cancelling the romantic space of imagination' (*ibid*, p,254).

Unfortunately for education, this is a role movies have now performed for nearly as long as the neoliberal era itself. The films in this thesis do not significantly depart from their forebears; like them they offer celebration of neoliberalism's objectives and central premises and objectively fail to bring audience insight into its negative consequences. For education and cinema, the 'obscene merger' carries a warning that drifts to one-dimensional perspectives should be taken seriously.

Indeed, the relevance of the one-dimensional concept and the tools creating it are arguably *more* important now after four decades of the neoliberal project. This 'normality' has become so rational, so accepted, of such longevity, that the prospect of alternative has long seemed out of reach – indeed, whole generations of people exist who have never experienced another form of life. If neoliberalism was entirely successful, if it did not pose a threat to equality, to health, to climate, to our economies, to our sense of self and community, to human rights and to schools, this might not be a problem (Harvey, 2007). That neoliberalism does threaten these, means the

need to keep multidimensional thinking alive and to be mindful of attempts at closing-down critical thought are of significant importance. For these reasons, Marcuse remains relevant and his perspective on how culture can narrow critical spaces demands we constantly evaluate movies' role in the neoliberal state.

Hail, Caesar!: Baird Whitlock tells Eddie Mannix about the problems with capitalism

It therefore seems appropriate to end with one last evaluation of the film industry, via a final visit to the only movie 'Marcuse' has appeared in – *Hail, Caesar!* For here, we see a textbook illustration of how Hollywood closes down critical spaces – in this case, of Marcuse himself. After Baird Whitlock is released from captivity he recalls his experiences with Marcuse and his fellow communist kidnappers to the hero of the movie, Eddie Mannix, a fixer at 'Capitol Pictures'. Baird explains how they told him about *Das Kapital* and outlines his own new-found understanding of his employers:

> You're not gonna believe this, these guys even figured out what's going on here at the studio. Because the studio is nothing more than an instrument of capitalism. So we blindly follow these laws like any other institution. The studio makes pictures to serve the system, that's its function, that's really what we're all up to here. We're just confirming what they call the status quo. I mean, we may tell ourselves that we're creating something of artistic value or there's some sort of spiritual dimension to the picture business, but what it really is….(Coen & Coen, 2016).

But before Baird and the audience get too carried away by Marxist cultural critiques, they are brought back to reality when Eddie hits him several times and orders him to go and finish the movie, 'because the picture has worth, and you have worth if you serve the picture and you're never gonna forget that' (*ibid*).

Baird bears the brunt of the assault, but the real joke is on Marcuse and his colleagues, long-forgotten relics of a time when capitalism had a rival, their humourous dismissal the clearest sign possible that Hollywood no longer regards Marcuse and his theoretical tradition a serious threat, their comedic absorption of his critique reducing it to toothless and old-fashioned deceit. The joke however is really on us, for such cultural tools serve to belittle and reduce the knowledge of alternative ways of seeing the world, thereby reinforcing the dominance of the advanced capitalist state.

It is because of movies like *Hail Caesar!* and the ten films explored in this thesis that we need to remain vigilant of the power and impact of the movie industry on the attitudes and knowledge of the wider populace. It is because of such movies that we need to remain deeply engaged in critical, multidimensional thinking. It is because of such movies that the ideas and theory of Herbert Marcuse remain valuable to this day.

However, if movies are part of the creation of one-dimensional educational perspectives, this thesis, like Marcuse, also remains optimistic of their potential to retain and enhance critical thinking. In the final paragraph of Marcuse's final book, he wrote that great art can make 'the petrified world speak, sing, perhaps dance' and in so doing 'spurs the drive for the conquest of suffering and the permanence of joy' (Marcuse, 1978, p.73). The very thing that makes movies dangerous - their mass reach and their ability to influence - is the same thing that may see them become a force against neoliberal education. For example, it is worth noting that both the DuPont PFOA and Flint water scandals were brought to world-wide attention in documentary films, demonstrating that cinema *can* retain a role in developing people's critical awareness (Moore, 2018; Soechtig, 2018). The vicious circle of cinema confirming the perspectives of the dominant, *can* become a virtuous circle of cinema insisting that the status quo must always be questioned. We can only stay hopeful that a scriptwriter is out there somewhere, beginning to put pen to paper on a movie revealing the damaging impact of neoliberal education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: MOVIE LONG LIST

Film	Year	Box Office	Studio	Director	Spin offs	Oscars					Gold Globe	Baf-tas	Palm D'Or	Grand Jury Sund	AFI	BFI	Empire Top.500	Time Out/ Emp 100	Lib Of Con	Rott Toms	Metac ritic	IM Db
						BF	BD	BA/ BSA	BFA/ BFSA	Oth					100	100						
Goodbye Mr. Chips	1939	$3.5m	MGM	Sam Wood			✓	✓	✓	0/4			✓		41hero	72		80em		81%	-	7.8
The Corn is Green	1945	unknown	Warner Bros	Irving Rapper				✓	✓											-	-	7.6
The Browning Version	1951	unknown	Universal	Anthony Asquith								0/2								88%	-	8.2
Belles of St Trinians	1954	unknown	British Loin Films	Frank Launder												94				-	-	6.9
Blackboard Jungle	1955	$8m	MGM	Richard Brooks						0/4									✓	76%	-	7.4
Our Miss Brooks	1956	unknown	Warner Bros	Al Lewis																-	-	6.7
Spare the Rod	1954	unknown	Bryanston Films	Leslie Norman																-	-	6.6
A Child is Waiting	1963	$1m	United Artists	John Cassavetes																91%	-	7.3
Carry on Teacher	1959	unknown	Anglo-Amal.	Gerald Thomas																-	-	6.3
To Sir with Love	1967	$42m	Columbia	James Clavell																92%	-	7.7
Up the Down Staircase	1967	$5m	Warner Bros	Robert Mulligan																80%	-	7.5
Rachel, Rachel	1968	$3m	Warner Bros	Paul Newman		✓			✓✓	0/1	2/2	0/1								-	-	7.4
If….	1968	$2m	Paramount	Lindsay Anderson							0/1	0/2	✓			12		9/36		97%	-	7.6
Kes	1969	unknown	United	Ken Loach								2/5				7		4/29		100%	-	7.9
Prime of Miss Jean Brodie	1969	$3m	Fox	Ronald Neame	✓				✓	0/1	1/3	2/3	✓							88%	-	7.6
Please Sir!	1971	unknown	Rank	Mark Stuart																-	-	6.1
Conrack	1972	$2m	Fox	Martin Ritt								1/1								88%	-	7.3
Looking for Mr. Goodbar	1977	$22m	Paramount	Richard Brooks				✓		0/1	0/1									76%	-	6.7
Amy	1981	unknown	Disney Films	Vincent McEveety																-	-	6.6
Gregory's Girl	1981	$25m	ITC	Bill Forsyth								1/3				30		58/95		92%	-	7.1
Fast Times Ridgemont High	1982	$27m	Universal	Amy Heckerling	✓															78%	67	7.2
Teachers	1984	$28m	MGM	Arthur Hiller																62%	-	6.0
Sixteen Candles	1984	$24m	Universal	John Hughes																86%	61	7.1
The Breakfast Club	1985	$51m	Universal	John Hughes													369		✓	89%	62	7.9
Ferris Bueller's Day Off	1986	$70m	Paramount	John Hughes	✓						0/1						88		✓	81%	61	7.8
Children of a Lesser God	1986	$32m	Paramount	Randa Haines		✓		✓	✓	0/1	1/3	0/1								81%	-	7.2
Clockwise	1986	$1.5m	Universal	Chris Morahan																-	-	6.6
Summer School	1987	$35m	Paramount	Carl Reiner																61%	27	6.6
The Principal	1987	$20m	TriStar	Chris Cain																50%	-	6.3
Stand and Deliver	1988	$14m	Warner Bros	Ramón Menéndez				✓			0/2				86				✓	73%	-	7.3
Dead Poets Society	1989	$236m	Buena Vista	Peter Weir		✓	✓	✓		1/1	0/4	2/6*			52**					85%	79	8.1
Lean on Me	1989	$31m	Warner	John Avildsen																69%	-	7.4
Class of 1999	1990	$2.5m	Lightning Pics	Mark Lester																60%	-	5.9
Kindergarten Cop	1990	$202m	Universal	Ivan Reitman																51%	61	6.1
Just Another Girl on IRT	1992	$0.5m	Miramax	Leslie Harris																64%	-	6.3
School Ties	1992	$15m	Paramount	Robert Mandel																68%	65	6.9
Waterland	1992	$1.1m	Channel 4 Films	Stephen Gyllenhaal																61%	-	6.7
The Browning Version	1994	$0.5m	Paramount	Mike Figgis								0/1	✓							82%	-	7.3
Renaissance Man	1994	$24m	Buena Vista	Penny Marshall																17%	44	6.2
Dangerous Minds	1995	$180m	Buena Vista	John Smith	✓															29%	47	6.5
Clueless	1995	$57m	Paramount	Amy Heckerling																81%	68	6.8

Film	Year	Box Office	Studio	Director	Spin offs	Oscars					Gold Globe	Baf-tas	Palm D'Or	Grand Jury Sund	AFI	BFI	Empire Top.500	Time Out/ Emp 100	Lib Of Con	Rott Toms	Metac ritic	IM Db
						BF	BD	BA/ BSA	BFA/ BFSA	Oth					100	100						
Mr. Holland's Opus	1995	$106m	Buena Vista	Stephen Herek				✓			0/2									74%	59	7.3
Billy Madison	1995	$26m	Universal	Tamra Davis																46%	16	6.4
The Substitute	1996	$15m	Orion Pictures	Robert Mandel																41%	-	5.9
High School High	1996	$21m	TriStar	Hart Bochner																13%	33	5.5
Matilda	1996	$62m	TriStar	Danny DeVito	✓															90%	72	6.9
187	1997	$6m	Warner Bros	Kevin Reynolds																31%	-	6.7
In and Out	1997	$64m	Paramount	Frank Oz					✓		0/2									72%	70	6.4
Disturbing Behaviour	1998	$18m	MGM	David Nutter																35%	-	5.6
Election	1999	$17m	Paramount	Alexander Payne						0/1							389			92%	83	7.3
Cider House Rules	1999	$89m	Miramax	Lasse Hallström		✓	✓	✓		1/4	0/2	0/1								71%	75	7.4
Music of the Heart	1999	$15m	Miramax	Wes Craven					✓	0/1	0/1									64%	54	6.8
Teaching Mrs Tingle	1999	$9m	Miramax	Kevin Williamson																19%	35	5.3
10 Things I Hate About You	1999	$54m	Buena Vista	Gil Junger	✓															62%	70	7.3
Billy Elliot	2000	$111m	Universal	Stephen Daldry			✓		✓	0/1	0/2	3/12						17em		85%	74	7.7
Finding Forrester	2000	$80m	Columbia	Gus Van Sant	✓															74%	62	7.3
Remember the Titans	2000	$137m	Buena Vista	Boaz Yakin																73%	48	7.8
The Clay Bird	2002	unknown	Audiovision	Tareque Masud																89%	75	8.5
The Emperor's Club	2002	$16m	Universal	Michael Hoffman																50%	49	6.9
Être et Avoir	2002	$16m	Film du Losange	Nicolas Philibert								0/1								97%	87	7.9
School of Rock	2003	$131m	Paramount	Richard Linklater	✓						0/1						188			92%	82	7.1
Machuca	2004	$3m	Menemsha	Andrés Wood																89%	76	7.8
Mean Girls	2004	$129m	Paramount	Mark Waters	✓															83%	66	7.0
Napoleon Dynamite	2004	$46m	Paramount	Jared Hess	✓															71%	64	6.9
The Chorus	2004	$84m	Vega Films	Christophe Barratier						0/2	0/1	0/2								69%	56	7.9
Coach Carter	2005	$77m	Paramount	Thomas Carter																65%	57	7.3
The History Boys	2006	$14m	BBC/Fox	Nicholas Hytner								0/2								65%	74	6.9
Half Nelson	2006	$5m	Thinkfilm	Ryan Fleck				✓												90%	85	7.2
Notes on a Scandal	2006	$50m	Fox	Richard Eyre					✓✓	0/2	0/3	0/3								87%	73	7.4
Take the Lead	2006	$66m	New Line	Liz Friedlander																44%	55	6.7
St Trinians	2007	$29m	Ent. Film	Oliver Parker																31%	39	5.8
St Trinians 2	2009	$7m	Ent. Film	Oliver Parker																14%	-	5.4
Freedom Writers	2007	$44m	Paramount	Richard LaGravenese																69%	64	7.6
Die Welle (The Wave)	2007	$24m	Constantin	Dennis Gansel																65%	-	7.6
The Class	2008	$29m	Haut et Court	Laurent Cantet						0/1			✓							95%	92	7.5
Wild Child	2008	$51m	StudioCanal	Nick Moore																44%	-	6.1
Precious	2009	$69m	Lionsgate	Lee Daniels		✓	✓		✓	✓ 1/2	1/3	1/4		✓						91%	79	7.3
An Education	2009	$30m	Sony/BBC	Lone Scherfig		✓			✓	0/1	0/1	1/9								95%	85	7.3
Nativity!	2009	£5.2m	E1 Entertainment	Debbie Isitt																46%	-	6.4
Cracks	2009	$29k	Element Pictures	Jordan Scott																43%	54	6.7
Waiting for Superman	2010	$6m	Paramount	Davis Guggenheim																89%	81	7.5
Easy A	2010	$75m	Olive Bridge	Will Gluck							0/1									85%	72	7.1
Bad Teacher	2011	$216m	Columbia	Jake Kasdan	✓															44%	47	5.7
Nativity 2	2012	£10m	E1 Entertainment	Debbie Isitt																36%	-	5.4
Won't Back Down	2012	$6m	20th Century Fox	Daniel Barnz																33%	42	6.5

Film	Year	Box Office	Studio	Director	Spin offs	Oscars					Gold Globe	Baf-tas	Palm D'Or	Grand Jury Sund	AFI	BFI	Empire Top.500	Time Out/ Emp 100	Lib Of Con	Rott Toms	Metac ritic	IM Db
						BF	BD	BA/ BSA	BFA/ BFSA	Oth					100	100						
Boychoir/The Choir	2014	$4m	Mongrel Media	Francois Girard																45%	51	6.7
The Falling	2015	$0.7m	BBC films	Carol Morley																78%	71	5.4
Nativity 3	2014	$11m	E1 Entertainment	Debbie Isitt																16%	-	3.5
The Bad Education Movie	2015	$3m	Ent. Film	Elliot Hegarty																71%	-	5.7
Sing Street	2016	$14m	Lionsgate	John Carney							0/1									95%	79	8.0
Wonder	2017	$305m	Lionsgate	Stephen Chbosky						0/1										85%	66	8.1

* Including best film, ** Also featured in the AFI's top 100 quotes

KEY

Year	By date of release
Box Office	At cinemas only
Studio	Financing studio
Spin-offs	For example, TV series or theatre production
Oscars	BF= Best Film
	BD= Best Director
	BA/BSA= Best Male Actor or Supporting Actor awards
	BFA/BFSA = Best Female Actor or Supporting Actor awards
✓	Nominated and awarded a film award
✓	Nominated but not awarded a film award
1/2, 2/3 etc.	Number of successful awards out of number of nominations
Gold Globes	Number of successful awards out of number of nominations for the Golden Globes Awards
Palm D'Or	Nominations and awards for the Palme D'Or, the most prestigious award at the Cannes Film Festival, awarded to the best film in the festival
Grand Jury Sund	Nominations and awards at the Sundance Film Festival, the largest and most prestigious independent film festival in the United States
AFI 100	Between 1998 and 2008 the American Film Industry released several Top 100 Film Lists of the 20th century, including 'films', 'stars', 'thrills' and 'cheers'
BFI 100	In 1999 the British Film Industry released the results of a survey producing the British publics' 100 greatest British films of the 20th century
Empire Top 500	Empire Magazine's Top 500 Films of all time (released in 2008)
Time Out/Emp.100	Appearing on either Time Out or Empire Magazines, Top 100 films of all time lists (released in 2018 and 2017 respectively)
Lib of Con	Placed in the Library of Congress because it is regarded as "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant"
Rotten Tomatoes:	A review aggregate website with reviews collated from members of writing guilds or film critics. It's colour-coded rating system is
	70-100% with 80+ reviewers (including five from 'Top Critics') is 'Certified Fresh' / 60-100% without 80+ reviews or five reviews from 'Top Critics' is 'Fresh' / below 60% is 'Rotten
Metacritic	A review aggregate website of movies, games, music and TV critics. Its colour coded rating system is:
	81-100 universal acclaim / 61-80 generally favourable / 40-60 mixed / 20-39 generally unfavourable / 0-19 overwhelming dislike
IMDb	An online database of films and TV, which includes a public rating and review system. The rating system is an average mark out of 10, but without labelling or colour coding.

APPENDIX 2: MOVIE SYNOPSIS

Wonder (released in 2017)

Based on the multi-million selling book of the same name, the Oscar and BAFTA nominated film tells the story of Auggie, a ten year old New York City boy with a significant facial deformity; most particularly his difficulties starting school for the first time. Auggie has been home schooled up until this point by his mother (Julia Roberts) and at first he struggles to fit into his new private school, Beecher Elementary – this includes being badly bullied by a group of children. Auggie's time at school is aided by making friends, first with a boy called Jack and then with a girl called Summer. Auggie's hardest time is when he and Jack fall out after he overhears the latter making fun of him in order to impress the bullies. However, they later make up and in a moment of redemption, many of the bullies make up with Auggie at a Summer Camp.

Running concurrently with Auggie's narrative are those of his sister Via and her best friend Miranda. Via has always lived in her brother's shadow, her life side-lined by Auggie's travails and numerous operations. She attends a high school but on the first day back after holidays is cold-shouldered by Miranda. She seeks solace by joining the drama society and ends up as a cast member in a production of 'Our Town' by Thornton Wilder. Also in the cast is Justin, who Via begins a romantic relationship with. It transpires that Miranda has shunned Via because her parents are divorcing and she cannot cope with seeing Via's perfect family environment. They are reconciled when Miranda gives up her lead part in the play so that Via can perform the role to her attending parents.

The Falling (2015)

Directed by Carol Morley, The Falling stars Game of Thrones' Maisie Williams and BAFTA nominated actresses Greta Scacchi and Maxine Peake, in a film inspired by the story of an all-girls school in England where a mass psychogenic outbreak of fainting occurs. Williams plays Lydia Lamont, a sixteen year old school girl at an all girl's school in the north of England. Abbie Mortimer, Lydia's best friend, becomes pregnant after losing her virginity and attempts to abort the baby by having sex with Kenneth, Lydia's brother.

For unexplained reasons, Abbie begins to suffer from fainting spells and following a detention given by one of the strict teachers (Scacchi), she collapses and dies in the school. Unable to deal with her grief and outraged by what she regards as the cold and overly disciplined environment of the school, Lydia begins to 'faint' elaborately in numerous school settings. Other girls, plus a young female teacher begin to psychosomatically copy her, with all eventually being hospitalised after a mass fainting episode during an assembly. Following this, Lydia is expelled by the officious Headmistress, Miss Alvaro. During the film, Lydia is comforted by her brother, with the two becoming closer and closer, eventually having sex after her expulsion. They are discovered by their mother (Peake), a housebound hairdresser, who throws her son out, with Lydia storming off in anger with her mother, with whom she has a very strained relationship. We learn that Mrs Lamont's agoraphobia was caused after being raped by a stranger, a crime resulting in her pregnancy with Lydia. In fear for her daughter, Mrs Lamont overcomes her fear of the outside for the first time in years, eventually finding and beginning a reconciliation with Lydia at the latter's favourite location – a tree she spent time under with Abbie.

Won't Back Down (2012)

Starring Oscar winning actresses Viola Davis and Holly Hunter, plus Golden Globe winner Maggie Gyllenhaal, the film charts a mother and a teacher's attempt to transform a failing Pittsburgh school into a charter school, despite huge resistance from the local school board and a teacher's union.

Jamie Fitzpatrick (Gyllenhaal) is a single mother living in a disadvantaged district of Pittsburgh. Her daughter, Malia, attends John Adams Elementary school, which has been labelled as failing by the local education board. The teachers in the school appear more interested in their employment rights than in effective learning, a fact symbolised by Malia's teacher, who appears unbothered by Malia's obvious learning difficulties. After failing to win a place at a celebrated nearby charter school and without options at other schools, a desperate Jamie begins an attempt to 'takeover' Adams Elementary. Although not mentioned by name, this would see the school converted into a charter school and the existing school leadership removed. To succeed, Jamie needs the support of teachers, which she obtains through recruiting Nona Alberts (Davis) to the cause. Overcoming the objections and obstacles of the highly bureaucratic education board and the corrupt teacher unions (including an attempt by one union leader – Hunter – to 'buy off' Jamie with a local private school place for Malia), eventually the bid is approved at a dramatic education board meeting. At the final scene we discover Nona has become the Head Teacher of a new and vibrant Adams, with Malia flourishing in the new environment.

Bad Teacher (2011)

Multi Golden-Globe nominated actress Cameron Diaz is Elizabeth Halsey, an amoral and lazy Illinois teacher prepared to do anything to win a state-wide test-score bonus that would pay for her breast enhancement surgery.

Halsey resigns from teaching at John Adams Middle School in order to marry her wealthy partner. But waking up to her avariciousness, he calls off the wedding and Halsey is forced to return to school. In a state of resentment, Halsey cannot be bothered to effectively teach her class and spends most lessons merely watching movies. Desperate for plastic surgery, she only becomes enlivened when carrying out schemes to make extra money, most particularly in attempting to win a state prize for the teacher with the most improved test scores. She succeeds by drugging the state test administrator and stealing the question paper.

During this period she forms an antagonistic relationship with Amy Squirrel, the only teacher in the school who appears to be in some way effective with pupils, although this is diminished by her unfortunate personal characteristics. Amy forms a romantic relationship with another teacher, played by Justin Timberlake, but Halsey steals him from her during a school trip. In revenge, after learning of Halsey' scheme, she informs the hapless principal who brings in the authorities. In return, Halsey successfully frames Amy for the crime, who is forced to leave the school. At the end of the film, Halsey decides to not go through with the surgery and gives up teaching in order to become the school counsellor, where her 'tough love' approach has found its true calling.

Precious (2009)

Gabourney Sidibe is Precious, a New York City teenager physically, sexually and verbally abused by her parents. When her second pregnancy is discovered, she is sent to an alternative school for

troubled teenagers. Nominated for six Oscars, including Best Film, it won two, including Best Adapted Screenplay.

Precious lives at home with her unemployed mother, Mary (Mo'Nique), in an apartment in a rundown housing project in Harlem, New York City. Mary is violent and abusive to Precious, and encourages her to follow her example by going on welfare arguing school will not help her. Following years of sexual abuse by her father, Precious has had one baby, a child with Downs Syndrome who lives with her grandmother, and is now pregnant for a second time. Illiterate, she attends a high school where the teachers struggle to control the disruptive pupils. After learning of her pregnancy, the Principal decodes the school cannot cope with Precious' needs and sends her to an 'alternative school', Each One Teach One, run by an unconventional educator called Blu Rain. Akin to a Pupil Referral Unit, in the alternative school, slowly Precious' confidence builds and she learns to read and write. She also attends sessions with a social worker (Mariah Carey), to whom she reveals her history of abuse.

After giving birth to her second child, Precious returns home where she is attacked by Mary, whose benefits have been removed following the allegations of abuse. Precious finally gets the courage to leave home and after staying for a short while in her own home, is found a place by Miss Rain at a halfway house. Her happiness is only short lived however, as Precious learns she has contracted HIV from her father. In a tumultuous final scene at the social work office, Mary admits the abuse and returns Precious' first child to her. Precious leaves and tells her mother she will never she her or her grandchildren again.

Freedom Writers (2007)

Based on the true story of an Los Angeles high school teacher, multi-Oscar winner Hilary Swank discovers her new school is riven by racial and gang tensions, which spill out in to serious violence in their home lives, including multiple murders. Struggling to maintain control and to make connections with her students, Swank persuades them to write diaries charting their lives.

Erin Gruwell (Swank) is a brand new teacher who is dismayed to find her class is dominated by suspicion and hatred between rival races and gangs. Her fellow teachers are racists, who blame the racial minorities for the deterioration of the school, which after being forcibly desegregated has seen its once celebrated reputation plummet.

Unable to secure funding to provide resources for her pupils due to her head of departments belief they will only be ruined by the unruly students, Gruwell takes on two part-time jobs to pay for extra books and school trips. Connecting both emotionally and pedagogically with her pupils, including their diaries, they respond positively to her obvious caring approach and put aside their differences to try and better their educational prospects.

Outraged to learning that she will not be able to take their class again in the following year because of strict seniority rules in the local education district, they persuade Gruwell to petition the authorities to teach them again. Overcoming the vehement resistance of the other teachers, Gruwell succeeds and takes the class for the next two years.

Notes on a Scandal (2006)

Based on the Booker Prize nominated novel, multi-Oscar winner Cate Blanchett is a London art teacher who has an affair with a pupil. Oscar winner Judi Dench stars as her colleague and ill-chosen confidante. The film was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Adapted Screenplay.

Sheba Hart (Blanchett) is a new Art teacher at an unnamed comprehensive school in North London. In contrast to what appears to be a very happy and stable home life, her career is in trouble as she is unable to maintain discipline with her pupils and after 'rescued' by Barbara Covett in one out-of-control teaching situation, is befriended by her older colleague. Covett's interest in her however is borne out of sexual interest, not genuine friendship and in private writes a diary that details her disdain for the other teachers and the pupils at the school.

Covett discovers that Hart has begun an illicit affair with a pupil, Steven Connolly. After confronting her, Hart admits it and promises to end the relationship. Covett uses this knowledge to manipulate her relationship with Hart and place herself more and more at the centre of her colleague's personal and professional life. One day, whilst visiting the Hart family home, Covett discovers that Hart's affair with the pupil has not ended and in revenge for being lied to ensures the school authorities learn of the relationship.

Hart's husband makes her leave the family home and she has no option but to go and stay at Covett's flat, where she eventually discovers Covett's diaries, including the fact that it was her supposed friend who betrayed her to the authorities. Hart is reconciled with her family, but is sacked and sentenced to prison. For her part in initially covering up the affair, Covett is forced to retire early and we learn that she had previously caused such mental distress to another female teacher that she was forced to take out a restraining order and leave London.

Half Nelson (2006)

Ryan Gosling plays New York City teacher and drug addict Dan Dunne, who forms an unlikely friendship with a pupil, Drey (Shareeka Epps), trying to protect her from becoming ensnared into the world of Frank (Anthony Mackie), the drug-dealer responsible for her brother's incarceration. Gosling's performance earned the first of his, so far, two best-actor Oscar nominations.

Dunne is a history teacher and basketball coach at a middle school in Brooklyn, New York City. His teaching approach is based on Engels' three laws of dialectics – opposite forces create change, which creates more opposites, recreating the cycle. He demonstrates this through study of famous events that lead to change, such as the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that led to the desegregation of US society. Sitting alongside Dunne's radical pedagogy are personal demons that have led him to become addicted to drugs and after taking crack cocaine in the school toilets after a basketball game, he is discovered by Drey who looks after him while he comes down from the high, beginning a relationship where it is never clear who is supporting who.

Drey lives at home with her mother, who has to work all hours to support her family after her brother has been sent to prison on drug offences. The dealer who he worked for, Frank, attempts to entice Drey into his drug operation. Dunne attempts to prevent this, but his own inadequacies and hypocrisy mean this is doomed to failure and we watch as his live spins further out of control, including his attempt to sexually force himself upon a girlfriend.

As Dunne's life spirals, any sway he had on Drey diminishes, who eventually consents to act as deliverer of drug packages to Franks clients, ensuring he is never caught dealing. Upon knocking at one motel room door, she discovers Dunne inside with several prostitutes and he hands her the money for the drugs. The next day she shuns Frank and returns to the motel and helps Dunne to return home, where he cleans up and becomes clean shaven for the first time in the film, suggesting, but not confirming, he may be ready to start a new page.

The History Boys (2006)

Based on the acclaimed Alan Bennett play, the film tells the story of eight Sheffield schoolboys and their ambitious school's attempt to help them get into Oxbridge through extra lessons from three contrasting teachers.

After unexpectedly excelling in their A Levels, the eight boys are forced to return to their all-boys grammar school to study for the seventh-term entrance exams once commonly used as an admissions tool to win places at Oxbridge. The ambitious Head Teacher, Felix, employs an additional history teacher, Irwin, who went to university in Oxford, and extra lessons are provided by existing teachers Hector and Ms Lintott. All three also take the boys on field trips.

Irwin demands the boys look at the world from an original perspective, even if that means challenging accepted norms. This alienates the more classically minded Hector, who prefers learning for its own, pleasurable sake, rather than twisting it as a means to an end. Hectors interest in the boys is not merely pedagogical however, for he abuses them on his motorbike while providing lifts home. This is eventually discovered, but one of the abused boys saves Hector's job by blackmailing the Head Teacher into ignoring it by threatening to reveal his sexual pursuit of his secretary.

Eventually, all the boys win places at Oxford and on their final day of school Hector this time gives a lift home to Irwin, who unused to riding pillion causes the former to lose balance of his bike. The resulting crash kills Hector and seriously wounds Irwin. In a dream sequence ending we learn where the characters end up in life, including that Irwin has become a presenter of TV history programmes.

Coach Carter (2005)

Starring Oscar nominated actor Samuel L. Jackson, the film is based on the true story of a San Francisco high school basketball coach who locked his players out of practice until their grades improved.

Ken Carter is a sports shop owner and former star school basketball player of Richmond High School. After witnessing yet another abject performance by his former team, he is invited to become the new coach. Discovering the team is arrogant and ill-disciplined, he embarks on a brutal training regime, emphasising fitness and obedience. Carter informs the team that to be considered for selection, not only must their sporting skills improve, but they must also maintain a solid grade point average and attend all their school lessons. Those unprepared to adapt to his sporting and pedagogical demands are quickly jettisoned from the team.

The players' home lives are governed by gang violence and the effects of poverty, but the turnaround in the team's fortunes begin to see them become respectful of discipline and education. However, Carter learns that their grades and attendance are still not reaching his demanded standards so he locks his places out of the gym and cancels upcoming games, causing a sensation in the local community and media. The resulting uproar sees Carter resign after the school board demands he allows the players to return to the court. However, they themselves refuse to return until they achieve the grades Carter demands. Finally reaching these, they attend the state championships for the first time and although they lose in the final it is clear their journeys of self-discovery are complete when we learn many of the original team made it to college on sporting scholarships.