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Book Reviews

Henry Morris: the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges and community education. Education from the Cradle to the Grave
DAVID ROONEY
Sawston: Henry Morris Memorial Trust
92 pages, ISBN 978-0-9515551-1-8

When I was Vice Principal (and for a time Acting Principal) of a pioneering new community college in Leicestershire between 1977 and 1984, I was aware that the Community College concept owed a great deal to the philosophy underpinning the Village College system developed by Henry Morris as CEO in Cambridgeshire between 1922 and 1954. Indeed, Stewart Mason, the powerful and successful Director of Education for Leicestershire from 1947 to 1971, and the man who did so much to promote the cause of comprehensive community education, had been an HMI in Cambridgeshire, and was quite prepared to acknowledge his debt to Morris. In his famous memorandum on community education published in March 1949, Mason was keen to stress both that the document incorporated many of the ideas and practices of the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges and that there was a need to emulate Morris's ideal of genuine democratic management of adult institutions:

> If the College is to teach community living, it must illustrate that harmony and integration, which it is the job of education to give to every individual. ... The Cambridgeshire Experiment has proved conclusively that youth and adults do not resent 'going back to school', provided there is additional accommodation which they can regard as their own. ... But a positive attitude of enthusiasm, pride and affection towards the Community Centre can be achieved only when the day-to-day government of the institution is in the hands of the people who use it. If real success is to be achieved, it must be the Education Committee's policy to encourage real democracy in these adult institutions by leaving the daily management to the people them-selves. (Quoted in Jones, 1988, p. 48)

Henry Morris: the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges and community education is a delightful and very honest account of the life and career of Cambridgeshire's most famous CEO by David Rooney, whose last teaching post was as Warden

of Swavesey Village College between 1977 and 1985. It makes effective use of a number of key texts, including Don Jones's 1988 biography of Stewart Mason, *The Art of Education*, and Harry Ree's 1973 biography of Henry Morris, *Educator Extraordinary: the life and achievement of Henry Morris*.

Morris was a real maverick, at a time when it was possible to be an independent-minded CEO with interesting and original ideas and a determination to implement them. No one was ever able to accuse Morris of being a faceless bureaucrat. In his introduction to Rooney's Book, Professor Bernard Barker observes that Morris was 'of first-rate importance in his own time'. Having promoted the concept of the Village College in a detailed memorandum, which was presented to the Education Committee at the end of 1924, Morris mobilised wealthy supporters to fund the buildings for his new creations, and established a group of elegant colleges that, in Barker's words, 'embody even now the pride and identity of their respective communities'. Although Morris retired in 1954 and died in 1961, it is Barker's view that his legacy, 'apparently lost in the modern obsession with competition, productivity and cash', is today more important than ever. He was, in fact, a prophet who taught us that 'community schools bring local people together in all their richness and diversity, and so create the conditions for people's personal growth, through their mutual association' (p. viii).

Morris could often be arrogant, abrasive and intolerant of the views of others, but it could be argued that this was precisely the kind of person needed to push through ideas of a radical nature. And it has to be remembered that he set himself a revolutionary task – not only to create a system of education 'from the cradle to the grave', but to use the idea of the Village College to change and revitalise the whole of rural society. Morris had to fight many battles in the 1920s and 1930s in order to achieve his aims, and it is the view of Cyril Poster, the former principal of a Leicestershire community college, that 'how he ever persuaded the landowning gentry of his Education Committee to accept his 1924 Memorandum is a mystery bordering on a miracle' (Poster, 1982, p. 20).

The first Village College was opened at Sawston in 1930, followed by two more Colleges, at Bottisham and Linton, set up in 1934. And by the mid-1930s, Morris could be said to have been at the height of his power and influence, known and respected on both the national and the world stage. Still to come was probably his most famous project, the establishment of the Village College at Impington, opened in September 1939. The design of the new college was largely the work of Walter Gropius, who had been forced to give up his leadership of the Bauhaus, the famous avant-garde German school of architecture and design, and flee from Nazi Germany.

Henry Moore offered to provide a sculpture, *The Family Group,* but, while his fee was purely nominal, this was one occasion when the Education Councillors refused to back Morris, and the sculpture was eventually installed at the entrance to a secondary modern school in Hertfordshire.

David Rooney makes no attempt to gloss over the fact that Morris was in many ways a flawed prophet, with several less attractive sides to his personality.

He was ashamed of his modest upbringing in Southport, and took pains to distance himself from his humble relatives in Lancashire, even though his brothers and sisters helped him financially at the outset of his career. At the same time, it is right to stress that, throughout his life, both professionally and personally, it was the concept of beauty that played a major role. As Rooney makes clear throughout the narrative, Morris was excited by beauty in art, in music, in the countryside, in gardens, and, above all, in architecture. He had a wide circle of friends who always responded to his dazzling conversation at the dinner table, but basically he was extremely lonely, and particularly so after his retirement in 1954. There is a good deal of evidence in his letters and writings that he was a man with powerful homosexual feelings, but also that the very real passions he developed always seemed to end in emotional exhaustion. Of course, the repressive legal climate of the period made it extremely difficult for a man like Morris to express his feelings openly, bearing in mind that homosexual activity in private between consenting males over the age of 21 was not decriminalised until 1967, six years after Morris's death. Sadly, the suppression of his true feelings and his emotional frustration led on to attitudes and comments that can only be described as misogynistic, causing him on one occasion, after a particularly difficult meeting at Girton College, to refer to the female dons as beings with 'their wombs stuffed with algebra'.

This is a brilliant little book; and it is important to end this review, as indeed Rooney ends his memoir, on a positive note. At this depressing time for community education, it would surely please Henry Morris to know that at Cambourne, a substantial development to the west of Cambridge, a new secondary school is, by popular demand, to become a Village College.

Clyde Chitty

All the proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Henry Morris Memorial Trust, which will then be able to continue to provide travel grants for students in the Village Colleges and local Cambridge schools. The address of the Memorial Trust is: Sawston Village College, New Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3BP.

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Ways into Hinchingbrooke Country Park
DEB WILENSKI with CAROLINE WENDLING, 2013
With a foreword by Robert Macfarlane
In collaboration with Ruby Class, Cromwell Park Primary School, Huntingdon
Cambridge: Curiosity and Imagination
40 pages, £7.50 including p&p (paperback), ISBN 978-0-9926259-0-0

> The imagination infuses a certain volatility and intoxication. It has a flute which sets the atoms of our frame in a dance, like planets ... But what is the imagination? Only an arm or weapon of the interior energy; only the precursor of the reason. (Emerson)

This book presents itself as 'the first in a series of guides that seek to reposition children's voices in our new public interpretation of place'. One of the foremost of the new interpreters, Robert Macfarlane, writes the introduction and reminds us that 'a place is always somewhere you are *in*, never *on*'. The place in question, Hinchingbrooke Country Park, may appear to be 170 acres of meadow, woodland and marsh, and this book may appear, at forty pages in an A5 format, to be lightweight, even meagre. But appearances can be deceptive.

Ruby Class, thirty-one children and their educators, set out from Cromwell Park Primary School on ten wintry Monday mornings to journey 'physically and imaginatively through the woods' (p. 4). In mythic style, though wrapped up warmly against the cold, they 'went to the park to meet the forest' (p. 4). Deb Wilenski and Caroline Wendling went too, observing, photographing and listening to the children as they made free and left the path and discovered their own ways and places. In the afternoons, back at school, the class re-visited 'the real and fantastical place that the park was becoming' (p. 4). Drawing, projection, sculpture and story helped map 'the land and what happened in it' (p. 4), and this subtly designed, beautifully produced text is one result, one end of all the exploring. It is written in the present tense, with an eye for detail and a sense of the rhythms inherent in the activities – physical and mental – husbanded and described, so that what happens in the park and back at school comes across with vivid immediacy. It is also alert to what the authors call children's 'important conversations' (p. 4), to connections between moments, and to the ways in which under such conditions each child reveals aspects of who they are. The book offers not only a model of teaching, one in which children are encouraged 'to leave paths ... discover ... return, go further, take time' (p. 4), but also a model of how to hold in mind, individually and collectively, a class of children.

The authors note that the dominant voices that explain our landscape are adult. They construct their text differently, and ensure that conversation between children, or particular single comments, observations or assertions made by a child, are presented on almost every page. What children notice in the woods, and what they make of what they encounter there through all their

senses and through their imagination, is seen as important in its own right, and as means to understand the place from the child's point of view. Under snow, the woods appear as a new land of whiteness, but Filip, even more fully engaged in the place, sees colours too: yellow in the bark of the trees beside the path, and green at their highest tips. Kian, Edward and Bryony find 'scratches and bits of fur' (p. 15) when they look in the woods for signs of a snow leopard. Among the trees they find doors which they pass through, and zones which they name. Later, by following the arrows spray-painted on some trees, they find a city. Cody 'finds water all over the woods' (p. 20) and explains 'how [it] got there, where it came from, and where it will go to next' (p. 20). He resolves to find 'some secret water' (p. 20) and, across the central double page of the book, does so. A lake brings home to Asad an understanding of reflections: 'You are in the water!' he shouts suddenly to his friend standing on the bank.

The woods, marshes, hills and lake offer physical challenges and elicit from the children bodily skill: jumping over, climbing up, crouching down. Place is apprehended bodily, and some part of each child's thinking about place makes itself visible in gesture and action. Another part of that thinking is made visible in the work created back at school. The children have mapped the park in many ways: 'by their naming and describing of places, by their models, drawings, paintings, stories and shared language of exploration' (p. 34). And by their own cartography. At the project's culmination, each of their maps is brought together within a chalk outline of the Country Park to make a map-of-maps which spans 'real and fantastical worlds with authenticity' (p. 36). Here the children's 'sense of location combines the real place in front of them, who they are with, and what it feels like to be there ... No map overlaid another, each child found a place. There is not just one specific place to look for hills or water or doors but a number of places. The reality is blurred but the mind is represented in its truest state. The children's imaginations galloped through the wild places; this big map is a way to map their minds' adventures' (p. 36).

By now I hope something of the insight and consideration which the authors bring to this project will have made itself plain. Sentimentality and cutesiness, the first dangers in such an endeavour, are kept at bay by the quality of the authors' attention and perception. They notice and take seriously what the children say and do. By reflecting on action or utterance patiently and in ways informed by other observations, by adult experience and by reading, they present the children as dedicated meaning-makers who come to know a place through their own empirical and imaginative (or incipiently theoretical) work.

It is also noteworthy that the children do this work together, as well as separately. Stories are communally shaped and developed: children enter the narratives of their peers and re-direct these, becoming 'accomplices in the story' (p. 23). Sometimes individual narratives coincide for a span and then separate out again. Spontaneously the children tell stories on the go about the place, to themselves and to their groups, and engage in dramatic exchanges which supply the woods with history and wildlife (wolves, snow leopards, polar bears) and

explanation. In the park the children discover, narrate, interpret and name, exemplifying how space is, in the words of the archaeologist Christopher Tilley,

> a medium rather than a container for action ... [Space is] socially-produced ... [and] combines the cognitive, the physical and the emotional into something that may be reproduced but which is always open to transformation and change ... [and is] constituted by different densities of human experience, attachment and involvement ... What space is depends on who is experiencing it and how. (Tilley, 1994, pp. 10-11)

Wilenski and Wendling's written text is carefully worked. Themes recur; elements chime or contrast. Observation prompts reflection, and reflection is grounded again in new observation. The book as a whole, designed by Susanne Jasilek, is an artefact which integrates written text with a range of visual elements: single photos, strips of stills, reproductions of children's maps and drawings, coloured pages, arrows, even page-number backgrounds in different shades. Almost every page is made up from some kind of picture as well as some kind of writing, sparking connections. The section about water begins with a double page of blue wash; the section called 'Beginning' is olive green with a red arrow pointing onwards, to a monochrome double page: the park under snow. Occasionally illustrations or photos are captioned vertically, making a reader turn the rectangle of the book like a map. Scale shifts. Here a picture takes a whole page while there it lodges in a corner. Two pages comprise only photos. All these facets of the made object serve to prompt the reader's imagination, and enact a commitment to multiple ways of reading or seeing.

Is it truly a guide, then? Not in the conventional sense, in that it eschews an authoritative voice, avoids recommending routes and sites, and contains almost as much about what's invisible as about what can be seen. But in another way it does suggest a direction for the reader interested in how young children come at new experiences. For these children, to name is to create. To pronounce 'the mud princess' is to introduce her into the world of the woods, so that meeting her (as one child says he did) and finding her belt come as no surprise. This magical thinking seems characteristic of many children in the class. When they are in the woods they exhibit a mode of thought the liberal philosopher Ernst Cassirer held to be characteristic of the mythic, one in which there is no differentiation between what is necessary and what is accidental, and no division between signifier and signified: 'Word and name do not designate and signify, they are and act. In the mere sensuous matter of language, in the mere sound of the human voice, there resides a peculiar power over things' (Cassirer, 1955, p. 40). In the park children wield this power, and demonstrate something about their developing understanding of language and what it can do. Invisible itself, it can summon the invisible to shared recognition and disclosure. Is this make-believe or 'let's pretend', or perhaps some less bounded language game, a more spontaneous kind of play with more potent consequences for learning? Cassirer writes that naming 'transforms the world of sense impressions, which

animals also possess, into a mental world, a world of ideas and meaning' (Cassirer, 1946, p. 28). If so, what the children of Ruby Class have done on their winter Mondays might be seen not only as revelling in enchantment, but also as proof of the emergence of that individual power of thought whose tendency is to hold even itself up to scrutiny. 'I heard a dolphin,' Mikaela says. 'It was in my imagination' (p. 29).

The text can be ordered from the website of Cambridge Curiosity and Imagination (http://www.cambridgecandi.org.uk/), where news of other projects in a similar vein may be found.

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Patrick Yarker

Education under Siege: why there is a better alternative
PETER MORTIMORE, 2013
Bristol: Policy Press
313 pages, £19.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-44731-131-7

Concerns about increasing political interference in education have been expressed since the Thatcher governments of the 1980s took control of the curriculum and began the process of turning the state system into a market. Those concerns grew during the Blair decade, when the government began to micromanage the teaching process itself, expanded the number of 'faith schools' and began privatising local authority services and schools (notably through its academies programme).

With the election of the coalition government in 2010 and the appointment of Michael Gove as education secretary, such concerns developed into something approaching panic, as educationalists and commentators realised that the new administration seemed hell-bent on the effective destruction of the state education system. Public debate about the nature and provision of education intensified, with notable contributions from Melissa Benn (*School Wars: the battle for Britain's education*, 2011) and Peter Cunningham (*Politics and the Primary Teacher*, 2012).

Now we have *Education under Siege: why there is a better alternative*, by Peter Mortimore.

In his preface, Mortimore says that 'to be effective, education needs good learners, good teachers and a good education system' (p. xii). We are born good learners, he says, and we have many good teachers. So it is the third component – a good education system – that he believes is 'questionable in England today' (p. xii). This book is his contribution towards creating a better system.

His credentials for contributing to the debate are impeccable. He has had a long career in education encompassing many roles: classroom teacher, university researcher, HMI, Director of Research and Statistics for ILEA, Assistant Education Officer, professor in three universities (two English and one Danish), Director of the University of London Institute of Education, school and college governor. It is an extraordinary record which gives him a unique understanding – both broad and deep – of the English education system and how it compares and contrasts with those of other countries.

Several factors make *Education under Siege* an excellent book. First, of course, there is the content. Peter Mortimore has provided a huge amount of invaluable information and a wealth of thought-provoking ideas for his readers. Second, the book is very well organised and logical in progression: there is a clear sense of direction and purpose. Third, it is very enjoyable to read – and made more so by the inclusion of personal anecdotes which add authenticity and interest. For example (in a discussion of grade inflation at GCSE): 'I suspect that this view of declining standards is mainly a natural reaction to growing older – as I suggested to my 10-year-old grandson when he criticised the lax standard of work required of his 8-year-old brothers' (p. 142); and (in discussing the 'wilful blindness to the often excellent management undertaken by local authorities'): 'I worked with one particularly outstanding manager in the ILEA. When the authority was abolished, he was hired by a private education company to take over the running of a troubled local authority. He recruited several of his former colleagues and set to work. Ironically, his success was hailed as a victory for private management' (p. 158); and (in noting the malign effect of streaming on children):

> most of us have such fragile egos that if other people (especially our teachers) think we are limited in our abilities – we become so. I experienced this at first hand when, for a short stage of my career, I worked for a particularly critical boss. When he questioned me, he did so in such an intimidating manner that I could feel my confidence draining away. I forgot important points and lost confidence in any creative ideas that I might have had. Because we humans are able to observe ourselves, I was aware of this transformation taking place and could see how poorly I was presenting myself. And I was an adult with a successful background and a supportive home life. Imagine the power of this effect on an insecure child or adolescent. (p. 169)

And finally, there are hardly any errors in the text to distract the reader. Luxembourg is missing its 'o' on page 61 (though not on page 60), and on page

115, when Mortimore writes, 'In Chapter Ten I deal with those parts of our system that have the potential to be either positive or negative', he means Chapter Nine. Otherwise, Policy Press are to be congratulated on producing a remarkably clean text – which, regrettably, is not always the case these days.

In the first half of the book, Mortimore gives his readers a wide-ranging introduction to the history, philosophy and psychology of education. He discusses theories of intelligence and ability, learning and teaching, school leadership and effectiveness, assessment and inspection. He has crammed an enormous amount of information into 113 pages – without giving his readers verbal indigestion. (The only bit of the book which I found slightly indigestible was the section in which he gives copious statistics from SATs, GCSE, A level and international assessments. Having said that, I'm not sure how he could have made these important facts and figures any less indigestible.)

He then looks at the current English education system in terms of its strengths, ambiguities (parts of the system which can be strengths or weaknesses or both) and weaknesses. I agree with his categorisation, except that I'm not sure why he included the aims of the system as one of its strengths, rather than as an ambiguity – or even a weakness. As he himself says:

> I found it difficult to identify the formal aims of our education system. Since it has evolved over 150 years, I did not expect to find aims clearly stated at its start. But I did expect some of the milestone Education Acts to include a statement of general aims for the system ... Instead, I found a system with confused aims – frequently shifting between the three Rs and broader ambitions. (p. 116)

I certainly agree with his list of the system's main weaknesses: the over-dominance of Westminster, the market model of schooling, the divisiveness of private schooling, selection and ability grouping.

Having noted its strengths and weaknesses, he seeks to answer the question 'how good is the system?' and goes on to suggest what a better system might be like. In Chapter Thirteen he sets out his proposals for change. This is the heart of the book – the manifesto he has been working towards logically and relentlessly for more than 200 pages. He proposes:

- expanding pre-school provision and raising the school starting age to six;
- decommissioning the education market;
- restoring powers to local authorities;
- creating schools with balanced intakes of both pupils and staff;
- incorporating private schools into the state system, possibly as sixth-form colleges;
- abolishing selection;
- requiring faith schools to be open to all pupils, with any religious practice conducted in voluntary after-school classes;
- rethinking pupil grouping policies: 'The Finnish mixed-ability model may be what we should be working towards' (p. 224);

- reviewing the purposes of assessment: abolishing SATs and GCSE and reforming A levels;
- creating 'a small body of knowledgeable and experienced HMIs' (p. 228) to be responsible for the inspection of schools;
- discouraging homework in primary schools;
- relaxing school uniform;
- extending after-school activities to all;
- reducing children's stress levels – including the dropping of SATs and 'a simpler system of transfer from primary to secondary schools' (p. 231); and
- establishing an independent Education Commission which would oversee the National Curriculum and arrangements for assessment.

He argues that the current model of schooling could be improved by:

- encouraging an inclusive culture in which all learners are treated with equal respect;
- abolishing league tables to make cooperation between schools easier;
- allocating pupils and teachers to schools on a fair and equal basis to avoid the creation of 'sink' schools; and
- changing the way that all schools deal with pupils: 'Teachers and administrators need to allow pupils more of a voice' (p. 232).

Finally, he rejects the notion of schools run for profit. 'Governments should resist the high-pressure lobbying,' he says (p. 234).

There will be a range of views on these proposals. *FORUM* readers may well agree with many of them. I certainly do – though I would have gone further on faith schools. I don't believe faith schools 'run the risk of being divisive' (page 144). They *are* divisive! I'm sorry Mortimore didn't go the whole hog and call for the removal of religious groups from the education system altogether. After all, he notes that in the 1944 Education Act, Rab Butler 'had the opportunity of thanking religious schools for providing a service prior to the creation of a national system and standing them down' (p. 73) – which rather suggests that that is what he would have preferred Butler to do.

Others will find some of Mortimore's proposals – random allocation of pupils to secondary schools, for example – controversial. Those on the Right will no doubt seek to rubbish the whole list.

In his final chapter Mortimore discusses how his ideas might be taken forward. In a situation where politicians of both major parties are adamant that they are right, how can change come about? Mortimore urges his readers to speak out and to 'persuade politicians of all parties to support a campaign for the better system that our children and our society deserve' (p. 240).

He warns that there will be strong opposition. Right-wing think tanks funded by anonymous donors 'will do their best to rubbish the arguments' (p. 240). Such opposition, he says, can be overcome 'only by a mass desire for a

fair education system, serving the interests of all society, led by determined campaigners' (p. 241).

He concludes, 'Readers, create the opportunity for an "education spring" and do your part in building an education system – and a society – worth leaving to your children and your grandchildren' (p. 241). I have to say I was disappointed with this last chapter. Perhaps this was because the rest of the book is so good – and Mortimore's passion for education so clearly expressed – that I was sure he would come up with a new and unique idea – a 'magic bullet' – for getting his proposals implemented. But he is right, of course. There is no magic bullet. In a democracy all one can do is try to persuade as many people as possible of the rightness of one's ideas. And that is exactly what he is seeking to do in this book. The problem is that, in our society, it is the rich and powerful who vote, exercise choice and make the decisions. It is in their interest to maintain the status quo. So it is not going to be an easy task.

Education under Siege is an important book which I hope will be widely read by parents, students, teachers and all those who care about the education of our children. (It would be good if a few politicians read it, too.)

Derek Gillard

The Decorated School: essays on the visual culture of schooling
CATHERINE BURKE, JEREMY HOWARD &
PETER CUNNINGHAM (Eds), 2014
London: Black Dog Publishing
96 pages, with 79 colour and black-and-white illustrations,
£14.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-908966-24-7

This resplendently illustrated, compact and beautiful book offers ten concise and revelatory essays about public art in schools. Contributing scholars explore artworks in school buildings located in the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Canada, the USA, Kyrgyzstan and Japan. They consider aesthetic, formal and stylistic questions across more than a century of practice, and relate these to more general educational and political issues. Every essay shows how artwork placed in schools engages, mutely but tellingly, with the educational thinking of the day. How a work was made, its form and content, and even where it was sited can reveal how the schoolchild was seen, how aspects of the curriculum were valued, or what view of the purposes of education held sway in a given institution. By exploring individual works in particular schools, by making links to broader artistic movements, and by relating works to the dominant ideas informing educational policy and outlook, these essays reinvigorate important arguments.

The book emerges from the activities of the Decorated Schools Research Network, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and established

by two of the book's editors. (one of them, Catherine Burke, wrote about some activities of the Network in *FORUM*, vol. 54, no. 3.) The Network attracted researchers and activists engaged internationally in rediscovering and re-evaluating art placed in schools. The first service *The Decorated School* performs is to retrieve from neglect and disregard extraordinary examples of mural painting, sculpture, stained glass, weaving and mosaic to be found in classrooms and school halls and within the fabric or the grounds of otherwise apparently unremarkable school buildings.

Its second service is to prompt and inform critical thinking about the ways in which the physical space for schooling may be imagined and constructed. That space always embodies ideas about how public education is or has been understood. By reclaiming elements of public education's physical past, contributors to this book restore possibilities for its future.

Much-needed possibilities. Upon taking office, the coalition government at once revised school-building regulations to legitimise smaller spatial parameters and dilute minimum standards of provision. More recently, a National Audit Office report in 2013 showed that the Secretary of State has permitted 107 free schools (some 60% of the total to date) to open in temporary accommodation: office blocks, community centres, disused fire stations, a warehouse, even a Scout camp. These moves signal how insensible or indifferent current policy-makers are to the effects a school's material embodiment may have on pupils and education workers.

Glass

But the materiality of a school's buildings and grounds can be more artfully conceived, as this book shows. In their lucid and wide-ranging introduction the editors quote Ruskin on the occasion of the great Exhibition of Art Treasures in Manchester in 1857:

> I would ask you to consider very carefully whether we might not wisely introduce some great changes in the way of school decoration ... we have considered that cheap furniture and bare walls are a proper part of the means of education ... the notion of fixing the attention by keeping the room empty is a wholly mistaken one. (p. 11)

Ruskin desires the walls of the schoolroom to be covered with history paintings, partly as a ready visual aid for learning and partly as a way to shape character. He claims the material environment is itself an educator which importantly influences the attitude of the learner to the work in hand and to subsequent similar kinds of work. It is a claim whose implications are returned to across this book.

The editors identify three particular periods during which the placing of artwork in schools, and the conception of school spaces as spaces proper for art, seem to have been especially encouraged: the opening years of the twentieth

century, the 1930s, and a short period around 1960. The energy characterising these moments in the history of 'the decorated school' doubtless owes something to the spirit more widely abroad in those years, animating an upsurge of popular and revolutionary hope. The editors note the persistence in such periods of 'a strongly held belief ... ignored or even pointedly rejected in current educational policy discourse, that pupils should be nourished by an environment that itself educates' (p. 8).

The first four essays consider twentieth-century art in schools to the end of World War II, ranging from the French 'Art at School' movement, Chicago's public school murals, iconic sculpture in the grounds of Japanese schools, and beautiful and distinctive work in Edinburgh. Later essays consider case studies of schools in post-war Britain; abstraction and Modernism on the walls of New York City's schools; radical work in Denmark; and Soviet and post-Soviet murals and reliefs in a school in Kyrgyzstan. The final essay is set in the Ardoyne district of contemporary Belfast. Each essay is written accessibly, and richly augmented by colour and black-and-white illustrations and photos of the artwork and the settings under discussion. I was especially glad to learn about murals in Craigmillar Primary School, Edinburgh by John Maxwell, whose designs incorporated suggestions by the pupils. Equally striking was the series of stained glass panels by William Wilson in Cameron House Nursery School in the same city. Wilson's twenty-two vibrant panels depict a day in the life of a nursery child in 1937: a curriculum in glass. They show children reading and drawing or writing; skipping; riding a scooter; roller-skating; picking and watering flowers; playing on a swing and a see-saw and also playing a hand-holding game; sailing model boats; feeding birds; gardening; drinking tea; and finally sleeping.

Murals

Jeremy Howard ends his fascinating essay about Edinburgh's decorated schools with a question about the choices to be made when it comes to preservation: 'how should we interpret the 2006 saving, at vast Heritage Lottery expense, of Maxwell's Craigmillar mural when the school around it has closed...?' (p. 44).

The political as well as the artistic significance of murals in, or on, schools is a recurring theme in the book. (And in life. One of John Maxwell's panels continues to spark controversy.) Sylvia Rhor's essay examines the power and significance of the Chicago Mural Movement. A teacher's inquiry in the 1990s about the paintings which lined the corridors of her school eventually led to the recovery of some 467 extant mural-cycles in the city's public schools. These had been obscured or ignored since the 1930s and earlier, and included work by some of the city's best-known artists. Rhor investigates how murals in one prestigious setting were understood as interventions in debates about the value and purpose of vocational education, about the ways working-class youth was regarded, and about how public education was hierarchised along class and ethnic lines.

Murals are strikingly presented as part of the 'Walls of Hope' project undertaken by Holy Cross Primary School and Wheatfield Primary School in Belfast. Emma Duff explores the making of the murals at these schools (and at other sites) and relates them to their wider context. She notes the way such ventures risk incorporation into a 'governmental drive to re-appropriate the mural form and "mitigate" its traditionally contentious imagery' (p. 82). As a school pupil in Northern Ireland, Emma Duff took part in cross-community arts projects: one of her arguments here has to do with how the image of the schoolchild is constructed and made use of in the charged political context of the North.

Shona Kallestrup's essay on radical work in ceramics and weaving made for a school in Denmark by Asger Jorn explores the interplay of decorative work with and against the architecture of which it is a part. It is argued that Jorn's work can be seen as an intervention in, and against, the country's educational tradition. The essay contains the only picture of an adult artist at work: a photo of Jorn, founding member of COBRA and the Situationist International, riding his Lambretta over a section of clay in order to secure a texture he required.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century thousands of primary schools were built in France. The French, influenced by Ruskin and William Morris, understood aesthetic education to be socially, economically and morally worthwhile. In her essay, Annie Renonciat traces the way such a view endured across the twentieth century in France, and looks at its impact on the way France's classrooms were designed and decorated. She reveals that in 1951 a law was passed requiring builders to reserve 1% of a school's construction costs to pay for a contemporary artwork designed for the building. That law is still in force.

Lost and Found

It can sometimes seem that a prime impetus behind the design and construction of new schools in England is the perceived need to control pupils by ensuring they are easily and constantly kept under surveillance. Two essays look at alternatives to this bleak panopticism. Peter Cunningham, in his reflections on school building immediately after World War II, cites the claim by Andrew Saint that 'sharing the proceeds of material, technical and cultural development equitably among all was the driving social dynamic behind new school building, to be reconciled with issues of style, meaning and appearance' (p. 45).

Newly built Modernist schools and their art signalled a 'political intention to demonstrate publicly the nation's investment in education and in the young, despite general economic austerity' (p. 46). It was felt that aesthetically pleasing surroundings would beneficently influence pupils and teachers for good, and help, after the destruction wrought by the world war, to develop more humane values and attitudes. Cunningham argues that 'the very presence of high-quality works of art integral to the building was integral to the curriculum in this sense'

(p. 46). He shows how, in Catherine Burke's words, 'the education of the eye was conceived of as a critical requirement for educational renewal' (p. 51).

Dawn Pereira's essay looks at schools in London around the turn of the Sixties, a time when, *mirabile dictu*, London County Council set aside £20,000 each year to commission or purchase works of art. The council's Patronage of the Arts Scheme saw '48 works of art by 42 artists commissioned or acquired for educational establishments over an eight year period'(p. 52). One of these works, *Bird in a Pool*, a bronze by Bernard Meadows, was sited in the entrance court to Crown Woods School, where I used to teach. Sadly, it did not long remain. (Another work, by Robert Adams, was designed for nearby Eltham Green School. The text locates both schools in Woolwich, though each is – or, in Crown Woods School's case, was - in Greenwich.) In her essay, Dawn Pereira looks at how various committees and constituencies addressed and resolved the question of what artwork might be 'suitable' for a primary or secondary school, or a tertiary institution. Perhaps counter-intuitively, it was felt that more abstract work was best for primary settings, more realistic work proper to secondaries, and a return to abstraction acceptable at the tertiary level. Artists did not always concur.

While several of the pieces Pereira describes have been lost, many endure. John Verney's wonderful Miro-esque decorative glass screen, commissioned for the entrance to Fairlawn Primary School, Forest Hill, in 1958, was re-made for the school's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, and Pereira cites other examples of parents, teachers and governors recognising, and working to restore or reclaim, artwork placed in their schools. That urge and its impetus to enrich the environment values craft and creation. It offers to the gaze of all in the school works of art made for the site, and insists that education is not only instrumental, and that schools are not to be understood first and foremost as sites for the manufacture of exam results and the meeting of externally set performance targets. If there is something in the idea that the environment is educative, that the substance, layout, organisation and decoration of the school's material and physical being 'teaches', the next question must be what is it that the child learns in and from the environment of this school? What adorns the walls? What admits the light? What stands in the entrance court or at the gate? And how do these features contribute to the learning we desire? This book, whose essays absorb and whose pictures elate, will encourage those who spend their days in schools to look again at what's around them and re-discover or re-make it.

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