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## Man's Second "Age": Schooling as A Theme in English Literature

... the whining school-boy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwilling to school.

Shakespeare

This essay deals with what Jaques, in *As You Like It*, considers the second of the "seven ages" of man's life. Jaques describes man's second "age" as the period when as a boy he attends school. This stage has occupied the attention of the English literary writers since Roger Ascham,<sup>1</sup> a tutor of Princess Elizabeth, through Burton, Milton, Fielding, Dickens and Lamb down to Bernard Shaw, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. Opinions on schooling have been expressed through almost all literary forms: poetry, fiction, drama, letter, essay, miscellaneous prose and recorded conversation. Some of these authors have engaged themselves in what, by and large, is a theoretical discussion of schooling; that is to say, they do not discuss the subject vis-à-vis their own experiences of the second stage of their lives. Among such writers are Milton, Fielding, a large part of Dickens, and Aldous Huxley. But there are many writers who have recalled their own experiences of schooling and have made these the theme of a poem, an essay, a part of a novel, or a conversation. This category includes Samuel Johnson, William Cowper, Charles Lamb, partly Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Samuel Butler the author of *The Way of All Flesh*, Bernard Shaw and George Orwell. Since in this paper I will confine myself to those authors who have given us their own experiences of schooling, I will discuss mainly the relevant writings of the second group of authors. An omission in this group will be Dickens whose views on schooling have already been exhaustively studied.<sup>2</sup> Some of these authors, for example, Johnson, Lamb and Orwell, have named and described the actual schools which they attended; others, such as Charlotte Brontë and Samuel Butler, have taken recourse to imaginary schools and fictitious teachers and through them have given vent to their emotions, recollected in tranquillity.

The repeated descriptions of schools and their functioning in English literature can be compared to some other prominent themes such as nature, satire, the supernatural, childhood and the like. However, in spite of the high frequency of schooling as a theme in English literature, it has not so far drawn the critical attention that it deserves. Even in the case of Dickens, though, as John Manning says, "school life was his forte," many critical volumes on his writings either "do not deal with this aspect of his work, or make passing comment only."<sup>3</sup> None of the writers included here dwells on schooling for any length even remotely comparable with Dickens' repeated treatment of it. This is so because, unlike Dickens, these authors have recreated only their personal experiences of their schooling. But the significant thing is that so many of them do say something on this subject though their descriptions of it are brief. Since I have confined myself in this paper primarily to the personal recollections of the schooling of specific authors, it would not be possible to include the theoretical views of the professional philosophers like Locke and Rousseau on the subject.

The element that is common to the views of the authors who will be studied here is that they did not find their academies, whether famous public schools or ordinary ones, satisfactory. In fact they censure their schools, though the degree of severity, of course, varies. There are also, naturally, variations on the points of criticism of their institutions. The full list will be very long; the main items of complaint can, however, be isolated under these well-defined heads: (a) snobbery and allied values imbibed at public schools, (b) avoidable physical punishment meted out, (c) a meaningless curriculum, (d) unhygienic surroundings and bad food at boarding houses and (e) selfish and hypocritical teachers and other officials. We will now take up these items one by one and locate them in the writings of the authors already listed.

Snobbery and other wrong values that are said to be acquired at public schools have been exposed by several writers. Cowper in his "Tirocinium"<sup>4</sup> has pointed out the harm that public schools do to their pupils. These schools retard the growth of children into good human beings; they, Cowper thought, teach them wrong values:

Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,  
Lascivious, headstrong; or all these at once;  
That, in good time, the stripling's finish'd taste  
For loose expense and fashionable waste  
Should prove your ruin and his own at last;  
Train him in public with a mob of boys (201-206).

Cowper is, as he states in the Dedication, for "private tuition, in preference to an education at school," because public schools, according to him, breed many more vices<sup>5</sup> besides the ones mentioned in the lines quoted above. A public school is not for such a sensitive child as the young Cowper was, because "great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough" (341). A public school thus requires that the pupil, if he wants to flourish in life, be aggressive and domineering — qualities which in themselves are hardly commendable. Besides, a public school does not teach its pupils moral probity; it is suited to only those who care for worldly success and whose only qualifications are "titles, riches, birth" (346), but it is no place for the offspring of those families "whose chief distinction is their spotless name" (355). Public schools, then, can lay little claim to producing worthwhile people for ecclesiastical calling; they breed the type of clergymen whom Milton had censured in "Lycidas". Cowper doubts whether a public school has the moral atmosphere to create among its pupils faith in religion (373-374). Cowper foreshadows the distrust that Bernard Shaw will later have of such schools.<sup>6</sup>

There is another evil, the mother of several sins, that is endemic in public schools, namely, the rat-race to outdo others. The competitive spirit, on the face of it, may seem harmless, but it really is a vice that engenders "envy, hatred, jealousy, and pride" (467). The school officials, however, give it the misleading name of "emulation" (469). It may be remarked here that Milton implicitly excludes rivalry as a device for education at his seminary.<sup>7</sup> The boys' real objective is not so much to improve themselves as, by their success, to "tickle spite" (481) in others. What is worse is that the evils picked up at school usually remain with the individual till the end of his life. Cowper wonders whether learning gained at the cost of imbibing some of the deadly sins is of any use.

Cowper's contemporary James Boswell, however, has another story to tell about public schools. Influenced by Dr. Johnson, who was less vituperative than Cowper against "great schools", Boswell placed his elder son at Eton, and the younger one at Westminster, the school where Cowper studied. And Boswell reports that his sons learned from these schools "a great deal of good, and no evil."<sup>8</sup> Since evil and good are relative terms and since we know that Boswell lived his life much less sensitively than Cowper, it is natural that the poet was repelled by things which the biographer considered harmless and even useful for his sons.

Cowper in "Tirocinium" argues for the child's early education at home, preferably by the father himself,<sup>9</sup> or by a hired tutor who should not have more than two pupils under his care. Such an arrangement

may suit a melancholy and introverted child such as Cowper was, but Charles Lamb, though temperamentally not altogether different from Cowper, could see certain advantages of an education at a large public school as compared with the "private tuition" that Cowper advocates. In his essay, "Recollections of Christ's Hospital" (1813), Lamb points out that at this school the boys shed "that cowardly shyness which boys mewed up at home will feel." This is true of Christ's Hospital, which is a Blue-coat school<sup>10</sup> and, therefore, as Lamb duly notices, prevents its pupils from getting that "disgusting forwardness of a lad brought up at some other of the public schools," like the ones described by Cowper on the basis of his experience at Westminster School.

Another such school is the one that Ernest, in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, attends. Butler's account is autobiographical and is presented through Ernest, the protagonist of the novel.<sup>11</sup> Ernest is hardly grateful to his father, Theobald Pontifex, for sending him to a typical Victorian public school where the dignity of labour, in which he has implicit faith, is not upheld (Ch. 34). Theobald Pontifex, a clergyman, himself did not escape unscathed from public school education. In chapter eleven Overton tells us that Theobald's "cleverness" in telling lies is due to his having had this type of education. Bernard Shaw points out some additional vices that boys learned at his school in Ireland. Shaw complains that at his school he learned "dishonourable submission to tyranny . . . hopelessness, evasion, derision, cowardice, and all the blackguard's shifts by which the coward intimidates other cowards." These vices, says Shaw, he came in contact with when he was only "a day boy" at an Irish school. He further tells us that, if he had been "a boarder at an English public school", he would have added to these vices still "deeper shames," of which George Orwell was to have a bitter experience at St. Cyprian's.<sup>12</sup>

St. Cyprian's, a preparatory school, is run closely on public school lines. Here Orwell spent several dreary years. St. Cyprian's, recalls Orwell, was an uppish school where during "the beginning and end of the term, especially, there was naïvely snobbish chatter about Switzerland, and Scotland with its ghillies and grouse moors" (408). It is not surprising, therefore, that the young Orwell, a comparatively poor boy, developed, in this choking atmosphere, a deep rooted inferiority complex from which he suffered "til far into adult life" (413). Orwell, though poor, was admitted to this expensive school at reduced charges because the headmaster Sambo — thus nicknamed by the boys (381) — guessed that this boy would win a scholarship and bring credit to his school. Orwell surpassed Sambo's expectations, because he earned not

one but two scholarships, and the headmaster "made full use of them in his prospectuses" (393). Sambo was very keen to "attract titled boys" (384) to his school. There may not be anything inherently wrong in this, but what Orwell resents in retrospect is the invidious distinction palpably practised by the headmaster and his wife, Flip, in their treatment of the ordinary, though academically gifted, boys, and the titled ones. Orwell vividly describes how once a titled boy "had a choking fit at dinner, and a stream of snot ran out of his nose on to his plate in a way horrible to see. Any lesser person would have been called a dirty little beast and ordered out of the room instantly; but Sambo and Flip laughed it off in a 'boys will be boys' spirit" (384). Even the sons of ordinary citizens who happened to be rich received preferential treatment. Sambo is a mixture of snobbery and cowardice. The young Orwell noticed that apart from the South American pupils "whose parents were safely distant," Sambo never "caned any boy whose father's income was much above £2,000 a year" (385). Sambo was obviously afraid of the rich boys who lodged complaints with their parents of their having been beaten by the headmaster (400).

Sometimes a snobbish attitude was maintained, it appears, sheerly out of a desire to humiliate poor Orwell. He recalls that on none of his birthdays that fell during his stay at St. Cyprian's did he have a cake though it went on the boy's parents' bill, and he is sure that his "parents would have paid for it readily enough" (389). In later life Orwell could not say anything better than this about his school: "I have good memories of St. Cyprian's, among a horde of bad ones" (394). And all his good memories are "in some way connected with animals", walks in the countryside or his private reading of Thackeray, H.G. Wells and others (394-396), but none with the school itself. According to Sambo's measuring-rod, Orwell achieved brilliant success at school, but still he could never get the regard that was his due; his social standing came between Sambo and him. Orwell left St. Cyprian's after having won two scholarships, but he was given a send off by Flip as if he had been a failure, "because success was measured not by what you did but by what you were" (416).

Apart from such mental torture and humiliation, many writers suffered severe physical punishment which at times at least could be either dispensed with wholly, or inflicted with less ferocity. Few people have doubted the use of fear as an aid to teaching and learning,<sup>13</sup> but none has supported unlimited use of the rod. Some severity is necessary for the immediate management of children whose attention may wander during teaching. Johnson ascribed his great knowledge of Latin directly

to his Orbilius-like school-master, Hunter, who "whipt" him sufficiently enough to make him learn the language.<sup>14</sup> Other writers have corroborated Johnson's opinion in this regard. Shaw says that he "did not learn anything at school" because he escaped beating. Orwell and other boys at St. Cyprian's found beating an effective device for learning their curriculum, especially classical languages (388). Lamb regrets that Matthew Field, the master who taught the Lower Grammar School at Christ's Hospital, "never used the rod"<sup>15</sup> and consequently it adversely affected his, and his schoolmates', academic attainments. The complaints, then, that these authors have made about corporal punishment are about its inhuman variety which, it seems, could be avoided. Johnson, the great supporter of physical punishment as an aid to teaching in schools,<sup>16</sup> considered his own master, Hunter, a little too severe: "abating his brutality," said Johnson to Boswell, "he was a very good master."<sup>17</sup> Johnson himself does not describe the punishment, but we have a very vivid account of it from J.L. Clifford, a Johnson scholar. At Lichfield Grammar School, which Johnson attended, the common method of punishment that Hunter, the headmaster, usually followed was to make the boy who was to be punished "lean over the three-legged 'flogging horse,' with his stomach on the top of the horse. Other boys held down his arms while the master whipped his posterior. If the punishment was also intended as a disgrace, the boy's trousers were taken down, for exposing the bare skin was considered a shameful humiliation." This produced in Johnson's mind a permanent fear of Hunter. We learn that later in his life Johnson "confessed that he could tremble at the mere sight of Hunter's grand-daughter, Anna Seward, because she looked so like her grand-father."<sup>18</sup> And such inhuman punishment did not result always from sufficient cause. Hunter never cared whether his pupils "had an opportunity of knowing" the answers to questions that he asked them. He "did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence" of the boys.<sup>19</sup>

Lamb describes the systematic punishment meted out to the boys. There were three degrees of it. When a boy committed his "first offence", he was put in "fettters"; his second offence entailed his being locked in a dungeon which so scared the boys thus punished that there were "one or two instances of lunacy, or attempted suicide." The punishment for the "culprit, who had been a third time an offender," was supervised by the governors of the school. This time the boy was punished in the presence of everybody connected with the school; and once at least, Lamb says, when the beadle himself turned pale with the thought of cruelty to be inflicted on the boy, "a glass of brandy was

ordered to prepare him for the mysteries." One can well imagine the plight of the 'offender' after the intoxicated beadle had exhausted his stamina.

The worst type of cruelty in the name of correction is seen in *Jane Eyre*.<sup>20</sup> In chapter six of the novel Charlotte Brontë describes the wholly unjust and vicious punishment meted out to Helen Burns, who in real life was Charlotte's eldest sister, Maria Brontë. Helen Burns, who is already in an advanced stage of tuberculosis, is punished for not cleaning her nails on a day when there was no water available because it had frozen in the intense cold. Helen's teacher, Miss Scatcherd, orders her to fetch the instrument which is to be used for inflicting torture. Helen returns "carrying in her hand a bundle of twigs tied together at one end. This ominous tool she presented to Miss Scatcherd with a respectful courtesy; then she quietly, and without being told,<sup>21</sup> unloosed her pinafore, and the teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs." Scatcherd's punishment to Helen was the result of a wicked malice<sup>22</sup> and had not the least semblance of the motive of Oliver Goldsmith's first school teacher, Thomas Byrne,<sup>23</sup> of whom he gives a lovable, though a little ludicrous, picture in *The Deserted Village*. Goldsmith writes that though his master was "stern to view":

Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.<sup>24</sup>

George Orwell recalls that at his school he used to wet his bed "for which the proper cure was a beating" by the headmaster (379). The punishment to Orwell was so vigorous that it ended in a broken riding-crop — a sorry fact for which the master held the boy wholly responsible (382). The master's "barbarous remedy" (384) was sufficient, says Orwell, to cure him of his habit of bed-wetting. The more severe punishment that Flip had contemplated was not necessary. She had threatened the eight-year-old Orwell that she would get the Sixth Form, i.e., the comparatively senior boys, to beat him if his habit of bed-wetting persisted (380).

The tyrannical behaviour of some of the senior pupils towards their juniors, with the support or connivance of the masters it appears, equals, and even surpasses, what the youngsters got from their teachers. Apart from the threatened beating from the Sixth Form, Orwell remembers one Johnny Hale, a senior and a great bully, who tortured him and others at school (413). This was excruciating enough, but worse was that Flip "loved" Johnny Hale and Sambo "commended him as a

boy who 'had character' and 'could keep order' " (413). Help of senior boys may indeed sometimes be necessary for maintaining general discipline in school, but to choose hoodlums like Johnny Hale for such a duty is to allot authority to somebody who does not even dimly realize that he ought to behave in a responsible manner. It indicates lack of judgment and propriety on the part of the headmaster or whosoever tolerates the "Strong Man" as Johnny Hale was nicknamed by his "toadies" (413).

In Aldous Huxley's *New Rothamsted*<sup>25</sup> and Milton's plan of an Academy there are no senior pupils vested with special authority. But we find Lamb, Charlotte Brontë, Butler and Shaw complaining bitterly, like Orwell, about their tormentors. Referring to the prefects, Lamb says: "The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose*. in the coldest winter nights . . . to receive the discipline of a leathern thong. . . . The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow." These prefects are little Marquis des Sades and their cruelties are grotesque. Lamb recalls that they "under the cruellest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season and the day's sports."

At Lowood Institution, the doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' was shamelessly practised by the "great girls". Since the food given to the girls was never adequate, these "famished" senior girls, whenever they had an opportunity, would "coax or menace the little ones out of their portion. Many a time," *Jane Eyre* recalls, "I have shared between two claimants the precious morsel of brown bread distributed at tea-time; and after relinquishing to a third, half of the contents of my mug of coffee, I have swallowed the remainder with an accompaniment of secret tears, forced from me by the exigency of hunger" (Ch. 7). There was no protection provided to the younger lot against the whims of the official monitors or the self-styled discipline keepers. Ernest Pontifex, at the Roughborough Grammar School, had a harrowing experience because of, among other things, the prevalent custom of "bullying which the younger boys . . . had to put up with at the hands of the bigger ones" (Ch. 28). In this regard Shaw found his school worse than a prison because there "they protect you against violence and outrage from your fellow-prisoners."

Keeping in mind Shaw's own unpleasant experience of schooling, it is natural to find him writing thus in his later life: "I take great care to discover a school with a sensible mistress and a rational system."<sup>26</sup> But as it is, few of the masters or mistresses have been found to be good in actual practice.



Cowper nostalgically laments that the "brilliant times" when such teachers existed are "fled" (284). Cowper blames the teachers of his own time for being unscrupulous because they claim "more than half the praise" (528) if their pupils do well in their studies, but the same teachers, Cowper continues, disown all responsibility if the pupils' performance is poor (536). Cowper's account is a little too generalized, but from Lamb we have a concrete instance of the unscrupulousness of his teacher, Reverend Matthew Field, at the Lower Grammar School<sup>27</sup> in Christ's Hospital. Field, says Lamb, "was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us." At Lowood Institution, none of the teachers, except Maria Temple, "precisely pleased" Jane Eyre (Ch. 5). The judgment of Helen Burns on Miss Temple, vis-à-vis her other teachers, implicitly states the plus and minus points of a teacher: "Miss Temple is very good, and very clever; she is above the rest, because she knows far more than they do" (Ch. 5). Ernest Pontifex' teacher, Skinner, notwithstanding his display of learning, is really a shallow and ignorant person; his "Meditations on St. Jude", says Overton, "were cribbed without acknowledgement" (Ch. 27). In later life Ernest is haunted by Skinner, and sometimes in his sleep has "fierce and reproachful encounters" with him (Ch. 86). In retrospect Orwell also regards Sambo and Flip as "silly, shallow, ineffectual people" (420).<sup>28</sup>

Apart from academic ignorance, pupils have complained of hypocrisy on the part of the teachers and others associated with their schools. Jane Eyre recalls that Sunday evening catechism at Lowood Institution was an exercise in hypocrisy. The girls had to listen to Miss Miller, their teacher, "whose irrepressible yawns attested her weariness" (Ch. 7). Her hypocrisy, augmented, no doubt, by the school management, led her to use grotesque methods of keeping the girls awake when some of them, like the Biblical Eutychus, as Jane points out, "overpowered with sleep, would fall down." The remedy to keep these girls awake was to "thrust them forward into the centre of the school-room, and oblige them to stand there till the sermon was finished. Sometimes, their feet failed them, and they sank together in a heap; they were then propped up with the monitors' high stools" (Ch. 7). Miss Miller, unlike St. Paul, never went up to the members of her fallen down flock to see what had happened to them.<sup>29</sup> Then there is the hypocrisy in matters of food. When the food at Lowood Institution happened to be scarce or rotten, as it generally was, Brocklehurst<sup>30</sup> expected the girls to be content with our Lord's "warnings that man shall not live by bread alone" (Ch. 7). Skinner is overfed, but he was unwilling to admit it. Overton observes that

“ ‘bread and butter’ was Skinnerese for oyster-patties and apple tart, and ‘gin-hot’ the true translation of water” — that is when Skinner referred to his own food (Ch. 27).

Residential schools, which Shaw is happy to have escaped, draw further complaints regarding bad food catered to pupils, and the general unhygienic conditions under which they had to live. Lamb tells us that the food was generally uneatable, and whenever it happened to be eatable it was scanty. He recalls “boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*),<sup>31</sup> with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth — our scanty mutton scrags on Fridays — and rather more savoury, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays.” This already subsistence level quota of food was further cut by the predatory nurses who “used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners.” The “Diet” which the austere Milton<sup>32</sup> recommends for his “*Academy*” is a great deal better than what Lamb and others seem to have got at Christ’s Hospital. Jane’s experience in this regard has already been mentioned in a different context. She also laments the fact that the clothing provided to the girls at Lowood was “insufficient to protect” them from severe cold during the winter season (Ch. 7). The unhealthy conditions at Lowood are simply appalling: “forty-five out of the eighty girls lay ill at one time. . . . Many . . . went home only to die; some died at the school” (Ch. 9). This is much worse than anything in Dickens’ schools. It cannot be argued that since Lowood was a charity institution, therefore, things could not be much better. The fact is that this school, like many others, was mismanaged, as Jane points out in chapter ten. After the death of Helen Burns and many other unnamed girls, an inquiry is conducted into the functioning of the school which “produced a result mortifying to Mr. Brocklehurst, but beneficial to the institution” (Ch. 10). Sambo, like Brocklehurst and most teachers at Lowood, pays no attention to the ailment from which a pupil may be suffering. Sambo considers Orwell’s “wheeziness” and cough, caused because of his lung trouble, a fit subject for ridicule. “You wheeze like a concertina,” Sambo used to tell Orwell (396). This headmaster also informed the ailing boy that his breathing difficulty was caused by his overeating. His abysmal ignorance in this regard is comparable to Brocklehurst’s complete darkness about Indian children.<sup>33</sup> Though, unlike Lowood, Sambo’s is not a charity school, yet the general conditions there also are unhygienic. Sambo saw to it that boys could have a hot bath only once a week. “The food,” says Orwell, “was not only bad,

it was also insufficient. Never before or since have I seen butter or jam scraped on bread so thinly." The boys were led to steal even stale bread from the pantry and "left-over scraps" from the plates of the assistant masters because they were served better food (396-397). The food served to the boys, it appears, was deliberately made disgusting and repellent so that they might eat less. The porridge, for instance, "contained more lumps, hairs and unexplained black things than one would have thought possible, unless someone were putting them there on purpose." Another vicious thing at St. Cyprian's was that the lavatories "had no fastenings of any kind on doors, so that whenever you were sitting there someone was sure to come crashing in" (398). It is not surprising then that with such bad and scanty food and almost open lavatories, the boys remained "constipated for days together" (399).

Apart from the complaints about underfeeding and unhygienic surroundings, there are protests against the unsatisfactory curricula which the pupils have been made to pursue at schools. Literary writers have complained about the sketchy, superficial and irrelevant education imparted to them. Cowper was keenly aware of the vital importance of the right education. He points out: "From education, as the leading cause, / The public character its colour draws" (911-912). Cowper missed the type of education that he wished to have. Macaulay is of the opinion that Cowper's "spirit had been broken by fagging at school."<sup>34</sup> Many writers have resented the heavy emphasis on classical education during their schooling. It is not the main duty of a school, says Cowper, to teach boys a "Greek or Roman page, / At stated hours" (605-606). Cowper pleads for a more comprehensive education of young boys. It ought to be a necessary part of the job of a school to watch the pupils' emotions and "Control their tide" (610). Obviously Cowper wants that young boys be educated to control such undesirable emotions as anger, hatred, envy and the like, so that they may be able to utilize properly the energy generated by these emotions. Cowper in this regard anticipates Aldous Huxley, who gives similar duties to the school that he describes in *Island*.<sup>35</sup> Cowper also wishes astronomy, revealed religion, and biographies of "men of ancient fame" and "some living worthy" to be included in school cursus (634-647).

Lamb, though he did not have to undergo much classical education at his school, is happy to note that the old belief that "all learning was contained in the languages" (i.e., Latin and Greek) is on its way out. The "least concern of a teacher in the present day," wrote Lamb in 1821 when he was forty-six years old, "is to inculcate grammar-rules."<sup>36</sup> However, we find Ernest still suffering at the hands of Dr. Skinner who

calls his pupil " 'an audacious reptile' . . . because he pronounced Thalia with a short i" (Ch. 30). Ernest's heart is not in classical languages because, as he argues with himself, they were "very well in their own time and country," but in England they are irrelevant and "out of place" (Ch. 31).<sup>37</sup> Bernard Shaw, though not averse to Latin and Greek, wished that he had been taught more than that. His Irish school, he records, "made only the thinnest pretence of teaching anything but Latin and Greek." At St. Cyprian's, Orwell found that Flip regarded "natural history" as "a babyish pursuit" primarily because it "smelt of science and therefore seemed to menace classical education" (395). These reactions against classical education reflect a shift from the time of Johnson who was happy to have learned a great deal of Latin at school.

Many of these writers have deplored the fact that their school curricula were narrow. We have already seen Cowper suggesting items that he would have liked to be included in his schooling. Shaw roundly denounces school text books and calls them "hideous". Orwell found his school system "a sort of confidence trick" in the sense that the boys were made "to learn exactly those things that would give an examiner the impression that you knew more than you did know" (385). Then there is the now vexed question of sex. Earlier writers do not seem to have missed sex education at school. Cowper, Johnson, Charlotte Brontë and Lamb appear to have been content with whatever they otherwise happened to know in this regard.<sup>38</sup> Even Samuel Butler is not really above other Victorians, and at Dr. Skinner's school sex is not discussed. In recent times, Shaw and Orwell talk about it and resent that their schools curbed a free discussion of the subject. In retrospect Shaw ruefully reflects that he acquired at his school "a blasphemous habit of treating love and maternity as obscene jokes." Orwell's criticism in this regard is more pronounced than Shaw's. He remembers that once during his stay at St. Cyprian's there was a lecture, provoked by the boys' curiosity and meant only for the older of them, on "the Temple of the Body". The lecture was delivered by an "imbecile of an assistant master, who was later to be a Member of Parliament" (403). It need hardly be added that this lecture was so delivered that it was wholly incomprehensible to the boys. Consequently they continued to believe in "the sexual mythology" that was enforced at St. Cyprian's (406).

A question that arises from the foregoing is, whether the criticisms of these writers of their schooling are just. These criticisms seem to suggest that the young pupils, who later became famous literary figures, got lit-

tle from their schools. This is true only in the larger context of life and their literary pursuits, but that they acquired at their schools what is called bookish education is beyond doubt. Of course, Lamb could not be taught his art of essay-writing by any of his teachers.<sup>39</sup> It need hardly be added that what is true of Lamb is true of other writers also. In spite of this, it is obviously difficult to agree with Alethea, Ernest's vivacious aunt who, in a Wordsworthian mood, referring to children, says "how much more they know than those who profess to teach them" (Ch. 33). This is an opinion on school education that only William Blake might have accepted.<sup>40</sup>

Shaw, like Orwell, Cowper, Lamb and Butler, considers the teacher-pupil relation inherently strained and believes that neither of them likes the other. A pupil's hatred of his "gaoler and flogger", says Shaw, is perhaps a little less than the teacher's "adult hatred" of his pupil. The teacher bears the company of his boys because he has to earn his livelihood. In the Preface to *Misalliance* and some of his other writings, Shaw implies that usually people with mediocre abilities take up teaching jobs. This opinion of Shaw, on the whole, represents the views of other writers also that have been discussed here. However, there is an exception so great that we cannot readily agree with these literary writers in this regard. Jeremy Taylor, the great seventeenth-century divine, thought that he could be "more usefull to others" by his teaching "trade" than by an ecclesiastical job.<sup>41</sup>

Ironically enough, some of the authors, whose reactions to their schooling we have studied, worked for some time as teachers in schools or tried to run their own schools. None of them, however, succeeded in this profession.<sup>42</sup> This may be so primarily because none of them was cut out for this job; teaching was a temporary phase till they found their real calling. Their "full-throated" criticisms and exposure of the very profession in which they themselves failed do not, on that account, seem either unreal or false. They have to be judged finally not on the basis of what they made of themselves as school teachers, but on the basis of their literary productions. Their accounts of their schooling are impassioned memoirs of high literary merit, at places even comparable, because of the quality of thought that they have brought to bear on the subject, with Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.<sup>43</sup>

## NOTES

1. Roger Ascham is the author of *The Scholemaster* in which, with his Baconian concern for the higher strata of society, he deals with the school education of boys belonging to that group.
2. John Manning has written a full-length book on this aspect of Dickens: *Dickens on Education* (Toronto, 1959).

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and vii. This is a literary vagary especially when we remember, as Manning says, that Dickens in his novels and short stories "discussed, at varying length, some fifty schools and more than that number of teachers" p. vii. This output is prolific indeed, but if such prolixity has remained comparatively unnoticed, it should be no wonder that few literary critics have paid attention to this aspect of Lamb, Shaw and others who, as compared with Dickens, wrote only briefly on this subject.
4. "Tirocinium" is a rambling poem of over four hundred and fifty couplets. The text of the poem that I have used here is as given in *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H.S. Milford (Oxford, 1950). In the Advertisement prefixed to "The Task" and other poems Cowper says that "he would be very sorry to stand suspected of having aimed his censure at any particular school" in "Tirocinium." However, while writing this poem Cowper constantly recalled his own school life. See Gilbert Thomas, *William Cowper and the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1935), p. 73, where it is stated: "'Tirocinium' is clearly inspired by Cowper's meditation upon his own childhood, though he obliquely reflects his experience in the mirror of an ideal." This view is corroborated by Maurice J. Quinlan, *William Cowper: A Critical Life* (Minneapolis, 1953), p. 5, where he says that Cowper, while writing "Tirocinium," "drew upon his memory for details of public school life." Subsequent citations from Cowper are to "Tirocinium." Figures in parentheses after citations from this poem refer to line nos.
5. The evils that Cowper thinks are acquired at a public school parallel at several points the vices which Parson Adams attributes to Public school education. "Public schools," says Parson Adams to Joseph Andrews, "are the nurseries of all vice and immorality." *Joseph Andrews*, ed. P.N. Furbank (Harmondsworth, 1954), p. 234 (Bk. III, Ch. v). Also see Bk. III, Ch. iii, where Wilson describes his life-history and the vices he had in his youth. Adams attributes these vices directly to Wilson's public school education.
6. In the Preface to *St. Joan*, Shaw says that if Joan were to be educated at a modern "convent school" she would be imparted "a very energetic training in the gospel of Saints Louis Pasteur and Paul Bert, who would tell her (possibly in visions but more probably in pamphlets) not to be a superstitious little fool." *The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw*, (London, 1965), p. 611.
7. In the plan that Milton gives of his Academy in his prose tract "Of Education", this teaching device is missing. Later references to Milton are to this tract. The text used is as printed in *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Milton*, ed. Cleanth Brooks (New York, 1950). Also see Dr. Johnson's strong condemnation of this device in Boswell, *Life of Dr. Johnson*, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford, 1953), p. 34. Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson* is hereafter cited as *Life*.
8. *Life*, pp. 725-726.
9. Bernard Shaw's experience lends support to this view, though on different grounds. He says that when he went to his school he "knew a good deal of Latin grammar" which he had been "taught in a few weeks privately" by his uncle. After several years at school it was discovered by the "same uncle" that the young Shaw had forgotten whatever Latin he had been taught and that he "had learnt nothing else." Preface to *Misalliance*. In the early part of this Preface, Shaw gives his references of his schooling. Later references to Shaw, unless otherwise stated, are to this Preface, and may be located on pp. 54-61 of *Prefaces* cited earlier.
10. A Blue-coat school is "a charity school of which the pupils wear the almoner's blue coat." *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Sir Paul Harvey, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1953).
11. Samuel Butler transcribed his life very "closely in his novel." See Morton Dauwen Zabel, ed. *The Way of All Flesh* (New York, 1950), p. xiii, and Daniel F. Howard ed. *Ernest Pontifex or The Way of All Flesh* (London, 1965), pp. v-vi, and n.5 on p. 98 which says that the name of Ernest's school, Roughborough, is "formed" like Butler's own school, Shrewsbury, and that Skinner, Ernest's teacher, has been "given many characteristics which Butler attributed to Thomas Arnold of Rugby." Skinner, thus, is not wholly identical with Butler's teacher, Dr. Kennedy. The protagonist of the novel is Ernest but the events are described by Overton, the narrator of the plot. Chapter references to *The Way of All Flesh* in the text of this essay are given as in Zabel's edn.
12. Orwell records his experiences of his stay at St. Cyprian's in his famous essay bearing the ironical title, "Such, Such Were the Joys," in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Harmondsworth, 1970), IV, 379-422. Orwell described this essay, in a letter to F.J. Warburg, as "a long autobiographical sketch." *Ibid.*, p. 378. The eds. point out that in the essay as printed by them the names of Orwell's "school fellows and the assistant masters have been changed." *Ibid.*, p. 379, n. 14. Since this is a longish essay of over forty pages, I give page no. after every citation from it.

13. See *Life*, p. 487, where Johnson says, "children, being not reasonable, can be governed only by fear."
14. *Ibid.*, p. 34; also see the views of Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley who, when he sees the tomb of Busby, the headmaster of Westminster School from 1638 to 1695, envies his grandfather because he had been beaten by this teacher: "Dr. Busby! a great man! he whipped my grandfather; a very great man! I should have gone to him myself, if I had not been a blockhead." *Coverley Papers from The Spectator*, ed. K. Deighton (London, 1965), p. 104 (No. 329, Tuesday, March 18, 1712). Orbilius, a flogger, was Horace's teacher.
15. "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago."
16. *Life*, p. 34.
17. *Life*, p. 459.
18. James L. Clifford, *Young Samuel Johnson* (London, 1962), pp. 54 and 55.
19. *Life*, p. 33.
20. Through Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë describes the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge which she and her three sisters attended. See Winifred Gérin, *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius* (Oxford, 1968), Ch. i, passim, for an account that establishes the identity of the characters associated with Lowood School in *Jane Eyre* with the historical people at Clergy Daughters' School. Of particular interest is the statement of Charlotte's widower, Nicholls, that his wife "to the day of her death . . . maintained that the picture (of Lowood Institution) drawn in *Jane Eyre* was on the whole a true picture of the Cowan Bridge School as she knew it by experience" p. 11. Also see Bonamy Dobrée ed. *Jane Eyre* (London, 1953), p. 10 where it is stated that Charlotte Brontë "herself, very much more than is usually the case, is the heroine of the novel.
21. This clearly implies that such a humiliating punishment was the rule rather than an exception at Lowood School.
22. See Gérin, pp. 11-12 where she points out that Miss Andrews, the real life counterpart of Miss Scatcherd, had a "personal venom against Maria."
23. It is well known that Goldsmith was "sent to the village school kept by Thomas Byrne, the original of the schoolmaster in the *Deserted Village*." A.S. Collins, ed. *The Vicar of Wakefield and The Deserted Village* (London, 1929), p. ix. Also see Arthur Barrett, ed. *The Traveller And The Deserted Village* (London, 1951), p. ix.
24. Lines 197 and 205-206.
25. Aldous Huxley in his novel, *Island*, creates a Utopian country, Pala; New Rothamsted is one of the best schools in that country. It is described in Ch. 13 of the novel. Subsequent citations from Huxley are to this chapter.
26. *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters (1874-1897)*, ed. Dan. H. Laurence (New York, 1965), p. 163 (to P. Beatty, Feb. 8, 1887).
27. The Upper Grammar School in Christ's Hospital was taught by James Boyer of whom Lamb gives a picture similar to Johnson's teacher, Hunter, except that Boyer was a shade less fierce than Hunter. Lamb says he was "sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer," i.e., he was not taught by this master.
28. In fairness to the teaching tribe, a great exception to this rule of general dislike of teachers must be recorded here. Lancelot Andrewes, the "general editor of the Authorized Version of the Bible," was taught at Merchant Taylor's School. "Mr. Mulcaster," Aubrey tells us, was Andrewes' "Schoolmaster, whose picture he hung in his Studie." John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick, 3rd edn. (London, 1958), p. 6. Andrewes' veneration for Mulcaster must have been due to the latter's ability to "exactly and plainly construe and parse the lessons to his scholars," and his habit of being "unpartial," though severe, in meting out punishment "where he found just fault." Thomas Fuller, *The Worthies of England*, ed. and abridged John Freeman (London, 1952), p. 600.
29. Acts XX, 1-12. And it is not the weaker sex alone that has suffered this Calvinistic severity of discipline. Byron, the dashing spark, himself complained that he was "disgusted with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where I was cudgelled to Church for the first ten years of my life." Byron attributed his melancholy partly to this rigorous discipline that he had to bear at the Aberdeen Grammar School. See *The Letters of Lord Byron*, ed. R.G. Howarth (London, 1936), p. 75 (Byron's letter to William Gifford, June 18, 1813). It is interesting to compare Byron's assertion with Robert Burton's views on Schooling. Burton regards school education as one of the causes of melancholy. Recalling his own and St. Austin's experience, Burton writes that

- school children "think no slavery in the world (as once I did myself) like to that of a grammar scholar. . . . St. Austin, in the first book of his Confessions and 9th *cap.*, calls this schooling *meiculosam necessitatem* (a dreadful compulsion), and elsewhere a martyrdom, and confesseth of himself, how cruelly he was tortured in mind for learning Greek." *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Hofbrook Jackson (London, 1961), I, 333-334 (Partition 1, Section 2, Member 4, subsection 2).
30. He is the treasurer and manager of Lowood Institution. He preaches, *inter alia*, severity of dress and hair-style to the girls. But neither he himself nor any of the members of his family practises what he preaches to the schoolgirls. See *Jane Eyre*, Ch. 7.
  31. "Coarse in taste as horse-flesh." Hallward and Hill's note in their edn. of *Essays of Elia* (London, 1960), p. 228.
  32. He recommends the "best" food and "it should be plain, healthful, and moderate."
  33. Referring to *Jane Eyre*, Brocklehurst blatantly declares before the whole school that she is "worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut — this girls is — a liar!" *Jane Eyre*, Ch. 7. Brocklehurst implies that Indian children are given to most of the conceivable vices — an opinion which hardly deserves to be commented upon.
  34. "Moore's Life of Lord Byron" (June, 1830), in *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, ed. G.M. Young (London, 1967), p. 536.
  35. "Redirecting the power generated by bad feelings is important," says Mrs. Narayan, the school principal. This is done by performing "the Rakshasi Hornpipe," an oriental dance, which neutralizes the "dangerous heads of steam raised by anger and frustration." This school also teaches "Children all kinds of breathing games, to be played whenever they're angry or upset." The breathing games have their basis in religion and yoga.
  36. "The Old and the New Schoolmaster." Milton had earlier complained that English schools spent too much time in teaching classical languages: "we do amiss to spend seven or eight years meerly in scraping together so much miserable Latine and Greek, as might be learnt otherwise easily and delightfully in one year."
  37. Such an extreme view, by implication, renders much of what is usually regarded learning superfluous and meaningless. It seems that Butler was aware of this; he had completed *The Way of All Flesh* in 1883, though it was published posthumously in 1903; in 1898, he published a prose translation of *The Iliad*, and in 1900, a prose translation of *The Odyssey*.
  38. Milton does not include it in his otherwise almost all-inclusive curriculum. But at the Utopian school that Huxley sketches, the Fall is "an exploded doctrine!"
  39. Talking about school-teachers generally, Lamb puckishly says: "One of these professors, upon my complaining that these little sketches of mine (*Essays of Elia*) were anything but methodical, and that I was unable to make them otherwise, kindly offered to instruct me in the method by which young gentlemen in his seminary were taught to compose English themes." "The Old and the New Schoolmaster."
  40. See Blake's poem "The Schoolboy," which partly reads: ". . . to go to school in a summer morn./O! it drives all joy away;" also see Cowling's note on the poem where he quotes Blake's view on schooling: "There is no use in education. I hold it wrong." George H. Cowling, ed. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (London, 1960), p. 66.
  41. *XXV Sermons*, 1653, Epistle Dedicatory. See Logan Pearsall Smith, ed. *The Golden Grove: Selected Passages from the Sermons and Writings of Jeremy Taylor* (Oxford, MCMXXX), p. 9 and n. to line 9.
  42. See, e.g., *Life*, p. 70; Gérin, *Charlotte Brontë*, Ch. 7, and Quinlan, *William Cowper*, p. 98.
  43. I am indebted to Dr. Yudhishtar, Prof. of English, Delhi University, and Dr. C.D. Sidhu, Senior Lecturer in English, Hans Raj College, Delhi University, for suggesting various improvements in this article.