



Voorbereidend
Wetenschappelijk
Onderwijs

Tijdvak 1
Dinsdag 23 mei
13.30 – 16.00 uur

Tekstboekje

Apocalypse Then

OPENS SEPTEMBER 11

Steven Spielberg goes over the top.

Saving Private Ryan ⁽¹⁸⁾

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Starring Tom Hanks, Tom Sizemore, Edward Burns, Jeremy Davies, Matt Damon

1 PERHAPS THE HIGHEST tribute that can be paid to Saving Private Ryan is that for the first 30 minutes you can hardly believe you're watching a Steven Spielberg film. Much ink has already been spilt describing the unrelenting carnage that unfolds as Captain John Miller (Hanks) leads his men into the slaughterhouse of Omaha beach during the D-Day landings, but it wouldn't be overstating things to describe it as the finest half hour of Spielberg's career. It's not merely that the landing is graphically violent – and make no mistake, it is – but rather that one is drawn into the enormity of the task facing the hapless soldiers with an intensity rarely experienced at the cinema, and one which makes the viewer deeply grateful not to have been of fighting age in 1944.

2 Janusz Kaminski's cinematography, a hyperkinetic blend of ultra-realistic hand-held camera footage cutting away to aerial views of German machine gun fire, is breathtaking, but equally audacious is the length and intensity of the scene. Again and again one expects Spielberg to break off, but save for one brief moment of slow motion where Hanks loses hearing and orientation, the scene barely pauses for breath. By its

conclusion, Spielberg has wrung the audience dry and whatever the merits of the remaining two hours plus, one can, for the first time this summer, feel that one has witnessed something very special.

3 The news from the frontline thereafter, is not so good. Once Hanks and fellow grunts (old hand Sizemore, young buck Burns, cowardly Davies) regroup and are sent off on a mission to locate the eponymous Private Ryan (Damon) whose three brothers have all been killed and whose life is to be spared, the film settles into a predictable rhythm of dialogue followed by dust-up with few shocks, although a collapsing wall which pits screaming Americans versus Germans in a Mexican stand-off is one notable exception. Niggles soon surface: Sizemore and Hanks are too old; the dialogue seems anachronistic; the message that America won WWII alone comes across loud and clear with one solitary mention of Britain being an ungenerous reference to Montgomery. And, of course, Spielberg being Spielberg, cannot resist an ending of such flag-waving sentimentality that it very nearly undoes all of the good work previous. Very nearly, but not quite. Saving Private Ryan sees Spielberg for the second time in his career send people screaming from the sea onto the beach. The only difference is that this time the horror is for real. ★★★★★

John Naughton

'Q', October 1998

Schoolday dreamers

I have a recurring dream in which I am jammed into a Lilliputian desk in class A of my junior school. All the pupils are in their correct place — Warren Davies to the left, Susan Olley to the right, Bill Flatman in front, just close enough for me to copy his maths answers.

In the dream, I desperately want to put up my hand to explain things. “Please Miss Bocking,” I want to say, “there’s been a mistake. I’m not supposed to be here. I’m 40, and I’ve got a degree and a nice flat and teenage children. I’ve had a book well reviewed in *The New York Times*. Can I go home, please?”

The words do not come out, however, because I know Miss Bocking would only laugh — and I realise I am going to have to spend the next 10 years going through the education system all over again as a superannuated impostor.

Somewhere in all that angst, I probably have something in common with Brian MacKinnon, aka Brandon Lee. The difference is that I would sooner eat my own liver than go through it all again.

Unpleasant dreams involving school are common, according to Dr Jacob Empson, senior lecturer in psychology at Hull University and director of the university’s sleep laboratory. He has a recurrent

dream, too, about exams. “It is usually during the summer. I am sitting in an exam room and I just have no idea of the answers to the questions,” he says.

He puts such dreams down to general anxiety rather than a specific recalled horror of school. But is it not fascinating that when the brain is seeking a metaphor for having an awful time, it zeros in for so many people on school?

The lack of status, the lack of freedom, the near-total circumscription of your movements that even the most liberal school necessarily imposes are all very character-building. But I do not think it was a bad experience at either junior or secondary school that sends me back there so often in uncomfortable or frustrating dreams. My schooldays, in fact, were quite pleasant.

What is so stomach-heaving about the thought of going back as MacKinnon did would be the thought of repeating all those adolescent conversations about pop, sex, spots and (the worst) who has grown public hair this week.

It is a bad enough mistake going back to the same place twice on holiday. To relive your youth in anything but whimsy would be a nightmare. And for most people it is.

Jonathan Margolis

*‘The Sunday Times’,
September 24, 1995*

1 **A**t last: the facts have been established and the headlines have said it all. “Official: violent videos cause crime” stated the front page splash in last week’s Sunday Times. “Movies ‘can make young 5 more violent’” echoed the Daily Mail on Monday. So, after all these years of to-ing and fro-ing, we have it for a fact, and the answer to society’s ills lies plain before us. If crime is caused by violent videos (or pictures on a screen) all we have to do is rid ourselves of them and – Abracadabra! – no more crime. What could be simpler?

2 Unfortunately, within a couple of paragraphs, you find the black-and-white claims of the headlines dulling down to a muddy grey. “Provisional findings, due to be published in October, show that violent offenders are more readily influenced by violent 6 videos than other young people” says the second paragraph in the Sunday Times. Paragraph six in the Mail explains “Provisional results show that people with a violent past who are shown video nasties are more likely to remember the details of any vicious acts and identify with the perpetrators”.

3 Instead of the clear statement that violent videos cause crime, we now have a provisional finding that, if you show violent material to that small proportion of the population already known to be violent they will be “more readily influenced” than their peers. The most specific claim comes from Dr Kevin Browne, co-author of the report, who is quoted as saying “Videos cannot create aggressive people, but they will make aggressive people commit violent acts more frequently”. It is hard to imagine how even this statement can be properly substantiated, given the difficulty in excluding all other influences and 8 maintaining a control group.

4 **B**ut assume the claim is right and that the report really will say what is being predicted. Does it come as a surprise? Shall we hear something that we have not heard before? Far from it. Anyone who has kept even the most casual eye on this subject over the last 25 years will have seen these assertions made over and over again. There is now a large body of material on the subject, some of the more interesting books being *Television And Delinquency* (Halloran, Brown & Chaney), *Violence On The Screen* (Glucksman), *Violence On Television* (BBC), *Mass Media Violence And Society* (Howitt & Cumberbatch), *Screen Violence And Film Censorship* (Stephen Brody), and *Dimensions of Television Violence* (Gunter). Above

Television / Christopher Dunkley

The question of violence

all, in this particular instance, Belson’s *Television Violence And The Adolescent Boy* made a case in

1978 which sounds startlingly similar to this new one.

What is so infuriating is that each time the case is presented we get bogged down in another argument about whether you can prove definite cause-and-effect. It seems pretty obvious that the answer is no, since there are so many contributory factors in such a complicated phenomenon. But why argue about it? Surely common sense tells us that if you keep on showing violent material to abnormally violent people you may well help to reinforce their feelings about violence. Not that the effect is uniform: the more violence you show to Mary Whitehouse, the more opposed to it she becomes.

But let us accept that, for a small number of people, violent images will mean a greater readiness to participate in violent activities, and begin the debate from there. The question then is: do we want all videos, movies and television to be made to suit the needs of a few violent delinquents?

It is not such a baffling or unusual problem. We know that some children, and perhaps adults, too, will be harmed or even killed every year if weedkiller, bleach and sharp kitchen knives remain on sale to the public. They could be banned, but we accept that this is a tough world and there is a price to pay for having such things available. It is not unreasonable to argue that freedom of expression, including the freedom to depict violence, should remain available despite the risks (probably less significant than those attaching to weedkiller, bleach and knives) in a similar trade-off.

If, however, the answer is yes, we do want all videos, movies and television to be made to suit the needs of violent delinquents, then we are faced with the familiar problems of taste and definition. Doubtless any new censorship board would not even need to think before banning *Driller Killer* *Zombie Flesh Eaters VII*. But what would they do the next time the BBC wanted to screen *King Lear* complete with the putting out of Gloucester’s eyes, or *Titus Andronicus* with its rape, mutilation and cannibalism, not to mention such routine matters as torture and multiple murder? Murmur “Never mind, the oiks won’t understand”? Or ban Shakespeare along with the Bible and all those dreadfully violent news programmes?

‘Financial Times’, August 24, 1997

Distress signals

Hystories: *Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* by Elaine Showalter

Picador £16.99 pp244

Joan Smith

1 It has often been remarked that hysteria, the malady Freud identified in many of his women patients, has now all but disappeared as a formal diagnosis. Freud's patients suffered from paralysis or seizures with no obvious cause, which he regarded as physical manifestations of unconscious desires. Feminist critics wrested this theory from Freud and linked it to the suffocating social conditions in which his patients lived, arguing that hysteria provided a "language" for women who could not otherwise articulate their discontents.

2 Liberate the patients, according to this theory, and their malady disappears. For Elaine Showalter, however, hysteria has not disappeared in the 20th century, but mutated. In this controversial book, she examines a series of contemporary epidemics and syndromes, from Satanic ritual to chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), and argues that they are outbreaks of mass hysteria. Most contentious of all, she includes in her list of hysterical epidemics Gulf-war syndrome, claiming that the diverse symptoms suffered by returning veterans are the modern equivalent of shell shock.

3 In Britain and America, former soldiers are already reacting furiously to what they see as an attempt to dismiss their ailments as psychosomatic. Nor have they taken kindly to finding themselves bracketed with that vociferous band of Americans who are convinced that they have been kidnapped and experimented on by creatures from outer space. Showalter's book seems just as likely to upset sufferers from CFS. It is only fair to say at this point that Showalter is not suggesting that CFS sufferers or Gulf-war veterans are perfectly healthy. Nor does she think that alien abductees or people who claim to have recovered memories of childhood abuse are telling lies. Her argument centres on the idea that each culture creates its own unspoken rules about acceptable and unacceptable ways of expressing distress. According to this argument, societies generate "symptom pools"

which pressure individuals to develop certain manifestations and not others. Chief among the prohibitions is the stigma that attaches to any form of mental illness, so that patients are encouraged to look for physical explanations for their condition.

4 "Hysteria is a mimetic disorder; it mimics culturally permissible expressions of distress," Showalter writes. "An Englishman can legitimately complain of headaches and fatigue but not that his penis is retracting into his body – a perfectly acceptable symptom in Malaysia and South China." These sentences, giving a flavour of Showalter's mildly

ironic style, may go towards explaining why she has got into so much trouble. The intelligent scepticism of the academic (she is a professor of English) is hardly calculated to find favour with people who regard themselves as victims of sexual abuse, or sufferers from contagious diseases.

5 Yet I do not think this is Showalter's intention. She does not doubt that what used to be called shell shock, now known as post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD), makes people sick. Her aim is to place her subjects in a context which encourages the reader to ask why so many people currently believe themselves to be victims of syndromes for which there is very little scientific evidence.

6 And while she is least convincing on Gulf-war syndrome, she draws parallels between the experience of people claiming quite diverse causes for their suffering in a way that goes a long way towards proving her thesis.

7 What the book also shows is the degree of consolation people derive from identifying themselves as victims. Most of the people she writes about are furious with someone, whether it is governments or doctors. This fosters an unhealthy atmosphere of fear and suspicion in which more outlandish theories gain popularity – distracting us, as she says, "from the real problems and crises of modern society". Paradoxically, we are unlikely to discover what is making so many people angry and ill in a climate in which books such as Showalter's generate more of the anxious, hostile reactions she has attempted to write about.

'Sunday Times', June 1, 1997



Did hysteria once provide a 'language' for women who could not otherwise articulate their discontents?

Mouse That Roared

Jonathan Yardley

THE MAGIC KINGDOM
Walt Disney and the American Way of Life

By Steven Watts
Houghton Mifflin, 526pp. \$30

IT IS an inescapable truth that Walt Elias Disney is one of the major figures of 20th-century America, however disagreeable that may be to those who find little to applaud in the Disneyfication of our culture. Like other individuals and institutions of pervasive, not always benign influence, Disney and the corporation that bears his name are irresistible targets for attack, a sport in which I, like countless others, have frequently and gleefully participated.

But it is more 23 to look at Disney square-on, to assess him soberly, as free as possible of cultural bias and reflexive condescension. This is what Steven Watts has attempted to do in *The Magic Kingdom*, a very long book that falls somewhere between biography and cultural history. Watts, a professor of history at the University of Missouri, confesses at the outset to having fallen under the Disney spell as a child four decades ago, and at times he seems incapable of wiping the stars out of his eyes; though not exactly Disney's apologist, he does bend over quite far backwards to 24. But in the process he requires us to acknowledge that his stupendous success arose not from cynical manipulation of the popular audience but from heartfelt understanding of and sympathy with "average Americans and their hopes, fears and values".

Walt Disney was no average American. He was preternaturally smart, industrious and ambitious. Nor was he, as he liked to claim, a bona-fide small-town American boy; his roots were more complicated than that, 25 his sentimental vision of small-town life was rooted at least as much in fantasy as in fact. Indeed, it may have been all the stronger for that. A persistent strain in American culture is the outsider, the person who longs to fit into one corner or another of our vast society and expresses that longing in literature or art or something (as in Disney's case) considerably short of those but far more popular.

Disney's career as a cartoonist began in the aftermath of World War I in Kansas City. It ran in fits and starts but in a clear upward direction, quickly taking him to Hollywood and its nascent movie industry. This was a watershed moment in 26. Watt's summation of Disney's role in this momentous and traumatic period deserves to be quoted in full:

"In the broadest sense, Disney smoothed the jagged transition from the values of the Victorian age to those of a fledgling consumer America. In addition, he helped to dismantle barriers between highbrow and lowbrow cultural activity and to bridge the gulf that separated the realistic art of the 19th century from the modernism of the 20th. Throughout, he negotiated the treacherous waters that lay between arts and politics, synthesizing powerful impulses in subtle and soothing ways. Disney had a foot in the past and the present throughout the 1930s, and he helped Americans accommodate to 27 by appealing to older transitions while forging a new creed of leisure, self-fulfillment and mass consumption. More than a mere cartoonist or entertainer, he managed to become, to use his own phrase, 28 the American way of life. The role was enormously satisfying, and Walt Disney played it with gusto for many years."

Any number of 29 can be attached to that passage – the only blacks in Disney's "America" were stereotypes; the "past" he celebrated was at least as much fiction as fact; the "American way of life" is considerably darker and more ambiguous than what one finds at Disney World – but in essence it is true. One may feel, as a disgruntled former Disney employee did, that Uncle Walt "had the innate bad taste of the American people," but Watts is 30 in saying that the images Disney offered, at once amusing and soothing, turned out to be welcome palliatives for millions caught up in the most bewildering change since the Industrial Revolution.

It is easy, now, to think of Disney as a malign influence, when one considers the bureaucratic megalith that is Michael Eisner's Disney but he didn't begin that way. As Watts reminds us, the early Disney cartoons

had a "unique blend of music, mischief, dance, comedy and heroic melodrama" and "displayed considerable ambivalence about the values of modern American life". In time Disney developed what Watts calls "sentimental modernism," which blended "comforting tradition and challenging innovation" in ways that went down easily, but this took place after Disney the individual evolved into Disney the corporation.

He and his company were scarcely the only ones to follow this path. When the history of 20th-century America is written surely one of its 31 will be how quirky, original visions evolved into mass mediocrity as the people expressing them came under pressure to earn even more money. But we do well to separate 32 from the corporation, even if in time they became indistinguishable, in Disney's own mind as in ours. In the beginning he was a bright, innocent man who had a deep faith in a somewhat artificial vision of America and a capacity to render this in terms that ordinary people responded to with pleasure and empathy. For a long time, being Disney was 33, as evidence from the Disney Studio makes engagingly plain. As Watts notes, it is ironic that Disney, whose early work made sport of industrial organization and bureaucracy, in time presided over a bureaucracy as vast as anyone's, but that is the way of the world, or at least of 20th-century America.

By the time of his death in 1966, Disney had become something far larger than 34: "a revered national moralist, an example of American achievement, a trusted guardian of the nation's children, and a representative of average citizens and their values, tastes and desires". For many of us this is exceedingly unpalatable but no less true for that. We Americans vote with our pocket-books, and the multi-billion-dollar corporation that Disney built – the most influential instrument of mass entertainment on the entire planet – may well be the most vivid and self-revealing way of expressing ourselves. Like it or not.

*'The Washington Post',
February 6, 1998*

FILM

PHILIP FRENCH

LETHAL
INSPECTION*Dead Man Walking* stands out among this week's releases

1 As a social issue and a source of exciting drama, capital punishment has been on the cinematic agenda for 80 years. It was firmly placed there when D.W. Griffith chose a wrongfully condemned man awaiting the gallows as the hero of the modern strand of *Intolerance*, his epic study of injustice through the ages. Following Griffith's example, most subsequent pictures have dealt with miscarriages of justice both real and fictional, and with sad victims of society.

2 No one nowadays believes that Timothy Evans was guilty or that Ruth Ellis deserved to hang. Yet to avoid special pleading and to confront supporters of capital punishment at their strongest point, total abolitionists must address themselves to cases where the crime is unspeakably brutal, the guilt proven beyond doubt and the convicted person does not invite our easy sympathy. Such a case was invented by Krzysztof Kieslowski in *A Short Film About Killing* (1988), a film so graphic in its depiction of judicial hanging that within weeks of its opening there was a moratorium on capital punishment in Poland.

3 In his equally devastating *Dead Man Walking*, the writer-director Tim Robbins has gone even further than Kieslowski. Not only is the crime (the rape and double murder of two New Orleans teenagers) even worse, and the killer an articulate neo-Nazi redneck, but the form of execution awaiting him in the Louisiana state penitentiary (lethal injection) is more humane than the various alternatives (hanging, firing squad, the

electric chair, the gas chamber) on offer in the 37 other American states that still practise capital punishment. The film's resonant title is what the chief guard shouts as he leads a condemned man down the corridor to the place of execution.

4 Based on a true story, *Dead Man Walking* centres on the relationship between Sister Helen Prejean (Susan Sarandon), a nun from a well-off New Orleans Catholic family, and Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn), a confused, preening working-class criminal who's been on death row for five years and asks her to be his spiritual adviser in the final week before his execution. Sarandon with her large expressive brown eyes and Penn with his large, expressive blue eyes face each other through the bars that separate visitor from prisoner and across the moral and social chasm that lies between them. Their astonishing performances chart the uneasy growth of a complex bond as Helen first tries to secure a reprieve for him, then prepares him to accept his guilt and die with dignity. As she says, what truly links them is their common humanity as children of God.

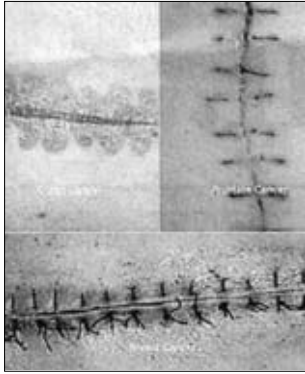
The film never loses sight of the devastating effects of an appalling crime on the victims' families

5 While one knows where Helen Prejean and Tim Robbins stand on the issue of capital

punishment, the important thing about this patient, unsensational, richly detailed film is that it speaks quietly to and for both sides of the question, preaching neither to the converted nor the unconverted. Rightly, capital punishment is put in its present American context – a conservative US Supreme Court has handed the issue over to the local politicians to be used as a football; death row is exclusively populated by the inadequately defended poor, most of them black; and a lottery-like system determines who will end up there.

6 The film never loses sight of the devastating effects of an appalling crime on the victims' families. Some of the best scenes are between Helen and the murdered girl's bereft parents (R. Lee Ermey, Celia Weston) and the murdered boy's distraught father (Raymond J. Barry), whose wife, anxious to start a new life, has left him. Even the conventional prison chaplain, who takes a dim view of Sister Helen's refusal to wear her habit, is treated sympathetically, though one assumes it was not by chance that he is played by Scott Wilson, still best known for his role as Dick Hickock, one of the young murderers sent to the gallows in the film version of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Ultimately, *Dead Man Walking* is concerned with issues that lie behind the debate on capital punishment: it's about society, personal responsibility and what St Paul meant when he wrote that 'we are members one of another'.

*'The Observer Review',
March 31, 1996*



The Vegetarian Society ad.

ADVERTS

By Dave Hill

When one man's meat is another man's invasive surgery...

Advertising: ain't it strange? For a few days from the end of September a series of display ads appeared in a number of newspapers, including this one. It was a provocative campaign. Created by OgilvyOne, it included three photographs, labelled as scars left by cancer surgery, and the headline 'It's much easier to cut out meat'. Underneath, in the earliest versions, it claimed that a recent government warning had said that 'eating meat can increase your risk of cancer'. The ads concluded: 'You might decide that meat, like cancer, is best avoided.'

A number of complaints were made to the

Advertising Standards Authority. Three came from the meat industry, but 61 were made by members of the public. The complaints were of two types: one, that the ads were offensive and distressing; two, that they were misleading. In the latter case the objections were that the ads suggested that a causal link between eating meat and cancer was universally accepted; that they exaggerated the link and that the earliest versions gave the impression it held for all meat; and that they misrepresented the Government's warning. Last week, the ASA upheld the complaints and told the Vegetarian Society not to use the ads again.

Bad news for the veggies, you might think. But it's not that simple. What happened next is the point, and the existence of this article helps make it. The Vegetarian Society reacted angrily and loudly. It issued a press release disputing the ruling and condemning it as 'a drastic restriction on freedom of speech'. Suddenly, the 'cancer' ads were 'a story'. Result? Far more publicity than the ads themselves had generated, and all of it for free.

Does this mean the ASA's actions have been wrong and counterproductive? The authority sticks by its adjudication. It also defends its practice of publishing its rulings, which is why the 'cancer' ads re-entered the public domain in the first place. And it notes, disapprovingly, that the Vegetarian Society sought advice from the ASA's affiliated Copy Advice Team before the ads went out, yet turned some of it down – and would have known that trouble was brewing all along. So did the Society set out to get them banned and milk the attention? They say no. They say they rejected some of the CAT's advice because they were confident the claims in the ads were justified. They do acknowledge, though, that with fears about BSE in lamb also jostling for media attention, it has been quite a week for the vegetarian cause.

'The Observer', December 14, 1997

Comment

Seeing crime in black and white

Most muggings are committed by blacks, therefore most blacks are muggers. The logical fallacy is obvious. But it is an assumption that a great many whites, police and civilians, instinctively believe.

This is the real context of the letter from Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, inviting leaders of the black community to a discussion about the 'fact that very many of the perpetrators of muggings are very young black people.'

Of course, the Commissioner has a right to seek public discussion of what has been a taboo subject until now. Refusing to publish 'the facts' only serves to widen the gap between the Establishment debate and the anecdotal sense of the public. Avoiding the unmentionable is just as patronising to the black community as harping on it.

But race has always been a subject of particular sensitivity in Britain. And for good reason. You have only to see the row that has developed over the article on black cricketers in Wisden Cricket Monthly to understand just how close to the surface are the prejudices of the British against minorities. However long they have been here, there are still many whites who regard them as alien to the country.

Sir Paul Condon is not a stupid man, and certainly not an insensitive one. Not for nothing is he known as PC or Politically Correct Condon. Indeed, that may be part of the explanation of his faux pas this time. Anxious to please his own officers, Sir Paul appears to have deliberately thrown a heavy stone into muddied waters.

If this is not so, if the tabloids have jumped to the wrong conclusion with their headlines, then the Commissioner should come out and clarify his intentions. If he does not, his initiative will serve only to raise the temperature of racial tension rather than to defuse it.

'The Observer', July 9, 1995

If I were a poor man

Sir; Your editorial on the NHS (15 February) was foolish. People with any sense don't 'go private' to get a private room. They do it to jump the queue: that is, they use their money as a way of getting treated before other patients, instead of submitting to a criterion of need, or first-come-first-served; and they square it with their consciences as best they can.

For example, when my GP spotted my glaucoma, I took his advice and saw a consultant immediately and privately, so that treatment could start within days rather than months. (Glaucoma causes irreparable damage; treatment arrests the progress of the disease.) If I were a poor man, I might now be blind. I don't think this is morally right; but I think that most people in my position would have done the same. With a better funded (and organised) health service, such dilemmas would be removed.

Andrew Smith
Bristol

'The Spectator', February 22, 1998

Einde