A comparison between two teachers drawn from fiction leads to an exploration of the issues between those whose concept of education is focused on the curriculum, and those who understand that pupils are active agents in their education and that therefore some beneficial outcomes can result from pupil subversion of the school. This is developed as a concept of an adversarial curriculum, with particular reference to moral education.

New-Fist and Mr King are both teachers, though very different teachers. Each appears in a work of fiction, but the two stories, while both related to education, are of very different genres and quite opposing tendencies. New-Fist is from ‘The saber-tooth curriculum’ (Benjamin, 1939), written for teachers and with a straightforward message. He was a genius in Palaeolithic times who hit upon the idea of showing children how to do the things they would do as adults: grab fish from the clear streams with their bare hands, club the little woolly horses, and scare off with fire the sabre-tooth tigers which menaced the tribe. New-Fist’s idea was a success, and for generations his people prospered. But then came a new Ice Age. The river became clouded with glacial debris, the little woolly horses moved east to the plains to fulfil their destiny by becoming mighty single-hoofed animals, the sabre-tooth tigers succumbed to pneumonia or migrated south into the deserts. The tribe now caught their fish, which could not be seen in the cloudy water, with nets; they hunted the shy and speedy antelope, not with clubs, but with snares; and trapped the new menace, the cave bear, by digging pits. Some suggested that these new techniques should be taught in school: that a fish-net-antelope-bear curriculum should replace the old fish-grabbing-horse-tiger curriculum. They were told that the new methods could never provide the educational value of the fine dexterity developed by fish-grabbing lessons, the generalised agility promoted by classes in horse-clubbing, or the noble courage inspired by tiger-scaring exercises. One radical suggested that perhaps fish-netting, antelope-snaring, and bear-trapping might have educational value of their own. He was immediately reproved:

The wise old men were indignant. Their kindly smiles faded. ‘If you had any education yourself,’ they said severely, ‘you would know that the essence
of true education is timelessness. It is something that endures through changing conditions like a solid rock standing squarely and firmly in the middle of a raging torrent. You must know that there are some eternal verities, and the saber-tooth curriculum is one of them!’ (Benjamin, 1939, p. 15).

This is a lovely story, which makes its point quite unmistakably. (Benjamin obviously enjoyed elaborating the circumstances surrounding the development of the new techniques of fish-netting, antelope-snaring, and digging pits to trap bears, the hopes of the little woolly horses as they set off for the plains, or the pitifully few moth-eaten tigers slinking away south. Exulting in the power of one’s imagination for the simple joy of it is rarely found in recent scholarly works on education.) Its consequence for the problem of disaffected boys identified by Willis (1977) is: provide them with a formal curriculum more relevant to their future employment as something other than factory workers in declining manufacturing industries. The question must be whether its argument — its moral, for in genre it is close to Æsop — is to be accepted. For this charming story is part of a long-lasting debate about education, and I wish to examine with it another work of fiction which is part of the same discourse.

This second text is ‘Regulus’ (Kipling, 1917), from Stalky & Co. It is educational fiction, not in the sense of a story written for educators like our first text, but in the sense of a story about education written for the general public and sold as entertainment. Although Stalky & Co. is usually classified as a novel of school life in the tradition begun by Tom Brown’s Schooldays (Hughes, 1857), it is actually a collection of short stories, originally published separately and then brought together as a book.¹ Stalky & Co. differs from other school fiction in this tradition in at least two ways apart from its structure. First, the attitude of the stories is not wholeheartedly on the side of the official school ethos, of cricket and football and not smoking, of disliking study and preferring sport, of teachers as, though sometimes (for dramatic purposes) mistaken or misinformed, in the last resort kind and fair authorities. With Kipling’s clear approval, his characters despise sport, smoke and read with gusto, and treat the masters as their enemies and their gulls. The second characteristic which sets this work apart from the rest of the British public-school story tradition, and indeed from almost all other fiction located in schools, is that it deals quite explicitly with the connections between what happens at school and the lives for which the students are being prepared. There is a world beyond the match against Grandview, the Year Twelve Formal, the Final Exams. For most of Kipling’s characters, this future was as junior officers in the British imperial services, a life and a cause we, with the benefit of hindsight and living in a different age, may deplore on moral grounds,² but which we can hardly deny made great demands on the minds, the bodies and the moral characters of those who undertook it. When a boy called Hogan intervenes in a discussion, he does so *not foreseeing that three years later he should

die in the Burmese sunlight outside Minhla Fort’ (p. 208), and similar parenthetical comments about where and when a boy will die recur throughout the book. For this life Kipling, like Homer (another storyteller who knew and admired real warriors), valued the qualities of the ingenious or wily Odysseus over those of a superficially more powerful oaf like Ajax. ‘Stalky’, the hero’s nickname, meant ‘crafty, cunning’ in the school slang.

Kipling took his characters and their concerns seriously. When writing about adults he wrote about their work and the whole range of feelings and thoughts connected with work, which of course occupies most of the waking hours of most men, and increasingly today of many women, but which is almost completely excluded from much of the imaginative literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even of the twentieth century. (It is not surprising that a corpus of imaginative literature which bypasses the largest part of most men’s experience and endeavour is now being found to be ‘girly’.) Just as Kipling’s men work, his schoolboys spend time in class, and what occurs in class — not just the messing the teacher around, but the content of the lessons — is important to them, and therefore to him. His main characters, Stalky, M’Turk, and Beetle (especially Beetle, who represents Kipling himself) are discovering books and poetry and new words and new ideas, and they are excited about them. They quote and misquote and parody what they are reading.

Kipling’s ‘Regulus’ is unusual as a school story in that it actually deals with teaching and learning, with what occurs in the classroom (rather than house matches, or midnight feasts, or adventures in free time, which occupied the lives of most British schoolchildren, at least in fiction, in those days). Not only does it deal with a lesson; it does so in detail, and requires of the reader some familiarity with the content of the lesson. The class is translating Horace’s ode ‘Regulus’ (Horace, 1914, iii, p. 5). In her modern edition of Stalky & Co., Isabel Quigly has provided a note which prints in parallel the text of Horace’s Ode and a prose translation; as she says, this is ‘The only way to make clear what King and his class are put to’ (1987, ad p. 157, p. 310). It is rather startling to realise that Kipling himself was able to assume that his readers would be sufficiently acquainted with Horace and with the process of translating from Latin not to need such help; and this in mass-market fiction. As a text, ‘Regulus’ is considerably more demanding than Benjamin’s lucid fable.

Kipling does at least provide a brief description of the subject of the ode:

Regulus, a Roman general, defeated the Carthaginians 256 B.C., but was next year defeated and taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, who sent him to Rome with an embassy to ask for peace or an exchange of prisoners. Regulus strongly advised the Roman Senate to make no terms with the enemy. He then returned to Carthage and was put to death (Kipling, ‘Regulus’ preamble, p. 157).
Carthaginian methods of execution were, as Regulus knew, protracted, imaginative, and contrary to the principles later expressed in the Geneva conventions. His decision to return should be understood in the light of his knowledge, atqui sciebat quae sibi barbarus tortor pararet, as Horace put it.7

Translating a Latin ode is, of course, a perfect example of the sabre-tooth curriculum Benjamin deplores. Why learn the language and customs of a people who, like the clear streams, the little woolly horses and the sabre-tooth tigers, have left our world? The prospects of ancient Rome becoming a significant export market are negligible (Davies, 2001). Though written before Benjamin’s fable, ‘Regulus’ can be seen as an answer to it on behalf of what Benjamin mocks as the sabre-tooth curriculum.

The boys work their way hesitantly and with many realistic and gorgeous mistakes through the Ode, despite the interruption of chlorine gas leaking from Mr Hartopp’s science class in the next room. Winton, a stolid, solemn boy, causes the whole class to break into laughter with his translation of signa . . . Punicis/adfixa delubris (standards hung up in Punic temples) as ‘signs affixed to Punic deluges’. Perhaps as a result of the class reaction to this blunder, which seems to have been the first time in Winton’s life that he has evoked laughter from an audience, he releases a live mouse in the mechanical drawing class, and is reported to the Head. The Head gives him a punishment which, as they both know, will prevent him from attending football practice and therefore, since he is not yet a member of the First Fifteen, render him liable to three strokes with a ground-ash from the Captain of Games. To make his position still more embarrassing, he has qualified to be a member of the Firsts—the Cap designating that status ought to have been delivered the previous week, but the outfitters had got behind in their orders8—and the Captain of Games is his close friend and shares a study with him. Mr King goes to the Head as Winton’s housemaster to put the case for mercy, even recommending Winton for promotion to sub-prefect. The Head is agreeable to the promotion, but not until after the punishment. Mr King goes to Winton and helps him with his lines by dictating them, and then discusses with Mr Hartopp the relative merits of Mr Hartopp’s ‘inculcating unrelated facts about chlorine, for instance, all of which may be proved fallacies by the time the boys grow up’ (p. 173) with Mr King’s ‘Chinese reiteration of uncomprehended syllables in a dead tongue’, providing nothing more than ‘one score of totally unrelated Latin tags which any child of twelve could have absorbed in two terms’ (ibid.).

Mr King’s position in this discussion is, of course, precisely the same as that of the defenders of fish-grabbing, horse-clubbing and tiger-scaring after the beginning of the Ice Age, and Mr Hartopp is the advocate of net-making, antelope-snaring and bear-trapping, of what will later be called the ‘implementation of a competency-based, outcome-oriented pedagogy which corresponds functionally to the world of work’ (Robertson, 1996, p. 39). A policy of relevance and bringing education up to date has
more prospects of success the more stable the world is likely to be; if we knew that the next several generations would face cave bears, we could confidently place pit-digging in the curriculum. Our world is not stable (Broderick, 1997). Judging from the recent past, many of the jobs which will be taken by the children now in primary schools have not yet been invented. What outcomes and competencies will prove valuable, or at least not completely pointless, in the future becomes less and less clear the more precisely we try to define them.

The structure of Kipling’s story shows that he is on the side of Mr King and the Romans. Winton, like Regulus, must go knowingly to his doom. Whereas Regulus spoke passionately in his country’s interest and against his own, Winton is so disturbed by his predicament that he recklessly attacks Vernon, who is known as a boxer. When Mr King asks whether the mass of struggling boys trying to restrain Winton is the *populus* (whom Mr King had described in the lesson as the crowd, the democracy, who stood about futilely pitying Regulus and getting in the way), Stalky replies that they are the *maerentes amicos*, the friends mourning Regulus’s departure (p. 171, cf. p. 163). A distinction in human motivation drawn by Horace has become part of the boys’ understanding of their own behaviour. Winton receives his three strokes from his study-mate and then yawns and collapses, asleep. His new experiences have overwhelmed him.

Mr King and the ‘wise old men, smiling most kindly’ have developed their understanding of their position since they spoke merely of fine dexterity, generalised agility, and noble courage back in the Old Stone Age (Benjamin, 1939, p. 15). They are concerned, unlike the people in Benjamin’s tribe, with education about people and society, rather than merely with tricks for earning a living in a given environment. To understand people and society, one needs to be able to distinguish what is essential and universal in them from what is merely contingent and local, and that ability cannot be developed from within the limits of one’s own culture. One must encounter an alien culture, where what is contingent and local is different from here, and what is essential and universal (“what the unaltering Gods require”) stands forth in contrast. To encounter the alien, to engage with their thoughts and institutions, requires more than being told *about* them; one must listen to them, speaking in their own voices, in (inevitably) their own language. We thus commit ourselves to *amo, amas, amat*, the tedious business of syntax and vocabulary, without which the semantic significance of alien thought cannot emerge. But all that is only a means to an end, the end of hearing the voices, knowing the minds, of people who are different from us and are thereby able to serve us as touchstones to understanding people in general, as against people of our time, our place, our social class, our situation, our world.

Kipling being Kipling, the illumination he draws from encounters with the alien world is one of military duty, for Regulus and for Winton. Like Macaulay (1842) before him, Kipling was impressed by the parallel between the Britain of his own day and Rome at the height
of her power — *Tu regere imperio populos Romane memento/Hae tibi erunt artes pacisque imponere morem,/Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos* (Virgil, *Aeneid* vi 851–3) (‘But you, Roman, must remember that you have to guide the nations by your authority, for this is to be your skill, to graft tradition onto peace, to shew mercy to the conquered, and to wage war until the haughty are brought low’, trans. Knight, 1958, p. 173) — and he wangles that passage (which gives imperial rule its moral justification, the imposition of peace and the limitation of oppression and exploitation) into his story by including it as first of the lines Mr King dictates to Winton. ‘There you have it all, Winton’, says Mr King on page 169; and Kipling himself is saying: There you have it all, Reader.

Mr King is openly racist and openly anti-democratic. He describes Carthage in the time of Regulus as ‘a sort of God-forsaken nigger Manchester’ (p. 161). Manchester when Kipling was at school was the very type of industrial and commercial success. We might construe his description as saying that Carthage was an economic powerhouse characterised by both religious and racial tolerance. Many today would not be displeased to hear their own communities so described; for Mr King, plainly, these characteristics made Carthage abhorrent and detestable. He speaks to the class of Regulus ‘and of Horace and Rome and evil-minded commercial Carthage and of the democracy eternally futile, he explained, in all ages and climes, he spoke for ten minutes’ (p. 165).

The original of Mr King was born perhaps a century and a half ago, in our own culture. That century and a half has seen considerable change, not only technologically but socially. How much can we understand his position?

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that . . . Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of; else he will never really possess himself of the portion of truth which meets and removes that difficulty (Mill, 1859, ii ¶ 23, p. 287).12

Even most of the educated are in this predicament, according to Mill:

Their conclusion may be true, but it might be false for anything they know; they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and considered what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess (*ibid.*) . . . The fact, however, is, that not only the grounds of the opinion are forgotten in the absence of discussion, but too often the meaning of the opinion itself (*ibid.* ii ¶ 26, p. 289).
Could we, for example, compose a ten-minute talk like Mr King’s, ‘a discourse on manners, morals, and respect for authority as distinct from bottled gases’ (p. 165), condemning the evil-mindedness of commercial centres and the futility of democracy (contrast Fukuyama, 1992) and taking as our text *Dis te minorem quod geris imperas* (‘Thou rulest because thou bearest thyself as lower than the gods’, Horace, *Carm.*, iii 6)? And if not, what understanding do we have of our own enthusiasm for business and democracy?

Do Kipling’s claims of superior understanding amount to more than the blathering about generalised abilities and noble courage of Benjamin’s Stone-Age conservatives? One way to test them is to look at whether they are exemplified in the picture of education which Kipling, their beneficiary and advocate, gives. Benjamin’s picture of education is straightforward: you wish to teach children to do $X$, so education consists in showing them how to do $X$ and giving them practice in it; his concern is only with the content of $X$ and its relation to the children’s future employment. Kipling’s picture of the educational process is more complex than Benjamin’s. The content of the lesson is Horace’s ode, as written by Horace (and not in translation). It is taught by Mr King, a complex person with strengths and weaknesses, insights and foibles, unlike New-Fist, who is held up for our unreserved admiration. For Kipling, education includes not only content $X$, but this $X$ taught in manner $Y$ by people $Z$; and the reactions each of these provokes. Kipling, unlike Benjamin, takes it for granted that pupils are active agents in their education, that they cannot be moulded like clay. Of course, Benjamin’s view may have been more nuanced than appears in his deliberately simplified story (1939); but at least on the evidence here, Kipling’s understanding of education is greater than that shown by Benjamin.

As a new master learns to his horror, boys in the Army Class are allowed to smoke, since the school has to compete against crammers, where smoking is usual. ‘Practically, it makes them rather keen on putting down smoking among the juniors — as an encroachment on their privileges, you see’, the Chaplain explains (p. 142). Here too, Kipling thinks of a rule not in terms of what it explicitly says, but in terms of how the pupils react to it. Much of our discourse about education today, and indeed since Benjamin wrote, no less than in the days of New-Fist, lacks this dimension of understanding.

What is learnt in this way about the human character is knowledge, and has practical consequences. It is, as the Foucauldians would say, a technology of the soul, which can give rise to planned and coherent actions to develop people’s understanding and character. The Head gave Winton that punishment, knowing its consequences, for a purpose: as the Head says, ‘I have overcrowded him with new experiences’ (p. 177), taking this trouble to loosen Winton’s moral joints. That evening, Winton receives both his First’s Cap and his promotion to sub-prefect. His escapade, he realises, did not count against him in his career. In a tribute to the Head repeated several times in *Stalky & Co.*: the Prooshian Bates was a downy bird. Kipling’s understanding of how an educational

institution works is considerably more complex than that of the Stone Age.

Kipling presents the school as a learning environment, of which the teaching staff is a part, but not a fully conscious part. The boys’ education includes, among other things, learning to evade, trick, and make fools of the teachers; and this learning is an essential part of their preparation for their adult lives. The stratagem which Stalky as a military officer uses against enemy forces in the Khye-Kheen Hills, of attacking one tribe in such a way that they blame their allies (in the final chapter, ‘Slaves of the Lamp, ii’), is the same idea he used in tricking the drunken local carter into hurling rocks into Mr King’s study (in Chapter 3, ‘Slaves of the Lamp, i’). The belly-crawling skills he uses to good effect in battle (p. 288) were developed evading the masters to find a safe place in the gorse to smoke and read with M’Turk and Beetle. Ensuring that all available evidence is consistent with one’s status as an injured innocent will stand Stalky in good stead in his dealings with the military authorities.

The environment of the school of Stalky & Co. developed many necessary skills, and some of them not through the formal curriculum of Latin and mathematics, nor indeed through the informal curriculum of house matches and the school pantomime, nor even through the hidden curriculum as it is generally understood. The school promoted skills through what the boys were required to do in order successfully to defy the school authorities, what we may call the adversarial curriculum. An essential feature of it is that the students learn skills to achieve what they want to do anyway — in Kipling’s case, to smoke and read in the gorse and avoid school punishment. This is in contrast to the contrived aims and objectives of most school activities. If my mother thought it was time for my sister or for me to read a particular book, she would hide it under a cushion in the sitting room, as if she had been surprised by us when reading something she did not want us to see. It usually worked. The idea is not new. Plutarch tells us in his life of Lycurgus (Plutarch, 1914, § 17. 3–4) that in ancient Sparta, teenage boys were deliberately underfed. To get enough to eat, they had to steal from the surrounding society; and they were punished severely if they were caught stealing. They therefore became adept and clever thieves, a valuable skill in ancient warfare. This is an understanding of the schooling experience much deeper than New-Fist’s, and Benjamin’s, focus on the relation between the content of the formal curriculum and future occupations. It is an understanding as unknown in educational discourse today as it was when sabre-tooth tigers were the main threat to human society.

New-Fist knew exactly how the relevant aspects of his school, and curriculum, affected the students, but Mr King and the other masters did not fully understand what Kipling’s school did and how. The Chaplain may understand Stalky & Co.’s tricks after the event (pp. 97–98); and the Head knows exactly what the experience of being at the school develops. The Prooshian Bates is a downy bird, though on one occasion Stalky pays even him back (p. 200). The utilisation of what I am calling the
adversarial curriculum, whether for Kipling’s imperialist goals or for any others, requires considerable understanding of human nature, and particularly adolescent human nature. It is as far as can be from the mechanical ‘If It’s Tuesday, This Must Be Honesty’ and rewards for being good, cited by Kohn (1997, p. 430\textsuperscript{a}), as two strategies employed in what is now being called ‘character education’. It is also more likely to be effective, whether for the imperial values Kipling stood for or for the values of empathy, scepticism, and compassion for which Kohn (ibid., pp. 432\textsuperscript{b}, 431\textsuperscript{a}) is concerned. It is easy to devise an adversarial curriculum for some outcomes. A healthy scepticism towards authority, for example, can be promoted by a school discipline policy which is rigid, pointless, and applied haphazardly. (Skirt hems must be no more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ cm from the floor when kneeling.)\textsuperscript{21} This enables the young pupils to identify the enemy clearly and to struggle against it with some hope of success, until eventually the sceptical attitude becomes a habit.\textsuperscript{22} A less obviously silly policy or a more fairly administered one might be too much for them while they were beginning. I benefited from such a policy while at school, and many schools today have reason to be proud of their achievements in this direction.\textsuperscript{23}

We must take it as inevitable that the boys Willis (1977) calls the lads will despise the ‘ear ‘oles’ (more amenable pupils) and resist the discipline of the school; given that they will, how can that school be organised so that through their resistance the lads will gain something of educational value? If this is possible at all, it will only be by a much more subtle understanding of the aims of education than the literal-minded concentration on curriculum content with which New-Fist amazed his tribe, and which still dominates educational discourse, particularly in political and commercial forums. It will seek to make use of the hostility of the lads to authority,\textsuperscript{24} and the teachers who implement it may be unaware of how it works, just as Mr King did not fully understand his contribution to the education of the boys in Stalky & Co.\textsuperscript{25}

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**NOTES**

1. Kipling left school in 1882. The Stalky stories began appearing in 1897, and nine of them (though not the story about how Stalky acquired his nickname) were collected as Stalky & Co. (London, Macmillan) in 1899. Kipling published four new stories in the series between 1899 and 1929, including our text ‘Regulus’, which was first published in *Nash’s Magazine, Pall Mall and Metropolitan Magazine*, in April, 1917; it appeared in Kipling’s collection *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), and all fourteen stories appeared as *The Complete Stalky & Co* in 1929 (Quigly, 1987, p. xxix–xxx). A new edition of this collection, with introduction and notes by Isabel Quigly, was published by World’s Classics in 1987 and reissued (with an updated bibliography) by Oxford University Press in 1999. It is the last to which I refer as *Stalky & Co*.

2. As nasty, brutish and wearing shorts.

3. Robert Graves reports that when he returned to university after service in the Great War, he felt closer to the world of Beowulf than to ‘the drawing-room and deer-park atmosphere of the eighteenth century’ (Graves, 1929, § 27, p. 239).

4. As one apocryphal reviewer remarked, the details about the duties of a gamekeeper on an English Midlands estate in Lawrence (1928) are completely overshadowed by extraneous material.

5. It is not quite unique in commercial popular fiction. The second part of chapter five of James Blish’s Doctor Mirabilis (1964) consists of Roger Bacon’s oral examination for the MA degree of the University of Paris at the hands of Albert the Great, presented in Latin, but with enough of Roger’s thoughts in English about the hidden traps in Albert’s questions and the possible ways to escape them for the Latin-less reader to be able to follow what’s going on.

6. Why was Horace praising him more than two centuries later? Regulus had suffered disgrace, the troops under his command had been defeated and had surrendered. Polybius is quite unsympathetic to him (Hist. I 34.8–35.4), and Boak and Sinnigen attribute his defeat to his overconfidence and lack of imagination (1965, p. 108). But Regulus redeemed his disgrace by Magnitudo animi et fortitudo (‘by greatness of soul and by courage’— Cicero, Off. iii 26 (§ 99), 1975, p. 376). When Horace wrote, Augustus was preparing to redeem Rome’s disgrace in another matter of prisoners and captured standards, those lost to the Parthians by Crassus. The ode was a contribution to debate about the imperial policy of its day. It is nevertheless a great poem: ‘The tension between the quiet simplicity of the language and the enormity of the event it describes gives the last lines their chief power’ (Commager, 1967, p. 112). One referee suggested that Horace, who at first seemed so alien to us, finds Regulus and his generation alien to him. The moral costs of empire, then and now, are high.

7. ‘Well though he knew what the savage torturer had in store for him’, as Mr King translates (p. 163).

8. Kipling’s assumptions about private enterprise efficiency were more realistic than is customary today.

9. This is Kipling’s phrase, from his ‘translation’ of a non-existent Horatian ode appended to ‘Regulus’, p. 180.

10. Quigly, 1987, ad p. 157 (p. 312) quotes Andrew Lang as writing of Horace’s ode, ‘That poem could only have been written by a Roman! The strength, the tenderness, the noble and monumental resolution and resignation—these are gifts of the lords of human things, the masters of the world’. This judgement, and the terms in which it is couched, would not come easily to most in the twenty-first century.

11. As an index of this social change, the occupation most frequently mentioned today as having high social status is that of surgeon. In the mid-nineteenth century, a surgeon’s wife could not be presented at court. The wife of a physician could be presented, but even physicians, since they worked for a living, were lower in status than most of the leading characters in many novels of the time. Nor might a respectable young woman remain overnight outside the supervision of either her family or an appropriate chaperon. Details of this (to us) bizarre society can be found in Poole (1994).

12. Mill had grasped what the postmodernists would later proclaim as their thesis that nobody may speak for another. Ironically, they borrowed this doctrine from a tradition they affected to despise, that of the humanists of the Renaissance.

13. To the extent that scholarship permits, we read what the alien wrote, without it being filtered through the mind of a member of our own culture.

14. Perhaps the nearest modern equivalent for Kipling’s ‘downy bird’ is ‘streetwise guy’.

15. Though Mr King’s school did more than New-Fist’s school, Mr King himself was not fully aware of how it did what it did.

16. Kipling’s final chapter, where the former schoolmates describe glimpses they have had of Stalky as a young officer, is fiction. The real Stalky’s early service in India was less eventful, though subsequently he displayed stalkiness both towards his country’s enemies and towards his own military superiors (Dunsterville, 1928).

17. The Head sees through Stalky & Co.’s regular pose of injured innocence and uses it as an opportunity to build on their understanding a further lesson. He pays them the compliment of assuming that the case for their innocence is unassailable; and gives them six strokes regardless (p. 52, and again p. 116). ‘When you find a variation from the normal—this will be useful to

you in later life — always meet him in an abnormal way’ (p. 52). ‘There is a limit — one finds it by experience, Beetle — beyond which it is never safe to pursue private vendettas, because — don’t move — sooner or later one comes — into collision with the — higher authority, who has studied the animal’ (p. 117). He knew.

18. The term ‘hidden curriculum’ seems to have been introduced by Jackson (1968). Especially since Illich (1971, p. 33), discussions of the hidden curriculum have concentrated as he did on the prejudice and guilt it fosters and on its contribution to promoting consumerism. Recently, some have begun to develop the idea in a more promising direction: for example, Dickinson and Flick (1998), and even in the literature of management, Burns and Stalker (1994, pp. 144–153).

19. Indeed, since the outcomes of the adversarial curriculum are the result of active subversion by the students, they cannot all be planned, though some may be foreseen in general terms. If this proposal eludes the instrumental, means–end models of reasoning currently fashionable among educational planners, so much the worse for those models.

20. Plutarch wrote some two centuries after Sparta had been subjugated by Rome, and his picture of Sparta, including its educational practices, may be inaccurate (see Tigerstedt, 1974, vol. 2, pp. 226–264). But whether the Spartans as a matter of history employed the policy is irrelevant; at least no later than Plutarch’s day the idea of using the adversarial curriculum was being discussed.

21. In a splendid section in Education in an Age of Nihilism (Blake et al., 2000) Richard Smith also invokes Stalky & Co., by considering a similar regulation, a student wearing forbidden shoes. He is concerned with the regulation’s silliness, not with what benefits may be attained by having silly regulations, though he concedes that the girl who objects to the rule ‘will go far’.

22. ‘Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (.ἡθός) is formed by a slight variation from the word ἐθος (habit)’ (Aristotle, 1928, ii 1, 1103 a14–18).

23. Kipling was very conscious that the causal efficacy of an action is independent of the intentions and understanding with which it is performed. He had the witchmaster Jerry Gamm conceal the rational basis for his advice to Miss Philadelphia (1910, p. 81), and presented the seventeenth-century Dr Nick Culpeper as himself mistaken, deriving a sound policy for combating the plague from astrology (ibid., p. 219). When Kipling was writing the latter story, India was in the grip of the plague, and the work by Glen Liston and W. B. Bannerman in India which gave experimental proof of the role of rats’ fleas in spreading the disease had been announced only in 1908 (Arnold, 1993, p. 210).

24. A recent news report describes students at a country high school in Queensland as having used the sophisticated computer-aided design and document preparation equipment at their school to prepare themselves fake drivers’ licences to use for gaining entrance to adults-only premises. The police described the licences as technically very good copies. The scheme failed because the photographs on the licences showed the students wearing school uniform. Stalky, but insufficiently stalky.

25. The Journal’s referees encouraged me to expand the last part of the paper, and made many suggestions which have improved its final form. Work for the paper was hindered by the inadequate funding of Australian academic libraries.

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