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Book Review: Mark Readman, ed. 2016. *Teaching and Learning on Screen: Mediated Pedagogies.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

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This review considers Mark Readman's publication entitled *Mediated pedagogies: teaching and learning on screen*.

Introduction

This review considers Mark Readman's thoughtful editorship of a publication that brings together a range of perspectives that 'tease out pedagogic theory and practice in film and television texts'. This central focus on representations of teachers and their pedagogies and how these are manifest *in practice* gives the book its impetus. While there has been a broad academic interest in how teachers and pupils are portrayed in screen media, few publications endeavour to locate a concern with their implications for practice for teaching professionals. This book seeks to converge two research traditions. Firstly, how teachers are represented on screen (typified by Susan Ellsmore) and, secondly, mediated constructions of pedagogy (exemplified in the work of Mitchell and Weber).

This collection comprises an introduction and 15 chapters, grouped into three sections. Each section is headed by a title lifted from popular songs about schooling. Part 1: *What I Go to School For* brings together chapters from contributors with an interest in representations of teaching in formal contexts. Part 2: *Everybody's Gotta Learn Sometimes* is concerned with teaching in alternative and informal settings. Part 3: *Another Brick in the Wall* identifies counter-pedagogies and alternatives to the increasingly instrumentalist pedagogies of contemporary schooling in western cultures.

The book commences with Roger Saul's study of a dominant trope in Hollywood's portrayal of the teacher as the lone saviour. He considers the perpetuation of the myth of the hero-teacher in an episode of *The Wire*. This establishes the book's tone of enquiry about pedagogic models and their embodiment in the actions of individual teachers on screen. In Chapter 3, Penny Spirou considers three Hollywood films to explore their portrayal of transformative learning through the power of the star persona, such as Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*. In Chapter 4, Meredith Garcia and J. W. Hammond investigate depictions of the 'Teacher-Saviour' as a screen archetype in relation to the television series *Veronica Mars*. They offer valuable insights in to how the teachers at Neptune High face complex pedagogic principles that reflect those approached by professionals in real-life educational contexts. In Chapter 5, Novella Brooks de Vita analyses the range of pedagogic models depicted in the *Harry Potter* films in that most familiar of fictional schools: Hogwarts. Despite these films drawing heavily on the traditions of British public boarding schools, de Vita identifies a range of models of teaching and learning constructed in the characterisations of teachers. Susan Ellsmore's chapter brings section 1 to a close and contrasts the British television documentary series that began with *Educating Essex* with the fictional film *The History Boys*. This chapter underscores the work of part 1 of this publication in

framing films and television programmes in relation to the contemporary values of their respective societies.

Section 2 opens with a chapter by Kirsty Sedgman that critiques approaches to the teaching of dance in *Bunheads*. Sedgman reveals how this 2012 American TV series relies on an intertextual approach to position its ideas. Chapter 8 by Ahmet Atay considers Feminist and Queer pedagogies with reference to *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Billy Elliot*, two influential British films adapted for the screen after successful stage runs. Marcus Harmes' chapter investigates an aspect of *Doctor Who* that is rarely considered by audiences: its representation of notions of knowledge and learning. It reminds viewers that mainstream texts can maintain a function of challenging social conventions to provide alternatives to society's norms. Chapter 10 sees Ave Laure Parsemain scrutinise representations of learning in the Australian version of *Who Do You Think You are?* Her chapter constructs a view that both 'detection' and emotive experience serve an educative function for participants and viewers alike. Part 2 closes with a chapter from Katrina Lawrence that considers how formal and informal approaches to mentoring are represented in popular teen texts, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Teen Wolf*. She frames arguments around peer co-mentoring as dimensions of coming-of-age narratives that impact audiences' empathy with characters.

Section 3 commences with the editor's article on the 2006 American movie *Accepted*. He suggests that radical pedagogies provide a valuable social function in challenging the constraints of educational systems, asking viewers to reconsider pedagogic norms and the experiences of learners. Laurence Raw approaches Turkish cinema in Chapter 13, to consider conceptualisations of pedagogy in relation to the concepts of nationalism and democracy. Next, Joel Windle delivers a chapter on the Brazilian comedy *Lessons from Donna Irene* that would meet the approval of Paulo Freire, whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* shares a concern with empowering the dispossessed and socially-marginalised through education. Julian McDougall considers the ideas of Slavoj Zizek in relation to *Gogglebox* and *Educating Yorkshire*. He challenges viewers to go beyond the platitudes and reassurances provided by contemporary British programming to adopt a more critical stance towards the hegemony of mainstream education. Section 2's closing chapter sees Richard Berger and Ashley Woodfall tracing remediated pedagogies of British longitudinal programming from *Seven Up!* to Channel 4's *The Secret Life of Six Year Olds.* It is notable that the chapters in section 3 cover a wider range of nations than the earlier sections, which tended to be based largely on films and TV programmes from Britain and America. Readers may apply understandings of other nations' films and television programmes to their own consumption of education-focussed narratives.

Conclusion

The publication's *Afterword* signals Readman's wish that this collection will 'provoke critical dialogue, leading to ethically enhanced practice'. It will certainly do so. The authority of its ideas stems from all contributors being both scholars *and* educators. Readman admits that he had only a limited capacity to accommodate expressions of interest in this topic, but he has selected contributions judiciously. Further work in the field might approach other national perspectives on representations of schooling on screen beyond the largely western viewpoints considered by Readman and colleagues. There would be value in hearing a fuller range of voices concerned with particular societal pressures faced by educators in specific contexts. Education remains a politically-volatile topic and, in turn, a rich vein of dramatic opportunity for screenwriters.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.