

The Headmaster's Ritual script

I'd somehow always managed to avoid caning. It wasn't as if I was never in trouble with the masters, sometimes about my appearance but also my politics. However, over the past year not only had my marks improved but I was also moderately tolerated by the other kids. Perhaps this might have been due to my perceived artistic bent, although I found the drama club to be at least as tedious as I found sports. The problem with the drama club was that they merely recited Wilde's dialogue without seriously interpreting it.

It was no secret that the headmaster was a capital-punishment enthusiast. There were so many stories of the headmaster having salivated enthusiastically at legendary hangings that certainly at least some of the rumours must have been accurate. And some of the other kids had experienced very serious caning. What else could one expect from a man with such a clear-cut sense of right and wrong... from a man so fascinated by possibilities of transgression that by definition rigorously-entrenched morals had to be articulated and then enforced. But somehow, I had managed to avoid the headmaster's office and I had no intention of spoiling my good fortune. Even with history or geography books protecting my butt, I had no wish to be caned by the jolly old geezer.

The headmaster was eventually superseded, not by means of any overt student revolutions but rather by means of the man's own critical short-circuiting. The headmaster could no longer perform because of his glaring contradictions... his parallel revulsion and fascination with flesh, his abhorrence of pleasure and his delight in transgressions. Capital punishment was no longer acceptable, not only to students and parents but also to the pragmatic Board of Directors.

The outgoing headmaster was gloriously replaced by the incoming Ideal Headmaster. The wonderful replacement was a queer socialist who believed that beauty and taste and fabulousness existed across class and economic boundaries, and who celebrated thrift-shop elegance and even constructive thievery. My marks blossomed, since I was able to maintain not only interest but delirious enthusiasm. Even the drama club became a joy, since practice was no longer separated from theory. Artistic and musical became complimentary verbs rather than derogatory adjectives. My swan song was one of the happiest periods of my life, and I certainly did graduate with flying colours.

However, the Ideal Headmaster was terribly misinterpreted by too many of his chronically inattentive students. The Queer Irish socialist degenerated into the stodgy upper-class twit, the self-centered libertarian egotist, and even the flamboyant fascist. Where do aberrations like Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Georgie Boy Haider and the recently-assassinated Pim Fortuyn come from? From those who routinely recite Wilde's dialogue while misinterpreting it. A considerable blame for this ongoing delusion must lie with those pedagogues who have shamelessly insisted that beauty and social justice are hopelessly incompatible.

Perhaps I may have formally graduated years ago. However, there's no way in hell that I've ever left the building.

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