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Transmission and enclosure through the figure of the teacher: a comparative literary study of *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark and *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov

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**Transmission and Enclosure Through the Figure of the
Teacher.**

A Comparative Literary Study of

***Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley,**

***The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark**

and *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov.



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Mémoire de Master 2

présenté par

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Sous la direction de

Madame le Professeur Françoise Besson

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¹ "The involuntary public figure." Image from dearrichblog.blogspot.com.
<http://dearrichblog.blogspot.fr/2016/05/are-teachers-public-figures.html>. Consulted 01/09/2016.

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Introduction

This dissertation for the Master's degree in English literature was born from a previous study of *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley. Two key themes emerged at the end of this initial study, but could not be extensively treated within it: transmission and enclosure.

In the novel, the characters are confronted with the issue of the validity of the past in the present and the construction of a future that may or may not be definable with criteria from the past. The transmission of values is put into question and, to a certain extent, the role of teachers and learning is explored. Furthermore the enclosure within an imposed identity, either as a transmitter or recipient of knowledge, is linked to values that the author reveals through the subtext.

Elements in *Antic Hay* will be compared with elements from two other novels by English and American 20th-century writers around the theme of transmission and teaching. This will allow me to approach the question of transmission and enclosure from a wider angle according to several authors.

I will study transmission, through the teacher-student relationships present, in a comparative literary study of *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley published in 1923, *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov, published in 1957 and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark published in 1961. These novels will allow me to focus on the portrayal of characters confronted with transmission and teaching in Anglo-Saxon culture. The relationships revolving around transmission, a nexus bringing together the past and the present will be particularly examined with regard to the depiction of the role of teachers and their teachings. Forms of enclosure will be examined, as the framework of the educational relationship but also as obstacles to transmission and possible causes of alienation and isolation.

I have chosen these three novels from 20th-century American and British literature because they deal with teacher figures and their roles. Throughout the novel by V. Nabokov, the reader accompanies Pnin, an ageing assistant professor, in his peregrinations through the small world of American university life in the nineteen-fifties. In the incipit of A. Huxley's novel the character of Gumbriel Junior, a young man searching for his identity after the first World War in London, works as a teacher. Miss Jean Brodie, is represented by M. Spark as a female teacher figure working in a religious private school for girls in Edinburgh between the two world wars. Whether their

experience is expressed by an inner narrator as a fallible being, caught between the quest for legitimacy and inner doubts, or from an extradiegetic point of view as a wilful moulder of young minds and potential initiator, the teacher is identified in these novels as having a particular role in society, at the intersection between the past, the present and the future in the making. The authors' depictions of the framework of the mentoring relationships at play and the expression of the difficulties of transmission will be examined to bring to light the heterogeneous construction of social identity. The teacher figure's enclosure within limitations, in his/her own perception or others' perception, set against the idealized mentoring relationship may emerge as one of the issues at work in the three novels.

The notion of enclosure is present in all three novels in different forms and will be interesting to explore in terms of isolation and belonging. The dynamic link between ignorance and knowledge in the different novels will be surmised. Signs of pressure to conform may be revealed, opposing the individual's will to remain free. In the novels, the nature of the forms of freedom that characters aspire to will be analysed.

My research strategy will first be to delimit the parts of the novels that are most significant with regard to the subject under study. For *Antic Hay* the first and second chapter only have been selected as pertinent to the subject on hand, whereas the other two novels will be more globally appraised. A structural analysis of each novel will allow the reader to grasp how the characters and the plot evolve, pertaining to the figure of the teacher. Attention will be paid to the terms employed and the semantic fields used by the authors, as well as the grammatical structures used. The tropes present in the text will also reveal significant aspects of the authors' messages.

Critical works written about the novels under study will be taken into account. An inventory of studies published on subjects close to my research question will be made. In terms of reading, literary theory will be used to back up to my analysis. Post structuralism, with Roland Barthes, will be applied to enrich the post-modern analytical tools on hand. Reference will be made to the works by Umberto Eco, David Lodge and Gerard Génette, among other researchers in literature. This work has the modest ambition of aspiring to a certain degree of transdisciplinarity.² Therefore

2 The trans-disciplinary nature of literature is identified at least since Barthes: *“Isabelle Alfandary avance donc que cette résistance à l’identité et à l’identification pose problème si l’on veut considérer la littérature comme une discipline. La littérature dissémine une puissance d’une rare violence, la puissance de voix qui ne répondent de rien. Isabelle Alfandary conclut que la littérature comme acte d’écriture et production textuelle n’est pas une discipline, ou qu’elle est une discipline explosive et interstitielle, qui se répand entre les disciplines et ne s’institue jamais comme telle. Reprenant les mots de Barthes, elle qualifie la littérature de “savoir total” et avance l’existence d’un*

other fields of research such as history, sociology and anthropology as well as research in education and psychology will be put to contribution in the contextualisation and analysis of the novels. The concept of teaching roles and categorisation of teaching styles, used by researchers in education and anthropology of teaching, will be applied to the subjects of this study. Indeed identifying, through the fictional characters, the different roles that a teacher has for researchers in education, will help highlight the authors' conscious choices and positions just as much as they may indicate social representations that the reader may unconsciously be applying to their reading experience.

The research issues that I wish to explore are the following: How do *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark and *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov bring transmission into play through the portrayal of teachers and the educational relationship? How are the themes of knowledge and ignorance used by the authors? What links can be found in these novels between transmission and individual enclosure? Is the social inclusion or exclusion of teacher figures, and individuals at large, portrayed as predestined or haphazard? Do the authors allow the characters to free themselves from enclosure within a fixed identity? What does this tell us about the authors' relationship to the reader?

Within these novels, the transmission of values, knowledge, signs and objects through the teacher/student relationship will be identified. Following this, the transformations of these values, knowledge, signs and objects over time, due to appropriation by the successive depositories, will be studied.

The notion of enclosure concerning transmission between individuals will be explored, particularly within a state such as knowledge or ignorance, action or passivity. Enclosure within an imposed identity will also be considered and spatial enclosure in an urban or rural environment will be analysed as the possible expression of a mental enclosure.

The fatality of these different forms of enclosure and the various authors' stances with regard to characters' capacity to escape enclosure will be ascertained. This will lead to a reflection

savoir de la littérature, à même de déplacer les frontières entre les disciplines." Presentation of the workshop "Is literature a discipline?" in the international symposium entitled "*De l'interdisciplinarité à la transdisciplinarité ? Nouveaux enjeux, nouveaux objets de la recherche en littérature et sciences humaines*" Paris-Est Créteil University, 27-29 November 2014. From <https://transatlantica.revues.org/7393> Consulted 10/04/2016.

on the notion of free will, self-defined identity and the portrayal of the individual in literature as a potential link in the chain of transmission of hereditary knowledge and culture. The possibility for the individual to be freed from the ties of the past, according to the authors under study, will be considered. Finally, the contracting teacher/student relationship, will be considered and parallels will be drawn between the teacher /student and author /reader interactions.

To explore the issues of teaching, transmission and enclosure in 20th—century literature, this paper first examines the role of teachers in society and the origins of social representations that are present in the authors' and readers' interpretations of the teacher figure and the relationship between teacher and student in literature. This is the first part of the dissertation.

Secondly elements in *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley, (mainly concerning chapter 1, relating Gumbriel's teaching activity) are confronted with elements from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark and *Invitation to a Beheading* by Vladimir Nabokov, around the portrayal of the figure of the teacher and the themes of transmission and enclosure, the interweaving of these observations allowing the approach of the authors in greater depth and the analysis of my own profession from a literary angle. On a wider level the analysis of teaching figures in literature will hopefully highlight the debates around transmission and identity, revealing social issues at stake in twentieth century Anglo-Saxon culture as well as the artistic preoccupations of these authors.

- 1) To open the study the focus is put on the portrayal of characters confronted with teaching in the novels chosen.
- 2) Furthermore transmission as the foundation of the teacher-student relationship is examined. The norms and values upheld and transmitted are put into question through the identification of representations of the “good” and “bad” professional teaching practices portrayed in the novels. Teaching content and the value given to it in the fictional worlds will be identified and analysed.
- 3) Lastly, forms of enclosure in the literary representations will be examined. The three novels will be explored in terms of the authors' various interpretations of the notion of destiny and self realisation as a product of education or not, thereby revealing aspects of the authors' possible vision. From this, the types of relationship they intend to build with the reader may be inferred.

0. A transdisciplinary overview of the theme “education and teachers” and gendered historiography.

Teaching, for the sake of clarity, can first be subjected to a multidisciplinary definition. The transmission of knowledge, skills, culture and history, technical gestures, social codes, morality, philosophical and spiritual wisdom is at the very root of all human societies. It requires the presence of a knowledgeable individual (or group) often associated with authority: the teacher/tutor/instructor /mentor/guide/master, who initiates one or more individuals, generally younger and less experienced, in the acquisition of something new (the latter being termed pupils, students, disciples or mentorees).

The figure of the teacher, whilst having universal characteristics, can also be considered as representative of a given society, since the nature of the teacher-student relationships can be analysed so as to reveal particularities of the society in which they occur at any one time. Teaching situations include a varying degree of power, constraint, and social recognition around the sharing of knowledge. The tension thereby expressed brings to light issues shared by humanity. In this light, the dramatic use of the figure of the teacher within literature becomes interesting to observe.

The manner wherein the teacher and student-teacher relationships are depicted in literature by a given author, at a given time, in a given place are significant on a number of levels: the first is sociological and historical (one could say civilizational). On a more literary level they reveal the author's choices within the plot regarding important themes such as transmission, intergenerational interaction, authority, power and the place of the individual with regard to the social group. On an extradiegetic level the reader is summoned to challenge his/her own experience as a pupil or student, since it is a widely shared experience readers can relate to. Finally the author reveals thereby aspects of his or her own relationship to knowledge and teaching as well as his or her stance with regard to the reader.

When looking at the representations of teachers and the teaching relationship in Western literature, one of the first significant teachers portrayed is Mentor, in Homer's *Odyssey*. Mentor represents a positive figure of trust and unwavering confidence since Ulysses leaves his only son Telemac in his charge before embarking on the Odyssey.

However it appears that in European literature since, teachers are often depicted in a disparaging manner, either ironically, as ridiculous if harmless in their self-importance (in the French novel *Gargantua*³ and philosophical tale *Candide*⁴) or in works claiming social justice, as terrifying sadists dealing out humiliation (in *Hard Times*,⁵ *Jane Eyre*⁶). Elsewhere and more rarely they are figures of admiration and respect (in *Goodbye Mr Chips*,⁷ *I Know why the Caged Bird Sings*⁸).

Teachers' status and representations that we have of teachers, can be identified as a result of a history of teaching. This aspect is explored as a preliminary reflection before embarking on the analysis of the three novels chosen for this dissertation. Teachers can be seen as the arm of a society that needs to discipline, educate and make order within the ranks of the unruly young, as Aristotle expounds in his theory of education.⁹ However this positivist¹⁰ authoritarian view is undermined by the fact that teachers may be perceived by society as having remained within the artificial school environment, in an escape from the adult world and "real life." In the western world the state-funded and protected status that teachers have had since the implementation of compulsory schooling may add to this impression. The unstated conclusion could be that a failed artist will become an art teacher or a mediocre writer an English teacher. The ironical undertone of many depictions of teachers in literature and other fictional media hints at this, tongue in cheek.¹¹ The ambiguity of the teacher's status lies in his/her action in the field of transmission rather than

3 Ponocrates is Gargantua's 3rd private tutor in the novel by Rabelais written in 1534.

4 Pangloss is Candide's private tutor in the tale by Voltaire written in 1759.

5 Mr Gradgrind is the teacher figure in *Hard Times* by Dickens: "Having made a small fortune as a hardware merchant before becoming a teacher, Gradgrind starts his journey the very personification of capitalism at a time when acquisition was society's key motive." M. Ferrier "Gradgrind: My favourite Charles Dickens character", 13/02/12. From <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/charles-dickens/9048771/Gradgrind-My-favourite-Charles-Dickens-character.html> consulted 14/02/2016.

6 Several teacher figures appear in the novel by Charlotte Brontë: Miss Scatcherd and Mr Brocklehurst at Lowood, are negative teacher figures. Jane herself is a more humane governess teaching Rochester's young and unruly ward, Adèle.

7 Mr Chips being the affectionate nickname the students give the main (positive) character of the novel by Hilton James, written in 1934.

8 Miss Kerwin is the teacher who gives the author the will to succeed in the autobiographical novel, by American writer Maya Angelou, written in 1969.

9 Aristototle 's theory of education "[for Aristotle] education is a function of the State, and is conducted, primarily at least, for the ends of the State." Thomas Davidson,[1900]. *Aristotle and the Ancient Education Ideals*. New York: Charles Scribner's, quoted in *The Educational Theory of Aristotle* by Elizabeth Mays on <http://www.newfoundations.com/GALLERY/Aristotle.html>. Consulted 09/02/2016.

10 "Positivism, in Western philosophy, is generally any system that confines itself to the data of experience" from Encyclopaedia Britannicus <http://global.britannica.com/topic/positivism>. Consulted 08/05/2016.

11 "Those who can, do. Those who can't teach." George Bernard Shaw, "Maxims for Revolutionists" *Man and Superman*, 1903. From <http://www.bartleby.com/157/>. Consulted 02/09/2016.

being productive in society. Paradoxically this signifies that teachers, as key elements of social transmission¹² are not necessarily highly considered by their social environment at large¹³.

Furthermore education in Western societies, and the teachers working within the system, belong to a larger social construction can be considered to be based upon a double standard of, on one hand, education for all and on the other, higher education mainly accessible to the elite, safeguarding the continuity of a centralised power.¹⁴ Teachers will then both encourage all their students to acquire knowledge while knowing perfectly well that the system will select certain pupils who will acquire higher education in more or less socially desirable fields. In fact, teachers are at once powerful by their knowledge and relative authority over their pupils and submitted to a hierarchy of deciders as well as educational norms and rules. The manifold contradictions inherent in this identity are apparent in the depictions of the teacher figure in literature. But before we continue by looking more closely at the novels chosen to highlight the issues at stake, it is important to take a global and historical view of how Western societies have organised transmission of knowledge and skills. To get the most comprehensive view possible, a brief overview of how teaching evolved from Prehistory through Antiquity, the Middle Ages into the Modern Period will be made, before focusing more precisely on the examination of the structures of teaching in Britain and the United Kingdom from the 18th century up to the 20th century. This part is slightly more detailed and gives the reader elements with which to surmise the choices made by the authors in the novels under study and identify the representations used.

It seems that initially, human groups regarded the act of transmission as a family affair for the main part.¹⁵ Even specific teaching required for transmission of knowledge, such as ritual initiations or technical skills, would have been mainly delivered within the enlarged family group.

12 "Teachers are selective, strategic and pragmatic actors in an often politically-charged context" (Lopes, Cardozo, 2011; Lopes, Cardozo and May 2009). "Literature Review: The Role of Teachers in Peacebuilding," September 2015. Lindsey Horner, Laila Kadiwal, Yusuf Sayed, Angeline Barrett, Naureen Durrani, Mario Novelli. From the United Nations' Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding. <http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/The-Role-of-Teachers-in-Peacebuilding-Literature-Review-Sept15.pdf>. Consulted 26/07/2016.

13 "From the perspectives of different actors, teachers are derided to admired and positioned on a range of continuums from being considered: part of the problem to part of the solution; skilful to ineffectual; victims (of conflict) or perpetrators; or technocrats to transformative agents." *Ibid.* Consulted 26/07/2016.

14 Bourdieu's theory of a two-level system corroborates this dichotomy: "*L'école légitime une culture bourgeoise très éloignée des classes populaires. À rebours du discours méritocratique, l'institution scolaire conduit nombre d'enfants du peuple à l'échec et naturalise la réussite d'élèves issus des classes favorisées : la conséquence de ce processus est la reproduction sociale.*" Alain Garcia, "Utiliser les théories de Bourdieu sur l'École," *Éducation et socialisation* [Online], 37 | 01/03/2015. From <http://edso.revues.org/1191>. Consulted 26/07/2016.

15 See Jean Vial, *Histoire de l'Éducation* [1995]. Paris: Ed. Que Sais-Je, 1998.

In his thesis “Daggers, Knowledge and Power,” Jan Apel writes:

An examination of the production of flint daggers during the Late Stone Age and Early Bronze Age of Scandinavia indicates the presence of formal apprenticeship systems based on corporate descent groups. [...] the craftsmanship was handed down through the generations by a form of apprenticeship system based on hereditary principles.[...] The logic behind this reasoning is twofold. First, in such a system, the time needed to transmit know-how through the generations made the principle of kinship the most convenient mechanism for recruitment. Second, flint and manufacturing skills were valuable assets that stimulated some form of limited access and thus regulations of group membership.¹⁶

Thus, from very early on, it seems that in human groups, knowledge has been an issue closely controlled by kinship and linked to the distribution of power. In this light, the transmission of knowledge, and more largely education, appears a sensitive matter linked to the structure of any given society, and that can be traced in literature. In the Bronze and Iron Age the development of specific skills linked to metal work concentrated both skills and power in certain members of the community. “[The evidence] would indicate a still limited production of metalwork apparently produced for few people with growing economic power.”¹⁷ The transmission appears to be family-based: “social roles were ascribed according to the genealogical distance from the chief of the community.”¹⁸ Later, in Antiquity, both in the Greek and Egyptian civilisations, education was mainly reserved for men of the higher social orders. In the ancient Egyptian society, scribes belonged to a highly valued caste.

The hieroglyphic language of the ancient Egyptians was complex and beautiful and those who had mastered it held a valued position in society. Scribes were the protectors and developers of ancient Egyptian culture and central to academic research and the smooth running of the state apparatus. The scribes not only copied existing texts preserving them for future generations, they also edited existing works and wrote new texts. They were considered to be members of the royal court and as such did not have to pay tax, undertake military service or perform manual labour.¹⁹

16 Jan Apel, “Daggers, Knowledge and Power.” Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2001. Abstract from <http://www.diva-portal.org>. Consulted 23/05/2015.

17 Luca Alessandri, “LatiumVetus in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age”, 21. From https://www.academia.edu/5212185/Elite_and_power_in_Bronze_Age_and_Early_Iron_Age_Latium_vetus. Consulted 13/02/2016.

18 *Ibid*, 52.

19 J.Hill, “Scribes in Ancient Egypt” from <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/scribe.html>. Consulted 19/05/2015.

Both systematic class-marking and gendering of knowledge transmission and acquisition seem to have fluctuated over time, both within and between civilisations, but it remains present in all of them. In the ancient Egyptian civilisation, J. Hill points out that “the majority of scribal students were boys from middle or upper class families, but there is also significant evidence that boys from lower class families and girls also learned to write.”²⁰ In ancient Greece the reigning minority “often hired a slave called a *paidagogos* who acted as a tutor supervising their son’s education, attending lessons with him and walking him to and from school.”²¹ The fixity of the Greek caste system, structured around the dichotomy of slavery and free citizenship mirrors a systematic differentiation between girls' and boys' education.

Education in the modern sense of the word, was reserved exclusively for boys and young men. A girl’s education was based on activities at home where her mother taught her how to run a household and how to weave. Richer families sometimes employed a tutor to teach their daughter other skills such as reading but this was rare.²²

The correlation between knowledge and secular power has crystallised the gender gap in the offer of education between men and women in many societies. Furthermore there is also a differentiation between male citizens according to their class with regard to access to education. Therefore the role of the teacher as an instrument of transmission is at the nexus of stability of any given system. For authorities in power there are high stakes to keep the teaching and transmission of knowledge under control as part of an overall effort to guarantee social control. In fiction, it will be observed how these aspects of transmission are present.

By the control it spreads historically over social practice, religion can be considered to be an important regulating and normalising element with regard to teaching and transmission. Indeed, in many civilisations, religious bodies have been directly responsible for theoretical education and the transmission of knowledge. The rise and fall of this influence over education in the United Kingdom, will emerge through the following overview.

So as to have tools with which to analyse 20th-century representations of teachers in Anglo-Saxon literature, the focus of this work will now concentrate on the history of the United Kingdom and Britain specifically since the Middle Ages. In England, around 1500, formal education was a

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ Education Department, Fact sheet “The Ancient Greeks Childhood and Education.”

From <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk>. Consulted 13/05/2015.

²² *Ibid*

religious matter and the *de facto* separation between male and female religious orders rendered the gender differentiation in society and education all the more natural. For secular skills, linked to a profession or craftsmanship, control and regulation were delegated to internal forms of authority. Education rested mainly upon apprenticeship to transmit skills in family circles or larger spheres. Professions were ordered into the structure of guilds: “There were two main kinds of Medieval guilds —Merchant Guilds and Craft Guilds.”²³ The guilds may appear as a loophole in the tight control that the reigning castes exercised over education and transmission, giving more latitude to the individual, male or female, and easier access to specific knowledge orientated towards craftsmanship, lesser valued than theoretical knowledge because less oriented towards the wielding of political skills such as logic, rhetoric and persuasion.

The influence of religion can be considered an important socially structuring force throughout the period particularly with regard to women. When women were nuns, they were excluded from the role of mother or family nurturer, submitting to a restricted lifestyle: “almost all female orders required women to live behind the walls of a monastery or within an individual cell, living a life of contemplation, prayer and work.”²⁴ For women outside the orders, the “natural” nurturing female role recognized by the church seems to have often limited the sphere of women's education to private and family affairs, however these may have included skills in any craft or commerce that a husband, father or son was involved in. In this manner, despite “the stereotypical image of medieval women as oppressed and subservient,” Alixe Bovey notes that “through surviving documents, literary and other texts and images, it is clear that medieval women were resilient, resourceful and skilled. Moreover, in exceptional instances they were capable of exercising political power, learning and creativity outside the domestic sphere.”²⁵ It appears that in medieval times, in England and Europe, some women were able to play an active role alongside men despite difficult access to education as a personal choice. That both lay persons such as the the author Margery Kemp (*circa 1373- 1440*), and religious female figures such as the writer known as Julian of Norwich (*circa 1342-1416*) left a written trace of their lives and visions is notable.²⁶

23 From “Guilds in the Middle Ages”. <http://www.lordsandladies.org/guilds-in-the-middle-ages.htm>. Consulted 22/05/2015.

24 Alixe Bovey, “Women in Medieval Society” The Middle Ages, The British Library. <http://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>. Consulted 12/05/2015.

25 *Ibid*

26 From articles “Top Medieval Women of Power and Influence” and “Medieval Women Writers” by J.J. Lewis. From <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/medieval/ss/Notable-Women-of-Medieval-Europe.htm>. Consult 17/06/2016.

The development of printing and the dissemination of books from the 15th century onwards gradually made access to reading and writing easier, both for men and women excluded from the innate privileges of formal education. As J. Eales cautiously remarks:

The evidence does suggest, that more educational provision, both formal and informal, was being made available to [women]. The number of women who could form a signature grew over the period [1500-1700] and inventories reveal that women were increasingly the owners of books (Eales 36).

However the content of any education remained submitted to the church's control. Published in the 16th century, the popular treatise *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* by Juan Luis Vives, "linked chastity with learning"²⁷ for girls. From the 16th century, the male offspring of the upper classes of British society had the choice of home tutoring or going to grammar schools and universities, depending upon the wealth of their parents.²⁸ Until the 18th century, women, even those within the elite, received less education than their brothers. If lucky, they were able to follow the same tutoring in the early years when their brothers received education at home, given by preceptors and governesses, but were often obliged to concentrate on social skills such as music, drawing and dance lessons once their brothers left for grammar schools or when they approached their social début. The aim of their education and up-bringing remained the contraction of the most profitable marriage possible.²⁹

In England after 1800, women's education can be considered as the point of dissemination of particular social norms and tastes, as more objective subjects remained out of their sphere. "Finishing school"³⁰ has been the epitome of social polish that a girl could receive in the higher classes of western society for centuries. That women have been the champions of good taste over the past centuries, deciding what can and cannot be done in which social context, remains nevertheless the short straw in education and individual self realisation. Barbara Whitehead recalls that, for Sharone Strocchia, in an essay on women's education in Renaissance Italy, "in a society where women were expected neither to have a civic role nor to participate actively in commerce, what constituted an educated woman was the woman who had "learned the virtues" more than a

27 *Ibid.*

28 See M.L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain 1500-1900*.

29 "The object of it all was still marriageability" (Renton 80).

30 *Finishing School* is the ironical title of one of Muriel Sparks' novels in which a teacher explains to students "When you finish(...) you should be really and truly finished (...) like the finish on rare piece of furniture"(F.S.,5).

woman who had learned to write.”³¹ It appears then that teaching young girls anything other than what was intended for women to fulfil their social role could have been considered seditious both in Northern and Southern European countries.

If one looks at boys' education in England it becomes equally clear that only the sons of the ruling classes would be given training for decision-making and public skills. In the 19th century things began to change. More and more lower class children received “a rudimentary form of education.” The names of the schools available for English children, both girls and boys, in the 19th century are eloquent as to their religious influence. The era of industrialisation saw the development of the “Ragged schools, originated in Sunday School,”³² Parish schools, Church schools. It is clear through this observation that the influence of religion remains strong in education into the 20th century. The imprint of religion will then be interesting to surmise in the fictional works under study.

The political engagement of the higher classes in the U.K. to ensure minimum education to all members of society in a pragmatic or philanthropic bid (depending on the view point) to improve the lives and capacities of the working class is illustrated by the Education Acts³³ which gradually introduced education as compulsory for all children. The first Education Act in 1870 gave the authority to create schools where necessary to newly appointed School Boards. Ten years later school was made compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 10. In 1891 state schools became free of charge. By 1901 school was compulsory until the age of twelve. This however did not prevent children from working outside school hours or skipping school to work to help their families survive. Despite this difficulty, theoretically all children had started receiving a minimum education. Throughout the 20th century heated debates followed on what to teach, to whom and for what purpose. The mark of class in education will be another aspect under study in the novels.

In the context of this broad overview of the gendered history of education, particularly in European culture, it is equally interesting to examine how the teacher figure is apprehended in society over time. The figure of teachers involved in schooling and the social representations these men and women have given rise to, and been judged by, is the other side of the educational coin.

31 Introduction by Babrabara Whitehead to *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe a History, 1500-1900*. Ed 1999 by B. Whitehead.

32 Liza Picard. “Victorian Education”, British Library website.
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/victorians/education/victorianeducation.html>. Consulted 24/05/2015.

33 Information on the education acts in the U.K. taken from the Parliament's website.
<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/>. Consulted 13/02/2016.

The men and women earning their livings out of the teaching profession in the 18th and 19th-century Anglo-Saxon world belong to an intermediate class neither at the top nor at the bottom of the social ladder. When Tropp asks: “What kind of person entered the profession during the period from 1800 to 1846?”, the answer is “the majority were men who had tried other trades and failed”(Tropp 10). Here dwells the source of the common representation of the male teacher as a mediocre person who reverts to teaching as a last resort after failure in a more valorized profession. The figure of Gumbriel in *Antic Hay* by A. Huxley is a side-shoot of this picturesque figure, rebelling against such a fate. For female teachers, the mother-figure, maternally presiding over the education of smaller children was a common representation. “Dame schools[...] as old as English history”(Tropp 5) were:

Small private school[s] for young children run by women; such schools were the precursors of nursery, or infant, schools in England and colonial America. They existed in England possibly before the 16th century in both towns and rural areas and survived into the 19th century. The school was frequently the teacher’s home, in which the children were taught the alphabet and some reading from the New Testament and given household chores.³⁴

The present day educational ideal of children being led out of ignorance by patient, enlightened teachers does not correspond to the picture drawn both by witnesses documenting the period, and literary works of the time portraying schools and teachers. Teaching was more often than not a learning of recommendations, rules or lists of commendable knowledge, by rote and repetition. Pupil-teachers, recruited from the age of thirteen, passed on what they had learnt within large classes of variously aged children, leaving the teacher the role of the overseeing disciplinarian rather than pedagogue. The moral and intellectual aptitudes of teachers were claimed to be scrutinized during selection “with the greatest care by the inspectors, managers and clergymen”(Tropp 21). However the training of the school teachers was haphazard until the mid 19th-century: “the lack of competent masters and mistresses handicapped charity school education”(Tropp 5). For women teaching as governesses or school mistresses, the problem had been even more acute, since the 16th century: “Women teachers themselves suffered from the lack of anything beyond a very basic education [...] A vicious circle had been formed: the very fact that erudition was not required of women teachers or governesses meant that it was virtually

³⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica* <http://www.britannica.com>. Consulted 12/05/2015

impossible for them to acquire it”(Renton 12). One can safely add that it was therefore also virtually impossible for them to deliver it to their pupils, as the following proves:

Want of thoroughness and foundation; want of system; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; undue time given to accomplishments, and those not taught intelligently or in any scientific manner; want of organisation—these may sufficiently indicate the character of the complaints we have received, in their most general aspect.³⁵

Miss Brodie, in the novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark, is a fictional figure that draws partly on this vision of female teachers, as will be seen. However male and female roles were evolving during the nineteenth century in British society due to industrialisation and the separation of the work place and the home. This affected the higher classes in an unexpected way:

During the Victorian period, men and women’s roles became more sharply defined than at any time in English history. In earlier centuries it had been usual for women to work alongside husbands and brothers in the family business. Living ‘over the shop’ made it easy for women to help out by serving customers or keeping accounts while also attending to their domestic duties. As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work – the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day to oversee the domestic duties that were increasingly carried out by servants.³⁶

The “separate spheres” of male and female activity are echoed in the classroom. Early childhood is the sphere of women who have “the right to train the infant mind.”³⁷ However boys, sometimes as early as the age of 7 in the upper classes, were sent off to boarding school. “In 1882, Winston [Churchill] was sent to a boarding school at the age of seven years and eleven months – quite normal in upper class families of the time.”³⁸ However the “better” education of boys has, at this stage, probably as much to do with the confrontation to various influences outside the home as with the content they were taught.

35 School's Inquiry Commission- Girls' Schools - Volume 1 chapter 6, 1868. Taunton Report taken from Derek Gillard “Education in England: a brief history” from website *Education in England, the history of our schools*. <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter03.html> Consulted 29/05/2015.

36 Kathryn Hughes. Gender Roles in the 19th Century, article from the British Library website <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>. Consulted 23/05/2015

37 Ephemeral card from the 19th century illustrating Kathryn Hughes' article. *Ibid*.

38 Stella Milner.”Educating Winston Churchill” in *History in an hour* from <http://www.historyinanehour.com>. Consulted 20/05/15.

A. Prentice and M. Theobald note that “students of contemporary education have come to recognize that sexual stereotyping and gendered occupational structures have profoundly affected and continue to affect the position of women teachers at all levels.”³⁹ Prentice and Theobald's work focuses on women working in the nineteenth and twentieth century. However it is interesting to note that for many of the authors they consulted “women teachers were frequently portrayed as young, naïve and malleable”(Prentice and Theobald 4), echoing back to the ideal of feminine gentle compliance, firmly entrenched in Victorian social representations. It is difficult to ascertain the part of projection from (male) observers, and the part of adherence to the stereotype from the women under study, within this statement. It can also be noted that young women once married would no longer be in the classroom since usual practice since the end of the 19th century in the UK and European countries⁴⁰ was to relinquish married female teachers to their homes and the more feminine job of caring for their families. “The Civil Service, the education sector and new professions operated a “marriage bar” which meant that women had to resign their posts when they got married.”⁴¹ The situation, with all its converging social and historical factors seems in fact to give rise to yet another negative representation, in which young women may be professionally active before the higher calling of married life takes over, and where only spinsters deprived of family duties remain marooned in the classroom. Thus another vicious circle impends, since teachers' postures and beliefs also affect the learning process and construction of identity and social representations of students among whom are those who will go on to be teachers. As Judy Yero points out, “Teachers base their thinking and behaviour on unconscious values—personal, professional, and those of the culture in which they live and were raised. Often, personal values conflict with values of the institution, administrators, and even with a teacher's own values regarding students.”⁴²

These values will now be examined. From the 19th century onwards the position of teachers reveals the evolution of society and of working women's status. As has been seen, education and wealth are indissolubly bound. Through the 18th and 19th centuries, even educated women were banned from public activity, reducing their activity to the home sphere. In case of

39 “The Historiography of Women Teachers, a Retrospect” in *Women Who Taught*, ed. Prentice and Theobald (1991).

40 From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_bar. Consulted 18/06/2016.

41 “The marriage bar was removed in Britain in teaching in 1935.” Taken from <http://www.striking-women.org/module/women-and-work/inter-war-years-1918-1939>. Consulted 8/05/2015

42 Judy Yero. “How Teacher Thinking Shapes Education.” John Hopkins School of Education. <http://education.jhu.edu>. Consulted 23/05/2015.

financial peril an educated woman of the higher classes could be reduced to teaching in her own home or someone else's home.⁴³ In this way her employer was guaranteed that she share the common values, and her goal for her pupils would have been expected to be marriageability rather than their advancement in education. The values of British society at large, during the 19th century, with regard to education for girls were clearly not enthusiastic:

No-one wanted to be called a 'blue-stocking', the name given to women who had devoted themselves too enthusiastically to intellectual pursuits. Blue-stockings were considered unfeminine and off-putting in the way that they attempted to usurp men's "natural" intellectual superiority. Some doctors reported that too much study actually had a damaging effect on the ovaries, turning attractive young women into dried-up prunes. Later in the century, when Oxford and Cambridge opened their doors to women, many families refused to let their clever daughters attend for fear that they would make themselves unmarriageable.⁴⁴

This reluctance of the upper classes to educate their girls left space for the daughters of the middle classes to invest the territory of higher education. Once colleges such as Queen's College for women (founded in 1848) opened up to them, middle class women started obtaining diplomas in higher education and launching into a professional form of teaching. "At the Oxbridge colleges a girl apparently found herself largely in the company of professional men's daughters"(Prentice and Theobald 48). The new professionalism of teachers went hand in hand with an awareness of the social issues to be tackled, infusing teaching with progressive ideas.

In 1871 the National Union for the Improvement of the Education of Women of all Classes was founded: its aims were to promote the foundation of cheap day schools for girls and to raise the status of women teachers by giving them a liberal education and a good training in the art of teaching.⁴⁵

Here the figure of the progressive teacher supporting women's rights and voicing her opinions can be sourced. Yet again certain aspects of the character of Miss Jean Brodie come to mind, revealing the complexity of this female teacher figure.

43 In the early 19th century, women working as teachers were catalogued as "poor ladies obliged to work for pay" (Prentice & Theobald 39).

44 Kathryn Hughes. Gender Roles in the 19th Century, article from the British Library. <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>. Consulted 23/05/2015.

45 Derek Gillard. *Education in England: a brief history* (2011), chapter 3. Published on the web at www.educationengland.org.uk/history. Consulted 29/05/2015.

For boys wishing to become teachers, horizons were also widening, the 1869 Endowed Schools Act⁴⁶ protected the quality of elementary schooling for the working classes. The implementation of scholarships in secondary schools and universities meant that the middle and lower classes were accessing teaching positions, producing teachers from a new social background. As professionals trained by the state they were no longer members of religious organisations, with the religious zeal that characterized the missionary “converting the heathen to some form of Christian morality”(Tropp 5) as was the case previously in charity schools. The gradual liberation of education from religious control over the period is revealed by the change in Oxbridge's stance after the 1871 Universities Tests Act. Students not studying theology no longer had to justify themselves :

[Students are not required] to subscribe any article or formulary of faith, or to make any declaration or take any oath respecting his religious belief or profession, or to conform to any religious observance, or to attend or abstain from attending any form of public worship, or to belong to any specified church, sect, or denomination; nor shall any person be compelled, in any of the said universities or any such college as aforesaid, to attend the public worship of any church, sect, or denomination to which he does not belong.⁴⁷

This new secular approach to teaching during the industrial era also meant a shift in content that coincided with the demands linked to the job market within the industrial era in the UK. Morality and religion were little by little being evicted from the mainstay of curriculum, in favour of more pragmatic content, as can be ascertained by the description of a class in Lancaster National School in the 1870's:

The 'head class' was composed of boys drawn from miles around. Admission was chiefly determined by an oral examination intended to reject all but the most promising candidates. This class supplied a number of intending teachers and from it boys, usually between 15 and 16 years of age, were appointed to vacant clerkships at industrial works which frequently led to partnership in the firms later on in life. The curriculum beyond the three R's included a little Latin, and a great deal of mathematics, drawing and science.⁴⁸

The shift towards a better education for both girls and boys amidst the middle class and the working class through the period was embodied in a number of Acts of Parliament and the

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

work of several commissions regulating schools' practices and state education. The withdrawal of the Church from the mainstay of educational supervision and content corresponds to its liberalisation. Hand in hand with this evolution, teachers' identity and training, both for men or women, strengthened. However "It was only at the very end of the 19th century, as radical political movements were being formed, that a common education for all was seriously debated in Britain."⁴⁹ Throughout the 20th century the teacher as a progressive intellectual was at the centre of the education and gender debates. The predetermining role of education raised the question of what girls and boys of all classes needed to be educated to become. In this way teachers heralded the changes of the turn of the twentieth century and may be considered as the forerunners of the social watershed provoked by the First World War: a dynamic force of proposition and change, fully aware of the importance of their mission in preparing the future. The various representations of the teacher figures that coexist today, and are expressed in fictional characters, call upon different aspects of the history of their profession and their professional identity, relayed by the transmission of the experiences that have been passed down through generations of teachers, and pupils. To quote Henry Brooks Adams: "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."⁵⁰ It is this figure in literature that is to be brought into question in the following pages.

49 *Ibid.*

50 Henry Brook Adams. *The Education of Henry Adams*, 1907 chapter XX "Failure". From <https://www.gutenberg.org>. Consulted 04/01/2016.

1. Teaching figures

The school teacher, by definition, imparts knowledge, beliefs, skills and methodologies to other people's children according to an accepted and official curriculum yet the personality of the teacher cannot be done away with, imprinting the teacher's actions with his or her personal style and convictions. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the verb “to teach” as the following:

- a: To cause to know something.
- b: To cause to know how.
- c: To accustom to some action or attitude.
- d: To cause to know the disagreeable consequences of some action.
 - 1. : To guide the studies of...
 - 2. : To impart the knowledge of...
 - 3. : To instruct by precept, example, or experience.
 - 4. : To make known and accepted.
 - 5. : To conduct instruction regularly.
 - 1. Intransitive verb
- 1. : To provide instruction.⁵¹

It is interesting to note that this definition, revealing the wide scope of the action, puts the accent on the responsibility of the teacher with the repetition of the introductory verb “to cause” as well as the timespan of the action, by the use of the verb “accustom” and the adverb “regularly.” In the novels under study, the emphasis on one or the other aspect of the definition varies according to the author's intention. The significance of these variations will be brought to light as the teacher characters' specificities are identified in the three novels. Reference will also be made to the taxonomy used by Harden and Crosby (2000) for their research in education on the “[...][six] roles that [...] educators must undertake.”⁵² These roles are the following: the information provider, the facilitator, the role model, the assessor, the planner, the resource developer. This prescriptive model will be used, along with Peter McLaren's theoretical framework concerning the possible types of teaching styles, to ascertain what aspects of the teaching posture and what forms of transmission are put forward in the three novels. Gumbriel Junior, Pnin and Miss Jean Brodie embody characters that can be appraised in the light of McLaren's taxonomy:

McLaren bases his theories on the application of anthropology to education and on

51 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/teach>. Consulted 02/03/2016.

52 Sarah M. Coyne. “The Many Roles We Play: Perception of the Role of Psychology Lecturers According to Staff and Students”. From <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ876474.pdf>. Consulted 20/04/2016.

direct observations in middle and high schools, both public and private. McLaren argues that teachers can be categorized as three distinct types or ideals of performers of ritual: the Liminal Servant⁵³, the Entertainer, and the Hegemonic Overlord.⁵⁴

For McLaren, the teacher who does not encourage the active participation of pupils is considered to be in the “role of the entertainer when students are 'viewers of the action', [with the classroom as a theatre and the teacher] as a propagandist—or even worse, an evangelist—for dominant cultural, economic, or ethical interests.”⁵⁵ This teacher will be looking to get the students to conform to his or her ideals: “The Entertainer model suppresses individuality and conditions students.”⁵⁶ The Hegemonic Overlord depersonalises the relationship with students, dispensing his or her lessons “strictly and mordantly by the book.”⁵⁷ He or she is unconcerned with student reception of knowledge and with quality of transmission. Lessons are dispensed in a normalizing and coercive environment that excludes any student initiative or re-appropriation. The Liminal Servant, according to McLaren, accepts to be divested of the central role in the classroom, to allow each student to become the actor of his own learning process. “Compassion and commitment to teach as a social and moral agent in the service of self and social transformation is what guides the pedagogy of the Liminal Servant.”⁵⁸ The last, of course, has McLaren’s favours.

Before embarking on the literary analysis it is important to note that beyond the experience of their own education on which to draw inspiration, Nabokov and Huxley also had a personal teaching experience, and all three authors under study use more or less autobiographical material. Huxley “taught French for a year at Eton, [...]. He was mainly remembered as being an incompetent schoolmaster unable to keep order in class.”⁵⁹ Furthermore his grandfather and father both ran schools. Nabokov uses his own teaching experience expressly in the depiction of Waindell, a small town university: “During the summer of 1941, he taught creative writing at Stanford University,

53 It is interesting to note the use of the term “liminal servant” is borrowed by McLaren from Urban T. Holmes's work on the priest's identity, linking teaching yet again to the religious orders.

54 Amy Cummins. “Beyond a good/bad binary: the representation of teachers in young adult literature” in *The Alan Review*. Fall 2011. Volume 39 number 1. From Virginia Tech Digital Library and Archives. <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v39n1/cummins.html>. Consulted 26/04/2016.

55 *Ibid*

56 *Ibid*

57 Peter L. McLaren. “The Liminal Servant and the Ritual Roots of Critical Pedagogy”. *Language Arts* 65.2 (1988): 164–180. 165. From https://www.jstor.org/stable/41405546?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Consulted 02/01/2016.

58 Peter L. McLaren. “The Liminal Servant and the Ritual Roots of Critical Pedagogy”. *Language Arts* 65.2 (1988): 164–180. 177.

59 From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldous_Huxley. Consulted 29/04/2016.

before securing an appointment as resident lecturer in comparative literature and instructor in Russian at Wellesley College. Later[...] at Harvard, [...] and at Cornell, as professor of Russian and European literature.”⁶⁰ As for Spark, she “herself attended an Edinburgh girls’ school much like the one she depicts so vividly and in such biting detail.”⁶¹

This approach will allow the reader to acquire insight into the characters' construction but also the authors' views on the teachers' posture and role in society. From the start, Huxley, Nabokov and Spark use different strategies to introduce their respective teacher figures, thus shedding light on the underlying issues that pertain to their roles.

1.1 Exploring the teacher figures in the three novels under study: the first meeting and beyond.

The figure of Theodore Gumbiril junior, the auto-fictional pseudo hero of *Antic Hay*, is pompously introduced at the very incipit of the novel, with his name in capital letters, followed by the ensign of his prestigious Oxford pedigree: “GUMBRIL, THEODORE GUMBRIL junior, B.A. Oxon”(Huxley 1). Within the first paragraph, the scene in a school chapel is set, with “half a thousand school boys” attending mass, in an unnamed prep school for boys, preparing them for the entry to elitist public schools. The physical position of Gumbiril in the chapel—“on the north side”(Huxley 1)—puts him in a position of power above these masses, the north being the fixed point of bearing around which space is organised and which gives the sense of orientation and guidance. It is also linked to religious authority:

Bible students have suggested that the north is a symbol of the permanent or the eternal, perhaps because the polar stars were permanently visible in the sky. It is the place of God’s celestial dwelling (Isa. 14:13) and from which His glory descends (Job 37:22) with blessings or judgements (Eze. 1:4).⁶²

Gumbiril is initially defined as secure in an unquestioned identity and stable position— “[he] sat in his oaken stall”(Huxley 7). The time set given by the “First Lesson” on “first Sunday of

60 From the website of the International Vladimir Nabokov Society. <https://www99.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/bio2.ht> Consulted 9/03/2016.

61 Maud Newton. “Muriel Spark: The Biography”: A fearless novelist, betrayed.” Tuesday, Apr 20, 2010. Barnes and Noble Review. From http://www.salon.com/2010/04/20/muriel_spark/ Consulted 15/03/2016.

62 Angel Emmanuel Rodriguez. “The symbolism of the four cardinal directions” from <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/archaeology-and-history/symbolism-four-cardinal-directions> consulted 25/04/2016.

term”(Huxley 1) is at the beginning of a new school year. It is rapidly clear that it is not this teacher's first moments on the job, an oft-related experience elsewhere in fiction. His familiarity with the rite and boredom during the service attest to that: “he particularly liked the third verse”(Huxley 6).

“The uneasy silence” of the students, while echoing Gumbriel's physical discomfort on the hard bench, also indicates the formal and hierarchical relations between student and staff. Gumbriel is presented as a member of the controlling few with authority over the mass of students and appears powerful, (at least in his own eyes, as the reflexive form indicates)“the folds of his B.A. gown billowed nobly about himself⁶³ as he rose”(Huxley 4). The use of the adjective “nobly” places him *de facto*, in his mind's eye among the ruling elite. Like his gown, Gumbriel's self image appears rapidly to be blown out of proportion, his self importance mirroring that of the institution he represents, while his gowns disguise his personal shortfalls and weaknesses like a veiling curtain. The use of the acronym B.A. (meaning Bachelor of Arts) in an adjectival position qualifying the robes puts his education and diploma forward as an attribute of and justification for his position of power, while the verb “to billow” hints at the possibility of this being an air-filled fraud, as he parades as if on show.

Elsewhere the influence of class distinctions on Gumbriel's posture, and his lack of empathy for the students are revealed in the disdain expressed when he notices “two ugly stupid-looking louts, who ought to have been apprenticed years ago to some useful trade. Instead of which they were wasting their own and their teacher's and their more intelligent comrades' time in trying, quite vainly, to acquire an elegant literary education”(Huxley 4). Stylistically the use of three possessive nominal groups in juxtaposition all linked to the noun “time,” along with the repetition of the conjunction “and” gives the sense of a negative accumulation leaving no possible redemption, in Gumbriel's eyes, for these boys. The dichotomy of his representations is revealed insofar as the lexical field of ignorance—“stupid -looking louts,” “wasting time”— is linked to trade and the apprenticeship while the literary education is semantically linked to elegance and intelligence. The adjective “useful” apposed to the noun “trade” paradoxically denotes usefulness as a quality that Gumbriel disdains, revealing the project of elegant education to be purposefully superfluous, learning for the sake of learning.

Despite the fact that the reader never witnesses his action in the classroom, Gumbriel

63 My underlining.

appears through this off-hand comment on the pupils to be a “non-relational teacher, one who seeks no personal relationship with students” (Triplett & Ash 245-246).⁶⁴ The lack of humane relationships in the classroom harks back to the representation of teachers as brutal disciplinary overseers. Furthermore Gumbriel takes on the identity of a lecturer—“he felt like a lecturer: next slide please”(Huxley 5)—imparting knowledge regardless of the audience, an “information giver” according the teaching roles identified by Harden and Crosby. In McLaren's categories, the Hegemonic Overlord would seem to be the teaching model Huxley has chosen Gumbriel to aspire to with discipline high on his list of priorities. This is interesting to confront with Huxley's own reputation as a poor disciplinarian.

This incipit also critically underlines the tight correlation between religion, class and education. The authority of the Church (Reverend Pelvey) works hand in hand with the prep school headmaster: “This being the first Sunday of the Summer term, they sung that special hymn, written by the headmaster”⁶⁵ (Huxley 6). The system portrayed is one geared towards guaranteeing the educational continuum of the ruling elite. Gumbriel's teaching identity and representations enforce the status quo, as he participates “for good example's sake”(Huxley 6) in the service. As Bartolomé (2004) explains in *Teacher Education Quarterly*, teachers who do not “identify and interrogate their negative, racist, and classist ideological orientations often work to reproduce the existing social order.”⁶⁶ It may however be observed that on another level, the figure of Gumbriel Junior is more complex, as much a victim as a perpetrator of the system. He is portrayed in the midst of a solemn religious ceremony in which he partakes only by his physical presence and participation in the ritual, his mind wandering off, revealing the author's satirical stance towards the official dominant discourse and the authorities above Gumbriel, both religious and educational. The young boys “fit for trade” are condemned to be failures in Gumbriel's view, and yet theirs' is an echo of Gumbriel's own failure to find a use for his elegant literary education which he reproaches his father with: “You gave me a pedagogue's education and washed your hands of me. No opportunities, no openings. I had no alternative”(Huxley 17). The character's own paradox lies in his attraction towards the life of the idle upper class he dreams of—“he would be free and he

64 C. Triplett & G. Ash, (2000). Reflecting on the Portrayal of Teacher-Student Relationships in Children's Literature. *New Advocate*, 13 (3), 241, 245-246. From <http://studylib.net/doc/7798475/teachers-in-children-s-literature> Consulted 14/04/2016.

65 My underlining.

66 Amy Cummins, “Beyond a good/bad binary: the representation of teachers in young adult literature” in *The Alan Review*. Fall 2011. Volume 39 number 1. From Virginia Tech Digital Library and Archives. <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v39n1/cummins.html> consulted 26/04/2016.

would live”(Huxley 11)—and has been educated for, but which he cannot access through lack of funding. His incapacity to make money because of the values he has been instilled with during that education put the character in a deadlock: “Lord how passionately he disliked work”(Huxley 7). To be admitted to the *gotha* Gumbriel would have to earn money, something his education has not prepared him for and which also would *de facto* exclude him from the class he educationally belongs to. The only way out of this double bind for Gumbriel is to dream: “he would go away and he would make money—that was more like it— money on a large scale, easily”(Huxley 11).

Personal dissatisfaction with the teacher's role pervades the first chapter: “Gumbriel laid the paper down and shut his eyes. No, this could not go on, it could not go on”(Huxley 11). The repetition of the phrase “it could not go on” echoes the unbearable receptivity of the task on hand. The lexical field of enclosure and submission is present with the use of the preposition “down” and the verb “shut.” The use of an internalised narratorial voice instead of direct speech attenuates Gumbriel's rebellion, by expressing it indirectly with the modal verb 'can' in the past and conditional form “could.” In keeping with the character's lack of courage, no words will be directly spoken to confront the headmaster, Gumbriel writing a letter of resignation instead. The teacher figure here is implicitly in keeping with the social representation of the weak individual, unable to become successful in business and enterprise and unable to live fully.

Gumbriel is caught in a double bind between his own representations of work and money. In the first chapter, the lexical fields of knowledge and power are linked with money. The prospect of “liv[ing] uncomfortably on his three hundred”(Huxley 11) is opposed to “the plushy floors of some vast and ignoble Ritz”(Huxley 11) just as his fantasy world is opposed to the reality surrounding him. The lexical field of desire and sex is also linked to Gumbriel's fantasy: “there were orgies without fatigue or disgust, and the women were pictures and lust in action”(Huxley 12). The use of the rhyming nouns “disgust” and “lust” illustrates Gumbriel's inner contradictions, while the negative preposition “without” undercuts the fantasy by defining it negatively. The semantic opposition between “pictures” and “action”, reveals Gumbriel's theoretical approach to the matter, as well as his passivity. The life of the teacher is by contrast portrayed as frustratingly monastic. Taking his last meal in the school, Gumbriel feels “as though he were partaking in a sacrament”(Huxley 13), with which he seems paradoxically much more comfortable.

In *Pnin*, Nabokov immediately presents the reader with a comical and slightly ridiculous

teacher figure. Within the first paragraph, the narrator undermines the character's legitimacy as an intellectual university professor by a critical physical description. This choice is very different to Huxley's interior stream of consciousness in the incipit of *Antic Hay* where the character seems to be in control of the situation and of the diegetic discourse, through the interior narrator. Here the reader is landed on a train taking unwitting Pnin to a lecture, covertly observing him from the opposite seat. Pnin is sitting, like Gumbriel junior, expressly to the north. However here the "north-window side"(Nabokov 7) gives the reader a fleeting sensation of cold and discomfort, the window also being a vista open toward the past and his Russian origins, evoking his own "anachronistic"(Nabokov 68) penchants. The narrator notes an "elderly"(Nabokov 7) isolated gentleman on a train, surrounded by empty seats. However, before the end of the first page, the reader has learnt much about his identity and past, among which his age: "fifty two"(Nabokov 7). The reader has two possibilities, either to assume Pnin looks old because he is old-fashioned in his garb and posture, or to take distance from the depreciating omniscient narrator's voice. The choice is the reader's. Pnin himself warns against the narratorial authority in the last pages of the novel: "don't believe a word he says (...) He makes everything up"(Nabokov 154).

The description in the first lines, termed by David Lodge an "anatomical anticlimax,"⁶⁷ begins on a positive note, "ideally" and "rather impressively"(Nabokov 7), with the expected appearance and dress code for a university professor: a bald head, "tortoise shell glasses[...], tweed coat"(Nabokov 7). But by the end of the first paragraph, the reader senses an insinuated reproach of imposture in the narratorial voice: "a pair of spindly legs [...] and frail-looking, almost feminine feet"(Nabokov 7). It is these fragile and tapering appendices, ending "somewhat disappointingly"(Nabokov 7) the lower part of Pnin's body, which are proudly if "tightish[ly]"(Nabokov 7) shod in "Conservative black Oxfords,"(Nabokov 7) just as the elderly Pnin is squeezed into the identity of a university professor. The name of his shoes, referring to the prestigious English university, seems a cheap way of justifying his credentials and disguising his "feminine feet." The portrait permeates a global dissonance as if Pnin was disguised or playing a role, like Gumbriel, representing rather than being the teacher figure he identifies with.

Through the sardonically revealed historical inconsistency in his dress, disclosed in the second paragraph, as the narrator reveals Pnin's intimacy to the reader, a lack of moral fibre is hinted at: "Nowadays, at the age of fifty two, he was crazy about sunbathing [...] and when

⁶⁷ David Lodge. "Exiles in a small World", 08/05/2003. The Guardian. From the website <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/may/08/classics.vladimirnabokov>. Consulted 06/03/2016.

crossing his legs would carefully, deliberately, brazenly display a tremendous stretch of bare shin”(Nabokov 7). The use of the informal American word “crazy” rings another dissonant note as if through the confusion of the language levels; Pnin's own difficulty with the English language and attempts to integrate transpire through the narrator's voice. Pnin's efforts to conform are visible through the juxtaposition of three adverbs “carefully, deliberately, brazenly” expressing the laborious cultivation of a relaxed Americanized attitude. The outrage of showing a “tremendous stretch of bare shin,” is shocking only to Pnin, for whom in the past “to reveal a glimpse of white underwear by pulling up a trouser leg too high would have seemed to Pnin as indecent as showing himself to ladies minus collar and tie”(Nabokov 7). The overall first impression of Pnin is one of old-world traditionalism, making enormous efforts to conform, in an “inexorably moving railway coach”(Nabokov 7) symbolising his inexorable moving life over which Pnin has no control. The reader may feel slightly uneasy for the struggling figure exposed by the depreciating narrator, presenting himself under the guise of an intradiagetic ally: “he carried in his inner pocket [...] the newspaper clipping of a letter he had written, with my help, to the *New York Times*”(Nabokov 14).

Subverting the preconceived idea that a university professor is knowledgeable, reliable, and in control of his life, the narrator throws down his joker by taking the reader aside to reveal his ignorance: “Now a secret must be imparted. Pnin was on the wrong train”(Nabokov 8). The reader finds himself siding with the narrator at Pnin's expense, by being manipulated into sharing a “secret.” Functioning as direct communication between the narrator and the reader, this revelation, formulated in an impersonal manner, accentuates the narrator's distance from the fictional environment. However, the following aside may put the reader on his guard, “Some people —and I am one of them— hate happy endings. We feel cheated. Harm is the norm. Doom should not jam”(Nabokov 22). The narrators' emergence in the extradiagetic space is one of bad omen. Nabokov's narrator seems to take pleasure in Pnin's predicament—“Unfortunately for Pnin, his timetable was five years old and in part obsolete”(Nabokov 8)—, metaphorically linking him to an obsolete timetable.

The narrator uses a negative concessive form to describe Pnin's capacity as a Russian teacher: “he was not altogether miscast (Nabokov 10). The verb “to cast”, also used for actors, hints at Pnin as an actor performing a role. The notions of fatality as in the phrase “to cast your fate to the winds”, and exile as in “cast away”, are also underlying. In the first pages of the novel Pnin appears to be socially and professionally inadequate. However it is this discrepancy that

endears him to the reader, and his students, despite the narrator's disparaging jabs: "He was beloved not for any essential ability but for those unforgettable digressions of his"(Nabokov 10). The few students that Pnin has, share in his states of uncontrollable mirth in the classroom: "By the time he was helpless with it he would have the students in stitches"(Nabokov 11). The use of the adjective "helpless" leaves Pnin no credit for the students' laughter. He visibly intends to impart knowledge to his students and conform to the information-giving teaching role but cannot do so efficiently because what he imparts is not adapted to the class, in being obsolete, of unsuitable linguistic level, and demanding skills the students have not been trained for:

To appreciate whatever fun those passages still retained, one had not only to have a sound knowledge of the vernacular but also a good deal of literary insight and since his poor little class had neither, the performer would be alone in enjoying the associative subtleties of his text (Nabokov 11).

The categorisation of Pnin as a "performer" fits him in the Entertainer group for McLaren. The notion of performance is recalled by Nabokov in the description of Pnin's new teeth: "This new amphitheatre of plastics implying, as it were, a stage and a performance"(Nabokov 33). The students are at a show, during which their incapacity to understand "the associative subtleties" of Pnin's teaching leads to a nonsensical hilarity. However the laughter of the students remains ambiguous, since the students are explicitly incapable of sharing Pnin's joke. Are they laughing at Pnin or with Pnin? In the incipit, "the author"⁶⁸ (as Umberto Eco defines the concept, not reduced to a physical person identified namely as Spark, Nabokov or Huxley but as the textual strategies at work in the novel) is highlighting the laughable individual incongruity of an intellectual figure: culturally at odds, full of idiosyncrasies and confronted with confusing obstacles of daily life, undercutting any inclination in the reader for respect due to a scholar.

To explore the teacher figure from a specifically feminine angle, the main character and teacher figure in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, will now be examined. This novel also begins out of bounds, outside the school gates, in a scene staging the girls from the "Brodie set"(Spark 5) and some boys. The author chooses to approach her subject indirectly, through a subject of forbidden

68 "In the following paragraphs I shall renounce the use of the term |author| if not as a mere metaphor for textual strategy." Umberto Eco, *The Reader's Role: Exploration of the Semiotics of Texts*[1979]. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Introduction.

fascination in any girls' school: "The boys"(Spark 5). These are the first words of the novel. Metonymically the author moves from the object of their fugitive desire—"at any moment the boys were likely to be away"(Spark 5)—to "the girls," first words of the second paragraph, and further onto their group identity. The first sentence of the third paragraph fixes this group identity: "These girls formed the Brodie set"(Spark 5). Immediately the novel twists away from an expected girls' school adventure plot, revolving around awakening sexuality, to more "unorthodox"(Spark 6) subject matter, the teacher/students relationship that will also reveal itself to revolve around sexuality and desire in a less direct form.

The first words spoken by Miss Brodie are: "Well, come and recite for us please, because it has been a tiring day"(Spark 7). The recitation of poetry, here *The Lady of Shalott* by Lord Alfred Tennyson, is an expected classroom activity that usually engages students to be assessed on their capacity to learn by heart and recite with meaningful intonation. Here the evaluation aspect is absent from the scene and only Sandy, "famous for her vowel sounds"(Spark 7), is solicited for this particular activity. Thus a traditional classroom activity has been subverted into a new type of activity, the goal of which is to accustom the pupils to poetry:"to lift one up"(Spark 7). The reader, already informed of Miss Brodie's unusual methods, links the romantic figure of the Lady of Shalott to the initial dashing portrait of the teacher. She appears to have the attributes of the Liminal Servant, able to reinvent classwork so as to engage the students creatively and make lessons exciting. As the novel progresses however a dissonance with the model jars the reader's senses. The complexity and ambiguity of this teaching figure is slowly unveiled by Spark through the narration in successive stages, interwoven in a complex chronological construction.

Just as Miss Brodie slowly infiltrates the minds of her pupils, so the narrator gradually accustoms the reader to her methods, through superimposition of various situations in time and place, until the reader has lost all bearings. Retrospectively, the Lady of Shalott condemned to view the world through a mirror, will appear in keeping with the darker side of Miss Brodie, feeding on illusions and romantic ideals that will bring her, and two of her students', downfall.

Muriel Spark first describes the teacher figure, in the first chapter, in the eyes of her admiring young pupils—"a mighty woman with her dark Roman profile"(Spark 9). Two lines further on, she is likened to "Julius Caesar"(Spark 9). This powerful and compelling description at once makes reference to the Roman ideal of beauty, but also infers a type of education resting on the selection of the elite as was delivered in the Roman Empire. Furthermore the analogy with Caesar,

a triumphant and charismatic leader, is at first sight a compliment to the energy of the woman although it also gives the reader an inkling as to her fate, since like him she is betrayed by her closest allies. Finally the figure of a Roman general, set as in a classical tragedy being played in a Scottish primary classroom in the 1930s, portrays the teacher as an actress on a scene giving her students cues as to her role, in a *mise en abyme* of identity: “if the authorities wanted to get rid of her she would have to be assassinated” (Spark 9). Through the use of direct speech, taking power over the narration, Miss Brodie sets herself up as a melodramatic role model for her young students, whom she considers herself to be an example for:

I have frequently told you, and the holidays just passed have convinced me, that my prime has truly begun. One's prime is elusive. You little girls, when you grow up, must be on the alert to recognize your prime [...] you must then live it to the full (Spark 11).

The repetition of the modal “must” indicating strong obligation, implies a form of indoctrination. However the object of Miss Brodie's exhortations, that are avowedly repeated, remains difficult for her to express and for the pupil/reader to identify; the use of the adjectives “elusive” and “alert” identify one's prime as something that can be missed or lost. The only certainty is one of personal conviction: the adverb “truly” and the verb “convinced” hint that Miss Brodie may be convincing herself at the same time as her class. Finally the phrase to “live it to the full” plays on a register of hedonism and personal satisfaction regardless of the consequences. The tragic undertone of the figure competes with the expression of a certain form of feminism and the rise of the desire for personal self attainment and fulfilment that is resolutely modern. It becomes clear in the progression of the novel that for Spark, under the seeming Liminal Servant (supposedly giving each student the power to express their personality and identity, and intent on “instructing by precept, example, or experience”⁶⁹) lurks the “evangelist” Entertainer of sorts, using the classroom as a space of influence in which to inculcate her personal values in her students.

It appears in this first approach of the novels that the three fictional teaching figures, while participating in the coherent expression of the authors' very different literary projects, can also be linked to the existing representations, definitions and categorisations that may be used to identify teaching and teachers in other areas of research. A common thread that all three novels share in

⁶⁹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/teach>. Consulted 02/03/2016.

the fictional description of teachers involves metaphors and tropes based on role play and disguise. The authors categorise the teacher as a character using dress, posture and words both in the classroom and outside the classroom, as a way of creating a purposefully constructed identity that is revealed by narratorial strategy, either to undercut or exploit the mechanisms exposed.

Gender is an important aspect in the creation and upholding of these identities, that the authors show the fictional teacher figures to employ. The incidence of gender will now be examined in the portrayal of these figures with regard to the social and historical representations already discussed. Furthermore the narratorial choices of the authors in the novels regarding these figures and the teacher-student relationships depicted will be highlighted.

1.2. The significance of gender in the figures depicted.

The choice of novels for this dissertation, depicting both male and female main characters, is not haphazard and allows the closer examination of the authors' approaches to the male/female identity and sexuality as well as the stereotypes attached to the fictional portrayal of this crucial participant in social construction: the teacher. The texts will be scrutinised to reveal how gender is dealt with by the authors and how each character participates in the validation or calling into question of the reader's assumptions.

On a global level, each novel reflects aspects of the institutional organisation of education and the issue of professional gender roles in our society. The male figures are in higher education. Pnin teaches at university level, Gumbriel in an all boys prep school. Miss Brodie works as a primary school teacher among "staff spinsterhood" (Spark 42), in keeping with the female nurturing ideal. The only male presences at Marcia Blaine's Private School for Girls are the art and music teachers, symbols of creativity. Interestingly enough, this polarisation is reversed in the novel concerning higher education, *Pnin*. At Waindell University, the only female teachers are in the "Fine Arts Department" (Nabokov 115). Pnin officiates among an almost all male staff with female secretaries, librarians and wives tagging behind at receptions. Gumbriel's teaching environment is but sketchily evoked with only male figures of authority present: The headmaster, the Reverend Pelvey and Dr Jolly the organist. House-masters rule over the all-boys school, the only woman to appear in the

intradiegetic space is the unnamed landlady who calls Gumbriel to dinner “Dinner's ready, Mr Gumbriel”(Huxley 13).

Within this codified environment the three characters are all portrayed as displaced and isolated figures. Miss Brodie—“a trifle out of place”(Spark 42)—does not conform to what is expected of a school mistress, described as a “more orderly type, earning their keep, living with their aged parents and taking walks in the hills”(Spark 42). Pnin is not a desired teacher who attracts students under his study: “Waindell feels that it would be too much of a burden to pay you for two or three Russian courses that have ceased to attract students”(Nabokov 142). Gumbriel is portrayed in solitude: “Gumbriel did not attend evening Chapel. He stayed at home in his lodgings, to correct the sixty three Holiday Task Papers that had fallen to his share”(Huxley 8).

A definition of gender stereotypes, given by the United Nations will help in the approach the three main protagonists as gendered role-players:

Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men[...]Harmful stereotypes can be both hostile/negative (e.g., women are irrational) or seemingly benign (e.g., women are nurturing)⁷⁰.

The inference that women, as nurturers, are the most appropriate teachers for young children continues to pervade our representations of primary school teaching. As Kimberley H. Ramsey states, concerning children's literature as recently as in 2003: “Teachers are often women in children’s picture books.”⁷¹ For Nabokov's narrator, women have a mysterious instinct for teaching: “Those stupendous Russian ladies[...] who without having had any formal training at all, manage somehow, by dint of intuition, loquacity and a kind of maternal bounce to infuse a magic knowledge[...] into a group of innocent eyed-students”(Nabokov 9). The “maternal bounce” refers explicitly to an automatic skill in child care that women allegedly have and can be transposed into teaching, while the qualification of students as “innocent-eyed” reduces college students to infanthood.

In the fictional character of Miss Jean Brodie, both stereotypes given as examples by the

⁷⁰ From the article “Gender Stereotypes/Stereotyping” by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderStereotypes.aspx>. Consulted 5/04/2016.

⁷¹ K. H. Ramsey. “The Portrayal of Teachers in Children's Literature”, 2003. From <http://www.ltl.appstate.edu>. Consulted 20/02/2016.

United Nations can be identified. Miss Brodie's action upon her set is at first perceived to be benign, as her chaperoning the girls gently away from the boys in the opening scene— “I think we won't detain these young men and their bicycles[...] We must be on our way dear”(Spark 8).

Elsewhere her figure is in keeping with the intrinsic irrationality expected of women: “we ought to be doing history at the moment according to the timetable. Get out your books and prop them up in your hands. I shall tell you a little more about Italy”(Spark 46). Her whimsical, almost laughable approach to the curriculum seems to be innocuous. However the miscellaneous information, mixed with her fascination with fascism, that she is filling her pupils' minds with, gives a dark undercurrent to the irrelevance of her lesson content. In her interactions with her pupils, the character employs the lexical field of devotion, in accordance with the expected womanly nurturing role: “You must all grow up to be dedicated women, as I have dedicated myself to you”(Spark 63).

However, as the novel progresses, the intrinsically egotistical motivations behind the influence she exerts over her group of chosen students are revealed: “she made it a moral duty for her set to rally round her each time her battle [with the authorities] reached a crisis”(Spark 112). A conscious thirst for manipulation and control appears in the description of her behaviour: “I wanted Rose for him” she confides to Sandy. “She knew exactly what she was doing”(Spark 27) another former pupil claims. This purposeful intent to exert power is socially considered as a male attribute—“According to stereotypic beliefs about the sexes, women are more communal (selfless and concerned with others) and less agentic (self-assertive and motivated to master) than men.”⁷² Miss Brodie is assertive—“like most feminists, [she] talked to men as man-to-man”(Spark 43)—and her commitment is on a physical level: “if the authorities wanted to get rid of her she would have to be assassinated”(Spark 9).

The semantic fields of warfare and masculine stereotyped behaviour are used by Spark to identify Miss Brodie and her actions: she is “like a gladiator with raised arm and eyes flashing light a sword”(Spark 46), her words are “forceful”(Spark 9), her stare “dominating “(Spark 99). Her pupils are a “violet clad company”(Spark 33) like soldiers, the girl guides are considered “rival fascisti”(Spark 32). In her incipit, Spark describes some boys' immobilized bicycles outside the school as a “protective fence,” implying the tension of inter-gender relationships and prefiguring

72 Alice H. Eagly; Valerie J.Steffen, “Gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of women and men into social roles”. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 46 (4), Apr 1984, 735-754.
From <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/46/4/735/>. Consulted 15/04/2016.

the warfare Miss Brodie wages in the novel against the school's dogma. Miss Brodie engages rebellion against the institution of the school, as a “vigorous daughter of dead or enfeebled “Scottish men, [one of the women] with “shrewd wits [...]and] hearty spirits“(Spark 42) who defend their legacy. She is described as belonging to a sisterhood of dominant and defiant women, re-appropriating stereotypical male roles and the Scottish identity in one foul swoop. Her pupil Sandy, often identified with the narratorial voice in the work, sees through the façade, the aporia of “beautiful and fragile”(Spark 111) Miss Brodie, who “thinks she is providence, [...] the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end”(Spark 120). The tragic undertones of the Cassandra type figure can be linked to the danger of overriding expected social roles.

The figure of Miss Brodie questions at once the womanly role of selfless nurturer and the perceived relative harmlessness of primary school education, that can be left to women as their natural role in common representations. To further counter the representations of the reader, the character is also equated with the masculine tropes of sexual activity. The sexualisation of Miss Brodie is explicit, she is portrayed as a desirable woman for all the men who come into contact with her but she “refuse[s] Mr Lowther, (Spark 104), “would have none of Mr Stanley”(Spark 119) and “renounced Teddy Lloyd”(Spark 114). In the domain of love she is pictured as a dominating figure, even in the imagination of her pupils: “It was here that Gordon Lowther[...] 'took her,' Jenny said when they had first talked it over. ' Took her—well, no. She gave herself to him’”(Spark 73). The only partner who is portrayed as her equal, Mr Lloyd, the art teacher, is kept at a distance: “Sandy saw her smile back as would a goddess with superior understanding smile to a god away on the mountain tops”(Spark 50).

To palliate her Diana-like chastity she projects her sexual desires onto girls among her set, living by proxy the intensity of a secret life: “Rose will be a great lover”(Spark 110). Her hubris (and the cause of her downfall) is to imagine she can send a girl to fight for Franco, much as if she was setting up an arranged marriage: “She would have done admirably for him”(Spark 124). It is only when Sandy can make her memory of the complex figure of Miss Brodie conform to the benign female stereotype that she is reconciled with her: “She never felt more affection for her in her later years than when she thought upon Miss Brodie as silly”(Spark 111).

Within their respective and markedly gendered professional environments all three characters are single. The use of religious terms such as “renunciation” (Spark 122), the setting of

Gumbriel's last meal at the school described as a "sacrament" (Huxley 13), and the "Greek catholic cross on a golden chainlet" (Nabokov 107) that Pnin wears around his neck, all echo back to the monastic origins of the teacher figure, tied to celibacy. The two male teacher figures, one at the beginning of his short-lived professional career, the other reaching the end of a longer one, are both personally in difficulty with women. They are portrayed incapable of adopting the stereotypical aggressive dominant male attitude that is socially acceptable around them, and being "self assertive and motivated to master."⁷³ Gumbriel's daydream evokes this issue: "when he spoke to women—how easily and insolently he spoke now—they listened and laughed and looked" (Huxley 12). Here the action "to speak" is the male prerogative whilst the imaginary women have the passive role of looking and listening, their laughter validating the attractiveness of the male who effortlessly charms them. This image is in sharp contrast with Gumbriel's incapacity to seduce when in proximity with a woman: "with Phyllis once he had sat [...] saying nothing, risking no gesture" (Huxley 12). Gumbriel's passivity, echoing that of his ideal women, is assimilated to a feminine attribute and perceived as humiliating. The figure of Myra Viveash haunts him, as a "cool, free, laughing mistress who had lent herself contemptuously once to his pathetic and silent importunity and then, after a day, had withdrawn the gift again" (Huxley 11). Three active adjectives linked to the feminine figure —"cool", "free", "laughing"— overrun and oppose the two passive ones used for the male figure: "pathetic," "silent."

In Nabokov's novel, the male teacher figure is also lacking aggressive masculine attributes. Pnin's sexuality, in the parts of novel devoted to his teaching experience in Waindell during his fifties, is limited to the observation of "a girl's comely nape here and there," a fantasy of "serene senility [with Miss Bliss] bringing him his lap robe" (Nabokov 36). He has a discrete partiality for certain female students: "Dutifully this was taken down by Franck Backman, Rose Balsamo⁷⁴[...] and the beautiful, intelligent Marilyn Hohn⁷⁵" (Nabokov 56). The identification of one particular student, whose name is preceded by two adjectives, "beautiful" first and "intelligent" second,

⁷³ cf footnote 63.

⁷⁴ "Balsamo" is close to the name "balsamic" for the vinegar, in my interpretation. It is also the name of the hero and title of a novel by Alexandre Dumas père, *Joseph Balsamo*. Nabokov was well versed in French literature, thanks to a French governess working for the family during his childhood (c.f. Maurice Couturier, *Nabokov et la Tentation Française*).

⁷⁵ "Hohn" could be a playful reference to the diminutive for the endearment "honey" (or inversely refer to "Hohn" in German meaning "disdain," "mockery," even "insult" as Jerome H. Katsel remarks in "Pnin: The Perils of Repetition" published in *The Slavic Quarterly*, Vol 27, winter 2009. University of Toronto. From <http://sites.utoronto.ca/tsg/27/katsell27.shtml>. Consulted 26/04/2016.

indicates clearly Pnin's partiality to this student and the probable reason: her beauty. In the intradiagetic past, (if the narrator is to be trusted) Pnin only manages to marry Liza by a set of circumstances, that have nothing to do with his capacity to charm or seduce, after putting his life at her feet in a letter of declaration produced *ex nihilo* by the narrator out of a "private collection"(Nabokov 38): "I am not handsome, I am not interesting, I am not talented. I am not even rich. But *Lise*, I offer you everything I have"(Nabokov 153). The compilation of four negative propositions, leading to a concessive form introduced by the conjunction "but" expresses Pnin's low self esteem, and reveals a troubadour type ideal of chivalric love⁷⁶ that is confirmed by a life-long momentum of absolute dispossession: "I haf nofing left, nofing, nofing"(Nabokov 51). This totally inverts the stereotype conveyed by Napoleon's apocryphal quote used by Patricia B. Campbell in her pamphlet published by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement from the U.S. Department of Education : "Woman is our property we are not hers, because she produces children for us — we do not yield any to her. She is therefore our possession as the fruit tree is that of the gardener."⁷⁷ Pnin is the possession of his former wife who continues to claim her due, interrogating him as "the Russian metaphysical police" (Nabokov 35) and extorting money from him for her son, in a humiliating encounter:

'What is your Salary Timofey?'

He told her.

'Well it is not grand but I suppose you can lay something aside — it is more than enough for your needs, for your microscopic needs, Timofey'.(Nabokov 46)

Pnin's "not grand" salary as a teacher is considered sufficient in another character's eyes because of his "microscopic needs." Notwithstanding the play on the terms "microscopic" and Pnin, as in 'pin head', dispossession and lack of personal needs harks back to the attributes of religious orders. In fact, it appears, that each of the three teacher figures carries the stigma of sterility and barrenness. As has been noted, they are deprived of sexuality for the male figures and marriage and reproduction for the female figure. The authors effectively link teaching to its

76 "Poets adopted the terminology of feudalism, declaring themselves the vassal of the lady and addressing her as *midons* (my lord), which was taken as standard flattery of a woman. One particularly striking practice showing an adaption from the feudal model involved the man kneeling on one knee before the woman. By kneeling down in this way he assumes the posture of a vassal. He speaks, pledging his faith, promising, like a liege man, not to offer his services to anyone else. He goes even further: in the manner of a serf, he makes her a gift of his entire person." Peter Wright. *The Rise of Chivalric Love*, 30/03/2013. <http://www.avoiceformen.com/misandry/chivalry/the-rise-of-chivalric-love>. Consulted 24/07/2016.

77 Patricia B. Campbell , Jennifer N. Storo. "Girls Are... Boys Are...:Myths, Stereotypes & Gender Differences", p 6/8 <http://www.campbell-kibler.com/stereo.pdf>. Consulted 20/04/2016.

historical monastic roots through their depiction of these teacher figures. In each novel, to atone for this sacrifice, a surrogate parent child relationship of sorts can be identified within the educational process described. This possible affiliation will be explored in the third part of the paper.

Another aspect of the characters' dispossession or power is spatial. Both Gumbriil and Pnin live vicariously, in other people's territories, the former with his father, the latter in various rented rooms. As lodgers, or in Pnin's words (Nabokov playing on the possible homonym of roamer) "roomer[s]" (Nabokov 123) both characters are viewed negatively by their landlords. Initially Pnin is perceived as a "pathetic savant" (Nabokov 30) for Joan Clements, her husband declaring "I flatly refuse to have that freak in my house" (Nabokov 27). On his unexpected return to his father's home, Gumbriil senior greets his son coolly: "My dear fellow, what on earth are you doing here?" (Huxley 16). Gumbriil's daydream highlights the issue: "he sat in his own house" (Huxley 11).

For the male characters, living under other people's roofs signifies no personal territory and can also be considered a position of inferiority in terms of the capacity to seduce and "capture" women, as the seducer Coleman does in *Antic Hay*. Gumbriil will, in the course of the novel, resort to renting rooms in an effort to copy Coleman, and construct a hidden seducer identity to overcome his shyness with women. Pnin is reduced to asking for permission to receive his former wife during the day at the home of the Clements: "I have come [...] to inform, or more correctly to ask you, if I can have a female visitor Saturday-in the day, of course" (Nabokov 36). He and his former wife are perceived by his landlady Joan Clement as "pathetic creatures" (Nabokov 44). When he has his teeth out, Pnin is even dispossessed of the intimate territory of his own mouth which becomes "*terra incognita*" (Nabokov 32).

On finding a short-lived reprieve, in his own lodgings, Pnin exults: "the sense of living in a discrete building all by himself was to Pnin something singularly delightful and amazingly satisfying to a weary old want of his innermost self, battered and stunned by thirty-five years of homelessness" (Nabokov 121). The use of the adjectives "weary", "battered" and "stunned" impress the violence of the sensation of "homelessness." Pnin is revealed as the underdog, beaten down by the tribulations he has undergone. A form of re-constructive healing can be observed in the grammatical stability of the two positive adverb and adjective pairs "singularly delightful" and

“amazingly satisfying.”

The classroom and professional space appears to be the only safe territory of the male characters, consolidating their professional identity and also rooting their existence in the man-made urban environment. Gumbriel's home is his “lodgings” inside the school (Huxley 8). Pnin is accommodated several times in the “college home for single instructors”(Nabokov 28). In contrast, Miss Brodie teaches outside the classroom: “That spring she monopolized with her class the benches under the elm” (Spark 71). Furthermore she regularly invites her pupils to her flat: “On most Saturday afternoons Miss Brodie entertained her old set to tea”(Spark 79). She “descends” (Spark 87) on Mr Lowther's home in the country, her “intrusions”(Spark 87) marking the annexion of a new territory: “he never seemed quite at home in his home, although he had been born there”(Spark 90). Even the headmistress's study, the symbolical seat of power, is a space to be invaded on a critical foray: “they passed the headmistress' study. The door was wide open, the room was empty. 'little girls, come and observe this'”(Spark 10). For Miss Brodie, the headteacher's jurisdiction over her class space is barely tolerated: “when [...] [the head] had gone Miss Brodie looked hard at the door”(Spark 45). On another level, Miss Brodie annexes her pupil Sandy, as a part of herself. In her *hubris*, she styles Sandy to be her alter ego, confusing voluntarily their identities: “I shall remain in this education factory. There needs be a leaven in the lump”(here Miss Brodie is the leaven). But further on she reprimands Sandy: “I am surprised at you, Sandy,' said Miss Brodie, 'I thought you were the leaven in the lump'”(Spark 50). The narrator confuses them also in a single consciousness: “those plans were clear to her mind as to Sandy's”(Spark 109). For Miss Brodie, the classroom is only one of the spaces she considers as her territory, the centre of which can be considered the elm tree in the school courtyard, the axis of her universe on which “she leaned”(Spark 12). The feminine link to nature existing in Western culture since the myths of Demeter and Persephone⁷⁸ as a secret bond, allows Miss Brodie to escape the constraints of her teaching role and celibacy as she alleges having “gone to the country to stay with a friend”(Spark 56) when eloping with the music teacher. The link of feminine sexuality with nature is further present in the novel, as having sex is referred to as going “to the glen to mix with the men”(Spark 38). The definition of “glen” for the online Merriam Webster dictionary is a “secluded narrow valley.” On a practical level it appears a natural secluded space away from the constraints of

⁷⁸ David Miall. “Nature being represented as woman.” 13/02/2005.

<https://sites.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/Travel/Presentations/Nature.htm>. Consulted 24/07/2016.

society in which to reconnect with one's animality, but it can also be interpreted as the symbol of the female sex organ and the empowerment through self knowledge, linking nature with womanhood.

Pnin's former wife, Lisa, appears as a mythological animal, she takes on the aspect of a mermaid in Pnin's imagination, swimming in his unconscious, as her eyes haunt him: "a blank moist aquamarine blaze shivered and stared as if a spatter of sun and sea had got between your own eyelids"(Nabokov, 37). The semantic fields of liquid movement and light link Lisa's elusive presence to "a curious verbal association [...] [that] he could not catch it by its mermaid tail"(Nabokov, 65).

The analysis of the gender issue shows that both male teacher figures are subdued and weakened in their (masculine) identity by the authors' renditions, through the narratorial voice, of their incapacities, their lack of sexual identity and the absence of personal territory. Their expression is divested of the semantic fields attributed to aggressivity, assertive action and seduction that are connoted as masculine. In their relationship to women, both characters appear subordinated to the women they love. On the other hand, Spark defines a female teacher figure, Miss Brodie, as a quixotic hybrid between the iconographic spinster teacher and the rebellious feminist leader, drawing on the semantic fields of domination and warfare, while through Miss Brodie's direct speech, Spark uses the lexical fields of religious devotion and fidelity, connoted as feminine. Rooted in the natural world, the female figure draws on powerful primary myths whereas the male protagonists remain subservient to chivalric ideals and stereotypes that incapacitate them. The female teacher figure is given the most intrinsic teaching identity, interrupting her career only when forced to, and weakened once deprived of her teaching role, dying soon after, as if no other life were open to her. However of the three figures under study, Miss Brodie is portrayed as the most independent and desirable, when within her professional role. As has been noted, Miss Brodie's character calls on masculine attributes of action and rebellion, and territorial possession, holding her ground in power struggles within the professional framework. The male teacher figure in *Antic Hay*, Gumbriel, calls on the 18th century representation of the teacher as a weak, irresolute member of society (the product of his theoretical education), resorting to teaching, to earn a meagre living as a default option, before trying his hand at more valorising entrepreneurship. Nabokov's Pnin is a more romantic figure of the exiled intellectual

who falls back on teaching Russian, French or English, according to where he happens to be. However, by the end of the novel Pnin has integrated an American self-determinism that allows him to escape from teaching. The literary depiction of teaching appears through this analysis as an activity marked with stereotypes and gendered representations. The three novels can be read as expressions of the general representations that have emerged through history in terms of gendered roles of teachers and the general gendering of the institutional framework, distinguishing the accepted roles of male and female educators. However each author subverts the stereotypes concerning male and female characteristics in the description of fictional teacher figures insofar as they counter-use semantic fields with masculine connotations such as domination and warfare, and semantic fields with feminine connotations such as passivity and dispossession. Finally it can be observed in the novels, that despite the countering of representations by all three authors, the female teacher is trapped within a gendered role that her male counterparts can escape from.

On the extradiagetic level, for the narrator and the main characters, the text is an extended territory over which the voice of one constantly vies for authority over the other. The place of the narrator in the three novels has been noted with regard to the main characters. The use of Genette's terminology⁷⁹ will now allow the reader to draw deeper and hopefully more relevant conclusions on the comparisons of the novels under study. The first of Genette's tools to be used will be the narrative instance.⁸⁰

The most straightforward narrative instance is that used by Huxley. As has been observed, the heterodiagetic omniscient narrator follows Gumbriel's flow of consciousness, identifying him as the main character of the novel and the focal point of the narration. His identity is clear cut, the time set of the narration is simultaneous, the same as that of the intradiagetic course of events. However the narrator, by revealing the characters' inner contradictions taints the reader's comprehension of the fictional figure. It appears that the internal narrator is capable of distancing the narratee through revelations that hinder readers' identification with the character. The textual

79 Inspired by the clear guidelines in "Narratology", 2008 by Lucie Guillemette and Cynthia Lévesque, In *Signo* [online]. Louis Hébert (dir.), Rimouski (Quebec). <http://www.signosemio.com/genette/narratology.asp>. Consulted 01/05/2016.

80 "The narrative instance is said to be the conjunction between (1) narrative voice (*who is speaking?*), (2) time of the narration (*when does the telling occur, relative to the story?*) and (3) narrative perspective (*through whom are we perceiving?*). [...] by examining the narrative instance we can gain a better understanding of the relations between the narrator and the story in a given narrative. "Narratology". *Ibid.*

territory is held in the narrator's firm grip all the more so since Gumbriel's first direct speech, occurring on arrival at his father's—"I was bored, I decided to cease being a schoolmaster"(Huxley 16)—, is immediately undermined by the narrator: "He spoke with a fine airy assumption of carelessness"(Huxley 16). The narrator's comment on his posture of "fine airy assumption" ironically pinpoints the superficiality of Gumbriel's claim to indifference, undermining his credibility for the reader. Elsewhere the voice of Gumbriel's mother, revealing his shortfalls, surfaces in the text but is quelled by Gumbriel's voice: "His mother had told him, when she was dying...No, no; not that"(Huxley 9).

In both Nabokov's and Spark's novels, the narrative instance is scrambled, or coded. The narrator in *Pnin* passes off initially as an omniscient narrator, closely linked to Pnin. However as the novel progresses the narrator claims to be a friend of Pnin's, entering the intradiagetic world, claiming to know all of the characters revolving around Pnin, in offhand asides, until the final curtain has him arriving on the scene of the narration as a new character, entering into Pnin's shoes as the hero is evicted from his own narrative. The narrator here takes control over Pnin's story and infiltrates the fictional territory as well as the textual one. Pnin's only option is to flee these spaces, disappearing ultimately from the novel, the narrator becoming homodiagetic. For Spark, the narrator's voice is also complex, being as we have seen extradiagetic and omniscient, flitting from the main focal point, Sandy Stranger, to a more global group memory, as the members of the Brodie set recollect the different episodes of their experience.

On an extradiagetic level, the fictional space the characters share with the narrator is another territory that is equally significant. The struggle for supremacy between the narrator's and the character's version of events never takes place in Huxley's work since the inner focalised narrator exposes the workings of Gumbriel's mind, revealing his doubts and questioning, as a reliable source of information, giving the reader the necessary elements to construct their vision of the character. Nabokov's narrator, as has been noted, has infiltrated not only Pnin's inner voice but also his environment and his past in a bid to possess Pnin within the narration. He is considered by Pnin to be unreliable. In many ways, the character Pnin can be seen to resist this annexation as the narrator appears as a kind of impostor. The reader becomes therefore distanced from the narratorial authority. Miss Brodie, whom the narrator describes from a heterodiagetic viewpoint resists annexation by remaining a mysterious figure beyond the conjectures of the Brodie set who are trying to construct, along with the reader, a clear vision of the character and her motives and

responsibilities.

At the close of this first part of the dissertation, the examination of the portrayal of the fictional teacher in the novels under study reveals the authors' explorations of the dynamic role of this figure. Furthermore the analysis of the gender issue in the novel leads us to the identification of the influence of gender stereotypes. Their various re-appropriations in the novels challenges the readers' representations and expectations while conveying the authors' choices with regard to the male and female teachers' identities and their place in the novels. The examination of the narration instance highlights the way in which the author engages the reader in the narration. All three novels induce in the reader a detachment from one narratorial version of events by multiplying subjective diegetic voices. The reader is therefore engaged in a process of interpretation.

The fictional teacher-student relationships depicted in the three novels remain to be examined. The nature and forms of transmission and the dynamic interactions between the teacher and student figures in presence will be appraised. The expression of teachers' influence on pupils, for the authors, will then be ascertained with the examination of the normative aspects of these relationships. The examination of the frequency of events depicted will also come under scrutiny. These aspects will allow the emergence of more global vision of the educational projects depicted.

2. Education as transmission

To begin this second part of the essay an etymological definition of the word “transmission” will bring to light its roots and original meanings, influencing its present day use:

transmission (n.) 1610s, "conveyance from one place to another," from Latin *transmissionem* (nominative *transmissio*) "a sending over or across, passage," noun of action from past participle stem of *transmittere* "send over or across."⁸¹

On a first level, teaching can therefore be likened to a form of radio transmission, the transportation of a message between two fixed points, as for Saussure's linguistic theory⁸²: the teacher, being the emitter and the student, the receiver. To underpin this underlying metaphor, the author describes the teacher figures checking the quality of reception through the use of rhetoric questions ““These men are the fascisti"[...] What are these men, Rose?””(Spark 31). Claiming the students' attention is another tactic employed in the novels to ensure reception: “Plainly you were not listening to me”(Spark 14). Control is also non verbal: “Gumbril frowned ferociously at them. The boys caught his eye and their faces at once took on an expression of sickly piety”(Huxley 4). The teacher-student interactions within these works by Huxley, Nabokov and Spark are however more complex and dynamic by nature.

Saussure's⁸³ linguistic diagram of communication can be used to reveal another interpretation. The teacher figure appears to be the representative or voice of a given society, the official “emitter” of whom he or she is the medium, more or less in conformity with an expected and recognizable identity. The teacher figure, working under hierarchical supervision, is depicted as upholding or subverting societies' norms and values, dispensing more or less normalised knowledge, in accepted or experimental ways, to learners represented as more or less distant “addressees”. The fictional representation of this role seems to exclude any other notable social identity in the larger framework of society. He or she also appears as an isolated figure, at the boundary of the social framework, bound to a sacrificial, sacerdotal mission: to become a transparent “signifier” in the permanent act of monstrating a “signified” element to be learned. The teacher, often depicted as a guide may also be seen as an inter-posed screen of permanent

81 From <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=transmission>. Consulted 28/04/2016

82 See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*. [1916] New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

83 *Ibid.*

re-actualisation between a society and its children, the “official message” being any elements considered teachable by the authorities with whom the teacher is more or less in confrontation or collusion, the unofficial “message” being any side-steps in communication, verbal, or non verbal. And so the idiosyncrasies of these teacher-“signifiers,” create more or less visible hiatus in the message delivered, as an expression of their personal “microscopic need” to exist. The learning process, as an appropriation and interpretation of elements vehicled by the signifier (the teacher), for students (the receiver) is therefore tainted. Mixed messages are the result of these interferences, at the heart of the student's subjective experience. The raising of awareness concerning self-definition, individuality and critical thought as opposed to an unquestioning group identity, appears to be the unspoken spin off for the authors. The interstices created by discrepancies between discourses become the focal point of the plots.

In view of the earliest etymology of the word “transmission”, concerning a form of transport or “conveyance,” the presence of vehicles and physical displacement in the three novels is significant to note. However the authors' choices with regard to the expected fixity of the emitter in particular can draw the reader's attention, as the characters variously comply with this unstated imperative. Nabokov's character Pnin is essentially nomadic: “during the eight years Pnin had taught at Waindell College he had changed his lodgings[...] about every semester”(Nabokov 52). By force a traveller, he initially appears in the pages of the novel in locomotion: first on a train, then forced to take a bus. He is found in a painful reminiscing paragraph, on a transatlantic steamer on his trip to America and finally, after an arduous apprenticeship (the rendition of which will be examined further on) ends up at the wheel of an individual car. This perpetual movement and change in modes of transport conveys to the reader an instability at odds with the representation the reader may have of the stable life of a university professor. The mysterious phrase “During the academic year, he lived on a motuweth frisas⁸⁴ basis”(Nabokov 56) reveals Pnin's aspiration to regularity and routine. The use of two words splits the week into two distinct parts, into what may be the working days and Pnin's weekend. The use of a nonsensical phrase to express mundane routine may have several implications. First one needs to ascertain who uses the term? The author, the narrator or Pnin? On a primary level, the use of a code calls for a guessing game to resolve it: the author seems to be inveigling the reader into a game of charades.

84 These invented terms are the acronym of Mo(nday), Tu(esday), We(dnesday), etc... without initial capital letters, as in Russian. From NABOKV-L Archives <https://listserv.ucsb.edu/lsv/cgi-bin/wa?A2=nabokv-l;c64c938.0507> Consulted 30/04/2016.

Throughout the novel the Russian language is present and for the reader this phrase could be considered another Russian slip of tongue except that it is not in italics, nor is it translated as other Russian interjections in the text. On the other hand, for Pnin daily life is, the reader is told, “a constant war with insensate objects that fell apart, or attacked him, or refused to function or viciously got themselves lost as soon as they entered the sphere of his existence”(Nabokov 12). In these circumstances it could be Pnin's own battle with everyday life that is expressed in his private code.

Another possibility is that the narrator and Pnin share this joke. Reconstructing words for them to have a private meaning would not be strange to two foreigners, knowing each other from childhood (if the narrator is to be at least partially believed) meeting haphazardly over the years and sharing a form of intimacy concerning language. The proximity over time of the two characters is clearly expressed: “Pnin and I had long since accepted the disturbing but seldom discussed fact that on any given college staff [one could find] a person who had a twin within the same professional group”(Nabokov 124). This hint at a form of duplication between Pnin and the narrator will be confirmed on different levels. It first appears when Pnin narrates his arrival in America, in the first person singular, and laughs over his own predicament: “So we had a very interesting discussion, in consequence of which I passed two whole weeks on Ellis Island”—abdomen beginning to heave; heaving; narrator⁸⁵ convulsed”(Nabokov 10). This self-deprecating humour, along with the confusion of narratorial roles, creates an identification between the narrator and Pnin, that appear like Tweedledum and Tweedledee to be at once identical, opposite and in conflict. Another occasion brings the two characters (already hinted at as twins above) to play on words: “He and I turned out to be, as he quipped, *vos'midesyatniki* (men of the eighties), that is, we happened to have our lodgings for the night in the West Eighties”(Nabokov 155). The use of an invented phrase to express the specific lifestyle of the Russian intellectual immigrant working in an American university could therefore be an inside joke between the narrator and the fictional character. Furthermore twins often invent languages in which they communicate. The proximity of Nabokov's narrator and Pnin, who can be considered quasi identical on many levels, becomes clear through this analysis. Their voices and identities become confused. The reader is excluded from the joke, needed by the author to find his own interpretation. Thus the message transmitted can also be coded to give it a secondary significance.

85 My underlining

Gumbril's perception of the dreaded static monotony of his immutable servitude may be more in keeping with the reader's representations of a teacher's routine life: "there were thirteen weeks in the summer term, there would be thirteen in the autumn and eleven or twelve in the spring; then another summer of thirteen and so it would go on forever. Forever"(Huxley 11). For Nabokov, the undermining of this intrinsic stability, through the narration of Pnin's wanderings, is coupled with a doubt on Pnin's legitimacy and competences as a teacher: "no doubt Pnin's approach to his work was amateurish and light-hearted"(Nabokov 9). In stark opposition, an institutionally integrated and fully-accepted teacher figure such as Clements chooses "to remain in the musty but familiar hole"(Nabokov 31) of his routine.

Despite her rooting in the community of "progressive spinsters of Edinburgh"(Spark 42) Miss Brodie is depicted as inherently unstable, perpetually in movement:"It was not a static Miss Brodie"(Spark 43). Her holidays resemble exploration missions,— "I have spent most of my summer holidays in Italy once more, and a week in London too"(Spark 44)—, the aim of which is to bring the benefit of her travels back to the classroom, for her pupils:"I will tell you about my last summer holiday in Egypt"(Spark 11). She exposes artefacts from her trips: I have brought back a great many pictures which we can pin on the wall"(Spark 44). The act of teaching is thus expressed in terms of redirecting messages from the outside world into the classroom. The essence of the exercise can be likened to the naturalistic pinning of butterflies in a show case for observation. The teacher appears to be a paradoxical figure at the crossroads between stability and movement, a mediator relaying information as a messenger from the world at large but also an encoder of knowledge, that escapes the student's understanding, thus mirroring the reading experience: "a verbal narrative phenomenon interpreted by a cooperating reader."⁸⁶

The multiple references to transport in the three novels, and uses of tropes around displacement symbolize all at once the cultural mission of education that opens new horizons, and the evolution of the characters in the course of the novels: "the principles governing the end of her prime would have astonished herself at the beginning of it"(Spark 44).

However on another level the notion of "conveying from one place to another" also symbolises the effect of education on a student, harking back to one of the possible etymological roots of the word education: the Latin *educare* "leading out." The metaphor that calls back to the

86 My translation from French. Umberto Eco, *Lector in Fabula*. Introduction.

Greek *paidagogos*, substituting the act of walking for the act of teaching, is present in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*: “Follow me”(Spark 10), “we turn to the right” (Spark 32), “we shall cross here”(Spark 39). As a guide and initiator, the teacher has the power to displace the student both physically and metaphorically as Max Masse suggests in his article on professionalisation: “[Education] will be understood as a spiralling movement. This movement takes place within a process of intergenerational transmission.”⁸⁷

The construction of the novels by Spark and Nabokov echoes this spiralling image⁸⁸ by interweaving the discourse in a permanent to and fro between prolepsis, analepsis⁸⁹ and an ever-shifting moment of narration. Just as the teacher allows the learning process to develop in the dynamic revisiting of known content and adding of new material, so both the authors treat the reader as an ignorant pupil to be guided (or manipulated) by the omniscient narrator in the meanders of the fictional world.

To return to Genette's literary theory, the frequency of events is an interesting concept to confront the novels with, because of the importance of time and repetition in education. In Huxley's novel the leitmotiv of Gumbriel's mother's death and her last words are repeated 6 times within the narrative of the first chapter. Within the same chapter Gumbriel reads through 9 examples of homework repeating the same facts with variations. He also remembers his childhood habit of praying, kneeling “to say those words” referring to the daily recitation of the Lord's prayer. The repetition of school meals—“unhappily indistinguishable from the meals of the past”(Huxley 13)—continues the procedure from the past into the present. Gumbriel's inner monologue points at the ritualised repetitive nature of the school environment that muddles Gumbriel's own relation to time, his childhood as a pupil, and adulthood as teacher, merging into one indiscriminating continuum. The chapter finishes on an analepsis as he dreams of a future life in which he himself has the narratorial role and can give a different version of events past, reinventing his identity to his advantage: “he was just dressing down that insolent porter at the Continental, who had complained that ten francs wasn't enough (and had as a matter of historic fact got another five in

87 Max Masse. “*La Professionalisation: Un Mouvement Spiralaire. Regards Croisés d'un Professionnel Chercheur. ¿Interrogations?* *Revue Pluridisciplinaire des Sciences Humaines et Sociales* N°19. II *Tenir une Double Posture*. December 2014. <http://www.revue-interrogations.org/La-professionnalisation-un>. Consulted 18/04/2016.

88 See the schematic diagram of the time-line of discourse of Sparks novel in “Disorder and Transfiguration: Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)” by Mitras R. Luis, in *Postmodern or Post-Catholic? A Study of British Catholic Writers and Their Fictions in a Postmodern and Postconciliar World*, 50-70. University of South Africa, 1997. From <https://www.academia.edu/5306140>. Consulted 01/04/2016.

89 Dino Felluga. “Terms Used by Narratology and Film Theory.” *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. 03/01/2011. Purdue University. <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/narratology/terms/> Consulted 28/02/2016.

addition)"(Huxley 13).

Nabokov's novel is also interesting to analyse according to Genette's frequency of events theory. Here repetition takes place on another level, with different versions of the same event. The introduction to Pnin's lecture is first rendered in direct speech—"Tonight we have here, I am proud to say, the Russian born and citizen of this country, Professor [...] Professor Pun-noon"(Nabokov 22)—, and the book closes on the introduction to the narration of Pnin's speech within the narration, in a *mise en abyme* of representations: "And now, ' he said, 'I am going to tell you the story of Pnin rising to address the Cremona Women's Club and discovering he had brought the wrong lecture"(Nabokov 159). The second version is not only from a different point of view and time frame but also adds information that the narrator initially withheld from the reader.

Spark uses a similar technique of elliptical repetition as memories are retold and reassessed throughout the novel on different levels of narration. The initial scene is depicted on a first level of narration: "The boys, as they talked to the girls from Marcia Blaine School, stood on the far side of their bicycles"(Spark 5). It becomes, further on in the narrative, a side pattern within another context: "Then she would find them, perhaps loitering with the bicycle boys after school"(Spark 112). In the process, the situation depicted has changed register moving from incidental, one-off occurrences to repeated habits. The use of repetition, far from being a sterile exercise, therefore appears as a transformative process by which knowledge is disseminated, but also manipulated and transformed as it is re-appropriated, reflecting what happens in the classroom.

Once the transmission (as narration of a story) is completed, or the novel read from cover to cover, the individual student/reader will have perceived a core to the message, that is an individual personal construction, born from the global reading experience. As M. Mitras states in his article on *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, "The structure determines how the novel is read: when the reader finishes the novel he or she will have reached the heart of the novel."⁹⁰ Both in the fictional reading experience and in the classroom, comprehension is an on-going construction: "In communication we construct a model of what we think is being communicated.[...] We use the model we are constructing to help us make sense of the material."⁹¹ It is only at the term of a given experience that the global conclusion can be drawn and the substantial core be identified. The narrator can therefore be taken as the extradiagetic double of the teacher figure within the novels,

90 Luis R. Mitras. "Disorder and Transfiguration: Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)" in *Postmodern or Post-Catholic? A Study of British Catholic Writers and Their Fictions in a Postmodern and Postconciliar World*, 50-70. University of South Africa, 1997. From <https://www.academia.edu/5306140>. Consulted 01/04/2016.

91 Trevor A. Harley. *The Psychology of Language: From Data to Theory*. New York: Psychology Press, 2008.

organising a global narration, through which the reader may be inclined to search for his or her own version of the diagesis.

In this manner, the reader is in the same position as the intradiagetic students, in the throws of making sense of their teachers' words. Pnin's invented words "motuweth frisas" echo his students' difficulty with the Russian language and his own difficulty with the English language, putting the reader in a similar situation of puzzlement, forced into the attempt to decode the transmitted message. Faced with the complexity of the character of Miss Brodie, the reader must make up his or her own mind as to the image to retain of this pedagogue. In view of the shared experience between reader and student, particular attention must be paid to the metaphors and images employed to express the act of education as transmission, the manner in which the initial metaphysical place of being, before transmission (ignorance) is portrayed, along with the idealized destination at the end of the learning process (knowledge). This should bring to light the stances of the authors and those of the narrators since: "metaphor [...] functions as a vehicle of a world view."⁹²

In the novels, educational shortfalls and ignorance are semantically linked to several lexical subgroups pertaining to bestiality, mental or physical degeneration and the body: students have "the minds of dogs"(Huxley 4). Charles Macbeth's madness is symbolised in his "pathologically purplish car"(Pnin 29). Betty Bliss has the "servant maid's mind"(Nabokov 127). The world outside school is portrayed as stark with poverty and violence: "a crowd of children, some without shoes, were playing some fight game, and some boys shouted after Miss Brodie's violet clad company, with words that the girls had not heard before but rightly understood to be obscene"(Spark 33). The body appears constrained by education: "the leaves fell on the children who were thankful for this excuse to wriggle and for the allowable movements in brushing the leaves from their hair and their laps"(Spark 12). The body imperiously overtaking the mind is depicted as a failure: "In the beginning he had been much upset by the sight of some of them, their poor young heads on their forearms, fast asleep among the ruins of knowledge"(Nabokov 61).

The unspoken link between money and education becomes apparent in Gumbrell's qualification of his modest family as "Bony starvelings"(Huxley 4) who suffer discomfort in chapel unlike the "stout and lusty pedagogues"(Huxley 5) from wealthy families, to whom the chapel benches are better suited. The noun "starvelings" opposing "pedagogues" also implies that

92 Elaine Botha. "Why Metaphors Matter in Education", *South African Journal of Education*.2009.Vol.29:431-444. From <http://sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/viewFile/287/175>. Consulted 05/04/2016.

education is a form of nourishment. The adjective “bony” indicating fragility and bad health is opposed to “stout” and “lusty” indicating strength and healthy appetites. In this way the body is portrayed as expressing the belonging to a cast, physically identifying those able to benefit fully from the education that goes with it.

Knowledge is semantically linked to hoarding a treasure: “many good young people considered it a treat and an honour to see Pnin pull out a catalogue drawer from the comprehensive bosom of the card cabinet and take it like a big nut, to a secluded corner”(Nabokov 64). The fields of pleasure (“treat”), nourishment (“a big nut”) and social recognition (“honour”), used ironically, are nevertheless linked in this passage to the reassurance given by objects symbolising knowledge, such as a card cabinet. The attributes given to it are feminine (“bosom”) and maternal (“comprehensive”) harking back to erudites' monachal lifestyle and to the consolation given by a chaste motherly presence. The depiction of Pnin as a squirrel, while making fun of his habits, also reveals his idiosyncratic attachment to the physical spaces and ritualised behaviours that mark him as a university researcher. The observation of his behaviour characterises his identity as a wild animal observed by naturalists. It also highlights his isolation and solitude (“secluded corner”).

Socially desirable on one hand, knowledge and education are also depicted as dangerous. The symbol of knowledge as a forbidden fruit, linked to sexual desire and sin, is shared within Miss Brodie's classroom: “I have four pounds of rosy apples in my desk, a gift from Mr Lowther's orchard, let us eat them now while the coast is clear”(Spark 55). The beginning of Miss Brodie's declaration sounds as though she was giving the children a maths problem. By mentioning Mr Lowther, the apples become the symbol of her personal and illicit connection with him. By sharing them with the class, the children become accomplices. The final guilty urging “let us eat them” formulated in the terms of a religious sacrament⁹³ transposes Miss Brodie's secret actions onto the class, making them also a guilty party. In three linked prepositions the classroom has become a smugglers' cove. This transformation is underlined by the metaphor “the coast is clear” a maritime saying used by pirates. Thus the sharing of knowledge can be expressed as a transgression that brings together those who share it, in a private, esoteric and secret world. “[...] A chance reference to a rare author[...] led insensibly to a tender concord between the two men, both of whom were

93 "Come now, and let us REASON together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah1:18. From <http://heresies.landmarkbiblebaptist.net/calvinism.html>. Consulted 16/07/2016 .

really at ease only in their warm world of scholarship”(Nabokov 34). The men's solitude, recalling the comfort of the foundational womb (“warm world”), is broken by their mutual recognition. Ideally this world of scholarship could be shared by all. Universal understanding is sought by Gumbriel in his day dream of a new life as the ideal outcome of erudition: “He found it easy now to come to terms with everyone he met, to understand all points of view, to identify himself with even the most unfamiliar spirit”(Huxley 12-13). Gumbriel's idealised vision is a wish to reconnect with those around him, beyond the solitude of the scholar. As E.M Forster wrote: “Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.”⁹⁴

The learning process can be found to be metaphorically described as a gift. For Pnin it is a “marvellous treat”(Nabokov 10). Miss Brodie likens the process to fermentation and maturation—“there needs must be a leaven in the lump”(Spark 9)—and plant growth, needing tending by a gardener, in a play on words:“cultivating Rose”(Spark 117). Education is also symbolized as an intervention to thwart a process of deterioration, whether it is natural—“the hair, gentlemen, is a tube. If you leave it unsealed, the water will get in and rot the tube. Hence the importance of singeing.”(Huxley 8)—, or a construction that any slacking effort can demolish: “In the beginning he had been much upset by the sight of some of them, their poor young heads on their forearms, fast asleep among the ruins⁹⁵ of knowledge”(Nabokov 61). Elsewhere it is likened to a trip: “Nostalgic excursions”(Nabokov 10). The Virgil type teacher cum guide is depicted accompanying the student, as when Miss Brodie shows the slums in Edinburgh to her set: “it is time now to speak of the long walk through the old parts of Edinburgh where Miss Brodie took her set”(Spark 27).

On another level, the novels all address education as a hereditary transmission of wealth. In *Antic Hay* the Reverend exhorts the congregation to take care of “vineyards and olive trees that thou plantedst not”(Huxley 3). Transmission here refers to the transmission of property from one generation to the next, linking knowledge to economical wealth. Intragenerational transmission is an educational ideal upheld by Miss Brodie: “there is an old tradition of this practice[...]. Many families in the old days could afford to send but one child to school, whereupon that one scholar of the family imparted to the others what he had learned in the morning”(Spark 81).

Importantly the lack of children, as heirs and links in transmission, that the three fictional

94 E.M. Forster. *Howard's End*. Chapter XXII. From <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2946/2946-h/2946-h.htm#link2HCH0022> . Consulted 25/07/2016.

95 My underlining.

protagonists are faced with in their personal lives, influences their relationships with others. All three are explicitly linked to a genealogical line, and explicit father-figure—Pnin presents himself to Victor as “Timofey, Pavlovich, Pnin”, which means “Timothy the son of Paul”(Nabokov 86). Gumbriel comments on the church architecture “like the dutiful son of an architect he was”(Huxley 5). Miss Brodie belongs to “the vigorous daughters of the merchants”(Spark 42). This concern with the lineage of the characters mirrors a dissimulated quest for descendants that the novels portray, as transmission is also historically a hereditary gendered process. Miss Jean Brodie's students are described in the guise of surrogate children, as a “brood”(Spark 31). In Teddy Lloyd's paintings they become physically like her: “we'd look like one big Miss Brodie, I suppose”(Spark 104). Miss Brodie herself claims the girls are formed by her: “you are mine, said Miss Brodie, I mean of my stamp and cut”(Spark 97). Pnin is considered the “waterfather”(Nabokov 49) of Victor by Lisa and her husband. A surrogate father link is set up by Victor's mother in her own personal interest but beyond this, other mechanisms are at play. Victor dreams of a king-cum-father figure who refuses to abdicate, claiming “I prefer the unknown quality of exile,”(Nabokov 71) mirroring Pnin's attitude when faced with Eric Wind on the boat to America. Victor's gift of the Aquamarine bowl (“*aqua*” being Latin for water, “marine” referring to the sea) validates a link beyond biological paternity. The connection that Victor claims to have with Pnin through the bowl is coloured by sea blue. It seems to run along the lines of Pnin's love for Lisa, flowing through Eric Wind, unbeknownst to him, back to a paternal grandfather, disregarding genetics, as a magical linking of precious stones, aquamarines and sapphires, creating a necklace of personal significance. Victor's genealogy is fastidiously detailed in a sentence that mimics the complexity of heredity, questioning how an individual builds significance and identity:

Should one trace Victor's passion for pigments back to Hans Andersen (no relation to the bedside Dane), who had been a stained-glass artist in Lübeck before losing his mind (and believing himself to be a cathedral) soon after his beloved daughter married a gray-haired Hamburg jeweller, author of a monograph on sapphires and Eric's maternal grandfather? (Nabokov 74)

The learning process is depicted in the three novels as an essentially evolutive, transformative phenomenon linked to maturation and influences beyond family ties, leading to the adult world. Huxley's depiction of the transformations of adolescence has the undercurrent of sexual awakening: when Gumbriel has “fallen in love for the first time”(Huxley 9), he justifies that

his “affection ceased”(Huxley 10) by the fact that “the next term [...] [the object of his desire] had 'come out'(Huxley 10). The first meaning of “coming out”⁹⁶ being to unveil and assume one's sexual orientation and practice, refers back to the coming out of *débutantes*, considered ready for marriage. In the novel it is a physical manifestation of hormonal change, acne, that finishes the platonic relationship: “Gumbril's affection ceased as suddenly as it had begun”(Huxley 10). In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the girls' sexual maturation takes place through Miss Brodie whom they observe and speculate about: “Perhaps Miss Brodie is having a love affair with Mr Lowther”(Spark 59). A primary school Mme de Merteuil,⁹⁷ Miss Brodie initiates the girls to some awareness concerning sex and courtship rituals, preparing them intentionally for their “prime”: “You little girls, when you grow up must be on the alert to recognize your prime at whatever time of your life it may occur”(Spark 11).

If teaching is a leading out as Miss Brodie claims, or the teacher an “usher” (Huxley 17) guiding future adults to their seats in the social theatre, as Gumbril senior declares, it is relevant to observe the way in which each author portrays the teacher's capacity to lead, and intended direction during these educative “excursions” (Nabokov 10). In effect Miss Brodie takes the interpretation of the etymology of *educare* (leading + out) literally, by, on the one hand, taking the masculine role of a leader implementing martial indoctrination—“It occurred to Sandy[...] that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's Fascisti”(Spark 30)— and taking her class out of doors —“Often, that sunny autumn, when the weather permitted, the small girls took their lessons seated on three benches arranged around the elm”(Spark 10)— while on the other hand organising outings to the theatre and to exhibitions, more in keeping with the role expected of a female teacher: “Miss Brodie took her to tea and to the theatre”(Spark 118). Within the same novel different educational projects are opposed. In Spark's novel the pragmatic headmistress is looking for academic results: “you girls must work hard this year at every subject and pass your qualifying examination with flying colours”(Spark 45). Miss Brodie's project, in the narrator's viewpoint, is less defined, her students being “vastly informed on a lot of subjects irrelevant to the authorized curriculum”(Spark

96 Arika Okrent, “What is the Origin of the Phrase “Come Out of the Closet?”” on website: **Mental_Floss**.03/05/2013 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/50405/what-origin-phrase-come-out-closet> Consulted 01/05/2016.

97 In *Les Liasons Dangereuses* (1782) by Choderlos de Laclos, the libertine Marquis de Merteuil initiates an innocent young girl to sexual depravity in order to induce by proxy the love of the man she is in love with. The situation of Miss Brodie with regard to Rose is similar, except that her plan backfires and Sandy becomes Mr Lloyd's lover instead.

5). Miss Brodie claims to transform her wards into an elite: “the *crème de la crème*” (Spark 14). While she is portrayed in a unisex environment, Miss Brodie's particular program appears to be trans-gender, taking at once from the male military sphere both vocabulary and stances while also upholding female gendered values such as morality and good manners. The outcome of this educational confusion is a soldier (Joyce Emily) and a nun (Sandy). Pnin's digressions from the curriculum are also confusing, even though they concentrate on linguistic and cultural aspects of the Russian language: “Although Pnin was supposed, in this elementary Russian class, to stick to language exercises[...], he took every opportunity to guide his students on literary and historical tours” (Nabokov 56). The teacher is likened to a tourist guide, followed by more or less interested and straggling visitors.

It appears that education is depicted in the novels as a form of transmission that vehicles a message from a teacher to a student in a more or less formalised manner. The way in which the different aspects of it are expressed by the authors on hand reveal a number of issues pertaining to the teacher's role, the relationship between teacher and student and the representations of knowledge, ignorance and the learning process. The acquisition of knowledge is consistently a bodily as well as intellectual transformative process that appears part natural, part constraint. Learning is consistently described as a type of journey, with the teacher in the leading or guiding role. The teacher-student relationship is revealed to rest on the author's depiction of the teacher's and student's representations of knowledge and of the student's presumed right to access it. Furthermore the hereditary subtext present in all three novels points towards an underlying pre-determinism linked to gender and class. The teachers depicted are condemned to a rarefied space of solitude and isolation cut off from others. The educational spaces invested, whether physical such as the Waindell library or intellectual such as conversations shared or wished for, appear to be oases of solace in an uncertain world. The authors all give the reader elements with which to judge the teacher's effectiveness and more importantly also all highlight the teacher's infringements of the dogma. So, for the students, the educational journey is depicted as being wrought with the dangers of losing one's way both morally and intellectually. The learning process, which appears irreversible, seems to be in dynamic tension with sexual development. The body is depicted as the seat of dangerous impulses. Desire and sexuality need to be controlled, assuaged by peripheral means or sublimated into intellectual curiosity. Morality is therefore at the

heart of the educational project. It is the authors' stances with regard to morality in the educational process, through the expression of values and norms in the novels, that will now be explored.

2.1. Values and norms

Duty. *noun* du·ty \ 'dü-tē also 'dyü-\

- something that is done as part of a job
- something that you must do because it is morally right or because the law requires it.⁹⁸

The novels under study reflect a concern of societies throughout the ages: guaranteeing the quality of teaching and tuition for the young members of a given community. The qualities required of a teacher over time are consistently moral as well as scholarly. The morality or immorality of Pnin, Gumbriel and Miss Brodie are essential elements of their characters. Putting them to the benchmark of the ideal teacher, the upholder of morality, virtues and higher intellectual pursuits, is an interesting exercise, as the following excerpt from the statutes of a Medieval London school reveals:

And thenne other auctours Christian [...] as shalbe taught conveyent and moste to purpose unto the true laten spech all barbary, all corrupcion all laten adulterate which ignorant blynde folis brought into this worlde.[...]I say that ffylthynesse and such abusyion which the later blynde worlde brought in which more ratheyr may be callid blotterature thene litterature I utterly abbanysch and Exclude oute of this scole and charge the maisters that they teche all way that is the best and instruct the chyl dren in greke and laten in Redyng unto them suych auctours that hathe with wisdom joyned the pure chaste eloquence.⁹⁹

In this official text the lexical field of sexual corruption and lechery (“corrupcion”, “adulterate”, “ffylthynesse”, “abusyion”) is opposed to irreproachable morality (“pure chaste eloquence”) by Collet. He voluntarily confuses ignorance (“ignorant blynde folis”) with low morals while linking learning with chastity (“that hathe with wisdom joyned the pure chaste eloquence”). Morality must therefore be present in one form or another in the teacher figure's professional identity.

⁹⁸ From <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/duty>. Consulted 12/05/2015.

⁹⁹ Statutes of St Paul's school, London, written by Colet in 1518 taken from *Classical Education in Britain 1500-1900*. M.C. Clarke, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, 5.

Echoing this, Miss Brodie declares: "As for impropriety, it could never be imputed to me except by some gross distortion on the part of a traitor"(Spark 39). Pnin's naïve morality does not equip him for the intrigues of university life: "Honest work will always prove its advantage"(Nabokov 141). Gumbriel puts his mother forward as the epitome of a lost moral purity: "you felt the active radiance of her goodness when you were near her"(Huxley 3).

In view of the importance of the moral fibre of teachers, expressed by the authors as a central element in the fictional teacher's make-up, the etymology of the word "moral" will be enlightening :

moral (adj.)

mid-14c., "pertaining to character or temperament" (good or bad), from Old French *moral* (14c.) and directly from Latin *moralis* "proper behavior of a person in society," literally "pertaining to manners," coined by Cicero ("De Fato," II.i) to translate Greek *ethikos* from Latin *mos* (genitive *moris*) "one's disposition," in plural, "mores, customs, manners, morals," of uncertain origin.[...] ¹⁰⁰

Morality can therefore be seen as the accepted code of conduct that teachers have the mission to implement along with the curriculum and that also influences their personal conduct. It infers a link with the past by the transmission of "mores, customs." It can be likened to a form of ethics that teachers are implicitly bound to respect by duty. In the three novels, the dichotomy between personal values and institutional values gradually emerges through the analysis of the teacher figures as a point of tension.

The enforcement of historical and social norms is portrayed as constraining for the fictional teacher figures, either bodily (hence Gumbriel inventing "pneumatic trousers" to ease the physical uncomfords of Mass) or psychologically. In Spark's novel, the headmistress Miss Mackay tries to keep an eye on Miss Brodie's doings by arriving without warning into her teaching space, declaring "I have come to see you and I have to be off"(Spark 13). Miss Brodie considers these forays into her territory as aggressions: "When she was gone she looked hard at the door for a long time"(Spark 45). Huxley portrays an exasperating headteacher "forever discovering something new. Two months ago it had been singeing"(Huxley 8). The ridicule of the headmaster's "caprices"(Huxley 8) does not stop them being enforced: "Nobody ever contradicted him. Nobody ever did; they all knew better. For the headmaster was fierce as he was capricious"(Huxley 8). The

¹⁰⁰ Taken from <http://www.etymonline.com>. Consulted 5/05/2015.

teacher's role can therefore be seen as limited to the enforcement of changing rules and regulations, implementing a hierarchically induced content. In *Pnin*, the teacher's relationship with the university authorities is less frontal but the powers in place are beyond Pnin's influence. His territory —“Office R[...] given for his exclusive use”(Nabokov 57)— is allocated without his knowing to “the newly imported Austrian scholar”(Nabokov 59) who has Pnin's “furniture moved to a darker place part of the office”(Nabokov 59).

The semantic fields of violence— “[Gumbriel's headmaster] banged on the table; he had looked defiantly round the room in search of contradictors”(Huxley 8)—, of hostility—“I have to consult you about a new plot which is afoot to force me to resign”(Spark 9) and of dispossession “so they have fired me,’ said Pnin, clasping his hands and nodding his head”(Nabokov 1142)—are used by the authors to describe the hierarchical teacher/head relationship based on domination and subordination. Alongside teacher-student transmission a fight for legitimacy takes place within the teaching body, to safeguard Pnin's post—“Blorengé [...]definitely felt that Pnin was not fit even to loiter in the vicinity of an American college”(Nabokov 118)— just as Miss Brodie retaliates to the suggestion to change school:“My terms of employment cannot be condemned unless they can be proved to be in any part improper”(Spark 38). The question of adherence to the educational project of an institution questions the teacher's own identity and sense of duty.

In effect duty appears in correlation with the term “education,” defining a multifarious notion of what is both morally and intellectually appropriate to be transmitted to the next generation. The injunction is clear:“thou shalt teach [...] [these words] diligently unto thy children”(Huxley 2). As Hegel propounds in *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*: “Whatever can be demanded on the ground of Law is a Civil Obligation but, in so far as moral grounds are to be observed, it is a Duty.”¹⁰¹

A teacher's duty implies furthermore a certain number of prescribed actions such as the evaluation of the students, particularly with regard to their adherence to the moral values upheld by their teachers and their capacity to reconstitute what they have learned. This evaluation ideally requires impartiality on the part of the evaluator. In the novels, the impartiality of the three teacher figures is undercut. Miss Brodie has a scapegoat, Marie McGregor—“the nagged

101 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic. Outlines of the Science of Laws, Morals and Religion*. Second Part: Science of Duties or Morals. Notes for lectures given in Nuremberg-1809-1811. 1st publication 1840. Published by Basil Blackwell in 1986. From <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pp/ch02b.htm>. Consulted 28/04/16.

child”(Spark 29). Pnin has a partiality for attractive female students, as has been noted. *Antic Hay* examines the institutionalised form of evaluation that is copy marking. The first lines of eight boys' homework on Pio Nono (whose name echoes Gumbriel's rejection of the system) are explicated. The different possible versions, more or less complete and to the point, bring into question the ambiguity of evaluation and the establishing of a benchmark, as a norm to which individual productions will be compared. The narrator catches Gumbriel straying from his moral duty: “the business-like answer of Appleyard called him back to a better sense of his duty”(Huxley 11). Gumbriel's temptation to err is in adequation with the student who evades the question and develops an answer outside of the given framework “at the top of Garstang's paper was written: 'I had the measles all the holidays, so have been unable to read more than the first thirty pages of the book'”(Huxley 10). Despite his inclination —“He would have liked to give him full marks”(Huxley, 10)— the teacher's duty is to uphold the accepted manner in which to evaluate students' homework.

In a larger sense it is the students' compliance and conformity to a given norm which is evaluated. The evaluation, selection and characterisation of students reveal the dogma upheld by the teacher. The teaching figures in the novels all pass judgement on their students, in direct speech, confronting the student, both positively—“You have got insight, perhaps not quite spiritual, but you are a deep one,”(Spark 107)—,and negatively— “stupid as ever”(Spark 45). This judgement may be indirect: “A madman, I think, judging by his compositions” Pnin used to say”(Nabokov 29). Through the interior narrator's voice Gumbriel reflects that the students have “minds of dogs”(Huxley 4).

The teacher's word in the classroom is the law, the dogma.... Any departure from this norm is “heresy”(Spark 62). The assumption of the teacher's correlation with the dogma in place on a larger level becomes interesting to confront when a “creeping sense of disorder”(Spark, 86) is instilled. This also happens when the narrative discourse is at odds with the characters' own discourse, revealing a narrative dissonance to the reader.

As has been seen so far, the depiction of the educational system, portrayed as demanding the submission of individuality from both student and teacher to a dominant set of values that the teacher is bound by duty to uphold, is used by the three authors to question the system.

2.2 Subversion

“Subversion in literary and cultural theory is usually understood, broadly, as a matter of the reversal of established values, or the insertion of other values into them.”¹⁰²

“O where shall I find a virtuous woman, for her price is above rubies”(Spark 6). The motto of Marcia Blaine School for girls is explicit, in the placing of virtue at the centre of the school's project. Spark's evocation of an all-female school concentrates on the subversion of this motto by Miss Brodie. Morality, as has been noted in the novels, is an essential underlying element of the dynamic fictional tension between the teacher figures and the institutions depicted. On a more global level it has been noted that the upholding of a norm or the expression of antagonistic values is visible in the three teacher figures' actions. The following part of the paper concerns the subversion of values and norms within and underlying the act of teaching as it is portrayed in the fictional worlds of the novels. Clues to the subversive role of the author as puppeteer of the fictional world will be examined through the interventions of intradiegetic characters and narrator.

Suspensions concerning any form of deviant behaviour of real life teachers call for constant control by authorities. However, in literature, authors are free to create transgressive teacher figures just as they can create transgressive literature. For one, Nabokov wrote *Invitation to a Beheading* during the period in which he was finishing *Lolita*, his novel on the incestuous relationship between a twelve year old girl and her step father (also a teacher). In this he reveals himself to be no stranger to subversion and transgression. Furthermore departure from common values and norms in literature also challenges the reader to decode the narrative strategies and temporal construction, as the characters' and the narrator's voice guides him or her through the ambiguities of a subversion that takes on many forms in the novels.

The expression of sexuality in the classroom environment is the most evident subversion of the norm that can be observed. As Leonie Wanitzek states: “With such a problematic issue as the eroticisation of teacher-student relationships, it is particularly important to distinguish between

102 Grindon Gavin. “Subversion” in *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*. Ed. Michael Ryan: 2011. From <http://www.blackwellreference.com/public>. Consulted 02/05/2016.

reality and fiction.”¹⁰³ Sexuality is a taboo in the classroom, which the three novels address in different ways. It has been seen, in the first part of this work, that the teacher figures' own sexual and gendered definition appears significantly influenced by their professional identity. What will be observed is how sexualised messages are communicated within the classroom. Concerning Miss Brodie's project for Rose to become the art teacher's lover, Leonie Wanitzek observes: “the illegal and morally questionable nature of an affair between a student and a male, married teacher does not enter her head.”¹⁰⁴ The moral corset of religion is however paradoxically apparent in Miss Brodie's own conduct at other points in the novel: “She tried to inspire Eunice to become at least a pioneer missionary”(Spark 62), “[Eunice] was not allowed to do cartwheels on Sundays”(Spark 26). At other times Miss Brodie's position seems totally immoral: “all the time they were under her influence she and her actions were outside the context of right and wrong”(Spark 86). “Some days it seemed to Sandy that Miss Brodie's chest was flat, no bulges at all [...]. On other days her chest was breast-shaped and large [...]”(Spark 11). As Léonie Wantizsek remarks, the description is a “striking metaphor for Miss Brodie's inconstancy and changing attitudes.”¹⁰⁵ The narrator describes her as being “in a state of fluctuating development”(Spark 43), an unstable state one would expect of her pre-teenage pupils and that she seems to monopolize. As the girls become conscious of Miss Brodie's sexual potential, they also become aware of the subtext and innuendos surrounding them. “It was the Brodie set who discerned, before she did and certainly before these men did, that Mr Lowther and Mr Lloyd were at pains to appear well”(Spark 48). The girls learn to read between the lines of what they are told or taught—“thereafter the two girls listened with double ears”(Spark 72)— looking for hidden significances behind words: “‘Miss Brodie said they clung to each other with passionate abandon on his last leave'. 'I don't think they took their clothes off, though [...] do you?’”(Spark 20). The fascination that this character holds for her pupils lies in her ambiguous use of a sexual subtext: “Miss Brodie had not yet advanced far enough into her prime to speak of sex except by veiled allusion”(Spark 38). In this way her behaviour becomes the cause of pupils' heated speculations on a diegetic level and challenges the reader's narrative interpretation on an extradiegetic level.

103 Eros in the Classroom, Mentor Figures, Friendship and Desire in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *The History Boys* by Léonie Wanitzek, *Gender Forum*, an Internet Journal for Gender Studies, issue 39, 2012. From <http://genderforum.org>. Consulted 24/04/2015.

104 *Ibid.* Consulted 9/05/2015

105 See footnote 11.

The only form of institutionalised and morally authorised sexuality, is within marriage: in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* the figure of the headmistress is anxious as to the future of the students. “What good will Latin and Greek be to you when you get married or take a job?” (Spark 64) Miss Mackay asks, offering two possibilities, instead of the one (marriage), in a concession to modernity. After being submitted to Miss Brodie's subverting influence, Eunice's husband perceives a dissonance: “I always knew your up-bringing was a bit peculiar” (Spark 27). Huxley's narrator's description of Gumbriel's attraction to another boy while at school is also sealed by the secrecy of taboo: “In 1906, he had fallen in love for the first time—ah, much more violently than ever since—with a boy of his own age. Platonic it had been and profound” (Huxley 9) – “it had been impossible to explain” (Huxley 9). Pnin's fantasies around Betty Bliss, his student, are under the sign of discretion: “He went so far one seminar session, after the rest had gone¹⁰⁶ as to hold her hand in his palm and pat it” (Nabokov 36). However his intentions remain theoretically honourable: “In principle marriage was not excluded” (Nabokov 35-36).

The expression of secrecy and ambiguity can be detected in the three texts as tainting and pervasive. Miss Brodie uses concealing strategies, revealing her acknowledgement that she is not delivering the expected curriculum: “‘Hold up your books’, said Miss Brodie quite often that autumn [...] If here are any intruders, we are doing our history lesson” (Spark 10-11). For Gumbriel, the protracted narration of his foundational lie —“1896: the first serious and conscious and deliberate lie”— underlines his moral flaw. His inability to confront his mother, also signals his inability to confront life, pushing him to live a secret fantasy life. For Miss Brodie, Sandy “will make an excellent Secret Service Agent, a great spy” (Spark 109). In *Pnin*, secrecy is the narrator's privilege: “Now a secret must be imparted” (Nabokov 8). As Miss Brodie expounds repeatedly, misinterpreting Shakespeare: “Discretion is... Discretion is... Sandy? 'The better part of valour,¹⁰⁷ Miss Brodie” (Spark 47). The pun intended in the play has been subverted into a proverb justifying Miss Brodie's dissimulating ways.

106 My underlining.

107 “In Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I* when Prince Hal finds the cowardly Falstaff pretending to be dead on the battlefield, the prince assumes he has been killed. After the prince leaves the stage, Falstaff rationalizes “The better part of Valour, is Discretion; in the which better part, I have saved my life” (spelling and punctuation from the *First Folio*, Act 5, Scene 3, lines 3085–3086). Falstaff is saying that the best part of courage is caution, which we are to take as a joke. Truly courageous people may be cautious, but caution is not the most important characteristic of courage.” Paul Brians, *Common Errors in English Usage*. Washington: William, James Co., 2013. From <http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/discretion.html> Consulted 15/05/16.

The use of a double language and dissimulation in the novels goes hand in hand with an arbitrariness that can be welded by the teacher figures or at their expense. Miss Brodie's ambiguous morality can be linked to the physical displacement of one object of desire onto another: "Sandy[...] perceived that the woman was obsessed with the need for Rose to sleep with the man she herself was in love with"(Spark 119). Such a semiotic displacement brings about a confusion on significance that appears to contaminate the fictional classroom space: "whoever opened the window has opened it too wide [...] six inches is perfectly adequate. More is vulgar"(Spark 46). Beyond the symbolism of the open window as open-mindedness, the subjectivity of the rule or the possible vulgarity of an open window (*sic*) must not be questioned. The pupils (and the reader in their wake) are plunged into a Kafkaesque space, this particular classroom, run according to quite different rules from the norm in the rest of the school. This becomes apparent when the girls are taken charge of by another teacher, Miss Gaunt. The change leaves them "so dazed"(Spark 57) they do not notice the absence of the singing master. Equally when two new girls arrive in Miss Brodie's classroom they are shocked—"they stood up with wide eyes"(Spark 47)—, Miss Brodie chides them: "you will get used to our ways"(Spark 47). The moral rules that govern Miss Brodie's world are as arbitrary and unpredictable as those of Wonderland, where Alice returns to in *Through the Looking Glass*. As the Queen of Heart warns, "all ways about here belong to me."¹⁰⁸ In Nabokov's novel it appears that Waindell university life is also governed by arbitrary figures of authority—"two interesting characteristics distinguished Leonard Blorengé, Chairman of French literature and language; he disliked literature and he had no French"(Nabokov 117)— who apply nonsensical reasoning to their decisions:

"'You mean' asked Blorengé sternly,' he can *speak* French? [...] he does speak it, eh?'
 'Well yes,'
 'In that case we can't use him in first year French. It would be unfair to our Mr Smith, who gives the elementary course this term and naturally is required to be only one lesson ahead of his students. Does your man read French as well as speak it?' [...]
 'I'm afraid he does,' [...]
 'Then we can't use him at all'"(Nabokov 11).

108 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, chapter II The Garden of Live Flowers, n.p., from the project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12/12-h/12-h.htm>. Consulted 15/05/2015.

The arbitrariness of a headteacher's educational project is highlighted by Huxley in the depiction of Gumbriel's "headmaster's caprices": "[...]two months ago it had been hair singeing, [...]Now it was the Risorgimento. One of these days, Gumbriel reflected, it would be birth control or the decimal system or rational dress" (Huxley 8). However the author undermines Gumbriel's sense of the headmaster's ridiculous choices by incorporating in his own supposed projects for the headmaster's folly, three topics that herald modern education: birth control, which has become a mainstay of secondary school education as "sex education", the decimal system,¹⁰⁹ which was adopted in 1971 by the United Kingdom, and rational dress¹¹⁰ which was a Victorian movement to liberate women from the constraints of dress codes, and bring comfort to the forefront of dress, a movement largely overshot by generations of Anglo-Saxons in jogging suits.

In this context of subversion, the assumption that the teacher, when upholding a stance, believes it to be relevant, is undermined. Gumbriel is depicted as a cog in the educational machine, the project of which is foreign to him. Religious authority, indissociably linked to the educational project as has been noted, appears just as questionable. Reverend Pelvey's preach on "houses full of good things, which thou fillest not" (Huxley 3) echoes the passivity of Gumbriel and questions his capacity to benefit from what has been elaborated in the past. Gumbriel's own stance as a teacher within a classroom is not explicit but he appears in outward conformity with the identity and posture of a teacher: "when the time came for singing, he sang" (Huxley 4). Dissociating himself from this outer appearance, he is elaborating a hidden counter-discourse opposing the reverend's official speech while outwardly obeying the ritual: "with the noise like the breaking of a wave, five hundred turned towards the East[...]. No, no Gumbriel preferred to look at the grooved stonework" (Huxley 5). Unobtrusively changing his focal point from the far distant "East" to the "stonework", Gumbriel discreetly refuses the spiritual transport of the preach. He is paying lip service to an institution in which he doesn't believe. "Could it be that he had an answer and a clue? That was hardly believable. Particularly if one knew Mr Pelvey personally. And Gumbriel did" (Huxley 2). By questioning the competence of the reverend, Gumbriel covertly subverts his authority as well.

It appears therefore that the inherent ambiguity and subjectivity underlying both

109 See decimalisation: <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Decimalisation-in-Britain/>. Consulted 12/04/2016.

110 See Victorian dress reform or rational dress movement: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_dress_reform. Consulted 12/04/2016.

teachers' and institutional figures of authority's actions leave ample latitude for subversion of a norm to support personal power and influence. The student's awareness of counter discourse and subtext, particularly in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, is a source of tension and vigilance on their part that appears to shift attention from content to form. It is no longer what is said but how it is said and the non verbal cues which become relevant to decode a situation. "‘Good Mawning’ [Miss Brodie] replied [...] flattening their scorn beneath the chariot wheels of her superiority, and deviating her head towards them no more than an insulting half inch”(Spark 54). At once the accent used for speech and the movement involved are calculated to change a mundane greeting into a diplomatic incident. What is not said but can be inferred is equally important “[Sandy] was thinking of something else. She was thinking that it was not the whole story”(Spark 60). In the same way, dissimulation becomes a primary asset: “You girls [...] must learn to cultivate an expression of composure. It is one of the best assets of a woman”(Spark 22).

As a linguistic mirror of the subversion at work, semantic shifts occur in all three novels due to changes in sounds, intonation, giving a sense of instability to the most straightforward communication. Spark reveals ambiguity through pronunciation variants: “Jenny had pronounced the word ‘nasty’ as ‘nesty’[...]This gave rise to an extremely nasty feeling in Sandy[...]”(Spark 68). The ensuing confusion at a sound being “neither one thing nor another”(Spark 68) opens a space for doubt. The narrator in *Pnin* highlights Pnin's subversion of pronunciation as a weakness endangering his integration into the American way of life: “He did not possess (nor was he aware of this lack) any long oo”(Nabokov 55). Furthermore Pnin misnames and confuses people, calling Miss Thayer Miss Fire for example. Intonation is also highlighted as an important aspect of communication. “Sandy [...] perceived that the tone of ‘morning’ in good morning seemed purposely to rhyme with ‘scorning’, so that these colleagues of Miss Brodie's might just as well have said ‘I scorn you’ instead of good morning”(Spark 54). Gumbriel notes that the voice of religious authority is linked to objects of power and dominates the audience by volume and tone: “[the reverend] was booming over the top of the portentous Book[...] foghorning away from behind the imperial bird[...] reading with holy gusto [...] ‘Here endeth’ boomed¹¹¹Mr Pelvey” (Huxley 1-4). The headmaster's voice carries a more threatening undertone, recalling that corporal punishment is his prerogative: “The headmaster's loud harsh voice broke violently¹¹² from the

111 My underlining

112 My underlining

pulpit”(Huxley 7). The importance given in all three novels to the spoken word and sounds hints at the importance of orality, tone and accent in transmission, highlighting what can be misunderstood or misconstrued from the manner in which things are expressed.

Word definition or word structure are also elements that appear subject to subversion, opening vistas unto misinterpretations and confusion. Gumbriel questions: “but if theology then why not theogonomy, theotropy, theotomy, theogamy?”(Huxley 1). By a nonsensical play on words, the possible variants explored express Gumbriel's scepticism but also play on his own identity since his first name is Theodore, revealing his self-centeredness.

In all three novels, interpretation is highlighted as a subjective phenomenon, riddled with pitfalls obstructing common understanding. Joan Clements's attempt at semiology, decoding an advert with Pnin, is doomed to failure and misinterpretation: “Now, you look at the picture, so this is the mariner, and this is the pussy, and this is a rather wistful mermaid hanging around, and now look at the puffs above the sailor and the pussy.' 'Atomic bomb explosion' said Pnin sadly”(Nabokov 51). When sitting down to correct students' “Holiday Task Papers”(Huxley 8), Gumbriel reverts to his own childhood memories, ironically applying the homework task to himself, subverting the task twofold: “Gumbriel leaned back in his chair and thought about his own character with dates”(Huxley 9). Gumbriel's capacity to lead anyone anywhere is largely undermined by the continually changing course of his thoughts, giving the reader a sense of his instability and doubts. The various expressions of the instability of meaning noted in the novels harks back to Edward Lear's and Lewis Carroll's nonsensical worlds, corroborating the ambiguity of the main characters and the infinite possibilities of subversion.

As has been noted, Huxley occupies his fictional teacher figure with a realistic and authentic teaching activity: correcting homework. He is represented in the role of the assessor, poised to judge the productions of students. This role, however brings on apathy and despair: “Gumbriel laid the paper down. No, this was really impossible. Definitely, it could not go on, it could not¹¹³ go on”(Huxley 11). The threefold repetition of the negative form and the use of the adjective “impossible” express Gumbriel's incapacity to participate in the institution even though he does not have the energy to openly defy it. The double bind of his apathy and the coercive environment is expressed in the opposition of the adverb “definitely” to the modal verb “could” indicating the past tense of “can” but also the conditional tense. The undermining of authority that Miss Brodie

113 My underlining.

embodies is, on the other hand, energetic and confrontational as we have seen. Furthermore her own counter authority is mirrored in her fascination for the fascist leaders in Italy, Germany and Austria, busy overthrowing the powers in place on a much larger scale. David S. Robb identifies Muriel Spark's definition of the fascisti as "being used to describe people who do not tolerate views other than their own, and who are unscrupulous in their methods of gaining control over the minds and behaviour of other people"¹¹⁴ This description uncannily fits Miss Brodie, formatting her pupils' minds with the project of each one embracing a cause: "you are all heroines in the making"(Spark 30).

It can be noted that Miss Brodie's heroic examples, such as Joan of Arc, the Lady of Shallot, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, and Helen of Troy, all carry tragic undertones. The notion of her young pupils being formless matter —"a lump"(Spark 9),— selected by Miss Gumbriel to become what Sandy describes as her "fascisti"(Spark 31), is confirmed by the narrator in a triple concessive proposition admitting that "Miss Brodie had already selected her favourites, or rather those whom she could trust; or rather those whose parents she could trust not to lodge complaints"(Spark 26). The girl's personal qualities have nothing to do with their selection. However they represent the personal project of the teacher that claims them as "my influence, now, in the years of my prime"(Spark 26). Sandy senses they are "all knit together for her need"(Spark 31). For the narrator, their education is a "taking into confidence"(Spark 26) the classroom a "jurisdiction"(Spark 47). The teacher figure appears throughout the three novels as a possible agent of disruption and threat or counter-point to an institutionalised discourse.

The ideal of a single, stable discourse is undermined in the three novels. On the contrary, multiple discourses are at work as the authors supply several distinct and contradictory voices, as well as voices reinterpreting events over time. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the dialogues between Miss Brodie and her "set" at the time of Miss Brodie's prime are interspersed among the direct speech of the pupils sharing memories among themselves, with others, and interacting with Miss Brodie before her death. Finally, the narrator's discourse relates events from different periods from one paragraph to the next without clearly marking transitions. The subversion of a clear time line in the novel, as well as the absence of a clear narratorial authority leaves the reader, like Sandy and Jenny with their novella "The Mountain Eyrie" reinterpreting Miss Brodie's life, to reconstruct

114 David S. Robb *Scotnotes : Muriel Spark's The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, 21.

their own version of events. What the reader can piece together is that the teacher figure appears egotistic and self centred, using the pupils in her class as a reflection of her self, in a Pygmalion-like posture,¹¹⁵ of love for one's own creation. When her plans for her pupils are thwarted by their own inclinations, Miss Brodie is scathing: "I thought when you were young children, that Mary might be something. She was a little pathetic. But she's really the most irritating girl"(Spark 106). Even her favourite pupil, Sandy, for whom she has chosen the role of informant, disappoints her: "What a waste. That is not the sort of dedication I meant. Do you think she has done this to annoy me?"(Spark 63). The thwarting of Miss Brodie's plans, appearing in her direct speech as a reason for irritation, may be considered by the reader in a different light, the reader becoming in this way involved in the interpretation of the subtext, and distanced from any one version of events.

In Nabokov's work, Pnin's capacity as the main character to lead the narration and acquire authority over his story is continually undermined and subverted. The narrator never misses a chance to expose Pnin's shortcomings or failings. Physically he has an "impressive torso" (Nabokov 101) and yet the narrator specifies:"he was less strong than his puffed out torso implied"(Nabokov 17). What strength he has is sapped by a mysterious ailment, striking him down suddenly, at intervals in the novel: "a stone bench among the laurels saved him from collapsing on the side walk"(Nabokov 17). During these crisis Pnin is overpowered by visions from the past. The contact with others also destabilizes Pnin. When Liza, his former wife, arrives, "Pnin slipped on the pavement, and the taxi-man said 'easy', and took her bag from him"(Nabokov 44-45). In the scene of Victor's visit, Pnin falls down the stairs in his haste to adapt his gifts to his host by getting rid of the football before Victor gets to his appointed bedroom: "a terrible clatter and crash came from the stairs: Pnin on his way down, had lost his footing"(Nabokov 89). In fact, the description of his "top heavy body"(Nabokov 17) gives the reader the impression he resembles a roly-poly toy, comically unstable, tipping this way and that.

This laughable description can be perceived to hide a darker subtext in which the narratorial observation resembles a form of surveillance, catching Pnin's every move: "[Pnin] slipped slightly on the flag of the path[...] Pnin on the dirty black ice slipped again, threw up one arm in an abrupt convulsion, regained his balance."(Nabokov 61) Despite his discreet aspiration to "disinterested, devoted scholarship"(Nabokov 120) buried in the college library, Pnin—"totally unaware"(Nabokov

115 The Roman poet [Ovid](#), in his [Metamorphoses](#), Book X, relates that Pygmalion, a sculptor, makes an ivory statue representing his ideal of womanhood and then falls in love with his own creation, which he names Galatea; the goddess Venus brings the statue to life in answer to his prayer. *Encycloepadia Brittanica*. From <http://global.britannica.com/topic/Pygmalion>. Consulted 03/04/2016

119)— is continually under scrutiny, as Cockerell's many impersonations prove. Through the narrator's exacting surveillance, the shadow of the Russian police and the FBI tracking Russian communists reaches over Pnin who, the student/reader is told during “autobiographical titbits”(Nabokov 10), was retained “for two weeks” on Ellis Island when he arrived on American soil, to discuss the intricacies of the definition of anarchy: “Then political question. He asks: “Are you anarchist?” I answer[...]“first what do we understand under 'anarchism'?”(Nabokov 10). Comforting this subtext, a sense of imbalance, instability, and impending menace pervades the portrait, as ominously as the nutcracker, “falling like a man from a roof”(Nabokov 144) into the aquamarine bowl.

Surveillance is a form of control of the character that echoes the author's control of the narration. Distanced from the inquisitional narrator and characters surrounding Pnin with a more or less mocking stance, the reader is given by the author a subtext describing the intestinal power struggles and niceties of university life, discrediting the voices of those judging Pnin (narrator included), and paradoxically reinstating Pnin's voice as the heart of the novel.

The teacher figures at odds with the institution, or perceived as mavericks by their peers, are immediately suspected of wanting to subvert the general order of the world in which they move. Pnin is considered a threat to the institution because he knows too much French, constituting a menace to Blorenge who does not want him in the French Department. A prior experience with a former teacher—“that Swiss skiing instructor [...] [who] smuggled in mimeo copies of some old French anthology. It took us almost a year to bring the class back down to its initial level”— demonstrates how a system working as a harmonious whole can be threatened by an individual. For the headmistress, Miss Brodie is also a threat: “I'm afraid she put ideas into your young heads”(Spark 124). However Mrs Mackay's main concern is for the school as a body: “Now she has formed a new set and they are so out of key with the rest of the school.”(Spark 124) Gumbriel is described by his father as a subverting element in the profession: “it's these undecided things, like Theodore, who ruin it by drifting in.”(Huxley 17). Just as he would inadvertently break a heater, Pnin unknowingly subverts the efficiency of an American college, teaching courses with virtually no students—“He had never had so few students to bother about”(Nabokov 119)—and self-indulging in the preparation of his imagined “great work on Old Russia”(Nabokov 33).

The arbitrary essence of the knowledge imparted is highlighted: “Who is the greatest

Italian painter?' 'Leonardo Da Vinci, Miss Brodie'. 'That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favourite'"(Spark 11). Miss Brodie links subjectivity to correctness with the use of the adjective "favourite." To be partial and subjectively involved is therefore upheld as right. Pnin's "great work on Old Russia, a wonderful dream mixture of folklore, poetry, social history and *petite histoire*"(Nabokov 33) associates a very unscientific and subjective "mixture" categorised as a dream in which folklore¹¹⁶ and poetry along with personal anecdotes termed as "*petite histoire*" largely outweigh the more objective "history" that is further contextualised by the adjective "social". Both religion and education are subverted with equal verve by Huxley in the listing of possible applications of religious study—"Why not that ingenious toy, the theatrope, or wheel of gods? Why not a monumental theodrome?"(Huxley 1). The application of theory in the realm of reality allows the authors to explore the dissonance and contradictions between the two realms. "There was nothing new in the idea, it was the reality that was new"(Spark 119). The distinction between theory and practice, the world of ideas and reality, is presented by the three authors as a nexus that allows ample space for satire and irony, subverting mainstream representations of teachers and teaching.

Through this analysis it becomes clear that for Huxley and Nabokov it appears that the submission of the teacher to authority is an inherent part of the role, subversion being expressed as some internal resistance (for Gumbriel) or an incapacity to conform (for Pnin). For Spark the teacher is undoubtedly an individual with the power to destroy or at least impact the pupils under her responsibility by subverting the norms she is expected to uphold. As a counter-figure, Spark describes Miss Lockhart:"He had confidence in Miss Lockhart, as everyone did [...] she could blow up the school with her jar of gunpowder and would never dream of doing so"(Spark 114). The three main teacher figures' inner instability and lack of conformity bring into question the order surrounding them.

The authors use the teacher 's identity and the theme of education to express the dynamics around the transmission of a norm, that is enforced by a given authority. According to the orientation of authority, for each author, subversion on one or several levels will occur. In the three novels, different discourses are dynamically set in juxtaposition, mirroring the discrepancies, incoherences and subversions that are found in the complex fictional web the authors are weaving,

116 "Ideas or stories that are not true but that many people have heard or read" definition from Merriam Webster Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/folklore>. Consulted 10/08/2016.

revealing multiple layers of meaning, that are not always converging.

On a meta-textual level, Nabokov's, Huxley's and Spark's novels also act as a fictional space outside chronological stability in which the reader is forced to follow the narrator's flashbacks and anticipations, losing all bearings within the superimposed fragments of memory. On every level the confusion in the novels between right and wrong, good and evil, and even reliable narratorial judgement on the events recounted, leads to a questioning of identity both in the intradiagetic space and on an extradiagetic level.

The unreliability of the narrator is constant: "it was only in retrospect that they could see Miss Brodie's affair with Mr Lowther for what it was, that is to say, in a factual light (Spark 85). The narrator's voice thereby recognizes the impossibility of objectivity while delivering the novel's substance. Nabokov's narratorial strategy is to undermine Pnin's legitimacy and reliability but the narratorial voice can also be considered thwarted, misleading and unreliable as the two voices construct a multifaceted novel: the author's strategy is to push the reader to make his own mind up as to the interpretation to be given to the diagesis. In this manner, the narrator can also be linked to the unreliable teacher. The reader is in the same position as a child in a classroom, delivered into the hands of a subjective narratorial authority. The position of the reader echoes that of Sandy in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* inferring significance from what is said, seen or heard and interpreting it to the best of her possibilities. She is the interface between author and reader towards whom the novel converges. Through the subjective interstices created by individual interpretation, emancipation from moral ties is the outcome of this education, just as Sandy has chewed off her hat string, liberated as she is from the constraints of conformity and yet haunted by the memory of Miss Brodie's extravagances.

Nabokov's use of a double or triple reading of the same event, as the car driving experience told by an omniscient narrator in Pnin's name and then told again by Cockerell to the narrator embodied in Pnin's Russian "friend," subverts the stability of the narration. The subversion of his life story by Cockerell and the narrator leaves Pnin dispossessed of his own history. The subversion of the fictional character's voice by other figures in the novel and by the narrator illustrates how the undermining and subversion of discourse happens on all levels. The final chapter of the novel is a reappraisal of all Pnin's already-related activity at Waindell College, through the mocking eyes of "Jack Cockerell, Chairman of English [...] [who] considered Pnin a joke." (Nabokov 117). Cockerell

is the “shadow-tail”¹¹⁷(Nabokov 73) of the narrator and Pnin himself: “I must admit that Jack Cockerel impersonated Pnin to perfection. He went on for at least two hours, showing me everything—Pnin teaching, Pnin eating, Pnin ogling a co-ed[...].”(Nabokov 156). The cutting display of this impersonation finally works against its initiator: “I fell to wondering if by some poetical vengeance this Pnin business had not become with Cockerell the kind of fatal obsession which substitutes its own victim for that of the initial ridicule”(Nabokov 158). Cockerell's impersonation becomes unbearable to the narrator and painful for the reader. Maybe because it is an exhaustive catalogue of snapshots, categorising an individual as if he were an animal in a zoo, subverting his humanity into the infinite multiplicity of representations of his habits and posture, in short, a dehumanization of the subject of observation.

In the same way, in Nabokov's novel, the subversion of the character's version of events by the narrator on the one hand and the narrator's arrival within the space of the novel on the other hand, all provoke the reader to reassess the understanding he or she has constructed throughout the novel. In this way the narrator and the faculty members who have dressed Pnin down throughout the novel are exposed and Pnin retrieves his dignity in the penultimate paragraph of the novel as “free at last [he] spurted up the shining road, which one could make out narrowing to a thread of gold in the soft mist where hill after hill made beauty of distance, and where simply anything might happen”(Nabokov 159). These eulogistic lines concerning a light-filled view (the road is described as “shining”) and the infinite possibilities of an open landscape (linked to the noun “beauty”) symbolising the promise of a prosperous future (“thread of gold”) confer to the end of the novel a fairytale type ending in which Pnin seems projected towards an American Eden. What has been previously revealed about the figure's incapacity to cope with the real world undermines this vision or rather provokes a second reading of the passage in which the “soft mist” could be a euphemism for death, his vision being one of heaven. Whatever the nature of Pnin's escape, it draws the reader's attention to the constraints and forms of enclosure that are present, not only in *Pnin* but in all three novels. It is these forms of structural, stylistic, metaphorical or symbolic enclosure which will now be brought under study.

117 “Victor was glad to learn that 'squirrel' came from a Greek word which meant 'shadow-tail'”(Nabokov 73).

3. Enclosure, Fate and the self-made individual

In the last part of this work, keeping in mind the elements that have been discussed above, the theme of enclosure and the different expressions it takes within the novels will be apprehended. We will analyse how dichotomies, echoing that of enclosure and freedom in the novels, bring into play the notion of fate and predestination, dichotomy itself being a form of enclosure.

In these works of fiction the classroom is an easily identified space in which groups of students are by convention enclosed and outside of which Pnin “had long ceased to notice the existence of students on the campus”(Nabokov 61). Symbolically the classroom is the teacher's territory. However in the novels other spaces appear to have more significance. For Pnin the classroom is a safe place where he can remain in between classes: “he did not bother to leave the classroom between his dismissed Elementary and the Advanced that was trickling in”(Nabokov 57). However “his favourite haunt”(Nabokov 60) is Waindell College Library where he has a “favourite alcove”(Nabokov 62). This space is the fixed immutable centre of Pnin's unstable universe. On the other hand, as has already been noted, Miss Brodie invests a much larger space beyond the classroom and school grounds, covering the town of Edinburgh, where she takes the Brodie set on an excursion, reaching the village of Cramond on the outskirts of Edinburgh where Mr Lowther lives, down to London, and across the Channel to Europe where she travels each summer. The centre of her sphere of influence can be considered the elm in the school park. Huxley never portrays his teacher figure in a class environment. Gumbriel invests the dream world of his chimera, out of touch with the physical spaces around him. The vision of the chapel and the rusticity of its benches are only prompts for his imagination, just as his “lodgings” are resumed to a “chair” (Huxley 12, 13), the private axis of his mental space. Like a puppet, he appears to stand or be seated according to what is expected of him, while remaining at least partially oblivious to his surroundings. Huxley satirises not so much the teacher figure as the system to which he must conform.

The authors use the ritualised teaching space within and outside the classroom as an efficient background of common knowledge shared by the reader, allowing the activation of a mass of inferred action that remains unstated in the novels, but also as a closed space defining the

roles of the characters within. It has already been observed that ritual, as an empowering process of repetition, is used both intradiagetically by the narrator and characters, mimicking the learning process, and extradiagetically by the author to revisit information, modifying the reader's interpretation or highlighting characters' varying visions of events. The retelling of the kiss between Miss Brodie and Mr Lloyd in the art room recalls a closed circuit of information; it is first evoked in a direct speech dialogue between the girls just after Monica has witnessed it (Spark 51), then evoked in retrospect by Miss Brodie just before her death (Spark 56), thirdly romanticised in the fake love correspondence between Miss Brodie and Mr Lowther written by young Jenny and Sandy (Spark 73). Each version is warped with regard to the previous one and delivered in chronological disorder, leaving the reader to reconstruct a personal version of events.

In the same manner the authors reveal how the enclosure within the school environment brings the teacher figures to perceive the outside world through a filter. Negation, sublimation or deformation of the outside world and events, takes place within the school environment in the novels. For Gumbriel the real world is negated: "the vast window" in the chapel, far from opening onto the outside is "all blue and jaundiced and bloody with nineteenth century glass"(Huxley 1). The historical glass actually stands in the way of the beholder, tending a human-like mirror. The use of the adjectives "blue", "jaundiced" and "bloody" to evoke the primary colours, confronts Gumbriel with his own mortal condition reflected by the stained glass window. Miss Brodie's gullibility to fascist propaganda in Italy and Germany reflects her romantic ideal of autocracy: "As I was saying, Mussolini has performed feats of magnitude and unemployment is even farther abolished under him than it was last year"(Spark 45). Her misuse of the term "abolished" which defines a final eradication¹¹⁸ that can go no "farther" also highlights a semantic shift that denotes a deformation of reality. In *Pnin*, the de-familiarisation of a library window at dusk allows the reader to enter Pnin's mental landscape: "[Pnin] fixed his mild gaze on the window above, where, gradually, through his dissolving meditation, there appeared the violet-blue air of dusk, silver tooled by the reflection of the fluorescent lights of the ceiling, and among spidery black twigs, a mirrored row of bright book spines"(Nabokov 65). Pnin is portrayed emerging from his intellectual preoccupations to contemplate, through the window, an intermingling of the library reflection and the view of the college grounds. The elements from the outside are semantically linked to darkness "violet-blue", "dusk", with a menacing undertone "spidery", "black". The reflected interior is synonymous with

118 Merriam Webster online dictionary definition: to officially end or stop (something, such as a law) : to completely do away with (something). Consulted 01/08/2016.

light, “fluorescent”; opulence: “silver”; mastery: “tooled”. Furthermore “Bright book spines” gives the reader a sense of light but also brilliance, intelligence and rectitude while the use of “book” in an adjectival position qualifying the noun “spine” at once humanises the books and highlights their physicality. Pnin's eye travels from one reality to the other but focuses finally on the reflection, closing Pnin into his “warm world of scholarship”. For the three teacher figures, the mundane pragmatic world resembles a flat two dimensional image, a slide projection on a class wall, a reflection on a window pane, or a propaganda leaflet, while the inner world of intellectual pursuits transforms perceptions and brings objects to life: “ZFL was now asleep in Pnin's lap”(Nabokov 67). Pnin's familiarity of this book, whose transformation into a kind of pet takes place over twelve pages in the novel, begins with its presentation: “Volume 18 — mainly devoted to Tolstoyana— of *Sovetskiy Zolotoy Fon Literaturi* (Soviet Gold Fund of Literature), Moskva-Leningrad, 1940.”(Nabokov, 55). It then becomes “*Zol.Fond.Lit*” (Nabokov 56, 57, 61). It finally appears as “ZFL” once Pnin has confronted a Russian colleague and the librarian over someone else wanting the volume (that other person being Pnin himself). In the adoption process the book's name has lost its foreign italics becoming a hybrid familiar, domesticated in Pnin's transcultural world. Victor's visions of a deformed world through a glass (Nabokov 88) or in the chrome body of a car (Nabokov 80), remind the reader of the subjectivity of vision. The merging of different planes questions the choice of level of analysis to be privileged. “Making the scenery penetrate the automobile”(Nabokov 80) is at once surrealist and plainly observational. The choice of the view point is the critical nexus for the authors, as even the perception of the tangible physical world is revealed to be influenced by the prism of individual experience. Isolation in an individual hermetic perception of the world can then be considered a threat for the characters.

The teacher figures in the novels are represented entrapped in the mundane if not dull routine of the school year, punctuated by holidays. Spark's novel revolves around the school timetable and yearly events, onto which the girls' memories are attached. The passing of time in Pnin's teaching activity on the Waindell campus is inscribed in his expectation of being given a fixed tenure: “‘Naturally I am expecting that I will get tenure at last' said Pnin rather slyly. 'I am now assistant teacher nine years. Years run. Soon I will be Assistant Emeritus’”(Nabokov 140). Gumbriel counts the terms in despair. The predetermined, fixed and immutable nature of the school calendar can be linked for the authors with a form of fatality, and sense of predestination. For

Spark the teacher is likened to a vestal exercising a rite: “She was in one of her prophetic moods”(Spark 106). The authors are relying on the readers' familiarity with educational proceedings based on assemblies and ceremonies such as Mass and rituals¹¹⁹ such as passages from one stage to the next: the state of assistant to professor or the passage from junior to senior school. In this case the teacher figures can be considered as the symbolic priests and priestesses of the temple of knowledge, as such they are enclosed within a fixed role. Whether they fulfil the role satisfactorily is another question that each author under study explores negatively: Spark mainly from the point of view of the students, Nabokov from the point of view of colleagues (the narrator being revealed to be one of them), Huxley from the inner conscience of the teacher and in his father's eyes. Neither Miss Brodie nor Pnin question their identity as teachers, but both are rejected by the system, Gumbriel takes the lead and leaves the job. All are therefore, by the end of the novels, excluded from the closed sphere of teaching. In fact all three authors express a dichotomy between teaching and living fully in their texts while the world outside the realm of teaching also appears dangerous. One of the possible subtexts of the three novels could be interpreted as “comply or die” since symbolically, the “freak” teacher figures, once eliminated, no longer have the ceremonial framework with which to the guard off fate and death: “‘And where will fate send me [...] death,’ declaimed inspired Pnin, throwing his head back and translating with brave literality, ‘in fight, in travel or in waves?’”(Nabokov 56). The expression of individual freedom appears as a danger threatening the isolated teacher figure.

Another dichotomy that can be observed in the three novels is that of the individual as opposed to the group. The three teacher figures, as has been seen, are isolated and considered as not belonging to the body of teachers at large, against which they may be set, like Miss Brodie—“Miss Brodie's colleagues from the junior school had been gradually turning against her”(Spark 47), or by whom they may be rejected like Pnin —“assistant Professor Pnin must be left in the lurch”(Nabokov 116)—, finally the figure of Gumbriel appears to have no attachments to a larger body that “would be an excellent profession if every one who went into it were as much interested in teaching as you are in your job, Porteous, or I in mine”(Huxley 17). For his father, Gumbriel belongs to a group of “undecided creatures”(Huxley 17) manifestly lacking the conviction to fulfil an educational role. The acceptance of a “freak”(Nabokov 27) within the teaching body can

119 “Ritual is transformative, ceremony confirmatory”. Ashley Kathleen, M. Ed. *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology*. Indianapolis : Indianapolis University Press, 1990,145.

be understood in the explanation given by the narrator of *Pnin* for Lake's presence. At St Bart's, Victor's school it is considered as "fashionable to have a least one distinguished freak on the staff"(Nabokov 80). The reason of Miss Brodie's peers' and superior's disapproval is that her students cut themselves off from the larger group of pupils and become individuals, "they were held in suspicion and not much liking. They had no team spirit"(Spark 6). They have become freed from the group and, more insidiously, the group's morals. They are "useless to the school as a school"(Spark 5).

The counter-identity forged by Miss Brodie at the expense of the school turns these female students into renegades instead of integrating them into the larger social body. Metaphorically the way they wear their hats in the incipit of the novel is significant. "Hatlessness was an offence. Certain departures from the proper set of the hat on the head were overlooked [...] so long as nobody wore their hat at an angle"(Spark 5). Brodie's influence has taught the girls how to remain on the knife edge between the proper and the offensive, expressing a form of personal liberty. "The five girls [...] wore their hats each with a definite difference"(Spark 5). Sandy pushes this to the hilt, her hat is "as far back as it could possibly go"(Spark 7). Her close scrutiny of Miss Brodie's example will bring her to explore and reveal the extent of the immoral nature of her role model. Miss Brodie senses that Sandy's behaviour reflects her own departure from the expected norm: "One day, Sandy, you will go too far for my liking"(Spark 66). Her disapproval of Sandy echoes that of the institution toward her.

The students are primarily identified as an anonymous mass, required to appear in "functional classroom concentrations"(Nabokov 61), moving as one body, like a natural phenomenon —"with the noise like the breaking of a wave, five hundred turned to the east."(Huxley 5)—"All heads turned to look at the reproduction."(Spark 22). The control that teachers exert over this body of students, like that exerted over natural forces harnessed for human profit, is visible in the intradiagetic direct speech ordering of the groups:"form a single file, now, please and walk with your heads up"(Spark 23). Exclusion from the group is expressed as a punishment: "Miss Brodie grasped Mary's arm, jerked her to her feet and propelled her to the door where she thrust her outside and shut the door"(Spark 50). The physical brutality of any exclusion from the group is tangible in the semantics of the verbs chosen: "grasped," "jerked," "propelled," "thrust," "shut." Their accumulation within one sentence gives a precipitated rhythm to the action. Furthermore by breaking down the action into a storyboard continuity, the reader

follows the action in the group's eyes, in a blow by blow recounting of events. The description involves only the teacher's actions as if the individual thrown out no longer has an identity or outside of the group.

However the group identities are all broken down at some point and in some way in the three novels as certain students are identified within the narrative discourse. Their names isolate them from the anonymous group categorisation, but their individuality often remains nevertheless subjected to subgroups personifying the wider group and group dynamics. In Huxley's novels they are nine, whose homework is on the top of the pile for correction. There is no specific reason for these individuals to surface amongst the crowd but within the group Gumbriel pinpoints a favourite, Garstang, who evades the homework question: "Gumbriel would have liked to give him full marks"(Huxley 10). The conditional tense categorises this eventuality as one of Gumbriel's dreams. In this manner the privileged relationship remains hypothetical. Miss Brodie has selected six girls to become the "corporate Brodie set"(Spark 40), among whom Mary MacGregor, the teacher's scapegoat, is thrown out of the classroom. The sacrificial figure of Mary undergoes a disciplinary technique used by Miss Brodie to keep control of the group as a whole. "[Miss Brodie] returned as one who had solved the whole problem, as indeed she had, for the violent action had sobered the girls"(Spark 50). Pnin is aided by three students, Betty Bliss and Marilyn Hohn (two attractive female students whose names recall Betty Boop and Marilyn Monroe) and Charles Macbeth, a male student considered by Pnin to be "a madman" with a prodigious memory (a reminder of what is required to remember the text of a Shakespearian tragedy). The subgroup escapes from the wider group identity as they become individual figures in the plot and for the reader. However their classification becomes all the more enclosing. Pnin categorises all his female students solely on their attractiveness, remarking "a dazzling flow of unsuspected lovely laughter transfiguring Josephine, who was not pretty, while Eileen, who was, dissolved in a jelly of unbecoming giggles"(Nabokov 11). The Brodie girls are all six modelled by Miss Brodie for an achievement or characteristic that she endows each with: Mary is the fool characterized by "her stupidity of mind"(Spark 126), Rose the lover, "inescapably famous for sex"(Spark 119), Sandy the secret agent "destined [...]for psychology", Eunice at once Ariel¹²⁰ and the *Comedia del Arte* figure, in "her

120 "But the main ingredients of Ariel's zephyr-like constitution are shown in his leading inclinations, as he naturally has most affinity for that of which he is framed. Moral ties are irksome to him; they are not his proper element" "The Contrast Between Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest*". From *The Tempest*. Ed. Henry Norman Hudson. New York: Ginn and Co., 1909. <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/thetempest/hudsonarielcontrast.html>. Consulted 29/05/2016.

harlequin outfit" (Spark 101), Monica is famed for mathematics and Jenny for her beauty. Paradoxically these roles, far from personalizing their identities, recall the rigidity and superficiality of figures on Tarot cards or graphic vignettes as well as highlighting Miss Brodie's own hubris: "Sandy felt warmly towards Miss Brodie at those times when she saw how she was misled in her idea of Rose." (Spark, 111). This is further expressed by Sandy's reaction to Mr Lloyd's suggestion of a group portrait, for her it would "look like one big Miss Jean Brodie" (Spark 102). Rather than revealing their individuality the novel explores their "brodierness". A common identity reflecting her own, into which they have organically merged: "[it] had worked itself into their bones" (Spark 115). In the course of the novel the merging of these identities, fixed by Miss Brodie, are perceived by Sandy as a growing body, an extension of Miss Brodie, creating a mythological dragon, "Sandy[...] understood them as a body with Miss Brodie for a head" (Spark 30). The only student figure catalogued as rebellious in the three novels is a cameo-character: Joyce Emily Hammond appears furtively in Spark's novel as the trigger to Miss Brodie's downfall. "Her alleged delinquency" is myth as "she was apparently a delinquent by name only" (Spark 117-118). Yet again the identity given is deceptive. Furthermore Joyce Emily's only motivation is to belong to a group: "it was the Brodie set to which Joyce Emily most desired to attach herself" (Spark 117).

In the same manner as the student figures are locked in a generic identity, so the teacher figures are locked in a professional straitjacket. Paradoxically unattainable for the teacher, living freely outside of the teaching framework and the temporal holiday/school dichotomy is portrayed or fantasized as more intense and satisfying. Gumbriel fantasizes on a metamorphosed life: "All chance encounters reoccurred, all plotted opportunities reoccurred; he knew, now how to live, how to take advantage of them" (Huxley 12). The access to this world is rendered hypothetical by the impossible reoccurrence of "chance encounters" and "plotted opportunities" and the repetition of "how" echoing a question more than an affirmation. This desirable world is also represented as barred symbolically by distance and complex to reach. Pnin arrives at his friends' house for the holidays after having struggled through a labyrinth: "an automobile[...] had turned off the highway just before reaching the bridge and was now nosing poking this way and that in a maze¹²¹ of doubtful roads" (Nabokov 93). The trope of being lost, like a wandering Don Quichotte, in the "maze of doubtful roads" beyond navigational difficulties, hints at Pnin's incapacity to find a

121 My underlining.

destination, symbolising an unattainable space outside his inner world and memories where he can belong and project a future.

The teacher is in effect reduced to a memorial role, at first glance dedicated to linking the past to the present. The classroom is first and foremost a place of recollection, the teacher transmitting knowledge from the past. However Miss Brodie re-actualises it, confuses past and present by embodying herself in the historical female figures: "I shall tell you a little more about about Italy. I met a young poet by a fountain. Here is a picture of Dante meeting Beatrice [...] on the *Ponte Vecchio*" (Spark 45). The lack of transition, between the recollection of the personal event and the presentation of an image of another similar but fictional event, creates a syncretic mental image for the pupils and reader, in which Miss Brodie and Beatrice merge into one figure. Pnin initiates his students to Pushkin's poetry, sidestepping the elementary "language exercises" (Nabokov 56): "That line in the absurd Russian grammar [...] was really the opening of a famous poem" (Nabokov 56). Pnin's effort to contextualise the sentence becomes a personal and fateful questioning, underlined by his "brave literality" (Nabokov 56). The highlighting of the spur of the moment translation brings the reader's attention to his interpretation of Pushkin's poem, more than the poem itself. Interestingly, it appears that through their presentation of the past the teacher figures are also talking about themselves.

The naturally representative and spectacular nature of the role of teacher, facing a public, induces a confusion between the object and subject of study. The three authors depict the teacher figures in the act of staging their own lives in a metonymic slide from teacher as vehicle to teacher as subject: Pnin's "autobiographical titbits" (Nabokov 10) are given to his pupils "when he would remove his glasses to beam at the past while massaging the lenses of the present" (Nabokov 10). Gumbrell's examination of conscience is provoked by a homework subject "'Give a brief account of the character and career of Pope Pius IX, *with dates whenever possible.*' Gumbrell leaned back in his chair and thought of his own character and dates" (Huxley 9). The self reflexive automatism of the teacher figures bring to light the confusion between contextualisation and self centredness. The romanticization of the story of Brodie's felled fiancé (Spark 13) that replaces history lessons is the epitome of this drift. The shift in the content of transmission reveals the figures' own paradox, caught between the desire to live an individual autonomous life and the necessity to conform to the transmissive nature of the teacher's role to exist within a social group. The three teacher figures' attempt at resolution appears to be a more or less intense self dramatisation.

The mythology of self is primary in the cult of individualism and often begins as paradox, articulating the meaning of "freedom" within a world of political and cultural, in essence, social constraints. The *mythos* of individualism is the story of law and its transgression, and more often than not, it is also the story where the hero breaks or defies the law—in a world defined by oppression, upheaval, turmoil, and change—in order to form a more perfect union. Thus the state theme of cohesion, although foreign to individualism, may be the outcome of individual heroic action.¹²²

The dynamic tension between individuality and group identity appears to be a driving force in the novels, along with the dramatic tension derived from the confusion between teacher-as-medium-between-pupils-and-knowledge, and teacher-as-object-of-study.

3.1 Fate

The teacher figures are portrayed at the centre of a web of influences, surveillance, control and constraining time, thus determining a 'teacher' identity that overrides the individual. Furthermore the notion of devotion to the profession implies a relinquishing of any personal ambition. For Huxley senior, teaching is “the last refuge of feeble minds with a classical education”(Huxley 17). The teacher's possible submission or rebellion against the dictates of this identity recall the fateful enclosure of Greek heroes, whose fateful choices confront them to a higher judgement.

The most elemental level of fateful enclosure experienced by the characters in the novel is within the uncomfortable body. Pnin's seizures are physical manifestations of pain that bring the physical body to the fore, underlining his mortality: “I don't know if it has ever been noted before that one of the main characteristics of life is discreteness. Unless a film of flesh envelops us we die. Man exists only insofar as he is separated from his surroundings”(Nabokov 17). The separate nature of “Man” as defined by the narrator brings Pnin's fundamental isolation and mortality to the fore. The uncomfot felt by Gumbriel during Mass is a physical sensation bringing his fragile “bony” body to the reader's attention. Miss Brodie's sickness and death are registered as events only touched on, at the edge of the novel's scope. These events remain guiltily veiled, as if they were half told consequences of Miss Brodie's actions.

The strong incarnation of the three teacher figures in a physical body is notable. For Pnin

122 Hughes C. Delahoyde “Mythology of Self” Washington State University website. http://public.wsu.edu/~hughesc/myth_of_self.htm Consulted 30/04/2016.

the body is the place of integration into the American way of life. He adapts his body language—[He] crossed his legs *pro amerikanski* (the American way)”(Nabokov 28)—, he also adapts his dress, changing from garters to socks, and his new false teeth are the symbol of America,— “a firm mouthful of efficient, alabastrine, humane America” (Nabokov 32). Miss Brodie's body is the basis of her domination, over the class and over men. Her physical positioning and the attitude she strikes are conceived as poses: “Miss Brodie seated herself nobly [...] with her legs apart under her loose brown skirt which came well over her knees”(Spark 49). For Gumbriel, the discomfort he suffers makes his body the place of submission. The body, as the *sine qua non* of human existence, is present in these works of fiction. However the threat of escape from the body through death also pervades the three novels in subtext. Pnin's attacks leave him on the threshold of a near death experience. The death of Gumbriel's mother overcasts the first chapter as he attempts to evade painful memories: “He had travelled up from school to see her just before she died”(Huxley 3). In the second Chapter of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, her death has been already evoked offhandedly by Eunice: “Remind me while we're there to go and visit Miss Brodie's grave”(Spark 27). Death appears for the three authors to be an inescapable finality that the fictional characters are confronted with. The authors' use of anticipation, revealing outcomes early on in the novels strengthens the reader's sense of fatality. The focus is no longer on what will happen, that being fixed in advanced and impossible to change, but on how it will come about, and why.

The wider presence of intertextuality appears to be another important element underscoring the secondary and “quoting” nature of the teacher's activity, dissolving personal identity in a pool of references. The literary spaces invested in the novels are permeable, incorporating quotations of, and references to, other texts, either poetic—“And where will fate send me[...]death[...], in fight, in travel or in waves?”(Nabokov 56)—, novelistic, as when Jack London's novel *The Son of the Wolf* is misinterpreted by Victor to be a Russian novel (Nabokov 90) or epistolary, like the fake correspondence between Miss Brodie and Mr Lowther (Spark 73). Beyond the incorporation of various writing genres, references to other art forms are also notable as in Gumbriel's exhaustive dream catalogue of possessions: “After dinner there were Mozart Quartets; he opened his portfolios and showed his Daumiers, his Tiepolos, his Canaletto sketches, his drawings by Picasso and Lewis (Huxley 11). Expansion beyond the limits of a single level of

narration and the lack of respect for the linearity of chronology, as well as the references to other artistic domains and works of art all point towards the authors' scheme to ordain the fictional world for his or her needs, a godlike figure presiding over the fate of the characters.

Facing this ominous creator, the fictional teacher, made in his image, is inherently isolated, metaphorically enclosed in the space of the classroom, facing a group of students on the one hand, and hierarchical institutions on the other. The solitude of the individual depicted by the three authors as a constitutive element of their social identity, also mirrors the authors' solitude as a writer. The teacher's proto-fictional action is highlighted by the fact that all three teacher figures are depicted in the act of some form or another of writing or narration. Gumbriel writes to the headmaster to denounce his methods, Pnin is engrossed in the writing of his history of Russia and Miss Brodie is a storyteller in Sandy's perception: "Sandy was fascinated by this method of making patterns with facts"(Spark 72). The confusion between the teacher figure, narrator and writer figures encloses the novels in a play of mirrors since neither narrators or characters are giving a final, stable version of events. However, all three authors work within precise forms both by patterning and repetition, thereby giving structure to their narrations and a sense of fatality that overshadows the reader in his or her own personal reconstruction of events.

"Form" is a capacious and charged term; it has elicited lively debates concerning its ability to identify distinct or hybrid genres or texts. Like "genre" and "text," "form" harbours a multitude of meanings, commonly including shape, what can be seen or felt, as in the body of something natural, mechanical, artistic—or even artificial. "Form's" artifice can be paradoxical. "Form made by humans is a distinct phenomenon," T. J. Clark observed in the treatise that served as a core English Institute text in the 2013 forum on "*Form*." Yet Clark also notes, "human forms seem to take off from ... the kinds of complex symmetry and patterning found in the mineral, animal, and vegetable world. Within music, literature, and the visual or plastic arts, the pattern and repetition that signals "form" as holding distinct sounds, scenes, or shapes also renders "form" as structure, form as style."¹²³

The novel as a closed form or pattern echoes the ritualised formality of the classroom. One level of narration may lead to another by a change of form or a collusion of forms, as with Sandy's and Jenny's letter writing. In this case, significance is made by using underlying forms through

¹²³ Meta Duewa Jones. "Reframing Exposure: Natasha Trethewey's Forms of Enclosure" *E.L.H.*, Vol.82,N°2 Summer 2015. 407-429 | 10.1353/elh.2015.0011. From <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/583631>. Consulted 19/05/2016.

which characters, intradigetically, and the reader, in the cooperative experience of interpretation, interpret the message of the work subjectively. Form is an expression of fatality, as the author has deemed to arrange it for the characters, enhancing the reader's sense of destiny for the characters.

The rendition of time as a fundamental framework is a notable element of the forms employed which will now be examined. Time is all at once a necessary element to the learning process, a constitutive element of the teaching experience and the constraint any novel must deal with in the expression of events and character development. Furthermore the passing of time is the basis of any human experience. In view of this, the relationship to time, visible within the three novels, can be interestingly analysed with the help of Genette's order:¹²⁴

The term Genette uses to designate non-chronological order is *anachrony*. There are two types of anachrony:

1. *Analepsis*: The narrator recounts after the fact an event that took place earlier than the present point in the main story. [...]
2. *Prolepsis*: The narrator anticipates events that will occur after the main story ends.

¹²⁵

The treatment of time within the novels plays with the notion of full circle narration. Huxley uses the first chapter of *Antic Hay* as a prelude to the rest of the novel, this short enclosed fictional space allowing the main character to express the full scope of his multidimensional self in the present, the past and an anticipated future, thus revealing the limitations set by the author to his possibilities. The incipit has Gumbriel "wandering, pondering and speculating," the consequence of this reflection appears in the final lines of the chapter: "he picked up his pen and denounced" (Huxley 13). The reader has been taken on an intimate tour of the character and this prelude colours the readers' understanding of Gumbriel's later tribulations. In a similar way, Nabokov's omniscient narrator reveals in the first chapter much of the character. However, the first chapter leading to the "Cremona Speech" (Nabokov 22-24), leaves the narration suspended. It is

¹²⁴ "Order is the relation between the sequencing of events in the story and their arrangement in the narrative. The narrator may choose to present the events in the order they occurred, that is, chronologically, or he can recount them out of order. For example, detective novels often begin with a murder that has to be solved. The events preceding the crime, along with the facts leading to the killer, are presented afterwards. The order in which the events actually occurred does not match the order in which they are presented in the narrative. This mixing of temporal order yields a more gripping, complex plot." Lucie Guillemette, Cynthia Lévesque, "Narratology" 2008, in Louis Hébert (dir.), *Signo* [online], Rimouski (Quebec). <http://www.signosemio.com/genette/narratology.asp>. Consulted 01/05/2016.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

only returned to at the end of the novel: “‘and now,’ he said, ‘I am going to tell you the story of Pnin rising to address the Cremona Women's Club and discovering he had brought the wrong lecture’”(Nabokov 160). As in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, another level of narration has been attained at this point in the novel. The shift of narratorial identity echoes Dante's advancing through the different spheres of hell, purgatory and heaven, changing guide as he goes. The narration folds back into itself, returning to the final lines of the first chapter. The intervening fictional space, the body of the novel covering six chapters, becomes a parenthesis, annihilating Pnin's attempt to exist outside of the narratorial voice.

Spark's novel is an intricate weaving of levels of narration. Chronological analepsis and prolepsis are present throughout, and here again the end falls back in on itself with Sandy's closing avowal that recalls the title of the novel: “‘there was a Miss Jean Brodie in her prime’”(Spark 128). The enclosure within a defined narration that can be told from an infinity of angles and that returns upon itself endlessly is mirrored by the fictional characters' continual reappraisal of events, as seen previously, reinforcing the sense of inevitability of events.

The notion of fatality and predestination, that can be considered expressed by the circular narration identified in the novels, is further underlined by the authors' explicit references to fate and fatality: “‘and everything had happened before in that exact sequence’”(Nabokov 44-45). In Spark's novel Miss Brodie's fate is stated and sealed by the narrator early on in the novel. It is the mechanisms of fate that hold the reader's attention, as in a Greek tragedy. The Kerr sisters' conviction that “‘God had planned for practically everybody before they were born a nasty surprise for when they died’”(Spark 108) points at an inescapable destiny. The enclosure within fatality is also present in Gumbriel's mother's words that he remembers during his musing at chapel: “‘And she had spoken to him. A few words only; but they had contained all the wisdom he needed to live by. She had told him what he was, and what he should try to be, and how to be it’”(Huxley 3). Pnin's mysterious “‘heart attacks’” that bring hallucinations from the past and his love of melancholic Pushkin verses (“‘where will fate send me death, in fight, in travel or in waves?’”¹²⁶) are permanent

126 “[...]I give way to my thoughts.

I say to myself: the years are fleeting,
 And however many there seem to be,
 We must all go under the eternal vault,
 And someone's hour is already at hand.

From *Yevgeny Onegin* by A.Pushkin from <http://www.pushkins-poems.com>. Consulted 01/08/2016.

reminders of his mortality.

The depiction of the mortal body, chronological deconstruction and enclosed spaces in the novels appear to be used by the authors to express the enclosure within a predestined fate that is made significant in retrospect. It is only as a narrative construction that this predestination appears, *a posteriori*. In this sense, time is the essential element of narration, expressing a form of celestial retribution, a nemesis that threatens the characters. The capacity of the fictional characters to escape this threat and gain control over their self definition will now be ascertained.

3.2. Individual freedom: self definition.

The stern and grim sense of fatality that is present in all three novels is counterbalanced by the depiction of characters in the act of escaping from their predestined fate. The expression of the rebellious individual's vital impulse can be found in several aspects of the novels, the first of which being the portrayal of the student's experience. It is remarkable that the intensity of the feuds over, and blatant lacks in, the educational projects "denounced" (Huxley 13) in the three novels, are temporized by the fact that all three authors distinguish the student's experience from the teachers' projects. The students' experience, while remaining a background concern in the three novels, is present in each of them and gives another angle of approach to the subject matter on hand, revealing individual resistance.

Both Huxley and Nabokov explore the characters' own experience as a student, whereas the narratorial authority in Spark's novel is a community of voices shared between the Brodie set. Nabokov steps aside from the teacher's point of view by recounting, in Pnin's terms, Pnin's driving lessons:

During actual lessons [...] a harsh instructor [...] cramped his style,, issued unnecessary directives in yelps of technical slang, tried to wrestle the wheel from him at corners, and kept irritating a calm, intelligent pupil with expressions of vulgar detraction. (Nabokov 94)

The use of adjectives "harsh," "vulgar," "unnecessary," "technical" to describe the instruction as opposed to the "calm intelligent pupil" sets up a dichotomy of misunderstanding, the irony of which reposes in Pnin's optimistic self evaluation. The text also reveals salient aspects of teaching for the student: the manner of delivery primes over the content and the adjective

“technical” implies Pnin's misunderstanding of the terms used. Furthermore the tension involved in the learning process is visible in the verbs referring to physical and spoken aggression: “to cramp,” “to issue directives,” “to wrestle,” “to irritate.” The constraints of integrating the physical skills of driving oppose Pnin's abstract and “warm world of scholarship”(Nabokov 34). The semantic field of vulgarity, that Pnin links to ignorance when describing Betty's “servant maid's mind”(Nabokov 127) is here the sign of Pnin resisting the instructions given, which do not engage his mind but his physical body in action. The body/mind dichotomy inherent in Western culture since Antiquity¹²⁷ comes here to the forefront of Nabokov's depiction of Pnin's representations, as a comical setback. As a learner, his resistance to instruction is also the expression of his self-determination.

Just as Pnin manages, despite his difficulties, to get his driving licence, so the students in the classroom contexts depicted in the novels, appear to be resilient. They are depicted as fundamentally distant from the incoherences of curricula and classroom absurdities. The Brodie set move on to the secondary school relatively unscathed. One of Brodie's chosen pupils “shook off Miss Brodie's influence as a dog shakes pond water from it's coat”(Spark 119). Likening her influence to water echoes her ubiquitous influence, infiltrating every level of her pupils lives. However the image of a wet animal indicates that Miss Brodie's influence has not affected the innate nature of the pupil. Another girl “had not thought much about Miss Jean Brodie”(Spark 15) disregarding her influence as anecdotal. Gumbriel's own scholarly progress as a child seems solely influenced by his personal relationships with his peers, offhandedly revealing a notable lack of correlation between scholarly success and capacity. —“He had done badly in his exams, on purpose; he had been frightened of Sadler, who was in the same form, and wanted to get the prize”(Huxley 9)— later “he had done badly that term too; not on purpose, but because he had spent so much time helping young Vickers with his work”(Huxley 9). Pnin's students “dutifully”(Nabokov 56) take notes during his lessons but relieve the monotony “in loud young laughter”(Nabokov 57). Sandy's escape from Miss Brodie's influence involves her becoming a nun. Thus cutting herself off from her own sexuality, she manages to thwart Miss Brodie's prediction

127 “According to many cultural theorists, the dualistic construction of the human mind and body, explicated by René Descartes with Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian roots, has shaped dominant discourses about health and morality in the United States and Western Europe.” Annamarie O'Brian. “Mind Over Matter: Expressions of Mind/Body Dualism in Thinspiration”, 2013, University of Liege. From <https://www.academia.edu>. Consulted 15/05/2016.

“after all, Sandy[...] you are destined to be the great lover”(Spark 124).

The authors all seem to be foretelling an impending threat through narrations centred around teacher figures. It may be that the teachers (and students) run the risk of no longer being governed by moral dictates, which curbs their individualities and eccentricities to conform to the norm, but may rather be under the influence of another governing force, namely desire. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* Jenny and Sandy take into their own hands the creation of a secondary text, that is evocatively concealed “between sheets of music”(Spark 41). Music has here an erotic undertone as the sheets of paper connote the sheets of a bed. The title of the girls' text is “*The Mountain Eyrie*, the true love story of Miss Jean Brodie”(Spark 41). This manuscript explores what Miss Brodie conceals of her intimacy in a further semantic shift of desire from Miss Brodie's person to her capacity to spin a story: “Sandy was fascinated by this method of making patterns with facts”(Spark 72). Through their fascination with the teacher figure and imitation of her technique the young girls become disenfranchised from her as the narrator of their lives, inverting the power balance by taking the diegesis into their own hands. Elsewhere Sandy explores auto-fiction, in her daydreams of romantic action: “Miss Sandy Stranger requests the pleasure of Mr Alan Breck's company at dinner on Tuesday the 6th of January at 8 o'clock”(Spark 37). Finally as sister Helena of the Transfiguration, she is the author of a psychological treatise *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Echoing the author's transformation of reality into fiction, Sandy herself is transformed, from the seducer to the nun, in a bid at self-determinism. In a different manner, Gumbriel dreams of a car of “forty horses[...] with the silencer out”(Huxley 12) carrying him “towards the most romantic city in the world”(Huxley 12) in Italy. Desire and dreams appear as a fuel for momentum, projecting the individuals beyond the walls of their reality and the classroom. Both teachers and students escape the defined space of the classroom by using their imagination, and fiction-building abilities, thereby enriching their private experience and escaping from the constraints surrounding them: “Sandy, who had been reading *Kidnapped*, was having a conversation with the hero”(Spark 28).

Symbolical escape from fatality seems to be momentarily possible. The body and mind, two elements kept largely at distance by the use of dichotomies that have been observed in the novels, merge however for intense and elusive moments. Jenny has the experience of “a total sensation

which it was impossible to say was physical or mental, only that it contained the lost and guileless delight”(Spark 80-81). For Gumbriil the moment of decision to leave teaching, reconciling his physical position with his aspirations leaves him “buoyant”(Huxley 13) as his inflatable trousers in his daydream. Pnin is confronted with a near-revelation: “during one melting moment, he had the sensation of holding at last the key he had sought”(Nabokov 21). Contrasting with the portrayal of the physical body, linked to the menace of fatality, the presence and importance of the mind and spirituality can be defined for, each of the authors, as a possible escape from this predestination. Pnin is comfortable in his abstract world of knowledge that appears immutably fixed in an idealized past. “Pnin, with a not unhappy sigh, started to copy out a passage referring to the old pagan games”(Nabokov 65). In Gumbriil's mocking vision, the Anglican ritual appears a purely physical affair of bodily movement, music and rhetoric delivered by dominating voices in an architectural hollow shell, far from the inherently natural spiritual experience of his mother's lost goodness. Miss Brodie's thirst for knowledge and experience is an unlimited quest: “there was nothing Miss Brodie could not yet learn”(Spark 43). It appears therefore that for Pnin, Gumbriil and Miss Brodie, escape may be a nostalgic yearning, a thirst for historical knowledge or a desire to live fully. All three are searching for a form of self realisation. Whereas Pnin's present is a painful experience,¹²⁸ which he shies away from to concentrate on reliving the past, Gumbriil and Miss Brodie both enhance their constrained lives by embroidering around it. As has been noted elsewhere, Gumbriil escapes into dreams of a hypothetical augmented reality by reinventing and revising the outcomes of lived situations, as does Miss Brodie by living by proxy through historical figures. This aspect of their characters, enhancing their lives by adding “special effects,” can be linked to what we now are familiar with in media:

Media spaces can be thought of as the video counterpart of ubiquitous computing. The combination of the two is what we call Ubiquitous Media.[...] We discuss Ubiquitous Media from the perspective of having actually "lived the life."¹²⁹

128 “In many ways, pain is the white noise of Pnin, a constant pulse, throbbing in the background. Pnin is a man in unrelenting, unforgettable and often unexpressed pain” Stephen Casmier “A Speck of Coal dust: Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* and the Possibility of Translation” from *Nabokov Studies* Volume 8, 2004, pp. 71-86 (Article), International Vladimir Nabokov Society and Davidson College. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/171923>. Consulted 03/01/2016.

129 “Augmented Reality: Ubiquitous Media and Reactive Environments.” William A.S. Buxton. Buxton, W. (1997). In K. Finn, A. Sellen & S. Wilber (Eds.). *Video Mediated Communication*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 363-384. Computer Systems Research Institute, University of Toronto & Alias. Wavefront Inc., Toronto. <http://www.dgp.toronto.edu/OTP/papers/bill.buxton/augmentedReality.html>. Consulted 02/08/2016.

In ubiquitous media, that allows someone to be projected and active in several places at once, by video cam or other computer devices, human activity no longer appears to be limited to one space and time frame at a time. The characters, confusing what they teach with their own life stories, appear to live their life by proxy in a similar way. The projection beyond the framework of the main diagesis in each novel is also expressed in the teacher figures' pervasive occupation of the fictional setting. Escaping the constricting narratorial framework, like the Queen of Hearts,¹³⁰ the figure of Miss Jean Brodie is ubiquitous. She invades all the spaces she enters, ruling “like Britannia”(Spark 49), in Mr Lloyd's classroom, invading the headmistress's privacy by entering her office during her absence. It is noteworthy that Miss Brodie takes her students at once out of the curriculum, outside the school during lesson times,—“the small girls took their lessons seated on three benches arranged about the elm”(Spark 10)—, and spends time with them outside of school times, after they are no longer in her class,—“Saturday afternoons at Cramond”(Spark 87). Pnin, on the other hand occupies the fictional space by appearing to be infinitely replicated: “there were as many as six Pnin's beside the genuine, and to me unique article” (Nabokov 124). He is considered by a colleague as “somebody impersonating Pnin”(Nabokov 156) and his own impersonation takes place for the sake of the narrator, in the final chapter. The *mise en abyme* of identities centres on the narrator and Pnin's interchangeability: “the radix of the troika was, absurdly enough, myself [the narrator]”(Nabokov 124). It is this confusion of one with the other that allows Pnin to escape, leaving a double in his place, trapped within the novel's framework, provoking an echo of the narration that reverberates beyond it. Gumbriel's identity appears equally to change according to the level on which he is projected. At one given time, the narratorial voice superimposes several aspects of his identity. Outwardly in the description of the school environment, he appears conscious of his place in a hierarchical environment and actively supporting it. Inwardly in the present of narration, he is critical of the system, but also superimposes in the past and in the hypothetical dream world of his future, a child figure and a man of the world. The occupation of different chronological settings simultaneously, allows the teacher figures to escape the present reality of their teaching activity and identity, thereby transfiguring the commonplace.

130 “All the ways about here belong to *me*.” Lewis Carrol, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 2, The Garden of Live Flowers. From <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12/12-h/12-h.htm#link2HCH0002>. Consulted 15/11/ 2014.

Another escape from the enclosure of an imposed identity can be linked to a psychological phenomenon visible in the novels. The tension between individuality and group identity is a fundamental element of each one, as has been seen. The teacher portrayed as an individual fighting against an institution can be considered a tragic heroic figure, relinquishing or unable to access the safety of group identity, left to explore solitary personal fulfilment.

[...] Until recently, social psychological theories of the self focused on the individuated self-concept—the person's sense of unique identity differentiated from others. Cross-cultural perspectives, however, have brought a renewed interest in the social aspects of the self and the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their relationships to others and to social groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). Central to this new perspective is the idea that connectedness and belonging are not merely affiliations or alliances between the self and others but entail fundamental differences in the way the self is construed (Brewer, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994; Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991; Triandis, 1989; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). [...] Individuals seek to define themselves in terms of their immersion in relationships with others and with larger collectives and derive much of their self-evaluation from such social identities (Breckler & Greenwald, 1986; Greenwald & Breckler, 1985). The motivational properties of collective identities are systematically documented in Baumeister and Leary's (1995) comprehensive review of the evidence in support of a fundamental "need to belong" as an innate feature of human nature.¹³¹

The depiction of the teacher figures' interactions with their colleagues and hierarchy tell the reader how they are situated by others and how they define their own professional identity: In *Antic Hay* the lack of any direct interaction concerning Gumbriel with colleagues or hierarchy within the novel denotes his inexistence within the system, and his incapacity to confront or denounce it. Miss Brodie's behaviour elicits more reaction: "these colleagues of Miss Brodie's might just as well have said 'I scorn you' instead of good morning" (Spark 53). That Jenny and Sandy well perceive Miss Brodie's haughty isolation is apparent in the name of their romantic fiction "The Mountain Eyrie", an "eyrie" being "the nest of an eagle or other bird of prey, built in a high inaccessible place, the brood of a bird of prey, esp an eagle or any high isolated position or place."¹³²

131 Marilyn B. Brewer, Wendy Gardner "Who Is This "We"? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations". Ohio State University. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1996, Vol.71, No.1, 83-93 Copyright 1996. The American Psychological Association, Inc. 0022-3514/96/\$3.00.
<http://myweb.scu.edu.tw/~wangresearch/topic/topic4/Who%20Is%20This%20%20We.pdf>.
Consulted 02/07/2016.

132 From <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/eyrie>. Consulted 07/08/2016. My underlining.

Pnin's reaction to being depicted among the members of the faculty staff on the fresco in Frieze Hall denotes a resistance to group identity expressed as an adamant refusal of being frozen into an immobile image. Witnesses observe "an enraged spluttering Pnin [...] pointing a shaking forefinger at the preliminary outlines of a ghostly Muzhik on the wall and shouting that he would sue the college if his face appeared above that blouse" (Nabokov 157). Beyond the play on words between the noun "Frieze" and the verb "to freeze," Pnin resists the rigidity of an imposed identity. To understand Pnin's violent reaction, the narrator's use of the terms "ghostly muzhik" must be examined. A ghost from the past of Great Russia "мужик [muzhik] has always referred to someone from the lower classes,"¹³³ historically a serf or servant. Pnin's fascination with the history of Russia appears to make him the symbol of Tsarist Russian serfdom for his Russian painter colleague, to his outrage. The refusal to be categorised reveals the system's penchant for generic identities, threatening individuality but also the capacity of the individual figures to take on multiple identities. On another level, the multiplication of the identities for a given character mirrors the authors' use the narrator's voice as a double, the voice of which combines with, or counters that of the main character. Therefore the multiplication of identities can be interpreted as a threat to narrational stability and the system in place.

The authors depict characters in movement to escape the immobility of a system. The system is personified by distant threatening figures, portrayed in a critical light. President Poore, "a tall elderly man wearing dark glasses [...] was now almost totally blind" (Nabokov 59). Miss Mackay "has an awful red face, with the veins all showing" (Spark 39) but more importantly she is devious: She "laid a scheme[...] [and] laid another scheme" (Spark 77-78). Gumbriel's unnamed headmaster "was as fierce as he was capricious" (Huxley 8). The Institutions are represented by individuals systematically set in a generic role of rigid authority in opposition to the teacher figures' individual initiatives. The teacher's more or less defiant self-definition that each author describes in the novels is a fluctuating individual identity overriding the fixed group identity. Their identities evolve as the novels progress, in other character's as well as in the reader's eyes, on a scale between victimic and agentic.¹³⁴ On the one hand, Miss Brodie is the victim of her own delusions, begging

133 Michele A. Berdy, "A Muzhik for all seasons." *Moscow Times* 10/12/2010. From <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/a-muzhik-for-all-seasons-3620>. Consulted 04/08/2016.

134 "Basic to occupational engagement is a person's personal power to author choices. Impairment in functioning moves some clients from an agentic identity of self to a victimic identity." Polkinghorne, D. "Transformative narratives: from victimic to agentic life plots." *Am J Occup Ther.* 1996 Apr;50(4):299-305. Review. From

her betrayer: “think if you can, who it could have been. I must know which one of you betrayed me”(Spark 126). Pnin is the victim of the narrator— “Now don't believe a word he says, [...]He makes everything up”(Nabokov, 154)— his former wife, Lisa, and various members of the staff at Waindell University. Gumbriil sees himself as a victim of the system at large. “What else was there for me to do?”(Huxley 17). On the other hand, as fantasized figures of counter power, the teacher figures appear in the guise of a reinstated father figure and king in exile (Pnin), a noble miscast (Gumbriil), or Boadicea, queen of the Amazons (Miss Jean Brodie). Invested with elements of these agentic identities, the teachers have the resources to outsmart the system. When Pnin learns he will be no longer required as a teacher at the university, writing a note he explains “he was through with teaching and would not even bother to wait till the end of spring term,” rebelling in this way even against the authority of his more understanding head of department, Hagen and against the threat of “work[ing] under[...] [his alleged] old friend”(Nabokov 142). Finally he disappears “free at last” (Nabokov 160) into the sunset at the wheel of a “little sedan“(Nabokov 160). The use of a “sedan,” naming a type of car but also a *chaise à porteur* gives a historical twist to Pnin's disappearance, all at once into the past and the future. Leaving teaching is described as a liberation for Pnin, as for Gumbriil, who deliberately chooses a new unsubmissive identity and way of life at the end of the first chapter: “he might have gone away, of course, without writing. But it would be nobler and more in keeping, he felt, with his new life to leave a justification”(Huxley 13). Gumbriil regains his dignity in relinquishing teaching, the adjective “noble” being linked to his “new” life. The female teacher figure, Miss Brodie, is mortally neutralised, and expelled from the system, due to the betrayal of a female agent: Sandy Stranger. The comparative outcomes of the novels with regard to the fate of the teacher figures can be considered significant in link with the gendering of teacher figures in history and the influence that this history have been seen to play in the novels throughout this study. It appears that the male figures can contemplate another life whereas the female teacher figure has no other resources to draw from.

It is interesting to note that when Miss Brodie does disappear from the school of her own free will it is under the alibi of being ill to live her affair with M. Lowther. The use of a subterfuge linking dissimulation with the frail female body prone to illness enhances the representation of an unacceptable female self realisation. For the male figures the dichotomy between teaching and

living is less institutionalized but nevertheless sufficiently a threat to push Gumbriel out of the job, in order to live fully. Pnin also leaves teaching, the end of the novel (a glimpse of him in a moving car) mirroring the beginning (where he is isolated on the wrong train) by highlighting Pnin's now active and decisive decision-making.

One of the major aspects involved in structuralism [...] is the aspect of binary opposition, a theoretical concept with structuralist origins. Binary opposition essentially involves the "structuralist name for opposed terms which are structured into a power relation, (or 'violent hierarchy', for Derrida) - eg. self/other, masculine/feminine, black/white, civilian/barbarian" (Arrowsmith). It expounds on the differences between two entities that appear to be mutually exclusive. Structuralism includes this concept as part of its overall theory, as the connections between opposites are key to understanding the organization of everything, including culture, language, and critical thinking.¹³⁵

In the same way, escaping enclosure is escaping the dualisms that the characters are confronted with. The manners in which each author depicts the possible escape from enclosure, be it bodily, spatial or temporal, are significant to ascertain. It appears that knowledge is a double edged weapon, at once enclosing the individual in an expected continuum while also offering wide vistas into unsuspected realms. Pnin's learning to drive is the key to his escape from Waindell, by finally becoming autonomous in his movements. Miss Brodie is locked in the ignorance as to the identity of her betrayer. Gumbriel is trapped in his abstract world of words, unable to connect to others. For each teacher figure, the resurgence of memories is the reassuring proof of their individuality, the personal private narration which allows them to process the elements they teach (either by distancing them or by annexing them into their personal sphere). The "autobiographical titbits" that surface in their teaching are interestingly what connect the students and teachers by arresting and holding their interest. It appears therefore, in the novels, that while the teacher figure is portrayed as a constitutive element of a system producing generic identities both for students and teachers, it is precisely the unformatted resisting individuality, tolerated on the outskirts of the system, that is at the heart of the three novels. The revelation of these teacher figures' incoherences, and individual quirks, allow the authors to bring about a certain awareness as to the unsuppressible subjectivity of experience and individuality: "it was the first time they had realized it was possible for people glued together in grown-up authority to differ at all" (Spark 10). The plots revolve around the influence these figures may have on students, or that authorities

135 Sam Lloyd, "The Subversive Structure of *Lolita*", The Commonline Journal. 01/2013. From <http://www.commonlinejournal.com/>. Consulted 06/05/2016.

dread, by opening vistas in the realm of doubt and uncertainty, questioning a given discourse. This atypical and nonconforming teacher figure is depicted as connecting with the students: “He had little respect for most of the teachers; but he revered Lake, a tremendously obese man with shaggy eyebrows and hairy hands”(Nabokov 79).

In the same manner, the author writes not for a generic reader, but for an individual with whom a unique and personal connection will take place through the interpretation the reader has of the novel, in the light of his own personal narration. The ideal reader, one able to activate the different levels of potential interpretation within these texts, appears to be one with more or less nonconformist teacher figure to relate to in their own past, in other words just about everyone who has been to school.

Using Umberto Eco's reader reception theory, it appears clear that the novels, each provoking a puzzled and unquiet feeling in the reader, mirror this raising of awareness as to the subjectivity of experience and interpretation. In the three novels, the undermining of narratorial authority, by harbouring contradictory and overlapping voices, shapes a critical reader just as the teacher figures at play shape critical student figures, distancing at once the official message and in the same movement, the teacher's subtext. The authors all lean on the expected reader's knowledge of the school environment, to infer the context regulating the contracting relationships between teachers and students. Inter-textual references evoking either the good or bad fictional teacher figure, (mainly from the student's point of view as in many of the introductory examples) will come to the reader's mind. However in these novels, what is highlighted is not the “commonplace” workings of this relationship, whereby the fictional teacher figure is either a positive agent or negative counter-agent in the *bildungsroman* narrative configuration focusing on the student experience. This generic representation can be considered the frame or “textual topic”¹³⁶ of the novels. It is the transformation of this side character into the main focal point of the narrative that retains the reader's attention and curbs his or her initial forecast in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The immediate focalisation on and identification of Pnin and Gumbriel as teachers, both, as has been noted, undermined or symbolically castrated by the narrator in the initial description, orientate the reader's presuppositions as to the capacity of the figures for self realisation. The common plot of the three novels seems then to be the capacity of the teacher as a secondary fictional agent, to become a main and active character within a fictional world. The

136 See Umberto Eco, *The reader's role: Exploration of the Semiotics of Texts*. [1979] Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Introduction.

agentive passivity or activity of this intermediary placed between the potentially infinite pool of knowledge and the actualised elements chosen for transmission, becomes the core of the narration. This focalisation is corroborated by the depiction of student figures as abstract receivers in the transmissive mechanism (in *Pnin* and *Antic Hay*). In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* the observers of the “Brodie phenomenon,” students or peers, appear in the group form of a Greek Chorus.

In this way the authors lay stress on this figure as the generator of moments of clarity and realisation or, on the contrary, opacity of meaning and confusion. The novels' fibres, albeit of different textures and colours, revolve therefore around the elaboration of significance as a personal interpretation but also as a social construction, questioning the individual realisation of self fulfilment and the influences at work in the teacher/student relationship.

Conclusion

Virgil fixed his eyes on me, and said: 'Son you have seen the temporal and the eternal fire, and have reached a place where I, by myself, can see no further. Here I have led you, by skill and art: now, take your delight for a guide: you are free of the steep path, and the narrow. See, there, the sun that shines on your forehead, see the grass, the flowers and the bushes, that the earth here produces by itself. While the lovely, joyful eyes, that, weeping, made me come to you, are arriving, here you can sit down, or walk amongst all this. Do not expect another word, or sign, from me. Your will is free, direct and whole, and it would be wrong not to do, as it demands: and, by that, I crown you, and mitre you, over yourself.'

Purgatorio Canto XXVII:115-142 Virgil's last words to Dante.¹³⁷

The three novels that have been the subject of this work have allowed me to explore the figure of the teacher as it is expressed in examples of 20th century Anglo-Saxon literature. The importance of the authors' choices in terms of the representations they have called on to construct these figures has been significant to explore. The narrations bring the reader to reflect on the nature of the specific roles in education both of teachers and pupils. The exploration of the gendered differences between the fictional teacher figures in the novels under study highlights the authors' apprehensions of the specific challenges that both women and men are faced with, beyond the institutional framework of education, in conciliating personal freedom and adherence to social norms. Through the tropes used, education and knowledge are portrayed as key elements of either domination or emancipation, or both at once. The notions of conformity, hierarchy and authority are undermined on many levels in the novels revealing the dynamic tension between the individual and his or her social identity. In these works of fiction, the confusion of private and public spheres as well as the depiction of the teacher as both transmitter of knowledge and object of study reveal the underlying paradox of the teacher's position. Morality as the basis for behaviour and the setting of examples is largely questioned in the novels under study through the

137 Dante Alighieri. The Divine Comedy, The Purgatory, Canto XXVII:115-142. From <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/DantPurg22to28.htm>. Consulted 04/06/2016.

expression of ambiguity and doubt as to the positive or negative impact of actions. Narratorial subjectivity reveals how individual critical discernment can be instilled by counter discourse. The teaching identities explored in the novels can be considered as enclosing, either binding the fictional representation of the individual to a group or alienating him/her in a painful and isolated self determinism.

Fascination with the school environment, and teacher figures in literature and media in general, is still visible in the notable and recent success of the *Harry Potter* saga and its spin off of fan fiction. However, in published fiction, the teacher figure remains, more often than not, subservient to the focalisation on the student experience. An example of this is the film *The Dead Poets' Society* in which the focalisation on the teacher figure is overridden in the course of the film by the focalisation on the pupils' outcome. In this manner the "positive" fictional teacher appears at first the fore of the stage, only to be pushed aside as the next generation come forward and play out their destiny, with the tools and weapons they have been bequeathed by their tutors. In this sense the teacher's ultimate role seems to be like that of a relay runner, passing onto the next generation a baton of knowledge, slightly different from the one they received, gently (or otherwise) marking the transmission with their individuality. As a "natural" continuity, the students who run first behind and then alongside them, carry forth their legacy. In the same manner, as Dante poises Virgil at the threshold of heaven, the teacher/guide, we are told, can only go so far, the student must go beyond. When reading these novels by Huxley, Spark and Nabokov, the reader may feel that the authors undermine this accepted discourse in the depiction of their teacher figures. By their central position in the novels, the authors seem to undermine the effective act of transmission, in a refusal to relinquish focalisation. The teacher figures involved all prefer rupture to continuity. Pnin abandons the narrative, Gumbriel leaves the job in the midst of the school year. Miss Brodie refuses to recognize any continuity in her pupils' outcomes. Ultimately these three figures represent in different ways the antithesis of the ideal teacher and yet paradoxically the reader's attention is retained. The authors can be considered to raise far more efficiently the questions surrounding teaching and transmission by challenging the reader's representations and depicting dysfunctional figures. In the same manner, the unreliable narrations question the reader's capacity to reconstruct his or her own narration, provoking a more active and collaborative readership.

By analysing the authors' manner of reappraising the Anglo-Saxon teacher figure's social

and historical context, the representations supporting the portrayal of the fictional characters depicted as professional teachers have been identified. This work can therefore be considered a developing tank of a kind, revealing the substratum, consciously or unconsciously at work in the three authors' creations, but more importantly in the reader's global interpretation and understanding of the dynamics at work in these novels. The significance(s) that can be given to the different aspects identified and the manner in which the authors use them, may bring a greater awareness to the reader's apprehension of the works. Further diachronic and synchronic studies incorporating literature from different cultures, centred around aspects of the teacher figure and issues pertaining to teaching in fiction, would be an interesting way to confront and enrich the preliminary conclusions emerging from this analysis. Furthermore the teacher's role and identity, in a world of growing hyper-connectivity and immediate individual access to knowledge, are muting. The fictional depiction of teachers in earlier science fiction novels would be interesting to analyse and compare with contemporary 21st century fiction, to highlight issues around the evolution of the fictional representations of teachers and transmission of knowledge.

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