

CULTURED REBELS

A Play

by

STEPHEN HIRST

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

CULTURED REBELS

Copyright Stephen Hirst 1992, 1995

This play is fully protected by copyright.

It is an infringement of the copyright to give any public performance or reading of this play in its entirety or in the form of excerpts without the prior consent in writing of the copyright owners.

No part of this publication may be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, typescript, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

All rights are strictly reserved. Any enquiries about performing rights, professional or amateur, should be directed, before rehearsal, to

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd,
15 Inglis Road,
Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU.**

No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

ISBN 978 1 872475 63 9

Printed and published by
SchoolPlay Productions Limited,
15 Inglis Road,
Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play is easily adaptable in a couple of ways:

Scene Two is self-contained and can be omitted. The jokes within it are so visual and, therefore, dependent on the physical characteristics and abilities of the actors - and possibly in-jokes among the expected audience - that the details of the mime must be left to the discretion of the director. Try things out and see how they work, and, keep it going as long as you dare... The temptation to introduce candidate-generated jokes should be RESISTED, however - all the gags should arise out of bad invigilating and be in contrast to the evident desire of the candidates simply to get on with their exam.

Scene Four: The additional housemasters and housemistresses who appear here can easily be written out or, alternatively, some more could be added.

Where pubs (The Gorilla's Arms) or other teachers (Old Crusty, Slapper) are referred to, names can, of course, be changed to provide a more intimate atmosphere of in-jokes, though this should not be allowed to take over the play, as it may tend to do.

Omitting everything that is easy to omit, and adding no in-jokes or improvisational discoveries, the play will run to about 55 minutes with four actors and two simple scene-changes on a minimal set.

S. H.

CAST

Housemaster: (Roger):

Perfectly intelligent man, but numbed by too long playing a stereotyped role and too often relying on stock responses, so that his mind is now frequently not properly on it, and he has become ever so slightly blimpish in unwitting self-parody. He is a sharp listener, and misses very little, but is often less subtle or penetrating with his responses.

Peter:

Bright Oxford University candidate, self-assured and clever. Some of his lines could be seen as bitter, but should not be delivered so: it's all a tremendous game to him, and his manner remains cheerful, even jovial throughout.

Second Master: (Andrew):

Below a rather bumbling and broken exterior lies a passionate and committed (but still defeated) man.

Hack:

A rather standard hard-bitten hack journalist with trenchcoat and hat, but has an edge to him which unnervingly suggests that he may be serious after all.

Scene Four features some more housemasters and housemistresses:-

Hm 2:	<i>Brusque, no-nonsense sort.</i>
Hm 3: (James)	<i>Smooth, irresponsible.</i>
Hm 4:	<i>Team games man.</i>
HMSS 1:	<i>Nice old spinster.</i>
HMSS 2:	<i>Progressive feminist.</i>
HMSS 3:	<i>A new initiative fan; energetic.</i>

The self-contained **Scene Two** features exclusively:-

Teacher 1:	<i>A clever layabout.</i>
Teacher 2:	<i>Sporty, young (but old-school) colonial style blockhead.</i>
Examinees:	<i>As many as desired but at least two.</i>

CULTURED REBELS

by Stephen Hirst

PROLOGUE:

PETER sitting at a desk facing the AUDIENCE, catches the attention of someone apparently at the back of the Auditorium.

Peter: So let me get this straight.... You're saying that the brightest and best have tended to refuse to accept the obvious, and that that's how progress is made. Some awkward bloke responds to an obvious fact - the world is flat for instance - by demanding proof. And the next thing you know is that the world's a sphere instead. Someone else refuses to accept Euclid's fifth postulate, tries to prove it and ends up with a different geometry that anticipates Einstein.

And from all this you want us to conclude that no matter how obviously right something seems, no matter how self-evident its truths and basic principles, there's always the chance that it's just an attractive-looking fiction, or the best working guess SO FAR. Test it, try something else instead, and you either prove it, or you discover something better than it.

Nothing is sacred.

Nothing goes without saying.

Nothing is too silly to be worth a try.

Wow.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 1

HOUSEMASTER'S study. HOUSEMASTER working at his desk. He is writing on a slip of paper, which he eventually places triumphantly in an OUT tray. Nothing remains in his IN tray. He chuckles sillily, inordinately proud of himself, looks again at all of his desk, sits back, chuckles again, produces a camera and prepares to photograph his desk-top. Knock on door.

Housemaster: Come in! (*Enter PETER*).

Peter: Sir? (*PETER stops uncertainly, regards HOUSEMASTER*).

Housemaster: Ah, Peter - come in, come in. I expect you're wondering what I'm doing with this - (*Waves camera. PETER shrugs*). Notice anything unusual about my desk? (*PETER glances at desk - no big deal*).

Peter: Well - not especially, sir....

Housemaster: (*disappointed*). Oh.

Peter: It's very tidy, of course....

Housemaster: Exactly!

Peter:but far be it from me to suggest that that were in any way unusual. As you always say, sir, a tidy desk indicates a tidy mind, in command of his work and his life....

Housemaster: Yes, yes, yes, - all right.

Peter: So I'm sure your desk is always tidy and, indeed, cannot recall seeing it otherwise - except, perhaps -

Housemaster: Yes, ALL RIGHT, Peter: I'm beginning to wish I hadn't asked. (*Takes his wretched picture and puts camera away*). There.

Peter: So what is it, then, may I ask?

Housemaster: What?

Peter: The desk -

Housemaster: What? Oh! Well - it's the WAY in which it's tidy....

Peter: Really?

Housemaster: Well can't you see?

Peter: No, sir. Some kind of new filing system, perhaps?

Housemaster: No, no - it's the IN tray - look at the IN tray!

Peter: Right, sir - the IN tray.

Housemaster: Well?

Peter: It's empty.

Housemaster: Exactly!

Peter: Everything seems to be in the other one.

Housemaster: Correct! In the OUT tray, in two distinct piles - one for filing and one for immediate posting into pigeon- holes. All dealt with.

Peter: Jolly good, sir.

Housemaster: (*Aware of PETER'S gentle irony*). Hmm - yes.

Peter: And the photograph?

Housemaster: (*Defensively*). Certainly! It's a rare sight, an empty IN tray on a housemaster's desk mid-term. Needs to be preserved for posterity.

Peter: Ah yes. A housemaster's lot is indeed a busy one. (*Pause*).

Housemaster: Quite. I really do wish I'd never brought the subject up, somehow.

Peter: I'm sorry, sir. (*Pause*). It's good to see you healthy once more.

Housemaster: Yes! Thank you. Thank God! Can't stand being ill.

Peter: No, sir. But then I suppose it does have its advantages - (*Nods at IN tray*).

Housemaster: Eh? Oh, the empty IN tray - quite. The one thing you can do when you're - well, ILL for three weeks, is catch up with the paperwork.. Nasty little illness. I don't know if, uh... um.... you know?

Peter: There was a rumour that you couldn't afford to go very far from the loo, sir -

Housemaster: Ah. You do. Well, quite! Very tactfully put, Peter. Exactly right. Pretty tedious place to be confined to for three weeks, I can tell you!

Peter: But you had your IN tray with you, sir.

Housemaster: Yes.

Peter: I imagine it must have been tempting to put some of its contents to alternative use, sir.

Housemaster: What? Oh, - yes. Quite. Very droll, Peter, very amusing indeed. Some of it did indeed seem good for little else.

Peter: But that's all behind you now. (*Pause*).

Housemaster: Quite. Hmm. And your work? How's it been going?

Peter: Yes, sir, very well, thank you.

Housemaster: Going to get into Oxford for us?

Peter: I hope so. For me, anyway.

Housemaster: Of course. So it's going well? You're on top of things?

Peter: Yes, thank you, sir. Perhaps not quite as well as you are, what with that empty IN tray....

Housemaster: No. No, I am rather on top of things. I've missed classes for three weeks, and hardly spoken to a single boy in the house, and young Fryatt's been doing all the day-to-day stuff for me of course, but nevertheless I am on top of the paperwork - up to three weeks ago anyway - for practically the first time in my life. Yes, I am. That's how I've come to notice a rather curious thing.

Peter: Oh?

Housemaster: Where were you on Tuesday afternoon, the seventh of November, four weeks ago?

Peter: In bed, sir.

Housemaster: Oh. (*This was the information he had expected to have to force out of PETER*). Well, where were you a couple of Tuesdays before that, mid-October, just before half term?

Peter: In bed, sir.

Housemaster: Ah. Why?

Peter: Well I needed the sleep, sir. As you always say, sleep is the most important thing to do at school, because if you don't do that right then you don't do any of the other....

Housemaster: Yes, yes! I know, I know.... because, as you say, I always say so.

If I always say so, I obviously know so, so no need to say so to me!

Peter: No, sir. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: So you've been missing archery.

Peter: No, sir.

Housemaster: "No, sir"? What do you mean, "No, sir"?

Peter: I mean that I haven't been missing archery, sir.

Housemaster: You haven't? But haven't we just decided that you've been sleeping on Tuesday afternoons? Presumably you sleep every Tuesday afternoon, because otherwise you'd have needed time to think what you were doing on a particular Tuesday afternoon, and you didn't. I just asked you what you were doing on a particular Tuesday afternoon, and without a pause you said "sleeping".

Peter: "In bed", sir.

Housemaster: What?

Peter: I said "in bed", sir.

Housemaster: Right. But the important point is that you've been sleeping, in bed or whatever, not just one or two Tuesday afternoons, but every ruddy Tuesday afternoon recently, haven't you?

Peter: Yes, sir.

Housemaster: And so you've been missing archery.

Peter: No, sir. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: *(After an introductory, patronising sigh)*. Look, Peter. I have notes from matron to the effect that she has seen you in bed in the afternoon, each dated a Tuesday, I have your own confession that you sleep - in bed - on Tuesday afternoons, and I have notes from a Mr. R. Hood or whatever his name is to say that you've been missing archery - I know all this, Peter, because I've actually been through my IN tray....

Peter: No, sir, the notes didn't say that I've been missing archery....

Housemaster: Oh, now you know what's in my IN tray better than I do?

Peter: There's nothing in your IN tray.

Housemaster: I know that! But you don't know what my notes say!

Peter: No, sir - but I know what they should say.

Housemaster: Which is?

Peter: That I haven't been doing archery. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: So, for the third time, you have been missing archery.

Peter: No, sir.

Housemaster: But you have just said that you haven't been doing archery.

Peter: Exactly, sir - I don't do archery.

Housemaster: That much is becoming obvious.

Peter: That's why I haven't been missing archery even though I haven't been doing

archery - because I don't even do archery, so clearly I can't miss it. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: I feel you could have made that much clearer a good deal earlier, Peter. Beware the tendency of many of those doing too many practice Oxford General Papers to become too smart for their own good....

Peter: Yes, sir. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: So it seems that the whole thing is a clerical error, is it?

Peter: Sorry?

Housemaster: Oh, of course, you've probably never heard of one of those - clerical error, thing made by a clerk, a rather old-fashioned system whereby an actual person with a pen wrote things....

Peter: Wrongly.

Housemaster: Well, in the case of the phrase "clerical error", yes, but I fancy it happened rather less than is the case with the "monumental computer cock-up" that's replaced it - but don't try to side-track me, we were just getting somewhere with the archery issue, namely that you were claiming that you've never done archery, but simply appeared on the wrong list.

Peter: Oh, no, sir - that's not true.

Housemaster: What?

Peter: That I've never done archery and appeared on the wrong list.

Housemaster: So you have done archery?

Peter: Yes.

Housemaster: But not on Tuesday afternoons -

Peter: Oh, yes.

Housemaster: What?

Peter: I have done archery on Tuesday afternoons.

Housemaster: What? Well when haven't you done archery?

Peter: Ooo, that's rather a hard question, sir.... Well, maybe it isn't: I always haven't done archery, except on the first two Tuesdays of this term. There, that's right. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: A-ha! Right! Enough of the smart-alec stuff, that was actually a straight answer and now we're getting somewhere! You are supposed to do archery every Tuesday afternoon, which you actually did twice, but since the third week of term you've been going to bed and sleeping instead....

Peter: Yes, sir - but not when I should have been doing archery....

Housemaster: Yes, sir! When you should have been doing archery! Sleeping is NOT your Tuesday afternoon activity. Archery IS.... *(Rustles an unwieldy piece of paper)* it's here on the splendid, state-of-the-art, fully-centralised, all-purpose, computer-generated list - Archery.

Peter: Not archery - anarchy.

Housemaster: Anarchy?

Peter: Anarchy.

Housemaster: Well don't be silly, it says archery.

Peter: Yes, sir. That's why I went for the first two weeks, despite some surprise.
But the updated, corrected list that you posted on the board says "anarchy".

Housemaster: Really?

Peter: Yes, sir.

Housemaster: Honestly?

Peter: Yes, sir - shall I get it?

Housemaster: No, no - if you say so, then I'm sure you're right.... and I'm beginning to get the picture now: because of some glitch or misprint or mischief or something, "archery" came out "anarchy" on the second list, so you decided to be anarchic and go back to bed instead of attending archery - right?

Peter: Oh, no, sir - I went to anarchy instead.

Housemaster: But you were in bed.

Peter: That was after. At the first meeting it was decided that anarchy society meetings would be at 2 A.M. rather than 2 P.M., so it would be a good idea to get some sleep in the afternoons. That was when I started going to bed in the afternoons.

Housemaster: That was a good, obedient little anarchist.

Peter: Yes, sir.

Housemaster: (*Cautiously*). And have you actually been attending meetings at 2 A.M.?

Peter: (*Cheerfully*). Oh, yes, sir.

Housemaster: But that's strictly against the rules.

Peter: It's an anarchy society, sir.

Housemaster: And if you're caught?

Peter: Well, it's an official school activity - it's on the list - it's official policy.

Housemaster: How do you think such an interesting bit of official policy could have eluded me until now?

Peter: (*Ignoring the sarcasm*). I'm sure I don't know, sir - it's on the list.

Housemaster: Oh, but come on - it's an obvious mistake....

Peter: It's not - I went - it was there: the list was quite right.

Housemaster: Peter, it's obviously not official policy. Just because it's on a list.... I mean no-one READS lists - especially not updates....

Peter: No-one reads half the documents that constitute official policy: insurance small print, the education act, even the school rules state that ignorance of them is no excuse....

Housemaster: Yes, well, never mind the legal niceties. The fact remains that this is an obvious error or prank, and you've gone along with it, even taken

advantage of it... What on earth does this anarchy society DO at 2 a.m., anyway?

Peter: We discuss things. And then, sometimes, we go and live them.

Housemaster: Live them?

Peter: The things that we have discussed.... We experiment with various manifestations of anarchic phenomena - test laws, try out lawlessnesses....

Housemaster: Ah. For instance?

Peter: Well, some are scientific - we tested a few of the laws of physics with large samples of plaster and stone in water....

Housemaster: Sounds fascinating.

Peter: and some are moral or linguistic or semiotic - we tumbled some of the icons of our day, and examined the implications of refusing to accept the force of symbolism.

Housemaster: What on earth is that supposed to mean?

Peter: Well, a rock is a rock and a person is a person, but the person can become a symbol of certain values and the rock can be sculpted into a representation of a person, so a rock can become a symbol and revered. Therefore behaviour that is natural towards a rock can become inappropriate towards this particular rock, if you accept society's mores on the subject, which one may well do even though the flaws in them are visible. *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: And you experimented with rejecting such mores, and, specifically, refusing to accept that a rock isn't just a rock when shaped into a symbolic representation?

Peter: *(Levelly, understanding where the question is leading)*. Yes, sir.

Housemaster: Peter, are you telling me that it was you that threw the statue of our founder into the lake?

Peter: The anarchy society, yes. We tried to get it out during a Bacchanal orgy, but it was too much for us, especially when drunk, of course. We did leave plenty of clues so that the school could find it. It was our idea to try and elevate and enlighten Old Crusty's lessons, but no-one seemed to appreciate the joke.

Housemaster: So it was you who set up an entire classroom's contents on the chapel roof? And I suppose you blew up the politics room?

Peter: Political anarchy discussion had gone particularly well that week. Not had quite such a good one on ecclesiastical anarchy yet - better warn the chaplain when we do....

Housemaster: It hardly seems a subject for flippancy - or are you serious? It hardly seems possible. All these things you mention have, of course, been the subject of massive investigations all term - even I know that, and I've hardly been out of the loo for three weeks - and now you're just calmly telling me

that it was all you?

Peter: Another experiment with political anarchy: say the truth instead of the expedient - this week's project.

Housemaster: My God, it really was you.

Peter: Among others, yes.

Housemaster: But have you forgotten who you're talking to? Aren't you worried about being thrown out?

Peter: Oh, come on, sir....

Housemaster: Come on, what? This is serious stuff: there have been threats, communal punishments....

Peter: Oh, I'm sure we'll get punished, but hardly thrown out -

Housemaster: Why not?

Peter: Well, no record of lawbreaking for a start.

Housemaster: You've owned up to a whole long-playing record all at once!

Peter: But no warnings -

Housemaster: The whole school has been issued with them.

Peter: My honesty in confessing.

Housemaster: That's a little naive of you, isn't it?

Peter: Oh, come on, sir, you're just trying to frighten me because it's what one does as part of the stock response to revealed law-breaking.... Either that or it's you being naive - I'm not going to be expelled! This is a boarding school, posh place, recession-hit nineteen-nineties, very expensive, unfashionably mixed-ability. My parents pay full whack, no scholarship, numbers are down and I'm going to get four good grades at A level and a place at Oxford with any luck. I'm not evil and you aren't going to pass up on what I'm offering to your League Table ratings....

Housemaster: League tables are always wrong, misleading or both.

Peter: But unlike some lists, they're read, and you want my results on them.

Housemaster: Do you imagine that you can hold this school to ransom?

Peter: Good heavens, no, but I'm all right aren't I? You wouldn't REALLY want rid of me, would you? Especially now that you can ill afford it.... *(Pause. HOUSEMASTER uncomfortably shifts his position on his chair).*

Housemaster: Who else is in this society?

Peter: Do you want just their names? Or their IQ ratings, A level prospects and sporting prowess assessments as well? It would be quite impressive, actually....

Housemaster: Don't be smart, it's beginning to sicken me. Just their names, please.

Peter: Secret Society, I'm afraid.

Housemaster: You've done wrong, Peter, are you too ruddy clever to be able to

understand that?

Peter: Not sure I accept your parameters -

Housemaster: Oh, aren't you? Well, you've cost money, caused damage, undermined necessary authority, created unnecessary work, hurt people....

Peter: We didn't hurt anyone -

Housemaster: How do you know? You've caused a lot of worry and unhappiness, how do you estimate the extent of the hurt created by the knock-on effect of all that?

Peter: Oh, come on, dealing with this sort of thing's all part of the job, isn't it?

Housemaster: By the same token I suppose shooting people is morally fine as long as they're paid soldiers? *(Pause)*.

Peter: Point taken - I'm sorry for the distress I have caused.

Housemaster: Honestly, Peter, I hardly know what to say; the Headmaster will....

Peter: Who?

Housemaster: The Headmaster -

Peter: Oh, you mean the executive i/c PR - where is he this week? Siberia? I expect a bit of recruitment there would be a good thing: must be lots of wealthy salt-miners who may benefit from a public-school education in Britain. We've more than we want of it here, so let's export the superfluity....

Housemaster: Don't be flippant, Peter, this is serious and we've got a problem. I don't know what the Headmaster will do, but....

Peter: Well, he's hardly likely to do anything you don't want him to do, he's never even here!

Housemaster: Don't be funny, Peter, let alone with 4th Year jokes -

Peter: Not at all, I mean it. He hasn't been at school since the beginning of term.

Housemaster: Oh, Peter, how can you say that in seriousness?

Peter: Because I've been in his office - there's a computer with a telephone link-up which has produced all the notices we've had this term. His secretary is the machine's minion, like Dracula's human servant. She's helping it build a hologram almost of the Head but better designed and packaged than the original, a kind of market-research Gallup poll educator that can be whatever its buying public wants it to be, like the Labour party but more subtle....

Housemaster: Peter, he's real and he's my boss.

Peter: Tell me you've seen him face-to-face this term.

Housemaster: Peter, he's real, and what happens to you is his decision - your anarchist society has done wrong. If its as cerebral as you say, it will understand that sooner or later it must take responsibility for what it has done. So will you. Give me some names and it will demonstrate that you understand that what you have done is wrong.

Peter: Secret society - absolutely fundamental.

Housemaster: Evil society, then.

Peter: George Bush belonged to one. There was a rumour that you yourself were a freemason.

Housemaster: Oh, don't be ridiculous: go back to your study until you're out of this fatuously elated mood, and consider what I've said.

Peter: Yes, sir. As you say, sir. (*Goes. Opens door.*)

Peter: Oh, sir?

Housemaster: Yes?

Peter: About the names, sir.

Housemaster: Yes?

Peter: Why don't you consult the official lists? (*Door closes. Pause. HOUSEMASTER exhales scornfully, mutters "No" incredulously to himself. Pause. Shifts on his chair, looks through the unwieldy computer list again, then pause.*)

Housemaster: (*Quietly.*) Good God.... (*Rustles list a little more, then slaps it gently down on desk top. Trying to decide, he stands and prowls restlessly around the room, then uses the telephone. Taps in three numbers only - internal line.*)

Housemaster: Hello, Second Master? Roger here.... Much better, thank you.... oh, yes, definitely back now....yes....yes About all this pranks-at-night business - thought I might have a crack at it now I'm back, and I think I may have come up with a rather good lead....

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

A number of schoolchildren sitting at classroom desks taking examinations in a sports-hall style setting [Rack of basketballs and sports equipment]. The two TEACHERS invigilating are a disgrace to their profession.

The scene should begin with a long almost silent mime, a suggestion for which follows:-

(TEACHER ONE is bored. He fidgets restlessly, exhales, walks up and down pointlessly and looks as if he'd rather be somewhere else [he would]. TEACHER TWO looks serene. He simply stands there, taking little notice of

anything. TEACHER ONE checks his watch, rocks backwards and forwards on his heels, moves about. Eventually his interest is caught by a script being written by a CANDIDATE. He reads over his/her shoulder. The CANDIDATE is clearly unnerved but works on. TEACHER ONE tut-tuts quietly and shakes his head from side to side as he reads. The CANDIDATE allows himself/herself one anxious glance towards him then continues. TEACHER ONE sniggers gently. CANDIDATE ONE stops writing, sighs, continues and reaches the bottom of the page and makes to turn over. TEACHER ONE prevents him/her, wanting to read the bottom of the page before the CANDIDATE turns over. Finally, sufficiently outraged, the CANDIDATE turns in his/her chair and stares into TEACHER ONE'S face. TEACHER ONE is not unduly concerned, pulls an expression designed to face the CANDIDATE down, who turns the page and continues. TEACHER ONE moves off, brushing past a desk so that papers fall to the floor. The CANDIDATE whose work is on the floor looks up but TEACHER ONE'S back is now on him - he is making no attempt to stop, apologise nor pick the papers up. The CANDIDATE cannot continue; he is about to get up and pick them up himself but thinks better of it and raises his hand instead. TEACHER ONE does not turn. The CANDIDATE turns to see TEACHER TWO, but he isn't looking either. CANDIDATE waves his hand a little, then coughs. TEACHER TWO eventually notices and raises his eyebrows enquiringly. CANDIDATE points to papers on the floor. TEACHER TWO indicates he doesn't understand. CANDIDATE points again. TEACHER TWO shakes his head, shrugs, but continues to give enquiring look. CANDIDATE gets to his feet. TEACHER TWO scowls. CANDIDATE sits again and reverts to pointing at papers. TEACHER TWO baffled again.)

Candidate: Can I pick up my papers?

(All working turn and look, disturbed and interrupted, then return to their work. TEACHER TWO shakes his head but now understands. He comes and picks up the papers, but gets them in the wrong order, misses one that the CANDIDATE has to point out to him, snatches them up when suspecting other CANDIDATES of trying to read them, stands on one and generally makes such an elaborate mess of clearing them up as to disturb everyone. Everyone that is except TEACHER ONE, who ignores the situation he has created and perches on the edge of an empty desk, swinging his foot. As TEACHER TWO finishes off and returns to his "post" attention is diverted to TEACHER ONE, who by now is swinging the desk/chair on which he is perched on two legs, so that it becomes a source of interest for everyone to

know whether or not he is going to tip too far and fall off. Ultimately he becomes aware of the distraction he is causing - ALL are now watching him - and spreads his arms as if having just finished a complicated circus act. He then stands. TEACHER TWO meanwhile extracts a handkerchief from his pocket and starts interfering with his nose, fiddling and poking and examining. Eventually he replaces the handkerchief in his pocket, but seems confused by something else in there. He goes through his pockets, then begins to empty them onto a spare desk nearby. Pens, pencils diaries, keys....Still not satisfied, he begins chasing something through the lining of his jacket. Throughout, nearby CANDIDATES struggle manfully to work on and ignore him. Meanwhile TEACHER ONE has taken up position just too close behind a CANDIDATE where he moves a step at a time and sways back and forth boredly. He is just behind one shoulder of the CANDIDATE, then just behind the other. He reads the CANDIDATE'S paper at one point, but is mainly completely unaware of him. The CANDIDATE, however, is acutely aware of HIM, and is constantly glancing round to see if he is just behind his left, or right, shoulder. He becomes increasingly nervous.... Eventually the two TEACHERS end up standing together, where they continue to distract by talking in ineffective, too loud stage whispers).

Teach 1: Don't you just HATE exam invigilation?

Teach 2: Oh, I don't know; I think it's rather restful.

Teach 1: It's so boring and frustrating. At least if you could get some work done....

Teach 2: I rather enjoy the rule that tells me I may not work: you can do nothing without feeling guilty -

Teach 1: Let me get the absolutely essential work done now and I can handle the guilt of leaving the rest and go to the pub....

Teach 2: - And then you can stare at all the little kiddies sweating it over their exams and think, "I don't have to do that any more".

Teach 1: You enjoy it so much you can do some of mine - I'll drink your health in The Gorilla's Arms.

Teach 2: The Gorilla's Arms? Where on earth is that?

Teach 1: You wouldn't know it - not the sort of pub frequented by decent public school teachers.

Teach 2: Just public school teachers like you?

Teach 1: Exactly. *(Full voice to an examinee who has turned to look at him).* What do you think you're looking at? Turn round and get on with your exam for Chrissake! *(Pause. Stage whisper again).* With your decency and fondness of invigilation rules you didn't mind my talking to you, do you?

Teach 2: Certainly not.

Teach 1: Only some people get quite funny about it. I was invigilating with Slapper once, and chatting away, he kept nodding towards the kids, couldn't think what he was on about at first. Then I realised he thought we were disturbing them and should stop, but couldn't bear the confrontation of actually saying so to a colleague! He walked away in the end, on a dutiful prowl round the hall, so I followed him. Turned into a real old chase, desperately funny - kids were transfixed.

Teach 2: Typical - no powers of concentration. They should have learned how to ignore the occasional distraction by now. *(Pause)*.

Teach 1: Always in the Sports Hall, exams are. Hey! *(He has found a basketball and bounces it a couple of times. ALL turn round and look. He is slightly cowed. Work resumes. Rather than bounce the ball, he decides to pass it). Here! (Hard throw is caught)*.

Teach 2: Ouf!

(The basketball "game" continues intermittently for the rest of the scene in a fairly restrained fashion).

Teach 1: Should have a game. Claim we're celebrating the joys of the physical life over the intellectual. Kind of thing the anarchy society would do.

Teach 2: The what?

Teach 1: The anarchy society. They're the bunch of jokers who are up and about in the middle of the night shifting classrooms and statues, smoking and drinking everything they can lay their hands on in the name of experimentation and intellectual recklessness. Put me down for some of that.

Teach 2: How do you know these things?

Teach 1: Usually lack of professionalism of one kind or another. In this instance, Detective Inspector Roger Housemaster left some of his case notes by the photocopier: synchronised interviews, all that sort of thing - great fun. There's an absolute campaign of interrogations going on behind the scenes. Can't see the point, personally.

Teach 2: Got to track the little swine down, find the leader; play the game.. That's what we're here for.

Teach 1: May be what YOU'RE here for. Pass the ball. *(Hand to hand and a bounce or two - perhaps the ball knocks one of the desks)*.

Teach 2: Which raises the question, what ARE you here for? Besides being a bad influence on me, tempting me into playing basketball during exam invigilations?

Teach 1: Good God *(derisive giggle)*.

Teach 2: What?

Teach 1: This kid in front of us - he's trying to solve a quadratic equation by integrating....

Teach 2: Is that wrong?

Teach 1: It's not just wrong, in the field of ineptitude it's absolutely inspired. (*Full voice*). Face the front! What do you think you're doing, listening in on other people's private conversations? Why don't you do some work? This is your exam for goodness sake - no wonder the school's going to the dogs and can't produce a decent set of exam results for the league tables....

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

SECOND MASTER'S study. SECOND MASTER muttering to himself as he sifts through piles of paperwork.

2nd Master: What a week.... silly job.... can't imagine whatever made me take it.... I thought Second master was just a kind of long service award and fillip for pension purposes. Never realised the Headmaster would be away all the time. What was next again? (*Consults diary*). Headmaster's got a secretary of course, but not me. At least I'd be in the same continent as mine. Still, I suppose he has to have a secretary so there's someone here, running the school. No - I'M running the school.... silly me. (*Stares at diary*). Oh no. It's Hack. I'm not good at this. (*A nip of gin from the filing cabinet and picks up phone*). Hello, reception? Oh hello. How are you this morning?.... Have you?.... Oh dear, I AM sorry....yes....yes, of course....I AM sorry....Do you have a bloke from the press there to see me? Could you send him along? Thank you so much....get well soon - hope he doesn't put THAT in the paper! No....no....well of course he wouldn't...well, yes, it would be embarrassing, but I really don't think.... quite....yes....bye-bye.... Thank you. (*Phone down. Nervous*). Never say the right thing to journalists. Really not good at it. This is what we need a Headmaster for - smooth talk and bigger scale politics. Oh dear. (*Quickly grabs a mint but is caught by the entrance of HACK*).

Hack: Good evening, Second master. (*Notices mints. Raises eyebrows and makes a note*).

2nd Master: Hello, Mr. Hack. Uh - would you like a mint? Um, drink? Umm?

Hack: No, thank you, sir. Not while I'm on duty.

2nd Master: (*Attempting easy joviality*). As the police always say....

Hack: Really? See much of them, do you? (*Takes note*).

2nd Master: Well, no - not really.... that is, of course not. Just in films, you know.

Hack: (*Grimly*). "Toffs' school denies police involvement".

2nd Master: What?

Hack: Just a little joke, Second Master.

2nd Master: Ah.

Hack: It's good of you to see me so late.

2nd Master: Well, yes. I mean not at all. Busy during the day, of course.... classes, that sort of thing.... Uh, how can I help?

Hack: I wondered if you'd like to comment on the anarchist society?

2nd Master: Good gracious, what?

Hack: The anarchist society. Apparently its an unofficial school society - breaking laws, sex, drugs, orgies, destruction. That sort of thing.

2nd Master: Drugs?

Hack: Cocaine, heroine, hashish, crack, ecstasy - you know.

2nd Master: Ah, well, no school can ever afford to be complacent, of course, and we remain ever vigilant, but there have been no signs of any such substances, or their effects, here.

Hack: Very good prepared statement, Second Master.

2nd Master: Thank you.

Hack: Top school denies use of drugs in destruction, sex, drink and orgy meetings of official anarchist society - good copy.

2nd Master: What? Oh no, you don't. There is NO official anarchist society.

Hack: UNofficial anarchist society....

2nd Master: Or one of those - you've been watching too many films.

Jack: I have a copy of the activities list -

2nd Master: Misprint for "archery". Or possibly a prank played by a computer - what do you call them? - people who break into the system and change things.... bank accounts, Pentagon war programmes....

Hack: I'VE been watching too many films?

2nd Master: Hacks, that's it.

Hack: Sorry?

2nd Master: Ah. Hacks - no offence to your name, of course - Computer Hacks: people who find their way into.... well, you know. Some of our boys are very good with computers and, well, boys will be boys. Hardly national news.

Hack: Lawlessness? Orgies? At an expensive public school? The public has a

right to know.

2nd Master: Oh PLEASE don't get sanctimonious.... we've had one or two schoolboy pranks in the middle of the night - furniture moved and so on - just youthful high spirits.

Hack: Spirits. Kids high.

2nd Master: "Youthful high spirits", for heavens' sake. Honestly, can't one say anything to you people?

Hack: Absolutely. Free speech. Fire away.

2nd Master: Nothing out of the ordinary has occurred here. Just normal school life, unworthy of wider interest. No story.

Hack: School describes nocturnal anarchy as normal. *(Pause)*.

2nd Master: I'm not sure if there is any point in this interview continuing, Mr. Hack. What you don't deliberately pervert you'll probably get wrong by accident, just make it up as you usually do.

Hack: I resent that.

2nd Master: What? I've made three separate accusations - which one offends your delicate sensibilities?

Hack: The one about my being too stupid to get the story straight.

2nd Master: Not quite how I put it. I notice the charges of perverting the truth and pure fabrication pass without comment.

Hack: Name one.

2nd Master: What?

Hack: A mistake I made unintentionally.

2nd Master: You published the government's league tables.... all right, we'll let that go.... even if it does amount to the deliberate promulgation of misinformation - let's stick to you, reporter Hack. You were, I think, responsible for your paper's recent analysis of sex differences in GCSE? *(Rummaging in desk, around it etc.)*.

Hack: Yes.

2nd Master: In which you quoted me as saying that all boys in the school failed English? - Good, God, I've found it.... *(Holds up newspaper cutting)*.

Hack: You said that.

2nd Master: In a manner of speaking.... what I actually said was *(Reading from accompanying notes)*. "The English results were pleasing with 98% gaining comfortable passes, including 34% at grade A. The Department had hoped for a 100% pass rate, but unfortunately, all the three boys who had come straight into the fifth year from overseas, whose first language was not English, failed.

Hack: Not quite pithy enough for a headline. Needs abbreviating.

2nd Master: "All the boys failed English" was hardly a faithful abbreviation.

Hack: The full quotation was in the article.

2nd Master: FULLER, perhaps. If you will allow me: ALL THE BOYS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE WAS NOT ENGLISH FAILED.

Hack: There, you see.

2nd Master: But you left in a comma that belonged to the phrase that you took out.

Hack: Oh well, if you're going to get pernicky

2nd Master: Pernicky? Pernicky? It was rather important.

Hack: Blimey, keep your hair on.... Only a teacher could get so worked up over a comma.

2nd Master: You just don't understand, do you? Let me spell out your quotation "ALL THE BOYS COMMA WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE WAS NOT ENGLISH COMMA FAILED".

Hack: A comma here, a comma there....

2nd Master: Your commas, Hack, announced to the entire country that this school has no native English speakers in the whole of the fifth year, nor a single boy whose English is good enough to gain a GCSE pass -

Hack: Upper class school ashamed of its ethnic minority students....

2nd Master: I don't get it, Hack, malicious or just thick, which is it?

Hack: I didn't think you teachers used words like "thick" - "differently gifted", "late developer", "less able" more your bag aren't they?

2nd Master: Oh - I see.... now we're a member of the tough-talking-anti-trendy-lefty-educationist, let's-call-a-spade-a-bloody shovel right-wing bring-back-proper education brigade.

Hack: Maybe. Teach them how to use commas, three Rs.

2nd Master: Aren't you supposed to like public schools?

Hack: Only if they're value for money. Your results were no better than the FREE Grammar School down the road.

2nd Master: If our results were even remotely similar it is a feather in our cap - we recruit a much wider range of ability: half our pupils would not have been accepted by a Grammar School. But I don't suppose the results were similar....

Hack: Yes they were.

2nd Master:in YOUR LEAGUE TABLE, which means nothing. You had half our lower sixth down as achieving no GCSEs - they don't TAKE GCSEs in their lower sixth year! I imagine the Grammar School's statistics are equally meaningless, compiled by someone in complete ignorance of what they actually mean or represent.

Hack: Oh yeah, we hear a lot from schools and teachers about the shortcomings of tables they've done badly in.

2nd Master: You never publish it, though.

Hack: Boring whining.

2nd Master: Oh piss off.

Hack: Can I quote you on that?

2nd Master: Have you any idea of the damage you do? Your sort of dishonest, ignorant, carping, sensationalising journalism? Your simplistic, misleading, pig-ignorant view of education? Your kind of scare-mongering misinformation which is also government policy now? Do you know, this afternoon I had to rebuke two junior teachers for the most outrageous behaviour during an exam invigilation. One was a bigoted blockhead who presumably got a job here solely on his ability to coach and play CCF exercises and team games of mind-numbing simplicity with quite terrifying tenacity, the other was a hardened case of such very profound fatalistic cynicism that he honestly doesn't believe that anything any of us does could possibly make any difference. What are these people DOING in teaching? Who gave them the idea that teaching would supply a sanctuary for such defeated, pathetic creatures? You did, Hack. You and your unspeakably arrogant government - when you began lecturing teachers like naughty schoolchildren and denigrating what they do and swaggeringly suggesting that it is all perfectly simple what teachers should do.

Hack: Yes, you can't bear that, can you? You're just like the teachers I had at school - always the smug contempt for any simple solution. You wouldn't understand it, it's too complicated.... but what's wrong with my answer, article, league-table, sir? Everything, boy, it's just not that simple, you can't do it that way, it's more complicated than that, you've missed the whole point in presenting it this way.... (*Continuing mimic*). No I can't give a model answer, if you're too stupid to understand I'm afraid I can't help you.... And now it's the same: the public is too dim to compare schools, produce or understand statistics; well if we're all too stupid to understand these niceties, whose fault is it? Bloody teachers!

2nd Master: Oh, fine, that's it then. I mean it's all right if you destroy society and the world, because you can always blame your teachers for not having taught you better....

Hack: You're right, SIR, there's no point in continuing this (*Going*).

2nd Master: Hack, if you ever worry that there aren't many people like you because you're so much lower, meaner-minded and morally bankrupt than average - forget it. After what you and your kind have done to schools there will soon be thousands more like you - (*HACK is gone. SECOND MASTER, after his uncharacteristic outburst, is exhausted. Slumps in his chair. Picks up dictaphone*). Urgent message to Headmaster, Okhotsk. Sorry to bother you, Headmaster, but it isn't anything to do with the school

itself - I'm doing my best with all that. I fear we must expect a less-than-sympathetic article in the press soon. (*Puts head down on desk and goes to sleep*).

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

Lights straight back up to reveal the SECOND MASTER still asleep. A knock on the door startles him awake.

2nd Master: Ah, come in, boys: I must have slept for hours - is it already.... (*Consults watch, faint surprise, enter ROGER, 3 more HOUSEMASTERS and 3 HOUSEMISTRESSES*).

HM 4: "Come in, BOYS?" : Unusual form of address, Second Master - are you trying to foster a happy atmosphere of comrades at war?

2nd Master: Ha! Yes.... um.... DO sit down. Grab a chair where you can.... come in, come in.... (*Shuffling and placing of chairs, piles of notes etc.*). Good, good - here, here you are - good. Now as I understand it, the purpose of this meeting is to pool everything we've discovered, cross-refer and so on. Roger, perhaps you'd like to bring us all up to date?

HM 1: Yes, of course, Second Master. Most of us now have interview notes which we've brought with us: we've interviewed all the boys and girls who appeared on the list as doing 'Anarchy'.... most of the cleverest in the school I should say - and all those potentially good enough to have got into the computer and tinkered with the lists in the first place.

2nd Master: It obviously represents a LOT of work.

Housemaster: But not, I don't think, fruitless. They clearly had a single leader who set it all up - rather a good one, too, I think; seems to have baled them out of a few crises and always kept his head besides instigating the mischief. Good judgment - if he isn't the Head of School perhaps he should have been! No-one has identified him, and most try to rearrange their stories to play down the idea of a leader, but he's clearly there, and I think he's here (*Indicates notes*). I really think that if we go through these carefully, matching and cross-referring, then we'll be able to sort out which one is being shielded.

2nd Master: (*Hesitates, then takes a pad and pen*). Okay. I'm with you.

Housemaster: Good. Well let's start chronologically; so that's the story according to young Peter in my house....

BLACKOUT

Lights up. - HOUSEMASTERS' and HOUSEMISTRESSES' notes beginning to get spread out over the floor. HOUSEMASTER One is on hands and knees pointing to one sheet. SECOND MASTER is very obviously asleep.

HM 1: Then who was it said.... Ah! I know.... it was James' interview that threw up the business about the tractor -

HM 3: Me? Oh I don't think so. Surely....

HM 1: Not you? (*Looks back at notes and traces out with finger*). then it must have been....

BLACKOUT

Lights up. HOUSEMASTER 1 still crawling over notes on the floor, SECOND MASTER in a different, elaborately obviously asleep posture.

HM 4: Well I think it's downright subversive missing chapel. Going to chapel's all part of the team spirit and to ARRANGE to skip it like that is irreligious and....

HM 2: WHO arranged it? That's what we need to know.

HM 4: Well you can obviously eliminate any members of the team - I mean those who've been confirmed into the Church of England - they'd hardly organise a boycott.

HMSS 1: Strictly speaking, of course, these weren't Church of England services; these were compulsory all-school, non-denominational prayers.

HM 4: Well, Church is church, isn't it?

HMSS 1: Admittedly it IS hard to tell the difference, but the Chaplain IS supposed to make compulsory morning prayers less specifically Christian-based than the Sunday services....

HMSS 2: Rather ironic really, that their transcendental meditation sessions or whatever they were doing instead of going to chapel was probably a rather better and more appropriate morning prayer session than the chaplain provides.

HM 2: What do you mean?

HMSS 3: Well they WERE indulging in a non-exclusive religious ceremony -

which is what the school advertises - when we weren't, you see...

HM 2: They were skipping chapel, for Christ's sake....

BLACKOUT

Lights up. Notes have spread a little further. HM 1 is still on them. SECOND MASTER is in another, elaborately asleep posture.....

HM 1: No, that line won't go any further....

HM 2: Well, let's get on to this unauthorised trip to London. I mean, that took some organising, and we can't just sit back and allow boys to absent themselves.

HMSS 2: Nor girls for that matter -

HM 2: No, quite - sorry dear - nor girls.

HM 3: They only went to the opera.

HM 2: Well so they say, so they say. I'm not too inclined to believe all they tell me on that one -

HM 3: Not much option with mine: he was chatting with a man at the bar in the interval who turns out to be reviewing the performance for *The Independent*. The review quotes one of his remarks and actually refers to him by name -

HMSS 3: Was it a good remark?

HM 3: Very intelligent, quoted with full approval.

HMSS 3: But why didn't anyone say? There are some really very exciting possibilities for good publicity there....

HM 1: I think we may be straying.

HM 4: But what sort of publicity? Making us out as a school of opera-lovers isn't going to do us any good attracting the supply of decent rugby prop forwards we need at the moment.

HM 1: If we could get back to....

Hm3: I can think of one or two opera singers built like good 1st XV props...

HMSS 2: Always the boys' games of course.

HM 3: Actually the singer I was thinking of is a woman....

BLACKOUT

Lights up on notes spread further, HM 1 still on them, SECOND MASTER still asleep in another abandoned posture.

HM 3: I actually thought that their prospectus was probably rather better than the proper one.... and then the appointments they announced on the

Headmaster's board were more imaginative than the ones that were eventually confirmed - I'd have liked to see the Drama department run by old Dodger....

BLACKOUT

Lights up on a further tableau - HOUSEMASTER notes even more spread out, SECOND MASTER in a yet more elaborately asleep posture, from which he slips and almost falls, waking with a start.....

2nd Master: Hmm? What? Oh gracious, I must have.... (*Looks at his watch*). Heavens! It's nearly two a.m.! I think we must postpone....

Housemaster: Not now, Second Master, we're nearly there. I don't think we should stop until we've worked out a precise strategy to nail this leader they've obviously got.

2nd Master: Leader? Oh I don't think boys work quite so like that any more.

Housemaster: But we've just said.... we KNOW that....

2nd Master: You may but I don't: I've been asleep. I really think that to do likewise must be on the top of all our priority lists now.

Housemaster: But I really think another half hour is going to be the thing which makes us crack it in the end, and then I'll sleep easier and better with all this sorted out....

Housemaster: Yes, come on, let's stick at it.

2nd Master: Oh God. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.... (*Pause of shock*).

Housemaster: No need for that, Andrew - look, if you're tired, we'll stop.

2nd Master: No, no, you misunderstand: I've been wasting your time.

Housemaster: Oh no, I think we've made real progress here.... (*Suddenly hopeful*). or do you mean....? No.... (*Light dawns on him*) or is it that you always knew - it's that, isn't it, Andrew?

2nd Master: Yes, yes - that's right. I'm afraid I already know everything worth knowing about the anarchy society and I've been keeping it from you and letting you waste your time...

Housemaster: Because you've been running it from the start?

2nd Master: Yes. (*Pause. Vague embarrassed packing up of papers. A little irritation, but overwhelmingly sympathetic*).

Housemaster: Why?

2nd Master: Because I'd had enough. I used to like - no, love and live - teaching, but since I've been promoted increasingly out of the classroom and buried alive under the ever-escalating paperwork and immersed more and more in the business PR that I originally chose NOT to do, even though it would have paid so much better.... I've just been lost. Even the little teaching

I do - well you can't pursue the variations that catch their interest and educate, because the syllabus is so narrow and literal, and there are all these boxes to be ticked and assessments to be executed and tests to reach for.... everything's been caught, defined, set down without possibility of variation, and the whole soul and purpose of it all is lost: we don't teach, we train. Children are not empty flower pots to be filled but plants to be nurtured, aren't they? Children are all different so a school has to be flexible - but flexibility costs money and makes you show up all wrong on standard statistics and league tables. And the paperwork, and lists, and forms.... And the kids.... they don't have the imagination any more.... even their law-breaking is uninspired, mere self-indulgence.... well it's inevitable, the whole climate is changed - robots can only produce more robots.... *(Pause)*.

Housemaster: And the anarchist society? Some sort of breakdown? You just flipped and needed to do something outrageous?

2nd Master: Tell the papers whatever story you need - "Toffs Master in charge of discipline goes mad" - whatever - but don't you dare believe it. The anarchist society is the only bit of real teaching I've done for years, and if I had to do it at 2 a.m. to generate that sort of excitement in this day and age, then so be it.. those boys were fired by pure ideas - ethics, moral philosophy - they CHALLENGED assumptions, began to think for themselves, felt liberated by the knowledge that - well, that Euclidian geometry has flaws in it, that physics doesn't explain the universe. Do you remember what that's like? When you take the certainties from under their feet and they love it? Not that pinched, pained look you get in class because they're thinking that this is going to make getting a grade A more difficult, that FRUSTRATION because they want everything explained so they can be sure of getting the right results even if it means their becoming plodding, literal-minded automatons.... not that but the sheer elation of mystery, of the undiscovered, of the opening up of new worlds and possibilities....

Housemaster: But the drunkenness, the vandalism, the -

2nd Master: Education is about experience as well as theory isn't it? It's not all intellectual: you've got to go and try it! Once you've decided there can be no such thing as personal responsibility you go and live your ideals and then, AND THEN, you have to explain how you feel about it having actually done it.... I don't believe in the concept of property so why do I feel so bad about having stolen this case of wine?

Housemaster: Good God - my claret!

2nd Master: Challenging assumptions and moralities in a classroom is one thing, but for it to MEAN anything it needs its perspective: if I can make a watertight argument it still isn't right unless its implications FEEL right as

well. Children need to learn to think, to feel, to grow, and my anarchists, albeit only part time, were doing that....

Housemaster: But the list? Why put it on the activity list?

2nd Master: A twinge of old-fashioned remorse? A cowardly toeing of the line? A desire to be caught before things went too far? I thought the volume of paperwork was such that no-one could read it anyway. Of course I never reckoned on a housemaster getting ill for three weeks.... (*There is a knock on the door*)

Housemaster: Who on earth could that be at this time?

2nd Master: Two a.m. on a Tuesday? Who else? (*Enter PETER, at first surprised to see the wrong group of people, but quickly recovers*).

Peter: Good morning, sir, time for the Anar.... new recruits, sir?

BLACKOUT

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play is easily adaptable in a couple of ways:

Scene Two is self-contained and can be omitted. The jokes within it are so visual and, therefore, dependent on the physical characteristics and abilities of the actors - and possibly in-jokes among the expected audience - that the details of the mime must be left to the discretion of the director. Try things out and see how they work, and, keep it going as long as you dare... The temptation to introduce candidate-generated jokes should be RESISTED, however - all the gags should arise out of bad invigilating and be in contrast to the evident desire of the candidates simply to get on with their exam.

Scene Four: The additional housemasters and housemistresses who appear here can easily be written out or, alternatively, some more could be added.

Where pubs (The Gorilla's Arms) or other teachers (Old Crusty, Slapper) are referred to, names can, of course, be changed to provide a more intimate atmosphere of in-jokes, though this should not be allowed to take over the play, as it may tend to do.

Omitting everything that is easy to omit, and adding no in-jokes or improvisational discoveries, the play will run to about 55 minutes with four actors and two simple scene-changes on a minimal set.

S. H.

CAST

Housemaster: (Roger):

Perfectly intelligent man, but numbed by too long playing a stereotyped role and too often relying on stock responses, so that his mind is now frequently not properly on it, and he has become ever so slightly blimpish in unwitting self-parody. He is a sharp listener, and misses very little, but is often less subtle or penetrating with his responses.

Peter:

Bright Oxford University candidate, self-assured and clever. Some of his lines could be seen as bitter, but should not be delivered so: it's all a tremendous game to him, and his manner remains cheerful, even jovial throughout.

Second Master: (Andrew):

Below a rather bumbling and broken exterior lies a passionate and committed (but still defeated) man.

Hack:

A rather standard hard-bitten hack journalist with trenchcoat and hat, but has an edge to him which unnervingly suggests that he may be serious after all.

Scene Four features some more housemasters and housemistresses:-

Hm 2:	<i>Brusque, no-nonsense sort.</i>
Hm 3: (James)	<i>Smooth, irresponsible.</i>
Hm 4:	<i>Team games man.</i>
HMSS 1:	<i>Nice old spinster.</i>
HMSS 2:	<i>Progressive feminist.</i>
HMSS 3:	<i>A new initiative fan; energetic.</i>

The self-contained **Scene Two** features exclusively:-

Teacher 1:	<i>A clever layabout.</i>
Teacher 2:	<i>Sporty, young (but old-school) colonial style blockhead.</i>
Examinees:	<i>As many as desired but at least two.</i>

