‘COMMONSENSE, MANNERS, GUTS’: ‘MANLINESS’ IN THE ENGLISH SCHOOL STORY 1887-1917

BY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any institution is identified in the text.

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Signed…………………………………….
This thesis is for my mother, Joy Haine who continues to inspire me. It is also dedicated to the memories of both my father, Ken Haine and my brother Roger Haine who passed away during the writing of the thesis.

I wish to thank Hazel Rowley and Wenche Ommundsen for their supervision in the early stages of the thesis and Clare Bradford for her patient and invaluable help as Principal Supervisor. I would also like to acknowledge the help of the following: the staff at the Deakin Library, Dale Campisi for excellent editing, Ruth Lee and Kim Waters for proof-reading and colleagues and postgraduate friends at the Waurn Ponds campus who have cheered me on. Lastly, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my immediate family, including my brother Alan, my husband Geoff and sons Tim and Philip for their abundant love and understanding. I could not have completed this work without the support of all of these important people.
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Thesis Frontispiece

This is the cover illustration from G. Forsyth Grant’s *The Hero of Crampton School*, London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd., (no date). First published in 1895.

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Plate 1  This is a reproduction of the front cover of E.F. Benson’s *David Blaize*, The Hogarth Press, 1989.


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This study stems from my interest in English public school fiction and the late Victorian/early Edwardian historical period. I want to raise questions about masculinity that are both embedded in the fiction of that period, and which are still relevant today because the world we live in is the product of cultural discourses that have inculcated the belief that to be ‘masculine’ means to dominate.

I examine discourses and ideologies of education and socialisation in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century English public school fiction for boys. I will consider how cultural representation is directed toward subjective identity or subject formation, and the extent to which narrative transgressions reveal slippage in the hegemonic imperial ideal.

Masculinity and power are integral to the school stories I examine: the texts are informed by a variety of discourses on masculinity and manifest considerable ambivalence. The stereotypical hero of the late nineteenth century school story is independent and self-reliant – a formulation consistent with popular narratives of imperial domination. Paradoxically, close reading of texts such as *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* and *David Blaize* reveals an effect of feminisation in the romantic attachments and relations between boys, unsettling such stereotypes and indicating a rupture or contradiction. By looking at the resistances and various subject positions that readers are invited to take up, I hope to indicate the historically and socially constructed nature of such narratives. I also want to suggest that the discursive production of a masculine ‘ideal’ involves exclusion.

Barthes, Fairclough and others have argued from several critical perspectives that language – as a system of signification, or discourse – is imbued with ideology.
Rather than looking at discourse as social practice, I am concerned with the discourse of narrative fiction for children and the way that ideological practices are integral to and inseparable from this fiction.

The study of language used in text enables us to examine the way that certain socially dominant moral values are inculcated or resisted. The writer’s ideological position is often overt and the story is deliberately used as an agent of socialisation. Several of the texts I examine are consciously didactic in intention and tone. Using theories of narrative and critical linguistics, I will examine the intersection of the ideologies of texts with the subject positioning of readers.

My chapters are organised as follows. Chapter One outlines my methodology and contextualises the school story in terms of historical background, masculinities and class. Chapter Two explores notions of gender. I look at the Victorian homoerotic school story and the ways that discourses around sexuality intersect in Talbot Baines Reed’s *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, E. F. Benson’s *David Blaize* and Alec Waugh’s *The Loom of Youth*. Chapter Three analyses Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co* with particular focus directed to the theme of Empire and the ideologies of masculinity embedded in it.

The final chapter examines issues around the discourses of education and the socialisation of children. In the late nineteenth century the school story was a staple of the *Boy’s Own Paper* – a popular weekly magazine published by the Religious Tract Society. Its readership included both the working class and the middle class. The magazine was appealing to men, women, boys and girls, and it is my contention that this publication (and others) promulgated an imperialistic, hegemonic masculinity. At the same time, I reveal contradictions, gaps and exclusions.

I explore the construction of middle class masculinity in Britain in boys’ fiction and the way in which it was presented to working class males. The specific site of masculinity that I investigate is that which occurs at the intersections between
imperialism and the public school ethos. The period between 1880 and the First World War saw widespread anxiety about the changing shape of masculinity. As Jeffrey Hantover puts it, men in this period ‘believed that opportunities for the development and expression of masculinity were being limited. They saw forces of feminisation in the world of adults and adolescents ... [and that perceived phenomenon] contributed to the anxiety of men worried about the present and wary of the future’.¹ I am looking at the relationship of a number of school stories to their historical context and the way that relationship affected gender formation during a time when the meaning of masculinity was in a state of flux.

I bring to the project the perspective of a female, feminist scholar at a historical distance from the texts. I suggest that women have a place in a study of men and masculinity and concur with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s statement that women as well as ‘men of all ages and cultural backgrounds – straight, gay, bisexual and female’ need to engage with projects that explore ‘key issues about the nature of masculinity.’² As Sedgwick puts it, ‘As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them.’³

My study uses a number of specific terms and concepts that require definition – most of them are slippery notions. I discuss human sexuality, particularly in Chapter Two in connection with discourses of sexuality. I have adhered to Foucault’s definition (in his History of Sexuality) of ‘sexuality’ as a discursive construct, although, as Roberta Seelinger Trites asserts, this definition is open to criticism in that it denies the pre-discursive physicality of human sexuality.⁴

³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Ibid., p.13.
Foucault shows that Western cultures define themselves by both the repression and the liberation of sexuality, but asserts that they depend on a repressive definition of sexuality. Because Western discourses about sex are repressed, he argues that the practices of confession and psychoanalysis, for example, have evolved from the need/requirement of people to discuss sexual matters. In *History of Sexuality* he claims:

What is peculiar to modern societies … is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret.*

Most of my chosen texts use a didactic form of narration. The serialised story ‘Emily’ that I analyse in Chapter Four, and Rudyard Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* are examples of what Foucault has identified as ‘practical texts’:

They are written for the purpose of offering rules, opinions, and advice on how to behave as one should: ‘practical’ texts, which are themselves objects of a ‘practice’ in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and they were intended to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct. These texts thus served as functional devices that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects.

The stories that I analyse represent and construct a range of public schools in their narratives. This poses another problem of definition because the type of school differs in each of the texts – they are not all set in the larger elite public schools. Some stories obliquely imply that they are based on elite schools such as Eton or Harrow. Others are different altogether – *Stalky & Co*, for example, is about an unconventional boarding school set up for the sons of servicemen who were

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unable to afford the prestigious Haileybury College. Kipling based his construct on the school he attended as a boy, United Services College. The term public school implies privilege. Isabel Quigly sums up the difficulty in defining exactly what a public school means in symbolic terms. She says that ‘its existence was not logical or exactly definable, merely emotive … it existed as a symbol of much more than itself: of a system, social and political, and of particular attitudes, large or small’. 7

The texts both celebrate muscular Christianity (St Dominic’s) and challenge those notions of the masculine ideal (David Blaize); or they celebrate an aggressive masculinity while omitting the role of athleticism in its construction of imperial manliness (Stalky & Co.).

I have attempted to reveal the omissions and absences as well as what is presented to the reader in order to ascertain the discourses that inform them. As Clare Bradford asserts:

> If adult knowledge of the impact of particular books upon child readers is limited, the books themselves tell us much more. In the ways in which they address child readers, in the language through which they position children to prefer one character to another, and to approve certain behaviours but not others, in what they say and do not say, children’s books yield up the ideologies which inform them. 8

The range of texts I explore are written from a variety of perspectives, but most are clearly written with a child audience in mind. Stalky & Co, David Blaize and ‘Emily’ each address children as well as adults. However it is not so easy to categorise Alec Waugh’s The Loom of Youth – he wrote it when he was just seventeen. But the views in it are directed at both an adult and child audience and the important point to remember, to quote Bradford again, is:

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8 Clare Bradford, Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children’s Literature, Melbourne University Press, Australia, 2001, p.3.
Books are necessarily informed by the cultures in which they are produced. But children’s books do not merely mirror what exists; rather, they formulate and produce concepts and ideologies, always within the context of adult views about what children should know and value.\(^9\)

I critique the texts in relation to respectable middle class ideals of masculinity that are constructed in them, and the attempts to disseminate those ideals. Middle class ideals however, were themselves subject to contestation. As Martin Crotty states:

Debates and contests over the morality, behaviour, outlooks and priorities of males need to be understood as a process of dialogue and conflict between different codes of masculinity, operative within, as well as across, class boundaries.\(^10\)

Kimberley Reynolds explains the way that these debates were part of earnest discussions that surrounded popular fiction during the last decades of the nineteenth century:

This anxiety originated from the belief that entertaining reading matter would stimulate the working class to read, and thereby develop the potential for radicalism and rebellion.\(^11\)

‘Manliness’ (itself a discursive construct like ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’) that is promulgated in the fiction is the identity that boys were directed to. I use the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in the way that R. W. Connell uses it to define ‘the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’.\(^12\)

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\(^9\) Clare Bradford, *Reading Race*, p.5.
Crotty urges us to think of ‘hegemonic masculinities’ as ‘pluralities’ – ‘in the same way that we need to think of ‘masculinities’.13

Finally, I hope that this exploration of the constructed nature of masculinity and sexuality through the discourses and ideologies of middle class public school stories will contribute to post-structuralist criticism while at the same time acknowledging that my own work is also subject to the same critical response – since, in Donald E. Hall’s words ‘literary and cultural critique is both fragile and polyvalent’.14

13 Martin Crotty, Making the Australian Male, pp.8-9.
CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In searching for a critical methodology, I needed to find a way of examining the interrelated issues of the ideologies of texts and the subjectivity of readers. I therefore decided to look at language, because the subject and the social world in literature are represented through language. Language is the medium through which relationships between a child and its cultural world are defined. Using discourse analysis, I aim to illuminate the processes and effects of those definitions and representations in literary texts. Discourse analysis, as proposed by John Stephens, is a tool to examine children’s fiction with a methodology that includes narrative theory, critical linguistics, and an overriding interest in ideology and subjectivity. Stephens (with reference to Barthes, Larraine and Fairclough) claims that ‘it has been argued from a number of social and critical perspectives that language as a system of signification – what is commonly referred to as discourse – is endemically and pervasively imbued with ideology.’

Ideology is increasingly seen as a mechanism of power in society, with language as the major locus of ideology. Language is both a site of and intrinsic to struggles for power. So the study of language as a system of signification (that is, as discourse) is able to reveal its ideologies. Many of the texts I deconstruct reveal the perpetuation of certain late nineteenth century values, while others resist them. Using discourse analysis I aim to reveal the way that discourses of this sub-genre of children’s narrative fiction are pervaded by ideology, at times overtly and at other times covertly.

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One way to discover the operations of ideology in the school story genre is to deconstruct its narrative discourse to reveal its significances. A deconstruction of the story and its significance enables us to discover a range of possible reader–subject positions. The ideological impact of a text is varied according to the subject position a reader might adopt. Another narrative strategy, focalisation, is also shown to be part of the relationship between subject positioning and ideology in this genre.

I am interested in the way that these texts reflect both educational policy and also provide a window into the socialisation processes of children. The discourses in the texts are imbued with ideology, and discourse analysis is both the methodology and the focus of my thesis. Discourse of children’s fiction intersects with several other discourses I have identified – such as those of child-rearing practices and the education and socialisation of young readers. Debates concerning the function of children’s fiction have been raging for centuries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the debate focused on moral purpose. It is not surprising that these questions of value arise. There is, after all, an age differential between the children who read the texts and the adults who write, produce and purchase them. The texts also raise ideological issues because of the social discourses within which they are produced and consumed.

In my ideological critique I look at particular textual devices that draw the implied reader into a text. Deconstruction of the texts and examination of narrative focalisation reveals the implicated ideological formulations and the construction of subject positions available to implied readers.

The language of texts for children, like all language and sign systems, is highly ideological. Eighteenth and early nineteenth century school story texts – with their didactic promotion of a particular set of values – took the form of preaching. Only a limited subject position was available to the reader. Some of the texts I consider in this thesis follow the pattern of Thomas Hughes’s *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and F. W. Farrar’s *Eric, Or, Little by Little*. As the genre became increasingly popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century, following the
popularity of novels such as *Tom Brown*, they took on a formulaic format. Sex-role stereotyping abounded – marginalising women and the working class and allowing the white male middle-class values of British imperialism to dominate. Women, if mentioned at all, tended to be either ignored or idealised.

An analysis of this genre, however, finds that within such stereotyping and homogenisation, the texts are full of gaps and ruptures. Umberto Eco (1981) argues that all texts carry ideological assumptions, whether overt or covert. Peter Hollindale (1988) distinguishes three levels of ideology at work in books for children: firstly, the didactic level that I discuss in my work on Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.*; secondly, a more passive level where world views are incorporated into the narrative (often in dialogue between characters or where the reader is tacitly invited to take a particular subject position); and thirdly, what Hollindale terms an ‘underlying climate of belief’, which he says is inscribed within the basis of the narrative. All these positions are incorporated in the texts I am studying.

My initial focus grew from an interest in the socialising role of public school fiction. I was fascinated to discover why a sub-genre of narrative fiction for children centred on the lives of boys in an elite institution – beyond the experience of working class children – could have had such a huge impact on the popular psyche. It is commonly accepted that this fiction and the ethos of the public school are implicated in imperialism and constructions of Britishness. The discourses encoded in the construction of the popular English public schoolboy hero provided one way in which sociocultural values came to dominate. They transgressed social class and achieved the status of universal significance. The texts themselves present a special context for the operation of ideologies. They are structured discourses that, whether overtly or implicitly, encode certain social practices.

Foucault has helped to define how to think about power in contemporary society and his insights into institutions and power are highly relevant to this study. For Foucault, the subject is constituted in discourse through the specific vocabulary of knowledge that circulate in society. His work explores the institutional effects of
discourse and the ways it operates to produce and govern individual subjects. But while most discourses work to produce particular forms of subjectivity, their very organisation also implies the possibility of other subject positions and with them the possibilities of resistance to meanings that may be dominant.

Foucault contends that societies function through regulation and discipline. For Foucault, the communal group is divided and individualised so that there is a sense of place for individuals but also a division of individuals into the binaries normal/abnormal, sane/insane etc. It is because people tend to regulate their own individuality – and that in turn assists in the regulation of society – that Foucault is able to assert:

> it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.\(^2\)

Foucault arrives at these conclusions by unpacking the way that two major historical events led to the organisation of society where the individual is regulated. The first is the way that the plague at the end of the seventeenth century is implicated in the partitioning of space, which meant that each individual was assigned to a place of confinement. Regulation of people according to categories of sickness and health ensured that individuals were subjected to a host of techniques of surveillance, which in effect brought power relations into existence.

Another example of how power works can be found in Foucault’s documentation of Jeremy Bentham’s (1748–1832) panopticon. The panopticon is a central watchtower with a hidden observer, overlooking a series of cells. The inmates of the cells cannot see prisoners in adjoining cells nor the tower. Each inmate is subsequently led to believe that they are being continually watched (which may or may not be the case). As Foucault describes it:
This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the human beings, the sick and the dead — all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.\(^3\)

They become conditioned to regulating their own behaviour and subject to a power arrangement, which Foucault names a ‘mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form’:

All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of these two forms from which they distantly derive.\(^4\)

Foucault goes on to explain how schools (as well as urban development, hospitals, asylums and prisons) are modelled on the underlying principle of power that acts by means of observation or hierarchised surveillance. Foucault explains that the school building derives from the conception of the *Ecole Militaire* that was to become a mechanism for training. Designed by Paris-Duverney as a pedagogical machine, its aim was to ‘train vigorous bodies, the imperative of health; obtain competent soldiers, the imperative of politics; prevent debauchery and homosexuality, the imperative of morality’.\(^5\) The pupils were confined to their ‘cells’ at night, which were arranged along a corridor with an officer’s quarters situated at each end of every ten pupils cells. In the dining room was a ‘slightly raised platform for the tables of the inspectors of studies, so that they may see all the tables of the pupils of their divisions during meals’; latrines had been installed with half-doors, so that the supervisor on duty could see the head and legs of the pupils, and also with side walls sufficiently high ‘that those inside cannot see one


\(^3\) Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.197.

\(^4\) Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., pp.199-200.
another.’⁶ Foucault also describes how the specifics of surveillance were incorporated into the reorganisation of elementary teaching. Pupils were given various roles to perform, some practical, such as the distributing ink and paper, and some that which were aligned to surveillance:

Observers must record who left his bench, who was talking, who did not have his rosary, or Book of Hours, who did not comport himself properly at mass, who committed an impure act, who indulged in idle talk or was unruly in the street.⁷

Foucault concludes that these developments from the eighteenth century, caused ‘hierarchized, continuous and functional surveillance…[to owe] its importance to the mechanisms of power that it brought with it. By means of such surveillance, disciplinary power became an ‘integrated’ system.’⁸

I have found Foucault’s methods to be important to understand the way that the English school story reflects and promulgates ideologies that are formulated within what he calls ‘apparatus of power.’⁹

**Historical background**

In order to contextualise the school story, I have also studied novels of middle-class life in the late-Victorian/early Edwardian era. I suggest that the mid to late Victorian middle-class family engendered an extremely intense atmosphere in which to grow up. The suffocating nature of family life is well represented in novels such as Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* and Edmund Gosse’s *Father and Son*. Compton Mackenzie’s *Sinister Street* demonstrates this oppressiveness – even for a young child. Book One ‘The Prison House’ describes the anxiety and

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⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.172.
⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.176.
⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.176.
anguish of having a mother who was frequently absent for long periods, with no adequate explanation:

His mother’s absence saddened for Michael the tall thin house in Carlington Road. He felt enclosed in the restraint from which his mother had flown like a bird.¹⁰

At this time, marriage and family were sacred institutions. The nanny had taken over the responsibility of the nursery years and governesses and tutors were employed for those children who did not yet go away to school. Mothers were remote figures and a hierarchy of servants did the day-to-day running of the family. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy remarks that one of the crucial factors to affect the supply and demand for nannies was the increase of wealth in the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution gave Britain immense wealth – but only for a concentrated elite. The period 1850–80 defined the place of nannies in well-off middle class households. Gathorne-Hardy traces the gradual emergence of a more indulgent attitude towards children from the Restoration onwards, with the decline of swaddling of babies, through to John Locke’s advice in 1692, in his text, Some Thoughts Concerning Education:

I would have children very seldom beaten ... A gentle persuasion and reasoning will most times do much better. They love to be treated as rational creatures sooner than is imagined.¹¹

By the end of the nineteenth century there was ‘a conception of the child as different, living in a separate world’.¹² The nineteenth century attitude towards the role and early care of children was defined by the remark by Samuel Smiles that ‘The nation comes from the nursery.’¹³ By the time of the Great Exhibition, especially scaled-down nursery furniture appeared for the first time. Chris Jenks’s

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⁹ Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish, Ibid., p.207.
¹² Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, The Rise and Fall of the English Nanny, Ibid., p.52.
chapter ‘Decoding Childhood’, in *Discourse & Reproduction: Essays in Honor of Basil Bernstein*,14 draws particularly on the theories of Hoyles and charts the development of ideas about childhood. Emerging as it did at a relatively late stage in the historical process, Jenks claims that childhood, formulated through an ‘analytic gaze’, is as revealing about our society as it is about our children. Jenks explains that we take childhood for granted, and because we regard it as a transitory phenomenon, something to ‘grow out of’ on our passage to adult rational life, this normative assumption leads us to admonish people for ‘acting childishy’.15 Jenks then draws attention to the way that we ‘know’ children in terms of the ‘normal’ and the ‘natural’. But he reminds us that childhood is historically constructed – not ‘a brief inhabitation of a lilliputian world owned and ruled by others.’16 Jenks refers to Aries who, in studying medieval art, has drawn attention to the changing ways in which children have been recognised by adults and the differing forms of their relationships with adults. He draws a parallel by remarking that the terms ‘adolescent’ and ‘teenager’ have entered common parlance relatively recently – only in the last fifty years.

Aries locates the emergence of the modern representation of childhood in the eighteenth century. Rousseau encouraged an interest in the process of growing up and in education. As Jenks puts it, ‘the child has moved through time from obscurity to the center stage.’17 He also discusses the theories of what he calls other ‘child evolutionists’ namely DeMause, Robertson and Shorter, concluding that ‘our changing attitudes have apparently transformed children from the status of object, worthy only of disregard, into the status of subject, and subject of our central attention and self-sacrifice. In short, ‘the child has come to symbolize all that is decent and caring about a society.’18

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15 Chris Jenks, Ibid., p.176.
16 Chris Jenks, Ibid; p.176.
17 Chris Jenks, Ibid; p.178.
18 Chris Jenks, Ibid; p.179.
Taking these theories a step further, Jenks explains that the various meanings about childhood are inextricably linked to the different forms of discourse that ‘move in and out of focus’. For example, discourses providing for children in a contemporary Western society might include the teacher, the educational psychologist, a television producer or advertising executive. Jenks thus argues that just as the child is neither ‘natural’ nor ‘normal’, s/he is not neutral, but always moral and political.\(^\text{19}\)

With regard to the place of women in nineteenth century society, George Winterbourne, Richard Aldington’s protagonist in *Death of a Hero*, explains that the public school system in the nineteenth century had avoided ‘the sexual problem’ by ‘teaching men to despise women, either by open scorn or by putting them on the pedestal of chastity’.\(^\text{20}\) Certainly, mothers in mid-Victorian England were remote figures and their position in the household was in decline, owing to the rise of the servant class. Not only was she remote, but she was also idealised. As Gathorne-Hardy puts it ‘she was turned into a remote, beautiful, untouchable goddess’\(^\text{21}\) – almost canonised. Nanny, continues Gathorne-Hardy, was the one to be reckoned with, the dealer out of punishment. He notes that by 1918 when the need for nannies declined, mothers took a larger part in child rearing – and their prior idealisation lessened. Gathorne-Hardy draws attention to the fictional heroines – the ‘pale, vapid, beautiful untouchable heroines of Buchan, Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle’\(^\text{22}\) and suggests that in real life the middle class woman had nothing much to do except to delegate the running of their homes to servants and indulge in social life. He says that it is ‘scarcely surprising that many of them suffered from a profound sense of uselessness and often retired, neurotic, fainting and depressed to be “ill” on couches or in their bedrooms for years and years.’\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{19}\) Chris Jenks, Ibid; pp180-181.


\(^{21}\) J. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*, p.78.

\(^{22}\) J. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*, Ibid., p.96.

By the late 1880s, manliness was increasingly seen in opposition to effeminacy. Women at home were seen to be weak – the very opposite of the muscular Christian ideal. Women had to be protected; and restraint was called for in dealing with women, while boys were brought up to be ‘manly, brave and vigorous’.

Gillian Avery, in *Nineteenth Century Children*, asserts that ‘The Victorians felt … that while a woman could not be truly womanly unless she had been protected from every breath of the world, a man could not be truly manly unless he had seen stripped bare the Tree of the Fruit of Knowledge of Good and Evil.’ The popularity of adventure stories and tales about the war against evil are directly attributable to this ideal of the ‘manly’. C. M. Yonge, in *What Books to Lend and What to Give* (1887), recommends that girls will require ‘something either solid, droll, or exciting’. Boys, on the other hand, need ‘a pretty book with plenty of killing’. Girls were thought to be malleable, impressionable, and sensitive. They could be reformed by their choice of reading material. It was thought that boys, however, would appreciate something stronger than the sort of moral dilemmas of conscience, such as taking a bite from a windfall apple. This was girls’ stuff.

Shirley Nicholson in *A Victorian Household* suggests that ‘the Victorians believed that men were by nature strong and active, women weak and passive, and they lost no opportunity of underlining that stereotype.’ Nicholson comments that women often posed as frail – since to be ‘delicate’ was to be interesting. She also remarks that country girls were assumed to be inherently different from middle class women – robust enough to work long hours as domestic servants, having a ‘lack of sensibility’ and ‘coarseness of fibre’. Nicholson’s examination of the diary of Marion Sambourne (wife of the *Punch* artist Linley Sambourne), mentions ‘unwellness’ nearly every day. Marion Sambourne seems to typify a Victorian lady with a morbid preoccupation with ‘ill health’ that Nicholson says is a characteristic of the Victorians. (Interestingly, the preoccupation with ill-health in her diaries reveals a paradox – a delight in parties

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and dinners. A day’s entry might contain as many references to a morning of sickness followed by ‘Delightful dinner, most amusing ... Enjoyed it immensely’).

Marion Sambourne’s diaries also reveal the differences in upbringing of sons and daughters. Roy, her son, tested his mother’s patience regularly. Marion begins the Easter holidays with a diary entry exclaiming ‘Darling Roy home from Eton.’ But the comments quickly deteriorate: ‘Roy very troublesome so rude and noisy made me quite ill and had good cry unable to go down to lunch.’ On the other hand her daughter Maud’s forthcoming wedding, while a source of excitement in the family, also has its frustrations. ‘Out all morning with Maud – Swears and Wells and Dickens and Jones – nearly dead, Maud so slow choosing.’ But it is her son who causes continued friction. ‘Roy getting very tiresome again, debts, bills and general indiscretions spoiling his better nature.’ Marion sums up her attitudes with the remark: ‘Wish boys were as little worry as girls or Roy as manageable as darling Maud was.’ These diary entries reflect the perceived ‘problem’ of boys and their education that was the subject of both public and private discourse.

By the latter decades of the century, structures that had been in place in mid Victorian Britain began to break down. Social inequalities were becoming more apparent with the growth of labour. The Depression, strikes, inter-class tensions all served to cause a breakdown of political consensus. In 1867 Matthew Arnold attacked the direction of culture in a rapidly industrialised Britain. Moreover, since the publication of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), Christianity no longer served to control the ‘masses’. For Victorians, *The Origin of Species* began to undermine the central truth of Christianity. Religious belief and morality were linked, and Charles Kingsley’s books linked Christianity with moral duty to Queen and country. Kingsley’s ‘muscular Christian’ was anti-intellectual and

29 Shirley Nicholson, Ibid., p.185.  
30 Shirley Nicholson, Ibid., p.185
anti-High Church. The non-conformist tradition of Kingsley emphasised duty to God and one’s fellow man.

P. W. Musgrave suggests areas of considerable change in Britain in the period 1860–90. From around 1880 literature for young persons and children began to take on a critical tone. This criticism, whether implicit or explicit, made its way into all areas of the British social framework via the burgeoning school story genre.

A rise in the total population of England and Wales during this period included a rise in the population of children and young people. A wealthier, more literate population allowed opportunities for an increase in entrepreneurs in the publishing world. Although there was a potential market for literature for children, it was not obvious how to establish it – and the 1890s depression only compounded the difficulty. A deliberate effort was made to concentrate on the political imperial spirit – directly affecting what was selected for publication. Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887 and Diamond in 1897 were notable occasions for patriotism.

Chivalric terms and metaphors increased, influenced by Sir Walter Scott’s romantic novels, introducing notions of chivalry to school stories from the 1860s. However P. W. Musgrave remarks on the paradox whereby the bullying of boys by boys was no longer being officially sanctioned, and yet the growth of Empire ultimately required of them extremely violent actions. Thomas Arnold’s definition of manliness was ‘in terms of an active maturity reached through growth and marked by the cultivation of intelligence and energy in the pursuit of morality within the Christian faith.’ Kingsley and Hughes later stressed the ‘masculine and muscular connotations of the word and found its converse in effeminacy.’

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Angus Wilson in *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* suggests that ‘the underlying mood of the nation was apprehensive and anxious in this hour of apparent high prosperity. In this time when churchgoing was fast eroding and religious doubt and indifference were spreading in all classes, a vaguely religious exhortation was exactly fitted to meet the vague anxieties of ordinary men and women about their slide away from church and chapel.’\(^{32}\) Imperialism was unequivocally the dominant ideology in Britain from the 1850s to at least the 1950s. The ethos of Empire infused and saturated the arts: theatre, books, painting, school textbooks, advertising material, newspapers and magazines – and later, films. The attitudes associated with imperialism were transmitted by the rising mass market and growth of mass media – making it an ideology of unprecedented impact. Popular imperialism combined what John McKenzie terms an ‘ideological cluster’ in which Empire, crown, ‘race’, armed forces and nation became synonymous. Britain had established the Empire for ‘economic, strategic and prestige reasons’, but the spread of the ideology of imperialism arose from a Protestant evangelical tradition combining a work ethic with a moral imperative to give ‘underprivileged peoples’ the benefit of Britain’s background in work and duty and service.

Britain was noticeably lagging behind Germany in technical and scientific research at the end of the nineteenth century, and the Boer war of 1899–1902 served to confirm the weaknesses and inadequacies of British military power. In the national quest for efficiency in the late nineteenth century, the main structures of society were put under the spotlight for investigation. Education was included to tighten up anything that could be at risk of hampering competition with foreign powers.

**Educational discourses in the public schools and the development of the school story**

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In this section I examine the ways that late-Victorian/early Edwardian ideals of manliness intersect with discourses of sexuality and imperialism. But first I want to highlight that historians have identified a shift in ideals of manliness from the mid-Victorian period to the last decades of the nineteenth century – what has been described as a movement away from moral earnestness and muscular Christianity, to that of athleticism. Norman Vance explains something of the complex nature of the term ‘manliness’:

As it emerged ‘manliness’ may relate to physical vigour and prowess … or to patriotic and military qualities, or to the traditions of chivalry, or to a variety of moral qualities … Each nuance of meaning mingles and overlaps with the others, so when the Victorians preached a gospel of ‘Christian manliness’ almost every good and perfect thing was potentially included under that generous label.¹³

Vance sums up the phases of manliness in the public schools as an emphasis on moral earnestness that merged into:

vigorous ‘muscular Christianity’, games mania, Grecian aestheticism, and finally a recruiting campaign. It reflected the changing atmosphere of Victorian society and largely disappeared, with some of the last vestiges of Victorianism, in the mud of the Somme.¹⁴

According to David Newsome, the term ‘muscular Christianity’ is ascribed to a Victorian Saturday reviewer, T. S. Sandars.³⁵ The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as an ‘ideal of religious character exhibited in writings of Charles Kingsley.’³⁶ A publisher’s summary on the back cover of Mangan and Walvin’s text *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain & America 1800–1940* endorses the important connection between manliness and the public schools:

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³⁴ Norman Vance, Ibid., p.130.
To the early Victorians, manliness represented a concern with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selflessness and integrity; but to the late Victorians it stood for neo-Spartan virility as exemplified by Stoicism, hardiness and endurance – the three pre-eminent qualities of the famous English public school system.

The early to mid-Victorian transition that Mangan and Walvin highlight, is exemplified in another term, that of ‘Godliness and Good Learning’, which came to signify this ideal. As David Newsome contends:

The ideal of godliness and good learning assumed that education and religion were essentially allied; and, furthermore, that the belief was not confined to a small group of Victorian headmasters who held a high and exaggerated view of the importance of their calling. In examining some of the roots of this ideal we have seen that this manner of thinking was natural to a large body of early Victorians who had been brought up in the atmosphere of pious homes and who had shared common experiences and enthusiasms at school and at the university. Despite doctrinal differences and rival philosophic systems, they can still be regarded as a single class ... a combination of intellectual toughness, moral earnestness and deep spiritual conviction.

Taking into account all their differences – in personality, religious temperament and philosophic standpoint – we may yet discern a definite pattern in the lives of these early and mid-Victorian intellectuals who were brought up to godliness and good learning ... They read seriously, talked earnestly, and sought to make the world a better place.

Newsome explores the way that educational methods were employed in the schools to convert, as he puts it, ‘dens of thieves’ into ‘temples of God’, and, ‘the attempts to inculcate spiritual zeal and love of learning to the Victorian public schoolboy’. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy in The Old School Tie has vividly described the mid-Victorian moral climate and the attempts to reform the public

38 David Newsome, Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Idea, Ibid., pp.16-17.
39 David Newsome, Ibid; p.17.
schools. He documents the movement towards reform, asserting that it was a reaction to ‘the brutality, inefficiency, corruption and immorality’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century public school. Concerns about teaching methods, about the curriculum, the practice of fagging, beatings and discipline began to provoke an outcry. Gathorne-Hardy quotes from the 1816 *Edinburgh Review* that ‘fagging [the system of younger boys doing domestic and menial chores for older boys] was the only regular institution of slave labour enforced by brute violence that now exists on these islands.’ Moreover, Gathorne-Hardy asserts that:

The school at this time was, sexually speaking, an adolescent boy’s jungle; a jungle where lust and brute strength raged completely unrestrained. Every good-looking boy was given and addressed by a female name; he was regarded either as public property – in which case he was frequently compelled into (often public) acts of incredible obscenity – or else taken over and became the “bitch” of an elder boy. Lust could turn to loathing or sadism.

David Newsome is less sure of the certainty of claims such as Gathorne-Hardy’s:

It is impossible, for instance, to write with any certainty on the prevalence of immorality in the schools at this period. Not surprisingly, the references made to it by contemporaries are so veiled and discreet that we cannot be sure of the nature of the offences apparently so grave. Even Arnold, usually extremely outspoken in references to sin in his sermons, speaks only of ‘sensual wickedness, such as drunkenness and other things forbidden together with drunkenness in the Scriptures.’

Gathorne-Hardy claims that ‘the scandalous reputation and behaviour of the schools ran directly counter to the second great movement now reaching its

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41 J.Gathorne-Hardy, Ibid; p.69.
42 J Gathorne-Hardy, Ibid; p.80.
climax: the spread of evangelical religion."^{44} He asserts that essentially the religious revival was about guilt:

Guilt about personal sin, sin which was to be conquered in desperate personal battles; sin which, since it was human, was also social, and which had therefore to be conquered in society too.\(^{45}\)

Thomas Arnold, an influential mid-Victorian reformer, was the headmaster of Rugby School, and his far-reaching educational philosophies linked education and religion. Arnold saw laziness, deceit, cribbing (cheating) and other schoolboy discrepancies as sins. For Arnold and other influential Victorians at that time, manliness meant ‘first, religious and moral principle; second, gentlemanly conduct; third, intellectual ability’.\(^{46}\) Thomas Hughes embodied something of Arnold’s philosophies in _Tom Brown’s Schooldays_ (1857). Tom’s father, Squire Brown muses on his aspirations for his son as he sets out for boarding school for the first time:

Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he’s sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn’t sent to school for that – at any rate not for that mainly. I don’t care a straw for Greek particles, or the diagma, no more does his mother … If he’ll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that’s all I want.\(^{47}\)

_Tom Brown’s Schooldays_ is arguably the first well-known school story of the middle of the century. While the text is a mid-Victorian school story, it nevertheless leans backward to early Victorian preoccupations and also looks forward to muscular Christianity and the cult of athleticism during the last decades of the century. Beverly Lyon Clark asserts that _Tom Brown_ marks ‘a change from an earlier literature written to the child to a literature for the child, portraying, as Avery and Bull put it ‘children as children like to see themselves.’

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45 J.Gathorne-Hardy, _Ibid;_ p.70.
Lyon Clark also claims that *Tom Brown* marks a shift from ‘a literature largely for both boys and girls to a sex-segregated one that allowed boys to be less submissive, if they were middle and upper class to one where men could let boys be boys’. Lyon Clark believes that Hughes’s text succeeded in ‘empowering children’. She affirms that:

If the disciplinary foundations of schooling in the eighteenth century succeeded in hierarchizing students even while homogenizing them, individualizing them by subjecting them to the adult gaze, as Foucault would have it, Hughes has succeeded in disengaging these individuals, a little, from visibility … What he provided is not so much a simple opposition to what had gone before but a departure sufficiently radical to clarify the terms of the dialectic, countering the school story as it had existed previously, freezing the fluidity of the genre.

Thomas Hughes, who had been a pupil of Dr Arnold at Rugby, wrote *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* as a didactic novel for both boys and men, loosely based on his own schooldays. It celebrates seriousness, industriousness and virtue. Yet a slippage occurs in its inclusion of elements of what Norman Vance has identified as a second stage in mid-Victorian manliness – what was commonly termed in the late nineteenth century, ‘muscular Christianity’. This ideal was a combination of godliness and manliness, where game-playing became part of character building and physical strength, and was eventually made a compulsory part of the school curriculum in both the public and state systems.

The discourse of muscular Christianity incorporated broad divisions and was a response to a complex set of questions around class, gender and nationality. Donald E. Hall points out ‘the volatility, indeed inadequacy, of the familiar gender norms articulated in Victorian and post-Victorian discourses on

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masculinity. Houghton explains what he calls ‘the anxieties of the age’ as being linked to:

scientific discoveries that called into question Biblical accounts of creation, to technological advances that rendered the world increasingly complex and hostile, and to industrial processes that isolated individuals from each other and the past. Muscular Christianity was an attempt to assert control over a world that had seemingly gone mad.

Clark stresses that ‘of course the genre developed dialectically, with a sedimentary layering of old and new’. In the second half of Tom Brown, for instance, Tom increasingly adopts the headmaster’s views, as the book reverts to the older, pious school story model.

It has been argued that Tom Brown’s Schooldays founded the genre of schoolboy literature. Published in 1857, however, it no longer reflected what was happening in public schools at that time – it more closely resembled the schooldays of Thomas Hughes some twenty years previously. Public school novels written after this mid-Victorian period promoted a healthy, athletic heroic ideal. The hero of that period is firmly in place in these texts but overlaid by mid-Victorian morality.

The complex social structures of boarding schools that act as setting for these stories are also concerned with the socialisation process. The world of the boarding school is reasonably stable and unchanging – although contemporary boarding schools have much more contact with the outside world. Both nineteenth century and contemporary boarding schools train young people in particular roles and socialise them into approved values. Royston Lambert, in his 1968 study of English boarding schools, The Hothouse Society, points out that they have the

51 Donald E Hall (Ed) Introduction to Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Era, Ibid., p.9.
attributes of both a complex social organisation and that of a closed or ‘total’ society, like that of a prison or monastery:

In fulfilling such purposes of training the young in roles and socialising them into approved values and attributes, a boarding school is potentially one of the most powerful mechanisms available in education.53

Boarding schools differ from day schools in that work, living and leisure are integrated in a boarding school and limited to one physical area. They are supervised by one system of authority rather than multiple authority figures.

Geoffrey Walford, also writing about contemporary boarding schools, sheds light on the way that boarding school pupils experience an intertwining of school work (the curriculum) and play. He states that:

Although day pupils live essentially in two separate domains, the unified world of the public boarding school with its much extended curriculum allows there to be a flourishing additional invisible pedagogy in operation.54

As well as the main classroom curriculum, boarding school pupils are expected to play sport – the main seasonal ones as well as minor sports such as golf and swimming. Students might also be involved in the cultural and artistic life of the boarding school, such as the school play and orchestra.

Walford claims that in the boarding school ‘judgments of success or failure are based on a multiplicity of dimensions’ because a larger range of activities are under scrutiny. As Walford puts it, ‘the school extends deep into areas that

elsewhere would be in the private domain and not the business of the school.\textsuperscript{55}

This extension of authority over the child results in a severe reduction of privacy. Walford suggests that ‘a far wider range of the pupils’ attributes and activities are seen as legitimate objects of evaluation and scrutiny.’\textsuperscript{56}

Many of the features of the contemporary boarding school as Walford describes them are also typical of the nineteenth century boarding school, except that nineteenth century public schools were often established around the focus of the school chapel. Chapel attendance was compulsory, with services held up to six mornings a week.

**Masculinities and the public school story**

Institutional masculinity is like an internally woven fabric; inside which a single-minded little man, restlessly struggling, spins his own cocoon.\textsuperscript{57}

(Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*)

Masculinities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination.\textsuperscript{58}

(Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*)

The specific site of masculinity that I describe in the following chapters occurs at the intersections between English public school education and imperialism. I want to explicate two aspects of the construction of masculinity: firstly, the fictional representation of experience of boys living in and educated in the public school system as it appears in public school fiction; and secondly, the ideological forces at work in the construction of a hegemonic masculinity for the upper middle classes. I want to demonstrate, through literary representations of public schooling, an insight into the constructions of masculinity as political discourse.

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\textsuperscript{55} Geoffrey Walford, p.199.

\textsuperscript{56} Geoffrey Walford, Ibid., p.200.

My examination of ideologies of manliness will focus on popular ideals of manliness promulgated in school stories. I have therefore tried to look, in each case, at the construction of the power relations within the texts, at the tensions and contradictions that occur in the processes, and at how texts position their readers.

The school story is a particularly English sub-genre of boys’ fiction that disseminated a masculinist ethos and was read by thousands of boys and men of every social class. (It was also read by women and girls. In her 1887 recommendations of books for children, Charlotte Yonge proclaimed that ‘schoolboy literature is … more read by mothers, sisters, and little boys longing to be at school, than by the boys themselves.’) 59

In these public school narratives, the action usually takes place in a single-sex boarding school. The enclosed world of the boarding school, a microcosm of the larger world, offers a setting in which relationships can be explored – both those between peer groups, between staff and pupils and older and younger children. Such novels were first published in the eighteenth century, and proliferated in the nineteenth century. In this period they were didactic and fuelled debates about educational reform in the public schools. They began a slow decline in the middle part of the twentieth century, and now exist only in the form of teenage novels based on television shows about school life, such as the British Grange Hill and the Canadian Degrassi High.

The genre of school stories largely concerns boys, mostly upper and middle-class boys, but not exclusively. The boys attend boarding schools from which they rarely emerge for the duration of the story. The nineteenth century boarding school has an ethos and ideology of its own and matters of pedagogy are also relevant. The boys in many of the books are emerging adolescents and during the period of time that these books were popular, many debates and discourses

circulated on ‘boy culture’, ‘adolescence’ and particularly on matters relating to
gender and sexuality.

The term ‘masculinities’ foregrounds the social construction of what is
‘masculine’ while acknowledging the multiplicity of variables in the gendering of
the biological male. It also emphasises the wide range of these gender formations
over time and within any given historical period, in particular the late Victorian
period. Lynne Segal, drawing on the work of Jacques Lacan, notes that:

‘masculinity’ is irreducible to any fixed internal essence or any set of
attributes … (however sophisticated our conception of them may be). It is
not something that can be pinned down inside the personality. Nor can it be
summed up in terms of any assigned set of roles. ‘Masculinity’ can only be
illuminated through study of the relation of language and meanings to
subjectivity and consciousness.

Segal goes on to say that:

Masculinity and femininity cannot be understood separately from the wider
concept of gender, which I would define, along with May McIntosh, ‘as the
individual, cultural and institutional ways in which biological sex is given
social existence in any particular context and period.’

In *Victorian Masculinities* Herbert Sussman emphasises the importance of a
historicist approach to masculinities. He contends that such an approach means
that various Victorian terms such as ‘manliness, masculinity, manhood … are so	en often identified with a single formation such as muscular Christianity, can be
opened up … so that we can see [the Victorian era] as encompassing a variety of
competing formations of the masculine.’ In arguing for a notion of the diversity
of masculinities, I aim to deconstruct notions of a monolithic view of masculinity

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61 Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood & Masculine Poetics in early Victorian
in the Victorian period, and stress the multiplicity and plurality of male gender constructions.

**Masculinities**

Contemporary debates around masculinity and the rearing of boys appear almost daily in contemporary medical, educational and academic discourses, with questions and contradictions around these topics appearing in the press. An article entitled ‘Be a Man and Pass the Hanky, will you?’ in *The Sunday Age* on 24 December 2000 reports a study in the *British Medical Journal* by Sebastian Kraemer, a child and adolescent psychiatric consultant from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust in London. Kraemer states that:

> Despite the long-standing belief that men are resilient and insensitive, researchers have concluded that in many ways they are more vulnerable than women … There is a collective fear of weakness amongst men, which is why parents get frightened when they see their sons playing with dolls.62

Similar debates about masculinity also abounded in nineteenth century Britain. A seminal work on Victorian masculine ideals, David Newsome’s *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal*, points to an area of change in the late nineteenth century educational ideals, ‘a change of spirit’. Newsome asserts that:

> Moral earnestness became ‘theumos’ – the hearty enjoyment of physical pursuits, the belief that manliness and high spirits are more becoming qualities in a boy than piety and spiritual zeal.63

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62 Sebastian Kraemer, ‘Be a Man and Pass the Hanky, will you?’ *The Sunday Age*, December 24, 2000, p.16.

Newsome claims that among other qualities ‘excessive displays of emotion came in time to be regarded as bad form; patriotism and doing one’s duty in Country and Empire became the main sentiments which the new system sought to inculcate.’

Or, as Gillian Avery puts it in the context of the school story, ‘it was the manly hero with his “frank, open face”, who mattered, generally speaking, in school fiction.’ It is important to note that this shift is neither sudden nor unopposed, as the subsequent chapters will illustrate.

So how does masculinity become institutionalised? Andrew Tolson, in *The Limits of Masculinity*, explains in terms of contemporary masculinites, that the school as well as the family and the peer-group make up the masculine ‘socialisation’ context for a boy, in which his sense of identity is directed. Tolson contends that a boy’s ‘taken-for-granted “masculine presence” is shaped by a systematic process of “gender-identification”’. The all-male boarding school sanctioned a notion of what ‘manliness’ meant, and Tolson explains that this ‘remained the ideological reference point for the training of “gentlemen”.’ Tolson states that ‘to a large extent, “manhood” in the public schools meant an imperialist masculinity – the stiff-upper-lip – that built the Empire.’

Tolson goes on to explain what marks all-male boarding school institutional routine:

> School provides a language through which boys discover sexuality; Boys are educated to be fearless, but masculine education drives a wedge between external behaviour and inner experience.

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66 Andrew Tolson, Ibid., p.22.
67 Andrew Tolson, Ibid., pp.34-35.
68 Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, Ibid; p.36.
69 Andrew Tolson, Ibid., p.39.
For Tolson, experience is ‘policed’ in the masculine culture of the school ‘into a daily drill of ‘character-building’; and feelings of tenderness, and especially sexuality, remain beyond recognition.70

**Men, culture and power**

In *Men in Perspective*, Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell have critically reviewed a number of perspectives on masculinities by which the ‘problem’ of masculinity can be framed. They have identified six theoretical perspectives from which masculinity can be viewed. These perspectives are the biological perspective; psychoanalytic theory; male sex-role theory; social relations theory; the cultural perspective; and the feminist perspective.

Edley and Wetherall agree with theorists such as Michael Roper and John Tosh who assert that masculinity has ‘divergent, often competing and above all … changing forms’.71 They also contend that there is no essence of masculinity. As Lynne Segal notes, ‘men, like women, are not a homogenous group.’72

Masculinity is … both a social and psychological phenomenon inextricably bound up with history, culture and systems or structures of power.73

As they put it, there is no single, correct theory of masculinity. In their review of six critical perspectives, Edley and Wetherall sought to ascertain the substance of masculinity; why it takes the shape or shapes that it does; the ways that males become masculine, and lastly how we can account for the deviations from common patterns in a particular social group. They summarise their analysis of six theoretical perspectives as: that of the biological argument, in which

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70 Andrew Tolson, Ibid; p.39.
‘masculinity does not so much “get into” men as “emerge out” of them.’\textsuperscript{74} Psychoanalytical theorists look at individual men’s psychical structures – i.e. desires, fantasies and emotions. In this perspective Edley and Wetherell suggest that ‘masculinity gets into the boy via a range of psychological processes, including identification, introjection and repression.’ Role theorists see masculinity in terms of a set of social scripts ‘a collection of ‘stage directions’ telling men how to act like men.’\textsuperscript{75} The social relations school of thought, a social rather than psychological theory, argues that masculinity is shaped from the institutions in which men are embedded. The feminist perspective sees masculinity as substantially a set of power relations and that ‘the primary factor determining the shape of masculinity is politics.’\textsuperscript{76}

I am writing from a cultural theoretical perspective that looks at masculinity and ideology. The implication here is that masculinity has to be learned or internalised and in this respect it is complementary to both role and psychoanalytic theoretical positions. (For example, sex-role theory argues that individual men learn to be manly).

In my chapter on late Victorian/early Edwardian sexuality, and the boys’ school story, which examines the formation of masculinities, I look at the boarding school as an imaginary zone in which writers negotiate the fraught boundary between the homosocial and the homosexual. I also examine the way that tensions around male-male desire move around the perceived dangers of feminisation and effeminacy.

I have drawn on the work of sociologist Bob Connell, whose writing on masculinity, representation and social context is historically grounded. Drawing on psychoanalysis, sociology and gender politics, he aims to explain that while gender relations may appear ‘intractable’ there are nevertheless situations when

\textsuperscript{74} Edgley & Wetherell, \textit{Men in Perspective}, Ibid., p.207.
\textsuperscript{75} Edgley & Wetherell, \textit{Men in perspective}, Ibid., p.207.
\textsuperscript{76} Edgley & Wetherall, \textit{Men in Perspective}, Ibid., p.208.
reconstruction can take place if the various crises and conflicts inherent in gender relations are met with specific strategies for change.

What Edgley and Wetherell have to say about masculinities as a set of ‘cults’ or ideologies is similar to the stance of the role theorists who argue that to become manly involves embracing social scripts. Edgley and Wetherall claim that cultural studies developed in the 1950s by breaking away from a traditional academic discipline where culture was understood in terms of ‘high art’. It was redefined as a framework through which people make sense of their lives. In turn, cultural theorists became interested in the relationship of social and economic factors to these cults. Edgley and Wetherell see ‘cults’ as ‘providing members of the wider cultural community with a shared understanding of what it means to be a man’. Edgley & Wetherall, Ibid; p.132. Cultural theorists show that in contemporary Western society a range of different and even contradictory representations and images of manhood abound.

Victorian masculinities and competing formations of the masculine

In this discussion I will refer to Bob Connell’s *Masculinities* and his ideas about the connection of masculinity and violence, and the way that masculinities are involved in and help to shape the process of imperial expansion. As Connell puts it, ‘European/American masculinities were deeply implicated in the world-wide violence through which European/American culture became dominant.’ R W Connell, *Masculinities*, Ibid., pp.185-186. Connell traces the history of masculinity, which he declares is non-linear and does not involve any simple shift. Rather, masculinity is the the production of ‘complex structures of gender relations in which dominant, subordinated and

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77 Edgley & Wetherall, Ibid; p.132.
marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, changing the conditions for each others’ existence and transforming themselves as they do.’

As the starting point in his chapter on the science of masculinity, Connell concludes from various studies of institutions in which masculinities are embedded, that:

Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity. It is also extended in the world, merged in organized social relations.

Connell concludes that for any understanding of masculinity historically, it is important to study social relations, so that the global expansion of European power is therefore integral to masculinity. He traces the modern gender order to the sixteenth century – the beginning of the modern capitalist order. As far as cultural change is concerned, the disintegration of the monastic system and the growing emphasis on the conjugal household led to the cultural authority of compulsory heterosexuality. A new emphasis on individuality and the concept of an autonomous self were, Connell states, ‘cultural prerequisites for the idea of masculinity itself’. Following the development of classical philosophy, reason and science were set in opposition to the natural world and to emotion. Masculinity was now aligned both with rationality and also with the expansion of empire by Western civilization. The latter was predicated on the rational notion of bearing ‘reason to a benighted world’. Imperial expansion was staffed by men and Connell claims that the organized bodies of men whose statecraft was based on force, ‘were perhaps the first group to become defined as a masculine cultural type in the modern sense’.

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79 R W Connell, Ibid., p.198.
80 R W Connell, Ibid., p.29.
81 R W Connell, Ibid., p.186.
82 R W Connell, Ibid., p.187.
Another important development was the growth of commerce and capitalism in Antwerp, London and Amsterdam. Connell notes that an entrepreneurial culture of capitalism institutionalised a form of masculinity. He claims that the struggles of European civil wars from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries revolutionised both class and gender order, in terms of consolidating the patriarchal order.

With the eighteenth century, in seaboard Europe and North America at least, we can speak of a gender order in which masculinity in the modern sense – gendered individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state – had been produced and stabilized.84

Connell puts into perspective the eighteenth century gentry class of landowners and its relationship to the State: gentry masculinity involved domestic authority over women, it provided army and navy officers, local administration and ‘a brutal relationship with the agricultural workforce’, exerting violent control by evictions, lashings, transportation and hanging.

The gentry masculinity, according to Connell, split and was gradually displaced by new hegemonic forms, resulting in the bureaucratic institutionalisation of violence in fascism leading up to the Second World War. The following chapters will explicate the ways that violence is both inscribed in the masculine ideal in the public school novel, yet at the same time there are many instances in the texts when the narrative resists or opposes the violence. The reader of these narratives is therefore offered a number of different subject positions from which to read the texts.

**Myths of childhood**

Richard N. Coe, in *Reminiscences of Childhood: An Approach to a Comparative Mythology*, examines a subspecies of autobiography that he calls the autobiography of childhood. From his study of texts from about 1850, Coe claims that:

> Whenever we take a sufficiently large and representative collection of childhood autobiographies (whether straight or fictionalized, no matter) of any literary or intellectual value, originating in a given cultural group, a myth will emerge.\(^\text{85}\)

Coe claims that the school story genre developed from an elaboration of a myth of childhood. In over 600 childhood reminiscences studied in England, France and Russia, Coe claims that ‘recurrent preoccupations and obsessions can be identified, which seem to operate at a subconscious rather than at a conscious level.’\(^\text{86}\) According to Coe, they have something of the status of myths. Myth, for Coe, is used in a post-Jungian sense, ‘in the way that structural anthropologists and critics such as Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes define myth as meaning the symbolic embodiment of a truth often buried too deep to be apprehended by the conscious mind.’\(^\text{87}\) For Coe, formal educational informs and permeates the English childhood, more than any other culture. The German *Bildungsroman*, the novel of ‘formation’ or ‘novel of education’ chronicling the passage from childhood to maturity – begins after a child leaves school. The French Lycée and the German or Russian Gymnasium detail what happens in the evenings, weekends, holidays and university vacations. Coe suggests that this preoccupation with formal education amongst the English, is connected to the pedagogical structures in place between 1800 and 1950, which he maintains effectively prolonged childhood. In his survey, some twenty writers comment that ‘the English remain grown-up children.’\(^\text{88}\) (This is nicely illustrated in Graham Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*, when two ex-public schoolboys, thrown together in a colonial outpost, revert to the childish game of cockroach hunting:

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86 Richard N. Coe, Ibid., p.2 [228].
87 Ibid., p. 2[228]
88 Richard N. Coe, Ibid., p. 6[232]
To and fro across the room they padded, weaving their lights, smashing down their shoes, occasionally losing their heads and pursuing wildly into corners: the lust of the hunt touched Wilson’s imagination. At first their manner to each other was ‘sporting’: they would call out ‘Good Shot’, or ‘Hard Luck’, but once they met together against the wainscot over the same cockroach when the score was even and their tempers became frayed.89

Coe’s research argues that a comparative study of the literature of childhood reveals particular myths in cultural groups. Coe points to the significance of an individual writer’s experience in the light of other childhoods produced by the same culture – or in an absence elsewhere. He claims that ‘myths incarnate anxieties, or drives, or urges too deeply-buried to be clearly and rationally apprehended by the individual.’90 It is through the study of the myths of the childhood in a comparative cultural context, that Coe maintains it is possible to trace a path ‘which leads from the merely contingent to the genuinely significant in any particular recall of the child-self’:

For while, evidently, there must be a positive and deterministic relationship between the social, cultural and religious environment in which the child grew up and his subsequent recall of those experiences in literary form, there is strong evidence to suggest that the myths reveal an alternative and profounder, relationship: not one of determinism, but rather one of symbiosis.91

The child is not merely the product of certain precise social institutions; but that these same social institutions arose, and became accepted and established, because they correspond to the needs and experiences of large numbers of children – themselves later to be adults who established the institutions – within a given or cultural or linguistic group.92

The myth that emerges from any cultural group in Coe’s analysis, is what he calls a ‘reiterated obsession’, varying in tone and with sufficient recurrence to reveal a

91 Ibid; p.[229]3.
92 Ibid; p.[229]3.
particular fascination. He gives examples for instance, of the North-American child, (writer/poet) who appears to be concerned with the relation of his or her identity in relation to the community in which he or she grew up. For the black North American and Caribbean child the myth is of the ‘white presence’; while for the French, it is an obsession with language. However in autobiographies of childhood and adolescence in England, Coe argues that one myth dominates – that of the part played in it by the processes of formal education. Coe maintains that the English educational system developed the world of the child and of the adult in parallel, ‘so that the child, consciously or unconsciously, learned the mental patterns which were destined to govern its eventual adult life by rehearsing them in the theatre of a closed and separate world.’

The enclosed and separate world of the English public school plays an intrinsic part in this peculiarly English pattern. Coe says that the French Lycée evolved from an educational theory or number of theories arising out of the Enlightenment and going through to the Revolution. However the structure of English education, he argues, (dame’s school, night-school and Sunday school for the working classes: nanny, governess and public school for the wealthier sections of society) is different. It didn’t arise from theories but from a series of *ad hoc* devices. English public school education in the nineteenth century was typified by the Arnoldian system that Coe argues was a “holding system” springing into existence spontaneously as the direct and immediate answer to urgent social needs and powerful historical pressures.

Coe claims that Hughes and Kipling and the dozens of other school story authors elaborated a myth of childhood that grew into the school story genre. As a myth it elicited a unique response that ranged across all social classes. For Coe, then, the experience of the child at an English boarding school and the ramifications of that experience in terms of the popularity of the school story genre, arises from the intersection of formal education at the level of conscious or unconscious myth-

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93 Richard N. Coe, Ibid; p.[231]5
94 Richard N. Coe, Ibid., p.[235]9
95 Ibid., p.[235]9
making. Certainly the English school story continues to have appeal to producers of text for children. The popularity of the recent ‘Harry Potter’ phenomenon bears witness to that.

**Class: The elite**

The public school that is modelled in the texts under consideration here is based on a system that emerged as a result of a number of reforms. The public schools of the eighteenth century reflected the values of the ruling aristocracy of the period. Discipline was practically non-existent and the life of the public schoolboy was, in Jeffrey Richards’s words, ‘tribal, turbulent, brutal and often drunken’. The expansion of the middle classes and the rise of Evangelicism with its cult of respectability transformed the fabric of society, so that by the mid-Victorian period the public schools had been reformed from their state of dissolution and had become the promoters of the doctrine of ‘Godliness and Good Learning’. Jeffries claims that *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, written by Thomas Hughes and reflecting his own schooldays under the celebrated educationalist, Dr Thomas Arnold, ‘demonstrates the importance of public school fiction in the creation of the cultural image of the public school.’ Jeffries goes on to state that *Tom Brown* became the symbol of the reformed public schools.

To join the elite aristocratic clientele of the public schools came the newly emerging middle classes, who sought respectable and morally elevating education for their sons. Thus the circle of power was expanded and ‘elite schooling gradually replaced noble birth as the identifying badge of the ruling class.’ J. F. C. Harrison in *Late Victorian Britain 1870–1901* states that the leisured elite, while belonging to ‘a pre-industrial, even feudal, age’ was nevertheless ‘the arbiter of taste, manners and refined living.’ He notes that it is remarkable that

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98 Ibid., p.10.
such an aristocracy both survived and flourished ‘in the vastly altered conditions of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.’

Richards reminds us that ‘from 1870 to the 1960s the schooling of the working class was geared to the promotion of middle-class values of discipline, thrift and hard work.’ Richards points out that if public school values were not absorbed from inside the schools attended by working class boys, that they were certainly inculcated into those values by their reading outside the school.

The extension of the public school ethos to the working class in school fiction and the use of the schoolboy as hero has become, as Graham Dawson suggests, ‘one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealized masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the Ancient Greeks.’

**School stories as formula fiction**

According to E. C. Mack, school stories are formulaic:

A boy enters school in some fear and trepidation, but usually with ambitions and schemes; suffers mildly or seriously at first from loneliness, the exactions of fag-masters, the discipline of masters and the regimentation of games; then makes a few friends and leads for a year or so a joyful irresponsible and sometimes rebellious life, eventually learns duty, self-reliance, responsibility and loyalty as a prefect, qualities usually used to put down bullying or over-emphasis on athletic prowess; and finally leaves school with regret for a wider world, stamped with the seal of an institution which he has left and devoted to its welfare.

We also learn from autobiographical anecdotes that the school story leads to the anticipation of a certain order of events. For example, one schoolboy, Richard

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Usborne (Charterhouse) explains that reading *Tom Brown* left him with ‘a nasty and unacknowledged residue’ and shaped for him the view that corporal punishment should be endured bravely:

> My mother ... gave me *Tom Brown* ... to read before I went to my prep school, at the age of seven. It put the wind up me vertically ... I did learn from it that school could mean my being boxed on the ear, caned, flogged, fagged, bullied, tossed in blankets, roasted in front of fires, made to sing songs solo ... and be constantly involved in fist fights with bigger boys, velveteens and louts. I would have to endure these things bravely and without preaching, so that I ‘might never bring shame or sorrow to the dear folks at home’.\(^{103}\)

Beverly Lyon Clark describes the formulaic plots of these canonical stories in great detail:

> They feature an ordinary good-natured boy, not particularly intellectual, but keen on sports. We would see our hero rise through the ranks to the sixth form and become a creature of awe himself, perhaps a prefect and captain of the cricket team. We could count on spending pages and pages on the playing fields, with at least one match described in thrilling detail. There would also be other physical adventures, probably a fight with the school bully. There might be a moral adventure too, our hero wrongly accused of, say, stealing an examination paper and staunchly bearing the blame. The story would conclude with our hero nostalgically reflecting on the joys and triumphs of his school days, as he is about to leave, and perhaps with the narrator telling us the future fates of the boy and his friends. Overall, as Margery Fisher has wryly noted, ‘You get the odd impression that school life consists of a series of cricket and football matches and school speech days, enlivened by petty larceny, cribbing and gang warfare.’\(^{104}\)

The school story fits into the category of a literary formula, as explicated by John Cawelti, like the spy story, the Western, the detective story, the gangster and the romance. Cawelti lists what he terms ‘moral fantasies’ which subsume that of the Adventure; Romance; Mystery; Melodrama; Alien Beings or States. The texts that I have chosen cross over into these categories. *David Blaize* is primarily a

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romance; *Stalky & Co* can fall into the categories of both Adventure and Melodrama.

Cawelti interprets the relationship between artistic and cultural interests as ‘a formula is essentially a set of generalizations about the way in which all the elements of a story have been put together.’ Cawelti theorises that formulae emerged and evolved through the phenomenon of *enjoyment* (my emphasis). Although he does not look specifically at the school story, the popularity of the genre over such a long period of time would suggest that it fits into his definition of formula fiction. He uses the example of the Western to describe the way that the formulae persist ‘not because they embody some particular ideology or psychological dynamic, but because they maximise a great many such dynamics. In other words, a great number of concerns are shaped or ordered. Cawelti points out the dialectic between artistic forms and cultural materials, explaining that myths should allow us to see how people in any given culture reveal their concerns and how they set about dealing with them.

In order to create an effective story, certain archetypal patterns are essential, the nature of which can be determined by looking at many different sorts of stories. These story patterns must be embodied in specific images, themes, and symbols that are current in particular cultures and periods.

Cawelti, building on Umberto Eco’s essay on the structure of the James Bond narratives, raises the issue of the role of political and social ideologies in these texts. He claims that racial archetypes, for example, are a means by which the conflicts may be intensified and dramatised. Eco suggests that Ian Fleming may be putting into play ‘archetypal elements which are precisely those that have proved successful in traditional tales … A man who chooses to write in this way is neither Fascist nor racist; he is only a cynic, a deviser of tales for general consumption.’

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107 John Cawelti, Ibid; p.32.
Of all the standard elements outlined, Jeffrey Richards claims that boy friendships are ‘the principal ingredients of the school story’\(^{108}\) and in the next chapter I have chosen to look at this topic across a selection of non-canonical school stories. These texts reveal disjunctions and contradictions that aren’t easily detected in the canonical novels. Moreover, non-canonical texts are important in the task of deconstructing the genre. Marginalised school storywriters were often in dialogue with other genres, such as adventure stories, and they therefore challenged the canonical story. I look at examples of novels written by women, where, for instance, the mother’s point of view is given, more of the domestic life of the schoolboy is explored and where the genre often merges with that of the adventure story. Clark suggests that ‘schools can feminise boys at the same time that it subjects them to discipline and authority.’ She quotes Isabel Quigly who notes that a young boy who fagged for an older one undertook ‘wholly domestic chores, considered totally ‘feminine’ in a period when no male would ever, in other circumstances, make toast and tea or lay and light a fire.’\(^{109}\)

Some cross-gendered school stories (women writing about boys) also embody the contradictions circulating within discourses of middle-class masculinity in the late nineteenth century. Clark states that ‘since school stories are so gender marked, it becomes easy – not just easy – vital – to address questions of gender, to examine both the instability of gender and its potency.’\(^{110}\) In her discussion of canonical school stories such as *Tom Brown*, Clark explains that the canonical school story is premised on the exclusion of females:

The canonical school story emerges when society separates ‘public’ from ‘private’, ‘public’ schooling from ‘private’ family: the school story symbolically carves out a realm where a boy could move from a private to a more public arena. And it does so by eliminating females. Excluding mothers and girls – boys were even chary of admitting they had sisters – lent the boys authority. A move that is replicated by twentieth-century


\(^{109}\) Quoted in Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the school story*, Ibid., p.5.

\(^{110}\) Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the school story*, Ibid., p.19.
critics, who have generally failed to notice that what they call the school story developed from a tradition dominated by women.\textsuperscript{111}

In a 1952 journal article, George Orwell pointed out the contradictions of the genre. He claims that they fit ‘between the tradition of nineteenth century asceticism and the actually existing luxury and snobbery of the pre-1914 age’; between ‘low-church Bible Christianity, sex puritanism, insistence on hard work, respect for academic distinction, disapproval of self-indulgence’; ‘contempt for “braininess” and worship of games, contempt for foreigners and the working class, an almost neurotic dread of poverty.’ Above all, Orwell contended, the genre assumed ‘not only that money and privilege are the things that matter, but that it is better to inherit them than to have to work for them. Broadly, you were bidden at once to be Christian and a social success, which is impossible.’\textsuperscript{112}

Beverly Lyon Clark suggests that the school story ‘is and is about a peculiarly marginal institution, a boundary institution between family and world, between private and public spheres’. Clark goes on to explain that schooling is addressed to marginal individuals, to those between childhood and adulthood, and adults always marginalise children and adolescents.\textsuperscript{113}

From a child’s perspective, school is a temporary site implicated and reinforced by hierarchies of power, where there is nevertheless the possibility of subversion. In short, it is as Clark suggests, a place where contrary impulses can be worked out.

**Review of current theory and practice**

\textsuperscript{111} Beverly Lyon Clark, Ibid; p.5.
\textsuperscript{112} George Orwell, ‘Such, Such Were the Joys…’ Quoted in Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the school story*, Ibid; p.5-6.
\textsuperscript{113} Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the school story*, Ibid., p.7.
The school story genre has been the subject of four major studies: recently by social historian Jeffrey Richards; literary critic Isabel Quigly; and also by educational sociologist P. W. Musgrave.

E. C. Mack’s two-volume study entitled *Public Schools and British Opinion since 1860* (1938) is a forerunner of critical analyses of public school fiction. He points to the rise of juvenile literature written about schools in the 1930s and claims that it ‘continues to this day to equal if not to surpass in volume any other forms of imaginative writing’.114 He is openly critical of the public school system that he describes as:

A number of highly individualised institutions which looked for guidance to their own past, taught chiefly the classics, relied on flogging, and, through being miniature worlds, imbued their pupils with self-reliance and group solidarity.115

Mack’s text was a pioneering work, ‘a study of the relationship between the English public schools and the ideas and forces which influenced or moulded its growth.’116 In other words, fiction that reflected and directly influenced adult public opinion. He used the fiction to analyse the way that public school literature has both criticised and praised that institution. Mack explains in the first of the two volumes, that he is attempting to understand the nature of the history of the public schools, through ‘a critical analysis of the copious body of prose fiction, reminiscence, history, poetry and pamphlet literature.’

attempted to understand the quality of the emotional relationship of the writer to the system, particularly of the very prevalent, unique, and important relationship of romantic attachment with its tendency to personalise and humanise its object.117

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116 Edward C. Mack, Ibid; p.x.
117 Edward C. Mack, Ibid; p.x.
My approach also attends to the place of romance and friendship in the public school story. Where Mack’s approach looked mainly at canonical texts such as *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, I am examining a series of mainly non-canonical texts written between the 1880s and 1910s.

Isabel Quigly’s *The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story* (1982) discusses the English school story from a thematic point of view, drawing on a range of texts – from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* to the twentieth century Billy Bunter stories, written by Frank Richards. Quigly notes a shift in the historical contexts:

> When the public schools confidence was high, and a particular kind of training was needed to produce a particular kind of man, it was functional and as energetic as a power-house. When this confidence waned, and the training it gave, the men it produced, almost suddenly seemed irrelevant to the world as it had become, its manner changed, its ethos faded, and it ceased to be the sort of place people understood ... by the term ‘public school’.  

Like Mack, Quigly comments critically on the powerful lifelong influence that the schools have over their pupils. Quigly’s analysis is based on what she terms a ‘long and intense love affair and its expression in fiction’.

Throughout the heyday of the public schools boys clung to, and men remembered, their schools with what now seems an incredible degree of affection and nostalgia, or of resentment and dislike. When this country was a pivot of the world, and the public schools a pivot of the country, this was less surprising than it would be today, when there is nothing pivotal about either. At this distance the self-importance of the public school and its products seems extraordinary; so does

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the wish to stay there as long as possible, and later to cling to the patterns of school life.\textsuperscript{120}

The scope of my thesis differs from Quigly’s study in that my discussion does not include fiction written after the First World War. However, I agree with Quigly’s emphasis on the social importance and influence of the public school. Quigley quotes John Honey’s history of the Victorian public schools in which he wrote:

\begin{quote}
This phenomenon … is perhaps unique in modern history … the completeness of the transfer to an alternative community – a distinctive emotional milieu, capable of generating its own set of values – as the common practice of an influential section of society, probably has no parallel in advanced societies.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

My thesis takes up this point in the close textual analysis of various texts, revealing contradictions and fissures that often back up Quigly’s belief that there is a harshness and even violence underlying the public school story. In my discussions of masculinity, I take up Quigly’s point about the lack of feminine influence in the text – a lack that reflects a system preparing boys for roles in the Empire based on the belief that it was essential to produce ‘men who would go anywhere and do whatever was expected of them.’\textsuperscript{122} As Quigly asserts, and the influence of the school story would suggest, ‘the First World War seemed to justify that belief. They did exactly what was expected of them and most of them died.’\textsuperscript{123}

Jeffrey Richards’s \textit{Happiest Days: The public school in English fiction} (1988) concentrates on popular fiction and argues that fiction reflects and creates public opinion. He claims that a favourable cultural image of the public schools is engendered through such fiction. Using and building on Mack’s contextual

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{120} Isabel Qigly, \textit{The Heirs of Tom Brown}, Ibid; p.4.
\textsuperscript{121} Quoted in Isabel Quigly, \textit{The English School Story}, Chatto & Windus, London, 1982, p. 3
\textsuperscript{122} Isabel Qigly, Ibid; p.273.
\end{footnotesize}
approach, Richards looks in depth at eleven stories, places them in their historical context and examines the way that they transmit and reinforce the dominant ideologies. Richards uses four key areas of the genre, to examine the novels. He claims that these texts offer factual evidence about the public schools, insights into the experiences of boyhood, promote attitudes and mirror the educational policy of the public schools. They therefore create a cumulative cultural image, a set of archetypes and value systems that 'sanctify and perpetuate the dominant ideology'.

Richards also argues that ‘neither P. W. Musgrave nor Isabel Quigly has appreciated the full extent to which criticisms remained part of a narrow intellectual world, a world of high-society literary salons and low-circulation magazines, rarely reaching out to or affecting the perceptions of the wider public.'

Of much greater significance in representing the attitude of the public to the public schools in the inter-war years were the middle-brow, best-selling novels ... the phenomenal success of Frank Richards’s public school stories in the weekly magazines *The Magnet* and *The Gem*.

My own work will similarly demonstrate that those middle-brow and popular school stories also seek to influence the reader’s position. My thesis includes an analysis of the role of Empire, public schools and the fiction, and like Richards, it addresses issues of class.


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123 Isabel Quigly, Ibid.p.273.
125 Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days*, Ibid; p.16.
educational sociologist, calls his text a ‘case-study’. It traces the progress of the genre from its growing popularity in the 1860s to its decline in the 1940s.

His findings are of a social, historical nature and his assertion is that the genre ‘helped the successful operation of the hegemonic process in Britain in those years’. Musgrave’s method is to examine the relation of expectations of what he terms ‘the writers, middlemen and readers’ involved. He claims that such an analysis ‘can lay bare the structure implicit in the genre itself and thereby force attention ... upon the social supports for and the contradictions to that structure.’

In discussing the novels, Musgrave points to key elements common to the texts and also to the public school code – the one reinforcing the other. Using textual examples, he demonstrates that the topic of the establishment of authority is crucial to the maintenance of empire. For Musgrave, the recurring episodes centred around authority. He claims that they:

provide opportunities for boys to stand against others or against the majority or even against adults. This was a key quality in the version of manliness that the schools were dedicated to teach.

Similarly, Musgrave stresses that the presentation of a moral code is a key element in the texts. He suggests that this is illustrated by ‘the growing restraint in openly displaying emotion; the deference to authority within a hierarchy; an absence of lying and finally in the encouragement of a sense of duty towards one’s family, one’s group, one’s friends and the school.

I have drawn on Claudia Nelson’s texts on nineteenth century gender ideologies, notably *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals 1850–1891* and also

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Nelson’s suggestions of gender definitions, specifically her concept of homodomestic patterns in boys’ stories where homoerotic desire is displaced – has been invaluable to my analysis in Chapter Two. For this chapter I have drawn on Nelson’s study of the Victorian school story’s relatively smooth movement from the overtly to the covertly feminine. Nelson’s work complements that of Mangan and Walvin’s Manliness & Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain & America 1800–1940, which helped me to understand the overlapping ideologies and the shaping process of the Victorian ideal of manliness and its moral code. Another useful on the topic of gender is Beverly Lyon Clark’s Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies & Tattling Tomboys. Lyon Clark explores early school stories and the way that they ‘embody the crises and values of their age.’ This text suggested to me the importance of examining cross-gendered writing in my study of late nineteenth century school stories – as a means of illuminating ‘the contradictory welter of purposes circulating in the culture.’

The themes of discussion throughout the thesis are all embedded in the novels selected for analysis. The following chapter explores friendships between boys and questions concerning the nineteenth century concept of manly love.

130 Beverly Lyon Clark, Regendering the School Story, Ibid., p.9.
131 Beverly Lyon Clark, Regendering the School Story, Ibid., p.22.
CHAPTER TWO: The Homoemotional/Homoerotic in Public School Fiction

At school, friendship is a passion. It entrances the being; it tears the soul. (Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby*)

The texts examined in this thesis are informed by the shifting discourses of Victorian and imperial sexuality. In this chapter I look at what is variously called ‘manly love’ and ‘romantic love’ – terms used in discussions of homoerotic literature. These terms cover a wide spectrum of discourses that celebrate close male relationships – bonds explored in E. F. Benson’s *David Blaize* (1887), Talbot Baines Reed’s *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* (1887) and Alec Waugh’s *The Loom of Youth* (1917).

A number of commentators on Victorian children’s literature have turned their attention to discussions of ‘manly love’. Jeffrey Richards claims that ‘for 2000 years male pair bonding was at the heart of the emotional life of the West’. Claudia Nelson notes that in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, homo-emotional or homoerotic behaviour was accepted as a common code of male bonding. Critics including Clark, Allsop, Gathorne-Hardy and Quigly have used the school story to discuss passionate friendships between boys in terms of the homo-emotional and homoerotic.

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Nelson suggests that different genres may use this trope of the close romantic friendship for different purposes. Rather than thinking about homo-emotionalism, homoeroticism and homosexuality as part of a continuum, Nelson believes the more important distinction in late Victorian British boys’ fiction is between domesticity and antidomesticity. She found (in boys’ adventure stories in particular) that ‘homo-emotionalism was the mechanism through which late-Victorian schools were consciously presented to the public as alternative “families” for the production of men, in which domesticity was to be translated into a male idiom rather than eradicated.’

Nelson also contends that while today we tend ‘to view male homo-emotionalism, homoeroticism, and homosexuality as three points on one continuum’, this was not a notion the Victorians particularly accepted. She suggests that for marketers of boys’ stories in late-Victorian Britain, ‘the opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality was less important than between domesticity and antidomesticity’. In public schools this served a crucial role:

Such boys can serve each other as protectors and moral guides as well as loving companions, suggesting a relationship that is simultaneously that of parent and child and that of partners in a ‘marriage’ that is asexual and that nonetheless is often characterized by physical expressions of affection.

Nelson believe that in an era when literature depicted women as ‘goddesses’, ‘boys’ fiction offered its readers an alternative and potentially less threatening vision of the new family, imagining male emotional needs and ties as paramount. Sometimes, in fact, these stories treat the regeneration of the father-son bond in a rather cursory way, implying that the best kind of homo-emotional

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4 Claudia Nelson, Ibid., ‘David and Jonathan’ p.120
5 Ibid.,
domestic bliss is to be found in the more genuinely egalitarian bond that exists between hypermasculine and hyperfeminine boys.

Nelson also draws attention to Beverly Lyon Clark’s point that even though women may be absent from or even vilified in a narrative, it does not necessarily follow that the values commonly associated with femininity are diminished. But Clark demonstrates in her discussion of crossgendered school stories, such as Julia A. Mathews’ *Jack Grainger’s Cousin* (1877), that Mathews does not ‘consolidate norms and resolve the contradictions in prevailing notions of masculinity’. Rather, Clark states, ‘she defines masculinity against femininity and subordinates the latter’. In doing so, Lyon asserts, she portrays ‘what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described … as the homosocial bonding that consolidates power over women, a bonding acted out through both homophobia and homophilia … a bonding so effective that females are no longer necessary to enact the feminine’.  

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, argues that between the mid eighteenth century and the nineteenth century:

Changes in the structure of the continuum of male ‘homosocial desire’ were tightly, often causally bound up with the other more visible changes; that the emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole.  

Sedgwick defines ‘homosocial’ as social bonds between persons of the same sex. She asserts that ‘to draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of ‘desire’ of the

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8 Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, p.212

potentially erotic … is to hypothesise the potential unbrokeness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual’.  

The importance of exploring these issues is enmeshed in Sedgwick’s statement about contemporary masculinities being tied to those of late Victorian crises.

Many of the major modes of thought and knowledge in twentieth century Western culture as a whole are structured – indeed, fractured – by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century.  

Sedgwick questions male homosocial bonds through what she terms ‘the heterosexual European erotic ethos’:

What does it mean – what difference does it make – when a social or political relationship is sexualized? If the relation of homosocial to homosexual bonds is so shifty, then what theoretical framework do we have for drawing any links between sexual and power relationships?

Sedgwick believes that relationships must first ‘make use of whatever forms of analysis are most potent for describing historically variable power asymmetries, such as those of class and race, as well as gender’. My analysis looks at representations, and bears in mind Kenneth Kidd’s assertion that ‘male bonds not only mediate male-female interaction but themselves range in character, intensity, and political orientation’. Moreover, ‘our challenge is to acknowledge that while bodies and attractions are real and should not be trivialized, representations transform as well as profile those realities, and are at once stable and shifting.’

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John Stephens takes up this complex issue about gender and genre in children’s literature, declaring gender ‘exists in … complex ways which include the assumptions and expectations of authors and audiences … gendering is apt to be systematic because a genre is constructed by linguistic discourses and interpersonal features.’

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century popular culture, which included the adventure novels of Rider Haggard, G.A. Henty and others, promoted a self-sufficient masculine ideal. Yet the public school novel, as part of a genre that promotes male self-sufficiency, had the subversive tendency to privilege romantic attachments between boys and between men. These homo-emotional bonds of close friendship and romantic male love are explored in this chapter.

Paul Fussell uses the term ‘homoeroticism’ rather than ‘romantic friendship’ to describe a sublimated (chaste) form of temporary homosexuality – something more like the ‘idealistic’, passionate but non-physical crushes that many First World War officers experienced at public school. Martha Vicinus traces the adolescent crush in girls’ boarding school friendships of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, commenting on a shift towards self-control, which has its parallel in boys’ boarding schools:

Homoerotic friendships were … part of and apart from general social attitudes toward women as private and public beings. During the second half of the nineteenth century … the course of such friendships changed as the experiences of adolescent girls in boarding schools changed … The emphasis on self-control encouraged the intense and erotically charged crush on an older and more experienced student or teacher as a girl’s most significant emotional experience. Questions of public power, authority, and control were central to relationships between women of differing ages, just as they were central to the new schools’ ideology.

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While Vicinus suggests that it is the emphasis on self-control that encouraged intense crushes between girls or girls and teachers, boys’ school stories reveal a paradoxical celebration of male self-sufficiency and a privileging of romantic attachments.

Martin Taylor, in *Lads: Love Poetry of the Trenches*, claims that around the First World War there was a ‘public taste for homoeroticism’. Taylor says that this accounted for the popularity of poets such as Rupert Brooke, Sassoon, Oswald and Geoffrey Faber to ‘feed poems on male love to an unsuspecting public’. Taylor contends that poems that publicly proclaim ‘their unambiguous love for other men … would not have been openly published without the war’. They were, Taylor says, ‘shielded by the patriotic necessity of celebrating fallen heroes and by a tradition of memorial poetry in English literature’.17

Paul Fussell, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, says that given the factors of ‘deprivation and loneliness and alienation that were characteristic of the soldier’s experience – given, that is, his need for affection in a largely womanless world – we will not be surprised to find both the actuality and the recall of frontline experience replete with what we call the homoerotic.’ 18 For Fussell, ‘the equation of blondness with special beauty and value’ is celebrated in war poetry. He claims that ‘to be fair-haired, or (better) golden-haired, is, in Victorian iconography, to be especially beautiful, brave, pure, and vulnerable …’ Victorian poetry commonly celebrates attractive lads like the one in Oscar Wilde’s “Wasted Days”:

A fair slim boy not made for this world’s pain,
With fair hair of gold thick clustering round his ears.19

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Fussell asserts that one reason for the homoerotic motif in First World War writing is ‘the war’s almost immediate historical proximity to such phenomena as the Aesthetic Movement, one of whose most powerful impulses was the rediscovery of the erotic attractiveness of young men. Aestheticism was an offshoot of the kind of warm late-Romanticism.’ 20 The famous and popular bare-shouldered photograph of Rupert Brooke provided a visual image for the general public that equated beauty with blondness. Martin Taylor comments that ‘such an androgynous image, known to Brooke’s friends as ‘your favourite actress’, became ‘one of the most famous icons of the First World War.’ 21 In public school fiction, a blond boy is often an object of desire within pairs of friendships.

For important background to Victorian sexual dynamics and the way in which they impinged on both the imperial elite public schoolboys as well as imperial subjects, I refer to Ronald Hyam’s Empire and Sexuality. Hyam traces changing historical and social discourses from the late eighteenth century that he believes led a ‘silence which descended over all aspects of sex.’ 22

By 1914 the whole British concept of masculinity – not least in the public schools – had been redefined, partly in the name of empire, to mean not sexual prowess and maturity but sexual restraint and ‘cleanness’ … Real sexual activity receded so far into the background that according to Larkin’s famous poem it was not rediscovered again ‘until 1963’. 23

Hyam asserts that during the eighteenth century, British attitudes towards sexuality were relatively relaxed. The upper classes had mistresses, erotic literature was prolific and prostitution flourished. However, child sexuality was considered problematic and by 1800 an anti-masturbation campaign led to ‘a new, supposedly scientific, basis of hostility to sex’. 24 For Hyam, the Evangelical Revival, with its emphasis on sin and the cult of Romanticism led to ‘an increasing idealisation both of love and of women’. Hyam stresses that it is never

22 Ronald Hyam, Empire and Sexuality, Ibid., p71.
23 Ronald Hyam, Empire & Sexuality, Ibid., p.71.
wise to generalise Victorian attitudes but he suggests ‘profound shifts and changes [were] taking place from the 1880s’.\textsuperscript{25}

Like Foucault in his suggestion of a ‘model of sexual politics’ for the middle-class Britons, Hyam claims British attitudes and practices are different from the rest of the non-European world. The age of marriage was unusually high; there was hostility to overt sex between males and a validation of monosexuality; and a concern about ‘the problem’ of sexual response in women and children – all of which led to ‘the exclusive promotion of reproductive adult marital sexuality’.\textsuperscript{26} By the late nineteenth century the British became interested in what Foucault terms ‘a discourse of sex’ – where sexual practice is seen as a scientific problem.

Close reading of nineteenth century boys’ fiction in a post-Freudian era reveals a more transparent homoerotic/homosexual trajectory than may have been intended by their authors. Peter Parker, for instance, comments that Ernest Raymond confessed that when he reread his public school novel \textit{Tell England} in the late 1960s, he was ‘astonished by its latent homosexuality’.

this astonishment would almost certainly be shared by other writers such as Vachell and Welldon had they lived into an age more sexually aware than their own. Their very innocence, and that of their audience, is what makes these overwrought books acceptable. In an age where good fellowship was the limit of relationships between heterosexual men, the lush unfolding of a chaste romance between two boys was clearly considered charming. The Romantic Friendship had all the agreeable elements of a clandestine yet carefree affair, without the complication of sex.\textsuperscript{27}

The analysis in this chapter explores the discourses that intersect with a selection of texts broadly interpreted as homoerotic, and will also examine the popular Victorian ideal of male friendship.

\textsuperscript{24} Ronald Hyam, \textit{Empire & Sexuality}, Ibid., p.56.
\textsuperscript{25} Ronald Hyam, \textit{Empire & Sexuality} Ibid., p.57.
\textsuperscript{26} Ronald Hyam, \textit{Empire & Sexuality} Ibid., p.57.
Passion and power: Edwardian censorship and E. F. Benson’s homoerotic novel David Blaize

Codes of male friendship in English public schools were an important strand in the definition of late nineteenth century manliness. As Jeffrey Richards asserts, ‘manliness was one of the qualities which the public schools sought to inculcate’. Constructions of male friendship and manliness were constantly changing over the nineteenth century – changes reflected in the public school fiction genre. This section explores the construction of schoolboy friendships and the imperial athletic ideal in E. F. Benson’s *David Blaize* (1916). The section also aims to identify ways in which readers are offered an alternative masculine ideal.

Jeffrey Richards claims that the importance of this strand of the genre is its function to furnish ‘role models and conduct validators’ that assist in the transmission of a dominant ideology. Public school assists in the dissemination of ideologies of masculinity that are critical for the expansion and maintenance of empire. As Bob Connell puts it, ‘masculinities are not only shaped by the process of imperial expansion, they are active in that process and help to shape it.’

According to Jeffrey Richards, friendships between boys are ‘the principal ingredients’ of the genre. Michael Rupert Taylor furthers the importance of nineteenth century boys’ fiction to discourses of sexuality, claiming they are ‘one of the most significant discourses on male love of the period’.

Isabel Quigly reminds us that patterns of close friendships in public schools are mirrored in the fiction, and were very much like those of courtship and marriage. As far as the public school story is concerned, Quigly suggests that this may be

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why, ‘to outsiders, the close friendships were perhaps the most wistfully regarded thing about it’. She states that pairing was ‘an acknowledged part of school life, encouraged by all sorts of school arrangements – the sharing of studies, the need to have a regular companion for walks and having a best friend was socially, emotionally, even practically necessary’. As privacy was virtually non-existent – bathing was communal and the lavatories didn’t have doors – close friendships provided compensation and comfort for some boys. But John R. Reed argues that the experience of boarding was menacing:

What should have been character-building frequently seemed to be outright demolition. A lack of privacy leading to numerous varieties of unspeakable humiliation, and a continual surveillance producing curious insecurity, drove sensitive boys into themselves, the only place where they could find sanctuary from an ominously pervasive system of control.

Harold Nicholson describes the house system in some schools exerted such control that it limited possibilities for friendship:

In my day it was not thought proper that boys should become acquainted with other boys who were not in their own house or dormitory. The range of our acquaintance was thus limited to the thirty boys who happened to be housed under the same roof. Ten of these boys were too old, and ten too young, for intimacy.

An important area linked to friendships is sexuality, and this topic is discussed in my textual analyses of David Blaize and The Loom of Youth. The texts reveal a tension between sensuality and sexuality and also highlight late nineteenth century and early twentieth century concerns about homosexuality in the public schools. (It was a commonly accepted idea that athleticism could counter the perceived threat of homosexuality, or ‘beastliness’ as it was euphemistically named.) While friendship models in all of the texts considered in this chapter are

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31 Isabel Quigly, The Heirs of Tom Brown, Ibid., pp. 81-2.
32 John R Reed, Old School Ties: The Public Schools in British Literature, Syracuse University Press, 1964, p 63.
33 Quoted in John R Reed, Old School Ties, Ibid; p 55.
closely aligned with a dominant athletic ideal, there is significant evidence of narrative transgression.

Publicly acceptable representations of friendships naturally change over time. The passionate male friendships celebrated in school novels such as Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and F. W. Farrar’s *Eric, Or, Little By Little*, became morally suspect and undesired as emotionality in middle-class friendship between boys was replaced by attitudes of the ‘stiff-upper-lip’. Claudia Nelson alerts us to the interesting paradox where the once idealised ‘girlish boys’ became a figure of contempt by the end of the nineteenth century. As Nelson puts it, ‘the mid-Victorian’s hero is the late-Victorian’s sissy’.  

Analysis of the language used in public school novels in the construction and role of friendships has revealed gaps and contradictions bound up with discursive social practice. The resistances and subject positions that readers are invited to take up provide indicators of the historically and socially constructed nature of the narratives and the discursive production of a masculine ‘ideal’ that involves exclusions.

The Victorian era is often associated with silence and repression in regard to private sexuality. Nelson, however, states that by the end of the nineteenth century there was so much written about the subject that ‘the discourse itself had become a subject for discourse’.  

(Foucault’s work has been fundamental in the development of discourse theory. His work on sexuality, discipline, subjectivity and language are particularly relevant to this thesis.) He suggests that power relations produce forms of subjectivity in institutions that repress children’s sexuality. He argues that discourse around masturbation, for example, while aiming to eliminate the practice actually increased the sexualisation of childhood:

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Educators and doctors combated children’s onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated. What this actually entailed, throughout this whole secular campaign that mobilized the adult world around the sex of children, was using these tenuous pleasures as a prop, constituting them as secrets (that is, forcing them into hiding so as to make possible their discovery), tracing them back to their source … wherever there was a chance they might appear, devices of surveillance were installed; traps were laid for compelling admissions; inexhaustible and corrective discourses were imposed; parents and teachers were alerted, and left with the suspicion that all children were guilty.\(^{36}\)

As attitudes toward masculinity and sexuality shift, their intersection becomes apparent:

Discourses contain statements, or truth claims, which are constructs of particular societies at particular times, and are accepted as true, so that they set limits and conventions of what can and cannot be said; they exclude those discourses which carry no power or authority, for they are the successful outcome of a socio-cultural struggle with other competing discourses. \(^{37}\)

For Foucault, the subject is constituted in discourse through the specific vocabulary of knowledge that circulates in society. His work explores the institutional effects of discourse and the way it operates to produce and govern individual subjects. He explains that discussions of power, knowledge and truth constitute discourse, and that discourses are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. \(^{38}\)

Power is a crucial part of discussions of discourse. The liberal humanist assumption is that power is something that can be taken from someone, or that it is something that someone can be prevented from having. Alternatively, discussions of power can subsume the Marxist theory of the relationship of


economics and power. For Foucault, power consists of a complex range of practices rather than the removal of someone’s freedom.³⁹ Cultural codes are deployed and, together with discursive regimes, they construct ideologies. According to Steven Cohan and Linda Shires, ‘codes are so much part of our cultural knowledge that we often forget that what we are reading is a code. Although they appear to pre-exist signification, making it seem effortless and natural, these codes … link sets of signs to … a referent system – which allows encoded meanings to become legible.’⁴⁰

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ‘men appear to be emerging as the threatened sex; even as they remain, everywhere, the threatening sex.’⁴¹ There is a proliferation of discourses on men and masculinities, on issues around boys and literacy, boys and violence, and so on. If there can be said to be a ‘crisis in masculinity’ then, according to Badinter and Kimmel, there have been at least two earlier crises involving the questioning of the meaning of ‘masculinity’ in countries undergoing ideological, economic or social changes.⁴² Jeffrey P. Hantover takes up the question of anxiety around manliness at the turn of the twentieth century, when David Blaize was published. He claims that ‘men believed they faced diminishing opportunities for masculine validation and that adolescents faced barriers to the very development of masculinity’.⁴³ Connell also notes that ideologists of patriarchy struggled to control and direct the reproduction of masculinity. He asserts that there was ‘a fear that boys would be feminized through too much influence by women’.⁴⁴

In the late nineteenth century, attempts were made to foster a particular masculinity among boys – one of toughness, self-reliance, physicality and

⁴⁴ RW Connell, Masculinities, Ibid., p.195.
aggression. This resulted in the construction of a hegemonic masculinity bound up with authority and rationality. David Blaize, however, subverts the hegemonic masculine ideal with its depiction of the feminine within a male-dominated institution. With this construction, Benson invites readers to assume an alternative subject position to the mainstream school story of the period. For young men in the early twentieth century, the potential for homoerotic pleasure had been expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group, and complex moral, legal and political questions about male sexuality abounded. As Jeffrey Weeks points out, there was a medical and legal onslaught on homosexuality in Britain from the mid nineteenth century, which included the idea that masturbation was a manifestation of unwholesomeness and unmanliness in the young, as well as a vice associated with homosexuality.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover, the Labouchere Amendment to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment made homosexual acts illegal. This legislation criminalised all ‘acts of gross indecency between males’ with a penalty of up to two years imprisonment.\textsuperscript{46} Femininity was thereby linked with physical weakness, masculinity with strength and self-reliance. This section will examine Benson’s reinstatement of the feminine to masculine ideologies in school stories.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century models of hegemonic masculinity share many characteristics with those currently under debate in educational circles regarding boys and violence. Kenway & Fitzclarence, for example, assert:

\begin{quote}
At this stage of Western history, hegemonic masculinity mobilises around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality. It distances itself from physical weakness, expressive skills, private knowledge, creativity, emotion, dependency, subjectivity, irrationality, cooperation and empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and certain affiliative behaviours. In other words it distances itself from the feminine and considers the feminine less worthy.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{47} Jane Kenway & Lindsay Fitzclarence, ‘Masculinity, Violence and Schooling: challenging ‘poisonous pedagogies’., \textit{Gender and Education}, Vol.9, No.1, p.121.
Kenway & Fitzclarence suggest that ‘hegemonic masculinity makes its claims and asserts its authority through many cultural and institutional practices’, and that schools are naturally implicated in the making of masculinities.

In *Masculinities*, R. W. Connell argues that contemporary pedagogy plays a key role in the transformation of masculinity. As well as asserting that the diversity of masculinities should be addressed in the curriculum, he suggests an approach that includes the feminine so that boys are enabled to understand feminine viewpoints – an angle he believes is ‘systematically denied in hegemonic masculinity’. Connell contends that the shift in hegemonic masculinity in Britain to embrace violence and aggression was due to the decline in landowning gentry and the emergence of industrial economies in the nineteenth century. This resulted in the bureaucratic institutionalisation of violence.

In *David Blaize*, violence in the school setting is muted and obscured, but present nonetheless in the manipulation of smaller boys by their seniors through sexual advances and predatory behaviour. In contrast, this violence is mitigated by the feminine space offered in the depiction of home: the friendship between the protagonists, David Blaize and Frank Maddox blossoms during the freedom they enjoy at Frank’s seaside home during their holidays. Here verbal and physical expressions of affection are freely given and reciprocated.

Kenway & Fitzclarence advocate the use of narrative theory to offer both individuals and groups the opportunity to develop alternative storylines to resist the dominant narrative. They suggest that boys should be given the opportunity to talk out their feelings in order to identify alternative forms of masculinity. Homoerotic novels such as *David Blaize* offered the early twentieth century reader an alternative model of masculinity – if coded and disguised.

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48 R W Connell, *Masculinities*, Ibid., p.239.
Passionate schoolboy friendships are vital ingredients of the English public school story, and are one strand in the definition of manliness. But what differentiates and illuminates *David Blaize* is an erotic subtext that highlights tension between sensuality and sexuality. While Benson’s novel breaks new ground by exploring the emotional nature of boys’ friendships, the construction of its hero, David, as sexually innocent reverts to the mid-nineteenth century didactic school story form. Benson’s use of carefully coded language invites readers to resist cultural codes and discourses around homosexuality and sexuality, and is informed by the discourses on homosexuality and censorship at the time. Such alternative reading positions play an important part in deconstructing the notion of hegemonic masculinity.

Benson’s *David Blaize* (1916) appeared on the market during the first years of the First World War. It is a distinctly Edwardian novel (unlike the late-Victorian texts of *St Dominic’s* and *Stalky & Co.*, and it is therefore useful to examine some of the early twentieth century historical factors that frame it. *David Blaize* is commonly regarded as homoerotic because it engages with discourses of sexuality in general, and with homosexuality in particular. The paradox about this text is that it celebrates the love between boys, but is written at a time when homosexuality was criminal. The love between boys was considered charming in print, yet purity campaigns in the public schools constructed such friendships as potentially harmful. I believe that censorship issues affected the narration of this text, and that Benson used satire and coded language to legitimate his treatment of passionate public school friendships.

As an Edwardian novel, *David Blaize* is a product of an era in transition. Samuel Hynes claims that while there are parallels between the corresponding decades of the previous century ‘when old and new ideas dwelt uneasily together’, Edwardian England was quite different in important ways. Queen Victoria’s extraordinarily long reign resulted in:
an ossification of authority that encased and cramped the new: the forms of values had become the values; institutions had become more important than the ideas they embodied.\textsuperscript{49}

This stagnation incorporates an underlying tension. There was much conflict and struggle in the political arena with the trade unions and suffrage movement, among others, pushing for reform. Hynes asserts:

In all these confrontations, the pattern was the same: the New behaved brashly, insolently or violently, and the Old responded with arthritic resistance.\textsuperscript{50}

Although the Edwardian era has been termed ‘a long garden party’ and a ‘golden afternoon’ it had disturbingly complex undercurrents of change. According to Hynes it was a time ‘when women wore picture hats and did not vote, when the rich were not ashamed to live conspicuously, and the sun really never set on the British flag.’\textsuperscript{51}

To think of Edwardian England as a peaceful, opulent world before the flood is to misread the age and to misunderstand the changes that were dramatized by the First World War. For though the war dramatized and speeded the changes from Victorian to modern England, it did not make them. Virtually everything that is thought as characteristically modern already existed.\textsuperscript{52}

Benson wrote \textit{David Blaize} at a time when technological and theoretical developments, together with shifts in artistic practice, impinged on Edwardian society. In the world of literature, new developments in technique were taking place, aimed to achieve a reality in writing. James Joyce’s \textit{Ulysses} (1922) experimented with form, and writers such as T. S. Eliot reflected discontent and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{50} Samuel Hynes, \textit{The Edwardian Turn of Mind}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{52} Samuel Hynes, \textit{The Edwardian Turn of Mind}, Ibid., p.5.
\end{flushleft}
scepticism of traditional values. Novels of social comment, such as Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* were more popular than the romance novel. Reynolds and Brasher, in *Notes on Britain in the Twentieth Century 1900–1964*, report that large swathes of the British population were interested in the state of social conditions – proving that the community was becoming more aware of its responsibilities. Religious practice also began to decline – partly due to the fallout from Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859). In the political arena the state became more involved in the control of economic and social conditions, which often resulted in censorship.\(^{53}\)

Samuel Hynes explains that while stage censorship was ‘a strong, focussed expression of established social and moral values’, books were also controlled because they were seen as a greater threat to English social stability. Literacy rates increased in the last years of the Victorian era, and free libraries circulated with large volumes of books – some of which questioned ideas on religion, politics and sex. In conservative circles many books were regarded immoral, and from the 1880s censorship of material considered threatening to public morals became an important social issue.

The legal bases for censorship in art and literature began in 1857 with the Act for More Effectually Preventing the Sale of Obscene Books, Pictures, Prints, and other Articles recommended by the chief justice, Lord Campbell. This law lasted for over 100 years and gave power for magistrates and Justices of the Peace to issue search warrants and seize material considered obscene.\(^{54}\) Ten years after Campbell’s legislation, Lord Justice Cockburn offered a definition of obscenity:

> I think the test of obscenity is this: whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{54}\) Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, p.254.

\(^{55}\) Quoted in Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Ibid; p.256.
This definition, given during a trial for obscene libel was accepted – with its implication that it is the young and innocent who must be the standard of purity. Libel laws, such as the 1889 Indecent Advertisements Act effectively suppressed any mention of sex in public. That same year, Zola’s English publisher was sent to prison for publishing La Terra, which directly contravened the law.

Evangelical MP Samuel Smith recommended:

This House deplores the rapid spread of demoralising Literature in this Country, and is of opinion that the Law against obscene publications and indecent pictures and prints should be vigorously enforced and, if necessary, strengthened.

Samuel Smith noted that one million copies of ‘the worst class of French novels had been sold in England’ and that ‘indecencies from abroad’, specifically France, were threatening the social order in England. In 1895 Oscar Wilde was charged with committing acts of gross indecency with men, under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. Purity campaigns, such as The National Vigilance Association, formed in 1885, acted as moral watchdogs and unofficial censors.

Benson, by writing of the love between boys in David Blaize, treaded very dangerous ground. His desire to write a frank book about the relationships between boys was tempered by an awareness of censorship issues and indecency laws. But his use of satire and coded language mitigated some of these obstacles.

E. F. (Fred) Benson wrote David Blaize in 1916, when he was 48, and it quickly became one of his most popular novels. It had a controversial reception: its homoerotic content was one factor, but more important was that it was written in the vein of the new tradition of critical writing about the public schools. Many people had questioned the role of the public schools in producing leaders for the

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56 Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, Ibid., p.256.
57 Quoted in Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, Ibid. p.257.
58 Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, Ibid., p261.
Boer War, which resulted in devastating loss of life. *David Blaize* took an ironic stance on the public school as an institution as well as treating the relationships between schoolboys ‘frankly’. As Benson’s biographer Brian Masters puts it: *David Blaize* was ‘new, dangerously new’.\(^5^9\) Benson was also determined to write a realistic account of ‘the strong affections between boys’ – something he felt was largely ignored in school fiction. By calling his protagonist ‘Blaize’, Benson is perhaps referring to his desire to write about the ‘blaze’ of friendships in public schools – he called the romantic friendships of his own schooldays ‘blaze after blaze [that] illuminated our excited lives’. Benson’s metaphor is highly significant: in writing about the love between boys he was indeed playing with fire.

John R. Reed notes the reason for the new tradition of criticism of public schools:

> a period of admiration for the public schools which extended from 1870 through 1890, was based principally on past achievements attributed to the schools, but as the depressions of 1874 and 1878 made it quite evident that the British Empire was being challenged by foreign commercial nations, the public schools were once more called in question.\(^6^0\)

Reed claims that the embarrassing failures and devastating losses in the Boer War (1899–1902) renewed interest in educational reform. Criticism of the nineteenth century public schools centred around what were perceived to be its biggest failures: notably the outdated fagging system, the abuse of boys by schoolmasters (flogging), an outmoded curriculum, the cult of athleticism and a conformist regime. Reed also cites ‘homosexual abuses’.\(^6^1\) He asserts that the critical tradition in school fiction ‘concentrated on the personal and individual, as well as the social and political’. He adds that ‘great numbers of public school novels written at the adolescent level appeared, but there was also an enlarged production

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of adult novels with school settings or incidents'. This he claims may have been due to ‘a publisher’s craze’.62

If *David Blaize* was part of ‘a publisher’s craze’ it proved to be exceptionally popular. Robert J. Kirkpatrick in *Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools: An annotated bibliography of boys’ school fiction 1742–1990*,63 classifies *David Blaize* as a novel written for adults. Isabel Quigly also agrees that ‘it is an adult novel rather than a book for boys; although no doubt many of the young once read it on another level of understanding’.64 *David Blaize* was a book of immense popular appeal. Brian Masters tells us that ‘letters of appreciation, many from women, were ecstatic’; ‘the lads in the trenches are sharing it and passing it around’ wrote one major in the British army; ‘the best school story yet written bar none’ commented another correspondent.65 Michael Rupert Taylor, in an article on homosexuality and boys’ school stories in the 1960s, looks back to what he calls ‘the circumstances created by the war in France’. He says that at that time ‘men of all kinds were living together in conditions that allowed and encouraged close and loving relationships’.66 Mark Taylor has explored something of this unique intimacy in *Lads: Love poetry of the trenches*, suggesting that public school novels influenced elegiac First World War poems.67 Peter Parker in *The Old Lie: The Great War and the public-school ethos*, confirms this view:

Stories such as these paved the way for the reams of elegiac verse produced during the Great War, in which the love between men, in all its shadings, was celebrated, and its destruction in battle was richly mourned.68

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62 John R. Reed, *Old School Ties*, Ibid., p.34.
64 Isabel Quigly, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, Ibid., p.223.
The erotic subtext of *David Blaize* appealed to both the heterosexual and homosexual communities because it is, after all, a well-written love story. In their biography of Benson, Geoffrey Palmer and Noel Lloyd write:

A third class of readers, new to Fred, were those who fell in love with the two boys, instinctively responding to the underlying eroticism of the friendship that had almost trembled into something more disturbing. They represented a wide cross-section of the middle-class homosexual world, and Fred received many letters from them.\(^6^9\)

Just four years before his death, Benson revealed how deeply he felt about his book, and the impulses behind its writing:

The idea of writing a school story, which without being sentimental had much about the strong affections between boys, which can amount to a sort of passion, had been in my mind for years before I wrote *David Blaize*. I tried it once, got all the values wrong, and then after a long period of internal simmering began it all over again and wrote it in a few weeks, because I imagine it was already written in my mind. My reason for writing it was because it was a subject that, as far as I knew, had never been frankly treated before... There is a good deal of autobiographical stuff boiled into it, and whether the book was bad or good, it was pretty well what I meant... I have had more correspondence about it than about any book I ever wrote. That I think has been because there was no 'book-making' about it, but because it was a genuine piece of self-expression.\(^7^0\)

Benson’s ironic stance, coupled with his considered and strong views about adolescent relationships, constructs this text for audiences other than juveniles. At 48, Benson was a mature and well-known published author and so it transpired that *David Blaize* be a multi-layered narrative for adults and younger readers. Having spent his entire childhood in public school settings (he was born at Wellington College where his father was headmaster), he was able to use his firsthand experiences to recreate the atmosphere of boarding school life – rendering it a nostalgic text for adults who had been to boarding school and an engaging one for people of any age group who wished they had.

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In *E. F. Benson: As he was*, Geoffrey Palmer and Noel Lloyd suggest that Benson’s aims in writing *David Blaize* were allied to a wish to depict schoolboy friendships more realistically than they had previously appeared in print – that is, it had to include the strong emotional bonds between boys, as opposed to the typical school story where the plot might focus on a cricket match or the mystery around the loss of a scholarship examination paper.

He wanted to write a story of school life that would be completely unlike *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, *Tim* or *The Hill* and the other traditional stories of bullies and cheats and captains of cricket who kiss the fevered brow of First Formers who are dying of consumption. He thought he could do it by depicting himself under the name of David Blaize as he really had been, or had wanted to be … yellow-haired, sunny-natured and of an unbelievable goodness. 71

On the one hand Benson’s aim is subversive in his treatment of adolescent male love. For example, the late Romantic poets Keats and Swinburne as well as the Uranian poets are depicted as sources of inspiration and a catalyst for the friendship between the two schoolboy protagonists. But Benson is also at pains to emphasise David’s sexual innocence, and he hints that sensuality is not synonymous with sexuality – at least not in its physical/homosexual expression.

As noted earlier, passionate male friendships celebrated in school novels such as Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and F. W. Farrar’s *Eric, Or, Little By Little*, had become morally suspect and undesirable by the 1890s as emotionality in middle-class friendship between boys had been replaced by a hegemonic masculinity of the ‘stiff-upper-lip’. But by the time *David Blaize* was published in 1916, ‘girlish boys’ were back in fashion, promoted by the First World War in what Martin Taylor calls ‘a “public appetite”72 for homoeroticism’. Taylor says that poets such as Brooke, Sassoon and Oswald publicly proclaimed ‘the unique physical tenderness, the readiness to admire openly the bodily beauty of young

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men, the unapologetic recognition that men may be in love with each other’. He points to the erotic quality of public school romantic friendships in texts like *David Blaize*, *Tim* and *Julian Home*, suggesting that they all contributed to the emotional tone of First World War poetry.

As indicated earlier, there were legal issues and inherent dangers in censorship to contend with. Taylor claims that:

> If the trial of Wilde brought the irrefutable existence of homosexuality to the attention of the late-Victorian public, the psychologists of the early twentieth century made a new generation aware of the ambivalent impulses underlying male comradeship.

The novel follows the life of the protagonist, David Blaize, at both his preparatory and his public school, from the age of thirteen to seventeen. It charts his friendship with Frank Maddox, an older pupil. In those formative years, David matures from a boy to a young man. His maturity does not follow the linear progression of so many other school stories, (new boy moves his way up the school to sporting and/or academic achievement). Instead, both boys reveal flashes of mature insight and self-knowledge, with these revelations occurring alongside episodes more typical of life in the conventional school story, thus creating more than one subject position for the implied reader.

The text addresses a dual audience – that of both adults and children. It describes the teachers as well as the schoolboys ironically:

> Mr Dutton was ‘a tall and ineffective young man, entirely undistinguished for either physical or mental powers, who had taken a somewhat moderate degree at Cambridge, and had played lacrosse … When the Sunday letters home were finished, Mr Dutton would read a chapter about the second missionary journey of St Paul, and then ask questions. But while these letters were being written Mr Dutton was not Sabbatically employed, for

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Such a heavily ironic passage appeals to both adults and children. In the case of the latter it signals a subversive undercutting of authority. Ironic observation of human activity was common in nineteenth century novels, but comparatively rare in fiction for children and particularly in the case of school stories. Here the authority of the usually respected schoolteacher is undermined by the use of the word ‘ineffective’. In more didactic fiction, teachers are to be feared, not mocked. The inclusion of lacrosse as Mr Dutton’s preferred sport at Cambridge is also ironic because aggressive sports like rugby and football (soccer), along with the ever-popular cricket, are the sports generally celebrated in school stories from *Tom Brown* onwards. Lacrosse is lampooned as not being a ‘physical’ game: we already know Dutton is physically ‘undistinguished’. Dutton’s contradictory impulse in his choice of reading matter is also commented on ironically. While supervising the boys’ letter writing, he earnestly studies the Bible, but ‘nestling between his books was a yellow-backed volume of stories by Guy de Maupassant’.

This incident represents a parody of the trope of the schoolteacher’s powers of surveillance and discipline. Mr Dutton is supposed to be supervising the boys and ensuring that their letters contain ‘suitable’ comments and information. But this passage suggests that it is Mr Dutton who is flouting the code of good taste in fiction. Reading de Maupassant under cover of the Bible undermines the idea and at the same time ironically draws attention to the surveillance of the schoolboy. To the schoolboy reader of *David Blaize*, this incident would hardly raise an eyebrow. But to the adult reader, de Maupassant is remembered as a Modernist writer whose work is imbued with subtle erotic undercurrents and explicit details of sexual relationships. Foucault has pointed out that it is not only the schoolboy who is subjected to policing by institutional power, but also the ‘pervert’ and the

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‘lunatic’. In this case Mr Dutton, by reading an illicit book, becomes what Foucault calls ‘carefully fabricated’ within the institution of the school. 76

The ironic tone of David Blaize begs the question: what is a children’s book? Barbara Wall defines a story ‘written to children’ as being ‘for children’, even though it may also be for adults. For Wall, David Blaize is a ‘dual address’ narrative. She outlines single address narratives as stories where an author/narrator has only a child’s viewpoint and where children’s interests dominate the story:

Their narrators will address child narratees, overt or covert, straightforwardly, showing no consciousness that adults too might read the work. In double address, however, the narrator addresses ‘child narrates overtly and self-consciously, and will also address adults (overtly or covertly) as ‘the narrator deliberately exploits the ignorance of the implied child reader and attempts to entertain an implied adult reader by making jokes which are funny primarily because children will not understand them. 77

The third possibility of dual address ‘concern[s] something other than purely children’s interests’. Wall claims that dual address is ‘rare and difficult’, presupposing as it does that a ‘child narratee is addressed and an adult reader simultaneously satisfied’.78

The dual audience is implicit in the book’s marketing. For example, the front cover illustration of the 1989 paperback Hogarth Press edition of the novel depicts a cricket match with the backdrop of a public school, complete with chapel and clock tower. Three schoolboys sit at a table drinking lemonade with striped blazers over their cricket whites. The colourings are watercolour outlined in pen and ink, similar to illustrations in children’s books of the period. From this

78 Barbara Wall, The Narrator’s Voice, Ibid., p.36.
IMAGE REMOVED: Plate 1, Front cover of E.F. Benson's 'David Blaize', The Hogarth Press, 1989
perspective, the book is distinctly for children. The publisher’s blurb on the back cover describes it as a ‘nostalgic classic of public school life … evoking the joys and torments of boyhood, from midnight feasts and glorious days on the cricket field to waxy masters and hilariously embarrassing parental visits.’ But Peter Burton’s preface signals the books as suitable for an adult readership. While describing it as ‘a very jolly read’ (Burton’s italics) he mentions that ‘Benson moved in homosexual circles’ but notes that ‘there is no evidence that he ever fulfilled his emotional leanings; in fact the number of spinsters of both sexes in his many books suggests that he was without carnal knowledge, a knowing innocent’. This tension between innocence and knowledge underscores the novel. There is also, I argue, a third possible position for a reader – as decoder of an erotic subtext.

The first six chapters of David Blaize are set at David’s preparatory school, Helmsworth, where the daily routine and preoccupations of small schoolboys is described in great detail. David keeps two stag beetles as ‘pets’ in a ‘cardboard travelling-carriage’. They live in his locker, his desk and his trouser pocket. The welfare of the beetles preoccupies a great deal of his time:

The lady was lying on her back, as good as gold, waving her legs slowly in the air, having probably fallen down on some climbing expedition about the roof of the locker, but the stag himself (called ‘The Monarch of the Glen’) could not at once be found. But a little careful rummaging disclosed him sitting morosely in a crevice between a grammar and a geography book.

‘I say, I don’t believe the Monarch’s well,’ said David.

‘Shouldn’t think so, living in your fuggy desk,’ said Bags, strolling out of the room.

For David, his beetles are more than just insects. They take on anthropomorphic qualities:

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80 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid., p.21.
They were male and female, as the lady’s absence of long horns testified, and it was hoped that even in confinement she might some day be confined. Indeed, there were several bets on, as to which form the babies would take – whether they would be eggs, or some sort of caterpillar, or minute but fully developed stag-beetles.\textsuperscript{81}

At the same time that this narrative entertains a young audience with its description of classroom and extra-curricular life at boarding school, there are coded and suggestive phrases. In the double-entendres and sexual innuendoes of such phrases in the incident above, such as ‘the lady was lying on her back’, and ‘a little careful rummaging’, and ‘his attention was completely diverted by the feeling of a slight vibration in his trouser-pocket, caused by the movements of the Monarch and his wife’ we are led from the outset to understand David to be ignorant of biological function and naive about his own sexuality and that of his fellow students. His ‘white innocence’ leading to ‘boy-love, hot as fire and clean as the trickle of ice-water on a glacier,’\textsuperscript{82} as described by Maddox, is a central theme of the novel.

David Blaize is in direct contrast to school novels published before the 1900s – when sexual matters were either ignored or veiled in language that obscures rather than illuminates. F. W. Farrar’s Eric, Or, Little By Little (1858), for example, treats the subject of what it calls ‘indecent words’ in the following way. The protagonist, Eric is a new boy and he witnesses another boy, Ball (who we are told had ‘tasted more largely of the tree of knowledge of evil than any other boy’), entertaining boys in the dormitory. The narrator informs us his words come from a ‘degraded and corrupting mind.’ The narrator intrudes into the story – putting vice and virtue in opposition, creating a moral dilemma for Eric:

Now, Eric, now or never! Life and death, ruin and salvation, corruption and purity, are perhaps in the balance together, and the scale of your destiny may hang on a single word of yours. Speak out, boy! Tell these fellows that

\textsuperscript{81} E.F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid.,p.20.
\textsuperscript{82} E.F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid.,p.201.
unseemly words wound your conscience; tell them that they are ruinous, sinful, damnable; speak out and save yourself and the rest. Virtue is strong and beautiful, Eric, and vice is downcast in her awful presence”.  

In this excerpt from *Eric* (in contrast to *David Blaize*), the reader can only consider Eric’s dilemma in oppositional terms – between corrupt and pure action. In *David Blaize* there is another subject position for the reader: to consider the sexual thoughts and physical manifestations of David’s emerging sexuality and sensuality. David’s gradual transition is from a childish interest in stag beetles to the emergence of different passions. His artistic sensibility develops in a discursive manner and is part of his friendship with Maddox. In an English class, David is enchanted by Mr Acland’s rendition of a Keats poem:

Keats’s poem was part of the whole joy of life, it, and its music, and the sense of longing for something he did not know about, which it produced in him.”

Attempting to articulate this feeling, David likens it to ‘something he had felt once when he woke early and heard the chirruping of birds before daybreak…”

Acland’s recital, among other sermons he delivers in the story, elicits a physical response in David, suggesting sexual innuendo and even sexual climax:

He began in tones so low that it needed an effort to hear him; it boomed out over ‘charioted by Bacchus and his pards’; it sounded like a breeze at night in the stanza ‘I cannot see what flowers are at my feet’; again it shook with emotion over the ‘sad heart of Ruth’, and David felt a lump rise in his throat, a mysteriously blissful misery took possession of him. And when the Head finished he found himself smiling at him with a mouth that trembled a little.

Benson’s choice of Keats as inspiration for David is interesting on two counts. Keats was, like Benson, critical of dominant attitudes about literature and

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84 E F Benson, *David Blaize*, Ibid., p.93.
sexuality in his time. There are ambiguities in Keats’s own treatment of sexual love, reflecting divisions in his psyche as well as society. Secondly, the poem that Acland reads, ‘Ode to a Nightingale’, is imaged on pure sensation. It is both sensuous and melancholy and strives to replicate moments of ecstasy.87 In a private conversation, Acland, using language that reverts to nineteenth century didactic fiction, hints at a dangerous side of public school life:

There are worse things than smoking…even worse things than stealing, and that many quite good chaps, as you would say, don’t think there is any harm in them. There are worse things than stealing … Things that damn the soul, David.88

Foucault comments on the evasions (what he calls ‘a screen-discourse’) of pre-Freudian discourse on sex. He claims that such discourse by scholars and theoreticians ‘never ceased to hide the thing it was speaking about.’ He also calls attention to claims of speaking about sex ‘from the rarefied and neutral viewpoint of a science’ because ‘it was in fact a science made up of evasions since, it concerned itself primarily with aberrations, perversions, exceptional oddities.’89

claiming to speak the truth, it stirred up people’s fears … it ascribed an imaginary dynasty of evils destined to be passed on for generations; it declared the furtive customs of the timid…strange pleasures, it warned, would eventually result in nothing short of death: that of individuals, generations, the species itself.90

Benson’s text is hardly more illuminating on the subject of homosexuality than Farrar’s Eric, but the narrator’s ironic tone allows reading between the lines. Foucault has commented on the way that resistances are fought through ideologies, and Jeremy Moss has stated that Foucault later ‘moved away from a position where power seemed to constitute individuals, to a position where

86 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid., pp.93-94.
87 Deakin University Study Guide ALL201, Romanticism, pp38-41.
88 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, p.115.
89 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Ibid., p.53.
90 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Ibid., p.54.
individuals have the scope to refuse the regulation of apparatuses of power.’ The later Foucault recognised that subjectivity is an active constituent within power relations.91

An erotic tension continues to develop between David and Maddox. Their relationship is constructed more like a romance between an adolescent boy and girl. Their friendship at school develops in a covert fashion, since Maddox is eighteen and David only fifteen, and friendships between older and younger boys are discouraged. But because Maddox is a prefect, he is able to arrange for David to sleep in the adjoining bed to his in the boarding house – enabling furtive conversations.

When David is invited to stay at Maddox’s beachside home at Naseby in the holidays, their relationship moves to a new level of intimacy. The two boys spend most of their time un-chaperoned. Maddox takes the opportunity to read the late Romantic poets, such as Swinburne, to David. Swinburne, like Keats, celebrates ecstatic feeling in his poetry and his erotic imagination leads him to explore sensuous love. The choice of the particular poem that Maddox reads to David has coded sexual meaning: underlying ‘Atalanta in Calydon’ are the philosophies of de Sade. The poem was written when Swinburne became influenced by the philosophies of de Sade – but he had been interested in sadomasochism since his schooldays at Eton. David mistakes ‘Atalanta’ for the Greek goddess Atlanta and is bewildered by Maddox’s teasing laughter at his mistake. Maddox comments, ‘Oh, you’re such a kid … and I keep forgetting it.’92 In this episode the narrator appears to be making ironic and veiled comments over the head of the child reader to the adult reader (who may or may not be aware of the sadomasochistic undertones of the Swinburne’s poem).

92 E F Benson, David Blaize, p.190.
The boys are inseparable during this holiday period – ‘alone on the hot beach,’ swimming naked, and playing golf – and Maddox makes what could be construed as sexual advances toward David:

Frank picked up a handful of the dry powdery sand and let it trickle gently into the gap of shin that showed between the end of his trousers and the beginning of his sock.\(^93\)

Although David retains his ‘white innocence’, there are hints that he is clearly aware at some level of the ‘dangers’ of such intimacy:

Then came trudges through sandy places, with breathless suspense to see whether the balls had carried the last of the bunkers…would be found nestling in little, steep, bare hollows and bedevilled hiding-places. David, in especial, found himself frequently in amazing and awful places, of which Satan had certainly been the architect.\(^94\)

Again, the coded language has the possibility of a double meaning for an adult or child readership. In *David at King’s*, the book’s sequel, which follows David and Maddox’s friendship through Cambridge University, the friendship is constructed with an increase in its physical expression – possibly because an adult novel was not affected by the same censorship in boys’ fiction, where ‘[Maddox] was eighteen and David fifteen’:

Frank shifted his position a little, and extended his hand round the back of David’s neck.

We’ve loved each other, thank God; I’ve been first in your life, and you in mine.\(^95\)

In *David Blaize*, Maddox, who arranges to have David as his ‘fag’ (a younger boy who does the domestic chores), takes on the role of protector of David’s sexual


\(^{94}\) E.F. Benson, *David Blaize*, Ibid., p.197.

innocence, but is clearly tempted to move the relationship to a physical level. The scene that illustrates this tension between sexuality and sensuality is one that is focalised through both David and Maddox. David returns to school drenched after walking in the rain. He gets into a hot bath and is sitting naked on the edge of the bath drying himself when Maddox looks in:

There, on the end of the bench below the team-clouded windows, was David sitting, his head enveloped in a towel, violently scrubbing, and whistling whenever the towel was not in actual contact with his mouth. He had not noticed his entry, and Maddox thought it would be rather amusing to sit down without speech close beside him, holding out, in mute reproach, the empty kettle that David should have filled. This he did.\(^\text{96}\)

There is something in Maddox’s expression, that unsettles and puzzles David and after a short conversation between the two boys, the focalisation switches to David:

David paused. There was Maddox only looking at him, only smiling. But instantly he had some sense of choking discomfort. He looked back at him, frowning and puzzled, and his sense of discomfort hugely increased. He merely wanted to get away.

‘O then, I think I’ll go and dress,’ he said hurriedly, and, picking up his sponge, left the room and ran away down the dark passage to his dormitory.

David sat down on his bed for a minute, feeling as if he had escaped from some distant nightmare that vaguely threatened to come near him.\(^\text{97}\)

The language of David’s interior monologue throughout this episode and its aftermath is replete with a sense of foreboding and ominous sentiments. From the ‘tingling, exhilarating affair’ of his bath, comes a flow of words to describe his response to Maddox’s presence in the bathroom: ‘nightmare’, ‘shy and frightened’, ‘subconscious horror’ and ‘irritation’.

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96 E.F. Benson, *David Blaize*, Ibid., p.146.
97 Ibid.,
As Maddox hurriedly leaves the bathroom, he realises that he has come perilously close to moving the friendship to another level, and his thoughts about his friendship with David are brought into focus, but the sexual nature of his desire is omitted:

Maddox had gone straight back from the bathroom to his study, without filling his kettle. He sat for ten momentous minutes in front of his fire without doing anything. All these weeks that intense friendship which was springing up between himself and David had been splendidly growing, and till now his influence over him had been exerted entirely for David’s good. He had constantly shielded him, as on the night when he had found Hughes sitting on his bed, from all that could sully him, he had checked any hint of foul talk in David’s presence, for, of all his lovable qualities, there was none so nobly potent to the elder boy than David’s white innocence, his utter want of curiosity about all that was filthy. It didn’t exist for him, but the danger of it (though, thank God, it had passed) he knew that he himself had brought near to him...Then he got up and looked at himself in the mirror above his mantelpiece, hating himself.

‘You damned beast,’ he said. ‘You deserve to be shot.’

The choice of the word ‘beast’ refers to ‘beastliness’ – schoolboy slang for homosexuality. David, for his part, is alarmed that he has narrowly escaped from something that he cannot quite articulate. Brian Masters notes that the bathroom scene in the original manuscript is more graphically described. It has Maddox coming so close to the naked David that their skin touches. Masters says that the first version of the story ‘is altogether more tactile’ and that the episode is ‘unquestionably a love scene’.

This passage also reveals tensions between innocence and (sexual) experience. Maddox and David’s relationship is built upon this tension, which includes temptation and resistance. Focalised through Maddox, we are privy to his inner thoughts and the wrestling with his conscience. He admits his sexual interest in David by using language that is full of the imagery of danger. There is interplay of words such as ‘sully’, ‘beast’, ‘choking discomfort’, ‘danger’, ‘miry road’ and ‘muddy place’ with those that situate him as protector of David’s innocence.

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Maddox tells himself that ‘his influence over [David] had been exerted entirely for good’. He says that he ‘had constantly shielded him’ from the attention of Hughes (a boy later expelled from the school for homosexuality).

Focalisation of this interior dialogue through Maddox’s perspective constructs a subject position that aligns the reader with a sympathetic understanding of Maddox’s intentions and dilemmas. As Stephens puts it, ‘narrative discourse implicitly offers its audiences a range of possible subject positions: aligned with narrators and/or focalizers; in opposition to unreliable narrators or unlikable characters; and so on’. 100 Stephens goes on to state that ‘in aligning themselves with a focalizing character, readers undergo textual subjection’. 101 In his discussion of readers and subject positions in children’s fiction, Stephens argues that:

The subject exists as an individual, but that existence is within a dialectical relationship with sociality. On the one hand, the relationship between a reader and a text is dialectical. … On the other hand, a work of fiction itself to some degree always mirrors the kinds of picturation and narrative which the subject draws upon for its own sense of selfhood. … The subject as reader is thus confronted with numerous examples in which the subjectivity of a fictive character is constructed and defined not merely in terms of its own being, as incorporated by the character’s represented actions, speech and thought processes, but also as it is narrated and described, and as it is perceived by other characters and interacts with them’. 102

Maddox is therefore presented as a young man facing a moral dilemma of an immensely complex nature. He has encouraged David’s friendship, prevented the predatory Hughes from seducing David but is now reflecting on his own sexual desire resulting from an unguarded moment in the bathroom when he succumbs to feelings for David that are clearly off limits. Although the interior monologue positions the reader to sympathise with Maddox, the reader can still respond in a variety of ways. This episode illustrates the way a fictional character’s

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100 John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction*, Ibid., p.44.
subjectivity is constructed in the text in the way that Stephens signals. Not only are the relations between Maddox and David entering a new and complex stage in their friendship, but the relations between Maddox and Hughes, and between Hughes and David are also loaded and involve self-examination. Foucault argues that when nineteenth century discourses on sex are integrated into a scientific discourse they produce the notion of ‘the principle of a latency intrinsic to sexuality’. For Foucault this explains why the subject no longer tended ‘to be concerned solely with what the subject wished to hide, but with what was hidden from himself’.

The introspection about sexual matters continues. A little later, and after a beating by Maddox for cribbing (a form of cheating), David feels momentarily sick. The following paragraph, focalised through David, suggests a moment of possible recognition of a mutual sexual attraction, even a sort of ecstasy:

There was a sudden singing in his ears, and Maddox caught him as he reeled, and put him gently down into a chair, as he leaned on him. But David’s faintness was only momentary, and, recovering, almost instantly, he saw that Maddox was looking almost as queer as he himself felt.

The ambiguities around the expression of ‘boy-love’ between David and Maddox is perhaps symptomatic of other tensions in late-Victorian and Edwardian society about sexuality, and Benson’s own uneasiness about the relationship between sensuality and sexuality. There is also confusion underlying the policies of the schools. Peter Parker, in writing about the First World War and the public school ethos, sums up these conflicts:

They insisted upon attempting to differentiate between what they saluted as the highest of all affections, which led to panegyrics in the chapel, and what they called ‘beastliness’, which generally led to expulsion.

103 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Ibid., p.66.
104 E.F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid., p.167.
David Blaize constructs David and Maddox as sensitive boys and portrays them as effeminate boy heroes of earlier Victorian children’s fiction. Even the clothes of the characters in the novel are described in feminine terms: Acland appears at an open doorway ‘in rustling silk gown’¹⁰⁶, and David wears a ‘soft grey hat’.¹⁰⁷ Alan Richardson suggests in his article ‘Reluctant Lords and Lame Princes’ that possibly the devaluation of feminine characteristics in late nineteenth century school stories may ‘allay the younger boy’s resistance in order to coax him into accepting the phallic heritage he may prove otherwise unwilling to assume’.¹⁰⁸ Richardson looks to Nancy Chodorow for a theory of gendering that ‘brings to the fore two distinct and apparently contradictory modes of representing the development of masculinity to the child – and more particularly to the boy-reader’.¹⁰⁹ Following Jacqueline Rose’s argument about ‘the refusal of sexual difference … that marks some children’s books’, Richardson states that children’s books, since they ‘embody the adult’s wish to shape the child reader in certain modes’, may ‘attempt to guide the child reader through the dilemmas implicit in the maturational paradigm they encode’.¹¹⁰ Richardson argues that boys portrayed in effeminate terms, such as in Little Lame Prince and Little Lord Fauntleroy, ultimately took on ‘a significantly qualified masculine identity and a social role at once paternal and maternal’.¹¹¹

Claudia Nelson talks about ‘the school story’s relatively smooth movement from the overtly to the covertly feminine’.¹¹² She defines the ‘peak’ of the school story genre as happening ‘only after the beginning of the redefinition of “manliness” and the restructuring of sexuality’.

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¹⁰⁶ E.F. Benson, David Blaize, Ibid., p.173.
¹⁰⁷ E F Benson, David Blaize, Ibid., p.182.
¹⁰⁹ Alan Richardson, ‘Reluctant Lords and Lame Princes’ Ibid., p.5.
¹¹⁰ Alan Richardson, ‘Reluctant Lords and Lame Princes’, Ibid., p.7.
¹¹¹ Alan Richardson, ‘Reluctant Lords and Lame Princes’, Ibid., p.7.
Toward the latter years of the century a new type of school story arose. Its chief formal characteristic was its willingness to criticize the mainstream tradition on the grounds of hypocrisy, unreality, or unforgivable naivety, while its chief stylistic trait was its use of a humorous tone to puncture the pretensions to earnestness of its rival and particularly to correct the tradition’s version of friendship between boys.\(^\text{113}\)

David Blaize follows this trend towards the subversive and sets out to clarify some of these questions, even though it appears to be as reticent as its mid-nineteenth century school story counterpart – with its evasions on the subject of expressions of affection in male friendship. With its depiction of feminised boy heroes it does offer an alternate reading position and model of masculinity that resists hegemonic masculinity by including ‘feminine’ values in its version of masculinity.

The next section on *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* exemplifies the unsettling nature of masculine narratives of imperial domination, and shows the many different ways in which discourses of friendship in public school fiction intersect with those of masculinity and sexuality. A close reading of the text, concentrating on the friendship between two main focalising characters, will highlight the way in which the expectations of readers are subverted. Competing discourses in the narrative give rise to this textual subversion and are related to contradictions and irruptions around the discourses of masculinity and sexuality.

*The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*

Oh! The happiness of that precious quarter of an hour, when the veil that has divided two faithful friends is suddenly dashed aside, and they rush one to the other, calling themselves every imaginable bad name in the dictionary, insisting to the verge of quarrelling that it was all their fault, and no fault at all of the other, far too rapturous to talk ordinary common sense and far too forgetful of everything to remember that they are saying the same thing over and over again every few minutes.\(^\text{114}\)

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\(^{113}\) Claudia Nelson, Ibid., p.88.

The reunion described in this quotation from Talbot Baines Reed’s *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* (1887) seems more like the resolution of a lovers’ quarrel than the termination of a misunderstanding between schoolboys. A reader in the 1880s would have been familiar with the figure of the independent, self-reliant hero, but the relations between the two boys in this story indicate a contradiction of the monolithic view of masculinity.

*The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* was first published in 1881–82 by the Religious Tract Society (of which Reed was a contributing member) as a serial in *The Boy’s Own Paper*. The Religious Tract Society set out to publish stories with a moral message and many of their publications were presented as school prizes. The Religious Tract Society published *St Dominic’s* in book form in 1887. Its popularity was so profound that it remained in print until 1948 and was reissued in 1951 and 1971. It was also made into a film in 1921.\(^\text{115}\)

The friendship between the fifth-formers Horace (Wray) Wraysford and Oliver (Noll) Greenfield, is one of several interconnecting narrative strands in *St Dominic’s*. The two boys – in the fifth form at St Dominic’s – are seniors at the school and provide leadership to the younger boys. Throughout the novel, Wraysford is constructed as the boy with the more desirable qualities of the two, yet his friendship with Greenfield (who is shown to be most in need of moral ‘improvement’) is crucial to him. Each has something to learn from the other. We learn of the importance of their relationship in a revelation in the last chapter, ‘Good-bye to St Dominic’s’. Wraysford and Greenfield, now Old Boys, return to the school for the county cricket match. Wraysford and Greenfield are described as ‘the lions of the day’ (author’s emphasis). Greenfield, we are told, ‘rowed in the boat of his Varsity the last year he was at Cambridge, and since then has been called to the bar, and no one knows what else. People say Oliver Greenfield is a rising man; if so we may hear of him again.’ Wraysford has also attained hero status. He is ‘a fellow of his college, and a “coach” for industrious
undergraduates’ and is thought by the junior boys at St Dominic’s to be “more learned and formidable a person than the old Doctor [the headmaster] himself”.'\textsuperscript{116} That the two friends should both be described as ‘lions’ by the end of the narrative emphasises that this text is a tale of moral growth. The boys ‘grow’ as various events in the narrative lead to the resolution of their quarrel. In turn, an exemplary schoolboy character is created, combining the qualities of the two boys who each overcome weaknesses to exemplify the implied author’s ideal schoolboy: someone with lion-like power, strength and domination. By examining the friendship and quarrel and the focalisation and subject positions available to the implied reader, we can understand the ideologies promoted.

Through Wraysford’s and Greenfield’s friendship, their falling out and subsequent reunion, the author is able deploy a moral message. The episode that triggers their quarrel is highly significant. Wraysford and Greenfield, together with sixth former Loman, are rivalling for the Nightingale Scholarship. In chapter eight, ‘A Quarrel and A Cricket Match’, Greenfield and Loman argue, causing Loman to punch Greenfield in the face. Greenfield does not respond with a fight, as expected. Instead, he ignores the incident:

Oliver coolly put his hands back in his pocket, and walking up to Loman said, quietly:

‘Hadn’t you better go?’

Loman stared at him in astonishment. He had at least expected to be knocked down, and this behaviour was quite incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{117}

The narrator then sets out some possible positions for the implied reader:

The blow had been a cowardly one, and certainly unmerited, and by all schoolboy tradition one fairly demanding a return. Could it be possible their man was lacking in courage? … When it was a Sixth Form fellow – a good


\textsuperscript{116} Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid., pp.290-291.

\textsuperscript{117} Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid; p.55.
match in every respect, as well as a rival – the Fifth were offended at their man for drawing back as he had done.118

Using an interrogative narrative tone that poses questions in a confidential manner, the narrator intervenes to address the reader directly:

The reader will no doubt have already decided in his own mind whether Oliver Greenfield did rightly or wrong in putting his hands into his pockets instead of using them to knock down Loman. It certainly did not seem to have done him much good at the time. He had lost the esteem of his comrades, he had lost the very temper he had been trying to keep – twenty times since the event – and no one gave him credit for anything but ‘the better part of valour’ in the whole affair.

Clearly the narrator is offering the implied reader a choice: was Oliver Greenfield ‘right’ to refuse to fight Loman, or was the refusal ‘unmanly’? Wraysford’s focalisation of the incident guides the reader to a conclusion:

Wraysford always backed his friend up, whether others thought him right or wrong. … And yet that one effort of self-restraint was not altogether an unmanly act. At least, so thought Wraysford that night, as he lay meditating on his friend’s troubles, and found himself liking him none the less for this latest singular piece of eccentricity.119

This piece of narration reveals an ambivalent stance on Greenfield’s restraint over the incident. Wraysford’s focalisation suggests sympathy with Greenfield. He mulls over ‘his friend’s troubles’, and decides that it is only a ‘piece of eccentricity’. Yet the narrator, while calling Greenfield’s actions ‘self-restraint’, casts doubt on the issue by saying that it ‘was not altogether an unmanly act’. Manliness, for this narrative, is ambiguous.

Greenfield’s refusal to fight is the first of a number of situations that cause Wraysford to reassess their friendship – culminating in the suspicion that

118 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s, Ibid: p.55.
119 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s, Ibid: p.64-5.
Greenfield stole the exam paper in order to win the Nightingale scholarship. Greenfield becomes an outcast and is ‘sent to Coventry’ (a common trope in public school fiction) – by all his peers. Greenfield is innocent, and exhibits fortitude in the face of his excommunication. The narrator gives the implied reader a hint of Greenfield’s innocence in the following exchange:

I wonder, Wray, if it’s possible we are wrong about that fellow?
Wraysford says nothing.
‘He doesn’t act like a guilty person. Just fancy, Wray’ – and here Tony pulls up short, in a state of perturbation – ‘just fancy if you and I and the rest have been making fools of ourselves all the term!’ Ah, my Fifth Form heroes, just fancy!120

The narrator’s remarks here are ironic – implying that heroes are not beyond making misjudgements of character. Wraysford is constructed throughout the novel as the approved ‘manly’ character. Even in spite of doubting his friend, he is a stereotypical nineteenth century hero: handsome, self-reliant, athletic and clever. His attitude to studying for the all-important scholarship exam is one of cool detachment – in direct contrast to Greenfield who is over-anxious. When the two friends decide to take a break from revision for the scholarship, it is through Wraysford that Greenfield’s shortcomings are focalised:

Of course it was very ridiculous of him to worry himself into such a state. Wraysford, though by no means in high spirits, kept his head a good deal better, and tried to enjoy his walk and forget about books.121

Wraysford’s stated qualities serve to highlight the deficiencies of his friend. Early in the narrative, Wraysford is described:

That handsome, jovial-looking boy of sixteen who is sitting there astride of a chair, in the middle of the floor, biting the end of a quill pen, is the redoubtable Horace Wraysford, the gentleman, it will be remembered, who

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120 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid; p.221.
121 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid; p.162.
is in want of a fag. Wraysford is one of the best ‘all-round mean’ in the Fifth, or indeed in the school. He is certain to win the mile race and the ‘hurdles’ at the Athletic Sports, and is not at all unlikely to carry off the Nightingale Scholarship next autumn.\textsuperscript{122}

The terms ‘handsome’ and ‘jovial-looking’ are connected by a cultural referential system to ideals of ‘manliness’. Each of these signifies Wraysford’s appearance. ‘Sitting there astride of a chair’ and ‘certain to win the mile race … and not at all unlikely to carry off the Nightingale Scholarship’ semiotically encode value, admiration confidence and domination.

Greenfield, on the other hand, Wraysford’s ‘friend and rival’, (who is elsewhere in the narrative noted as a ‘hardened villain’), is initially described as:

Standing there against a wall, with his head resting on a map of Greece. He does not strike one as nearly so brilliant a fellow as his friend. He is quieter and more lazy, and more solemn. Some say he has a temper, and others that he is selfish; and generally he is not the most popular boy in St Dominic’s.\textsuperscript{123}

As if to underscore Greenfield’s unpopularity, the narrator elaborates this point for the reader:

He was a long way from being the most popular. He never took any pains to win the good opinion of his fellows.

The narrator then unequivocally guides the reader:

Boys don’t like this. It irritates them to see their praise or blame made little of.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid; p.9.
\textsuperscript{123} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid; p.9.
\textsuperscript{124} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid; p.173.
The authoritative narrator makes claims about ‘all boys’ here, and at the same time suggests that he knows and sympathises with them. In other words the narrator is siding with his readers against an adult viewpoint.

With Wraysford, who appears so self-reliant and independent, there are no domestic traumas or ‘problems’ in his parental background. Conversely, Greenfield has the disadvantage of the ‘baggage’ of a home life that intrudes into his boarding school life – what Anthony Powell’s schoolboy narrator in *A Dance to the Music of Time* calls ‘the disturbing impact of home-life in school surroundings’. Greenfield’s mother, a ‘trembling’ widow, and his sister intrude into the narrative. The fact that Greenfield is at the school at all is because of family tragedy and misfortune. With no father, only a surrogate uncle, Greenfield is further disadvantaged in comparison to the uncomplicated background of his friend:

Oliver and Stephen were Mrs Greenfield’s only two sons. Their father had died twelve years ago, when Stephen was a baby, and the two boys had been left in charge of an uncle, who had carefully watched over their education, and persuaded his sister to allow her elder boy to go to a public school. Mrs Greenfield had consented, with many tremblings.

Mrs Greenfield writes letters to her son, in which his domestic home life stands in sharp relief to the perceived autonomy of boarding school life:

It was an ordinary, kind, motherly epistle, such as thousands of schoolboys get every week of the school year. All about home, and what is going on, how the dogs are, where sister Mary has been to, how the boiler burst last week, which apple-tree bore most, and so on; every scrap of news that could be scraped up from the four winds of heaven was in that letter.

And to the two brothers, far away, and lonely even among their schoolfellows, it came like a breath of fresh air that morning.

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126 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid., p.14.
When Greenfield’s younger brother Stephen is sent to join him at school, his mother sees him off at the station with the following humiliating ‘final benediction ringing in his ears’:

‘Good-bye, my boy; God bless you! And don’t forget to tell the housekeeper about airing your flannel vests.’

As well as having the responsibility of his younger brother, Greenfield’s life is described both inside and outside the school, where his anxious mother makes pronouncements on his activities. When Greenfield and Wraysford plan a holiday-time camping expedition, there are no stated restrictions for Wraysford, but Greenfield has to consult his mother, who voices her doubts about the scheme:

Mrs Greenfield didn’t half like the idea, and became pathetic on the subject of ague and rheumatic fever.

Women are marginalised in this text and only serve to highlight the ‘manliness’ of the schoolboys: a grandmother visits and is represented as bossy; Mrs Greenfield is portrayed as pathetic because she is over-anxious about her son’s health. (Working class men are also derided – ‘old Jeff’ at the local pub is described as ‘one of the sniveling order’.) Foucault claims that it was the ‘bourgeois’ or ‘aristocratic’ family that was ‘the first to be alerted to the potential pathology of sex’ and ‘there emerged the “nervous” woman, the woman afflicted with “vapors” and that it was in this particular class of nineteenth century family that “the hysterization of woman found its anchor point”.

Indeed, effeminacy is humiliating, as detailed in an incident where a spoof newspaper details the sixth form debating society:

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128 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid; p.12.
129 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid; p.133.
130 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid., p.43.
131 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Ibid., p.121.
Then, too, they oiled their hair. No previous Sixth had ever been guilty of this effeminacy, or of wearing lavender kid gloves on Sundays.\textsuperscript{132}

This is followed by an extract from Stephen’s, responding to a joke played on him when he first entered St Dominic’s. He had been set an ‘examination’ by some older boys with questions that did not make sense, such as ‘Question 2. History. Whose daughter was Stephen the Second, and why was he (sic) nicknamed the “Green”?’ The answer Stephen gave to ‘Question 6. What is a minus’ was embellished and reproduced on the notice board as:

‘Minus’ is derived from two English words, ‘my’, meaning my, and ‘nus’, which is the London way of pronouncing, ‘nurse’. My nurse is a dear creature; I love her still. … How I would like to hug her! She sewed the strings of my little flannel vest on in front just before I came here because she knew I couldn’t tie them behind by myself.

This is one of the very few references to women – and the cause of acute embarrassment for Stephen:

Poor boy! The laughter which greeted this simple exclamation was enough to finish up any one, and, with a bursting heart, and a face crimson with confusion, he struggled out of the crowd and ran as fast as his legs would take him to his own class-room.\textsuperscript{133}

There are other references to blushing in the text. These references signify something ambiguous – blushing is more commonly ascribed to girls, but it also signals guilt or other emotions associated with close friendship:

Those who were watching this incident noticed a sudden flush on Oliver’s cheek as he stared for an instant at his late friend.\textsuperscript{134} Wraysford coloured as he caught sight of his old ally, and looked another way. Oliver, more composed, kept his eyes fixed straight, ahead, and

\textsuperscript{132} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid., p.48.
\textsuperscript{133} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid., p.49.
\textsuperscript{134} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid; p.174.
appeared to be completely unconscious of the presence of anyone but
Stephen, who hung on to his arm, snorting and fuming and inwardly raging
like a young tiger held in by the chain from his prey.\textsuperscript{135}

This quotation, with its symbolism of wild animals and suggestion of constraint,
is consonant with what Herbert Sussman calls the ‘acute male anxieties’ around
male identity. In his study of the social construction of Victorian manliness in
\textit{Victorian Masculinities: Manhood, masculine poetics in early Victorian literature
and art}, Sussman suggests the homoerotic is

\begin{quote}
one among many psychological and social forces that troubled Victorian
manhood, among them industrialization, the development of bourgeois
hegemony, class conflict, the feminization of culture.\textsuperscript{136}
\end{quote}

Sussman asserts that the early Victorians saw masculinity as ‘an innate,
distinctively male energy that, in contrast to Freud, they did not represent as
necessarily sexualized’ – it was ‘an inchoate force that could be expressed in a
variety of ways, only one of which is sexual’.\textsuperscript{137} Sussman locates the point of
problematisation of manhood in the development of what Foucault terms
‘practices of the self’ where internal, natural energies are managed or regulated.
Sussman goes on to claim that these ‘technologies of the self’ were linked to the
technologies of Victorian industrial Britain that were ‘obsessed with harnessing
the natural energy of water and fire’.\textsuperscript{138} The quotation from \textit{St Dominic’s}, where
Stephen is hanging on to Oliver’s arm and ‘inwardly raging’,\textsuperscript{139} exemplifies the
idea of control of male energy.

When the two boys eventually make up, the narrator draws the reader into the
intimacy of the close friendship:

\textsuperscript{135} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, Ibid; p.204.
\textsuperscript{136} Herbert Sussman, \textit{Victorian Masculinities}, Ibid., p.10.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{138} Herbert Sussman, \textit{Victorian Masculinities}, Ibid., p.11.
\textsuperscript{139} Talbot Baines Reed, \textit{The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s}, p.204.
Five minutes later Oliver, who had retired alone, as usual, to his study, … caught the sudden sound of an old familiar footstep outside his door, which sent the blood to his cheeks with strange emotion.

‘Noll, old man,’ was all he could say, as their eyes met, ‘the youngster’s right – I am a beast!’

Aligning himself with the reader, the authoritative statement ‘it is no business of ours to pry’ acts as a distancing strategy to draws attention away from the reader but also to highlight the closeness of their relationship:

It is no business of ours to pry into that happy study for the next quarter of an hour. If we did the reader would very likely be disappointed, or perhaps wearied, or perhaps convinced that these two were as great fools in the manner of their making up as they had been in the manner of their falling out.

The resolution of the quarrel in *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s* unsettles the imperial discourse of masculinity because the narrator refuses to disapprove of Oliver and Wraysford’s blushing toward each other. By stating ‘it is no business of ours’ the reader is positioned to accept moments of tenderness as private matters and therefore not open to censorship.

The next section explores the tension between innocence and experience, and sensuality and sexuality. These tensions are implicit in *St Dominic’s* but both implicit and explicit in Alec Waugh’s *The Loom of Youth*.

**Unravelling The Loom of Youth**

Alec Waugh’s *The Loom of Youth* (1917) was published a year after Benson’s novel, (and was reprinted eight times between 1917 and 1918) – making it an interwar public school novel; and like *David Blaize* it is critical of the public schools. *The Loom of Youth* also shares this critical stance with Rudyard Kipling’s

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140 Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic’s*, Ibid: p.227.
Stalky & Co. (published in 1899) and the topic of the next chapter), even though it specifically reacts against that text. Although The Loom of Youth was published after Stalky & Co., and therefore not chronologically placed, I have included it in this section on the homoerotic texts because gender and sexuality are frankly treated in these novels.

David Buchbinder in Masculinities and Identities believes that in order to understand the gender dynamics of a text requires us ‘to read against the grain, as it were, to look between the lines of the preferred or obvious meaning of the texts’. Stephens uses the term ‘symbolic thickness’ to describe the way that meaning is constructed from texts. The Loom of Youth, for example, can be read against the grain in terms of its criticism of the public schools and the ideals of class and Empire in relation to sexuality. Within the discourses of sexuality are contradictions and gaps.

Alec Waugh wrote The Loom of Youth when he was just seventeen, which immediately sets it apart from the school stories already published. It was hailed as an extraordinary achievement, praised by H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett. Waugh wrote his book almost immediately after leaving school, about a fictional but easily recognisable public school, and it is addressed to adults as well as children. In his preface to the book, he likens his schooldays to ‘a long and intense love affair’ and dedicates the novel in terms of ‘a love letter to Sherborne’. Contained in this expression of love for his school are some of the contradictions brought out in the novel. In the text he is critical of sentimentality; through the character Gordon, he seeks to give a more realistic version of school life. Mr Ainslie, an adult visitor to the school, tells Gordon:

old public school men shroud their school life in a mist of sentiment; so they forget what they really did.
As the title suggests, *The Loom of Youth* is an interweaving of ideas, rather than a school story written on one plane of feeling. Two of the strands are its discourses on sexuality and athleticism, and their connections.

Isabel Quigly suggests that *The Loom of Youth* was ‘probably the most disapproved school story of them all’\(^\text{146}\) because of its frank treatment of homosexuality. She says that it was:

> the hint of homosexuality (not much more than a hint, but suggesting its commonness and pervasiveness) that mainly shocked readers. No other school story had been so explicit about it.\(^\text{147}\)

Waugh explained what all the fuss was about in the preface to the 1954 edition: ‘before World War 1 Britain’s imperial destiny was never questioned, and the Public School system was held sacrosanct’.\(^\text{148}\) So Waugh actively set out to interrogate the public school system. *The Loom of Youth* is written in a documentary realist style and openly borrows from Arnold Lunn’s *The Harrovians* (1913). Claudia Nelson believes that *The Loom of Youth* caused such a sensation because ‘its realism could not be denied (Waugh had been a schoolboy a scant two years before publishing his *roman a clef*) and because readers therefore had to consider seriously its accusation that in investing all in athleticism, the modern school system inevitably creates precisely the opposite of the stated ideal’.\(^\text{149}\)

Jeffrey Richards says that Waugh rebelled against his beloved Sherborne School partly because of his hatred of conformity and partly to ‘expose the misconceptions about the public schools, due to guilt and resentment over the school's attitude to sex and love’.\(^\text{150}\) (Waugh’s father was asked to remove his son due to a homosexual scandal.)

Waugh used techniques in the writing that had not previously been attempted in boys’ fiction – such as interior monologues that constructed the feelings of an

\(^{147}\) Isabel Quigly, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.209.
adolescent, and it incorporated incidents of both homosexuality and heterosexuality. He tells us that in July 1917, two months after the book’s publication:

Half the housemasters in the country found their desks littered with letters from anxious parents demanding an assurance that their Bobbie was not subject to the temptations described in this alarming book. In self-defense the schoolmasters hit back and by mid-November the book had become the centre of violent controversy. In many schools the book was banned and several boys were caned for reading it.\(^{151}\)

While many critics were hostile, Thomas Seccombe wrote in one preface to the novel that he felt *The Loom of Youth* was a valuable piece of realistic contemporary writing:

> I thought with a reminiscent shudder of *Stalky & Co.*, the ignominy of Farrar and the calculated falsity of Talbot Baines Reed.\(^{152}\)

In this respect these novels were part of a growing literature of criticism that grew up around the First World War and continued into the 1930s. Edward C. Mack draws attention to the number of writers of public school novels – the ‘sensitive extroverts’ – who provided what he calls a ‘silent protest’ against materialism and the crushing of individuality of the times’. \(^{153}\) P. W. Musgrave asserts that Waugh’s book caught a tide of reform: ‘after three years of war there was a market for doubts about the imperial assumptions of the public schools.’\(^{154}\) In addition to criticising athleticism, Waugh takes the public school system to task for its stance on adolescent sexuality, which ultimately provoked moral outrage.

\(^{151}\) Alec Waugh, Preface to *The Loom of Youth*, p.11.
\(^{152}\) Cited in J. Richards *Happiest Days*, p.232.
Waugh suggests that his novel’s acceptance and publication by Grant Richards in July 1917 coincided with the popularity of a number of novel and poetry written during the war:

As always in war-time there was a demand for books and there was that summer a dearth of novels. A spirit of challenge and criticism was in the air … writing in a critical vein. The war was still bogged down and public opinion attributed allied failings in the field to mismanagement in high places.155

Waugh was impressed by Lunn’s novel, The Harrovians. Gordon, the protagonist in The Loom of Youth refers favourably to Lunn’s novel, commenting that ‘this book, as no other has done, photographs the life of a public school boy stripped of all sentiment, crude and raw, and is, of its kind, the finest school story written ... it is true to life in every detail.156

Among the favourable reviews of The Loom of Youth in Bystander 21 August 1917 was a comparison between Waugh’s book and Lunn’s, claiming that Lunn had been the person who had ‘started the modern idea that ‘the fetish of games and athletics is ruining our public schools’.

At the 1986 exhibition ‘The World of Public School Fiction 1857–1920’ at St Paul’s School in London, The Loom of Youth was placed in the war novels category alongside Kipling’s Stalky & Co. and Gunby Hadath’s Sheepy Wilson, among others. Kipling’s novel was placed in this category because of his vision of public schoolboys and their future roles as leaders at the frontiers of British Imperial projects. Waugh, however, had a different message about the public schools, and he disassociated himself from one of Kipling’s model schoolboys – ‘The Brushwood Boy’ (1895). As he explains in the preface:

155 Alec Waugh, Preface to The Loom of Youth, p.10.
156 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, Ibid., p.81.
I was the victim of a system which encouraged the myth of The Brushwood Boy and created a conspiracy of silence to conceal the reality of the public school boy’s life… I was impelled by a need to explain and justify myself.\(^{157}\)

His opinion is that ‘I knew that the public school boy was not like that’.\(^{158}\) So what was ‘The Brushwood Boy’ all about and why did Waugh react so strongly against it? ‘The Brushwood Boy’ is one of Kipling’s longer short stories published in 1895 as part of the collection The Day’s Work. The story is focalised through the protagonist, George Cottar. We are first introduced to Cottar when he is aged three, when he ‘sat up in his crib and screamed at the top of his voice, his fists clenched and his eyes full of terror’.\(^{159}\) George’s bad dreams dominate the story, as do unsettling premonitions. In the story, the dreams link a girl he met when he was six with a woman called Miriam whom he meets on his return from service in India. But it is his character, formed and informed by public school life, to which Waugh takes exception. Rejecting home, Cottar’s masculine world at public school is all-important:

Home was a far-away country, full of ponies and fishing, and shooting … but school was his real world, where things of vital importance happened, and crises arose that must be dealt with promptly and quietly.\(^{160}\)

Here ‘home’ is connected with childhood pursuits and recreation, and ‘the real world’ with the need for leadership qualities. It was also a place of training for action, rather than introspection:

The school was not encouraged to dwell on its emotions, but rather to keep in hard condition, to avoid false quantities, and to enter the army direct.\(^{161}\)

\(^{158}\) Alec Waugh, The Early Years of Alec Waugh, Ibid., p.49.
Throughout the story, dreams are the only place where we are given an insight into Cottar’s inner life. His dreams encompass motifs connected to the feminine rather than the masculine – such as the sea, lilies and lily-pads, the ‘dark purple downs’ and ‘the House of the Sick Thing, a pin-point in the distance to the left; stamped through the Railway Waiting room where the roses lay on the spread breakfast-tables’.\textsuperscript{162} In the army, Cottar is commissioned as a young subaltern in India, where he is popular among the men in his charge. Kipling draws parallels with Cottar’s leadership skills at public school and the army:

\begin{quote}
An adjutant’s position does not differ materially from the head of the school, and Cottar stood in the same relation to the colonel as he had to his old Head in England.\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

Feminine qualities are denied and rejected. We are told that ‘he did not care to have his tennis spoiled by petticoats in the court’.\textsuperscript{164} In this masculine world, where the regiment’s obedience to authority is a source of pride, Cottar is promoted to Major, and his regiment goes from strength to strength. His leadership skills are celebrated and aligned with positions of responsibility at public school:

\begin{quote}
Cottar nearly wept with joy as the campaign went forward. They were fit – physically fit beyond the other troops, they were good children in camp, wet or dry, fed or unfed; and they followed their officers with the quick suppleness and trained obedience of a first-class football fifteen.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

For Waugh, ‘The Brushwood Boy’ represents a disciplined public school boy and soldier, who demands obedience of his men, and where home and the feminine play no part and is despised and vilified.

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{162} Rudyard Kipling, ‘The Brushwood Boy’, Ibid., pp361-406.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Rudyard Kipling, ‘The Brushwood Boy’, Ibid; p.378.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Rudyard Kipling, ‘The Brushwood Boy’, Ibid; p.373.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Rudyard Kipling, ‘The Brushwood Boy’, Ibid; p.382.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
We do not know how Waugh viewed Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.* but whatever their differences, each writer had an important goal in common: that of the need to criticise the public schools for their dominant ethos of athleticism. Kipling avoided explicitly mentioning it in *Stalky & Co.* and by this omission of an important trope in school stories, made a statement about its importance to his framework of ideas for *Stalky & Co.* But as my chapter on that text explains, Kipling’s heroes are anti-authoritarian, and in the case of the character Stalky, cunning, bookish and certainly not part of the games-playing set.

Although critical of certain aspects of their pedagogical approaches, Waugh and Benson both exhibited and avowed a deep love and respect for their respective public schools. Their novels, like Kipling’s *Stalky & Co.*, and Harold Lunn’s *The Harrovians*, clearly point to urgent reform rather than abolition of the system. Both Waugh and Benson wanted to depict the public school as they experienced it. Like Kipling, who claims to have loved his schooldays, Alec Waugh also makes it clear that he enjoyed himself at Sherborne. He says: ‘It is in such a mood that a man at the end of a long and intense love affair writes … that is what *The Loom of Youth* was – a love letter to Sherborne.’\(^{166}\) In his autobiography, *The Early Years of Alec Waugh*, he writes:

> I was the kind of boy who gets the most out of a public school. I loved cricket and football and was reasonably good at them. I was in the first XV and my last summer headed the batting averages. My father had lit in me a love of poetry and an interest in history and the classics. More often than not I went into the class-room looking forward to the hour that lay ahead. I enjoyed the whole competitive drama of school life – the cups and caps and form promotions.\(^{167}\)

Waugh and Benson were part of the first twentieth century wave of realism. They felt it important to broach the subject of homosexuality that had been largely ignored in the mainstream public school novel. These two writers, in raising awareness of romantic attachments in the public school, at the same time blur the

\(^{166}\) Alec Waugh, *The Early Years*, Ibid., p81.

boundaries of sexuality and sensuality. Waugh wrote the novel in what he terms ‘white heat’ – in six and a half months, just after leaving Sherborne School where he had been a student for four years. At the time of writing the novel Waugh was at Officer Training Camp where, he tells us, he ‘kept comparing my present life with that which I had been leading ... at Sherborne, as a schoolboy’. He tells us that:

In the evenings on my way to night operations, passing Berkhamstead School and looking at the lighted windows, I would think ‘At Sherborne now they are sitting round the games study fire waiting for the bell to ring for hall.’ Day by day, hour by hour, I pictured myself back at school.

Nostalgia for his old school and a wish to ‘expose’ hypocrisy – particularly with reference to attitudes towards homosexuality – galvanised his writing of the novel. In later life, Waugh was regarded as an authority on the public schools, producing the non-fiction text Public School Life. But the storm of the controversy over The Loom of Youth led his father (publisher Arthur Waugh) to withdraw Alec’s younger brother Evelyn from the school. In the 1929 edition of The Loom of Youth, Alec Waugh explained:

I regret certain misunderstandings and estrangements. I regret the pain it brought to people in whose debt I stand. And had I the rewriting of it, there are one or two unbalanced and exaggerated ‘asides’ that I should modify. At the same time it is a faithful narrative.

Jeffrey Richards notes that although Waugh claims to have been happy at school, he was in fact asked to leave:

In 1915 he was house captain, a prefect, top batsman in the eleven and had just won the English verse prize when a homosexual scandal broke (‘a number of names were involved and a chapter that had been long closed

\[168\] Alec Waugh, Introduction to The Loom of Youth, Ibid., p.9.
\[169\] Alec Waugh, Preface to The Loom of Youth, p.9
\[170\] Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, Ibid p9
was opened’). The headmaster did not expel him but suggested that his father remove him at the end of term.\textsuperscript{171}

If Kipling’s ‘Brushwood Boy’ was the hero Waugh sought to counter, what was it about Lunn’s that he sought to emulate? Lunn’s hero, Peter, is (unusually for this genre) an orphan, and is sent to boarding school by his aunt and uncle. At this early stage of the novel it is very much like the mid-nineteenth century novel in that there was often a warning by the boy’s father of what would happen at boarding school. In this case Peter’s uncle writes to him to let him know what to expect:

\begin{quote}
On your mimic stage you are rehearsing the more serious drama of life. Even the slight hardships incidental to your lot have their value. They will make a man of you.\textsuperscript{172}
\end{quote}

The narrator gives us an insight into the constructed mind of a developing adolescent:

\begin{quote}
Peter was mildly knocked about, but he bore his occasional buffetings with the philosophy of the young. His favorite school stories were beginning to lose their charm, but he still dwelt in an unshattered world of schoolboy romance.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

In Lunn’s novel, adults are seen ironically. The narrator explains that Peter’s ‘uncle was just one of those cheerful folk who go through their own schooldays blind to the significance of everything save their own immediate circle’.\textsuperscript{174}

The novel uncovers and criticises issues such as games-playing, the deficiencies of masters and the subject of sex. One incident that is of interest is a veiled reference to a sexual relationship:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{171} Jeffrey Richards, \textit{Happiest days}, Ibid., p.230.
\textsuperscript{172} Arnold Lunn, \textit{The Harrovians}, Methuen, London, first published 1913, p.76.
\textsuperscript{173} Arnold Lunn, \textit{The Harrovians}, \textit{Ibid}; p. 77.
\end{flushright}
A stranger splendid had taken a fancy to Peter and borne him away to the magic country above the snowline...And the relations of this mountaineer friend to the boy had proved that there is a more natural and more human link between manhood and youth than that which is stereotyped by school traditions.\textsuperscript{175}

This incident is intriguing because of what is \textit{not} said. There is no further reference to the ‘stranger splendid’. The reader assumes that Peter and his adult mountaineer friend have a short-term sexual encounter or relationship, and this is contrasted to schoolboy peer relationships. The didactic narrator, in stating that ‘there is a more natural … link’ draws attention to sexuality discourses in the public school system. Jeffrey Weeks asserts that there was a sharpened sense of hostility towards homosexuality, both in Britain in Europe, resulting from alterations to the Criminal Law Amendment Act that made homosexual acts illegal – public and private. The moral purity campaigns of the 1880s led to what Jeffrey Weeks calls ‘earnest moralising’ in the public schools. Headmasters (such as Reverend J. M. Wilson of Clifton) proclaimed that ‘the sins of the flesh’ were a potential cause of imperial decay and a block to civilisation:

\begin{quote}
Strengthen your will by practice; subdue your flesh by hard work and hard living; by temperance; by avoiding all luxury and effeminacy, and all temptation.\textsuperscript{176}
\end{quote}

In \textit{Boys Together} John Chandos contends that schoolmasters and preachers became obsessed with purity – the headmaster of Harrow even order that all boys’ pockets be sewn up. Chandos notes that the ‘immorality’ drives and purity campaigns targeted the teachers as well as the boys. Moral purges and what Chandos calls a ‘cycle of suspicion’ reached fever pitch and he quotes a situation at Rossall where no master was allowed to entertain a boy alone in his room for

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{174} Arnold Lunn, \textit{The Harrovians}, \textit{Ibid}; p.77.
\end{flushright}
more than ten minutes, nor should a boy be in a room with a master with the door shut.\textsuperscript{177}

Foucault, in seeking to understand how power is both productive as well as regulatory, argues that particular regimes of knowledge produce intimate forms of power. He argues that the historical interrogation of objects that are often designated as natural, are in fact constructed through particular genealogies and systems of knowledge. Sexuality, along with ‘madness’, ‘medicine’ and ‘punishment’, is one such area. As Frank Mort puts it, Foucault’s paradigm ‘seeks to understand how power is both regulatory and productive; productive of knowledges and institutions and of bodies, pleasures and desires’.\textsuperscript{178} Mort’s text \textit{Dangerous Sexualities}, with its emphasis on the historical construction of masculinity, suggests that sexuality is historically specific and culturally variable. He seeks to explain the relation between systems of medical knowledge and power and to look at the way medical (and other) discourses have produced a regime of sex that targets ‘sensitive or dangerous groups’ and generates forms of resistance.\textsuperscript{179} Using this analysis Mort seems to see the present as historical and as the ‘product of a particular combination of structural forces’.\textsuperscript{180}

In \textit{Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a genealogy of a discourse on male sexualities}, Ed Cohen takes as a starting point what he calls ‘the historical ‘fiction’” outlined by Foucault in \textit{The History of Sexuality}. Cohen says that Foucault describes the way that the eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeoisie articulated its own self definition within a complex set of practices, institutions, and discourses through which it attached itself to its own (‘proper’) sexuality. In contrast to the aristocracy where ‘blood ties’ ensured the transfer of property and position, Foucault argues that the middle-class:


\textsuperscript{178} Frank Mort, \textit{Dangerous Sexualities}, Ibid., p.6.

\textsuperscript{179} Frank Mort, \textit{Dangerous Sexualities}, Ibid., p.2.

\textsuperscript{180} Frank Mort, \textit{Dangerous Sexualities}, Ibid., p.3.
must be seen rather as being occupied, from the mid-eighteenth century on, with creating its own sexuality and forming a specific body based on it, a ‘class’ body with its health, hygiene, descent and race.181

The Loom of Youth fits into this category. It deals with the public school system and incorporates the discourses of sexuality of that particular class and hence instantiates, in Foucault’s terms, a ‘class’ body.

The Loom of Youth is divided into four sections. Book One traces the first lonely and tentative steps taken by Gordon Carruthers to find his feet as a new boy at Fernhurst School. He is anxious to ‘fit in’ – eventually achieving popularity among his peers by being beaten by a master for his behaviour in class. He also learns to appreciate sport and by the end of the first year he wins his cricket cap. Book Two traces his enthusiasm for and prowess at sport at the expense of academic achievement, and his English teacher engenders in him a love for poetry. But at this juncture in time he also becomes disillusioned with the public school system and his school career follows in the same path as Peter, the protagonist of The Harrovians, in that both boys begin questioning the system.

Like The Harrovians, The Loom of Youth is self-reflexive – drawing attention to school stories and their constructed nature. And with its many intertextual references to Sheridan, the Bible, Heine and Romantic poets such as Swinburne, The Loom of Youth makes subversive points about accepted notions of sexuality. Tester (an older boy with whom Gordon shares a study) reads ‘Atalanta’ to Gordon (as does Maddox to David in David Blaize). Tester explains that Swinburne was:

the great pagan who was sick of the sham and pretence of his day, and cried for the glories of Rome.182

182 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, Ibid., p.133.
In his introduction to *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*, Christopher Parker discusses the reflection of ‘social anxieties’ around masculinities in the Victorian novel. He mentions that Alfred Austin’s attack on Tennyson, Swinburne and Trollope was ‘an attack on the feminization of literature’:

> If we were to sum up the characteristics of Mr Tennyson’s compositions in a single word, the word we should employ would be ‘feminine’.

By raising Swinburne to heroic status, Tester subversively attacks the popular idea that the Romantic poets are ‘feminine’ – and therefore threatening to a dominant notion of masculinity. The use of the words and phrases like ‘sick of’, ‘sham’ and ‘pretence’ refer to the refusal of Victorian public discourses around sexuality to acknowledge close male friendships. Waugh, by referring to Victorian poets and Victorian ideas of sexuality in relation to contemporary ones, thus critiques those of his own era by inferring that attitudes have not changed. This is an example of Stephens’s suggestion that ‘intertextuality, by making relationships between different cultures and different periods, can act as a critique of current social values’.

> Intertextuality frequently takes the form of parody or travesty of a pre-text, and its purpose often seems to be an iconoclastic gesture attempting to subvert what is perceived as a dominant discourse.

In Book Three, Gordon’s third year at Fernhurst, Mr Ferrers influences Gordon with ideas of rebellion and reform – for example, he favours the modern novel and despises Kipling. Book Four opens in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War. It is the final cricket match of Gordon’s career, and he amiably distinguishes himself – a common trope of public school fiction. True to form, Gordon is promoted to prefect and house captain but has a fierce argument with a

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master called Buller (The Bull) about athletics, where he reveals his thoughts about athleticism:

shorn of its glamour … It led nowhither. He wondered if boys, as soon as they left school, realised of what little real proficiency at rugger was as training for the more serious issues of life; if they understood how trivial it was, when it ceased to culminate in the glory of a gold tasselled cap.\(^{185}\)

The two areas of Gordon’s rebellion – his disapproval of dominant views on sexuality and his disenchantment with athleticism are related. Sexuality – in particular homosexuality – is a trope that is sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit. Early in the novel there are veiled hints of homosexuality (what Gordon calls ‘the usual stuff’):

Oh, well, I don’t mind you knowing ... You know what Meredith is, well – I mean – Oh you know, the usual stuff. He wanted me to meet him out for a walk tomorrow. I told him in polite language to go to the ‘devil’.\(^{186}\)

In another episode where homosexual relationships are openly acknowledged, Tester asks Gordon to leave their study because a younger boy ‘[is] coming up for a few minutes’.

After a little Gordon ceased to worry whether such things were right or wrong … One day towards the end of the Easter term, Gordon asked Tester, rather shyly, if he would leave him alone a little. ‘I’ve often cleared out for you, you know’. ‘Of course, that’s quite all right, my dear fellow. Any time you like, I understand!’ Tester smiled as he walked down the passage.\(^{187}\)

This exchange of confidences and admission of an ‘affair’ leads to a situation where such relationships are debated and the narrator moves from a position of wondering whether they are ‘right or wrong’ to an open declaration of what he

\(^{185}\) Quoted in Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days*, Ibid., p.235.

\(^{186}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, Ibid., p.42.

\(^{187}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, p.90.
terms the ‘unfairness’ of the public school system, with its hypocritical stance on the issue.

This key episode is centred around one of the older boys, a ‘blood’ called Jeffries, with whom Gordon has become acquainted. The flustered Jeffries explains that he is ‘in the deuce of a row’. He goes on to say that ‘I’ve got bunked ... Chief’s found out all about me and Fitzroy, and I’ve got to go!’ Gordon comments, ‘I never thought there was really anything in that,’ to which Jeffries replies ruefully ‘Oh, well, there was. I know I’m an awful swine and all that – Oh, it’s pretty damnable; and the Three Cock, too! I believe I should have got my House cap!’ (This is the first time in the text that there is explicit acknowledgement of a homosexual encounter).

Jeffries focalises a torrent of ‘wild anger’ and resentment against the public school system – particularly Fernhurst. He declares to his peers that he came to the school as an ‘innocent’ (a common trope in the genre, according to Dieter Petzold, and one that relates to ‘a Rousseauistic belief in the child’s fundamental innocence’);¹⁸⁸ that he ‘never knew anything’:

Unfair? Yes, that’s the right word; it is unfair. Who made me what I am but Fernhurst? Two years ago I came here as innocent as Caruthers there; never knew anything. Fernhurst taught me everything; Fernhurst made me worship games, and think that they alone mattered, and everything else could go to the deuce. I hear men say about bloods whose lives were an open scandal. ‘Oh, it’s all right, they can play football.’ I thought it was all right too. Fernhurst made me think it was. And now Fernhurst, that has made me what I am, turns round and says, ‘You are not fit to be a member of this great school!’ and I have to go.¹⁸⁹

Jeffries highlights what he sees as a paradox in the public school system – that it is all right to have affairs (particularly if you are a ‘blood’), just don’t get caught. Using the expression ‘who made me what I am’ he attributes blame to the system, and by the repetition of the school’s name, Fernhurst, to the school in particular –

ultimately seeing himself as the victim. In the chapter ‘Romance’, where Gordon has a relationship with a boy called Morcombe, he acknowledges: ‘that was the one unforgiveable sin – to be found out.’

This highlights a tension around homosexual behaviour that I have discussed in David Blaize. But Jeffries’s mention of the link between sport and sexuality relates to a wider discourse in society that was at its zenith in the late nineteenth century. P. W. Musgrave claims that the novel ‘has a tightly argued thesis, focused around the central flaw in school structure namely, athleticism’. He believes that Waugh argues two points from this ‘flaw’. One is the devaluation of intellectual matters and academic work, and the other is about sexuality:

Within the school prestige depends upon success at games so that a group of older, usually anti-intellectual boys are worshipped by the younger ones. In an all-male, adolescent community emotional and sexually-laden problems are almost inevitable.

Musgrave’s comments are somewhat reductive in that they don’t take into account the complex dynamics of groupings in male school communities. In discussing masculinities in a school setting, Connell explains that whether or not boys become sporting types or those that are bullied:

the difference between these masculinities is not a matter of free choice by the boys: an unathletic way of life may for instance be imposed by a boy’s understanding of his physique. Larger cultural dynamics can be detected here. But the crucial point is that entering one group does not make the other irrelevant. Far from it: an active relationship is constructed … qualitatively different types are produced within the same social context that do not float free from each other.

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192 Ibid.,
This complex situation of the relationship between athletics and sexuality is signalled in the chapter titles: Warp and Woof, The Tangled Skein, Unravelling the Threads, and The Weaving. A large part of the book is a working out of Gordon’s position on athletics. His ambivalent attitude includes both a love of games and a criticism of athleticism where a national preoccupation with games threatened to put schoolboys ‘at the shrine of the god of Athleticism’. Gordon’s growing love of poetry and recognition of the prominence at his school of athletics to the detriment of artistic endeavour, led him to muse:

He was overcome with a tremendous hatred for the system that had kept literature from him as a shut book, that had offered him mature philosophy instead of colour and youth, and tried to prevent him from seeking it for himself. So this is the way, he thought, the youth of England is being brought up.\textsuperscript{194}

The ‘problem’ of athleticism is played out in the text by a series of conversations, arguments and debate between characters. But lengthy description of games matches show that the lure of sport is not denied and the familiar trope of the school story with its house matches and inter-school competitions makes up a large part of the story, with humour lightening the detailed blow-by-blow accounts. An example of this inversion of the familiar trope in the school story is the way that instead of hearing how the ‘bloods’ fare on the cricket pitch or football field, the narrator chooses to describe the progress of Bray, a minor character who is clearly clumsy and not a heroic figure:

among the lesser lights there was a great display of energy, much of it misplaced. The worst offender was Bray. To watch him play was to witness a gladiatorial display of frightfulness. His fists flew about like a flail, his legs were everywhere. On the whole he did more damage to his own side than to his opponents. And the amount of energy he wasted every game in hacking the bodies of any who got in his way must have been exhausting.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{194} Alec Waugh, \textit{The Loom of Youth}, Ibid., p.135.

\textsuperscript{195} Alec Waugh, \textit{The Loom of Youth}, Ibid., p.235.
Gordon’s own glories and triumphs on the sporting field are matched only its failures, described in terms of extreme emotion: ‘the captaincy he had tried so hard to gain had ended in pitiable failure. It was the desolation, the utter desolation.’\(^{196}\) To ensure that the reader is given a number of perspectives to view athleticism, criticism of it is often focused through characters other than Gordon. One of the masters, Buller, epitomises the dominant attitude toward sport:

> [he] stamped up and down with a whistle in his hand. ‘I never saw such slackness. What good do you imagine you men will be in the trenches, if you can’t last out a short game of rugger like this? I don’t know what the school is coming to!’\(^{197}\)

Gordon organises a House debate on the ‘Value of Athletics.’ His idea is to demonstrate that ‘the blind worship of games is harmful … [to] make the school think.’\(^{198}\) The narration suggests that this is an equitable discussion. While Gordon has an obvious bias against athleticism, as a senior prefect and house captain he also has immense influence over the other boys.

> He was at the very summit of his power. He had been making scores for the Eleven out of all proportion to his skill; he was almost certain for the batting cup … He could get the House to vote as he wanted; he was sure of it. \(^{199}\)

Ferrers, a young master with minority views, impassionedly declares against athletics:

> How much longer … are we going to waste our time, our energy, our force on kicking a football? We have no strength for anything else. And all the time, while Germany has been plotting against us, piling up armaments, we have been cheering on Chelsea and West Ham United. Look at the result. We were no prepared … because we had wasted our time on trivial things, instead of things that mattered; and unless we turn away from all this truck,

\(^{196}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, Ibid., p.255.
\(^{197}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, Ibid., p.236.
\(^{198}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, Ibid., p.260.
\(^{199}\) Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, Ibid., p.260.
trash and cant about athleticism, England is not going to stand for anything worth having.\textsuperscript{200}

This is followed by a speech in favour of athletics by Rudd:

\begin{quote}
I am the hardest-working fellow in the school … I am also a fine athlete. To-day I clean bowled two people on the pick-up, and hit a splendid four over short-slip’s head. I am what I am because of our excellent system of work and play. Look at me, I say, and vote for athleticism.\textsuperscript{201}
\end{quote}

However the narrator positions the reader to sympathise with Ferrers, because Rudd is described in negative terms, his speech is termed ‘buffoonery’ and his remarks about being hard-working are discredited by the phrase a ‘roar of laughter’. We are told that ‘Rudd had been nearly deprived of his position of school prefect for doing so little work.’ Gordon sums up the debate by putting athletics into perspective:

\begin{quote}
We all enjoy games. I love cricket; but that does not make me worship it. I like eating; but I don’t make a god of a chocolate éclair. … Games don’t win battles, but brains do, and brains aren’t trained on the footer field … for years we have been worshipping something utterly wrong.\textsuperscript{202}
\end{quote}

In \textit{Muscular Christianity} Clifford Putney notes that Thomas Arnold used organised sports as the means to impose ‘order and morality upon the otherwise disordered and amoral life of boys’ at Rugby in the 1830s and 1840s. Putney claims that it was the ‘rules, chains of command, and strenuosity’ that made sports so powerful. Arnold viewed sports as ‘a means of channelling and dispersing those boyish energies (particularly sexual energy) which, if left unchecked, could result in masturbation or other illicit behaviour’.\textsuperscript{203} As noted earlier, Foucault contends that attempts to regulate masturbation actually

\textsuperscript{200} Alec Waugh, \textit{The Loom of Youth}, Ibid., p.261.
\textsuperscript{201} Alec Waugh, \textit{The Loom of Youth}, Ibid., p.261.
\textsuperscript{202} Alec Waugh, \textit{The Loom of Youth}, Ibid., p.263.
produced child sexualisation. Surveillance of children and treating masturbation as an epidemic to be eradicated entailed vigilance by parents and children, which produced an awareness and foregrounding of sexuality: ‘their conduct was prescribed and their pedagogy recodified’.  

As I have already signalled, The Loom of Youth does not shy away from sexual discourses on homoeroticism and homosexuality. But The Loom of Youth also details the sensual role of adolescent heterosexuality, which is exceptionally unusual for a school story. Gordon creeps out at night to go to the Pack Monday Fair in the local town. This chapter, ‘Carnival’, is grounded in a mixture of history and myth. MacDonald, Fernhurst’s historian, authenticates the ‘legend’ of Pack Monday – and the reader is led to a position where history lends authority to the context.

It was believed that, when the building of the Abbey was finished, all the masons, glass workers and artificers packed up their tools and paraded the town with music and song, celebrating the glory of their accomplished work.

The carnival, described as ‘a day of marketing and revelry’ began at midnight on the Sunday night. In the same vein as Kipling’s Stalky & Co., Waugh describes the hero-status accorded to the ‘few daring spirits’ who took part in the ‘hazardous expedition’ where the heroic exploits of old boys were ‘whispered quietly in the dormitory’.

Those courageous souls were the objects of the deepest veneration among the smaller boys, who would whisper quietly of their doings in the upper dormitories when darkness lent a general security to the secrets that were being revealed.

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204 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality 1, Ibid., 1979.
206 Alec Waugh The Loom of Youth, Ibid; p.170.
When Gordon and Rudd steal out of the school at midnight they arrive to ‘the glaring lights of the booths in Cheap Street. The confusing roar was as music to Gordon’s soul. He had the Cockney love of a fair.’ The next paragraphs begins to describe the experience in terms of ‘passion’. The sky ‘was red with pleasure, and ‘the noise and shrieks grew louder and more insistent’. Gordon meets a young girl, Emmie, and together they ride on the merry-go-round. We are told that she sat in front of him ‘in a languor of satisfied excitement’. The following description is one of adolescent sexual fantasy:

Her hair blew across his face, stifling him; on every side couples were hugging and squeezing. The sensuous swirl of the machine was acting as a narcotic, numbing thought. He caught her flushed, tired face in his hands and kissed her wildly, beside himself with the excitement of the moment ... Her arms were round his neck, her flushed face was hot on his, her hair hung over his shoulders. The strains of You Made Me Love You came inarticulate with passion out of the shrieking organ. Her elbow nudged him. Her lips were as fire beneath his. The machine slowed down and stopped. Gordon paid for five extra rounds. Dazed with new and hitherto unrealised sensations, Gordon forgot everything but the strange warm thing nestling in his arms; and he abandoned himself to the passion of the moment.

The language used here is unequivocally about sexual passion. Kimberley Reynolds, quoting Freud, says that ‘sexuality is nowhere more active than at the level of fantasy’. She claims that fantasy is limited in boys’ fiction and ‘refuses to incorporate any ambivalent sexual models or to explore problems surrounding sexual difference in content or language’. As we have seen from Connell and Foucault, appropriate sexual behaviour that supported middle class values, were reproduced in boys’ literature at a time when unacceptable behaviour was regulated and controlled. Set against the ‘noise and shrieks’ of the fairground, with a focus on sensuality, and where ‘thought’ is ‘numbed’ and therefore pushed to the background, Gordon surrenders to the immediacy of his encounter with Emmie. As Gordon puts it, ‘this was life’. Although Emmie is ‘a girl of about nineteen’ and is described as Gordon’s ‘Juliet’, her name could be male or female and indeed girls in the novel are described more than once as ‘thing’. The bodily

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208 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, Ibid; p.175.
sensations could be attributed to either gender. Finally, after ‘lights flickered, shot skywards, and went out’ Gordon and Emmie part and Gordon creeps back to school at dawn. The next day ‘Emmie’s hoarse laugh grated on his ears’ and Tester reprimands Gordon:

I can understand quite well anyone being drawn into anything dangerous by a strong emotion or feeling. It is natural. Masters say we should curb our natures. I don’t know if they are right.  

The question of whether or not boys should ‘curb their natures’ is part of the discourse around schoolboy sexuality. The fact that Gordon’s first heterosexual encounter takes place outside the confines of the school is significant. Foucault answers the question around surveillance and its role in sexuality by remarking on this fundamental relationship. In a conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot he asserts:

With these themes of surveillance, and especially in the schools, it seems that control over sexuality becomes inscribed in architecture. In the Military Schools, the very walls speak of the struggle against homosexuality and masturbation.

This chapter, then, illustrates the way in which power is institutionalised. As Foucault explains:

A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would be at the same time be the history of powers … from the great institutional architecture from the classroom to the design of hospitals, passing via economic and political installations… Space used to be either dismissed as belonging to ‘nature’ … or else it was conceived as the residential site or field of expansion of peoples, of a culture, a language or a State. Anchorage

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210 Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, p.177.
in a space is an economico-political form, which needs to be studied in detail.\textsuperscript{212}

In talking about the Panopticon and resistances, Foucault describes the way that each offensive from the one side serves as leverage for a counter-offensive from the other:

The analysis of power-mechanisms has no built-in tendency to show power as being at once anonymous and always victorious. It is a matter rather of establishing the positions occupied and modes of actions used by each of the forces at work, the possibilities of resistance and counter-attack on either side.\textsuperscript{213}

The texts in this chapter illustrate the checks and balances between resistance and counter-attack. One such example is Tester’s comments highlighting the tension between ‘strong emotion’ and the suppression of ‘our natures’. His resolution is to provide a space for resistance: ‘I can understand quite well’, which offers approval and acknowledgment of the complex sexualities of adolescent boys. Another example of the checks and balances is integral to the occasion when Jeffries reveals Fernhurst’s endemic hypocrisy by saying that it ‘made me what I am,’ and then remarking that the school expelled him. In suggesting that he has been unfortunate in being one of the boys who has been ‘caught out’, Jeffries in fact implies that close friendships of boys have been pushed underground.

The other area of interest in The Loom of Youth is its use of the carnivalesque. John Stephens refers to interrogative texts as ‘carnivalesque’ because their function is to question official culture in ways that Mikhail Bakhtin has identified. Stephens likens carnival in children’s texts as ‘a playfulness which situates itself in positions of nonconformity’.\textsuperscript{214} It offers the characters ‘time out’ from the constraints of normal life, but allows them to ‘incorporate a safe return to

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{212} Colin Gordon Ibid., p.149.
\bibitem{213} Colin Gordon, Ibid., pp.163-64.
\bibitem{214} John Stephens, Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction, Ibid., p.121.
\end{thebibliography}
normality’. By visiting the carnival, Gordon breaks school rules. Stephens asserts that such acts of rebellion express ‘opposition to authoritarianism and seriousness.’ He also notes ‘linguistic and narrative resources’ through which adult figures of authority are mocked. As Stephens puts it:

The self-conscious textuality of interrogative texts…draw attention to the text itself as a construct.

Self-conscious textuality, as Stephens explains, ‘implies a reader whose role is that of author’s playmate, sharing a game with deducible rules, and being … conscious of the way meanings are both linguistically and socially constructed’. The reader is positioned as (in Stephens’s phrase) ‘author’s playmate’ by the way that authority is mocked in such conspiratorial utterances as Gordon and Rudd being hailed ‘courageous souls’ for breaking school rules, and that Gordon ‘had the Cockney love of a fair.’ The admittance of subversive behaviour in breaking school rules and crossing class barriers (in Gordon’s emotional involvement with the pleasures of a Cockney pastime) are instances of the way the reader is positioned to accept transgression.

The Loom of Youth, in its depiction of the romantic/sexual encounter between Gordon and Emmie, opens a space for Bakhtin’s idea of ‘the material bodily principle’. By creeping out at midnight Gordon enters a ‘temporary liberation’ (as Stephens puts it) from Fernhurst’s surveillance.

Foucault addresses the topic of surveillance in The History of Sexuality. He uses the autoerotic schoolboy as an example of one of four subjects of surveillance.

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216 Ibid.,
implicated in the rise of modern biopolitical subjects.\textsuperscript{221} He claims that the most rigorous techniques were formed in the politically dominant classes:

As for the adolescent wasting his future substance in secret pleasures, the onanistic child who was of such concern to doctors and educations … was not the child of the people … but rather the schoolboy … who was in danger of compromising not so much his physical strength as his intellectual capacity, his moral fiber, and the obligation to preserve a healthy line of descent for his family and his social class.\textsuperscript{222}

Middle-class male bodies were subjected to a large and diverse system of institutional gazes – all trying to understand and detect the behaviour patterns of their sexual identities. Social values were inscribed onto/into male bodies, or as Ed Cohen puts it in \textit{Talk on the Wilde Side}:

Development of normative standards for male (sexual) behaviour was a critical element in the self-definition of British middle-class throughout the nineteenth century. The increasing energetic activities by numerous organic intellectuals of the bourgeouisie (doctors, educators, clerics, alienists, parents, feminists, evangelicals, etc.) not only to define but also to watch for and to enforce new ideological articulations of sex, age, and class foregrounded the transformations in these elements of the sex/gender system.\textsuperscript{223}

In his \textit{History of Sexuality}, Foucault states that because of the ‘calculated management of life’ that merged in the nineteenth century, ‘the disciplining of the individual’ and ‘regulatory controls’ combine to form a ‘biopolitics of the population’.\textsuperscript{224} As Ann Laura Stoler puts it, ‘nineteenth century biopower represented a shift toward the regulation of the social body, toward the normalization of collective entities, and away from individualising regimes.\textsuperscript{225}

\textsuperscript{221} Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Ibid., p.120.
\textsuperscript{222} Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Ibid., p.121.
\textsuperscript{223} Ed Cohen, \textit{Talk on the Wilde Side}, Ibid., p.118.
\textsuperscript{224} Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, p.139.
Stoler states that this ‘technology of power centred on life’ produces a normalising society and a new form of racism inscribed within it.²²⁶

The fact that Gordon has a sexual encounter with a working-class girl is significant in an analysis of power relations in the text. Foucault says that ‘the working classes managed for a long time to escape the deployment of ‘sexuality’ – commenting that ‘it is unlikely that the Christian technology of the flesh ever had any importance for them’. He claims that mechanisms of sexuality took a long time to reach the working classes and that it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that ‘the deployment of “sexuality”, elaborated in its more complex and intense forms, by and for the privileged classes, spread through the entire social body.’ Foucault says that this has to be seen ‘as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another’. He goes on to say that ‘with this investment of its own sex by a technology of power and knowledge which it had itself invented, the bourgeoisie underscored the high political price of its body, sensations, and pleasures, its well-being and survival.’²²⁷ It is in the light of such comments by Foucault that we can see the power relations at work in the interplay of characters across class in The Loom of Youth.

In the texts I have chosen to analyse, it is clear that specific roles are created to interrogate official culture and the normal subject positions created for child readers within socially dominant ideological frames. In The Loom of Youth, I have identified elements of the carnivalesque, parody and intertextuality, which all act as a critique of the social values of the time. As ‘the loom’ of its title suggests, The Loom of Youth’s intertextual references work at different levels. Brian Moon suggests that the Latin word textus meaning a woven fabric, gives way to the ‘text … [and] individual texts produced in a culture are like designs woven into the larger fabric of language and writing’.²²⁸ The textual allusions in the novels I have discussed in this section often invite comparisons with texts that challenge the notions of dominant masculinity of the time. The intertextual links can also frame reading and thinking about masculinity because they have the effect of

²²⁶ ibid.,
²²⁷ Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Ibid., p.123.
²²⁸ Brian Moon, Literary Terms: A Practical Glossary, Chalkface Press, Australia, 2001, p.76.
naturalising masculinity. This suggests, as Moon says, that ‘many of the “common sense” beliefs and values of our culture are intertextually woven into the fabric of literary works’.229

What the three texts in this chapter have in common is an insight into the interior life of public schoolboy characters. Since texts produced for children have implicit ideological positions, they all demonstrate the tensions between homo-emotionalism and homosexuality, and they all interrogate and resist notions of power – for within the relation of power there is also the force to challenge or overthrow it.

229 Brian Moon, *Literary Terms*, Ibid., p.77.
CHAPTER THREE: Bo[a]rders and Boundaries in Rudyard Kipling’s Stalky & Co.

All margins are dangerous. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. (Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.)

Connell asserts that the fact that ‘the interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race create further relationships between masculinities’.\(^1\) Rudyard Kipling’s Stalky & Co., the focus of this chapter, richly illustrates the interplay between masculinity, sexuality and Empire.

The character that Kipling created in Stalky, the text’s chief protagonist, is a juvenile imperial hero. John M. MacKenzie, in Propaganda and Empire, alerts us to several ingredients of Victorian boys’ fiction that are relevant to Stalky. He says that hero-worship emanated from the evangelical publishing houses from the early nineteenth century and that ‘by the end of the century such “hero publishing” had become a considerable industry.’ He claims that stories of imperial lives with titles such as With Stephenson in Samoa, Heroes of Britain and Brave Sons of the Empire were issued for as little as seven pence per copy, as well as the texts being distributed as Sunday School prizes.\(^2\) MacKenzie comments on a situation where, from the middle of the century, improving literature took more secular forms and, as he puts it, ‘the emphasis moved away from faith to works, from submission to improvement, self-help, aggressive individualism’. He asserts that this new morality was galvanised by the expansion of publishing and mass readership that became part of the late nineteenth century world view – ‘suffused with the patriotic, racial, and militarist elements which together made up the new imperialism.’\(^3\) For MacKenzie, these developments,

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1 RW Connell, Masculinities, Ibid., p.80.
and the emergence of classic children’s literature acceptable to both parents and children, produced ‘complacent self-confidence, sense of national and racial superiority, and suspicious xenophobia.’

*Stalky & Co.*, with its episodic form, its elements of fantasy, one-dimensional characters and strongly didactic impulse, could be seen as aligned more to the Victorian literary fairytale than the English school story. Like the *Harry Potter* series, it uses fantasy in a traditional school form. It is not formulaic and is written for and about middle-class children. Although concurring with the nineteenth century idea of childhood as a period of psychic and moral development, it emphasises the practical acquisition of skills such as cunning and resourcefulness. It celebrates boyish high spirits and reiterates the notion that ‘boys will be boys.’

Kipling’s collection of boisterous schoolboy farces explodes the myth of boarding school stories as being safe, secure and contained, and it replaces sentimentality with assertive individualism. It also openly ridicules the moralistic tradition of earlier stories. *Stalky & Co.* was designed to appeal to the phenomenon that greatly interested Kipling – that of the energies of developing youth, and at the same time it furthered the interests of colonialism. What makes it a fascinating text for interrogation is that it is a masculinist and Orientalist text that is cross-written for adults as well as children. It provides a subject position for readers that transgresses the dominant athletic stereotype and replaces it with a different model of manliness. It was written expressly for the elite young men who would be furthering England’s interests in Empire. Moreover, its publication coincided with a time when serious problems were arising in areas of colonial power. The masculine ideal promulgated in *Stalky & Co.* was Kipling’s desperate attempt (who at the time of writing was Poet Laureate of the Empire) to toughen up boys and to make them into adventurous young men. His visits to South Africa to meet Cecil Rhodes, and his experiences while working as a journalist in India convinced him that curriculum reform was required in schools. Moreover, schoolboys needed more practical training to encourage initiative.

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Stalky & Co. is quite unlike any other school story. Isabel Quigley, in *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, claims that Kipling has ‘almost nothing in common with other writers of school stories’. She asserts that ‘it is the only school story, I think, in which school is shown as directly parallel with life in the Empire; a training directly related to the life that lay ahead for many public schoolboys at the end of the nineteenth century.\(^5\) A literary text, with many intertextual references, it does not develop character through a focus on games, neither does it focus on the interior life of the largely one-dimensional characters – they stay on a single plane of feeling. For Kipling, who privileges action and duty over emotion, it is what they *do* that counts. The structure of the book is a series of short incidents and the book ignores and at times attacks the orthodoxies of the previous school story genre. Quigly draws our attention to the fact that *Stalky & Co.* ‘managed to cross the often uneasily described division between adult life and boyhood, and between the mature attitude of the writer and the unripe outlook of his heroes.’\(^6\)

While the book received enthusiastic responses, many critics were outraged. H. G. Wells condemned the characters as self-righteous bullies. Robert Buchanan, Kipling’s most virulent critic, wrote that ‘only the spoiled child of an utterly brutalized public could possibly have written *Stalky & Co.*’ – later declaring: ‘the vulgarity, the brutality, the savagery reeks on every page.’\(^7\)

Far from being a school story like those that had degenerated from *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* into formulaic fiction, it is written to entertain, but also suggests a ‘recipe’ for educating the imperial man. With a recognition of the potential for didactic reading material for the newly-discovered adolescent youth, Kipling turned his considerable talents to this series of school stories and combined them with his passion for the expansion of Empire, to put forward a code for living that underpins the ethic of British imperialism as it is popularly represented. Christine

\(^7\) Quoted in Isabel Quigly, Introduction to *The Complete Stalky & Co.*, Ibid., p.xiii.
Gibbs, in an article entitled ‘Sensational Schoolboys’, suggests ‘the bureaucracy of the Empire generated military and service careers that excluded women entirely, but such public challenges to the masculine image as the humiliating Boer War generated the feeling that the next generation must be one of manlier men.’ The school depicted in the text is unlike those of other school stories. It is based on Kipling’s own school, United Services College, a foundation set up for the sons of service officers who could not afford the public school Haileybury. The school was founded in 1874 to provide a good but cheap education for the sons of imperial service officers and was geared to the entrance exam for Sandhurst or Woolwich. It was in the mould of what Kimberley Reynolds calls a ‘proliferation of public schools for boys of the middle and lower-middle classes who aspired to military or civil service careers.’

*Stalky & Co.* promotes the idea of Empire as a place of excitement, adventure and action. Kipling’s message is rendered particularly potent because of his use of certain ingredients in the text. For example, he chooses the enclosed world of the boarding school as a setting, with its defined boundaries between home and school. (As the poem says, at the beginning of the book, ‘Western wind and open surge took us from our mothers.’) Boundaries are important in the genre, but Kipling subverts the need for them, moving away from the idea of ‘safety’ to one of ‘watching one’s back’, using cunning (or ‘stalkiness’, as he calls it) and a code where the ends justify the means. George Orwell, in his essay on boys’ weekly magazines like the *Gem* and the *Magnet*, points to the insularity and stagnant nature of the boarding school world in fiction: ‘Everything is safe, solid and unquestionable. Everything will be the same forever and ever.’ Paradoxically, Kipling, who subverts Orwell’s suggestion of insularity, implies that both hierarchies and laws are necessary to his code. Patrick Scott explains:

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The closed form of the school story, like the evermore secluded world of the boarding school itself, socialized children rather than indoctrinating them, and so reflects the more general late-Victorian shift from explicit to implicit ideology ... A central distinction between Kipling and his precursors is one of ideology.\textsuperscript{12}

His subject matter is the adolescent schoolboy who operates in that important zone between childhood and adulthood, where moral questions about life are paramount. Kipling paints a picture of anarchy and adolescence at school and relates it to life in the wider world. He advocates that the same rules for adolescence hold good for adulthood. Accordingly, Stalky never really matures – staying a ‘boyish’ leader in the Empire. It is precisely his preoccupation with childhood and youth and his ability to write about it that made Kipling immensely popular and his ideas highly influential.

It is not surprising that \textit{Stalky & Co.} succeeded on one level because of Kipling’s gift of bringing to life the high spirits and anarchy of boyhood. At another level it was profoundly influential as both a critique of the prevailing English public school ethos and as a vehicle of propaganda for Kipling’s own imperialistic ideological beliefs. The devious adventures of Stalky and friends at ‘the Coll.’ are linked paralleled with the daring deeds of old boys on the north-west frontier. It is made clear in the text that the cunning and survival skills developed both at school and outside its bounds by Stalky and his friends will be useful in the ‘real world’.

The publication of \textit{Stalky & Co.} was revolutionary in its raising of issues affecting the boundaries of the public school genre. It also radically transgressed the dominant masculine public school ideal embedded in this genre. \textit{Stalky & Co.} differed markedly from other nineteenth century school stories, which had increasingly moved away from an ideal of bourgeois Christian manhood with its sentimental and earnestly moral and intellectual attitudes. Instead, as athleticism

grew in popularity it became much more action-based. In mid-nineteenth century school stories, emphasis is largely on the moral and religious life of the schoolboy protagonist. However with the late century cult of athleticism, the schoolboy hero is more likely to be tearing down to the touchline of the rugby pitch or hitting a six on the cricket field than piously kneeling at his bedside saying his prayers. The late nineteenth century hegemonic masculine ideal combined this athleticism with Christian principles coupled with a social Darwinian instinct for survival. 

*Stalky & Co.* subverts school norms but also transgresses the norms of the school story. Patrick Scott comments that Kipling’s ‘explicit alliance is with the shift away from the moral didacticism of the mid-Victorian school novel’.

Stalky and his mates are neither loyal to the house or the good of the school, nor do they display leadership qualities. George Orwell in his *Horizon* essay sums up the stories of that period:

> You are at Greyfriars, a rosy-cheeked boy of fourteen in posh tailor-made clothes, sitting down to tea in your study on the Remove passage after an exciting game of football which was won by an odd goal in the last half-minute. There is a cosy fire in the study, and outside the wind is whistling. The ivy clusters thickly around the old grey stones. ... Everything is safe, solid and unquestionable. Everything will be the same for ever and ever.

What really differentiates *Stalky & Co.* from other Victorian school stories is its move from the enclosed world of boarding school to a seemingly broader social setting. This shifting of boundaries marks a new departure in the school story and Kipling is the first writer to suggest, with specific examples, the vital role of public school education in the preparation of boys for their ‘duty’ in the outside world. *Stalky & Co.* was written expressly for the elite young men who would be furthering England’s interests in Empire by becoming soldiers and administrators.

The masculine ideal promulgated by public schools was challenged in 1902 by J. A. Hobson’s *Imperialism*, which attacked the ideology that produced these ill-fated and competitive men:

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To capture the childhood of the country … to fasten this base insularity of mind and morals upon the little children of a nation and to call it patriotism is as foul an abuse of education as it is possible to conceive.  

As with the preceding chapters, I aim to trace the trajectories of competing strands of manliness in this text and to map the exclusions and contradictions hidden in its discourses.

Setting the scene

The proliferation of literary references in *Stalky & Co.* is an innovation in the boys’ school story genre. References to Homer, Shakespeare, the Bible, together with Latin and French phrases are liberally sprinkled throughout the text – serving to the schism between Kipling the schoolboy aesthete, and the anti-intellectual pragmatist. Kimberley Reynolds alerts us to the role of anti-intellectualism in texts for boys at this time. She says that ‘a consequence of this determination to produce more masculine boys is a decidedly anti-intellectual strain in their fiction: muscle and morality are celebrated over intelligence and inspiration.’  

*K. & C.* was Kipling’s deliberately didactic message (albeit couched in humour) by which he was able to suggest a radically new ideal type of public school imperial boy. P. W. Musgrave believes that because children’s literature is didactic it must, by definition, be the repository of values that parents and others hope to teach future generations.

Kipling’s poem, ‘Let Us Now Praise Famous Men’, which serves as prologue to *Stalky & Co.*, underscores the role of education in world affairs and foreshadows his implicit message in the text. John M. MacKenzie states that ‘a striking characteristic’ of the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century is the

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popularity of poetry that includes ‘a poetry of romance, patriotism, and war.’ This poem, rather like a national saga and with the Bible as a pre-text, became famous. In one stanza it acknowledges and praises the public school system. It states that the reason schoolteachers are authoritarian and occasionally inflict physical pain may not be understood until later in life:

There we met with famous men
Set in office o’er us;
And they beat on us with rods–
Daily beat on us with rods,
For the love they bore us.

It is clear that pain and separation are necessary in this code. Teachers who were ‘set in office o’er us’ to ‘teach us God’s own common sense’, are described as having to ‘beat on us with rods – faithfully with many rods.’ This stanza, with its repetition of phrases to emphasise and reinforce the points it makes, foreshadows the masculine trait of cruelty that surfaces in the text. The use of ‘beating’ strangely juxtaposed with the word ‘faithful’ is part of Kipling’s ideas on the necessity of suffering for the schoolboy and the important role of the teacher to inflict suffering. The rhetoric and language of the Bible, together with the use of the metre of hymns and phrases such as ‘bless us’ and ‘we all praise’ – gives the sense that it is the schoolboy’s destiny at stake and that he is called to serve God. It is as if the idea of Empire is a divinely appointed duty. The syntax is like a sermon, (and is also reminiscent of a cautionary tale). By evoking God in this prophetic poem and linking it to ‘common sense’, the concept of pain and punishment that is encoded is naturalised. An alternative interpretation is that Kipling is commenting on and even parodying religion in the same way that he parodies texts like Eric in Stalky – Patrick A. Dunae informs that the Boer War caused serious splits in evangelical approaches to militarist imperialism. The message of the poem is directed to the educated middle-classes and the ‘famous men’ that he refers to in the poem are schoolteachers. The importance of their

work is emphasised by repetition of the word ‘continueth’: ‘For their work continueth, Broad and deep continueth, Greater than their knowing!’

In another stanza the energetic invective describes the separation of home and school, and makes it clear that separation from feminine influence – particularly mothers – is crucial:

Western wind and open surge
   Took us from our mothers
Flung us on a naked shore
   (Twelve bleak houses by the shore!
Seven summers by the shore!)
‘Mid two hundred brothers

The word ‘brothers’ refers to Kipling’s adherence to the importance of male camaraderie, or brotherhood. The ‘twelve bleak houses’ refers to United Services College. Its buildings comprised a connected row of seaside boarding houses on the wild North Devon coast. In his introduction to United Services College’s 1933 commemorative history, Major Tapp reports that the conditions were ‘ideal for hardening boys into men’. It was a spartan but healthy institution – with open dormitories and an emphasis on strenuous activity. There were paper chases, games and bathing off the Pebble Ridge and the cold sea-water Nassau Baths. The headmaster in Kipling’s time there, Cormell Price, believed in tiring the boys with physical activity and sending them to bed exhausted. This preoccupation with organising the boys’ time and channelling their interests is a crucial part of the discourse on boys and masturbation. It was thought that keeping boys busy would prevent sexual ‘excesses’.

As I have already signalled, Foucault, in *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, argues that surveillance of the schoolboy is linked to fears about male sexuality. Middle-class male bodies were subjected to a large and diverse system of

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22 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 1, Ibid., p.37.
in institutional gazes in order to try to understand and detect the behaviour patterns of their sexual identities. Social values were inscribed onto/into male bodies, or as Ed Cohen puts it in *Talk on the Wilde Side*:

> Development of normative standards for male (sexual) behaviour was a critical element in the self-definition of British middle-class throughout the nineteenth century. The increasing energetic activities by numerous organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie (doctors, educators, clerics, alienists, parents, feminists, evangelicals, etc) not only to define but also to watch for and to enforce new ideological articulations of sex, age, and class foregrounded the transformations in these elements of the sex/gender system.\(^\text{23}\)

For Kipling, however, it was important for boys to be physically active and alert for service in the Empire. Another stanza represents this challenge to action, and alludes to the didactic message in *Stalky* – that it is the ‘keen’ and ‘diligent’ duty of the schoolboy to serve his country. It refers to the practical and broad-ranging aspect of Kipling’s message that is a celebration of worldwide colonial expansion:

> Each degree of Latitude
> Strung about Creation
> Seeth one or more of us
> (Of one muster all of us),
> Diligent in that he does,
> Keen in his vocation.

Like Kipling’s poem ‘The Islanders’, which warns against worship of athleticism and includes the famous line ‘with the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals’, it includes accusations of complacency about war, particularly in the face of disasters in the Boer War. The poem as a whole is a rousing piece of rhetoric. It may appear to be different in tone than the boisterous tales that follow, but the function of the poem is to foreground the serious intent of the narrative since the reader is positioned to understand the links between school and service in Empire. The book is structured such that it is obvious that

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Stalky and his tactics in school are linked unmistakably with those deeds of Empire played out in the last chapter. Also interspersed throughout the book are tales told by various old boys of the school who return from action overseas and relay their exploits to the boys who listen ‘in awed silence in the dormitory.’

The ninth stanza emphasises the role of serving Empire. For Kipling, the whole point of public school education is to train boys to become leaders of Empire ‘beneath the further stars’: ‘Set to serve the lands they rule, (Save he serve no man may rule).’ Thus this poem, before the narrative begins, shows Kipling’s reverence of both education and the authoritarianism of the English public school system. As Benita Parry suggests, this poem – with its references to ancient culture to describe former teachers – it calls out to be read as ‘the location of an internal interrogation’.24 Put simply, it questions but does not displace the discourse it embodies. Parry asserts that to gauge Kipling’s role ‘in the invention of an imperialist English identity requires the study of how reader responses were catalysed over many decades as forms of consciousness, social conduct, and political behaviour.’25 Stalky & Co. is a fiction of Empire, clearly linking the education/socialisation of boys with the imperial project. John M. MacKenzie points out that:

From the middle of the century the purveyors of an improving literature began to attempt a new approach, to convey their morality in more appealing secular forms. At the same time, the morality itself began to change. The emphasis moved away from faith to works, from submission to improvement, self-help, aggressive individualism. By the 1880s that new morality had come to be wedded to the late nineteenth-century world view and was suffused with the patriotic, racial, and militarist elements which together made up the new popular imperialism.26

As Parry puts it, Kipling’s readership is ‘positioned as a racially homogeneous and masculine community, unfissured by class allegiances.’ In his discussion of his oeuvre, Patrick Williams argues that it is important to scrutinise Kipling’s work because ‘although clearly Kipling the author nor the range of positions offered by his texts is reducible to the merely imperialist, it is nevertheless important to achieve as precise a notion as possible of the ways in which the texts were involved in the process of the Empire.’ Said explains in *Culture and Imperialism* that Kipling (as well as Conrad) ‘brought to a basically insular and provincial British audience the colour, glamour, and romance of the British overseas enterprise, which was well-known to specialized sectors of the home society.’ *Stalky & Co.* embodies that sense of adventure, and Said explains its importance for the reader in terms of what he calls ‘a complex dialectic of reinforcement’:

> the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers’ experiences. … Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe.

Michael Rosenthal in *The Character Factory* comments further on this dialectic by noting that it is ‘the universality of agencies of social control to attempt to implant public school ideals to the working-classes’ that gives credence to his assertion that ‘it was not a disembodied, altruistic exercise, but a thoroughly political act with significant social consequences.’

### ‘In Ambush’

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27 Benita Parry, Ibid., p.52.
After Kipling’s poem comes the opening tale, ‘In Ambush’, which also sets up parameters:

In summer all right-minded boys built huts in the furze-hill behind the College - little lairs whittled out of the heart of the prickly bushes, full of stumps, odd root-ends, and spikes, but, since they were strictly forbidden, palaces of delight. And for the fifth summer in succession, Stalky, M’Turk and Beetle (this was before they reached the dignity of a study) had built like beavers a place of retreat and meditation, where they smoked.32

The reference to ‘beavers’ also hints at the role of action in the book. For Kipling it is necessary to be active – to ‘beaver.’ The lyrical language and description of the furze-hill is a rally call to boys to delight in breaking rules and moving out of bounds. What is created here is a space that defines the paradoxical rules implicit in the text: it is important to adhere to a hierarchical structures, but it is also important to take initiative and ‘bend’ the rules at times. So, even at the beginning of the book importance is placed on moving from the tightly circumscribed world of the school into the wider world. Moving ‘out of bounds’ also has implications for genre slippage – action takes place in the school and also in the Devon countryside, where the boys interact with local villagers. *Stalky & Co.* takes on tropes of the popular adventure story genre when many incidents take place outside the physical parameters of school. But it is in this way that Stalky and his mates enjoy freedom from the school that the reader is also able to share. Foucault talks about the ‘major effect of the Panopticon’ (from which he argues all mechanisms of power derive) as being ‘to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.’33 It works, he asserts, by permitting ‘an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it … to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct.’34 He goes on to explain that the school building was (like the camp from which diagram of power it evolved) part of a number of institutions whose function was not simply to be seen or from which to observe

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33 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.201.
34 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ibid., p.172.
external space, ‘but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it … and to provide a hold on their conduct.’

By posing as members of the school’s Natural History Society (with some equipment stolen from the lockers of younger boys), Stalky, Beetle and M’Turk (who comprise the trio Stalky & Co.) are legitimately free to roam the countryside that is usually out of bounds. In this way, they can thereby evade the surveillance of the school institution. In *History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces the Western concept of self in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and concludes that what he calls the ‘sciences of sexuality’ is integral to control of its members in contemporary society. However freedom is necessary for the call to action that Kipling advocates, even although, as he says in his opening poem, it is necessary ‘to obey your orders’.

While trespassing on Colonel Dabney’s land (where the boys have been collecting birds’ eggs and poaching), they are shot at by the estate’s gamekeeper. In retaliation, the boys – who are blatantly in the wrong – boldly walk up to the big house and tell the colonel that his gamekeeper had been killing foxes, which contravenes the rules of the estate. The accusation is, of course, untrue. The confrontation with Colonel Dabney could be construed as an impertinent accusation – a landowner being told by three schoolboys that his gamekeeper is in breach of his work boundaries. At first it seems as if Dabney is going to explode with rage. We are told that ‘the old gentleman made noises in his throat’ and then ‘gurgles’ the words ‘Do you know who I am?’, which leaves Stalky and Beetle ‘quaking’.

The fact that Stalky and Beetle ‘quake’ at the irate man’s outburst is significant in light of what happens subsequently. M’Turk in his Irish dialect replies to the Colonel, saying:

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‘No, sorr, do I care if ye belonged to the Castle itself. Answer me now, as one gentleman to another. Do you shoot foxes or do ye not?’

Dabney appears to bend to M’Turk’s interrogation, and the schoolboy and the aristocrat meet on this issue as equals:

Forgotten – forgotten was the College and the decency due to elders! M’Turk was treading again the barren purple mountains of the rainy West coast, where in his holidays he was viceroy of four thousand naked acres, only son of a three-hundred-year-old house, lord of a crazy fishing-boat and the idol of his father’s shiftless tenantry. It was the landed man speaking to his equal – deep calling to deep – and the old gentleman acknowledged the cry.38

Kipling is making a statement about power relations here. He makes the point that the schoolboy is as important as the landed gentry. In other words that the role of the public schoolboy for his future in the Empire is equal to that of the upper class and that it is the middle and upper classes who have influence and power. The suggestion that M’Turk’s father’s tenants as working-class people are ‘shiftless’ is a common sentiment in this text. M’Turk, although a young schoolboy, is called ‘viceroy’ which also puts him in a position of power and importance that is equal to that of adult men of influence.

Dabney is grateful for the information the boys give him on his gamekeeper’s activities and he invites them for beer and refreshments on his lawn. He gives them free access to his grounds in the future, which they explore ‘with the stealth of Red Indians and the accuracy of burglars.’39 The use of the words ‘Red Indian’ and ‘burglars’ both invoke childhood games (of Cowboys and Indians) and the idea of sanctioned criminality because Colonel Dabney, a member of the aristocracy, had given them permission to be there.

The novel continues with more exploits of the three boys and consists of a series of tales – all of which share elements of adolescent fantasy and revenge. The boys pit their wits against Colonel Dabney, their masters and prefects, and they boys always win. In each episode Stalky & Co. manipulate a situation where two groups will unwittingly become enemies. On each occasion the three boys retreat to watch the consequences of their actions and gloat over their own ‘stalkiness’. (Stalky’s name was college slang for ‘clever, well-considered and wily as applied to plans of action’). It is constantly implied in the book that initiative is allowable, even to the point where rules can be broken and boundaries exceeded in the name of action. It is also clear that punishment has to be accepted on discovery. These unwritten rules give room for the trio to manoeuvre situations to their advantage, although ‘stalkiness’ and initiative are at times closely aligned to acts of vandalism, bullying and brutality.

‘An Unsavoury Interlude’

By engaging with dominant contemporary discourses of athleticism and imperialism, Kipling is able to use irony to suggest an alternative subject position for the reader. For Kipling, muscular Christianity produces boys so obsessed with organised games that they do not have the vital ‘stalkiness’ that will help them survive in difficult conditions and situations in the service of the Empire overseas. Clifford Putney suggests that Kipling was one of several ‘serious inheritors to the mantle of Hughes and Kinglsey’ – the writers who admired the notions of Thomas Arnold who inspired muscular Christianity. (Arnold conceived the idea of combining organised sports with the promotion of the virtue of duty to school, king and god. Sports, he thought, would usefully channel sexual energies.) In Stalky & Co. Kipling employs the themes of ‘manliness’ (‘derring-do’ as Putney puts it), but departs from the work of Hughes in deploiring the open ‘worship’ of games.

40 Explanatory Notes by Isabel Quigley in Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co., Ibid., p.298.
To make the point, Kipling embroils Stalky and Co. in a campaign to humiliate another boarding house. On the surface, what appears to be a prank nevertheless carries a serious message. The story begins in the boys’ study where, instead of taking part in a house cricket match, they discuss F. W. Farrar’s *Eric, or, Little by Little* and *St. Winifred’s*. They deride the heroes – suggesting that the educational ideas these books hold are untenable. They are interrupted by housemaster Prout, who bursts into their study and says: ‘I’m sorry to see any boys of my House taking so little interest in their matches … very sorry, indeed, I am to see you frowsting in your studies.’

Apparently the boys missed the house match because they were ‘rabbit-shooting with saloon-pistols’. In the past, the boys have outwitted Prout: on one occasion he insisted on their presence at a big match, but ‘the three, self-isolated, stood to attention for half an hour in full view of all the visitors, to whom fags, subsidized for that end, pointed them out as victims of Prout’s tyranny.’ Prout was thus publicly humiliated and embarrassed. Stalky and Co. prefer swimming off the Pebble Ridge beach to organised sport. This suggests that these boys find swimming more rewarding than cricket matches: ‘they returned from the baths, damp-headed, languid, at peace with the world’.

‘Languid’ and ‘peaceful’ suggest a sport more relaxed and remarkably different from the pressures of inter-house or inter-school matches and ‘languid’ is not a word usually associated with ‘muscular’ masculinity: it is much more likely to be used in a description of a woman or an effeminate man at that time. This ‘unmanly’ pastime is used to advantage in the following cunning manoeuvre.

King, a housemaster from a rival house, accosts them with the sarcastic comment:

‘Here we gave the ornaments of the Casual House at last. You consider cricket beneath you, I believe’ – the flannelled crowd sniggered.
Not only is King scathing about the boys’ retort that they are going swimming and of being ‘ornaments’ (with its suggestion of passivity and effeminacy), he also confronts them about their needing to go to the sea, suggesting that they need to go there to wash. He accuses them in front of their peers of being ‘smelly’ – and the situation escalates when a boy from King’s house holds a piece of soap at arms length in front of them:

In a few days it became an established legend of the school that Prout’s house did not wash and were therefore noisome. Prout’s house was furious because Macreas’ and Hartopp’s Houses joined King’s to insult them.

In order to take revenge, Stalky employs guerilla tactics involving a cat he has recently killed with a catapult:

Gambolling like kids at play, with bounds and side-starts, with caperings and curvetings, they led the almost bursting Beetle to the rabbit-lane, and from under a pile of stones drew forth the new-slain corpse of a cat.

‘Well-nourished old lady, ain’t she?’ said Stalky. ‘How long d’you suppose it’ll take her to get a bit whiff in a confined space?’

The dead cat is pushed under the floorboards of King’s house. The boys retreat to a safe distance, congratulating themselves on their cunning and artfulness at devising the prank, supposedly in the name of their own house honour. Between explosions of laughter Stalky says:

‘She-is-there, gettin’ ready to surprise ’em. Presently she’ll begin to whisper to ’em in their dreams. Then she’ll whiff. Golly, how she’ll whiff! Oblige me by thinkin’ of it for two minutes!’

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When the cat begins to decompose, their bewildered housemaster accuses the boys in of being smelly, deals out carbolic soap and takes them all to bathe naked in the icy Bristol Channel to rid them of the supposed stench. When this does not have any effect, the floorboards are taken up and the dead cat is discovered. Then Stalky, all self-righteous and innocent, rounds up one of the boys from King’s accusingly:

‘It’s all very disgustin’, and I do hope that the Lazar-house won’t do it again’.

‘Do what?’ a King’s boy cried furiously.

‘Kill a poor innocent cat every time you want to get off washing. It’s awfully hard to distinguish between you as it is. I prefer the cat, I must say. She isn’t quite so whiff.’

This incident praises the wily and ‘stalky’ action that wreaks havoc on the ‘enemy’, as well as allowing the perpetrators to disown the act and suggest that the victim is the guilty party.

This excerpt is typical of the type of prank or ‘jape’ practiced by the trio in *Stalky & Co*. Some of the tales involve acts of vandalism, cruelty and bullying: in one boys roast sparrows on pen nibs over a gas jet, and the gratuitous violence of ‘The Moral Reformers’ is well known. But always the motive is revenge in the name of a ‘just’ cause and Stalky and friends always appear to be the injured innocents. This ‘formula’ for dealing with challenges to authority positions the reader to sympathise with Stalky and Co. – authority figures are rendered ludicrous, and the trio engage the reader in exciting ‘adventures’ in successful attempts to outwit such figures. Peter Hollindale suggests that *Stalky & Co.* (and some of what he terms other major ‘classic children’s books’) undermine and test some of the values that they appear to be upholding. In this episode the teachers are depicted as objects of ridicule, rather than respect. By establishing such oppositional positions, readers are invited by the text to enter into a negotiative framework. The text positions the reader to enjoy the fantasy of outwitting such authority

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figures or, as Cheryl McMillan puts it, ‘school stories … address notions of freedom and ways in which child characters develop subjectivities in relation to authority.\textsuperscript{52}

‘\textit{Slaves of the Lamp I & II}’

In each of the stories Kipling links the ‘skills’ of ‘stalkiness’ with a specific outcome. Sometimes it is a farmer who is made to look foolish, or a teacher or peers. Kipling specifically links school with Empire in two stories called ‘\textit{Slaves of the Lamp}’. The first is set at school where Stalky, in one of his acts of revenge against the hated housemaster King, enters the housemaster’s study with a duplicate key and fires a catapult into the night, hitting the local carrier’s horse and cart. The carrier, (nicknamed ‘Rabbits-Eggs’ by the boys) is drunk. King opens an adjacent window to see what the commotion is about and Rabbits-Eggs thinks that King fired the catapult. In retaliation Rabbits-Eggs throws rocks through the teacher’s study window, knocking over a lamp, upsetting ink bottles and wrecking King’s Persian carpet and calf-bound books. By naming the carrier with the derogatory and nonsensical title ‘Rabbits-Eggs’, and aligning him with wanton destruction in King’s study, Kipling creates an ‘Othered’ character.

This ‘Othering’ is continued the last story of the book, ‘\textit{Slaves of the Lamp II}’. This section details Stalky after leaving school – he has subsequently entered the colonial service as a soldier and leader of men on the northwest frontier. Although Stalky is not present at the reunion, those who have either come across him directly or heard of his actions recount his daring deeds. The inference of the tales about the schoolboy Stalky linked to those of his actions in India is that by using stalkiness and initiative he has become a hero. An old boy called Dick Four describes this particular exploit:

\begin{quote}
Stalky is the great man of his Century’ said Dick Four.
\end{quote}

‘How d’you know?’ I asked.
‘How do I know?’ said Dick Four scornfully.
‘If you’ve ever been in a tight place with Stalky you wouldn’t ask’.53

Present at the reunion is a man who is singled out to demonstrate the qualities that are not deemed to be worthy – as far as masculine ideals are concerned. He is described as ‘an enormously big and well-kept man, who had evidently not campaigned for years, clean-shaven, soft-voiced, and cat-like’.54 It is made clear that the schoolboys had kept in touch:

We had met one another from time to time in the quick scene-shifting of India – a dinner, camp, or a race-meeting here; a dak-bungalow or railway station up country somewhere else – we had never quite lost touch.55

The earlier tale is recounted in conjunction with Stalky’s exploits on the northwest frontier. The story is told in the first person, adding an air of authenticity, and the setting of the tale is an old boys’ reunion, where they reminisce about him. In particular, they recall escapades involving ‘stalkiness’, making particular mention of the Rabbits-Eggs incident.

Dick Four, who has already termed Indians as ‘Fuzzies’ and ‘hairy villains’, describes Stalky’s tactics in setting two rival Indian factions against each other – the Malots and the Khye-Kheens. He says:

Stalky’s notion was to crawl out at dusk with his Sikhs, in the back of the Kyhe-Kheens position, and then lob in a few long shots at the Malots while the attack was well on. ‘That’ll divert their minds and help to agitate ’em.’ he said. ‘Then you chaps can come out and sweep up the pieces and we’ll rendezvous at the head of the gorge.’56

53 Ibid., p.281.
Like ‘Rabbits-Eggs’, the Indians are also ‘Othered.’ We are told that Indians are killed in skirmishes – ‘abolished’ ‘scragged’, ‘sweep up the pieces’, and ‘brownin’ (which the notes tell us is ‘firing into the mass without taking precise aim’), and the perfunctory statement that they ‘finished off the men and snaffled the sheep.’ The Sikhs under Stalky’s command are described as ‘the dear children’ (in other words less powerful), and provide another example of the way in which the Indians are ‘Othered.’ But Clare Bradford reminds us that it should not be supposed that colonial discourses ‘operate like straightjackets’: ‘dominant discourses can always be contested by alternative, questioning voices.’

For Foucault, power is a precarious and unstable structure and his histories reveal ‘resistances’ to dominant ideologies. His understanding of power as dynamic comes from the idea that ‘power is employed through a net-like organisation’ and where power is ‘something that circulates’ and is always mediated by social alignments. Modelling power relations on war (war not governed by rules and war conceived as ‘senseless’) power is not for Foucault a system of domination, not something to be possessed. He describes power relations as ‘a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance transverses social stratifications and individual unities’. Joseph Rouse sums up Foucault’s position as being a dynamic of power where power ‘is dispersed across complicated and heterogeneous social networks marked by ongoing struggle. Power is not something present at specific locations within those networks, but is instead always at issue in ongoing attempts to (re)produce effective social alignments.’

In *Stalky & Co.*, it is generally characters from working-class backgrounds that are ‘Othered’. The local people are marked out as ‘Other’ in that the broad Devon dialect is used for dialogue with them. They are portrayed as shifty, illiterate, untrustworthy and morally questionable – inferior to the United Services College boys.

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'Slaves of the Lamp I’, although only a brief episode, presents an example of a challenge to gender identity, where boys are able to escape the institutional masculine ethos with a temporary act of transgression. The episode in question is a rehearsal for the pantomime *Aladdin*.

Beetle … in a gray skirt and a wig of chestnut sausage-curls, set slantwise above a pair of spectacles mended with an old boot-lace, represented the Widow Twankey.

The tone and reflexive nature of the discourse in this incident, engages with, yet makes fun of, the cross-dressing:

M’Turk, in a violet silk shirt and a coquettish blue turban, slouched forward as one thoroughly ashamed of himself … [and] Stalky, The Slave of the Lamp, in black tights and doublet, a black silk half-mask on his forehead, whistled lazily where he lay on top of the piano.59

Similarly, the combination of the use of the words ‘coquettish’ and ‘ashamed’ in the same paragraph signal ambivalence and contradiction about cross-dressing. Victoria Flanagan, in her article ‘Cross-dressing as Transvestism in Children’s Literature: An analysis of a ‘gender-performative’ model’ (which focuses on a female to male children’s cross-dressing model), asserts that cross-dressing can interrogatively examine the socially constructed notion of gender and ‘becomes the means through which gender can be positively subverted and re-appropriated by subjects to whom it does not holistically “apply”. … The cross-dressing subjects reclaim gender for themselves as they subvert, transgress, destabilise and rebel against traditional gender ‘values.’60 Thus, Stalky and Co. are able to transgress the ultra-masculine by temporarily adopting feminine roles in the pantomime – and yet they are also able to return to their usual roles. Just a few

pages later they reminisce about dropping rats down the study chimney of one of the masters: ‘Mason’s rooms were filled with rats every day … it took him a week to draw the inference.’

Both of these linked episodes question the discourse they embody. They subvert the dominant masculine discourse and revert to ‘Othering’ to underscore the superiority of the white middle-class male.

**The role of women in *Stalky & Co.*

Women in *Stalky & Co.* are represented in terms of contamination, and are set in opposition to hypermasculine males. In a conversation with the padre, Beetle claims:

> I’ve met chaps in the holidays who’ve got married House-masters. It’s perfectly awful! They have babies and teething and measles and all that sort of thing right bung in the school; and the maters’ wives give tea-parties-tea-parties, Padre! – and ask the chaps to breakfast.

This theme is repeated on the next page, but this time by Stalky:

> I’ve met chaps in the holidays, an’ they’ve told me the same thing. It looks awfully pretty for one’s people to see – a nice separate house with a nice lady in charge an’ all that. But it is’nt. It takes the House-masters off their work, and it gives the prefects a heap too much power, an’ – an’ – it rots up everything.

This emphasis on the masculine rather than the feminine is constantly reinforced, and the effect on the reader is repeated emphasis on the desired male role model.

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62 Rudyard Kipling, *The Complete Stalky & Co.*, Ibid., p.120.
When women appear at all, it is usually in general terms that relegate their gender roles to the margins, such as ‘bicycle-riding maidens’ mentioned in passing in Slaves of the Lamp II. A few women feature in Stalky & Co., but have only a line or two of the dialogue. ‘Fair Lena of the laundry’, as she is called in ‘An Unsavoury Interlude’ ventures an opinion about the dead cat under the floorboards: ‘Her died mousin’, I reckon, poor thing’ but the college servant Richards who found it dismisses her perfunctorily: ‘Yeou go ‘tend your own business, Lena.’ Likewise, the mother in ‘Slaves of the Lamp I’ who hosts the old boys reunion and provides ‘a dinner from the Arabian Nights served in an eighty-foot hall full of ancestors and pots of flowering roses’, is allowed only one comment: ‘You boys want to talk, so I shall say good-night now.’ There follows a description of the all-male camaraderie that Kipling endorses. We are told that they ‘gathered about an apple-wood fire, in a gigantic polished steel grate, under a mantelpiece ten feet high, and the Infant compassed us about with curious liqueurs and that kind of cigarette which serves best to introduce your own pipe’.

Mary, the daughter of village shopkeeper Mother Yeo, features in ‘The Last Term’. She is described as ‘fair-haired, blue-eyed, and apple-cheeked, and carrying ‘a bowl of cream in her hands.’ She is described as weak in character and easily bribed into becoming an accomplice to a plot by Stalky and Co. to bring about the downfall and humiliation of one of the hated school prefects, Tulke. This is their revenge on Tulke for getting them into trouble with the headmaster. Mary is offered half a crown to kiss the prefect in the village main street – in the knowledge that his fellow sixth-formers will reprimand Tulke for breaking school rules. Mary accepts the challenge and ‘laid a vast hand upon his shoulder’. She says in the Devon dialect, ‘Gie I a kiss! Don’t they larn ’ee manners to College?’ In this gesture she is made to appear almost grotesque with her ‘large hand’ and her dialect separates her in speech from the middle-class

63 Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co., Ibid., p.121.
64 Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co. Ibid., p.95.
66 Ibid.,
67 Rudyard Kipling’s The Complete Stalky & Co., Ibid., p.264.
characters. Mary, like all of the women in *Stalky & Co.* exists outside the boundaries of school and is portrayed as corruptible and easily manipulated.

*Stalky & Co.* incorporates a paradox about masculinity. It promotes male self-sufficiency and camaraderie as important ingredients in the making of imperial men, yet ‘boyishness’ is also given prominence. For the most part, the *Stalky & Co.* ethos suggests the suppression of feminine instincts. Patsy Adam Smith describes this ethos as ‘raw, practical and unsentimental’. The power of the strong always prevails over the weak. Kimberley Reynolds describes the way that masculinity is presented in the boys’ story as the polar opposite of femininity where acceptable behaviour in male characters could not include any characteristics that aligned them with the feminine.

In this way boys’ fiction provided a coherent, exclusively masculine subject position for its readers. The effect of constantly reinforcing this position was not only to define manliness, but to produce a reader who accepted the definition. … the relationship between symbol and symbolized is not only referential, does not simply describe, but is productive, that is, it creates.

Central to the *Stalky & Co.* message is a tough masculinity favouring self-sufficiency and a propensity for the strong to dominate the weak. Yet there are situations, as detailed above, where this is destabilised. One paradox is the message that the school is one that turns boys into men – yet the United Services School actively celebrates boyhood.

*Stalky & Co.* does not follow the masculine pattern of the majority of formulaic school stories. In such stories one boy will be hypermasculine and his close friend will be hyperfeminine. Often both boys admire the qualities of the other and the inference is that all these qualities are good in that they complement each other. An example of the way that masculinity is contested in *Stalky & Co.* is in an

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69 Quoted in Isabel Quigley’s Introduction to Rudyard Kipling’s *The Complete Stalky & Co*; Ibid., p.xxvi.
episode that features cross-dressing. The three boys are cultured aesthetes (their study is decorated in the style of William Morris and the pre-Raphaelites), yet they indulge in hypermasculine aggressive behaviour.

Although a tough masculinity is promulgated, there are situations where this destabilises. For example, domestic chores, usually represented as ‘feminine’; commonly fall to younger boys who light fires and make toast for the older, more ‘manly’ boys. Beverly Lyon Clark underscores what she calls ‘the instability of gender and its potency’,\(^7\) asserting that ‘schools can curiously feminize boys.’\(^8\)

**Violence in *Stalky & Co.***

Very well then, let’s roast him, cried Flashman, and catches hold of Tom by the collar; one or two boys hesitate, but the rest join in.\(^9\)

This incident from Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* and the reprisals on the school bullies in ‘The Moral Reformer’ in *Stalky & Co.*, are probably the two best-known incidents of bullying in school fiction. Carole Scott in her article ‘Kipling’s Combat Zones’ states:

Kipling exalts the harshest side of the manly code, especially the enthusiastic approval of physical punishment and violence and the stalwart indifference to pain, while encouraging the suppression of softer ‘feminine’ feelings that he thought made men vulnerable.\(^4\)

*Stalky & Co.* promulgates a particular masculine ideal based on the following alternative modes of operation, which were paradoxically critical of and compatible with the prevailing public school system. This ideal can be summed

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\(^7\) Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering The School Story*, Ibid., p.19.
\(^8\) Beverly Lyon Clark, *Regendering the School Story*, Ibid., p.5.
up as valorising the importance of all-male camaraderie – what Carole Scott terms ‘an ordered, all-male structure whose shaping power turns boys into men’.  

Scott goes on to explain that ‘the men … are fierce, courageous, hard, even cruel; they exult in pain and they exult in winning’. Part of Kipling’s code of boyhood is an acceptance and even promotion of violence. An associated part of this code is bullying – or the systematic abuse of power. In this section I will explain the undercurrent of violence that is present in the text, and how it relates to male power. Kipling constructs a cruel worldview in *Stalky & Co.*, and Isabel Quigly calls the chapter ‘famously nasty’. H. G. Wells links the ‘nastiness’ of this episode to colonialism, claiming that this particular episode is ‘the key to the ugliest, most retrogressive, and finally fatal idea of modern imperialism’ that ‘lights up the political psychology of the British Empire at the close of the nineteenth century very vividly’. There is a link between Empire and the masculine ideal promulgated in *Stalky & Co*. Connell also believes that the development of masculinity and the creation of overseas Empires are important. He traces four developments in the making up of social practice that is now known as ‘masculinity’, and places the power relations of Empire as one of the most important. First was a series of challenges to the way that sexuality and personhood were understood in European countries after Renaissance secular culture and the Protestant reformation disrupted medieval Catholicism and the monastic system. Connell states that ‘the power of religion to control the intellectual world and to regulate everyday life began its slow, contested, but decisive decline.’ Marital heterosexuality displaced the monastic tradition of celibacy and became the cultural norm. Individualism and the idea of an autonomous self led to masculinity being defined by rationality and the notion of delivering reason to the rest of the world linked and legitimised patriarchy and Empire. Second was the creation of empires and third was the growth of

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75 Carole Scott, ‘Kipling’s Combat Zones’ Ibid., p.11.
76 Carole Scott, Ibid., p.56.
77 Isabel Quigly, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, Ibid., p.121.
78 Quoted in Quigly, Ibid., p.121.
commercial cities under capitalism, which led to institutionalised masculinity together with the emergence of sexual subcultures. The fourth development that Connell identifies is the strong centralised state providing even larger-scaled institutionalisation of men’s powers – with masculinity defined in opposition to femininity. What he calls a ‘hegemonic type of masculinity’ has its origins in eighteenth century gentry masculinity and leads to a number of subordinated and marginalised masculinities. 81 For Connell, three out of these four developments were central, and he lists these as ‘challenges to the gender order by women, the logic of the gendered accumulation process in industrial capitalism, and the power relations of Empire.’

Two episodes link violence and colonialism in Stalky & Co. The first, a chapter called ‘The Moral Reformers’ is set at the school but is then linked to another episode set in the outposts of Empire. In ‘The Moral Reformers’ the school chaplain (‘Padre’ as he is called) is one of the few members of staff that Stalky and friends approve of (in fact they call him ‘beloved’, which underscores the important role of religion in this text). The Padre asks them to deal with two older boys who have been bullying a younger boy. The fact that it is the chaplain, an authority figure, who sanctions the brutality against the school bullies sets up a situation where Stalky and Co. are seen to be justified in their vengeful acts. The chapter begins with the Padre pointing out to Stalky and Co. that the new boy, Clewer (described as a victim ‘a little chap … whimpering in a corner’), 83 ‘has been hammered till he’s nearly an idiot’. 84 Beetle (Kipling’s alter ego), aligns himself with the victim:

But I got it worse than any one. If you want an authority on bullyin’, Padre, come to me. Corksrews – brush-drill – keys – head-knucklin’ – arm-twistin’ – rockin’ – Ag Ags – and all the rest of it. 85

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81 R W Connell, Masculinities, Ibid., pp.189-191.
82 R W Connell, Masculinities, Ibid., p.191.
83 Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co. Ibid., p.123.
84 Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co., Ibid., p123.
85 Ibid.,
The victim/bully dialectic signalled in relation to Clewer can be seen in terms of the domination of imperial races that I discuss later in this chapter, and the expressions ‘hammered’ and ‘brush-drill’ suggest some sort of mechanical action – remote and detached from the user of these ‘tools’.

The Padre gives the trio a clear hint that he would like them to avenge Clewer’s bullies:

> Listen to me. I ask you – my own Tenth Legion – to take things up quietly. I want little Clewer made fairly clean and decent. … As for the other boy, whoever he is, you can use your influence … in any way you please to – dissuade him. … I’ll leave it to you.86

The term ‘Tenth Legion’ links the activities of the schoolboys to the world beyond – that is, as future leaders of the Empire. Padre and the headmaster are both in agreement that bullies need to be educated by other boys – ‘they either educate the school, or the school, as in this case, educates them.’87 John M. MacKenzie, in his chapter ‘The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype’ in Managan and Walvin’s *Manliness and Morality*, explains that concepts about masculinity were conveyed through various youth organisations and popular images in juvenile literature. Discipline was part of that code. In his implicit instructions to Stalky and Co., Padre, as their superior in position and years, expects them to obey orders. MacKenzie states that in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods:

> Discipline for the young was to take precise forms: obeying orders from elders and superiors, training in firearms, acceptance of violence as part of the natural order, preparation for war and a strict separation of sexual roles.88

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86 Ibid., p.123.
88 John M MacKenzie, ‘The imperial pioneer and hunter and the British masculine stereotype in late Victorian and Edwardian times’, in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in*
MacKenzie calls this masculine code a ‘frontier’ stereotype, with hunting an
expression of global dominance. Stalky and Co.’s sport of ‘stalkiness’ exemplifies
this model and it fits with MacKenzie’s list of attributes of the imperial male to
include ‘courage, endurance, individualism, sportsmanship … resourcefulness, a
mastery of environmental sings and a knowledge of natural history.’ The trio
practice their ‘stalkiness’ under the guise and cover of membership of the Natural
History Society where they steal birds’ eggs, indulge in poaching and
occasionally cause pain to animals. In the first tale of *The Complete Stalky & Co.*
the boys goad a herd of cows that are ready to be milked up steep hills to another
farmer’s yard, even though they are aware of the consequences for the cows. ‘It’s
awfully bad for cows, too, to run ’em about in milk’, said M’Turk. They hide in a
barn but because the terrified cows crowd into the barn, blocking their escape,
they fire catapults at them, making them ‘dance’ with pain. Reflecting on their
actions they declare that they ‘were about as stalky as they make ’em.’ It is
Hartopp, the natural history master who declares that such actions are ‘normal’.
He says that ‘It’s not brutality’, ‘It’s boy; only boy.’ This suggests that for boys,
a level of violence is to be expected.

The trio then discusses how they can help Clewer. M’Turk rejects Beetle’s idea of
making him a study-fag:

> We ain’t goin’ to have any beastly Erickin. D’you want to walk about with
your arm round his neck?

This suggested solution of befriending Clewer, rather than avenging his
tormentors, criticises a similar situation in Farrar’s *Eric, Or, Little by Little*.
‘Erickin’ refers to the mid-century school story that was sentimental and framed
in the context of Evangelicism, where boys were more likely to become moral guides rather than physical abusers of a boy in trouble.

Having decided to take revenge on the bullies, and while searching for Clewer, they hear a muffled noise, described as a ‘thin piping mixed with tears’\(^93\) and discover him being bullied by two senior boys: ‘hefty chaps … precocious hairy youths between 17 and 18’ who had been sent to the school to ‘cram’ them for Sandhurst. We are told that ‘the lights of war flickered over Stalky’s face’. Stalky says, ‘I want to jape with ’em:\(^94\)

He drove his hands into his pockets and stared out of the window at the sea, whistling between his teeth, Then a foot tapped the floor; one shoulder lifted; he wheeled, and began the short quick double-shuffle – the war-dance of Stalky in meditation. Thrice he crossed the empty form-room, with compressed lips and expanded nostrils, swaying to the quick-step.\(^95\)

Stalky’s ‘war-dance’ signals that their task of revenge on the bullies is approached as if hunting a quarry. The hunting spirit that Stalky and Co embody is represented as if in preparation for war, while at the same time their manoeuvres are depicted as a source of fun, sport and adventure. The term ‘jape’ puts violence on the same level as a practical joke. MacKenzie asserts that ‘part of the hunting code seems to have been a love of japes, and ruses’ and that ‘it was all part of the ‘boyish masters’ effect – a concern to avoid a too serious approach to imperial rule.\(^96\) The word ‘quick-step’ and references to ‘war-dance’ plus a repeated reference to a line in Galton’s *Art of Travel*: ‘the kid who’s bleatin’ excited the tiger’, all suggest war as ritual and sacrifice. For Kipling, ‘The Law’ is central to his credo and necessary for the next stage, the ‘Great Game’ – both are metaphors for war and espionage. Paul Fussell also confirms that attitudes to war before 1914 held the enemy as ‘the foe’, warfare as ‘strife’ and a soldier as a

\(^93\) Ibid.,
\(^95\) Ibid.,
‘warrior’. Fussell asserts that there is a link between warfare and sexuality. 97 The erotic significance of Stalky’s ‘excitement’ in the face of violence is discussed later in connection with the next textual episode, which I discuss in the second part of this section.

Stalky and Co. manage to trick the two boys, Sefton and Campbell, into thinking that M’Turk and Stalky are bullying Beetle. Lured by the sounds of Beetle’s ‘screams’ the trio manage to lock them in a room, truss them with ropes, and then systematically torture them. Writers such as James Joyce in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man have given us an insight into the plight of the victim of bullying. But Kipling, who was passionately interested in the youthful search for identity and who explored its theme in many of his books, chooses instead to relate this tale on one plane of feeling, with a lack of character depth. The descriptions of bullying are chilling. The third person narration ensures an impersonal, detached stance:

> It needs three boys and two boxing-gloves to rock a boy to sleep. Again the operation has nothing to do with its name. Sefton was ‘rocked’ till his eyes set in his head and he gasped and crowed for breath, sick and dizzy. … In silence Campbell was ‘rocked’ sixty four times. I believe I’m goin’ to die! he gasped. 98

A number of tortures are employed, with the two boys trussed and bound (‘the man trussed for cock-fighting is, perhaps, the most helpless thing in the world.’) 99 The names of the tortures are ‘head-knuckles’, ‘brush-drill’, ‘corkscrew’, ‘rocking’ and ‘the key’ – the last of which, we are told, ‘has no key at all’ and ‘hurts excessively’. Connell discusses the way that the metaphor of the body as machine has been used by biological determinists to give an evolutionary explanation of human society. For example, the body ‘functions’ and ‘operates.’ Connell goes on to discuss a number of ways in which the body is conceived in modern gender ideology, and concludes that the body ‘is inescapable in the

construction of masculinity; but what is inescapable is not fixed. The bodily process, entering into the social process, becomes part of history (both personal and collective) and a possible object of politics.\textsuperscript{100}

The narrative continues: ‘the torture of the Corkscrew … has nothing to do with corkscrews – [and] is keener than the torture of the key. … they endured several minutes of it, and their language necessitated the gag.’\textsuperscript{101} The tortures are identical to those that Stalky said he had received himself as a young boy and the repetition of their name followed by the phrase ‘the bleating of the tiger excites the kid’ reinforces the ritual.

On my 1997 research visit to Haileybury School I found additional material on torture in Kipling’s hand-written original manuscript, which never became part of Stalky & Co. It described the ‘Ag Ag’ as follows:

> An ag ag is a boy whose thumbs are tied to his big toes with six inches of sharp cutting twine in which posture he looks rather like a toad.\textsuperscript{102}

Other omissions from the final publication are embellishments to the torture, such as ‘Stalky, sitting on Sefton’s right shoulder alternatively throttled and thumped him’ and:

> Gag him first, said M’Turk throwing over an Isabella-coloured handkerchief. The advice was good because the head-thrust which means digging both knuckles into a boy’s temples with a swift corkscrew motion is acutely painful.

For the reader, the omission of the descriptions serves only to add to the horror. Angus Wilson in The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling calls these tortures ‘the

\textsuperscript{100} R W Connell, Masculinities, Ibid., p.56.
\textsuperscript{101} Rudyard Kipling, The Complete Stalky & Co., Ibid., p.130.
\textsuperscript{102} Rudyard Kipling, original handwritten Stalky & Co., manuscript held at Haileybury College, Hertfordshire, UK, p.6.
hinting of unspeakable things – sadism disguised as moral realism',\(^{103}\) and points out that the systematic bullying of the bullies ‘is not made any better by the emphasis upon the fact that it is performed coolly without loss of temper’. He also finds disturbing ‘the deliberate cruelty of the goodies to the baddies in order to teach them a lesson, or simply as a necessary expression of mastery.’\(^ {104}\) Joseph Bristow, in *Empire Boys* explains that violence was ‘an aesthetics of a new kind of militaristic masculinity. … Here was a distinctive imperial spirit of rebellion that turned its back on the strictures of the schoolroom and looked across the world for the imaginative escape to be enjoyed in adventure and romance.’\(^ {105}\) Rather than turning his back on the schoolroom, Kipling managed to use violence to link it to the Empire.

Violence, for Connell, ‘can be a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in struggles amongst groups of men’. He explains that terror is used as a means of drawing boundaries and making exclusions and that violence ‘is part of a system of domination’. He goes on to say that there would be less need to intimidate in ‘a thoroughly legitimate hierarchy.’\(^ {106}\)

After Stalky and Co. torture the bullies, they decide shave Sefton, who has a moustache. We are told that they ‘scrope’ him. Finally he is humiliated and reduced to the status of an animal (‘He is a hog, you know; we might as well singe him’). With the use of invented language that evokes cruelty without actually describing specific detail, and the use of rhythms and repetition, a fantasy of tortures is created. The scene begins and ends with mention of Stalky’s war dance. In the final mention of it, the war dance is replaced by a sleep that comes from exertion. ‘There should have been a war-dance, but that the three were so utterly tired that they almost went to sleep above the tea-cups in their study, and slept till prep.’\(^ {107}\) This sequence of events – the ‘war-dance’ to prepare for the

\(^{103}\) Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Angus Wilson*, p.49.

\(^{104}\) Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Angus Wilson*, p.49.


tortures, the actual tortures, and the ‘sleep’ afterwards are sexually symbolic. MacKenzie describes the way that ‘hunting can readily be interpreted as sexual sublimation’ arising from ‘the tensions induced by the great risk and the ecstasy of release when the hunter prevails and stands over his kill.’

MacKenzie links the fact that ‘the object of the Hunt was the male of the species’, with the collection of horns and fascination with horn size – and suggests that they represent western man’s dominance of the world and ‘indicated to a Darwinian age the sexual selection of the fittest.’

During the torture, Beetle makes mention of ‘Molly’ Fairburn – who he was bullied by as a younger boy. He says ironically: ‘They never really bully – “Molly” Fairburn didn’t. Only knock ’em about a little bit. That’s what they say. Only kick their souls out of ’em, and they go and blub in the box-rooms. Shove their heads into the ulsters an “blub”.’ The use of the name ‘Molly’ is highly significant: in the masculine public school ethos, Molly is the worst possible insult. The description of Beetle’s former bully as ‘Molly’ is couched in terms of feminine behaviour – signalling a contradiction to the code of ultra-masculinity.

Jeffrey Weeks, in *Coming Out: Homosexual politics in Britain from the nineteenth century to the present*, describes the transformation of gender in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Antwerp, London and Amsterdam. These commercial cities saw the emergence of sexual subcultures – Molly houses established in each. Connell believes that as a result of changed conditions of everyday life, ‘a calculative rationality’ permeated urban culture and the entrepreneurial culture of commercial capitalism ‘institutionalised a form of masculinity, creating and legitimating new forms of gendered work and power in the counting-house, the warehouse and the exchange.’

Weeks writes about the gender practices of ‘Mollies’ and says that ‘Molly’ was a slang term for effeminate men who cross-dressed, danced and had homosexual relations. Weeks confirms that in the early 1700s there were ‘Mollies Clubs’ in London, a sub-

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110 R W Connell, *Masculinities*, Ibid., p.188.
culture ‘closely associated with transvestism and stereotyped effeminate
behaviour … reinforced by the words used for homosexuals in the period – Molly,
Madge-cull, Marianne.’

MacKenzie’s theories about popular culture and imperialism are also connected to
the gendered nature of late nineteenth century life. He suggests that sexual
separation is ‘often a characteristic of dominant societies’ and that ‘the provision
of the male sanctum became an architectural necessity’. In ‘Slaves of the Lamp
II’, which details an old boys’ reunion which takes place in England (when Stalky
is still on active service in India), the men are accommodated in a separate part of
the host’s house:

Luckily the baize doors of the bachelors’ wing fitted tight, for we dressed
promiscuously in the corridor or in each others rooms, talking, calling,
shouting, and anon waltzing by pairs to songs of Dick Four’s own
devising.

We are told that at the end of ‘The Moral Reformers’, Stalky and Co. are left
‘dripping with excitement and exertion’ and the same physicality and eroticised
rituals are repeated and represented in this chapter. MacKenzie mentions that the
use of the word ‘baize’ is significant here: ‘even to the extent of contrasts in
interior decoration where women’s areas were “pastel-shaded and chintz
bedecked” and masculinity asserted itself “through the dark browns and green
baize”, thus representing sexual separation’ through domestic aesthetics.
MacKenzie claims that ‘the provision of the male sanctum became an
architectural necessity.’ This trope is contradicted in Stalky & Co. because the
triumvate’s study at the school is contrasted against the sparsely furnished
schoolboy’s study. It is described as being decorated with antiques, friezes and
pictures in the style of the Pre-Raphaelites. So their study is masculine by virtue
being a male preserve, but it is also a feminine sanctuary in that the boys decorate

111 Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to
it with pictures and china ornaments and read Browning and Ruskin within its walls.

Stalky is in charge of a platoon of Indian Sikhs and they take refuge in an old stone fort with a watch-tower. Two old boys of the school, Dick Four and Tertius, find the besieged Stalky – his first words of greeting links the encounter with the rehearsals for the school pantomime. He calls them by the name of the characters, who are fictional but whose nicknames suggest power:

‘Hello, Aladdin! Hello, Emperor! … You’re just in time for the performance.’

The ‘performance’ turns out to be the viewing of the body of a fellow old boy, Everett. The use of Stalky’s expressions of ‘performance’ and ‘comfy’ is curious. The narrator, Dick Four states: ‘To make us quite comfy, Stalky took us up to the watch-tower to see poor Everett’s body’:

It looked like a girl of fifteen – not a hair on the little fellow’s face. He’d been shot through the temple but the Malots had left their mark on him. Stalky unbuttoned the tunic, and showed it to us – a rummy sickle-shaped cut on the chest.

The use of the impersonal and distancing third person pronoun ‘it’ links the incident with the bullying in ‘The Moral Reformers’, as does the repetitious description of Stalky’s physical reaction to the body, as described by Tertius:

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‘Member the beastly look on Stalky’s face, though, with his nostrils all blown out, same as he used to look when he was bullyin’ a fag? That was a lovely evening.\textsuperscript{118}

The use of the expression ‘lovely evening’ juxtaposed with the details of Everett’s (feminised) body and the use of the childish word ‘member’ for ‘remember’ suggest what Preben Kaarsholm has called ‘a deeply and depressed and neurotic’ worldview and one that ‘fought for a masculine, activist “realism” as an alternative to the “sickly” aestheticism of the decadents.’\textsuperscript{119} Describing Everett’s body as like ‘a girl’ and his face as hairless links with what MacKenzie claims is the hunt’s capacity to mark out ‘the virile from the “effeminate” imperialist’. The use of the phrase ‘lovely evening’ together with the word ‘performance’ with its suggestion of pantomime resonate with MacKenzie’s suggestion that a military ideology came to see war as a ‘theatrical event’. Kipling uses popular songs and jokes from the music hall throughout \textit{Stalky & Co.} and MacKenzie contends that ‘music hall performances represented an authentic popular voice, whose rhythms and sentiments he tried to match in his ballads and poems.’\textsuperscript{120}

Stalky uses the cover of Everett’s body to steal out at night. He kills a Khye-Kheen in revenge for Everett’s death and marks him with the same sickle-shaped Malot insignia – something he knew would enrage the Malots and cause them to attack the Khye-Kheens:

\begin{quote}
He’d kept the hole open for his own ends; and laid poor Everett’s body slap over the well of the stairs that led down from the watch-tower. He’d had to remove and replace the corpse every time he used the passage. The Sikhs wouldn’t go near the place of course.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{121} Rudyard Kipling, \textit{The Complete Stalky & Co.}, Ibid., p.286.
Jeffrey Richards describes this act of revenge as ‘Kipling’s … unforgiving nature. … a kind of Old Testament retribution was a recurrent feature of all Kipling’s work.’

The suggestion that the Sikhs are superstitious about dead bodies illustrates the part that popular culture plays in promoting Empire, and it also represents non-Western races as ‘Other’ and inferior. Edward Said says that this ‘immense reservoir of popular wisdom’ where the Empire was ‘extolled’ is necessary ‘to England’s strategic, moral, and economic well-being, [and] at the same time characterizing the dark or inferior races as unregenerate, in need of suppression, severe rule, indefinite subjugation.’ Kaarsholm situates Kipling’s imagery of India and the East in ‘a conglomerate of obscenity, infection, maliciousness’, stating that Kipling’s heroes are ‘born in a nether-world of dark imaginings’. Indeed, ‘many of the mental structures and emotional energies’ that give his writings ‘form and power’ are similar to those ‘that helped to constitute the mass influence and ideological domination of fascism.’ On the one hand, then, Kipling’s tale ‘reproduces the aggressive landscape of the high imperialist project’, as Said puts it, but on the other hand the contradictions reveal the complexities of India.

Cultural texts imported the foreign into Europe in ways that very clearly bear the mark of the imperial enterprise… At first they stimulated the interest of European audiences; by the beginning of the twentieth century, they were used to convey an ironic sense of how vulnerable Europe was…

As detailed earlier, Stalky has a ‘beastly look’ on his face as he views Everett’s body: his nostrils are dilated, and Dick Four likens the expression to the torturing/bullying incident. Stalky’s reactions and the physical description of

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122 Jeffrey Richards, Happiest Days, Ibid., p.149.
bodies suggests eroticism, and link to what David Trotter calls ‘marked bodies’ and their relationship to desire in late Victorian and Edwardian fiction. Trotter claims that although the body was represented in Victorian literature ‘it was only towards the end of the century, as description in general became more minute, that writers started to supply a fuller range of erotic detail.’

Surfaces and textures become metaphors for desire, and Trotter describes the way that attention to hair on a body such as ‘golden down’ or scars, for example, became subject to scandalous speculation ‘because it ignored the assumption, widespread in Victorian fiction, that a face consists of features rather than surfaces’.

Nevertheless, Trotter argues that ‘the body was beginning to be described in new ways, ways that revalued, or refigured, desire’: the body had become culturally inscribed and able to signify desire.

Stalky’s physical reactions can be seen to symbolise the awakening of unacknowledged sexual desire – a trope uncommon in late nineteenth century school story and one that goes against the grain of the dominant ideal. Trotter draws attention to the fact that in the years before the First World War an emphasis was laid on hygiene rather than purity where in the words of the hygienists it was felt that there was ‘too long a period between the awakening of strong sexual desire in adolescence and the possibility of regular gratification’, and a tension was recognised in the control of sexuality. Trotter says that it was ‘the recognition of sexuality’ that needed to be controlled – the preferred meaning of sexuality did not allude to pleasure, but rather it meant racial evolution, or ‘the future of the race’. Trotter goes on to say the solution was to ‘preoccupy’ the adolescent mind with healthy books – literary classics. The National Home-Reading Union was founded the same year as the publication of Stalky & Co. and issued primers, reading lists and recognition from boards of education. What this means in terms of subject positions for readers is that there is a subliminal erotic thread that would be unrecognised in its day but that runs counter to the aggressive masculinity it promotes.

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One of the areas that these two chapters from *Stalky & Co.* highlight is the polarised view about masculine and feminine attributes and the fear of effeminacy. Weeks points out that there was an ‘attempt to sustain a stereotype of male homosexuals as decadent, corrupt, effete and effeminate … [with] frequent linking of masturbation, ‘the secret sin’, with homosexuality.’ He quotes Richard von Krafft-Ebing:

> The sexual functions of men exercise a very marked influence upon the development and preservation of character. Manliness and self-reliance are not the qualities which adorn the impotent onanist.

In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault states that the ‘calculated management of life’ merged ‘the disciplining of the individual’ and ‘regulatory controls’ to form a ‘biopolitics of the population’ in the nineteenth century. As Ann Laura Stoler puts it, ‘nineteenth century biopower represented a shift toward the regulation of the social body, toward the normalization of collective entities, and away from individualising regimes.’

Stoler states that this ‘technology of power centred on life’ produces a normalising society and a new form of racism inscribed within it. What is important for a discussion of *Stalky & Co.* and its didactic stance is Stoler’s assertion that ‘surveillance of sexuality and insistence on racial supremacy’ in Foucault’s work omits the ‘crucial elements of gender and Empire.’

> It is the imperial-wide discourses that linked children’s health programs to racial survival, tied increased campaigns for domestic hygiene to colonial expansion, made child-rearing an imperial and class duty.

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131 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Ibid., p.139.  
133 Ibid., p.33.  
134 Ann Laura Stoler, Ibid., p.35.
Character building is nascent in didactic texts such as *Stalky & Co.* Kipling’s ideas about rearing boys to become imperial men was part of what Kenneth Kidd has reminded us were late nineteenth century and early twentieth century preoccupations. Kidd tells us that the term ‘boyology’ was used by Henry William Gibson in 1916 to describe a philosophy ‘codifying a cluster of ideas about boyhood and the national character that were modeled in part on urban child-saving efforts … directed chiefly to white, middle-class boys’. The boy, now deemed a problem, had, according to Kidd, ‘replaced the ‘vanished’ native as a literary and social subject by the end of the nineteenth century.’

By this time, as well as advocating a romantic return to pastoral innocence and pleasure of the countryside as a ‘cure’ for urban problems, the topics of health, poverty, the rising population of the working class and the boy in particular came under the microscope. Brian Doyle, in *English and Englishness* asserts:

> the period between 1880 and 1920 was marked by a sequence of strategies to combine under the loose banner of ‘efficiency’ traditions of aristocratic cultural mystique with utilitarian programmes of industrial and social administration. From this perspective, the working class was seen as the object for colonization by its cultural superiors in order that ‘respectable’ members of the class be separated from their ‘rough’ residue, and the leaders of the class be made fit for a limited role in governing the nation.

Doyle goes on to say that not only were the nation’s mothers given the task of raising fine imperial boys, but also ‘schools were expected to inculcate in the nation’s children a proper sense of patriotic morality’. Boys were the subject of many discourses, but it was the working-class boy who was to be moulded and assimilated into the public school culture. Like the boys’ clubs and the Boy Scouts, *Stalky & Co.* was one such vehicle for this project.

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136 Kenneth Kidd, Ibid., p.49.
138 Brian Doyle, Ibid., pp.18-19
Joseph Bristow explains that ‘the boy was now identified as a political danger to the nation.’ He had to be trained to read the right things, to ‘turn his mind away from the debasing effects of penny fiction’, but also needed to work towards the goal of becoming a responsible citizen. As Bristow puts it, ‘Imperialism made the boy into an aggrandised subject – British born and bred – with the future of the world lying upon his shoulders.’\textsuperscript{139} He quotes social commentators such as Wills, who suggested that ignorance is dangerous and ‘like loose ballast in a vessel’, may ‘roll from side to side and so to destroy national stability’.\textsuperscript{140}

Working-class boys and their education were the focus of interest from many angles. Their leisure reading was under scrutiny: critic B. G. Johns declared in the 1887 Edinburgh Review, ‘there is now before us such a veritable mountain of pernicious trash, mostly in paper covers, and all “Price One Penny”’.\textsuperscript{141} On the other hand, G. K. Chesterton points out that the bourgeoisie are not blameless:

\begin{quote}
It is the modern literature of the educated, which is avowedly and aggressively criminal … with a hypocrisy so ludicrous as to be almost unparalleled in history, we rate the gutter-boys for their immorality at the very time we are discussing … whether morality is valid at all.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

Kidd says that the primers and handbooks from 1900 to 1920, ‘were the legacy of at least half a century of meditation on boyhood. Kenneth Kidd places ‘boyology’ – with its knowledge about the individual and social body – in the context of Foucault’s model of bio-power. Kidd explains this as ‘a post-Enlightenment merging of technologies relating the species with those regulating the individual.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{141} J. Bristow, Ibid., p.12.
\textsuperscript{142} J. Bristow, Ibid., p.17.
\textsuperscript{143} Kenneth Kidd, Ibid., p.52.
Both Foucault’s, Stoler’s and Kidd’s comments allow us to understand the role that the discursive framework of sexuality played in children’s sexuality. In the case of boys and British imperialism (following Foucault’s conception of power in relational terms, rather than as a top-down model), we can say that the power relations of Empire had a productive nature as well as one of repression. Surveillance of boys and the attitudes towards masturbation actually produced an awareness of and a foregrounding of their sexuality. This model of power, then – where power is not imposed – allows for resistance. The heterogeneous discourse of *Stalky & Co.* is characterised by gaps and contradictions – the way the trio cross-dress in pantomime costumes, the description of Everett’s corpse as being like a girl, and the bully known as Molly – are all resistances that allow the text to be read as a counter-hegemonic text.
CHAPTER FOUR; ‘Whatever Boys Do…’

**Boy’s own Paper**

Imperialism offers a swashbuckling politics and a world in which neither epic heroism nor chivalry is dead.¹

Popular fiction, in helping to construct the political themes and racial stereotypes which were then transmitted back into social consciousness, was a powerful force … linking together elements of commercial distribution, mass persuasion and conservative ideology, in forms which only the cinema was able to rival successfully in succeeding decades.²

This chapter looks at the popular weekly periodical, *Boy’s Own Paper*. It was published from 1879 until the late 1950s – still the longest-running juvenile periodical in history.³ The *Boys’ Own Paper (BOP)* aimed to counter the pernicious influence of the ‘penny dreadfuls’ (noted for their sensationalism, slapstick and melodramatic plots) by producing ‘manly’ reading for boys, with public school stories as its staple ingredient. In the late nineteenth century its appeal was far ranging: it circulated over one million copies per edition⁴ and was read by boys, girls, men and women of all classes.

My previous chapters have already addressed questions concerning the discursive construction of gender, race and nation in nineteenth/early twentieth century British boys’ school fiction. The chapter will entail an analysis of ‘Emily’, which was serialised in two edition of *BOP* in 1887. I am here particularly interested in the way public school masculine ideals were extended across classes.

Popular boys’ fiction writers were contracted to write for *BOP*, and they inscribed a definition of masculinity that valorised an aggressive masculine ideal. As I will argue in my analysis of ‘Emily’, they used language, structure and content to

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suggest to readers that they accept this definition of masculinity as natural. These stories also demonstrate that although a masculine patriotic-imperial ideology is legitimated, there are contradictions inherent in the aggressive, masculinist and individualistic male public school stereotype. And these contradictions signal contested terrain.

The *BOP* motto, ‘Whatever boys do . . .’, is taken from *Juvenal (Satires I: 85–86)*: ‘*Quidquid agunt pueros nostros farrago libelli* – Whatever boys do is the subject of our little book.’ The editor has made a somewhat ironic choice of motto – particularly in relation to class. The contents of *BOP* are not what every boy does, but what *public schoolboys* do. As Kathryn Castle contends: those who wrote, edited and published the magazine were ‘Anglo-centric, chauvinistic, conservative’. While the public school novel was the staple of the middle and upper classes, it was the advent of the magazines directed mostly to adolescent boys that transmitted public school ideals to the working class. Patrick Dunae’s research highlights that *BOP* ‘enjoyed and dominated an extremely competitive market in a large field of boys’ papers’. Moreover, he attributes part of its success to ‘the calibre of its writers and illustrators such as Jules Verne, R. M. Ballantyne, and Talbot Baines Reed and the skills and imagination of its editor, George Hutchison.’

As demonstrated in chapters two and three, aspects of British imperialism in the late nineteenth century differed in attitude from the early and mid-Victorian decades.

The 1870s, then, were a watershed, marking a qualitative change away from the confidence of the early Victorian period to a time of doubt about the

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8 Ibid., p.123.
civilising mission of British commerce, worries about national efficiency, and fear of racial decline and cultural decadence.\footnote{Robert Dixon, \textit{Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Fiction, 1875-1914}, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.2.}

Donald Read also points to the complexity and contradictory nature of the late nineteenth century: ‘on the one hand the Edwardian years have been presented as some kind of golden era; on the other, as an age of accumulating crisis’.\footnote{Quoted by Robert Dixon in \textit{Writing the Colonial Adventure}, Ibid., p.2.} Conceptions of masculinity caused much anxiety, and public schools stories exemplified contradictions. Joseph Bristow asserts that ‘it was the duty of boys’ narratives to make the hero ‘an agent of moral restraint, on the one hand, and the embodiment of intrepid exploration on the other.’\footnote{Robert Dixon, Ibid., p.3.}

Just as my previous chapters have looked at ideologies of manliness in school novels, this chapter looks at shifting masculine ideals in the \textit{BOP}, and the way that British youth were socialised in their reading of these magazines in areas such as imperialism, racism and sexism. Masculine ideals and identities are multiple, complex, and unstable constructions. James Eli Adams contends in \textit{Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian masculinity} that ‘manliness is exemplary of all gender norms in being always under pressure from the very social dynamics that authorise it, the changing consolidation of social authority through new varieties of suspicion, exclusion, and affirmation.’\footnote{James Eli Adams, \textit{Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity}, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1995, p.19.} Dixon asserts that by the 1890s, a new imperialism promulgated ‘a spirit of defensive aggressiveness not only against “external threats”, but also against “internal decay”.’\footnote{Robert Dixon, Ibid., p.3.} His analysis of the colonial adventure story (or ‘ripping yarns’ as he calls them) can be extended to the school story because he examines degeneration and feminisation of British culture. ‘Emily’, the story analysed in this chapter, embodies the external threats and internal decay flagged by Dixon.
Connell alerts us to the fact that it was the fear that boys would be feminised through the influence of women that led to a struggle to control the reproduction of masculinity by late nineteenth century ideologists. He traces this ‘problem’ to changes in the organisation of domestic life whereby bourgeois culture and the practice of ‘separate spheres’ had emerged from what he calls ‘pressure from women against gentry masculinity’. He goes on to claim that this division was supported by an ideology of natural differences (promoted by the duelling cult in France) between women and men. In practice, however, he claims that although bourgeois women were subordinate to men, in their capacities as employers of servants, for example, they enjoyed considerable autonomy.\(^\text{14}\) Lynne Segal describes the way that British middle class changed during the nineteenth century: the vision was one of ‘home as a haven of domestic comfort and moral strength’ and where the monogamous bourgeois family would be the foundation of a ‘stable and industrious society’. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall put it in *Family Fortunes*, ‘the goal of all the bustle of the market place was to provide a proper moral and religious life for the family.’ Segal claims that there was ‘a far greater emphasis on psychological differences between men and women’, and that a gulf of difference grew between ‘the private “feminine” sphere of the household and the public “masculine” world of the market’.\(^\text{15}\)

Kimberley Reynolds contends that different spheres existed in the reading material of boys and girls: ‘after the passage of the 1870 Education Act, a child’s experience of school was increasingly likely to be shaped by gender as well as class’. She goes on to explain that after 1870 girls’ education ‘had a practical rather than an academic basis’, and that ‘this sexual discrimination within the educational system was to have repercussions on the form and status of fiction for girls and boys.’\(^\text{16}\) Musgrave claims that children’s literature was becoming more entertaining than at previous times in the nineteenth century, although with an underlying morally didactic aim.\(^\text{17}\) He alerts us to the fact that adventure stories, such as those of Henty and Marryatt, began to flood the market at this time.

\(^\text{15}\) Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion*, p.105.
\(^\text{17}\) PW Musgrave, *From Brown to Bunter*, Ibid., pp.91-2.
‘Emily’ is both entertaining and has a moral message, and addresses children across classes.

With regard to literacy, the educational system is of enormous importance and influence in disseminating the values of a dominant culture, and the English public school and public school stories are implicated in this process. J. S. Bratton claims that ‘the extension of the public school ethos to those in less privileged forms of education was necessarily indirect; it was only possible through the medium of fiction.’ John M. MacKenzie notes that ‘scarcely a story appeared which did not carry some form of patriotic message’. As Graham Dawson claims, ‘the nation itself came to be conceived as a gendered entity’.18 Robert Roberts, (author of Classic Slum) sums up the impact of middle class heroes for his working-class contemporaries:

The public school ethos, distorted into myth and sold among us weekly in penny numbers, for good or ill, set ideals and standards.19

Bratton suggests that they affected the way children read and also caused a shift in the cultural messages they received: in public school stories ‘the elaborated idea of the school itself … when set in the ideal and shapely world of art, may be far more potent than the messy and unsatisfactory reality.’20 In addition, ‘many educators consciously turned to fiction to solve problems of the transmission of the ideology. Fiction had the advantage of a much more nearly universal availability: anyone educated to the level of basic literacy was accessible through a story …’21

Attitudes to literacy were affected by attitudes to culture and working-class children. Debates about culture in the nineteenth century began the culture-

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oriented agenda for literary education in Britain that lasted well into the twentieth century. Matthew Arnold and Thomas Wright were two of the most influential proponents of the popular notion of ‘culture and anarchy’ where English literature is seen as a civilising agent to lead the working classes towards a position where they might ‘better’ themselves or, conversely, without literature to occupy their minds they might become politically active or anarchistic. Arnold, Wright and others defined culture as ennobling and improving, and as the means to heal social and class divisions. Kimberley Reynolds contends that another function of literature for the working class was ‘to reinforce the cultural superiority of those who condemned fantasy literature and sought to provide a literature that would highlight the distance between it [and] that read by the educated elite.’

Advances in literacy among working class boys (due largely to the fledgling printing industry and the popularity of ‘penny dreadful’ periodicals that preceded the BOP) were of enormous concern to the nation’s educators. Reynolds comments that when public school boys became regular readers of ‘penny dreadfuls’, ‘cultural decay and degeneracy were forecast’ – the definition of what was acceptable or unacceptable in terms of reading matter became of paramount importance. The wider spread of literacy to the working class increased the demand for children’s books. More publishers and writers entered the lucrative business of supplying children’s books. As J. S Bratton put it:

\[\textit{Ibid.}, \textit{p.76.}\]

\[\textit{Kimberley Reynolds, Girls Only? Ibid., P.21.}\]

\[\textit{K. Reynolds, Girls Only? Ibid., p.23.}\]
The didactic traditions of writing for children, which had had an independent life for the best part of a century, eventually merged with the literary and other traditions to form one mainstream of juvenile fiction.\textsuperscript{24}

According to Bratton, after the 1870s education acts ‘the balance of instruction … swung away from the explicitly religious’ because there was no longer a concern about the amusement of and reading matter pertaining to children in terms of what was thought to be ‘dangerous’ practices. ‘There was no longer a feeling … [that] they should somehow cause a socially undesirable result.’\textsuperscript{25}

The Religious Tract Society (RTS) conceived of \textit{BOP} to provide a ‘wholesome’ antidote to the ‘penny dreadful’. It was designed ‘to find its way into the slums as well as the best homes’.\textsuperscript{26} Dunae has researched the editorial practices of the magazine from its inception in 1879 and he describes a number of early policies that influenced the direction of the paper. Congregationalist minister George Burder, and teacher and pastor Dr David Brogue founded RTS in 1799. It published tracts for both adults and children that were ‘suitable’ reading material for the newly literate classes. In his opening address to the RTS in July 1799, Burder declared:

\begin{quote}
Thousands who would have remained grossly illiterate, having through the medium of Sunday schools been enabled to read, it is an object of growing importance widely to diffuse such publications as are calculated to make that ability an unquestionable privilege.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

The background to this boys’ paper stems from the Sunday school movement started by Robert Raikes and others in the 1850s due to their concerns about working class children. Gillian Avery reports that in the 1850s and 1860s ‘torrents of little books cascaded down upon the Sunday Schools’.\textsuperscript{28} This created a demand for books to be given away as Sunday School prizes. The idea of prizes stemmed

\textsuperscript{24} J S Bratton, \textit{The Impact of Victorian Children’s Literature}, Ibid., p.192.
\textsuperscript{26} Quoted in Kimberley Reynolds, \textit{Girls Only?} Ibid., P.82.
from the Cheap Repository Tracts produced by Hannah More, which Gillian Avery tells us was ‘to take the place not only of the current seditious pamphlets, but of the crude ribaldry hawked by the chapmen.’

They were produced to look like and with titles similar to the literature they were intended to supersede. MacKenzie explains that the prize system also emanated from the ‘rewards’ techniques of Sunday schools and the national schools. The evangelical publishing houses had provided Bibles, religious tracts and so on in the early part of the century but juvenile fiction soon became acceptable: ‘by the 1870s it was virtually the norm.’ Avery points to a change after the 1870s education acts came into force – board schools as well as church and charity schools were formed. ‘The Board Schools … wanted informative books and the Sunday School prize was produced in smaller, cheaper editions and became more heavily moral’.

Dunae draws attention to the RTS’s issuing of religious books and tracts – these were only part of the interests of the RTS’s founders. Significantly, Brogue was also the founder of the London Missionary Society in 1795 and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. Missionary activities in India and Africa were therefore directly involved in BOP. Dunae points to the symbolic relationship between the two organisations:

The missionaries in constant need of financial support, were able to draw on the revenue of the juvenile periodical. The BOP, in turn, was able to feature, first hand, exotic stories and travel accounts supplied by many of the Society’s overseas workers.

According to R. C. Terry, the years 1859–60 were ‘a watershed in popular fiction’. Huge changes in the areas of science, religion, philosophy and social thought followed the 1859 publication of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. Terry

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28 Gillian Avery, *Childhood’s pattern*, Ibid., p.74.
29 Gillian Avery, *Childhood’s Pattern*, Ibid., p.65.
31 Gillian Avery, *Childhood’s Pattern*, Ibid., p.74.
32 Patrick Dunae, Ibid., p125.
states that ‘a robust and fleshly materialism is the hallmark of mid-Victorian fiction, underpinned by a generally moral tone, basically decent, vulgar, conservative and unfailingly cheerful.’ He argues that the appeal of this fiction, deriving from slapstick, parodies, cartoons and comic sketches, is that ‘readers of popular fiction like the comfort of the familiar and old-fashioned while being hoodwinked into believing it saucy, daring and entirely up-to-the-minute.’

Kirsten Drotner, in *English Children & Their Magazines 1751–1945*, suggests that the impetus for these changes and the ensuing education acts came from the middle classes who intended the education acts to make schooling compulsory for the working class. Drotner believes that the legislation ‘was clearly hastened by middle-class anxieties about the increasing power displayed by the skilled work force, anxieties that were further spurred by the first signs from Germany and the United States that Britain’s economic and military supremacy might not remain unchallenged.’ Drotner goes on to state that ‘the act was also clearly intended as a moral substitute for ‘deficient’ family upbringing.’

In the conclusion to her study, Kirsten Drotner warns that we need to be wary of the separation of cultural production from historical circumstances. She goes on to claim that ‘children and adolescents have been ‘active in shaping the mass-produced expressions of culture’. Drotner’s work shows that those expressions give rise to ‘a covert history of resistance, revealing strong wishes for independence and personal control, sexual curiosity and social power’. She claims that the magazines usually reinforced existing power relations: strengthening racial, social and sexual biases. However, buying the magazines conveyed a momentary satisfaction and sense of freedom for young readers. And

this, as Drotner puts it, is ‘addictive’ in the sense that the draw of the magazines is that ‘one has to buy another issue, and yet another.’

Patrick Dunae, in ‘Boys’ Own Paper: Origins and editorial policies’, reproduces a cartoon from an edition of BOP in 1907 (Plate 1). I have included it here to show the way that it constructed the BOP as superior reading material – using Jane Doonan’s schemata for understanding how visual art communicates her terms for visual codes. The dapper public school boys with their blazers, Eton collars and eager faces are shown in direct contrast to the thin, untidily dressed boys who are reading the ‘penny horrible’ and the ‘halfpenny driveller’. These boys are smoking and are shown to be smaller in stature than the boys reading BOP. Doonan urges that ‘we need to look not just at what is being represented but at everything that presents itself, grasping at the ‘how’ as well as the ‘what’. Looking at the layout of the cartoon, the viewer is invited to take up multiple viewpoints at a fixed level that Doonan says ‘send us travelling along the picture.’ For Doonan ‘layout plays a crucial role in the psychological effect upon the reader/beholder and the ‘contour lines’ of the form of the central pair of public school characters ‘defines objects and gives them precise structure and character’. The two readers of BOP have clean lines to their jackets while the other three characters are shown to have ill-fitting coats. Moreover, the faces of the BOP readers are well proportioned and defined, in contrast to the other boys who look solemn. This schematic division of social types is based on a crude social-Darwinist ethic, reflected in Lord Rosebery’s assertion that ‘health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the world.’ Joseph Bristow suggests that Baden-Powell extended the same suggestion to boys that they

41 Jane Doonan, Ibid., p.89.
42 Jane Doonan, Ibid., p.85.
43 Jane Doonan, Ibid., p.83.
44 Quoted in Joseph Bristow, Empire Boys, Ibid., p.192.
classify people by types and that the process involves stereotyping. Bristow says that ‘Bad types have innately bad looks and, it follows, bad forms of behaviour.’

‘Emily: A story of public school life’ by Ascott R. Hope

Ascott R. Hope’s ‘Emily’ demonstrates the way that a didactic message about the superiority of the public school masculine ideal was constructed to appeal to boys across the classes. Serialised in two editions of BOP in 1887, it traces the integration into English public school life of a new French schoolboy, Emile. His peers mock his ‘femininity’, and give him the nickname ‘Emily’. He is accepted only when he assimilates masculinist public school codes and culture and when he becomes, as the narrator puts it, ‘thoroughly one of us.’ The story reveals racial stereotyping typical of the era, and in its attempt to define masculinity by contrasting it with femininity, the struggle reveals a contradictory sense of slippage. It therefore becomes a focus of what James Eli Adams calls ‘the shifting contours and internal stresses in Victorian discourses of gender’.

Hope, the pseudonym of Robert Hope Moncrieff (1846–1927), was the British author of a large number of books for boys. The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature suggests that he produced more than one hundred, including adventure and historical stories. P. W. Musgrave explains that ‘Emily’ was one of a series of twenty stories with titles based on letters of the alphabet called My Schoolfellows (1870). Robert J. Kirkpatrick comments that Hope’s ‘earliest published narrative works came from religious presses’. ‘Emily’ addresses a dual readership, and is didactic and racist (like many books of the period). The

45 Joseph Bristow, Empire Boys, Ibid., p.192.
narrator often intrudes into the narrative to unequivocally state his position on the subjects of education, patriotism and racial tolerance. For example:

   We all do well to be proud of our country, and England is indeed a country to be proud of; but there is a foolish as well as a wise patriotism.51

Hope’s stories often included discourses on race, class, gender and empire. An 1880 story published in BOP strikes a racist note with its title, ‘Adventures of a Boston Boy Amongst Savages’. His book, Hero and Heroine, which details the passion of ‘a younger boy for an older, more active boy’,52 calls attention to gender divisions. In ‘Emily’ the message of the text is a moral one, but gendered discourses around race, class and empire are implicit.

‘Emily’ is a short story about a boy called Emile d’Hersenac after he arrives at a prestigious public school (represented as either Eton or Harrow). His aristocratic background is emphasised and romanticised. We are told that his father is a political exile, and that Emile is a Count in France and perhaps ‘even a Marquis’, since letters to the school are addressed to M. le Comte d’Hersenac. It is implicit that at the elite public school a pupil needs to be of aristocratic birth in order to become a ‘hero’. Given the nickname ‘Emily’ (‘his name being so like a girl’s’),53 and from a reference to Chaucer in the story, we can assume that Emily refers to the ‘Emily the Bright’ in The Knight’s Tale, where she is described in terms of ultra-femininity:

51 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
52 Robert J. Kirkpatrick, Ibid., p.182.
53 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.4.
‘Young Emily, that fairer was of mien/
Than is the lily on its stalk of green/
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress/
Behind her back, a yard in length I guess’.\(^54\)

In Chaucer’s tale two rival lovers, Palamon and Arcite, court Emily. In Hope’s story, however, Emile is ‘courted’ by two very different and competing cultures. The intertextual reference to Chaucer signals the fact that imperial patriotism drew upon chivalric myths of heroism, which Joseph Bristow tells us ‘were first popularised in the 1830s and 1840s’.\(^55\) Robert Baden-Powell later extended the idea of adventure and chivalry in *Scouting for Boys* (1908), where he claims that what he calls ‘real men’ are products of chivalry:

> The History of the Empire has been made by British adventurers and explorers, the scouts of the nation, for hundreds of years up to the present time.

> The Knights of King Arthur, Richard Coeur de Lion, and the Crusaders, carried British chivalry into distant part of the earth.\(^56\)

Emile’s behaviour is dignified in the face of the teasing of his peers and he conducts himself well in spite of the mysteries he faces in terms of public school customs. For instance, on his arrival at the school Emile is put into a class with younger boys because of his language handicap and even though his age would warrant it, he is not entitled to wear the swallowtail coat of ‘the upper boys of the college’. Nevertheless, the older boys offer him the opportunity to wear the coat as an honorary privilege:

> He modestly thanked those friendly patrons, but magnanimously assured them that it would be his pride to go tailless till that coveted appendage had


\(^{55}\) Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man’s World*, Ibid., p.171.

\(^{56}\) Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys*, Ibid., p.171.
Plate 3, This is the etching that accompanies Ascott R. Hope's 'Emily' : A story of school life, in Boy's Own Paper, Saturday October 1, 1887, p.4
been gained by merit, not by favour, as a young knight of old sought to win his spurs before he wore them.\textsuperscript{57}

The reference to Emile as a ‘young knight’ forms a significant part of the construction of masculinity in this story. Robert Dixon points out that ‘romance, adventure and epic were reassuringly masculine’ and that ‘the revival of romance can be seen as “a men’s literary revolution” intended to reclaim the kingdom of the English novel for male writers and readers in the face of what seemed to many like “the feminisation of literature”.’\textsuperscript{58}

As well as being portrayed as someone with the courtly qualities of a knight, he is also constructed as ‘other’: as exotic, with feminine qualities such as ‘gracefulness’ that are not usual attributes of a nineteenth century schoolboy in life or in fiction. The story hinges around Emily’s often humiliating initiation into the life of his English public school as he learns its mores. Initially the other boys ridicule him because of his mode of dress, choice of games and ideas about education. But the feminine side of his character as it is drawn at the beginning converts to a more masculine and muscular one. He is described at the outset as ‘being a thoroughbred’ and ‘some kind of rare bird’,\textsuperscript{59} but having overcome a number of initiations such as being caned, participating in English sport and so on, the narrator claims that these achievements and tolerance on Emile’s part are the result of his being ‘frank and good natured’.\textsuperscript{60} In other words, his French cultural identity appears to become subsumed by that of the English public school.

That this is a story about race is signalled by motifs of or suggesting France, in the black and white steel etching adjacent to the first paragraph of the story. The frame picture is of a pond with water lilies and bulrushes, signalling the initial nickname ‘Froggy Frenchman’ that the school gives Emile on his arrival before

\textsuperscript{57} ‘Emily’ Ibid., p.21.
\textsuperscript{58} Robert Dixon, \textit{Writing the Colonial Adventure}, Ibid., p.4.
\textsuperscript{59} ‘Emily’ Ibid., p.4.
\textsuperscript{60} ‘Emily’ Ibid., p.21.
the name Emily is adopted, (Plate 2). There are numerous references to frogs such as ‘the Continental world … is not all frogs and frippery.’ The second motif indicates Paris, shown in silhouette across water and on the horizon, suggesting distance and foreshadowing the discourses that led to an entente cordiale – a reference to the colonial disputes that led to the 1904 Anglo-French Entente.

‘Emily’ reveals a didactic message about France and the French – ostensibly the focus is on the achievement of entente. Nevertheless a dominant anxiety about invasion underlies the narrative, as a result of the ascendancy of French, German and Russian military power at a time when there was general unease about Britain’s preparedness for war. This anxiety gradually took the form of a sub-genre of Edwardian invasion literature. The general unease also included a ‘terror of the increasingly dispossessed working-class’ reflected in the ‘ubiquitous image of the “abyss” to describe the life of the urban poor.’ Robert Dixon writes that texts of imagined invasions are ‘paranoid, masculine texts’ and that ‘they contest the centre by breaching their boundaries’. Dixon also comments that I. F. Clarke catalogued dozens of novels about imaginary invasion published between 1871 and the onset of the First World War, which reflected the mounting pessimism that followed defeats in the Boer War. Britain was in moral and spiritual decline and social commentators noted a lack of patriotism and ‘even a lack of vigour in the working classes’ – warning that these traits together with ‘excessive love of luxury’ were a danger to the notion of self-sacrifice needed by the nation. These discourses are reflected in stories such as ‘Emily’, which promoted an aristocratic or middle-class ‘manly’ ideal, and ridiculed feminine qualities.

The narrative’s overtly didactic message about racial tolerance is conveyed through a dominating but friendly narrator who speaks to children and more ironically to an adult audience. The relaxed, conversational and humorous tone of

61 ‘Emily’ Ibid., p.21.
63 Robert Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914, p.135.
64 Robert Dixon, Ibid., p.135.
the narrator juxtaposes clear authoritative moral instruction, which I contend also reinforces racial stereotypes. The first person narrator assumes the paternalistic but friendly and helpful persona of an old boy. He situates himself as an eyewitness to Emile’s education, beginning the narration with the words ‘I shall never forget my astonishment when, on returning to school after the Christmas holidays, I found a group of boys gathered round a new fellow.’ 66 The narrator is here drawing attention to the need for instruction about racial tolerance, aligning himself with the other boys and saying ‘as we went on teasing him one of the masters came up and hotly rebuked us’. 67 In this way he situates readers in a subject position identical to his own – gaining the sympathy of child readers of any class who have been in breach of authority. The narrator engages the interest of the adult reader by the use of the ‘Old Boy’ persona and irony. He also uses a tone that appears as charmingly guileless. He says, for example, of France, that ‘over the Channel they have no House of Lords, no plum-pudding, and, I understand, no athletics to speak of’. 68 Claudia Nelson explains that between 1892 and 1910 ‘editors and publishers were forced into an ascending spiral of competition for readers’ so that this ‘doubleness of class discourse means that editors and publishers were forced into “authoring” their wares in such a way as to permit both subversive and conservative readers on a variety of issues, extending the ideological boundaries of the potential audience’. 69

As the story continues, the narrator becomes more intrusive, as if taking part in a discursive conversation. He interjects comments such as ‘I forget if I have told you that his father, the Duke d’Auray, was a political exile’. 70 John Stephens explains that ‘the forms of direct address and the use of overworded registers … exert ideological control over the reader quite directly, by assuming that certain objectives and outcomes of the story are commonsensically natural and desirable’. 71 The narrator naturalises the notion of the superiority of the public

66 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.4.
67 Ibid.,
68 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
70 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21
school boy by referring to his peers as ‘the cream of British youth’ – thereby signalling the superiority of the middle and upper class. He explains the customs of the school for the contemporary child, or ‘for the information of boys who do not know what it was to be at school in those good old days’.

Youths who wear swallow-tail coats in broad daylight, and tall black hats … so that at first you might be inclined to take them for waiters out of place, or vergers’ apprentices.

The narration becomes more didactic at the end of the story when he sums up the moral implications of the story, saying:

if all French boys were frank, good-natured fellows like Emile d’Hersenac, the more we saw of them the better we would learn to shake off our insular stiffness.

There are a number of ways that Emile is shown to be good-natured. One is by his supposed tolerance of the schoolboys who laugh at his broken English:

Nevare mind! exclaimed Emily, with an excited wave of his arm. Death (he called it deat) rader than dishoneur – dat is de motto of my race!

On another occasion the whole class get reprimanded for copying French translations from Emile, who had deliberately included mistakes in his exercises before allowing his fellow students to copy them. His classmates are punished verbally and threatened with a caning by the teacher. We are told that ‘Emile “burst forward” saying “May I have the speech? Sir, the fault was mine, and on to me let fall the chastisement! … I shall be caned!” he cried in theatrical tones.’

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72 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.6.
73 Ibid.,
74 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
75 Ibid.,
76 ‘Emily’, p.6.
77 ‘Emily’, p.21.
Each time that Emile is shown to adopt the ‘honourable’ schoolboy code, the dialogue undercuts it by making his speech comical.

The way that the ‘friendly’ narrator exerts control over the child reader is in the assumption that some of the outcomes of Emily’s socialisation into English school life and the ironic stance about his ‘foreignness’ is of a commonsense view. Kathryn Castle, in commenting on the Indian character Hurree in the Greyfriars School stories, makes the point that Hurree is classed with French and German boys as ‘other aliens’, and that Hurree’s (like Emile’s) broken English ‘is a key source of the [story’s] humour and was a standard way of distancing all foreigners, particularly those with “aspirations” to join the dominant culture’.78 In another example in ‘Emily’, the narrator relates a story about an Italian organ grinder as a moral lesson about tolerance of other races. But by creating the Italian not only as a racial stereotype but also as a figure of fun, the moral message is undercut:

78 Kathryn Castle, Ibid., p.45.
There is always something to get accustomed to in a new country, as the Italian organ-grinder could tell us who was seen on his knees in Holborn before a dentist’s show-case, under the impression that its contents were the relics of some saint.\(^7\)

Louis James talks about racial stereotypes that are typical of boys’ popular fiction. He says that ‘Russians are treacherous and loutish; Spaniards are cruel. … Those with dark skins are groups in a miscellaneous category of “savages”.’ He goes on to remark that since they are deemed to be ‘by nature and instinct, very cruel’ that they can therefore be killed without regret.\(^8\) Isabel Quigly gives similar examples of racism in the school story, citing Walter Rhoades’s *The Boy From Cuba*, where one boys speculates about a new boy of non-Anglo-Saxon race: ‘We’ll hope he isn’t a cannibal … or there’ll be nothing left of you but shirt buttons.’ This remark is followed by the couplet:

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\(^7\) ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.6.
Here lies Franky Holland, Who never got bigger/ Because he was eaten, when young;/ By a nigger!81

Kathryn Castle claims that ‘while heroics and historical myth-making helped to activate and inculcate a belief in manliness, service, athletic prowess, honour, courage, and fair play with a firm underpinning of Christian sensibilities, they also injected the ‘mirror image’ of the ‘other’ – alien beings.82

The need to be free from prejudice that ‘Emily’ endorses derives from Rousseau. The title of the story, ‘Emily’, (an Anglicized version of the French name Emile) also signals an intertextual reference to Rousseau’s Emile (1762). Hope draws on Rousseau to suggest that Emile might be unspoiled or ‘natural’ and in need of being socialised out of this state.

Gender binarism, as noted earlier, is also implicit in Hope’s writing. It is crucial to ideologies of masculinities and the Victorian idea of ‘separate spheres’ for moral relations between men and women. In Emile Rousseau states:

The one should be active and strong, the other passive and weak. It is necessary that the one have the power and the will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance.83

Jo-Ann Wallace, in her work on ‘the child’ in post-colonial theory, reminds us that the construct ‘the child’ has a relatively recent discursive history. As explained in my introduction, the modern idea of childhood has been traced to the early Renaissance and seventeenth century humanist revival of interest in theories of education. It is evident in such texts as John Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Emile (1762). Wallace reminds us that Foucault has pointed out the contradiction inherent in the discourse of childhood: on the one hand this period saw both the birth of the school and the prison. Wallace articulates this dichotomy, noting that ‘the child’

81 Isabel Quigly, The Heirs of Tom Brown, Ibid., p.98.
represents potential or futurity – both of which need protected spaces to flourish, and a subjectivity and corporeality in need of discipline.\textsuperscript{84}

One of the ways this inconsistency is achieved in ‘Emily’ is the way that Emile is represented in oppositional terms to that of the ‘active and strong’ English schoolboy. His personal aesthetic constitutes a counter-hegemonic position to Victorian bourgeois hegemony. He is described by the narrator as ‘a new fellow with patent-leather boots, long hair, a sallow complexion, and other signs that he was some kind of rare bird’.\textsuperscript{85} The reference to ‘patent-leather boots’ symbolises the way that British boys, in the stories in \textit{BOP} appear more ‘manly’ in comparison to the boys of other races. Ed Cohen notes that in the 1880s ‘effeminacy was often seen to align the ‘aesthetic’ male with the domestic realm of the female.’\textsuperscript{86} Jeffrey Weeks, in \textit{Coming Out}, quotes a newspaper article of the era describing a court case that depicted the defendants as having ‘strong hints of decadence and effeminacy’ because they wore diamond rings and their ‘feet were covered with patent shoes’. Weeks comments on the association of the shoes with effeminacy by saying that ‘patent shoes … were in the 1880s what suede shoes were to the more prurient papers of the 1960s.’\textsuperscript{87} James Eli Adams in \textit{Dandies and Desert Saints} states that ‘the increasingly pointed and violent social leverage inherent in the authority to designate a man or an idea “effeminate” was ‘contested … in a great variety of discursive forms.’\textsuperscript{88} Ed Cohen speculates that the association of the ‘aesthetic’ male with ‘effeminacy’ associated with the domestic realm arose from ‘an anxiety generated in middle-class men by the Victorian ideology of “separate spheres”’. Internal anxieties included industrial conflict and the suffragette movement. A male who took an interest in the

\textsuperscript{82} Kathryn Castle, \textit{Britannia’s Children}, Ibid., p.6.
\textsuperscript{83} Rousseau, \textit{Emile}, para.1254, quoted in http://www.public.asu.edu/-jacquies/emile-5.htm
\textsuperscript{85} ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.4.
\textsuperscript{86} Ed Cohen, Ibid., p.136.
\textsuperscript{87} Jeffreý Weeks, \textit{Walk on the Wilde Side}, Ibid., p.42.
aesthetics of what was inscribed as ‘domestic’ therefore threatened the balance of these polarised relationships.\textsuperscript{89}

Emile, with his long hair, Parisian clothes, patent-shoes and theatrical outbursts, is represented at the beginning of the story as a ‘dandy’. Adams points to Ruskin’s statement: ‘You may chisel a boy into shape … But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does.’\textsuperscript{90} Although it appears that Emile is ‘chiselled’ into an English schoolboy, the story encapsulates Adams’s suggestion that there is a potentially subversive implication in this idea of Victorian gender. Adams asserts that there is a paradox implicit in what he calls ‘the logic of the dandy’ whereby:

In attacks on the dandy or ‘swell’ … a theatricality readily accommodated in earlier constructions of aristocratic manhood is disavowed as the sign of a socially mediated identity, which betrays both religious integrity and the social autonomy fundamental to manhood. But a manhood that ostensibly transcends self-interest and the gratifications of social regard must nonetheless be proved in the theatre of the world.\textsuperscript{91}

Adams talks about ‘the shifting contours and internal stresses in Victorian discourses of gender’. He notes ‘the importance of masculinity as a central problematic in literary and cultural change.’\textsuperscript{92} Drawing on Foucauldian analysis, he contends that ‘Victorian men are “marked” not simply by medico-juridical regulation of the body, but by assignments of gendered identity that circulate outside that discourse, and are shaped through comparatively occasional, informal, even haphazard rhetorical engagements.’ He goes on to discuss the problematic nature of gendered distinctions in regard to self-discipline which was attached to the struggle ‘to appropriate the very real authority attached to it’, claiming that over the course of the nineteenth century ‘commentators increasingly distinguished between a masculine self-discipline, which they represented as an ongoing regimen of aggressive self-mastery, and a feminine

\textsuperscript{89} Ed Cohen, Ibid., Footnote 10. Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{90} James Eli Adams, \textit{Dandies and Desert Saints}, Ibid., p.9.
self-denial, which they represented as a spontaneous and essentially static surrender of the will to external authority.’

One of the ways that Emile is constructed as eventually achieving British public school masculinity of self-discipline is by his enthusiastic espousal of British sport. This endorses what was seen to be the value of self-discipline resulting from team sports, and it negates the individual French sporting pursuits at which he excels, suggesting that they are unmanly. It is implied that Emile, despite his expertise in solo sports (‘nobody could touch him at swimming and diving, as he had already excelled in swimming, fencing and … other sports of the less violent order’) he had a lot to learn about team games. The narrator tells us that Emile ‘was heathenishly ignorant of football and cricket’. He has none of the ‘muscular’ physicality of other schoolboy heroes depicted in BOP and is described as being ‘leopard-like’, having a ‘slender figure’, and ‘refined features’. But when Emile ‘threw himself into cricket as into football with a sense of almost pious duty’, he ensured that his nickname (Emily) ‘was no longer given him in derision, but in affection’.

Emile is thus trained ‘to play the game’. This phrase characterises the public school ethos as well as athleticism and imperialism. It emanates from Henry Newbolt’s ‘Vitai Lampada’, a poem about public school life that begins with the well-known line ‘There’s a breathless hush in the Close to-night’ and encorporates the refrain ‘Play up! Play up! And play the game!’ The final lines of the second verse dealing with war and the battle field ends with the exclamation ‘The river of death has brimmed his banks, And England’s far, and Honour a name, But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks; ‘Play up! Play up! And play the game’. Michael Rosenthal claims that the exhortation ‘play the game’ was:

91 James Eli Adams, Dandies and Desert Saints, Ibid., p.10.
93 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
94 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
95 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
96 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
At once a political ideal and a moral injunction, it constituted, for those reared in the system, an all-embracing principle of conduct applicable to every circumstance in which an individual might find himself.  

Rosenthal explains that this ideal was used for a variety of imperial purposes. He quotes Eustace Miles’s writings as representing the ‘fullest elaboration of the ideal’. Miles recommends that ‘playing the game’ can be applied as a mantra to the schoolboy in even the most mundane and practical of activities:

Speak to yourself. … ‘It isn’t the game to eat so fast: it isn’t fair on the stomach and other members of my team.’

Miles also suggests what might be seen as the ultimate implication of the idea of ‘playing the game’ when he refers to it with regard to the British Empire:

We can express the best spirit of our Empire in those words: that we try to ‘play the game’ with the natives; we do not try to play tricks with them or bully them, for that is not sportsmanlike; we give them a fair chance. … Meanwhile you are lucky to be Anglo-Saxon. Where two or three Anglo-Saxons are gathered together, or where one stands and fights like a man alone against others or against himself, there is the sportsmanlike spirit in the midst. It is called the game. Its other name is God.  

The growth of organised sports, with its emphasis on ‘playing the game’ was one of the areas of middle class education’s ‘disciplinary regime’. Ed Cohen claims that it was initially instituted to increase control over public school boys who were prone to ‘fighting and petty theft’. The Clarendon Commissioners’ Report ensured that team sports were compulsory in England by the 1860s.

By the late nineteenth century, organised sport was a national obsession. Cohen confirms that the circulation of discourses around sexuality subjected middle class

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male bodies ‘to a wide array of institutional gazes’ that were put in place to detect deviations from what was inscribed as ‘healthy’ (that is Christian standards) – thereby ‘inscribing social values onto/into male bodies’. Cohen partially attributes this as means for defining male gender identity and ‘for inculcating a “manly” ideology’.99

The normalisation of masculinity in ‘Emily’ is also inextricably bound up with nationalist interests. Christopher Armstrong explains that team games – those ‘manly and muscular divisions’ as they were termed – intensified to a ‘cult of athleticism in the two decades before the First World War.’100 It also encouraged a class-specific ideal of masculinity and promoted the ‘manly’ attribute of ‘poise under pressure’.101 He says that games ‘developed a strong sense of school loyalty’ by emphasising group identity over individual competence, they promoted identification with the boy’s own house and school teams, and that the broader result in terms of the wide world was ‘the desired identification with one’s class, country, and the British Empire.’102 Armstrong also asserts that ‘organised team sports enabled schools to extend control over their boys in the afternoons, and with the extension of this control, that linked in with a Victorian concern with order in both individuals and institutions, schools became more total, cloistered, enclosed worlds separated from the outside world.’103

The Victorian concern with self-control is explored in ‘Emily’. Emile is initially depicted as the opposite of a self-controlled boy and is described variously as ‘excited’, of using ‘theatrical tones’ and on one occasion the narrator claims that ‘he stormed at us [with] eyes flashing’. Self-control was one of the facets of moral character that Thomas Arnold sought to promote in his reforms at Rugby. They were designed to counter the bullying and anarchy that had taken place in the public schools and one of the main aims of the new class ideal of the moral

99 Ed Cohen, Ibid., pp.35-43.
102 Christopher F. Armstrong, Ibid., p.316.
Christian gentleman had been to develop moral character in boys by teaching them to exercise self-control.

Eventually Emile leaves the school abruptly when ‘a coup d’état, or an amnesty, or something of that kind came round in France’ and he and his family who have been in exile, return home. Although it is made clear that Emile ‘left us with universal regrets and good wishes’, he all the better perhaps … and we none the worse for having had a glimpse into the Continental world.’ We are told that he is returning to ‘that weather-cock country’ and that ‘Emile’s affection for English school life had been after all but skin deep’. The didactic message that ‘we were not again so ready to condemn a new boy unheard … because he happened to be no Englishman’ is undercut by the suggestion that his race is like a weathercock – fickle and changeable.

In order to place ‘Emily’ in a context of imperial masculinities, it is useful to examine the other articles that appeared alongside it in BOP. Each issue includes a balance of fact and fiction. The emphasis in boys’ magazines on combining fact with fiction is borne out by the research of Colin Ford and Brian Harrison. They assert that Britain in the 1880s had ‘an impressive growth of all academic studies’ including geography, history and economics and that of the total publications of the decade, about five per cent ‘were assigned by The Publisher’s Circular to voyages, travels and geographical research and 8% to history, biography etc.’ The 1 October 1887 edition, which includes the first part of ‘Emily’, bears an illustration for the serial ‘Harry Treverton: A story of colonial life’ by Lady Broome. There are portraits of BOP artists, notes on football, a poem and another serialised story, ‘Edric the Norseman’ (which celebrates the Nordic manly ideal alongside the British one, with descriptions of ‘champions’ in well-polished helmet rings … golden brooches, and other ornaments of costly price, glittered

103 Tony Money, Ibid., p.315.
104 ‘Emily’, Ibid., p.21.
and blazed so that the coming ship looked like a furnace on the waters’). Such images of manliness are part of what Ronald Hyam calls ‘an attempt to inculcate some sort of demotic manly ‘warrior tradition’ into British youth. There is an article entitled ‘The Boy’s Own Model Locomotive and How to Build It’, some letters–and-answers columns and articles about nature. All of these articles promote a robust notion of manliness. As MacKenzie notes, ‘many of the stories contained grisly description, not just in details of violence, but also in practical hints on the pursuit of blood sports, taxidermy, and the like.’ An issue of BOP a few weeks later gives detailed ‘Hints on Taxidermy’, which includes graphic descriptions of stuffing. It makes a point of mentioning that ‘in the event of the bird being only wounded, press the breast bone in with the finger and thumb, until life be extinct’, before giving instructions on how to remove the head:

If the head is very much larger than the neck, cut the throat lengthways to remove the head. It is immaterial whether the eyes are taken out before the head is skinned … some people crush the skull slightly to make it come out of the skin easily … pull the eyes out of their cavity … and place in the neck a piece of stick covered with wool, the end of which put into the hole made in the skull for extracting the brains.

Thus the ‘factual’ articles of this nature link the practical with the imaginative. A feature of the 1 October 1887 edition is a poem on the back cover called ‘Compensation: Race for the first number of our new volume’. The pen and ink illustrations that form a border depict the variety of readership that it targeted – one spread across age, gender and class. A nurse with baby in arms, a small child holding the hand of a young man, a milkmaid with yoke and pails, a farmer in smock with a bullock, an elderly gentleman, a well-dressed young couple. All these ‘readers’ are depicted on foot, or on bicycles on their way to purchase the latest copy of BOP. As far as boys are concerned, Parker suggests that while magazines like The Captain were aimed at public schoolboys, the BOP was specifically marketed to boys of all classes. MacKenzie concludes that the ‘new

106 BOP, October 1, 1887, p.10.
wave of journals’ of which *BOP* is a part, with their ‘cross-class following’ turned them into ‘vehicles of the dominant Zeitgeist’ through the palatability of the contents that were ‘acceptable to Establishment, parents, and children alike’.

France appears in other articles. One, on an adjoining page to that of the first instalment of ‘Emily’, is entitled ‘A French Soldier’s Blotting-Paper’, written by David Ker. It is a short feature story about Napoleon and the Franco-Austrian war in Mantua. It reports that in the midst of gunfire exchange on the battlefield, Napoleon dictates a dispatch to a young soldier called Private Junot, (nicknamed the ‘Salamander’). The story relates that while the dispatch is being dictated, a cannonball hits nearby, covering them both with a layer of dust. The soldier, who had shown no fear, leaps onto the nearest gun, waving the dispatch – the ink of which has been dried by the dust. He thanks the enemy for providing blotting paper! The article ends with the comment that when Bonaparte became Emperor Napoleon, he gave the cross of the Legion of Honour to this former soldier, now General Marshal Junot. MacKenzie confirms that boy heroes were invariably placed in the setting of great contemporary or historical events, thereby personalising details of colonial wars and imperial expansion. This story, appearing as it does alongside ‘Emily’, portrays the French soldier as heroic. The Salamander, as he is nicknamed, suggests the lizard-like animal that is reputed to withstand the heat and even live in fire. Napoleon is depicted as a great Emperor who rewards initiative. Underlying this notion of the French as noble and to be revered is a growing uneasiness about Britain’s relationship with France (and also Germany and Russia), hence the warning to the British schoolboy readership of *BOP*, to heed the speedy and resourceful French.

John M. MacKenzie describes the way that there was both a class and a racial dimension to the morality promoted in these magazines, claiming that ‘integrity, courage, loyalty (all subsumed under the concept of ‘character’) were generally

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110 Peter Parker, *The Old Lie*, Ibid., p.133.
identified with a particular type of public school, middle-class, sporting, and of course Nordic, ideal.‘Emily’ therefore sets out to lampoon the French while ‘preaching’ racial tolerance, while at the same time fears of French ascendency are subliminally suggested.

‘Emily’ is unusual in the genre in that it deconstructs, by the use of irony, concepts of masculinity, femininity and racial stereotypes. It is a particularly illuminating text as it demonstrates the way in which gender intersects with other social factors such as class, race and ethnicity. In its struggle to reveal gender binarism and gender stereotypes, it in fact subverts the gender ideologies of the text. Ultimately, however, it defers to the notion of a hegemonic masculinity that dominates this particular issue of BOP.

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113 John M. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire, Ibid., p.207.
CONCLUSION

It would appear, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, as I submit my PhD thesis on nineteenth century masculinities, that there continues to be a proliferation of discourses on men and masculinities, which also include issues around boys and literacy, boys and violence, and so on. As Badinter and Kimmel point out, there have been earlier crises involving the questioning of the meaning of ‘masculinity’ in countries undergoing ideological, economic or social changes.1 My work has looked at novels written at a time when, as Jeffrey P Hantover asserts, ‘men believed they faced diminishing opportunities for masculine validation and that adolescents faced barriers to the very development of masculinity’.2 As I have pointed out throughout, ideologists of patriarchy struggled to control and direct the reproduction of masculinity, and as Connell puts it, there was ‘a fear that boys would be feminized through too much influence by women.’3 There was also a linking of the ‘feminine’ with physical weakness and the ‘masculine’ with strength and self-reliance.

Recent discussions have shown masculinity to be both an historical and a cultural construct, incorporating a variety of changing and competing forms. Michael Roper and John Tosh have urged us to understand masculinities as subjective identity, as social power and as cultural representation, and to understand gender in relational terms, ‘since dominant or hegemonic masculinities function by asserting their superiority over the ‘other’. They also claim that in the public

schools, ‘manliness is defined through elaborate rituals in which supposedly feminine behaviour is ferreted out and lampooned.’

This study has examined the way that in its depiction of the feminine within a male dominated institution, some of the texts subvert the hegemonic masculine ideal and at the same time invite the reader to take up an alternative subject position to that offered by the mainstream school story of the period.

Attempts were made in the late nineteenth century to foster a particular masculinity amongst boys – that of toughness, self-reliance, physicality and aggression, and my work has traced the way that the English school story has depicted these characteristics in promoting a masculine ideal. I have examined the discourses around sexuality and the construction of masculinity, since, as Lynne Segal points out, masculinity refers to the effects of discursive practices, rather than any particular traits or stereotypical roles. Various types of discourses, according to Segal, ‘set up’ contradictory positions for women and men, and thus undermine any unitary or coherent sexual identities, while nonetheless providing sites for resistance and struggle.

It seems to me that late nineteenth/early twentieth century models of hegemonic masculinity have much in common with the characteristics of those currently under debate in educational circles in connection with boys and violence. One manifestation of hegemonic masculinity is violence. The connection of masculinity with violence is also a global connection. For example, Kenway and Fitzclarence assert that:

At this stage of Western history, hegemonic masculinity mobilises around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality. It distances itself from physical weakness, expressive skills, private knowledge, creativity, emotion, dependency, subjectivity, irrationality, co-

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5 Lynne Segal, Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities Changing Men, p.92.
operation and empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and certain affiliative behaviours. In other words it distances itself from the feminine and considers the feminine less worthy.\textsuperscript{6}

Kenway and Fitzclarence suggest that ‘hegemonic masculinity makes its claims and asserts its authority through many cultural and institutional practices’, and that schools are implicated in the making of masculinities. Education plays a key role in the transformation of masculinity and a literature of the education of boys dates back to Dr Arnold whose educational philosophies influenced the English school story. However, Arnold was not the only influence on masculine ideals. Thomas Carlyle, for example advocated a much more ‘muscular’ style of manliness. Roper and Tosh claim that ‘the juxtaposition of Arnold and Carlyle’ [where aggression and will-power took precedence over Christian virtues], ‘illuminates the variety of discourses about masculinity at a given time, but more importantly their uneasy and often unstable ordering in a gender hierarchy’.\textsuperscript{7}

RW Connell in \textit{Masculinities} has also argued that contemporary pedagogy plays a key role in the transformation of masculinity. As well as asserting that the diversity of masculinities should be addressed in the curriculum, he suggests an approach that includes the feminine, so that boys will be enabled to take on board feminine viewpoints which, he says, are ‘systematically denied in hegemonic masculinity.’ \textsuperscript{8} Kenway & Fitzclarence advocate the use of ‘narrative theory’ to offer both individuals and groups the opportunity to develop a new and alternative story-line to resist the dominant narrative. That is, they suggest that boys should be given the opportunity to talk out their feelings in order to identify alternative forms of masculinity. In my view homo-erotic novels such as \textit{David Blaize} and \textit{The Loom of Youth} offered the early twentieth century reader an alternative model of masculinity, even if it is in a coded and disguised form.

\textsuperscript{6} Jane Kenway & Lindsay Fitzclarence, ‘Masculinity, Violence and Schooling: challenging ‘poisonous pedagogies.’, \textit{Gender and Education}, Vol.9, No.1, p.121.
\textsuperscript{7} Michael Roper and John Tosh, Introduction to \textit{Manful Assertions}, p.17.
\textsuperscript{8} R W Connell, \textit{Masculinities}, p.239.
Contemporary constructions of knowledge about men and ‘masculinity’ have made it increasingly clear that all knowledge is socially produced. Alan Petersen in *Unmasking the Masculine: ‘Men’ and ‘Identity’ in a Sceptical Age*, calls for additional analysis to address the power relations of sexuality and the ways in which ‘heterosexual masculine identity became institutionalised as the ideal’. He claims that ‘most research is taken as given, rather than problematizes, the dominant epistemology of sexuality.’ The ambiguities around the expression of ‘boy-love’ between David and Maddox in *David Blaize*, for example, is perhaps symptomatic both of other divisions in place in late-Victorian and Edwardian society about sexuality (and perhaps Benson’s own uneasiness about the relationship between sensuality and sexuality). There is confusion underlying the policies of the schools themselves, and Peter Parker, in writing about the First World War and the public school ethos, sums up these conflicts with this observation:

> They insisted upon attempting to differentiate between what they saluted as the highest of all affections, which led to panegyrics in the chapel, and what they called ‘beastliness’, which generally led to expulsion.

Some of the early twentieth century novels I analyse are therefore subversive, and set out to clarify some of these questions and offer alternative reading positions and models of masculinity, which resists hegemonic masculinity by including ‘feminine’ values in its version of masculinity. I have looked at the way that the language in the text reveals gaps, since those textual contradictions and fissures are sites of conflict in cultural discourses and practices. The resistances and the various subject positions that readers are invited to take up in the text, provide indicators not only of the historically and socially constructed nature of the narrative, but also the fact that the production of a masculine ‘ideal’ involves exclusions.

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I have uncovered ways of reading that offer models of masculinity broader than those commonly associated with the genre. That is, by interpolating ideas of the feminine as a positive force in a number of texts, I have drawn attention to other possible subject positions that contradict the hyper-masculine stereotypical public schoolboy ideal. For instance where the school story is associated with representing discomfort around physical expression of love and affection between boys, I suggest that there is scope for notions of emotionality to co-exist with stereotypical masculine constructions, particularly in the homoerotic novels.

As far as intersections of race, class and gender are concerned, I show that masculine ideals usually associated with depictions of a white, Anglo-Saxon public schoolboy, are unsettled in texts like ‘Emily’ where the character of the French boy, Emile, while represented as having long hair and clothes that single him out as ‘other’, nevertheless contradicts that normative hegemonic ideal and enables him to act as a positive agent of change. While the genre perpetuates misogynist sentiments about women in general, I assert that that while working-class men remain largely represented as shifty and untrustworthy, this is contradicted by constructions of individual working-class girls/women as being capable, (if somewhat scheming), but having the ability to bring about change by their actions.

But as Kenway and Fitzclarence note, there is still a long way to go in working out a pedagogy where ‘males and females, males and males and adults and children can live alongside each other in safe, secure, stable, respectful and harmonious ways in relationships of mutual life-enhancing respect.’

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