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Scholarship Boys and Children's Books: Working-Class Writing for Children in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s

Haru Takiuchi

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how, during the 1960s and 1970s in Britain, writers from the working-class helped significantly reshape British children's literature through their representations of working-class life and culture. The three writers at the centre of this study – Aidan Chambers, Alan Garner and Robert Westall – were all examples of what Richard Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), termed 'scholarship boys'. By this, Hoggart meant individuals from the working-class who were educated out of their class through grammar school education. The thesis shows that their position as scholarship boys both fed their writing and enabled them to work radically and effectively within the British publishing system as it then existed. Although these writers have attracted considerable critical attention, their novels have rarely been analysed in terms of class, despite the fact that class is often central to their plots and concerns. This thesis, therefore, provides new readings of four novels featuring scholarship boys: Aidan Chambers' *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave*, Robert Westall's *Fathom Five*, and Alan Garner's *Red Shift*. The thesis is split into two parts, and these readings make up Part 1. Part 2 focuses on scholarship boy writers' activities in changing publishing and reviewing practices associated with the British children's literature industry. In doing so, it shows how these scholarship boy writers successfully supported a movement to resist the cultural mechanisms which suppressed working-class culture in British children's literature. The thesis ends by considering the legacies of their efforts and demonstrating, through close readings of Westall's *The Machine-Gunners* and Garner's *The Owl Service*, that the class context of the time is embedded in the texts in ways that have not previously been recognised. Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu, as well as referring more generally to studies of scholarship boys in social sciences and education, this thesis also makes use of personal interviews and archival materials, which together yield significant insights on British children's literature of the period.

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INTRODUCTION

A cluster of working-class children's writers come to prominence in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s. This thesis looks at their writings and activities, the beginning of their struggles and how they gradually, but effectively, re-shaped British children's literature. The majority of writers from the working-class in the 1960s and the 1970s were examples of what Richard Hoggart, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), termed "the scholarship boy".[1] By "scholarship boys", Hoggart means British children who, during the early-to-mid twentieth century, were selected at eleven-years-old to be educated in grammar schools. Hoggart himself was such a child, and *The Uses of Literacy* explores how this selection process served to educate children out of their class and place them in a new kind of social space where they found themselves caught between classes. Three main writers featured in this thesis, Aidan Chambers (1934-) Alan Garner (1934-) and Robert Westall (1929-93), were scholarship boys. Their writing for children, this thesis will argue, had a lasting impact on representations of class in British children's literature. However, representations of class in their writing have rarely been examined.

The central concern of this thesis is to address this silence and to show how it has affected understanding of British children's literature from the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than looking across the range of work produced by scholarship boy writers, the focus here is on novels that feature *characters* who are scholarship boys, looking closely at how the texts portray their experiences and critique their ambivalent class position. Ultimately, it argues that the writers' effective use both of their inherited British working-class culture and of the middle-class culture which they gained through education enabled them to be successful, and contributed to some of the radical changes in British children's literature during the period in question. In doing so, this thesis also highlights how class oppression operated in the inter-connected spheres of children's book publishing and criticism, and shows how scholarship boy writers for children consciously struggled to change long-standing stereotypes and attitudes. While this thesis is principally concerned with representations of the working-class in British children's literature of the mid-twentieth century, it also begins the work of filling a gap in studies of British working-class literature of the period which, to date, have paid little attention to children's literature.

[1] Later scholars in sociology also use "the scholarship girl" to refer to the female version of the experience, but Hoggart's original term was "the scholarship boy", as it was based on his experience and observation.

Scholarship Boys and English Literature

The emergence of scholarship boy writers in British children's literature cannot be separated from developments in adult literature and larger social changes. By the 1960s, the increasing number of scholarship boys had affected many aspects of British society. Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, two of the founders of modern Cultural Studies, are among the best-known scholarship boy writers and academics (Munt 4). Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* particularly inspired later generations of scholarship boys and girls by helping them to recognise the relation between their personal/emotional experiences and class, and so forging a new identity around the concept of the scholarship boy (see Ferrebe 72-174; Long 105-36). Richard Hoggart chose the term "scholarship boy" to describe the experiences and characteristics of grammar school-educated people from the working-class – in *The Uses of Literacy*, the term refers to adults as well as children of school age – because for his generation who attended school before the 1944 Education Act, children in primary schools took scholarship examinations at 11-years-old. The 1944 Education Act abolished fees for all state maintained grammar schools, but still pupils had to pass an examination at the age of 11. As will be shown in Chapter 1, the 1944 Education Act changed little about the experiences for working-class pupils from those of Hoggart's composite figure of the scholarship boy. Therefore, in this thesis, the term, "scholarship boy", is used to refer to grammar school pupils and former pupils both pre- and immediately post- the 1944 Education Act.

Among the writers featured in this thesis, Robert Westall belonged to the generation of Hoggart's *pre*-1944 Education Act, while Aidan Chambers and Alan Garner were educated under the tripartite system introduced by the 1944 Education Act. The term "scholarship boy", as it is understood here, does not include scholarship pupils from middle-class families – scholarships for grammar schools in the early twentieth century were open to any pupils from state schools – because such pupils did not share the distinct experiences of working-class grammar school pupils. As will be discussed, the scholarship boy experience is characterized by class tension between working-class home culture and middle-class school culture. Scholarship boys suffered from the gap between the culture of their original communities and the culture of their school and the middle-class world for which they were being trained. This gap was due, in part, to the

antagonism between these two cultures beyond the school gates, but schools' policy of assimilating working-class pupils into middle-class culture contributed substantially to it. Pupils from middle-class families, however economically poor they were, did not experience the same class tension either in their homes or in themselves. The reasons for this, as explained by the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, are rooted in access to "cultural capital", by which he means the knowledge and tastes associated with the dominant social class. Bourdieu's ideas are discussed more fully in Chapters 1 and 2. Here it is only necessary to note that the tensions between home and school endured by scholarship boys were not experienced by middle-class pupils who received scholarships.

British literature for adults saw a sudden and short-lived growth of writers from the working-class between the 1950s and the early 1960s. Critics dubbed them "Kitchen Sink" writers and "Angry Young Men". While the majority of so-called Kitchen Sink writers were from the working-class, the category of Angry Young Men includes writers from the middle-class. For instance, novelists such as Alan Sillitoe (1928-2010), Keith Waterhouse (1929-2009), John Braine (1922-86), Stan Barstow (1928-2011), Barry Hines (1939-), David Storey (1933-), and playwrights such as Shelagh Delaney (1938-2011) and Arnold Wesker (1932-), belonged to these groups. Most left education early, and regarded themselves as outsiders to the dominant culture.[2] With the odd exception, such as Sillitoe and Wesker, there are few studies of individual working-class writers, though the phenomenon as a whole has been studied in recognition of the fact that it is rare phenomenon in British literature for there to be such a large number of writers from the working-class (for instance, see Nick Bentley [2012]; Mary Eagleton and David Pierce [1979]; Alice Ferrebe [2012]; Nigel Gray [1973]; Stuart Laing [1986]; Jane Mansfield [2010]; Ingrid von Rosenberg [1982]; and Malek Mohammad Salman [1990]). Although more than half of the writers from the working-class in the period were scholarship boys, few critics adequately consider the role of scholarship boy writers as an *independent category*. Eagleton and Pierce (1979) identify scholarship boy novels as a distinct category (see Eagleton and Pierce 139-47), but their discussion of scholarship boy novels is minimal.[3] Alice Ferrebe (2012) includes a chapter on "The

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[2] Among these writers, Braine, Barstow, Hines, Storey and Delaney attended grammar schools. However, Braine and Barstow left school at 16; Delaney attended a secondary modern school before transferring to a grammar school at 15; only Hines and Storey entered higher education. Sillitoe and Waterhouse left school at 14 and 15. Wesker attended the intermediate selective secondary school and left at 16.

[3] Raymond Williams wrote a series of scholarship boy novels including *The Border Country* (1960), one of earliest novels featuring a scholarship boy, though he does not use the term; he also analyses class-

Scholarship Class", but her focus is on the characteristic of the period rather than details of how class operated. Overall, in the field of adult literature, how scholarship boys' class position and education formed their writing has received little sustained critical attention. Moreover, none of the studies about working-class/scholarship boy literature in the period pay attention to children's books.

Although limited attention has been given to the figure of the scholarship boy by literary critics, in the fields of sociology and education this group has attracted much more attention. In the 1960s and the 1970s, research into scholarship boys and girls tended to be done by scholars and journalists who were *themselves* scholarship boys. The concern with scholarship boys and girls in this period often centred on the education system which, they noted, often failed working-class pupils (see, for instance, Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden [1962] and Roy Greenslade [1976]). While the early studies were almost exclusively conducted by male scholars, since the 1980s, experiences of scholarship girls have been explored by former scholarship girl scholars including Caroline Steedman (1986), Valerie Walkerdine (1990), Annette Kuhn (1995), and Gillian Plummer (2000), and in the collection *Class Matters* (1997), an anthology of female working-class scholars' essays. Such studies often arose from the scholarship girl scholars' realization that their social and cultural assumptions are "very different from those of our middle-class feminist colleagues and friends" (Mahony and Zmroczek 1), and therefore are concerned particularly with issues of gender and class. A considerable number of autobiographical studies have been attempted by working-class academics; these studies, in turn, have been studied, notably by Paul Wakeling in "Is There Such a Thing as a Working-Class Academic?"

Although Richard Hoggart introduced his scholarship boy in 1957, "the scholarship girl" was almost unseen until the 1980s (Kuhn 122; Steedman 15). This reflects the fact that most of the emerging writers from the working-class were white males – though there were some exceptions, such as Sheila Delaney, whose *A Taste of Honey* (1958) had considerable impact and was made into a successful film in 1961.[4] Similar gender and racial backgrounds also shaped British children's literature. Most influential writers and critics from the working-class until the mid 1970s were white males. Few female writers for children wrote about scholarship girls, particularly in the

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related experiences that are similar to those of scholarship boys in his chapters on Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970). For discussion of Williams' scholarship boy novels, see Eagleton and Pierce, 145-47; Ryan; Ferrebe 166-68.

[4] For studies about working-class women and English literature before the 1980s, see Pamela Fox (1994).

body of writing about working-class grammar school pupils. Conversely, scholarship boy writers such as Chambers, Garner and Westall featured them frequently. This lack of material is reflected in this thesis, which also focuses on white male accounts of the scholarship boy experience.

Scholarship Boy Writers and British Children's Literature

Although this thesis focuses on Aidan Chambers, Alan Garner and Robert Westall, whose contribution and impact to British children's literature in the 1960s and the 1970s was particularly significant, they were a part of a larger group of scholarship boy writers of the period who had similar awareness. Where possible, discussion of these writers is complemented and extended by reference to other scholarship boy writers, but this trio, in itself, is important not only for understanding the modern history of British children's literature, but also British working-class literature. Generally, working-class writers have been seen as a marginalised minority in British literature. However, the energetic and powerful children's writers from the working-class have been rather influential, and arguably have become canonical. This achievement stands out in the history of working-class writing and needs to be explored.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, most emerging writers from the working-class in British children's literature were highly educated and had middle-class occupations, such as school teachers and journalists, when they began to write for children. For instance, Bernard Ashley (1935-), Aidan Chambers, Gene Kemp (1926-) and Robert Westall were teachers who received higher education, or at least trained as teachers in colleges; Robert Leeson (1928-2013) and Jan Needle (1943-) were left-wing journalists, and Alan Garner was an Oxford drop-out. These writers were not simply "the working-class", and nor did they conform to working-class stereotypes. Rather, they tactically and consciously used their intellectual ability and cultural capital gained from their grammar-school and higher educations. Many of them, as teachers and left-wing journalists, were aware of the middle-class dominance of British children's literature and entered the field at least in part with the aim of making British children's literature more accessible for ordinary state school pupils. The sustained and complementary activities of these writers is another aspect of children's publishing in this period that has received insufficient attention.

In the 1970s and the early 1980s, class in children's literature was frequently discussed by working-class British critics such as Bob Dixon (1977) and Robert Leeson (1985); thereafter, interest in class, or more precisely in the working-classes, largely receded in Britain.[5] Similarly to the field of adult literature, "specific class analysis today has lagged behind" other areas in children's literature studies (Wojcik-Andrews 117; see also McLead 73-74). Even though, as McLead notes, the "three terms, 'race', 'class', and 'gender', are linked so frequently", "the second area, class, received far less attention" (McLead 73). That situation has begun to change. Since the 2000s, particularly in the US, scholars have paid increasing attention to class in children's books, at least partly in response to developments in the fields of Education and literacy (see Kelly Hager [2011]; Stephanie Jones [2008]; Kenneth Kidd [2009]; Cynthia Anne Mclead [2008]; Meredith Labadie et al. [2013]). However, the British writers at the centre of this discussion stand outside this work largely because class in Britain functions very differently from class in the US. Even where there is an attempt to include British writers in discussions these are overwhelmed by American examples, as seen in *Little Red Readings* (2014) or the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*'s special issue on *Children's Literature and the Left* (2005), both of which are predominantly about American children's literature. There is also no British equivalent to substantial historical studies on the left, such as Julia Mickenberg (2006), who looks at roles of left-wing writers, including some working-class writers, in mid-twentieth-century American children's literature, even though Owners of the Means of Instruction? (2007) calls Marxist attention to British children's literature.[6]

The majority of the small number of class studies of British children's literature are largely concerned with representations of class in classic middle-class books and/or about eighteenth- or nineteenth-century children's literature. For instance, Sarah Robbins (1993), Christopher Parkes (2012) and Troy Boone (2005) highlight class issues in British children's literature of the Georgian and Victorian eras, while Judith Plotz (1993), Valerie Krips (1993), Mervyn Nicholson (2014), Sharon Smulders (2014) and Clare Hollowell (2014) examine representations of class in British middle-class children's books. However, while scholars have focused on class attitudes and ideologies of middle-class writing, the working-class in modern British children's literature has been continuously neglected. For example, in *Little Red Readings* and the

[5] Robert Leeson published many more essays about class in the 1970s; see Chapter 5 and 7.
[6] Some conference papers in *The Sands of Time* (2010) also discuss class issues in Anglophone children's literature.

special issues of *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1993) and *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, no article focuses on British working-class writers of the mid-twentieth century. Positive representations of working-class culture in twentieth-century British children's books – and of how writers from the working-class depicted class issues – have scarcely appeared, with only a few exceptions. Fred Inglis (1992) discusses social class in relation to Jan Needle in one book chapter. Nolan Dalrymple's 2009 PhD thesis focuses on Robert Westall and David Almond, both from working-class backgrounds, and this is probably the most comprehensive study of the working-class in twentieth-century British children's literature, despite the fact that his primary concern is that of regionality.

Theorising Working-Class Literature and Scholarship Boys

This thesis draws mostly on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Raymond Williams instead of classical Marxism.[7] As will be shown, the theories about class and power developed by Bourdieu and Williams, both intellectuals who were born into the working-class, are particularly suitable for the analysis of scholarship boy novels in the mid-twentieth century. One of strengths of Bourdieu's approach is that it can comprehend the class related structural problems which have restricted British literature studies. Overall, in the late-twentieth century onwards, "while gender, sexuality, and race have been thoroughly examined, it has been at the expense of class" (Driscoll 2; See also Gilmore 215; Janowitz 239; Day 201-02). Some scholars of class attribute this shortage of class studies in English literature to the classist nature of British academia, in which "Class is often a dirty word" (Wakeling 35), and "Most literary critics visibly wince at the mention of working-class representation as a significant component of cultural analysis" (Hitchcock, "They must be Represented?" 20). One reason for this relates to the fact that the dominant (middle-class) culture defines what is meant by "good" literature and art, and therefore critics' tastes and judgements are inevitably class-bound (see Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 49). This mechanism is not only limited to the field of literature. As Simon J. Charlesworth (2000) argues, "The humanities and social sciences are key sites for the production of the *petit-bourgeois* professionals who have contributed to the current culture"

[7] While in the field of sociology Bourdieu is now probably the most popular theorist, there have been only a small number of attempt to apply his theory in British literature. For examples of studies applying Bourdieu to Anglophone literature, see Lavelle; Hollowell.

(Charlesworth 14). The tendency, therefore, to neglect class studies is also seen in sociology: "sociologists of class have had to fend off a succession of challengers since they first carved out their subject area" (Atkinson 5), while "'death' of class continues to be announced, at fairly regular intervals, by leading sociologists" (Crompton and Scott, "Introduction" 1). Even in the field of Cultural Studies, which "was a field formed by social class" (Munt, "Introduction" 1) and originally "marked by class consciousness" (Milner 3), since the late twentieth century "issues of class tend to be devalued or disavowed" (Medhurst 29).

However, since the turn of this century, while scholars in sociology have paid increasing attention to theories of class, English literature has seen continuous neglect of class (Lavelle 9). The more serious lack of class studies in the field indicates that the effect of class has been particularly strong for the field of English literature. As Bourdieu argues, scholars and critics themselves are agents of struggle in the field of art and literature (see Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*). His point is that because of their upbringing and circumstances, critics of the dominant class tend to respond positively to cultural products that reflect the values and tastes of their class; for instance, some elements of middle-class writing are often held up as naturally and incontestably "good". This tendency is epitomised by F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), which identified great British novels all of which are imbued with middle-class ideology. Although much of the critical activity of the 1970s and 1980s called attention to this middle-class stranglehold and opened up new ways of thinking about a wider range of works, a middle-class bias can still be identified in the educational and critical establishments. According to Lawrence Driscoll (2009), despite the fact that critics maintain the "classlessness" British literature, the canon of British literature since the 1980s has consisted almost exclusively of middle-class works (Driscoll 3-4, 16-21; see also Tew). Since "working-class writers bring to their production a different set of tastes and distinctions" (Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction* 34), scholars need a different set of tastes or theories to apprehend them (see Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction* 21). According to Bourdieu, in the field of cultural production, critics "take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art" (*Field of Cultural Production* 36). In other words, middle-class literary critics usually dominate the field by excluding different values, such as working-class tastes. Therefore, "the poverty of theory on the value of such [working-class] cultural production" (Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction* 42; see also Driscoll 2) in British

literature inevitably happens, resulting in "the problem of marginalization of working-class culture in the bourgeois academy" (Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction* 9, 42). This class bias can, to some extent, be corrected or mitigated through awareness of the effect of class in the field of literary criticism, or, more practically, by studying how class operates in literary criticism, as Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis demonstrate.

Some scholars of class also blame the dominance of post-structuralism and/or postmodernism in late twentieth century English literature for the lack of research into literature and class (Day 201; Driscol 1-3; Haywood 142; Janowitz 239-41). Scholars consider that topics such as race and gender "have been aided by structuralist framing, while discussion of class has... been disempowered by it" (Janowits 240), because post-structuralist/postmodernist theories do "not give any particular role or value to working-class cultural production as all texts have class conflict inscribed in them"; as a result, the theories reduce "Working-class traditions... to redundant metanarratives or textual constructions" (Haywood 142). On the one hand, this tendency arose from the fact that, as Driscoll argues, critics have used postmodern theories "to erase the category of class" (3). In other words, in the field of English literature, postmodernist theories have been used for critics' unconscious struggle to achieve the monopoly in defining the legitimate taste rather than for taking their own cultural and social positions into consideration (see Driscoll 19-21). On the other hand, their accounts indicate that the neglect of class in the field of English literature arose, at least in part, from a theoretical overreliance on Marxism (see Lavelle). According to Gary Day (2001), "The concept of class [in traditional Marxist sense] implies an ability to imagine society as a structured whole based on particular economic relations" but "Post-structuralism... is suspicious of the idea of the whole and therefore of class-based analyses" (Day 201). However, class analysis and postmodernism/poststructuralism are not necessarily in conflict (Labelle 1, 9-10). Since Bourdieu's concept of class is relational, it does not imagine society as a structured whole and therefore is regarded as a theory which overcomes the kind of problems of Marxist theory (see Devine and Savage, *Rethinking Class* 1; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociologyy* 15-19, 133). What these scholars see as at odds with postmodernism/poststructuralism is in fact classical Marxism, rather than issues around class itself.

The majority of studies about the working-class in Anglophone literature (both for adults and children) have taken a broadly Marxist approach. However, John F. Lavelle (2011) argues that Marxist literary criticism is almost by definition limited in

analysis of novels which deal with lived experiences of working-class people. Although some Marxist scholars since the mid-twentieth century, including Raymond Williams, have developed literary theories deriving from Marxism that take account of the everyday lives and feelings associated with class, Lavelle observes that the majority of Marxist literary critics have tended to disregard the realities of working-class lives (Lavelle 1). Traditionally, Marxists have defined class by focusing on economic relationships to the means of production (Cannadine 7-17). This approach is not helpful when considering the working-class/scholarship boy literature in mid-twentieth century Britain which involves directing attention to working-class culture (Day 180). Scholars of British working-class culture rarely define class solely in terms of economic standards, because class in Britain has always been understood as comprising psychological and cultural elements alongside economic matters.

According to Andrew Milner (1999), the three founders of Cultural Studies, Richard Hoggart (1957), E. P. Thompson (1963) and Raymond Williams (1963), were all "suspicious of supposedly 'objective' notions of class, as a 'category or 'structure'"(Milner 111). They therefore developed a "culturalist" approach (Milner 111). For example, Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) offers no objective or economic definitions of the working-class because, in his view, working-class people are those who "feel rather that they are 'working-class' in the things they admire and dislike, in 'belonging'" (*Uses* 19). Therefore, Hoggart identifies a series of class indicators, such as where a person lives, housing, occupations, education, speech and voice, and clothing (*Uses* 20-21). Similarly, Joanna Bourke (1994) states that, at least between the 1890s and 1950s, "'objective' definitions [of class] are problematical" (2), because "Realization of one's 'class' position emerged from the routine activities of everyday life" (4). Raymond Williams' theory of hegemony developed as an alternative to the Marxist notion of a superstructure (all aspects of social relations not associated with producing the food, resources and materials necessary to sustain a society), is based on a similar view. For Williams, hegemony "is a whole body of practices and expectations... It is a lived system of meanings and values... which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming" (*Marxism and Literature* 110).

This way of thinking about class is also evident in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's class theory became popular in the so-called "cultural turn" in class studies in sociology that began in the late 1990s (Devine and Savage 1; Wakeling 36). This

refers to the general tendency to turn away from pure Marxist definitions of class which occurred in line with decline of class studies in the late 1970s (Cannadine 7-17). By the end of twentieth century, the majority of those working in the social sciences and Cultural Studies had ceased to focus on class on the grounds that classes, in the Marxist sense, did not exist any longer in Britain (Cannadine 7-17; Milner 9-10, 121-34). Rather, attention shifted to race, gender, and sexuality (see Atkinson 8-9; Cannadine 7-17). However, the late 1990s and the 2000s saw a renewal of interest in identity issues and cultural aspects of class, despite continuing claims that Britain had become a "classless" society (Atkinson 10-11; Wakeling 39; Devine and Savage 13). In the revival of class studies since the 2000s, the majority of studies have tended to consider class through the lens of Bourdieu's theories, focusing on how "class is reproduced through *cultural* process and... manifest in identities, consciousness, dispositions and lived experience" (Atkinson 10). Bourdieu's concept of class, which is not solely defined by economic capital, but also by, at least, cultural and social capitals, is relational. Therefore, it can accommodate what class means in a post-industrial age and it can be used to analyse complicated relations between class strata within or outside of the three-tier class system (see Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* 15-19). This concept of class enables more effective analysis of the class position and experiences of scholarship boys.

Another problem with Marxism in relation to the evaluation of scholarship boy writing is Marxist critics' tendency to idealise and stereotype working-class people (Lavelle 2). Bourdieu points out that "the crucial error... in Marx, would consist in treating classes on paper as real classes" (*In Other Words* 128). In Bourdieu's view, "Classes in Marx's sense", such as the working-class, are "*to be made*. They are not given in 'social reality'" and have to be "made through a political work" (Bourdieu, *In Other Words* 129). According to David Cannadine (1999), until the early 1960s, many British saw Britain as characterised by "a hierarchical and deferential caste of mind" rather than social classes in Marxist sense (162). However, throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, gradually the political work to create the working-class was built up by socialists and left-wing scholars, such as E. P. Thompson and Richard Hoggart. During the period covered by this thesis, the 1960s and the 1970s, therefore, polarized or triadic models of class predominated, meaning that most people saw their lives and society in terms of "them and us", "the working-class, the middle-class, and the upper-class" (Cannadine 164). In the 1960s and the 1970s, the writers featured in this thesis

frequently referred to "the working-class" and "the middle-class" in their essays and correspondence when discussing children's literature and their own backgrounds. They show that they were fully aware of the diversity and conflicts within the working-class. Yet, these writers also shared a sense of solidarity as writers from the working-class when it came to resisting what they saw as the oppressive middle-class cultural dominance of children's literature. In this respect, for them the working-class existed, and, as will be shown, this class consciousness served an important role.

However, even in the mid-twentieth century, when the majority of people were much more class-conscious and often had clearer class identities than in early twenty-first century Britain, the working-class did not exist as a unified homogeneous social group. As Cannadine puts it, in Britain "The homogeneous proletariat with common economic interests and revolutionary political ambitions was a figment of the deluded hopes and excessive fears of the Far Left and the Far Right" (140). In fact, for anyone who has looked closely at British working-class culture, its diverse nature has always been apparent. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart refers to "the great number of differences, the subtle shades, the class distinctions, within the working-classes themselves" (*Uses* 21). Some scholars, particularly those who are working-class themselves, have blamed some socialist/Marxist intellectuals for circulating the image of a united homogeneous working-class by choosing to focus on a limited group and set of attitudes in their discussions of the working-class (see Lavelle; Walkerdine). For instance, Valerie Walkerdine points out that in some ways ideas about the working-class constituted a kind of middle-class fantasy:

> Whether The Working-class is seen as the 'bedrock of the revolution'... or as an authoritarian class who are reactionary... the issue is similar. All these positions attest not to the 'reality' of working-class life but to bourgeois fantasies that are incorporated into 'truths' through which The Working-class is created as an object, governed and regulated. (205)

Scholars such as Walkerdine argue that whatever their political beliefs, middle-class people (including those who regard themselves as socialists) constructed working-class people as "the Other", or as a way of fulfilling middle-class desires. As a consequence, they created a fantasy of a unified working-class. According to Walkerdine, when middle-class intellectuals who had believed in the fantasy of the united and rebellious

working-class realized that their fantasy was false, they began to assert the death of class (Walkerdine 207), and therefore, until the 1990s, few attempts to appreciate the reality and diversity of the working-class were undertaken (for the decline of class studies in the late-twentieth century, see also Cannadine, xii; Atkinson 5; Driscoll 8).

Scholarship boy writers depicted what they saw as the realities of working-class lives, which often contradicted the united homogeneous image, or the middle-class left-wing fantasy of the working-class. For instance, as will be shown in Chapter 3, Robert Westall depicted antagonisms between class strata within the working-class in a small area. His novels often illustrate conflicts within the working-class at a variety of levels, such as antagonisms between rural and urban, or rivalry between specific streets and districts or between races. Furthermore, scholarship boy novels often feature aspiring working-class characters who desire to *be* middle-class, or who experience alienation both from the working-class and the middle-class. Their attempts to depict such realities and diversity of the working-class were, however, less likely to be appreciated by Marxist critics, who were concerned with emphasizing the political role of the different classes. In a similar way, although Alan Garner, as will be shown in Chapters 4 and 8, attempted to revive the residual culture in the rural working-class through his writing, such attempts were rarely appreciated by left-wing critics, because classical Marxism had an urban bias and tended to dismiss non-revolutionary rural working-class culture (see Williams, *Politics and Letters* 319).

Due to the tendency to emphasize political ideology rather than cultural and psychological issues of class, working-class/scholarship boy writers' backgrounds were also often toned down by socialist critics, both in the fields of adult and children's literature. Overall, "Among critics of working-class, especially socialist, literature it has become the habit to argue that the author's own background is of only negligible importance", because what was seen as important was political ideology, rather than one's class (Rosenberg 146). This thesis, however, shows that scholarship boy writers' backgrounds and real-life experiences were indispensable in any consideration of their works and activities. The consciousness of *being* from the working-class, and their rich inherited working-class culture, played a key role in the development of the children's writers from the working-class in the 1960s and the 1970s.

The political bias toward Marxism or socialism in working-class literary studies has generally not benefitted most writers from the working-class in mid-twentieth century Britain. This is because the majority of working-class/scholarship boy writers

(whether they wrote for adults or children) did not, in the period in question, identify with left-wing politics, except for a small number of communist writers (see Rosenberg; Haywood 116-24; Laing 221-23). It is probably not a coincidence that the most frequently studied working-class novelist in the period, Alan Sillitoe, "is the only novelist [among John Braine, Stan Barstow, David Storey, Barry Hines and Sillitoe] who overtly expressed ideas of class struggle" (Salman 202). Even relatively "angry" working-class characters in the novels of the period, including Sillitoe's, rarely support socialism/Marxism in straightforward ways (Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction* 68; von Rosenberg 158-60). Peter Hitchcock (1989) notes that

> Arthur [in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*], Arthur Machin [in *This Sporting Life*], Joe Lampton [in *Room at the Top*], Billy Liar, and, of course, Jimmy Porter [in *Look Back in Anger*] have few natural predilections for the Right Wing – yet part of their dilemma is a distrust for a Left in Britain. (*Working-Class Fiction* 68)

Some of the working-class characters depicted by scholarship boy writers are neither angry nor revolutionary, meaning they do not fit into Marxist models (see Rosenberg 16). Marxist/socialist critics were likely to disregard such works, and more often focus on "militant and proletarian" earlier working-class writers such as Robert Tressell (1870-1911) (see Lavelle 3-5).[8] Due to a similar tendency, while Jan Needle, who "accepts... the great promises held out to the future by a certain local, low-key and militantly domestic British socialism" (Inglis, "Social Class and Educational Adventures" 89), is valued by the left-wing critic, Fred Inglis, other scholarship boy writers who distance themselves to varying degrees from classical Marxism, including left-wing writers such as Robert Westall (see Chapter 3), have been largely neglected in terms of their depictions of class and politics.

Additional tensions with Marxism and for Marxist critics stem from the fact that their literary aims were also often difficult to appreciate in the frame of classical Marxism. Ingrid von Rosenberg (1982) summarizes the characteristics of working-class novels for adults in the mid twentieth century:

[8] For the studies of militant working-class literature in Victorian era, see Peter Miles (1984) and Roger Webster (1984) in *The British Working Class Novel in the Twentieth Century* (1984); H. Gustav Klaus (1985); Owen Ashton and Stephen Roberts (1999). Pamela Fox (1994), which focuses on "shame" rather than the militant image in working-class novels between 1890 and 1945, is, in terms of the political bias, a notable exception.

> The writers no longer show that grim pride in the separateness of their class, born from its very underprivileged and deprived position, which had dictated all that militant proletarian literature of the past. They show a pride that is fundamentally different, almost the opposite: it is pride in their integration, in having become a respected part *within* the existing society at last. (148)

Von Rosenberg, like most critics of working-class literature, makes no specific mention of writing for children by scholarship boys, but in this observation she is pointing to a characteristic shared by scholarship boy writers for both adults *and* children. As will be shown in the following chapters, most scholarship boy writers for children willingly use middle-class literary traditions to write about working-class culture. Scholarship boy writers, who were caught between the working-class and the middle-class, saw antagonism between the classes and blind rejections of middle-class culture ultimately as damaging and pointless. In their stories, therefore, social and cultural integration is generally regarded as an ideal rather than a reluctant concession to the dominant culture and class. Scholarship boy writers often sought reconciliation between the working-class and the middle-class. For left-wing critics this has undermined their status as writers from the working-class (see Salman). As a result, both in the fields of adult and children's literature, the impact of scholarship boy writers in mid-twentieth century Britain has largely been neglected.

Paradoxically, therefore, as this thesis shows, it was the writers' determination to write about the working-class that engendered not only criticism from conservative critics who disliked the inclusion of working-class culture but also critical neglect by left-wing critics (see Chapters 3, 6, and 8). Such Marxist scholars and critics have, however, overlooked the fact that another kind of class struggle was ongoing in the period. It was what Bourdieu theorises as struggle in the field of cultural production. As Haywood points out, "there has never been a time of such cultural pre-eminence in the history of the British working-class" to match the mid-twentieth century (Haywood 116). In other words, it was the time when struggles to challenge the bourgeois cultural domination in the field of cultural production was most intense. As will be shown, in mid-twentieth century Britain, class was reproduced through cultural processes which often took place in educational institutions and in conjunction with children's books

(see Chapters 1 and 5). Scholarship boy writers for children aimed to change this reproduction of class. They challenged the class system by integrating working-class culture into the dominant culture. This was not the kind of class struggle to achieve a social revolution expected in classical Marxism, but it was still a significant, and an enduring, struggle to change the class-divided society.

Thesis Outline

Part I of this thesis consists of four chapters which analyse four scholarship boy novels written by Aidan Chambers, Robert Westall and Alan Garner. Chambers, Garner, and Westall are all from the upper sections of the White English working-class – though Westall has some Scottish ancestry. Corresponding to Jackson and Marsden's findings of working-class grammar school pupils' backgrounds that many of scholarship boys are from "the sunken middle-class" and/or children of foremen, all the three writers have one grand or great-grandparent with middle-class origin, and their fathers are all skilled manual workers (Jackson and Marsden 58-73). As will be shown, therefore, their depiction of the working-class was not of the slums, which was, as will be argued, the preferred image of the working-class in the minds of the middle-class due to its "exotic" nature and the safe distance. Rather, it was quite close to the middle-class, meaning that class barriers and antagonisms between the middle- and the working-classes could be more closely observed and experienced. Furthermore, since English working-class culture comprises a great variety of different cultures, these three writers' works show the diversity within the white English working-class, which, unlike racial, gender and sexual differences, have tended to be overlooked by the middle-classes, who rather see the working-class as homogeneous "Others".

Robert Westall grew up in the Tyneside area of the North-East. He attended a grammar school as a scholarship pupil under the education system before the 1944. Alan Garner, whose father was a craftsman in Alderley Edge in Cheshire, received his education under the 1944 Education system. However, he attended not an ordinary state-maintained grammar school, but the elite, direct-grant Manchester Grammar School. Aidan Chambers also grew up in the North-East of England, in County Durham. Unlike other two writers, who were academic high-flyers, he initially failed to pass eleven-plus examination, but was transferred to a grammar school when he was 13-years-old. While Garner and Westall enrolled at universities – which was relatively rare

for scholarship boys of their generation – Chambers was not able to apply for university, and instead attended a teacher training college; in short, Chambers was closer to the average scholarship boy. These three writers, through their recognition of their scholarship boy experiences, have created texts which illustrate both the variety and typicality of experiences of scholarship boys. As will be shown, the scholarship boy experience is characteristically represented in their Young Adult novels, because the class tension between working-class community, family and middle-class world represented by school is generally most intense in adolescence. This makes their novels even more illustrative texts to understand scholarship boy experiences than books that are *for* adults, and *about* adults.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 examine Chambers' scholarship boy novels, *Dance on My Grav*e (1982) and *Breaktime* (1978), in relation to Chambers' autobiography. In doing so, these chapters highlight the historical background of the education system which produced scholarship boys and the mechanism of the class reproduction through cultural process in the education system. Chapter 3 focuses on a critically-neglected example of one of Westall's scholarship boy novels, *Fathom Five* (1979). This chapter highlights Westall's representation of the scholarship boy and his uses of socialism and left-wing politics. In Chapter 4, Garner's *Red Shift* (1973) is examined. This chapter highlights Garner's views on the rural working-class culture and the dominant culture, and his awareness of being a scholarship boy who stands between two class cultures.

As these four chapters show, scholarship boy novels for the young are often based on, or inspired by, the writers' personal experiences. This thesis highlights these aspects of their novels by using previously unknown materials which have been gathered through a combination of interviews and archival research. In particular, material from the Aidan Chambers Archive in Aberystwyth, and several collections, including those of Robert Westall at Seven Stories in Newcastle, provide important insights into their scholarship boy experiences. The thesis, therefore, incorporates first-hand, sometimes verbatim accounts by scholarship boys about their experiences, views and writing. Theoretically, it draws on the work of Bourdieu and Williams, who were both scholars with working-class origins. Overall, this study attempts to describe and then to reread the scholarship boy writers' activities from a point-of-view which is closer to theirs rather than what has been regarded as neutral and objective – in reality, middle-class-centred – history of British children's literature.

One methodological problem of most working-class literature studies is the inadequate attention to publishing processes. Published novels are, after all, commercial products and writers "are dominated in their relations with those who hold political and economic power... such as those of the market" (Bourdieu, *In Other Words* 144). More specifically, published texts are selected and filtered by editors of publishing houses, who are usually middle-class – in addition to writers' pre-selection in accordance with publishers' class status. Often, manuscripts are altered according to customers' or editors' tastes. Part II of this thesis explores such conditions of the field of British children's book production in the 1960s and the 1970s. It shows how scholarship boy writers broke down the hegemony of the middle-class editors, critics and adult readers who, until then, had shaped what was published for children in Britain. Although some studies on children's book publishing of mid-twentieth-century Britain exist (for instance, see Pearson; Wright; Reynolds and Tucker), they have largely been concerned with issues other than class. Therefore, in Chapters 5 and 6, using material from archives and interviews, I explore the state of children's book publishing in the 1960s and the 1970s; how it initially restricted the emergence of working-class writings, and how tactically scholarship boy and left-wing writers/activists resisted and struggled to change the field, with particular emphasis on two editors, Leila Berg and Aidan Chambers, who succeeded in publishing some books for ordinary state-school pupils. Chapter 6 examines editorial disputes over and alterations to Westall's *The Machine Gunners* (1975). This example shows how working-class culture was suppressed at a variety of levels. Together, these chapters look at the conditions of the field which enabled scholarship boy writers in this period to be more successful in the inclusion of working-class culture.

The other two chapters that make up Part II focus on the conditions of book reviewing and criticism of British children's literature in the 1960s and the 1970s. As Chapter 7 shows, book reviewing and criticism, which were mostly undertaken by middle-class critics until the late 1960s, indirectly restricted the emergence of the new kind of working-class literature. As Bourdieu states, "The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work" (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 35). Therefore, some scholarship boy writers, such as Aidan Chambers and Robert Leeson, consciously engaged in children's book criticism to change the middle-class dominance of the field. Drawing on archive material and interviews, Chapter 7 highlights how Aidan Chambers became

aware of the problem of the field of British children's literature in the light of children's book criticism, and how it led him to the foundation of *Signal*, one of the earliest specialist journals of children's literature in Britain, and how *Signal* contributed to the change of the field of British children's literature. Chapter 8 analyses Garner's scholarship boy novel, *The Owl Service* (1967), as an example of how certain meanings (such as class anger) in the novel have been undermined in a historical process, and how struggles in the field of children's book criticism has affected our understanding of a novel.

Although this thesis reveals class oppression, some of which continues to this day, the three scholarship boy writers, Chambers, Garner, and Westall, are among the most admired and/or influential writers in modern British children's literature. Some of their scholarship boy novels, such as Garner's *The Owl Service* and Westall's *The Machine Gunners*, are now regarded as classics of modern British children's literature. Although Robert Leeson has been rather neglected as a writer, he was, alongside Chambers, one of the most influential children's book critics in the period. Even though the scholarship boy writers faced numerous difficulties, in hindsight, these writers were winning their battles in the field of British children's literature in the 1970s. This thesis does not simply reveal the class oppression and conflicts in children's publishing; rather it shows how these writers infiltrated and, over time, did much to reshape the industry and the cultural infrastructure that supports it.

Part I

CHAPTER 1: EDUCATION AND UNCERTAINTY IN AIDAN CHAMBERS' *DANCE ON MY GRAVE*

From 1907, grant-aided grammar schools, which were long the principal gateway to middle-class occupations, were required to offer 25 per cent of their places to scholarship pupils. Therefore, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the numbers of working-class children entering grammar school gradually increased. Among boys born between 1899 and 1910, 27 per cent of middle-class boys and 4 per cent of working-class boys entered grammar schools; between 1910 and 1929, the figures rose to 38.9 per cent middle-class and 9.8 per cent working-class boys (Musgrave 97; Floud 112-13). Richard Hoggart's landmark study, *The Uses of Literacy*, mainly describes the experience of what he calls the "scholarship boy" for this generation. Among the writers discussed in this thesis, Robert Leeson and Robert Westall also belonged to this generation, while Aidan Chambers and Alan Garner represent the next generation; they received their education under the restructured 1944 education system.

The 1944 Education Act introduced state-funded secondary school education for the first time in the UK. However, the so-called Tripartite System introduced in 1944 and consisting of selective grammar schools, non-selective secondary modern schools and the intermediate selective schools known as technical schools, gave only limited opportunities to working-class children. Non-selective secondary modern schools, which the majority of children entered, mostly provided vocational training for pupils thought to be destined for manual work, rather than educating them with a view to further educational opportunities (see Plummer 15-16). Before the 1944 Education Act, a considerable proportion of the pupils who qualified for grammar schools refused to take up places for economic reasons (Jackson and Marsden 230). However, although fees were no longer required, the proportion of working-class pupils in grammar schools had increased only modestly by the 1950s (Jackson and Marsden 230). The apparently equal entrance opportunity for state-maintained grammar schools was, in reality, far from equal, because examination success required middle-class culture in a number of ways – not simply knowledge, but also aspects of lifestyles (M. Evans 25-26; Kuhn 113). The extent of the middle-class bias is described by Mary Evans, a middle-class grammar school pupil from 1953 to1960. The eleven-plus examination, she contends,

"gave middle-class children considerable advantages" to the extent "that the eleven-plus was almost impossible to fail" for middle-class children and "almost impossible for working-class children to pass" due to "a particular kind of... petit-bourgeois normality that the test relied on" (M. Evans 25).

Although Evans's claim is overstated, the inequality of the examination in terms of class has been substantiated by surveys. For example, according to John Bynner (1975), "Nearly two-thirds of the professional group of parents had succeeded in getting their children into grammar schools, in comparison with only 7 per cent of the unskilled group" (Bynner 10; see also *Crowther Report* Vol. 2., 12, 130). In addition, although it was known that some working-class parents were reluctant to send their children to grammar schools (Jackson and Marsden 255-63), Bynner reveals that the inequality did not arise from parents' attitude toward education: while nearly 85 per cent of those children from professional groups succeeded in gaining places when their parents wanted them to receive a grammar school education, less than 22 per cent of unskilled workers were offered places even when they and their parents hoped they would be (11). Therefore, it was middle-class families who benefitted most from the Tripartite System, which abolished fees for all grammar school pupils (K. Jones 38). Furthermore, as will be further discussed, the majority of working-class grammar school pupils, including the brightest pupils, left school early (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2., 17, 131-33; Lawson and Silver 425, 430; Greenslade 65-67). Therefore, the class profile of sixth-form pupils did not change considerably after 1944 – "boys from the homes of the non-manual workers are a majority in the last two years of grammar school life" (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2. 132; see also Jackson and Marsden 24-25; *Crowther Report* Vol. 1 203; Vol. 2, 17, 62, 116-18). This meant that the chances for working-class children to reach university did not change significantly under the Tripartite System (Musgrave 120).[1]

Aidan Chambers: A Scholarship Boy Writer

For Aidan Chambers, the 1944 Education Act changed the course of his life. Chambers, like Alan Garner, was born in 1934; both belonged to the first generation of working-class children who received their secondary education under the Tripartite System.

[1] According to the *Crowther Report*, while one in five sons of professional and managerial workers attended universities, the proportion for working-class boys was roughly one in twenty (*Crowther Report*, Vol. 2, 62). As for girls, while slightly more middle-class girls left school earlier than boys of the same category, working-class girls were more likely to stay at school longer than working-class boys (*Crowther Report*, Vol. 2, 17).

Aidan Chambers initially failed to pass the eleven-plus examination due to the poor quality of his primary school education (Chambers, personal interview). However, following an additional examination (introduced by the Act) at 13-years-old, he was transferred from his secondary modern school to a grammar school. He credits this change with making it possible for him to become a writer (Chambers, personal interview). The idea of becoming a writer was sown when he read about the experiences of an earlier scholarship boy in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, "written by someone from my social circumstances" (*Booktalk* 81; see also Chambers, personal interview; *Breaktime* "postscript"; *Booktalk* 80-81). Chambers believes that his encounter with Lawrence was almost certainly the result of his move to a grammar school since, at his secondary modern school, he had little chance to be exposed to the culture of reading (Chambers, personal interview).

The move to a grammar school, however, caused Chambers to suffer from lack of confidence, anxiety, and the sense of being uprooted – all typical experiences of scholarship boys, according to Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957). Aidan Chambers was therefore impressed by Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, which was published when Chambers was in his early twenties (Chambers, personal interview). In a letter to Richard Hoggart, Chambers wrote that his eyes were opened to "a good part of" his working-class background by *The Uses of Literacy* (Letter to Hoggart, 25 Oct. 1971). He was not unique in this. *The Uses of Literacy* was highly important in the way it encouraged scholarship boys and girls to see their class free from middle-class prejudice, and for the way it gave them confidence to be proud of their working-class roots (Long 131-32; Kuhn 119). *The Uses of Literacy* gave Chambers insights into the problems associated with his situations as products of class, when previously he thought of them as merely personal issues (Chambers, personal interview). The scholarship boy characters in Chambers' novels are the type of boys whom Hoggart sees as most fragile and problematic: those "who are self-conscious and yet not self-aware in any full sense, who are as a result uncertain, dissatisfied and gnawed by self-doubt" (Hoggart, *Uses* 240). The lack of confidence and uncertainty is a unique characteristic of Chambers' scholarship boy characters.

Aidan Chambers' Scholarship boy Novels

The scholarship boy's experience of being removed from his working-class home and community was frequently traumatic. This is what motivated Aidan Chambers to explore the experience through writing. But this did not happen straightforwardly. In the 1960s, while Chambers was working as a critic and an editor to increase the range of books available for working-class children, he wrote several books for working-class/lower-middle-class teenagers. Those early works, such as *Cycle Smash* (1967) and several plays, were mainly written to encourage the pupils at the secondary modern school where he taught to participate in literary activities. During the late 1970s, when the number of books for working-class children began to increase, he started to write Young Adult novels which experimented with radical styles. Often, these books were based on his own adolescent experience. As Martha Westwater points out, feelings of being estranged or alienated and melancholy "pervade all Chambers's writing [Young Adult novels] and reveal his discomfort in a world where... even life itself seem debased" (Westwater 39). Although the correlation between the melancholic feeling and Chambers' class position in Britain has largely passed unnoticed by scholars of children's literature, the feeling which Westwater points to – Chambers "doesn't feel at home in the world" (Westwater 39) – is typical of scholarship boys and girls (see Hoggart, *Uses* 246-47). For instance, according to former scholarship girl Valerie Walkerdine, a scholarship girl would "no longer feel any sense of belonging, nor any sense of safety" (Walkerdine 169; see also Plummer, x).

The unique experiences and suffering of adolescent scholarship boys is at the heart of two novels in the group of YA novels that is now referred to as the Dance sequence: *Breaktime* (1978) and *Dance on My Grave* (1982). In *Breaktime*, as will be shown in Chapter 2, the scholarship boy experience is at the heart of the story. Without understanding of the unique experience and suffering of Ditto as a scholarship boy, it is not possible to understand the novel fully. The same is true of *Dance on My Grave*, which is notable as a very early children's book that positively features a gay protagonist and his relationship with his boyfriend. While in *Dance on My Grave* the class position of the scholarship boy protagonist, Hal, is somewhat less crucial to the plot, problems of the scholarship boy shape the story. Without this context, the book becomes incomprehensible at points; for instance, reading the novel as a story of a melancholic gay teenager, Martha Westwater is puzzled by the last words of the book, "somehow we all escape our history" (*Dance* 246; Westwater 53). Taking Hal's final decision to continue his schooling into account, and therefore seeing the story as not

only an escape from his past and heteronormativity but also from the historical limitation of the working-class, the phrase takes on a particular resonance.

Breaktime and *Dance on My Grave* were published in 1978 and 1982, when state-maintained grammar schools had already largely disappeared or been incorporated into a new education system in the form of comprehensive schools. However, as Aidan Chambers confirmed in conversation, the schools depicted in *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave* are based on grammar schools from the previous era. As will be shown, in these novels Chambers infuses his own experience as a scholarship boy in his treatment of the problems of the education system and relations between class and school. The experiences of scholarship boys in these novels are typical of the 1950s rather than the late 1970s, even though details of their school and home lives are not necessarily those of the 1950s.[2] The scholarship boys' experiences in these novels are largely based on Chambers' own adolescent experiences and observations of other scholarship boys; first as a grammar school pupil, and then a teacher. The geographical setting of *Breaktime*, his "most autobiographical novel" (Greenway 16), corresponds with Chambers' own adolescent home in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Darlington. *Dance on My Grave* is set in a seaside resort town in Essex, where Chambers was a grammar school teacher in the late 1950s (Greenway 6, 32; Chambers, personal interview). However, while his novels give clear accounts of the reality of life for scholarship boys in the 1950s, the novels highlight more than the historical past. For instance, although the book focuses on the protagonist's romance and sexuality, *Dance on My Grave* has significance as a scholarship boy novel in terms of Chambers' insight into how class was reproduced through the education system, which mechanism was not unique to the Tripartite System in the 1950s, but continued to affect the education system throughout the twentieth century. The limitations of the education system have frequently been discussed in the field of education in the mid-twentieth century (see, for instance, the *Crowther Report*; Jackson and Marsden; Plummer). However, while there are a number of novels featuring scholarship boys for both adults' and children's literature, few highlight the issues and conflicts associated with school to the degree that Chambers does in *Dance on My Grave*.

Limitations of the Education System

[2] According to Betty Greenway, Chambers began writing *Dance on My Grave* in 1966 (Greenway 31).

Dance on My Grave, in which, according to Chambers, the scholarship boy's experiences are closer to his own than those depicted in *Breaktime* (Chambers, personal interview), features a scholarship boy who is at the end of compulsory education.[3] At the beginning of the novel, the central character, Hal, the son of a baggage handler, is in the midst of uncertainty. He speculates about what to do after he finishes the compulsory part of his education.

> Should I leave school this summer and find a job? Or should I stay on?
> If I left school, what job could I do?
> If I stayed on, what subjects should I study? And what job would those subjects qualify me for when I am eighteen?
> Or should I go to university at eighteen? And if so, why?
> I was in two minds about everything. (*Dance* 6)

Hal has choices thanks to free secondary education and the relative affluence of his working-class home. However, he does not have answers to his questions, because he lacks the information and encouragement to do what he wants, which is to stay on at his school to study English literature. He has the academic ability to continue, and if he were a middle-class pupil, he would be expected to stay on.[4] However, the majority of scholarship boys and girls at the time were not committed to going on to the sixth form, and in his uncertainty about further education Hal is a typical scholarship boy of the mid-twentieth century. For instance, according to "The Social Survey" in *The Crowther Report*, more than 70 per cent of working-class grammar/technical school pupils, or 85 per cent of semi/unskilled manual workers' sons (the category Hal belongs to) left school at 15- or 16-years-old, while 62 per cent of the sons of professional and managerial workers went on to the sixth form (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2., 17, 62; see also 130-33). The majority of the brightest working-class children left school early for reasons which had little to do with economic necessity (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 116,

[3] The number of studies on *Dance on My Grave* is relatively small. For discussion of sexuality, see Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000) 102-07, 113-16. Chapter 3 of Betty Greenway (2006) is dedicated to *Dance on My Grave*. Kimberley Reynolds (2007) briefly discusses father-son relationships (75), Mary Harris Russell (2008) focuses on female characters' roles, and Emer O'Sullivan (2010) discusses issues of English-German translation.

[4] For working-class pupils' uncertainty and middle-class pupils' confidence regarding further education, see Atkinson 84-105 and D. Reay, "Always Knowing" 526.

see also 118-24), though there was also a smaller proportion of pupils who had to leave because they "needed to earn money" (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2., 23-25).

Confronted with a similar situation in France, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron proposed that inequalities of education did not arise solely from economic factors, but rather were a product of inherited class cultures from students' social backgrounds and the culture which schools require (Bourdieu and Passeron, *Inheritors*). While middle-class pupils inherited culture and information from home which supported their success in school, working-class pupils had to assimilate the school culture, which was "often contrary to those of their class of origin" (*Inheritors* 22, 24). The phenomenon identified by Bourdieu and Passeron was as true in Britain and many other parts of the world as it was in France, and has been used to explain how cultural dominance and class reproduction works through the education system. However, in mid-twentieth-century Britain, the class-cultural nature of grammar schools not only disadvantaged working-class pupils, but it also directly alienated many working-class pupils emotionally and socially:

> For the majority of the [working-class] children... the entry to grammar school was uncertain and confused. They had suddenly lost in some measure that mesh of securities, expectations, recognitions, that we have called 'neighbourhood'. (Jackson and Marsden 110)

As Jackson and Marsden discuss here, from the moment a scholarship boy entered a grammar school, he often found himself in uncertainty because of a cultural gap between his working-class home and the middle-class grammar school.

Furthermore, in class-conscious Britain in the mid-twentieth century, the cultural assimilation of scholarship boys was calculated to separate working-class pupils from their home cultures. Aidan Chambers criticises that "it [separating pupils from the working-class] was almost consciously done to" working-class pupils (Chambers, personal interview). For example, Jackson and Marsden found that grammar school teachers discouraged working-class pupils from participating in activities in their working-class communities or keeping old friendships (126-27). Grammar school pupils often disliked their uniforms which "required the dress styles of the young" and for children of the working-class effectively marked them as outsiders in their home communities (Jackson and Marsden 125). Grammar schools also discouraged the sports

which were popular with the working-class and encouraged those favoured by the middle-class (Jackson and Marsden 123-24). As Aidan Chambers experienced, "They trained you in rugby not in soccer, not in football" because "At that time rugby was a middle-class, private school game" (Chambers, personal interview; see also Jackson and Marsden 123-24).[5] The middle-class culture and social activities in grammar schools psychologically alienated working-class pupils (Kuhn 103-05). Alan Garner's accounts of being punished when he spoke the regional dialect in his primary school suggest that enforced cultural assimilation began earlier, in elementary schools, because teachers believed in the superiority of middle-class culture (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 21). Therefore, ultimately only those who successfully assimilated into the school culture from an early age succeeded in gaining a place in a grammar school. The unofficial aspects of the selection process based on the extent of cultural assimilation were further progressed in grammar schools, which were in effect institutions designed to produce middle-class people and cultures.[6]

Working-class pupils' resistance to the middle-class culture was one reasons why many left school early (Jackson and Marsden 119-29; Kuhn 113-14). Jackson and Marsden report that working-class "rebel" pupils who were loyal to their neighbourhoods and culture, or who did not accept middle-class views and tastes, received frequent punishments and tended to leave grammar schools earlier than others (Jackson and Marsden 119-29). In *Dance on My Grave*, such a pupil is found in the character of Spike. Spike is "always in trouble at school because he won't wear anything but raggy jeans and a scruffy shirt... He'd been up in front of the Head five times that summer term already, ostensibly because of the way he was dressed" (*Dance* 4-5). At the end of the compulsory period of education, Spike is going to become "a labourer for a painter and decorator" and he is "glad to be free of school" (*Dance* 245). Such pupils were not the minority in the mid-twentieth century: the majority of those who left grammar/technical schools early (more than 80 per cent of those who left

[5] The class markers of rugby and football are also central to Westall's semi-autobiographical novel, *Falling into Glory*.

[6] Most former grammar school pupils recall that their grammar schools were overwhelmingly middle-class, with the exception of a school Greenslade and Walsh attended, which was a "second division" grammar school in a working-class area (Greenslade 30). However, since at the time the majority of the British population was working-class, statistically, roughly about half, or slightly more than half, of grammar school pupils were from working-class families (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 12, 130; Himmelweit 142). Therefore, their accounts indicate how grammar schools effectively dressed themselves as middle-class institutions, even though it was still true that most elite grammar schools were actually predominantly middle-class, because class proportions of pupils largely depended on class status of areas in which grammar schools were built (see Himmelweit 143-44; Greenslade 30, 35).

schools at 15-years-old) claimed that they “did not want to stay longer at school” (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 23).

However, Hal is not as loyal to working-class culture as Spike, and he does not dislike his school. In fact, Hal wants to study English in the sixth form. Nevertheless, he nearly leaves his school at the end of compulsory education because of his uncertainty over further education. Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of class habitus refers to an internalized principle which generates judgments and determines routine activities (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 170). Due to class habitus, he explains, people feel natural and comfortable when they take choices which are familiar to their class, while they often feel uncomfortable with the practices of different classes. Therefore, for instance, according to Kuhn, “In the all-encompassing English class system, if you know that you are in the ‘wrong’ class, you know that therefore you are a valueless person” (117). A letter from Chambers to Alan Garner illustrates the kind of anxiety: “*every day* I spend an hour wondering why I don’t get a ‘proper job’ as a bus conductor, or a milk man or something decent and – and this is the rub – *safe*” (Letter to Garner 23 March 1978). Due to his class habitus, Chambers felt that “a proper”, “decent” and “safe” job was a respectable *working-class* job rather than the middle-class occupations he pursued. In other words, in Britain’s class society in the middle of the twentieth century, an average scholarship boy was unlikely to aspire to the middle-class occupations without special encouragement. In fact, according to the *Crowther Report*, many grammar school pupils left school early, ultimately because they preferred working-class or lower-middle-class jobs to school (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 25, 135); roughly half of working-class grammar/technical school boys eventually took manual jobs (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 36).[7]

While middle-class pupils knew about opportunities in further and higher education from their homes and communities, working-class pupils relied on information and advice provided by schools, but schools often failed to give them and their parents the information and encouragement they needed to decide to continue their education. Sometimes, this was accidental; because such information was common knowledge to teachers, they failed to understand that it was not known by all of their pupils (Jackson and Marsden 155-56; *Crowther Report* Vol. 1, 204). As will be discussed later, sometimes failure to encourage working-class pupils reflected teachers’

[7] See also Paul Willis (1977), who describes the process in which working-class pupils in non-selective schools willingly chose working-class jobs which fulfilled values of their class cultures.

lack of belief in their ability and social worth. According to the *Crowther Report*, the most frequent reasons for leaving grammar/technical schools (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 25, 135-36) were that pupils "Saw no point in staying at school longer" (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 135) or believed he is "Not learning anything useful for [a] future career" (*Crowther Repor*t Vol. 2, 25).

Hal's working-class parents, who presumably left school at the end of their compulsory education, do not appreciate the benefits of further education. This roughly corresponds to Chambers' own experience and was again a typical situation for working-class children in the mid-twentieth century. Hal's parents think he will "be best off with a good job" (*Dance* 102) and they do not see the point of staying on at school for English literature, which will not be any use for a job (*Dance* 103). Their view – "It's a job that matters" (*Dance* 103) – was typical of working-class parents in the mid-twentieth century (Jackson and Marsden 132-33). According to F. M. Martin (1954), more than half of skilled workers (and more than two-thirds of semi/unskilled workers), preferred their children to leave school early (172-73). Although there were some supportive working-class parents, more commonly working-class parents "mistrusted the book learning" (Greenslade 55) and considered "education was wrong" for their children (Greenslade 56; Jackson and Marsden 263). The majority of working-class parents hoped their children would get better jobs than they had themselves, jobs such as working in "a local bank or office", but "university was a strange new thought" (Jackson and Marsden 153). The working-class view, higher education as something exceptional continued to be seen even in the late twentieth century (Plummer 39-40). As Paul Willis points out, for the working-class in the 1970s, "Practical ability always comes first and is a *condition* of other kinds of knowledge" (Willis 56), while the middle-class understood qualifications and further education as cultural capital, assets for social mobility (Willis 57). For instance, Jackson and Marsden found a mother who said to her child, about a School Certificate, "What's the use. It's only a bit of paper" (Jackson and Marsden 271). Her son, although he actually took good results in the School Certificate, left school early (Jackson and Marsden 271-72). It is, however, important to understand that mistrust of the benefits of further education was not working-class people's ignorance, but was also fed, at least in part, by their desire to resist and reject the values of the dominant class.[8] In the working-class view, "the exam

[8] See Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (1988) 194-225, and *The State Nobility*: "the educational institution appears to play a crucial role in the permanent redistribution of power and privileges" (*State Nobility*

system" is "what they want", what is "imposed by those who have the power" (Plummer, xi). As Bill Williamson (1981) states, "the apparent unwillingness of some working-class people to seek out higher education is a direct consequence of their systematic exclusion from it over a long period of time" (Williamson 35). The exclusion was also directly, though unconsciously, performed by schools. Scholars point out that average working-class parents, who needed basic information about further education, were often alienated from middle-class grammar schools and teachers (Jackson and Marsden 134-37; Bynner 14). *Dance on My Grave* reflects this reality of grammar schools: Hal's parents want information from his school, but "The Headmaster is always too busy" to meet them (*Dance* 65). According to Bynner (1975), working-class parents' desire for the child to leave school above the minimum age markedly declined in secondary school; many working-class parents were supportive of further education at first, but were made unsupportive by schools (Jackson and Marsden 133, 137,140; see also Greenslade 55-56; Bynner 14-20).

Aidan Chambers was not the only scholarship boy to show parents who failed to understand the attractions of higher education to their academically successful children. Such parents are also depicted in Garner's *The Owl Service* and Westall's *Fathom Five*. As will be discussed, in these novels the parents of scholarship boys are even more hostile to education than those in Chambers' novels, to the extent that they attempt to force their children to leave school because grammar school education, as will be shown, often caused conflicts between scholarship boys and their parents.[9] Although sometimes scholarship boys – such as Gwyn in *The Owl Service* or Chas in *Fathom Five* – had ambitions and different understandings of further education from their parents, Hal's perspective has not moved far beyond that of his parents.[10] The decision for Aidan Chambers to enrol at a teacher training college was made entirely by his English teacher, Jim Osborn. Acknowledgement of this fact is made in *Dance on My Grave*: Hal's

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117). As Bourdieu argues in *The State Nobility*, the value of qualifications and educational institutions are always placed in the power struggle to maintain its own values. In this respect, therefore, the rejection of qualifications is not entirely meaningless as an attempt to devalue them. However, in a class society in which the working-class is used as a negative reference point for the dominant class, their rejection of qualifications is more likely to reinforce social values of qualifications for the middle-class.

[9] Cases in which parents actually *forced* children to leave grammar/technical school were relatively rare, but still, according to The Social Survey, 3 per cent of boys and 8 per cent of girls who wished to stay in school had to leave gave parents as the reason (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 25; see also Kuhn 107).

[10] According to Paul Willis, grammar school pupils more often understood educational qualification as "choice and mobility in a class society" (57) than secondary modern school pupils. However, the number of Willis' grammar school sample is too small to consider the tendency of grammar school pupils. Although it is likely that grammar school pupils tended to understand education in a manner closer to middle-class pupils, the surveys in the *Crowther Report* suggest that the number of such pupils was limited.

English teacher, who also encourages him to stay on, is named Jim Osborn (Chambers, personal interview). Reflecting Chambers' own experience, Hal finally decides to stay on at school; however, Hal is unusual, since most working-class grammar school pupils whose parents were unsupportive of further education left school at the end of compulsory education (Greenslade 65-68).

Dance on My Grave points to teachers' attitudes towards working-class pupils to explain why so many bright working-class pupils did not enter the sixth form under the Tripartite System (Jackson and Marsden 218; *Crowther Report* Vol. 1, 203). Teachers tended to underestimate working-class pupils' potential and expectations (Rushton 2). In *Dance on My Grave*, although Hal's English teacher thinks that he is sufficiently clever to go to university (*Dance* 117), his tutorial teacher believes Hal should leave school and tells him, "There are better ways of spending the taxpayers' money" (*Dance* 111) than letting him stay on the school.[11] Although the tutorial teacher in *Dance on My Grave* is exaggeratedly hostile to her pupil, such low expectations for working-class pupils were not uncommon at the time. Jackson and Marsden point out that state school teachers rarely noticed "the vast size of the wastage in our schools" (Jackson and Marsden, 218-19). Hal's experience is indeed based on Chambers' own:

> Everybody thought that I would leave [school at the end of compulsory education]: my father wanted me to join him in the work he was doing; the head teacher said, "what you going to do?" and I said, "I want to stay at school" and he said, "But what do you want to do?... You haven't got a foreign language. You can't go to university. What you want to do?" and I said, "I want to study English with Mr. Osborn". And the Head said, "I don't know why you want to do that". (Chambers, personal interview)

Although, in Chambers' case, the Head had the excuse that Chambers did not meet the requirement for university, he clearly underestimated the ability and range of possibilities for his pupil. In actuality, sixth-form education enabled Chambers to enter higher education as a trainee teacher, a course which did not require foreign languages.

[11] The teacher also shows prejudice against English literature. In the mid-twentieth-century Britain, according to Chambers, English literature was a low status subject in the academic hierarchy. Hierarchy of subjects in educational institutions is also important since working-class pupils were less likely to understand those untold hierarchy.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron, schools tended to judge pupils' academic "gifts" by class cultural criteria: "the abilities measured by scholastic criteria stem not so much from natural "gifts"… but from the greater or lesser affinity between class cultural habits and the demands of the educational system or the criteria which defines success within it" (*Inheritors* 22).[12] By analysing remarks on pupils' oral work in a preparatory class for a *grande école*, Bourdieu found that pupils were judged not exclusively on knowledge or arguments, instead "*accent*, *elocution and diction*... and finally and above, all the *bodily* '*hexis*', manners and behaviour"*(Homo Academicus* 200) affected grades. Correspondingly, Kuhn points out that what was required in her grammar school was not simply "brains, sticking to the rules, doing well academically" (Kuhn 103) but "as part of its predominantly petit bourgeois system of values, the school took for granted a certain 'cultural capital'" of the middle-class (Kuhn 104). In other words, teachers unconsciously underestimated lower-class pupils' gifts and potential because of their embodied working-class culture (see also Rushton 2; Plummer 30-34). In fact, *Dance on My Grave* shows that the tutorial teacher's judgement is largely based on non-academic criteria such as "You're anti-social" (*Dance* 111).

In addition, although this is not specifically mentioned, because he moved from the north of England to Essex it can be assumed that Hal speaks with a distinctive Northern accent (*Dance* 18, 63, 71). In the mid-twentieth century, pupils' use of language, one of the most distinctive class markers in the UK, was seen as a measure of intelligence. Bourdieu and others point out that academic language, which is regarded as "second nature to intelligent and gifted individuals" (*Academic Discourse* 8) is "no one's mother tongue" even if "it is very unequally distant from the language actually spoken by the different social classes"(8). The unequal distance from the academic language between classes was, however, far greater in the UK, where dialects closely relate not only to regions but mainly to social classes. Middle-class or boarding school-educated people more commonly speak Standard English, the closest dialect to academic language. As a result, in mid-twentieth century England, working-class speech and/or regional dialects, both of which depart from middle-class Standard English in aspects of vocabulary, syntax and accents, could be used to support teachers' judgement of low intelligence: the features of working-class dialects were often regarded as "wrong" (Trudgill 38) or "a deficiency of language" (Plummer 28), while

[12] Bourdieu (1988) proves this by analysis of 154 individual pupils' social backgrounds and their marks and files (Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* 194-208). Since the 1970s, many British studies have also endorsed teachers' class bias which disadvantage working-class pupils (see Plummer 30-34).

Standard English and Received Pronunciation as spoken in public schools and universities were proof of "educatedness" (see Honey 17-29, 60-67; Trudgill 27-28). In the 1970s, Peter Trudgill pointed out that some teachers regarded children who spoke and wrote "high-status varieties" of dialects such as the standard English, "usually middle-class children", "as having more academic potential, simply because of their language" (Trudgill 63).

Teachers' lack of recognition of the talents of scholarship boys suggests that the cultural differences of working-class pupils were seen as signifying lack of ability and/or motivation (Jackson and Marsden 218-19). This perception had an important role in the reproduction of class through the education system. According to Bourdieu, an education system effectively reproduces social class "only because this is performed *in the guise* of an operation of academic classification" (*Homo Academicus* 207); because teachers and professors "believe that they are making a strictly academic judgement" (*Homo Academicus* 207) when they are actually making a class-cultural judgement, they can effectively transform "social truth into academic truth" (*Homo Academicus* 207). In other words, as British scholars point out, "working-class children are encouraged to personalise their failure" to see their disadvantage as being due to their individual lack of intelligence or effort (Plummer 23; see also Charlesworth 280). This explains why Hal, in *Dance on My Grave*, simply accepts his tutorial teacher's judgement that he is not sufficiently bright to warrant further investment in educating him (*Dance* 111), despite the fact that he is actually assessed as "above average intelligence" by the school (*Dance* 18). *Dance on My Grave* illustrates this mechanism behind the "truly colossal" waste of talent in schools during the 1960s and the 1970s (Williamson 29; see also Jackson and Marsden 218; *Crowther Report*).

The educational inequality in terms of class has continued throughout the twentieth century without significant improvement since the 1960s (Furlong and Cartmel 28-29; Archer et al., 69-70, 75-80; Plummer 21-40). While overall participation in higher education has increased throughout the twentieth century, the growth was "greatest for the middle-class" (Archer et al. 70), and the gap between the working-class and the middle-class was, after the rapid widening of the gap between the 1940s and the 1960s, unchanged (Archer et al. 70; Plummer 37-39). Compared with rapid improvements elsewhere – gender inequality, for instance, has now been reversed, with middle-class girls having been outperforming boys since the 1980s (Furlong and Cartmel 30-31; see also Plummer 26) – class inequality is strikingly persistent in Britain.

In this respect, *Dance on My Grave* not only highlights the problems in the Tripartite System which Chambers, as a pupil and a teacher, directly experienced, but also captures the long-lasting problems and mechanism of class reproduction which still disadvantage working-class pupils (see Archer, et al., 69-80, 93, 102-09; D. Reay, "Always Knowing"; Atkinson 84-105; G. Evans; Plummer 22-23).

CHAPTER 2: AIDAN CHAMBERS' *BREAKTIME*: CLASS, ANXIETY AND HOME AS A CULTURAL BATTLEFIELD

Although several of Aidan Chambers' Young Adult novels feature scholarship boy characters, the scholarship boy experience is most centrally depicted in *Breaktime* (1978), a coming-of-age story of scholarship boy, Ditto. Chambers explains that in *Breaktime* he was consciously writing about the experience of the scholarship boy based on his own time at school:

> I was very aware that what I was dealing with was a boy who has gone to the grammar school, and was having to deal with what was happening to him. The other thread of course, was a sexual one. But it was mainly to do with the crisis the boy is going through... So in that story, which takes place in a few days, is everything that I had been feeling over a period of years, from the age of 14 to 18. It was packed into that story. (Chambers, personal interview)

Breaktime particularly highlights problems of class tension in the scholarship boy's family and the scholarship boy himself; through Ditto it illustrates the psychological suffering and the troubles with family relationships arising from the experience of attending a grammar school. Although scholarship boy characters and their experiences are also depicted by other writers of Chambers' generation, including Alan Garner (1934-) and Robert Westall (1929-93), Chambers' *Breaktime* is unique in making the reconciliation of tensions between working-class home and middle-class school its central theme. While (as Chapter 1 showed) issues of class relating to the education system highlighted in *Dance on My Grave* have continued relevance due to persistent aspects of class inequality in education, the problems faced by scholarship boys featured in *Breaktime* are peculiar to mid-twentieth-century Britain. Therefore, since the 1980s, by which point the historical context had been lost, scholars have tended to focus on other pioneering features of this novel, such as its narrative style and sexual content.[1] Since *Breaktime* was published in the late 1970s, when interest in social class and the

[1] For biographical and general discussion of *Breaktime*, see Greenway (2006) chapter 2. For narrative style, see Deluca 144-48; Nikolajeva, "Changing Aesthetics" 438; Reynolds, *Children's* 49-58. For sexuality, see Reynolds, *Radical* 118-19; Trites 72-73, 96-97. Marry Harris Russell (2008) briefly discussed female characters' roles, as instructors, in these two novels. Also, Ted Hipple introduces and explains *Breaktime* in *Lost Masterworks of Young Adult Literature* (2002).

experiences of scholarship boys had already began to decline, the scholarship boy theme of the book has rarely been discussed. However, to understand the book we need to return to the specific historical conditions of the scholarship boy in mid-twentieth-century Britain. This chapter also shows that highlighting the mechanism of the way class operated at the time, *Breaktime*'s theme – "breaking away from your social and cultural background, whatever and wherever that might be" (Chambers, Email 30 Nov. 2013) – remains relevant for teenagers today.

Class and Habitus

> Many, many, in my generation, people of my age, and the next generation up from mine... had this experience of being born into the working-class, then the 1944 Education Act opening up the grammar school system to us, and many of us went through that system. And what it did to you, almost deliberately – I mean it was almost consciously done to you – was, as in my case, they removed you from the working-class, and educated you into the middle-class. But you knew you didn't belong to the middle-class. You weren't born into it. (Chambers, personal interview)

This is how Aidan Chambers, who was born in 1934, talks about his experience of the relationship between education and class. This account is illustrative of how cultural aspects of class and class identity worked through the education system in Britain in the middle years of the last century. As has been discussed, working-class grammar school pupils had to assimilate into middle-class culture, including aspects such as speech, clothes and sports, to be successful in school. However, even if pupils acquired middle-class culture, they rarely felt wholly and unproblematically middle-class. As Chambers observes, "you knew you didn't belong to the middle-class". Scholarship boys and girls have often expressed similar feelings of not belonging to the middle-class, or, indeed, *any* class: "I never think of myself as an entirely middle-class person. I simply do not feel middle-class" (Medhurst 20); "we were not working-class, we did not *feel* middle-class (Mahony and Zmroczek 1; see also Walkerdine 169). Class, then, is more than an educational, financial or occupational condition; it is also a way of feeling. As Kuhn puts it, "Class is something beneath your clothes... in your psyche, at the very core of

your being" (Kuhn 117). Richard Hoggart makes this point in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), defining the working-class in this way: "they feel rather that they are 'working-class' in the things they admire and dislike" (Hoggart, *Uses* 19). This view is now widely shared by scholars who focus on cultural aspects of class. As Joanna Bourke explains, "Realization of one's 'class' position emerged from the routine activities of everyday life: it was the 'feeling of belonging' which was 'felt to be natural and was taken for granted'" (Bourke 4).

In sociology, the work of Pierre Bourdieu has often provided the theoretical frame for considering this psychological and cultural aspect of class. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus, referring to an internalized principle which generates judgements and determines routine activities (*Distinction* 170). Ultimately, one's class habitus generates the feeling of belonging (or not belonging), and forms an internalised class identity. Class identity (or lack of class identity) is, according to Bourdieu, not formed by cultural similarities but by differences or differentiations; people recognise themselves as "working-class" because their class habitus differentiates others and is differentiated *by* others. The concept of habitus has been particularly useful for scholars who focus on scholarship boys and/or working-class people whose class identities are "uncertain, torn and oscillating – caught on a cultural cusp" (Medhurst 20).

What makes habitus a useful tool for analysing scholarship boys is that class habitus is not only determined by current economic capital, but also by the trajectory of economic, cultural, and social capitals. Habitus is not easily changed by a sudden increase of economic capital or even cultural (in this case educational) capital. This means, in a class-conscious society, that even if economic social mobility is increased, the person who changes class encounters difficulties because his or her habitus is different from that of both his/her old and new classes. For instance, in mid-twentieth-century Britain, when a scholarship boy moved economically and educationally upward, his origin almost invariably remained visible to people born into the middle-class (Hoggart, *Uses* 246). The scholarship boy often felt uneasy in the middle-class communities because he had different perspective from them (Hoggart, *Uses* 247). Therefore, as Chambers explains in the quotation that begins this chapter, the scholarship boy felt as if being middle-class was a birthright. At the same time, a scholarship boy's habitus had already considerably changed from those of workers like their own parents due to his education, making him feel ill at ease in his original

community (Hoggart, *Uses* 246). Therefore, the scholarship boy did not feel the sense of belonging to any class.

For the scholarship boy in mid-twentieth-century Britain, differences in habitus gave rise to more than uneasy feelings; he could be a target of antagonism in both working-class and middle-class communities. According to Bourdieu, "the habitus apprehends differences between… products of other habitus" (*Distinction* 172) and "social identity is defined and asserted through difference" apprehended by the habitus (*Distinction* 170). This is why, as the popular notion "them and us" shows, class is usually expressed through oppositions. The middle-class, the upper-class, and any divisions within classes, recognise their own class (or class segment) by differentiating themselves from the lower- and the upper-classes on the basis of products of habitus such as taste, appearance, manners and habitual practice.[2] According to Bourdieu, the line between the working-class and the middle-class (which directly concerns the situation of scholarship boys) was constructed by the dominant class as a "negative reference point" (*Distinction* 57). On the other hand, the habitus of the working-class discouraged its members from acting beyond the boundary of their habitus because of "the need for class solidarity" (*Distinction* 380). In this way, almost unconsciously the line between the working-class and the middle-class was drawn and kept. Additionally, in the class-conscious Britain of the mid-twentieth century, "'class' was intrinsically tied up with" not only "awareness of difference", but also "experience of conflict" (J. Bourke 4). However, because the scholarship boy stands at the fulcrum of this cultural struggle between attaining cultural superiority and retaining class solidarity, he faced numerous difficulties. [3] While the scholarship boy could be spurned in the middle-class world due to the fact that his views and tastes potentially challenged cultural dominance of the middle-class, in the working-class world he could be accused of being a traitor because his middle-class tastes and practices challenged the class solidarity which was politically important for the working-class in order to resist against the dominant power. He was, as Hoggart observes, "at the friction-point of two cultures" (*Uses* 239).

Lack of Confidence Arising from Cultural Assimilation

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[2] Although Bourdieu does not deny notion of the symbolic three tier classes – the working-class, the middle-class and the upper-class, his model of class is theoretically much more ramified, complicated, and fluid as class locates in three dimensional space which consists of not only economic but also axis of cultural capital and social capital, and which is potentially always changing.
[3] See Bourdieu, *The State Nobility* 265.

Breaktime features a scholarship boy in the sixth form who suffers from lack of confidence. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, pupils who remained in the sixth form – two optional years following secondary school – tended to be those who had, at least superficially, successfully assimilated into middle-class culture (Jackson and Marsden 129). However, due to the nature of habitus, even if the scholarship boy adopted the external criteria required in his school, it was unlikely that he had middle-class tastes. Therefore, during his adolescence, the scholarship boy's psychological suffering was intense, because he internalised two conflicting values and views. In other words, the class-cultural tension between the working-class and the middle-class was internalised in the scholarship boy. To be successful in his school, ultimately the scholarship boy had constantly to reject what he and his family felt to be natural and good. This generated uncertainty and lack of confidence. However, the scholarship boy was often unconscious of this because he believed in the superiority of the school culture (Jackson and Marsden 119-29).[4]

The legacy of this undermining process is evident in Hal in Chambers' *Dance on My Grace*. Hal has clearly lost his own taste; he depends on his middle-class boyfriend Barry to tell him "what to wear, how to comb your hair, what to eat" (*Dance* 238). Hal's dependency on Barry's taste and judgement ultimately reflects the fact that, in Britain in the mid-twentieth century, most everyday choices of practices and purchases, such as "what to wear" and "what to eat", were largely conditioned by class habitus. Hal is not as loyal to working-class taste as Spike, who is routinely punished for what he wears and other minor rebellions against the school codes. Hal cannot rely on his working-class taste, but nor does he have middle-class taste; therefore, he has no taste.

Early in *Breaktime*, Ditto is shown suffering from a similar mistrust of his own taste. While the toys, furniture, and ornaments which belong to his childhood and early adolescence, when Ditto was still comfortably a working-class boy, show "crazes and passions" (*Breaktime* 15), nothing in his room represents his current tastes and interests. Ditto cannot find "the real blood flushed Ditto" (*Breaktime* 15) in his room. The books he has most recently purchased have "mostly [been] inspired by Midge [Ditto's English teacher]" and are only there "because he believed they were what he should read and

[4] The learning of hegemony or prejudice against their own culture can be also seen among ordinary working-class pupils even today in non-selective comprehensive schools. Charlesworth (2000) based on his interview research states, "The education system is the chief institutional site through which they come to learn the dominant criteria of evaluation and realize their own competence as negatively valued" (280).

possess rather than simply to please himself" (*Breaktime* 15). The titles, however, are not named. The authors that he does mention in the story are all rather controversial in mid-twentieth-century Britain. These include George Orwell, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Richard Brautigan (*Breaktime* 15). For instance, in Chambers' own past, Lawrence was not the kind of writer his English teachers mentioned (Chambers, personal interview). In the 1970s, some left-wing teachers might recommend this kind of radical writer, but "old Midge", who "should have retired years ago" (*Breaktime* 2) and who chooses Jane Austen, is not the kind to do so. Presumably, these writers were chosen by Ditto independently rather than recommended by his English teacher, suggesting that, in the area of reading, he is developing at least some sense of independence and taste. As is also indicated in the last pages of the novel, Ditto owns some books which meet his own taste and which he keeps after his clearance of "Other people's me" (*Breaktime* 130), but at the start of the novel, due to his lack of confidence, he is not even aware of that fact.

Correspondingly, in *The Uses of Literacy,* Hoggart points out the way the scholarship boy "rarely feels the reality of knowledge, of other men's thoughts and imagining, on his own pulses; he rarely discovers an author for himself and on his own". (Hoggart, *Uses* 243). This is not surprising because scholars' thoughts and canonical authors' novels were more often based on middle-class lives and views; to feel the middle-class reality of knowledge of fiction, ultimately a person needed the class habitus for the class-culture.[5] Even though they were taught to appreciate literary works, working-class grammar school pupils, including Chambers himself, rarely felt reality in them. Chambers talks about books recommended by his English teacher, "the great English tradition" (Chambers, personal interview), as follows: "I could appreciate how good they were. But they didn't speak to my heart. It was intellectual. The one who spoke to my heart was D. H. Lawrence, and Jim [his English teacher] never mentioned him" (Chambers, personal interview). D. H. Lawrence, who at the time was still a controversial writer, spoke to Chambers' heart because of their similar backgrounds: both grew up in working-class homes in mining areas. However, few writers from the working-class were, at this point, included in "the great English tradition".[6] Since "The study of English Literature was thus a central vehicle for the development of a particular

[5] See Bourdieu and Darbel, *The Love of Art* 40.
[6] Similarly, Alan Garner states: "At the age of eighteen... I found nothing at all that relevant to me in twentieth century novels" (Interview by Chambers in *Signal* 307). Even today, writers from the working-class are still rare (see Driscoll).

kind of understanding of the social and emotional world" of bourgeoisie (M. Evans 15), the kind of books recommended or studied in grammar schools were carefully controlled in terms of its class-culture and attitude to authority (M. Evans 15-18).

Literature was only a small part of the vast areas of culture the scholarship boy had to acquire at school. During his secondary and higher education, the scholarship boy was forced, or forced himself, to appreciate things in which he did not feel any reality or view with enthusiasm; such pupils merely followed the judgments of others or teachers. In other words, during the course of his education, the scholarship boy learned to conform to authority rather than judging things by his own tastes and thoughts (Hoggart, *Uses* 243-44). Therefore, according to Hoggart, grammar school education typically created a "reliable and unjoyous kind of clerk" (*Uses* 244) who could "snap his fingers at no one and nothing" (*Uses* 244). This was a kind of education which turned some of the brightest working-class children into a "domesticated class" (Greenslade 163) instead of the revolutionary new class which some left-wing intellectuals had, at first, naively expected from state secondary education. However, not all were "domesticated": the scholarship boy writers featured in this thesis, including Chambers, retained a willingness to challenge authority and cultural hegemony. Their novels can, indeed, be seen as textbooks to show how to resist the hegemonic power which attempts to domesticate them.

Both working-class teenagers who stayed within the boundary of the working-class and middle-class grammar school pupils tended to be much more confident than scholarship boys because they could embrace a single set of values and could endorse the values in their everyday lives.

> Such a scholarship boy has lost some of the resilience and some of the vitality of his cousins who are still knocking about the streets... and he does not acquire the unconscious confidence of many a public-school-trained child of the middle-classes. (Hoggart, *Uses* 244)

Although Hoggart here compares the scholarship boy with public school pupils, middle-class grammar school pupils were, in theory, similarly confident. In both *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave*, scholarship boy protagonists have a confident middle-class best friend/boyfriend. The middle-class grammar school boys are confident because they have not been uprooted from or denied their original class culture, but rather are assured

in their inherited class culture, views and tastes, inculcated by grammar school education.[7] In *Breaktime*, Ditto also meets a confident working-class boy, a travelling manual worker, Jack. Jack is confident because even if he is currently a traveller, he is not detached from his original culture. In *Breaktime*, the use of such characters highlights Ditto, the scholarship boy's, anxiety arising from his class position and education.

Family Troubles: Conflicts between Working-Class Home and Middle-Class School

The hegemony internalised by the scholarship boy generated not only his uncertainty, but also increased the class-based tension in his home. While in *The Uses of Literacy* Hoggart spends little space considering the scholarship boy's family troubles, scholarship boys' troubled relationships with their parents are often at the heart of novels by children's writers. *Breaktime* is specifically structured to focus and deal with this problem. In *Breaktime*, the relationship between Ditto and his father has "reached that pitch where neither can speak civilly to the other for more than a minute or two" (*Breaktime* 6). Ditto is an only child who is loved by his parents and who loves them in return, but they fail to communicate with each other, especially the father and the son. This was typical of the experience of high-achieving working-class grammar school pupils. In interviews and personal correspondence, Alan Garner and Robert Westall both describe their experience as being "alien" to their parents (Garner, *Taliesin's Successors*) and a "cuckoo" in the nest (Garner, *Taliesin's Successors*; Westall, letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992).

The problem arose from a manufactured gap in judgments and tastes – in Bourdieu's term, habitus – between the scholarship boy and other family members. Because "the worlds of school and home... meet at few points" (Hoggart, *Uses* 242), the scholarship boy and his parents/siblings lost the common foundation of understanding to communicate each other (see Jackson and Marsden 129-40, 152-53, 206-10). According to Jackson and Marsden, scholarship boys and girls often stated they had nothing in common or nothing to talk about with their parents and siblings who attended non-selective schools (Jackson and Marsden 144-46, 152-53). Hoggart explains that the scholarship boy tells about his school and the work he is doing even if "he knows they

[7] See Bourdieu and Passeron, *The Inheritors* 17- 22.

[his family] do not understand" because "he would like to link the two environments" (*Uses* 242). However, other studies indicate that scholarship boys more often ceased the effort of linking their two worlds at some point, being overwhelmed by the unbridgeable gap. For instance, a working-class father of a scholarship boy told Jackson and Marsden that his son "doesn't tell us much... so we don't talk. It's as if when we talk we don't talk on the same level, you see. His way of putting things isn't the way that I can understand... I can't follow his ways of looking at things" (Jackson and Marsden 209). This father of the scholarship boy, in effect, refers to the difference in habitus, the "way of looking at things", as the cause of the difficulty. Chambers himself experienced the typical sense of estrangement of the scholarship boy:

> they [his parents] didn't know what to do with me, because I'd changed in what I talked about, and I didn't talk about it to them... So immediately, my parents began to feel as though I was cutting them off, which of course I was, and that unsettled them, they didn't know what to do with me. (Chambers, personal interview)

This experience is a recurrent theme in Chambers' scholarship boy novels. For instance, in *Dance on My Grave*, Hal's parents "couldn't keep up with him because they couldn't understand what he was talking about half the time" (*Dance* 64). In *Breaktime*, similar to Chambers, Ditto cuts his father off from his school world. A conversation between Ditto and his father about Jane Austen establishes the lack of common foundation of knowledge as a reason for this:

> 'What you done today?'
> Ditto resisted the impulse to reply not much. He knew too well the fractious talk that would follow.
> 'Jane Austen', he said, his throat stiff from restraint.
> 'What did she have to say for herself?'
> Ditto squinted for hint of jest behind his father's deadpan. None was intended, sadly.
> 'She's an author', he said.
> . . .
> 'What's she write about, this dead woman?'

> ‘It would take too long to explain’.
> A long glance; a smile, sour. ‘You mean, you think I’m too thick to understand’. (*Breaktime* 9)

This passage highlights the gap between in cultural capital between Ditto and his father; Ditto’s working-class father does not know the middle-class writer, Jane Austen.[8] As Betty Greenway (2006) points out, Chambers credits Jane Austen with teaching him “the power of literature to open up different worlds, strange people” (Chambers, *Introducing Books to Children* 10). However, Austen is not depicted here as an “example of the subversive power of literature” (Greenway 17). Austen, whom Ditto studies for his examination, symbolises the cultural capital of the school and the dominant class, which for his father and the working-class, is not necessarily legitimate – for them, Austen is merely a “dead woman”. In this respect, Chambers’ choice of writer is deliberate, as Austen is a writer in whose work the working-class and topics concerned with workers are especially absent. Ditto finds it difficult to explain the value of the novel, to connect the worlds of his school and his father, because Austen’s novels feature lifestyles and values which are totally foreign to his father.

Furthermore, since the middle-class sustains its cultural superiority by using working-class culture as its negative reference point, Ditto’s embodied middle-class culture challenges his father’s working-class views and tastes. He takes Ditto’s answer as a challenge against him as a worker who does not have the knowledge of high culture: “You mean, you think I’m too thick to understand”. Ditto’s father’s frustration toward middle-class culture is depicted as understandable, because it is clearly shown that Ditto has brought the cultural hierarchy or prejudice against the working-class culture into the family home. As Hoggart mentions in *The Uses of Literacy*, books served as illustrative examples of certain class cultures in the mid-twentieth century: while reading materials in the scholarship boy’s home, such as magazines, “are never mentioned at school” (*Uses* 242), at school the scholarship boy was encouraged to read “books never mentioned at home” (*Uses* 242). Soon after the conversation about Austen, Ditto recalls an incident which happened when he was 12-years-old at the start of his and his father’s difficulty: Ditto’s father had given him a book, but Ditto refused to read the book because he thought “it was some god-awful person, not to be seen reading it” in his school (Chambers, *Breaktime* 9). He said, “Thanks, Dad, but I can’t read this...

[8] For cultural capital, see Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital”.

Well at school they tell us what's best to read and Mr Midgely [Ditto's English teacher], he said this writer wasn't very good, so I don't think I can read it you see" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 10). This incident shows that the scholarship boy, Ditto, believing in authenticity of values of school culture, symbolised here by "good" books, denies the value and taste of his home culture. Ditto's father's hostility toward Ditto's middle-class culture is generated by such consistent denials of the values in the working-class home. This passage also highlights the cultural process through which Ditto's school removes him from the working-class world by identifying certain cultural products and tastes of the working-class as illegitimate and "bad". As Ditto acquires and internalises middle-class school culture, therefore, home is turned into a cultural battlefield. That is why Ditto and his father unintentionally hurt each other: "Despite our mutual intentions, we – Father and I – were soon spilling emotional blood... The longer we continued, the greater the tension became" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 18). This conflict, therefore, continues as long as they stand for the different class cultures.

Since school and home were both important for Ditto, he is painfully stretched between these two conflicting worlds: "I felt like a twisted elastic unable to stretch any more". (*Breaktime* 18). Alan Garner also uses an overstretched elastic band between two classes as a simile when explaining the experience of scholarship boys in the early years of the 1944 education system (Garner, *Signal Approach* 308). For the scholarship boy, it was difficult to keep the bond with two communities, the working-class and the middle-class: some chose to leave schools early, and others, often the most successful scholarship boys, sacrificed family and community bonds (Garner, *Signal Approach* 308; see also Jackson and Marsden 119-29, 137-40, 265-72). However, in *Breaktime*, eventually Ditto manages to retain both home and school through his recognition of the effects of the class tension. This is enabled by his journey ostensibly to see, or have sex with, Helen, a journey in which the girl is given minimal attention.

The Resolution of Class Tension: Journeying in *Breaktime*

Whether Ditto's trip to see Helen actually happened or whether it is Ditto's invention in unclear (similar questions about the "reality" of all the characters and events in this book are raised in its final exchange between Ditto and his friend Morgan).[9] Either way,

[9] Ditto points out that his record of what happened to him, which is the main body of the story, might be a made-up story (*Breaktime* 132). Scholars argue that particularly his sex with Helen may be "a sexual

although the trip began with a sexual motivation, the larger part of his account relates what happens with the two friends he makes, Jack and Robby. Scholars tend to emphasize Ditto's first sexual experience with his old classmate Helen as the book's "rite of passage" moment (Trites 97), and sometimes even attribute his resolution of anxiety and reconciliation with his father to the release of losing his virginity.[10] However, since unlike ordinary teenagers' lack of confidence, the scholarship boy's anxiety is associated principally with class tension, focusing on the sex act is only part of what brings about the change in Ditto. The time with Jack and Robby is important in the way that it serves to solve the anxiety arising from the cultural class conflicts Ditto has internalised. Ditto's troubled relationship with his father arising from their widening cultural gap is resolved more through the events that happen during his time with Jack and Robby than his time in the tent with Helen.

Spending time with Jack, a working-class boy who reminds Ditto of his father in his youth, Ditto begins to understand that his inability to communicate with his father is caused by their "education gap":

> Is that why I can't understand him and he can't understand me? Not the generation gap – crap that is – but the education gap? The thinking gap. Is that why he can't explain him to me and I can't explain me to him? (*Breaktime* 51)

As has been shown, and as Ditto realises here, fundamentally their ways of thinking and communicating have become different due to alteration of Ditto's habitus (Chambers, *Breaktime* 51). One solution for scholarship boys was to behave according to the code of the working-class. During the day with Jack and Robby, Ditto behaves like a reckless working-class teenager. For once, he is free of the anxiety produced by his middle-class education. However, the journey also enables Ditto to realize that he does not want to be like his father, even if his father is an ideal working man in Ditto's view (Chambers, *Breaktime* 51, 75-76). Ultimately Ditto wants to move upward, and so he has to embody the kind of cultural capital which makes him successful in his school and the middle-class world. Therefore, Ditto has to find a way to release the class tension without rejecting middle-class culture.

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fantasy invented by Ditto"; see Russell 64, Trites 123).
[10] For example, see Trites 97: "After he has sex, he is able to emphasize with his father for the first time, which implies that sex is what makes him a man".

The resolution comes as Ditto observes the arguments between Robby and his father. Robby and his working-class friend Jack (who is also probably his lover) behave like typical rebellious teenagers. [11] Robby accuses his Marxist father of being a hypocrite because of his wealth and education. His efforts to identify with the working-class are symbolised in his name: he is named after Robin Hood (Chambers, *Booktalk* 99). He wants to move in the opposite direction to Ditto, but they are both obsessed with class and both challenge their fathers over class. During the night they spend together, Robby, Jack and Ditto break into Robby's house (Ditto does not know it is Robby's house) to steal a symbol of Robby's father's rare and expensive copy of Marx's *Das Kapital*, which Robby sees as symbolising his father's hypocrisy (Chambers, *Breaktime* 87). Seeing Robby and his father's argument, Ditto realizes the immaturity of Robby's rebellion against his father and the meaninglessness of Robby's class obsession, which motivates him to deny his middle-class home (Chambers, *Breaktime* 90). The disillusionment with Robby helps Ditto to reflect on his own situation because Robby is a mirror image of Ditto: he realizes "Robby had shown me myself" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 90) "as if I were looking in a mirror" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 90). On the one hand, Ditto learns the ugliness of rejecting his roots and his father. It helps him to loosen the tension, to some extent. On the other hand, his disillusionment with Robby helps him to accept his class position as a scholarship boy. Robby's accusation against his father is that Robby's father tries to represent the working-class while he himself is middle-class. In other words, Robby's father symbolises Ditto's dilemma: Ditto wants to keep his bond with the working-class, but he has chosen a middle-class education and future. By understanding and disapproving of Robby's attack on his father's class position, Ditto accepts himself, as embodying both the working-class culture and the middle-class culture.

Ideal of the Scholarship Boy: Reconciliation of Two Classes

What is depicted in *Breaktime* as the solution for the scholarship boy is the acceptance of two classes (the middle-class and the working-class), despite the fact that in mid-twentieth-century Britain they were politically and culturally in conflict with each other. The reconciliation is seen, on the one hand, in the resolution of conflict between Ditto

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[11] According to Aidan Chambers, Robby and Jack are in sexual relationship (Chambers, personal interview), but Ditto does not notice this, and therefore in the novel it is not clear.

and his father. After the trip, Ditto's difficulty with his father and his anxiety are both resolved. Disregarding the importance of class tension and the role of Ditto's journey in this respect, scholars often tend to concentrate on the way that "Ditto is suddenly able to see his father empathetically" (Russell 64). The father shows his understanding of their problem in a letter that Ditto receives after his trip: "I have been thinking about the rows we have been having lately... The school has brought you on... But sometimes I get worried because I cannot always understand what you are doing" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 125-26). As is confirmed in this letter, and as Ditto has realized on his journey, their problem has arisen from the cultural gap and class tension generated by middle-class grammar school education. Therefore, it is not that this letter suddenly changes Ditto; Ditto has already understood the situation during his trip. That is why this letter and his father's decision to "try harder to see each other's point of view" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 126) can bring about their reconciliation. The medals his father gives Ditto have an important meaning in this context. The medals are tokens of his father's broken dream of being a motorcycle racer, which he gave up because of lack of funds and support from his parents. The medals stand for his father's support for Ditto's further education and the middle-class future it will lead to despite the difficulties it has caused between them.

Ditto's acceptance of his father is therefore not simply because Ditto "recognizes the adolescent in the father, and forgives him" (Westwater 43); it is mostly achieved because both, realizing the class tension and the cultural gap, accept each other's different views and practices. The reconciliation, which owes much to Ditto's father trying to abandon his hostility towards the middle-class, is rather optimistic. As Chambers states in his afterword to the book, *Breaktime* is "about what I longed for and didn't ever achieve" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 250) rather than what he, and most scholarship boys, actually experienced. In reality, in the mid-twentieth century, a considerable number of working-class pupils left their grammar schools early at least in part due to their parents' hostility towards the middle-class culture and the unbearable class tension at home (see Jackson and Marsden 133-40, 257-63; Greenslade 55-56, 65-68). Some scholarship boy novels for children, therefore, such as Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) and Robert Westall's *Fathom Five* (1979), illustrate such parents' attempts to force their sons to leave their grammar schools. Chambers, however, highlights the possibility of reconciliation rather than concentrating on lasting damage to relationships.

The last scene of Ditto's report – since *Breaktime* is a frame story, the end of the novel follows shortly after this – symbolises the resolution of Ditto's internalised class tension and anxiety. While cleaning up his room, he removes "All the left-overs of me" and "Other people's me" (Chambers, *Breaktime* 130) from his room and keeps only two kinds of things: some books that he bought for his own reading pleasure (rather than under his teacher's influence) and the medals which he has inherited from his father. As the medals symbolise, he now proudly accepts his working-class roots, and as the books show, Ditto is now able to use his intellectual ability confidently, having accepted his own tastes and thoughts. These resolutions of class tension within Ditto and his home indicate that an individual can resolve the internalised class conflict by changing his way of seeing; and this resolution of class tension is positively valued in the novel rather than being treated as a negative escape from the class struggle. In this respect, even though class is a central theme to *Breaktime*, Chambers distances himself from left-wing politics and classical Marxism, which regards class conflict as inevitable and important for social change. Although *Breaktime* depicts a political meeting and a left-wing politician in Robby's father, Ditto shows little interest in politics. The scholarship boy, Ditto – like Chambers – is more concerned with the cultural and psychological aspects of class, or class as a lived experience. For Ditto, class is first of all a personal experience and a personal crisis.

Breaktime, however, does represent another kind of class struggle in which Chambers participated in the mid-twentieth century. Even though Chambers hoped to help bring about an egalitarian society, he did not and does not consider the Marxist strategies built on the concepts of class struggle and revolution as a way to achieve it. However, he believes that literature has the power to change Britain's class-divided society through struggles in the field of cultural production (as described in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*). As he states about himself and his fellow scholarship boys in the teacher training college he attended, "We wanted to produce a de-classed, an egalitarian, democratic society. And we thought such a society was based on a literate and literary education, that literature was the heart of education" (Chambers, personal interview). In reality, as has been shown, in mid-twentieth-century Britain education and literature worked as a part of the mechanism that reproduced class (*Crowther Report* Vol. 2, 131-33; Lawson and Silver 425, 430; Greenslade 65-67).[12] Chambers,

[12] In the UK, the educational inequality in terms of class has continued throughout the twentieth century (Furlong and Cartmel 28-29; Plummer 21-40). For the mechanism of class reproduction in education

who was a secondary school teacher until the late 1960s, consciously fought to change the cultural process of class reproduction, in which middle-class dominance of British children's literature had a clear role. Becoming a critic, writer and editor of children's literature, Chambers contributed to the development of books for working-class children between the 1960s and the 1980s (Chambers, personal interview; see also Pearson). The individualism and optimism seen in *Breaktime* ultimately arise from this motivation. *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave*, which feature scholarship boys' uncertainty and anxiety over education, are designed to encourage culturally disadvantaged teenagers to pursue further education. Therefore, even though *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave* highlight problems associated with education, Aidan Chambers' optimistic views on education run through these novels. The positive effects of education on a scholarship boy's life are never denied, and it is suggested that a scholarship boy and his parents can overcome the difficulties they face.

At the same time, by publishing his novels, Chambers succeeded in incorporating aspects of working-class culture into mainstream British children's literature. The ideal state of the scholarship boy highlighted in the final pages of *Breaktime*, that is the acceptance of two class cultures, was highly important for this struggle. In this way, using his intellectual ability and cultural capital, Chambers, as a scholarship boy, fought to change the reproduction of class through the struggles in the field of children's literature.

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system, see Bourdieu and Passeron; Jackson and Marsden.

CHAPTER 3: ROBERT WESTALL'S *FATHOM FIVE*: CLASS DIVISION, SCHOLARSHIP BOY AND SOCIALISM

Robert Westall's semi-autobiographical novel *The Machine-Gunners* (1975) and its sequel, *Fathom Five* (1979), feature a scholarship boy, Chas McGill. Like Westall himself, Chas is the son of a foreman in Garmouth, a fictionalised version of Tynemouth, where Westall lived. He attends Garmouth High School, which is modelled on Tynemouth High School.[1] Westall's novels have often provoked arguments (see Dalrymple 92-93; Chapter 6). This was particularly true in the 1970s and the 1980s, because his works were depicted from a perspective which was considerably different from those of traditional middle-class writers, and because he consciously challenged the then prevailing class hegemony in Britain. The main discussion of the controversy around Westall's writing is covered in Chapter 6. This chapter is concerned with his depiction of the working-classes and socialism from a scholarship boy's perspective in his most underestimated and radical novel in the 1970s, *Fathom Five* (1979).

Although written as a sequel to *The Machine-Gunners*, the spy-thriller *Fathom Five* was initially published as a stand-alone novel on the advice of Westall's editors at Macmillan (Dalrymple 107). In the first published version of the novel, the name of the protagonist and next-door neighbour were changed: Chas McGill became Jack Stokoe (so his parents are Mr and Mrs Stokoe) and the McGills' next-door neighbour, Mrs Spalding, is re-named Mrs Friar. However, later editions revert to Westall's original plan; the novel was presented as a sequel to *The Machine-Gunners* and the characters' names were restored.[2] Between the first and later editions, except for a paragraph explaining what has happened to Chas McGill and his friends after the incidents described in *The Machine-Gunners* (*FF* 1979 Ed. 17-18), there are no substantial differences in the texts. For this reason, although both editions are discussed, in this thesis, the original names (e.g. Chas McGill) are adopted, both to reflect the fact that the novel was originally intended as a sequel to *The Machine-Gunners*, and to avoid cumbersome explanations.

Reception of *Fathom Five*

[1] For study on the North-East landscape and these novels, see Dalrymple.
[2] Since Greenwillow edition (1980) in the US and Puffin edition (1982) in the UK, most editions, including Pan Macmillan Children's Books edition, were published as the sequel.

Despite his worldwide popularity and the respect accorded to Westall on the basis of the quality of his novels (he is one of a small number of writers to have won the Carnegie Medal twice), Robert Westall's work has received only limited attention from scholars. Nolan Dalrymple's PhD thesis, "North-East Childhoods", dedicated to Robert Westall and David Almond, is the only sustained study in English discussing Westall's novels and his background. Dalrymple is also one of the few scholars to have discussed *Fathom Five* in any detail. This may reflect the book's initial reception: the majority of reviews were unfavourable. A reviewer for *The Children's Book Bulletin* even claimed that the novel was "on every level a dreadful book" (Rev. of *FF*). Ann Thwaite, though overall her 1979 review was favourable, predicted that *Fathom Five* would be regarded as a problem novel in the same way as *The Machine-Gunners* due to its inclusion of topics which had previously hardly featured in children's books (125). As will be discussed in Part II, *The Machine-Gunners* was regarded as a controversial novel because it includes swearing, adultery, and violence, which shocked some middle-class adult readers who had been used to traditional middle-class children's books. However, as will be argued in Part II, the problem stemmed from the representation of everyday working-class culture in the case of *The Machine-Gunners*, while *Fathom Five* went further into untrodden and previously forbidden territory for children's books. Thwaite makes the point by developing a comparison with the kind of "traditional" children's books represented by Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* (1930):

> There's a good deal of messing about in boats, and the book will undoubtedly be read by eleven and twelve year-olds whose parents would prefer them to be reading Arthur Ransome... Ransome knew about spying but he did not think that whores and drunks belonged in children's books. In fact, *Fathom Five* might claim some sort of record as the first published in a children's list to mention syphilis. (125)

Fathom Five is probably also the first children's book in which the protagonist becomes a friend of a brothel keeper. However, while *The Machine-Gunners* and *Fathom Five* were both regarded as controversial books, *The Machine-Gunners* gained a much higher reputation, as evidenced by its being awarded the prestigious the Carnegie Medal.[3] *The*

[3] As a rare exception, Peter Hollindale stated *Fathom Five* was "a better book than *The Machine-Gunners*" in his short review of *Fathom Five* in *Children's Supplement* (18).

Machine-Gunners featured fewer controversial topics, but it was not simply because of the brothels and drunks that *Fathom Five* was less well received.

For John Rowe Townsend, at the time a leading children's book critic and a pioneer of children's books featuring working-class characters, and who was himself from the lower-middle-class, it was Westall's attempt to write about politics and class in a book for children that made the book a critical failure:

> One is reluctant to criticise a book for the elements which probably, in the author's eyes, made it worth writing. Yet I am sure that *Fathom Five* would have been more successful if it had attempted less. It would have worked better as a straight spy catching story with fewer social and psychological complications. ("Jack for all Seasons" 41)

However, as this chapter shows, when considering the relationship between British children's literature, class and historical context, Westall's novel is far more than a story about catching spies. As Townsend indicates, the depiction of class politics and the suffering of the scholarship boy in *Fathom Five* are central aspects of the novel. In a contemporaneous essay, "How Real Do You Want Your Realism?" (1979), Westall reflects on his previous works and taboos in children's books, emphasizing that left-wing politics were regarded as taboo in British children's literature. By contrast, he complains that "Tory politics, establishment politics" ("How Real" 40) were widely seen in British children's books without their political ideology being recognised ("How Real" 40). In this article, Westall expresses regret that, in *The Machine-Gunners*, class politics are not featured because of the limited horizon of the protagonist: "There is politics in *The Machine-Gunners.* But again, they are largely the acceptable politics of the war against Hitler. Chas doesn't like coppers and headmasters, but what twelve-year-old does?" ("How Real" 41). Chas is 14-years-old in *The Machine-Gunners* (*The Machine-Gunners* 56).[4] However, whatever his age is, Chas's world is limited to his own class in *The Machine-Gunners*. *Fathom Five* was written at least in part to fulfil the unfinished business of that novel: writing for a juvenile readership about class politics from a scholarship boy's position.

[4] Probably Westall misstates Chas's age because Westall says, shortly before the sentence, that he wrote the novel "To tell him [his 12-year-old son] how it felt to be me, when I was twelve" ("How Real" 37); see also *The Making of Me* 183-87.

One of the few critics who appreciated what Westall was attempting was Aidan Chambers. In a letter to Westall, giving his comments on a draft of *Fathom Five* in 1977, two years prior to publication, Chambers sets out exactly the opposite opinion to that of John Rowe Townsend. The "social and psychological complications" that troubled Townsend are, for Chambers, the most important aspect of the book. Chambers had expected more of what he regarded as the strongest point of *The Machine Gunners*: "the utter painful accuracy with which you captured Chas, his family, the tenor of the times, the social background, the effect of the war then and there" (Letter to Westall, 2 May 1977, 1). However, to his disappointment, the "spy-catching device of the plot... takes over the whole book" and to the "detriment of character and indeed to the very thing you most wanted to deal with": "Chas up against the sex and class conventions of Tyneside childhood" (Letter to Westall, 2 May 1977, 2). Unlike other reviewers, Chambers, as a scholarship boy himself, appreciated the depiction of the scholarship boy, Chas, and his parents, "which I recognize so clearly not just from my own home but from the homes of many of the kids I knew: there is something typical about it and yet it's Chas's too" (Letter to Westall, 2 May 1977, 3). For him, the social class barrier is particularly vivid as in "The visit to [Chas's middle-class girlfriend] Sheila's house... rang all too horribly true; as did the conversation there" (Letter to Westall, 2 May 1977, 3). This letter also shows that "Chas up against the sex and class conventions" *was* the main theme of the book for Westall. It is therefore ironic that, as will be discussed below, another reviewer condemned the novel for sexism and classism because of his very attempt to deal with them (Rev. of *FF* in *Children's Book Bulletin*).

Chambers accurately predicted that "it will receive some strong adverse criticism" (Letter to Westall, 2 May 1977, 4). Westall's new form of didactic writing, by which I mean his way of explaining the necessity of overcoming existing class prejudices, was misunderstood by a reviewer for *The Children's Book Bulletin*, who read the book as purveying class prejudice – precisely what Westall condemns in the novel. Mainstream, middle-class children's books in the early- and mid-twentieth century rarely conveyed what were then deemed as inappropriate behaviours and attitudes to child readers. If they did, they also carefully and clearly established that these were unacceptable. For instance, narrators disapproved of them or good protagonists defeated those who behave inappropriately. In Westall's novels, however, central child characters are often imperfect, displaying prejudices and making mistakes that are only indirectly criticised through plot or dialogue. *Fathom Five* is typical of this

strategy. As Dalrymple explains: “Through the course of the novel, Chas and the other children gradually come to reassess their prejudices about the different areas of Garmouth, and in particular Low Street” (Dalrymple 110).

However, in 1970s Britain, the subtleties of this new approach to writing about class in children’s literature were not appreciated, as is seen in the reaction of *The Children’s Book Bulletin*’s reviewer:

> This realisation [overcoming prejudices], in the last pages, is too late to redeem the book when one has already been subjected to its unremittingly distorted treatment of class, sex and race in the rest of the book. To highlight Jack’s stereotyped views of class, Westall is unnecessarily derogatory about the Low Street and its inhabitants (Low Street indeed!), until the end where Jack sees that these views are what he has been taught by ‘Bosses’. However, the classist statements throughout the book come through too strongly to be refuted in a few words. Add to that the simplified class stereotypes of Mum and Dad, and the result is a strong anti-working-class statement.

This review contains several misreadings. For example, it overlooks the fact that not “a few words” but at least five chapters are spent overturning characters’ prejudice against the lower-working-class. Another misreading shows the reviewer’s lack of knowledge, or ignorance, of upper-working-class culture and scholarship boys, in spite of his/her condemnation of class prejudice. Chas’s/Jack’s prejudice against Low Street, as will be shown, is not what has been taught by the “Bosses”: it is upper-working-class prejudice against the lower-working-class, as instilled by his upper-working-class mother and neighbours. In this respect, *Fathom Five* requires a certain amount of knowledge of the British working-class, and the reviewers’ ignorance of this contextual knowledge has contributed to their low estimation of the novel.[5] In an article by Stephanie Nettell for *The Guardian*, Westall described his family as “artisan working-class” and says “the hatred of the artisan working-class for the labourer is far greater than them for the middle-class or the nobs” (Nettell 32). Scholars from the working-class point out that

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[5] As another example of this, an American reviewer in *The Horn Book Magazine* considers that *Fathom Five* is “at times confusing and lacking in cohesion” (McDonnell 531). Although the review is too short to allow space for discussing this “confusing”, it seems the reviewer failed to understand the class struggles of the scholarship boy which are inserted in the spy catching plot.

the unified solid working-class, the idyllic good working-class and the victimized innocent working-class were merely creation of bourgeois socialists.[6]

As depicted in *The Machine-Gunners* and *Fathom Five*, there were hierarchies within the working-class and each subdivision looked down on those below themselves.[7] Even within a single neighbourhood, Chas and his mother look down on a family living in a council house "as if they were ants, without sympathy, because they were a slummy kind of family" (*MG* 10), and so were ""West Chirton rubbish", he [Chas] said, in a tone he had often heard his mother use" (*MG* 11).[8] The reviewer was perhaps afraid that child readers would mistake the protagonist's inherited prejudices as the novel's own point-of-view, but in fact this view underestimates young readers. For example, a 12-year-old reviewer summed up the story in this way: "The leading character, Jack [Chas], sees most other people change dramatically throughout the book but on the whole they change in his perception of them... In short, Jack not only catches the spy, he also grows up. This is an excellent book".[9] The child reader was capable of understanding that the story is told from an unreliable protagonist's point of view, and of recognising the importance of his growth in overcoming his prejudices.

Chas's parents are also typical parents of a scholarship boy in the way they struggle to comprehend their educated son. Sometimes, the depiction of the McGill parents includes a sense of bitterness and a slight contempt. These feeling are associated with Chas, the focal point of the novel; he is the embodiment of the scholarship boy who is frustrated with the limitations of the working-class and who has absorbed middle-class perspectives and prejudices in his grammar school. Scholarship boys' and girls' feelings towards the working-class home, which cannot be unrelated to class for them, are ambivalent due to restrictions of the working-class home and their ambition. The home was often "both hated and desired" and "its sense of safety... felt... like a trap" (Walkerdine 161). Westall's feeling was a typical mixture of love, hatred and fear. As he explained to Stephanie Nettell, "I love'em and hate'em" (quoted in Nettell 32). However, depicting a typical working-class family does not mean that he was "anti-

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[6] See Walkerdine 205-09. For the middle-class novelists' views on the working-class, see Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy* 16-17; Holderness 21-23.
[7] For this kind of working-class neighbourhood, see Bourke 151-69.
[8] Similarly to Chas' parents, Aidan Chambers' neighbours forbade him to go near an estate of council houses when he was a child (*SAAS* Vol. 12, 38): "we were simply being conditioned into the English class system, where to be an owner-occupier of even a meagre property, like the inhabitations of Glen Terrace, places you a rung or two up the social ladder from anyone living in a rented council house" (Chambers, *SAAS* Vol. 12, 38).
[9] Quoted in Yates, Rev of *Fathom Five*, 27 March 1981.

working-class”. *Fathom Five* is, in fact, a story of a scholarship boy who struggles to be loyal to the working-class, unlike Westall’s later novels such as *Kingdom by the Sea* (1990) and *Falling into Glory* (1993), in which the protagonists are eager to be socially-mobile rather than keeping their bond with their parents.

The Three Classes in *Fathom Five*

In *Fathom Five*, Chas, now 16-years-old, has obtained a bicycle. This makes the landscape of the story radically different from *The Machine-Gunners*, which is limited to the area Chas can easily cover on foot. The terrain of *The Machine-Gunners* is a homogeneously white, predominantly British working-class area. In *Fathom Five*, Chas moves around three different areas populated by three classes. The first is Whitley Bay, where the established middle-class people live – those whom Chas calls “toffs” (*FF* 1979 6; *FF* 1992 7). Next is Bank Top, home to upper-working-class people, or “anybody who was *anybody* [sic]” in Chas’s estimation (*FF* 1979, 6; *FF* 1992, 7). Finally, there is the multi-racial slum, Low Street, where, according to Chas, “Only the Riff-raff were left” (*FF* 1979, 6; *FF* 1992, 7), and “they produced children every colour of the rainbow” (*FF* 1979, 6; *FF* 1992, 7-8).[10] Unlike the three-tier class image observed from a middle-class perspective – the upper-class, the middle-class, and the working-class – the three classes in *Fathom Five* are the middle-class, the upper-working-class and the lower-working-class. This difference stems from Chas as the focal point of the novel.

As Pierre Bourdieu observes, people understand their class position through a series of differences (*Distinction* 170). This means that one can be strongly conscious about difference between his or her class and class categories directly below or above but not about remote divisions of class. Therefore, it is generally the case in novels written by middle-class writers that differences between the class segments within the working-class were scarcely depicted. In the same way, Chas and his family, who belong to the upper-working-class, are aware of differences between themselves and the lower strata of the working-class, and between themselves and the middle-class. However, differences among the middle-classes or differences between the middle-class

[10] In the Pan Piper Edition (1992), the sentence, “Lascars and Chinamen, Finns and Negroes, they produced children every colour of the rainbow” is removed. Racist words were often rewritten in the Pan Piper Edition (1992): for example “Wop” was rewritten to “Mussolini” (*FF* 1979, 103; *FF* 1992, 120).

and the upper-class are not observed in *Fathom Five*: they are all “toffs” or “Bosses”. The depiction of class in *Fathom Five* is historically notable: *Fathom Five* was among the earliest children’s books to show clearly the British class system as observed from the upper-working-class perspective.

The division between the three classes in *Fathom Five* is established not only geographically. People in the three areas clearly have different class markers as products of their habitus. For example, all the characters can easily tell which class or class division someone belongs to from his or her clothes and speech. When Chas visits his middle-class girlfriend Sheila’s home in Whitley Bay, her house maid knows that he is not from Whitley Bay at first glance (*FF* 1979, 61; *FF* 1992, 70). In the same way, a shop keeper in Low Street sees that Sheila lives in Whitley Bay from her appearance (*FF* 1979, 106; *FF* 1992, 123). Even when she disguises herself as a prostitute with what she thinks of as the typical makeup and clothes of prostitutes, Nelly, a brothel owner in Low Street, can see that she comes from Whitley Bay because of her “Lady’s hands. And lady’s coat” (*FF* 1979 139; *FF* 1992, 163). Voices are even more distinctive markers of characters’ class. When Chas speaks on a ship carrying only established middle-class people, “The Bosses looked back over their shoulders, irritated by the sound of Chas’s voice” (*FF* 1979, 203; *FF* 1992, 239). When Sheila speaks in a bar in Low Street, the result is dramatic: “More than any police whistle, the voice cut through the tension in the bar. The voice of outraged middle-class morality; of the woman magistrate and the lady from the Welfare” (*FF* 1979, 129; *FF* 1992, 151). Although the difference between Low Street and Bank Top is more subtle than the difference between the middle-class and the working-class, Chas can still judge “Low Street types” (*FF* 1979, 8; *FF* 1992, 9), while a British Italian in Low Street can immediately tell that Chas and his friend Cem “are decent boys from the town” once they speak a few words (*FF* 1979 103; *FF* 1992 120).

Moreover, while the people in these three areas are, in reality, geographically close, living within a few miles of each other, they rarely know about one-anothers’ lives because their lives are restricted to their class segments. Since “respectable” working-class people have more deliberately to draw a line between them and those they regard as beneath them – because the differences are actually very subtle – Westall makes it clear that their prejudice against Low Street is no better than middle-class prejudice against the working-class. Chas’s mother is even against walking through Low Street (*FF* 1979, 7, 17; *FF* 1992, 8, 20). Therefore, for Chas, Low Street has been

a totally foreign territory; when he first goes there he notices with surprise that, "the Low Street lot got milk delivered just like decent people" (*FF* 1979, 27; *FF* 1992, 31). On the other hand, Chas's view of the middle-class is also stereotyped due to working-class antagonism toward the middle-class and his lack of acquaintance with people in that class. Chas believes that "All toffs have a black sheep in the family" (*FF* 1979, 20; *FF* 1992, 23). In the course of the story, while Chas gradually comes to understand Low Street and loses his prejudice toward the lower-working-class, his antagonism toward the middle-class gets stronger due to his encounter with class barriers. The fact that Chas becomes a young socialist underscores the left-wing ideology of the novel, which Westall found lacking in the children's books of 1970s Britain (Westall, "How Real"). The political spirit of the novel is undoubtedly concerned with uniting the working-classes to fight against the dominance of the bourgeoisie. However, due to the class position of the scholarship boy, the representation of social class in *Fathom Five* is, in reality, much more complicated.

The Scholarship Boy as an Outsider in the Working-class

Even though Chas largely holds inherited upper-working-class views, his class habitus is distinctively different from that of his parents: he is already, in certain ways, an outsider to his original class. Despite his conscious political attitude as a self-proclaimed socialist, unconsciously he has begun to challenge and reject working-class values due to the middle-class values he is learning at school. That is why the novel was often misunderstood and largely unrecognised by left-wing critics as a socialist novel. Similarly to Chambers and Alan Garner, *Fathom Five*'s depiction of the relationship between the scholarship boy and his parents as troubled is modelled on Westall's own experience. Even though this difficulty is a recurrent theme in his novels, in his published autobiography Westall barely mentions it: for example, in *The Making of Me* (2006), he only recalls his love and respect for his working-class parents when he was a young child. However, in an interview with Stephanie Nettell for an article for *The Guardian* and in letters to his editor, Miriam Hodgson, he explained his difficult experience as a scholarship boy, describing himself as "a Frankenstein's monster" (Nettell 32) to his parents:

> My childhood had been very happy and whole... until I went to grammar school. From then on, I grew and realised that I was... [unrecognisable line]... I suppose I was a gigantic cuckoo in their little nest. I also became a snob – not so much as money snob as an intellectual snob... Things were pretty bad by the time I reached Robbie's age [the protagonist of *Falling into Glory* (1993), 17 years old]. We lived separate lives in the same small house. (Letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992 MH/01/29)

This letter shows that his experience was similar to Garner's, who was fully uprooted from his working-class home through his grammar school education, and who failed to communicate with his father for decades (see Chapter 4). While Garner determined to return to his roots, at least geographically, after discovering the value of the rural working-class culture in Alderley Edge, Westall never returned to the North-East (Dalrymple 91); he had a fear of returning to his working-class home.[11] However, while *Falling into Glory*, which he referred to as "pure autobiography" (Letter to Hodgson 11 July 1992), features an ambitious scholarship boy who does not look back on his home and family, *Fathom Five* features a different type of scholarship boy who tries to stay true to his working-class parents and community. The scholarship boy's conflicted feelings toward his parents, and the class tension pulling him between the middle-class and his working-class home are, therefore, more vividly illustrated in *Fathom Five*.

In *Fathom Five*, Chas does not realise what he is sacrificing for his education and ambition. Westall, by contrast, knew he "would have to throw into the furnace everything" – including his family – to become successful (Westall, Letter to Hodgson 11 July 1992). Chas may not realise what is happening, but his parents, who are recognisably parents of a scholarship boy and have much in common with the parents in Garner's and Chambers' novels, blame Chas's change on his education:

> 'You never used to be like this,' continued Mam, as if Dad hadn't spoken. 'You were a different lad, before you went into that sixth form. That sixth form's turned your brain...'
> 'I'm *trying* to answer my father's question', snapped Chas. "*If* you don't mind... [sic]'

[11] On his fear for returning home, see his letter to Hodgson (5 Aug. 1989) and Nettell (1991).

> Dad's fist thumped the table. 'Don't come that grammar-school talk wi' us'. (*FF* 1992, 13-14)

In this short scene, Westall captures the dynamics of the typical scholarship boy's family: the scholarship boy's grammar school manner and new practices irritate his parents, and the parents blame the school for their son's foreign manners and behaviours. There is a slight difference in the 1979 edition, in which Jack Stokoe's mother says, "You never gave us a minute's worry, before you went into that Sixth Form. That Sixth Form's turned your brain..." (*FF* 1979, 11); because, unlike Chas, Jack has not been part of the gang featured in *The Machine-Gunners*. But, the gist of the mother's speech is the same: "That Sixth Form turned your brain". The result of his education is that his mother cannot understand her son. Similar to the parents in Chambers' *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave* and Garner's *The Owl Service*, Chas's mother clearly suffers from the typical scholarship boys' parental dilemma of seeing their children become strangers to them (Jackson and Marsden 138-40, 152-53).

The scholarship boys' parents in Chambers' and Garners' novels, even if they are irritated by middle-class manners, ultimately support their children's acquisition of middle-class culture because they accept its acquisition as necessary for success in their class society. However, *Fathom Five* shows working-class parents who do not accept the cultural hierarchy; they are proud of their respectable working-class culture. As his father's rage over "grammar-school talk" shows, bringing the grammar school's culture into the home is considered an insult in the McGill family and in the respectable working-class community. This was Westall's own experience: "I learnt things at grammar school that parents didn't know and didn't *want* to know, and the warmth of a working-class family can turn horribly sour if you break the rules"(Nettell 32). As Hoggart describes, in a traditional working-class community in the mid twentieth century, "you will be disliked if you imply a criticism of their ways by acting differently yourself; if you infringe the taboos you will run into disfavour" (*Uses* 72-73). The scholarship boy, therefore, learned "to make use of a pair of different accents, perhaps even two different apparent characters and differing standards of value" (Hoggart, *Uses* 242; also see Jackson and Marsden 153). However, in reality, it was almost impossible to use a pair of standards because most judgements and practices were done unconsciously. As Westall states in his letter to Hodgson, "I did my best to keep up a 'home act' but they [his parents] became increasingly distressed and negative about me

being ‘like nobody but myself’” (Letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992). However, Westall also highlights Chas’s snobbishness here; Chas *deliberately* uses “grammar-school talk” to irritate his parents because he is frustrated with his working-class parents and the gap between school and home. Chas is “an intellectual snob”, just as Westall himself was (Westall, Letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992).

Reflecting Westall’s own experience, the tensions between Chas and his parents are profound and uncontrollable because the scholarship boy and his parents think in markedly different ways (see also Chapter 2). At school, Chas has been trained to think logically and analytically: for example, at school his speech has to be based on reason and logic to be persuasive. Although these may sound like neutral terms, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4, “reason” and “logic” were aspects of middle-class culture; working-class lives and speeches were ruled by other codes. As Garner tellingly illustrates in *Red Shift*, the dominant culture that scholarship boys were taught in school in the mid twentieth century was not perfect and not superior to the culture of the working-class. However, due to the cultural hierarchy in the class society, Chas believes in the superiority of the school culture and uses it to disobey his parents, or to violate rules in his working-class community:

> The greenhouse was male territory. Chas told her so, reasonably and logically.
> Mam called it cheek… Then Mrs Spalding came across and put her two-penn’orth in. Chas was reasonable and logical again. Mrs Spalding departed in hysterics. What *was* the point of being taught to argue logically at school if, the moment you tried it at home, they just call it cheek? (*FF* 1979, 38; *FF* 1992, 43)

Chas’s view that his mother must not enter the greenhouse, however logically he justifies it, is merely a selfish and sexist claim. Therefore, his mother rightly rejects the claim. However, the focus of this scene is the cultural conflict between the working-class way of communication in which logically structured arguments are disregarded, and the middle-class way of speech which has to be verbally explicit and structured logically to be persuasive. In this scene, Westall particularly highlights two points: firstly, that the reasonable and logical (or middle-class) way of talking is not a universally validated culture; secondly, that Chas is frustrated with the fact that his

middle-class school culture is not valid in his community, while he uses this culture, consciously and unconsciously, as a way to irritate the adults around him. In this respect, Chas is clearly exercising his cultural power. Whatever his political belief, he dismisses the working-class culture, and desires universal validity for middle-class culture.

Chas's parents' life is ruled by what was commonly described as "Wondering what the neighbours will say" (Hoggart, *Uses* 72). "The neighbours", in this context, stand for the value system that takes the place of "logical thinking" or rationality.[12] However, Chas disregards the neighbourhood rules because they do not have validity in the middle-class value system which he has internalised through school. For example, Chas considers his parents' rule against going out at midnight invalid because they do not tell him "reasonably and logically" their reasons: "Not for any reason. Just 'cause of what the neighbours would think. Mam's whole life was ruled by what the rotten neighbours would think" (*FF* 1979, 2-3; *FF* 1992, 3). However, Westall carefully distances himself from Chas's snobbish views, so that he does not give authority to Chas's disdain for working-class culture and lifestyle. When Chas claims the validity of the school culture to reject his parents' and neighbour's rules and views, he actually does not behave reasonably: sneaking out at midnight to see a lifeboat is unreasonable enough to encourage readers to distrust Chas's self-justification.

On the other hand, the novel also highlights the restrictiveness of the respectable working-class seen from the scholarship boy's perspective. For instance, Chas's mother dislikes and disapproves of Chas's former classmate Audrey, who is now a journalist, because, "She's been seen drinking with *men*, in the Rex Hotel at Whitley Bay" (*FF* 1979, 17; *FF* 1992, 19). This situation matches one Richard Hoggart describes in relation to restrictive working-class neighbourhood rules:

> Working-class people watch and are watched in a manner which, because horizons are limited, will often result in a mistaken, and lowering, interpretation of what the neighbours do. A working-class woman may be known to act as a 'sitter-in' at the place where she cleans all day; but if she is brought home at the end of the evening she is likely to ask to be left a couple of streets away. What would the neighbours say if they saw her coming home with a man? (*Uses* 72)

[12] See also Raymond Williams' novel, *Border Country* 223.

Here we can see not only the narrowness of the working-class women's morals, but also Hoggart's distance from the working-class. From his changed perspective, Hoggart sees the working-class woman's concern about being seen with a man as an unreasonable and arising from their limited horizon. Within her own group, her thinking would have been understood as commonsensical. Once scholarship boys and girls were educated out of their class – in other words, once their habitus was altered – they were only able to see the working-class from the outsider's perspective, even if they continued to live among the working-class. For instance, according to Jackson and Marsden, a scholarship boy says: "The way our parents do things and look at things, the way they set about living – that's altogether foreign to us. We look at it from the outside, and it seems strange," (Jackson and Marsden 209); or a scholarship girl says: "I like to go round and hear relations talking about themselves... But I'm not sure whether it's quite the same interest as I used to have, or if I regard them more as... specimens, in a way" (Jackson and Marsden 209). Westall illustrates this through the different ways Chas and his mother regard Audrey.

Since Chas is a scholarship boy, he cannot understand why his mother dislikes Audrey, even if he *has* noticed that Audrey's appearance such as clothes, hairstyle, and makeup are "a *bit* different" from ordinary girls (*FF* 1979, 16; *FF* 1992, 19). However, the difference *is* the matter for his working-class mother, because she unconsciously understands them as products of a different class habitus. What Chas's mother dislikes is not just that Audrey drinks with her older fellow journalists, or because she suspects Audrey of having inappropriate relationships with married men, but that she does this in the hotel in a middle-class area. From her perspective, Whitley Bay is reserved for special occasions, such as Aunt Aggie's Silver Wedding (*FF* 1979, 17; *FF* 1992, 19), and so going there casually confirms that she does not belong to the same class. Chas's parents do not want Chas to leave his original class, and so for them the most important condition for Chas's girlfriend is that she belongs to the same class; she must be "one of our own sort" (*FF* 1979, 69; *FF* 1992, 80). In *The Machine-Gunners*, which is set two years prior to *Fathom Five*, Chas's mother likes Audrey because her family is "posh", but basically they belong to the same class (*MG* 22). The class of the local journalists is not necessarily, in terms of economic capital, different from her class or what she hopes for her son. But their lifestyles, and their cultural capital – "she knaas too much" (*FF* 1979, 69; *FF* 1992, 80) – place them as outsiders to her class. Audrey is no longer accepted as "one of our own sort" anymore in *Fathom Five* (*FF* 1979, 69; *FF* 1992, 80).

For similar reasons, his mother also dislikes Chas's bourgeois girlfriend Sheila: "'What you want to get involved with *her* sort for?' hissed Mam. 'Why can't you stick to your *own* sort?'" (*FF* 1979, 152; *FF* 1992, 179). Although apparently her hostility towards a bourgeois girlfriend is nothing but class prejudice, as will be discussed, Westall shows that this is not an entirely unreasonable attitude, because the bourgeois Sheila unconsciously attempts to remove Chas from his working-class family. The kind of hostility toward the bourgeois girl is generated by the working-class parents' desire to keep their son within their class to keep a bond with him.

The same desire drives the parents to remove Chas from his school because the scholarship boy's success in getting into university meant that he was likely to be socially, emotionally and geographically removed from his parents.[13] Therefore, similar to the parents of scholarship boys in *Dance on My Grave* and *The Owl Service*, Chas's mother is unsupportive of higher education: "Well, you can go out to work and earn your living after this. That'll knock these grand ideas out of your head. University..." (*FF* 1979, 152; *FF* 1992, 179). As discussed in Chapter 1, this view of universities and jobs was typical of working-class parents in the mid twentieth century. Like Gwyn's mother in *The Owl Service* (a book discussed in detail in Chapter 8), who threatens to force him leave school, Chas's mother blames education when her son acts in ways she finds inappropriate. When Chas and his grammar school friends, including Sheila, get in trouble with the police, she loses patience. Although in a middle-class view, forcing her son to leave school as a punishment for his bad behaviour is unreasonable, seen from the working-class parent's perspective, it is consistent because the troubles and the inappropriate behaviour for their class all stem from the school. Chas eventually stays on at the grammar school only because his strong-minded headmaster does not accept his parents' request for him to leave school.[14]

The Temptations of Middle-class Culture

[13] According to Jackson and Marsden, majority of scholarship boys and girls who educated to A-level standard moved different cities: only 27 out of the sample of 88 remained in the town where they grew up (173). Their study also illustrates the "gap of non-understanding" (Jackson and Marsden 207) between scholarship boys/girls with A-level (or degrees) and their parents remained, in many cases, to the end, because their lifestyles and the way of thinking were radically different (206-10).

[14] As has been discussed, historically in the mid-twentieth century, a significant proportion of working-class grammar school pupils left school early when their parents were opposed to education (Jackson and Marsden 140, 254-72; Greenslade 55-56, 65-68).

The scholarship boy tended not only to be frustrated with the working-class, but was also likely to be attracted to bourgeois culture and lifestyles due to his education in which he was taught to appreciate bourgeois cultural products and taste. In *Fathom Five*, Westall uses Chas's relationship with Sheila to illustrate bourgeois cultural power. While Chas's relationship with Audrey is nothing but comradeship, he falls in love with the bourgeois Sheila. In Westall's novels – and generally in scholarship boy novels – scholarship boys' girlfriends and wives tend to be from the middle-class.[15] The choice of girlfriends or wives sometimes is clearly motivated by their economic and social ambitions, as seen in John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), but more often it is depicted as attraction of their embodied bourgeois/petit-bourgeois culture, which is felt as natural attraction. For instance, in *Falling into Glory* (1993), the scholarship boy protagonist falls in love with his teacher, Emma. Westall explains her attraction in this way: "Emma's early charm is that she is not only beautiful, but *cultured* – Shangrila to a boy from a working-class narrow background" (Letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992). In other words, the scholarship boy protagonist is attracted to her embodied middle-class culture, or her cultural capital, which is not seen in his original culture. In this respect, such scholarship boy characters are at least in part attracted to the dominant culture rather than the individuals with whom they fall in love. As the above quotation shows, Westall was conscious of this, and he illustrates this cultural power in *Fathom Five*.

Throughout the story, Westall carefully illustrates the attractions of the dominant culture. The attraction of "cultured" people is particularly highlighted in scenes with Sheila's parents. When Chas visits Sheila's house he observes everything with surprise: a big lawn, a varnished oak front door with a big black knocker and a little bell-button, sounds of playing piano, a maid, big book cases with "more books than the school library" (*FF* 1979, 60-62; *FF* 1992, 70-72). The kind of surprise and longing for a bourgeois lifestyle is frequently seen in scholarship boy novels. For example, in *Room at the Top* (1957), when the scholarship boy protagonist rents a room in a middle-class home, "a different world" (Braine 11), he is not only impressed by the interior of the house and the material possessions within it, but by almost every detail of the house, because everything has class markers and is new to him (Braine 11-15). Hal, in *Dance on My Grave*, is also surprised by his middle-class boyfriend's bathroom, even though Barry's home is rather lower-middle-class compared with Sheila's home (Chambers,

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[15] According to Jackson and Marsden, scholarship boys and girls tended to choose partners of similar educational background (188-89).

Dance 23-24). Chas, who likes English literature, is particularly attracted to the huge bookshelves and Sheila's mother, with whom he can talk about his favourite poet, T. S. Eliot (*FF* 1979, 62; *FF* 1992, 72).

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, typically the scholarship boy rarely spoke about such writers at home because working-class parents did not welcome such topics. Similarly to Chambers, this was the case in Westall's childhood home: "I realized I would have to hide my growing from them [his parents], because they could not share it, and it hurt them" (Westall, Letter to Hodgson, 11 July 1992). Due to the loneliness in his home, the scholarship boy was attracted to the place he could use his knowledge. Westall depicts this psychology of the scholarship boy skilfully in Chas's visit to Sheila's home. For instance, he relates the power of high culture in the psychologically loaded scene where Chas is asked about his father's occupation by Sheila' mother:

> He wanted to get it over with; leap into the yawning gap shouting, 'He's a foreman-fitter, you snobbish cow!' But he liked the books too much, and the grand piano, and adults you could discuss T. S. Eliot with. So he merely said, 'Engineer'. (*FF* 1979, 62-63; *FF* 1992, 72-73)

Ultimately, the attraction of the bourgeois culture deprives Chas of his ability to be a rebel.

Unlike Sheila, who has little prejudice against lower-class people, her mother is clearly snobbish and classist. For example, she withdraws her offer to lend a book once she finds out that Chas's father is a foreman:

> 'Is he the manager?'
> 'No. Foreman-fitter'.
> 'Ooooooh'... The hand holding the book wavered, then vaguely put the book down on the arm of a chair. The voice changed to brisk dismissal. (*FF* 1979, 62-63; *FF* 1992, 72-73)

Unsurprisingly, for the period, Sheila's parents are against her seeing Chas, and they interfere in their relationship. However, even after he is treated rudely – virtually kicked out of their house and prevented from seeing Sheila in various ways – Chas continues to be attracted to their culture and lifestyle: "But he remembered the grand piano, and the

shelves of books behind glass doors, and the people you could talk to T. S. Eliot about" (*FF* 1979, 161; *FF* 1992, 189). As will be further discussed, ultimately the power of the bourgeois culture limits Chas's political anger. However angry he is against the bourgeoisie and politically dismisses them, the cultural attraction never disappears.

Uses of Socialism

In *Fathom Five*, socialism is a personal and psychological tool to resist bourgeois hegemonic dominance rather than to achieve specific political purposes. Chas invokes socialism when he feels a sense of inferiority to the bourgeoisie or insecurity about his working-class roots. For instance, when Sheila unwittingly challenges Chas's pride as the son of a foreman, by her innocent question and surprise, "is he the manager?", and "You mean he mends machines? With his own hands?" Chas declares that he is a socialist (*FF* 1979, 31; *FF* 1992, 35):

> Yeah. Well, it's honest. Not like bosses and lord mayors always eating banquets. I'm a *socialist* and when the war's over, Attlee will get power and then *we*'ll say what goes. Everyone have to work and get their soft white hand dirty, just like my dad. (*FF* 1979, 31; *FF* 1992, 35)

Here Chas defends himself with socialism because "he wanted to say yes" (*FF* 1979, 31; *FF* 1992, 35) when Sheila asks whether his father is the manager of Gasworks. As the son of the respectable working-class family which is "proud of its roots" (Dalrymple, 225), Chas tries to protects their pride, and his own identity as a member of the family, by claiming to be socialist. Socialism is therefore a practical tool or a weapon in his everyday life to resist the power, the bourgeois views of the working-class.

However, in this conversation Chas's uneasy class position is soon highlighted. Although Chas says, "*we*'ll say what goes" after socialist revolution, Sheila sharply points out that Chas is not one of workers, and he is attuned to the middle-class culture more than anyone:

> 'My father works as hard as yours. Brains are just as important as hands. Look how brainy you are at school'.

> Chas's voice rose to a squeak. 'My dad's cleverer than me. He can mend anything. I'm hopeless at mending things'.
> They glared... (*FF* 1979, 31; *FF* 1992, 35)

For the scholarship boy, "brains are the currency by which he has bought his way" (Hoggart, *Uses* 242-43). Sheila therefore attacks Chas where he is most vulnerable. However, unlike the typical élite scholarship boy who believes in "brains" and denies his parents and his original culture, Chas's strength as a self-proclaimed socialist is seen here. He can still believe in superiority of his working-class father: "My dad's cleverer than me". Here, Westall overturns the grammar school meaning of intelligence. He attempts to give power to the working-class view, in which hand is more valued than brain, or educational qualifications. This was historically significant, since in mainstream British children's books, with the exception of a few working-class writers' novels, this kind of working-class view has rarely been articulated. Even though socialist books for children had existed in the early and mid twentieth century (see, for instance, Rosen, "The Young Socialist), such left-wing ideas were rare in mainstream children's books at the time. One of Westall's achievements, therefore, was including such views in mainstream British children's literature.

One of Westall's aims as a left-wing children's writer was to depict the intelligent working man. In "How Real Do You Want Your Realism?" (1979) he points out that "The idea of the intelligent workingman *is* a comparative rarity" in British children's literature ("How Real" 41). Therefore, Chas's Dad in *Fathom Five* is consciously depicted as an intelligent workingman who knows the bourgeois cultural power. Unlike typical scholarship boys' parents, who often failed to find a way to communicate with their children, Chas's Dad succeeds in explaining why they are not happy with the girlfriend from the established middle-class, even if they like the girl's personality. When Chas almost breaks up with Sheila, Chas's Dad explains why he is glad to hear that:

> "Well, Aah am glad, Aah'll tell ye straight".
> "Why?"
> "Well, suppose them Smythsons [Sheila's parents] had been a bit kinder to you? Had ye round to tea, and fed you bits like a little lap-dog. Who'd'a become more important to ye – them, or yer mam and me?"

> "Never", said Chas. But he remembered the grand piano, and the shelves of books behind glass doors, and the people you could talk to T. S. Eliot about... [sic]
> "Aye, ye can say that now", said Dad, a bit kinder. "But they're clever, that lot. Clever at tekking our bright kids an' mekkin' them into little lap-dogs. World's full o' little lap-dogs. That's how that lot survives, an' keeps their power... [sic]". (*FF* 1979, 161; *FF* 1992, 189)

Westall here makes it clear that Chas's father has realized the hegemonic power which attempts to incorporate Chas culturally and politically into the middle-class. As has been shown, even if Chas wants to keep the close tie with his working-class family and claims that he is a socialist, the bourgeois culture has tempted him and deprived him of the ability to be rebel.

The bourgeois cultural dominance was, as Westall illustrates here, a part of a system to tame the selected bright working-class children. The scholarship boys were often those who became what Chas's father calls "lap-dogs" without even realizing that they were "domesticated" (Greenslade 162-63) and betraying the working-class because the changes in their perspectives and behaviours were presented as the result of cultural and emotional processes, rather than arising from political and economic factors. Scholars revealed in the mid twentieth century that most scholarship boys and girls shifted their political views to the right. According to Jackson and Marsden, among their sample of former working-class grammar school pupils of the 1940s and the early 1950s, "65% to 73% were *against* the Labour party, the traditional political voice of the working-class" (194), while 50% of their parents supported Labour; even if a member of the working-class who was educated in a grammar schools still supported Labour, "most of them had moved 'rightwards' in their party" (194). Westall illustrates the way that the cultural power of the dominant class spurs on the tendency. Chas's father clearly recognises the role of high literature in this: "There's a lot in the world that's wrong. But ye won't find it in *their* poetry books. Ye ought to try reading *men*'s books" (*FF* 1979, 161; *FF* 1992, 189). Therefore, Chas's father tells Chas about The Left Book Club, an influential left-wing publishing group in the late 1930s and 1940s. He hopes reading its publications will help Chas recognise and resist bourgeois cultural power; or, as his father puts it, "ye'll be cured o' the Smythsons. Ye'll see them for what they *really* are" (*FF* 1979, 161; *FF* 1992, 189).

However, Chas's father's hopes are not realized. Chas, unlike his father, has no experience of being a worker, and as has been shown, he has internalised middle-class views and tastes. It is worth remembering that the working-class did not constitute the lone voice of socialism or left-wing politics in mid-twentieth century Britain. In the early 1940s, when *Fathom Five* is set, the vast majority of left-leaning writers were from the middle-class; Mr McGill's plan fails to take account of the fact that The Left Book Club reflected views of middle-class socialists and so were still far from working-class literature. As Pierre Bourdieu observes, since regardless of their political views, ultimately a middle-class socialist has a middle-class habitus, he cannot see the working-class in the same way as a worker sees it (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 372). Insights into the cultural aspects of class were also limited in the 1940s because such theories were mostly developed during and after the 1950s. According to Gary McCulloch (1985), the activities of the Left Book Club were based on middle-class ideas, and "The LBC may be interpreted as an attempt to educate an alternative middle-class élite for the Left" (McCulloch 152). When Westall shows that reading socialist books merely make Chas into a middle-class socialist rather than enabling him to return to his roots or recognise and reject his internalised middle-class views, he is creating an accurate portrait of the times. For instance, after Chas reads his father's Left Book Club offerings he begins to see the lower-working-class, or in his words "slummy" people, "as the victims of the Smythsons" (*FF* 1979, 161-162; *FF* 1992, 189). This is a middle-class socialist's view, which sees the working-class as pitiful Others, rather than "one of us". When Chas helps a lower-working-class old woman with a sack of coal, he notices that "She kept on thanking him in a smarmy way and told him he was a proper young gentle man. It only struck him when he got back to his bike that to her, *he* was a Boss" (*FF* 1979, 162; *FF* 1992, 190). Ironically, when Chas loses his upper-working-class prejudice against the lower-working-class, he becomes more like a middle-class person who does not understand the unspoken rules and prejudices within the working-class. Against his father's expectations, then, The Left Book Club widens the gap between Chas and the working-class.

As a genuine working man, Chas's father can make use of socialism because he has a solid class identity; he thinks that "the *real* war" is not the war between Germany and Britain, but "between workers an' Bosses" (*FF* 1979, 196; *FF* 1992, 231). For Chas's father, his view is endorsed by his real experience and memory that "Churchill set the cavalry at" the miners "wi' drawn swords" in a rally at Newcastle in 1926 (*FF*

1979, 196; *FF* 1992, 230). However, when Chas hears this, he thinks of Sheila's face and says, "But Bosses are just people" (*FF* 1979, 196; *FF* 1992, 231). By this, Westall shows that the class position of the scholarship boy makes it difficult for Chas to be a socialist like his father. It is repeatedly shown that Chas has difficulty in relating his personal experience to socialist views because he does not have a working-class identity. For example, "Chas shook with rage" (*FF* 1979, 167; *FF* 1992, 195) when he discovers that Sheila's parents are taking Sheila to a hotel with private beach so that Chas cannot see her. Chas understands that "Smythson used his money like a fist. Like Dad's [socialist] books said" (*FF* 1979, 167; *FF* 1992, 195). However, he cannot relate this experience to a broader picture. He has observed that Sheila's father has a certain amount of control over the police and the Law (*FF* 1979, 153-56; *FF* 1992, 180-84). But, his understanding of the power of the bourgeoisie remains personal. Chas's Left-Book-Club socialism is in fact less effective than his previous self-styled socialism which enables him to connect his lived experience with "socialism". In the final six chapters of the story, in which Chas overcomes his prejudices against the lower-working-class and racial minorities by making friends with them through cooperation in tracking down a spy, he observes class prejudices and barriers between the middle-class and the working-class several times. In this part of the story, therefore, Chas has opportunities to feel revolutionary anger against the bourgeoisie, but he fails because he cannot relate socialism to his real experience of class, and he cannot feel the genuine sense of unity with the working-class.

Furthermore, Westall shows Chas's middle-class socialism as powerless to resist the cultural power of the bourgeoisie. Even after he has started reading books from The Let Book Club, Chas cannot deny that Sheila's father, Mr Smythson, is "a very handsome man" with a "spotless white collar" (*FF* 1979, 202; *FF* 1992, 237). Mr Smythson also has "blond hair swept back in a smooth wave, the straight nose and piercing blue eyes" (*FF* 1979, 202; *FF* 1992, 237). The description of this "handsome man" corresponds exactly to the features of the dominant class and race. Westall uses Sheila's parents to show the mechanisms of how the scholarship boy, as if naturally, sees ruling-class/race culture and characters as aesthetically superior to ones of the dominated class, and how longing to the dominant culture suppresses rebels. Chas understands social class barrier in his relationship with Sheila. Sheila is not classist in the way her parents are, but she nevertheless embodies unconscious bourgeois views. As has been shown, for Sheila and her parents, an "ordinary family's" occupation would

be at least a management jobs (*FF* 1979, 31; *FF* 1992, 35). For them, manual workers all belong to an unseen class. For Sheila's parents, the scholarship boy, Chas is also one of the people who should be unseen. However, Sheila wants Chas to change so that her parents will accept him.

> '...If you give up things halfway, nobody will ever take you seriously. People will go on thinking you're an idiot'.
> '*People* meaning your precious daddy?'
> 'Yes – if you like. People who matter. I want *you* to be someone people take seriously. You must see that'...
> 'Who says your father's somebody who matters?'
> (*FF* 1979, 166; *FF* 1992, 194)

Here, Sheila and Chas's parents' interests are in conflict. While Sheila wants Chas to go to Low Street to finish their investigation into a German spy, Chas's parents are against it. However, what is important is that this dialogue again highlights Sheila's unconsciously held view that people such as Chas's parents do not matter because they live in a different world; or ultimately that working-class people are excluded from "people" in bourgeois speeches, as Westall shows in this exchange. Chas shows his loyalty to his family: he chooses his working-class family over his middle-class girlfriend (*FF* 1979, 166; *FF* 1992, 194). Sheila frequently, but always unknowingly, places Chas in an uncomfortable middle ground between his family and her own middle-class world. However, unlike other scholarship boy characters, such as Tom in Garner's *Red Shift* (see Chapter 4), Chas is loyal to his home even if that means "Tears glistened in Sheila's eyes" (*FF* 1979, 166; *FF* 1992, 195). This is Westall's ambition and commitment to portray an academically successful scholarship boy who is yet loyal to the working-class. Such scholarship boys, in reality, were rare and this is what John Rowe Townsend, as a former grammar school pupil, criticised as unrealistic in the novel. Townsend considers the fact that Chas is a "potential Oxford open scholar" and also is an "ordinary [working-class] lad" does not "carry real conviction" (Townsend, "Jack for all Seasons" 40-41). However, the depiction of a scholarship boy who holds these two qualities was a part of Westall's ambition to include class politics and "The idea of the intelligent workingman" in children's books (Westall, "How Real" 40-41).

However, Westall also realistically attributes Chas's loyalty to his home to social barriers rather than his socialism. Because Chas is neither working-class nor middle-class he can unite with the working-class only when he understands that the gap between him and the middle-class is deeper. Westall repeatedly depicts Chas's difficulty to behave in a middle-class manner. For example, although the scholarship boy speaks differently from his parents – enough to annoy them – he cannot speak in the established middle-class way. This is apparent when Chas meets Sheila's mother (*FF* 1979, 62; *FF* 1992, 71). Westall articulates the social barrier which Chas can never fully overcome through academic success:

> He'd always known that life would be fighting your way upwards. But he'd thought it would be like flying. Free; like a bird. Suddenly, Sheila made it seem like a hill you had to climb. And on top, already arrived, were all the people who mattered. Even if you climbed really well, they still wouldn't let you join the club. And if you climbed badly, they'd kick you down the hill again. Right in the teeth. (*FF* 1979, 166; *FF* 1992, 194)

In the final chapter, the social barrier is re-emphasized. Chas observes privileges given to the Bosses by the police and the navy, and their prejudiced attitudes against him and working-class people (*FF* 1979, 203, 205; 238, 241). Although Townsend criticised Chas' "unreasonable hatred for "the Bosses, who are implausibly shown" in this part, this is where Westall particularly emphasizes Chas' – and his own – political view, which had rarely been written in British children's books (Townsend, "Jack for all Seasons" 40-41). Before Chas sees the Bosses on the boat going to see the U-boat which Chas has helped to sink (*FF* 1979, 203; *FF* 1992, 239), he has not entirely agreed with his father's view of the class conflict. When Chas finds out the German spy looks "like an ordinary working-lad" (*FF* 1979, 206; *FF* 1992, 243), Chas is forced to choose between the two kinds of wars: the war between Germany and Britain and the war "between workers an' Bosses" (*FF* 1979, 196; *FF* 1992, 231). Chas chooses the latter because he hates Bosses more than the spy due to repeated alienation in the final chapter (*FF* 1979, 207; *FF* 1992, 244-45). The depictions of snobbish Bosses, which disturbed Townsend, are inevitable for this ending.

On the other hand, the final chapter still shows Chas's difficulty with being a socialist. Alan Garner, in *The Owl Service*, succeeds in depicting profound class anger by turning Gwyn away from the middle-class, though in doing so he provoked critics' misunderstanding and criticisms (see Chapter 8). Significantly, Westall was not happy with the ending of *The Owl Service*; he felt that Gwyn should have won the middle-class girl ("How Real" 41). In *Fathom Five*, therefore, Chas does not give up the middle-class girlfriend and his social success. This inevitably makes the depiction of class conflict and anger difficult. For example, in the following scene, Chas's anger, which actually arises from the social barrier and class prejudices that he encounters, is turned into little more than a childish personal anger against Sheila's father.

> '*They* think I shouldn't be here', said Chas loudly. 'But it's them that shouldn't be here. What have they done that's so bloody marvellous?' Meaning Smythson.
>
> . . .
>
> 'Even if he knew what I'd done', raged Chas, 'it wouldn't make any difference. *He* wouldn't say sorry. *He* wouldn't fetch Sheila home. He'd still think I was a lunatic...' (*FF* 1979, 203; *FF* 1992, 239)

To the end, Chas cannot relate his personal experience to the broader picture of the class society due to his class position. In this respect, Westall's depictions of the scholarship boy are thoroughly realistic. Westall's achievement in *Fathom Five* is not only the inclusion of left-wing politics, but also his realistic insights into limitations of socialism, the divided working-class, scholarship boys' political inability, and the mechanisms of the cultural dominance suppressing rebellion of scholarship boys. Based on Westall's experience as a left-wing scholarship boy, *Fathom Five* highlights such realities of class politics.

CHAPTER 4: ALAN GARNER'S *RED SHIFT*: THE ANGER OF THE SCHOLARSHIP BOY

> "All my writing has been fuelled by the instinctive drive to speak with a true and Northern voice integrated with the language of literary fluency". (Garner, "Fine Anger" 10)

> "Another strand through all the books has been an instinctive searching out of the concrete culture that I had to be removed from in order to be educated". (Garner, *Signal Approach* 307)

As these quotations show, throughout his career Alan Garner has attempted to craft a way of writing that allows the voices, values and traditions of the rural working-class, not just to be heard, but to be given poetic value. In other words, his writing seeks to incorporate the subordinate part of culture into the dominant. This conscious determination to change the dominant literary culture at a deep level makes Garner one of the most radical children's writers of the 1960s and the 1970s. It is ironic, therefore, that he has often been criticized by left-wing critics for the middle-class nature of his writing and his pessimistic views about the likely success of overcoming social barriers and conflicts in Britain's class society.[1] It is certainly true that Garner is neither a socialist nor a revolutionary in the Marxist sense, and he engages with and employs middle-class culture to achieve his purpose. Garner's literary ideal involves fusing middle-class and working-class cultures. This reflects his understanding that, as a scholarship boy, he stood "between two cultures represented by two languages – the concrete, direct [rural-working-class] culture... and the [middle-class] culture of abstract, conceptual thought which had no root in me, but in which I have grown and which I cherish" (Garner "Fine Anger" 10). Elsewhere, Garner gives popular comics, *The Dandy* and *The Beano,* and "the strict literary training... in Greek myth and tragedy" at Oxford University as examples of two worlds united in his works (Garner, *Signal Approach* 328).

Garner's admiration for both rural working-class traditions and intellectual culture results in writing that is often highly sophisticated. For example, *Red Shift* (1973) is richly intertextual and makes use of a highly calculated plot structure. It

[1] For instance, see Dixon, *Catching*, vol. 2, 147, 150. Chapter 8 discusses this further.

displays considerable research into historical periods and episodes as well as folktales, philosophical thinking about power and culture, and linguistic experiments. These elements are all part of his literary aim to challenge the dominant culture; Garner uses middle-class culture to revive the residual culture he sees as preserved, though under threat of disappearing, in the rural working-class.[2] While such literary ambitions are more successfully achieved in his *Stone Book* and later works, this chapter focuses on one of his scholarship boy novels, *Red Shift* (1973), which reflects more of Garner's struggle and despair than the harmony of balancing two class cultures found at its most lyrical in the *Stone Book* quartet (1976-78). However, *Red Shift*, which is a tragedy, vividly illustrates the damaging effects of the cultural assimilation imposed on scholarship boys. His view of the destructive power of the dominant culture as expressed in *Red Shift* is the central concern of this chapter.

Although Garner has attracted a considerable amount of critical attention, scholars have often overlooked Garner's roots and the importance of his scholarship boy experience in the formation of his aesthetics. Overlooking the role of class in his work has often resulted in a partial understanding of his literary aims. For instance, Jacqueline Rose (1993), finds similarities between Garner philosophy and that of Rousseau (42-65). However, what she sees as "cultural decay" (*Case of Peter Pan* 43) in Garner's works is what Garner as associates with the dominant class culture, as opposed to the rural working-class culture. This has little to do with Rousseau's ideas about childhood innocence (Rose, *Case of Peter Pan* 44). Similarly, Garner is not simply "interested in early forms of language" (Rose, *Case of Peter Pan* 49), but he is interested in the fact that his mother tongue, the rural working-class language, preserves the early forms of language which he maintains has been lost in the language of the dominant class (see Garner "Achilles in Altjira" 47). Therefore, overall Garner's aesthetics, which Rose links to the Rousseauian philosophy of childhood innocence, is better understood as formed by his class cultural background.

Of the three writers featured in this study, Alan Garner, paradoxically, is both the one who travelled furthest from his working-class roots and the one who has re-engaged with them most fully and creatively. He was born into an ancient family of yeoman farmers and craftsmen from the area of Alderley Edge in Cheshire (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 1" 18). The fact that his roots are in the rural working-class rather

[2] See Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 22: the population of his local village has changed radically due to the immigration of rich middle-class people into the area.

than the industrial working-class is crucial in considering his writings. While industrial working-class culture is relatively newly formed, the rural working-class is connected to the land and so, Garner maintains, preserves ancient aspects of British culture. This marks a fundamental difference between writers from the industrial working-class, such as Westall. What Garner values is the residual culture, particularly in the forms of myths and folk legends as seen in his retellings of "the King Asleep Under the Hill" tale that he associates with Alderley Edge (see Garner, *Taliesin's Successors*).[3] Ultimately, Garner states, the legend "came to represent the whole of that rural, working-class part of my background" (Garner, *Taliesin's Successors*). The rich traditional culture in the form of folk legend and the regional speech, stories, and customs of his native working-class community features in many of Garner's novels. For instance, legends from Alderley Edge feature in *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960), *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), and *Boneland* (2012).

However, his grammar-school education meant that Garner's "childhood was spent struggling [to break] away from those [working-class] values" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 310) that had defined his parents and generations before them in his family's rural working-class community. His efforts to assimilate into the middle-class saw Garner gain an élite education at the prestigious Manchester Grammar School, and a place to study at Oxford University. However, academic success came at what he began to see as too great a cost; for instance, it meant he lost "the first language of my own life", North-West Mercian (Garner, *Signal Approach* 282).[4] The realization that he had lost his original culture was accompanied by the recognition that it was indispensable to him. There followed "a violent sense of loss". He "was suddenly angry" ("Fine Anger" 5) at the workings of power which had concealed the true value of the rural working-class and tricked him into denying his birth culture ("Achilles in Altjira" 50; "Fine Anger" 6). As will be shown, this kind of anger over cultural loss is powerfully articulated through the storyline of *Red Shift*. This anger, therefore, is according to Garner, different from the anger of the so-called "Angry Young Men" (Garner, *Labrys 7*

[3] Raymond Williams explains the residual culture as "certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue... of some previous social and cultural institution or formation" (*Marxism and Literature* 122).
[4] See also his interview in *Swing 51*; according to Garner, in his primary school, children were severely punished when they spoke the regional dialect (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 21). When he wrote *Red Shift*, Garner had to re-learn the regional language by listening to builders: "I was tuned back into the dialect I must have spoken as a child, though I have no memory of it, but I must have spoken with a fairly pure Cheshire dialect" (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 20).

85): “I’ve never been angry in the sense of Angry Young Men. Never felt that society is rotten and wicked and that it owes me a living” (Garner, *Labrys 7* 85). The anger featured in *Red Shift* is the type which was only experienced by scholarship boys, who resented the emotional cost of separation and loss from their home cultures.

Garner’s anger at being deprived of his roots was further fuelled by his disillusionment with the high culture on offer at Oxford University: “I had been educated into a world that I embraced... But it was the world of the high table, and it was ultimately arid” (Garner, *Taliesin’s Successors*). While middle-class students absorbed high/academic culture without the need for cultural sacrifices, Garner understood that, for him, it was the “reward” for “denying a part of myself” (Garner, *Taliesin’s Successors*) and sacrificing his relationships with his family. Therefore, as will be shown, in *Red Shift*, the protagonist’s loyalty to the dominant culture results in loneliness and despair. By contrast, the residual aspects of rural working-class culture are generally equated with love, acceptance and salvation. This celebratory view of rural working-class tradition which has continued throughout his career is particularly evident in *Red Shift*.

The Time Setting: Latin as a Symbol of the Dominant Culture

Red Shift weaves together three stories set in the same part of Cheshire but in three different times: the end of the Roman British period, the English Civil War, and modern Britain (presumably the 1960s). Two protagonists from the historic story lines, Macey and Thomas, are essentially mirror images of Tom, the scholarship boy protagonist from the modern period. Tom’s uprooted state is reflected in Macey, a Celtic boy who was abducted and raised as a Roman soldier. Tom also shares characteristics with seventeenth-century Thomas Rowley (this storyline features two Thomases: Thomas Rowley and Thomas Venables); such as his lack of confidence in his relationship with his girlfriend, Jan, and his problems with having sex. However, as will be discussed, the parallel stories ultimately function to highlight problems Garner associates with the disabling effects of the modern dominant culture of that time.

As Garner states, “quite a lot of the importance of *Red Shift* lay in expressing three different time levels” (Garner, “Alan Garner Part 2” 22). Although scholars have tended to overlook the significance of time in the novel (see, for instance, Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 100; Nikolajeva, “Insignificance of Time” 129; Benton 5), the time setting

is indispensable to understanding Garner's critical stance in relation to the dominant culture and the historical change of cultural hierarchy in Britain. In the education system in the mid-twentieth century, Latin and Greek were at the top of the hierarchy of subjects while English literature was lowly (Chambers, personal interview; Garner, *Signal Approach* 309; Garner, "Fine Anger" 4). Because "English, as a main subject, was for the few who could not master the literature of a foreign tongue", Garner was trained in "Latin and Greek" (Garner, "Fine Anger" 4). Therefore, in *Red Shift*, Latin culture represents the dominant culture in all three story lines. The three time settings in *Red Shift* are also determined by Garner's view that, in the history of Britain, there were "three injections of" Latin culture ("Fine Anger" 5): "Imperial Rome", "the mediaeval Church" and "Neo-Classicism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" ("Fine Anger" 5). Garner deliberately chooses these three periods for the three stories of *Red Shift* to highlight the cultural condition in which the scholarship boy is placed.

Of the three time periods, Garner says, the third, the "Age of Reason... had done the damage" ("Fine Anger" 5). Garner sees the time shortly before the Civil War as an ideal time when "English achieved an elegance of Germanic and Romance integration" (Garner, "Fine Anger" 8). This view has been supported by studies: for instance, according to Malcolm Smuts (1999), in the Stuart period, British high culture "assimilated folk rituals and English peasant customs within descriptions that were also thoroughly infused with themes deriving from Latin models" (Smuts 98). Garner blames changes to British high culture that occurred soon after the Civil War and which saw the privileging of Latin-based culture over traditional British cultures for the aridness of modern high culture in Britain (Garner, "Achilles in Altjira" 49; "Fine Anger" 5-6). This view, which Garner put forward in the 1970s, is based on the idea of the Civil War as a bourgeois revolution (Smuts 99-100). Although, since the 1980s, scholars have tended to deny this, many Marxist critics in the 1960s and 1970s regarded the Civil War as the English revolution (Smuts 99-106). In other words, when Garner wrote *Red Shift*, he believed that soon after the time period of Thomas' story, aspects of folk culture such as regional dialects and folk beliefs began to be neglected or stigmatised as peasant culture due to the cultural dominance of the bourgeoisie. As part of this process, rural working-class people also ceased to value their own culture (Garner, "Achilles in Altjira"

49; “Fine Anger” 5-6).[5] This is why Tom is uprooted from the culture which Thomas still has, and this difference, as will be shown, determines their fates.

Loneliness of the Scholarship Boy: A Soldier for the Dominant Class

Garner carefully charts Tom’s disintegration as an inevitable consequence of his loyalty to the dominant culture. Tom is a character who reflects Garner’s own adolescent emotional suffering as a scholarship boy who believed in the dominant culture and became “a cuckoo in the nest” (Garner, *Taliesin’s Successors*). Tom, who is preparing for an open scholarship for Oxbridge, is highly intelligent and academically successful. However, as was true of many scholarship boys, his education made him a snob (*RS* 13). Unlike Macey, whose parents and villagers have presumably been killed by Romans, Tom has not lost his parents, but he is emotionally removed from his local community and family. Tom has, as he himself points out, lost the genuine respect for his father which he once had (*RS* 13), while his father, a sergeant major, loves his son but admits, “I don’t understand him half the time” (*RS* 42). Tom’s relationship with his father is not as severe as Garner’s own. Garner’s education made him unable to have a genuine conversation with his father for decades because, in his family’s eyes, he had become “alien” to his family (Garner, *Signal Approach* 309-310; Garner, *Taliesin’s Successors*). Tom suffers from severe loneliness because even though his parents try to understand him, they “can’t widen their vision to include” his (*RS* 96).

The class habitus of Tom’s parents is frequently shown in subtle ways: for instance, when Tom’s parents save up to give him a cassette player, they do not know it needs cassettes to work (*RS* 96-97). As Jan’s surprise indicates, such a mistake would not have happened in a middle-class home. Tom’s mother interferes when she thinks Tom is studying too hard (*RS* 114, 121; Jackson and Marsden 116-19). She is a typical mother of a scholarship boy. This kind of mother’s anxiety is also depicted in *A Kind of Loving* (1960); the protagonist’s mother agonises over his younger brother, a grammar school boy who she thinks studies hard. She plans to “have a talk over to the doctor’s with him” (Barstow 25) because she has been shocked to discover her son sitting asleep in his bed with his books open (Barstow 24-25). As has been shown in Chapters 2 and 3,

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[5] On the other hand, however, for some left-wing middle-class people, the rural working-class culture, such as folk song had been “a refuge from the pressures of modernity” and “refashioned essence of Englishness” (B. Reay 9) since the late 19th century (Lang 75). For the movement of Folk Revival in the early and mid twentieth century, see Lang 71-104.

in such a typical working-class family, the scholarship boy and his parents often failed to communicate because of the cultural divisions arising from his education. Therefore, Tom is unable to communicate with his parents, even when he desperately needs their emotional support (*RS* 119-22). In contrast with Tom, Jan, a middle-class girl who is following in her parents' professional footsteps, and her parents can understand each other, even though they have lived separately for long periods (*RS* 185).

Tom's loneliness is frequently expressed by his favourite phrase: "Tom's a cold". Although sometimes scholars dismiss the phrase as a "seemingly meaningless Shakespeare annotation" (Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age* 178), the intertextuality between *Red Shift* and *King Lear* is highly calculated. Tom, who cannot sufficiently explain his feelings, expresses his loneliness through identifying himself with Edgar in the disguise of Tom O'Bedlam in *King Lear*. The phrase "Tom's a-cold" is repeatedly used in Act 3, Scene 4, when Edgar's father unknowingly mourns the betrayal of Edgar in front of his disguised son. It suggests not only physical coldness, but also Edgar's loneliness and sadness arising from his father's misunderstanding of him (*King Lear* 3.4.143; 3.4.169). Correspondingly, "Tom's a-cold" is used when Tom feels the gap of understanding between him the people he loves, as when he talks about his mother's concealment of Jan's letter (*RS* 109). Tom repeatedly says, "I'm cold" (*RS* 186) on his last date with Jan when they are physically close but he is emotionally distant from her.[6] Tom is cold not because he is *physically* alone, but because his loneliness, as a scholarship boy, is not understood by his parents or his girlfriend. However, Garner clearly shows that, unlike Edgar, Tom is not entirely innocent and his loneliness is inevitable because he is loyal to the dominant culture and betrays his working-class parents. Tom's loneliness is much more severe than that experienced by other scholarship boy characters in children's books (see Chapters 2 and 3) because he does not try to keep his bond with his working-class home. Tom has, for some time, been detaching himself from his home due to his loyalty to the dominant culture and the middle-class world. This is how Garner views his own adolescent experience: "I couldn't shrivel back into the family. My momentum was such that I shriveled away from them" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 308).

In *Red Shift*, Tom's loyalty to the dominant culture is often highlighted in tension between his mother and his girlfriend, Jan. As has been shown in Chapter 3, in

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[6] In addition to *King Lear*, Neil Philip points out an echo of John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* in the last scene of *Red Shift* (Philip, *Fine Anger* 105).

Westall's *Fathom Five*, when Chas has to choose between his girlfriend and his father, Chas chooses his father, who represents the working-class for him. In contrast, Tom is always loyal to his girlfriend, who represents the dominant culture. The early part of Tom's story, in which Jan visits Tom's home, highlights the class-cultural difference and tension between Jan and Tom's mother. For instance, when Tom's parents talk about professional wrestling, Tom and Jan do not join the conversation (*RS* 15); Tom's mother eats some bacon which she cooks for herself instead of the lobster that has been prepared for the guest, Jan (*RS* 15). The argument between Jan and Tom's mother (*RS* 22-23) particularly highlights the conflict between two classes, since Tom's mother's suspicion that Tom and Jan have had sex ultimately arises from the class difference. Tom does most of his studying at Jan's house because he does not have the space to work in his caravan home (*RS* 13, 22); lack of space for studying was a typical problem for scholarship boys and girls (Hoggart, *Uses* 241; Jackson and Marsden 116-19). More troubling for his mother than the amount of time he spends at Jan's is the fact that Tom and Jan are allowed to be alone in Jan's house. This has led to accusations and rumours in the working-class neighbourhood (*RS* 21), where (as Hoggart confirms) it would have been seen as inappropriate according to working-class codes of respectability (*Uses* 72). As discussed in relation to *Fathom Five*, studies such as *The Uses of Literacy* identified the extent to which what the neighbours thought was the most important moral standard for the members of working-class communities in mid-twentieth-century Britain (see Chapter 3). Tom and Jan have breached the neighbourhood rule by "walking wrapped round each other: kissing and that" (*RS* 22) on streets around their home. It is a behaviour which could not be accepted by a respectable working-class woman (Hoggart, *Uses* 72). However, for her part, Jan is heedless of local attitudes, and is disgusted by Tom's mother's accusation because she, as a middle-class girl, is incapable of understanding Tom's mother's sense of morals. The text, furthermore, makes it clear that Jan pays little attention to Tom's mother and does not respect her. There is no genuine conversation between Jan and Tom's mother, even before they have a major argument.

By using this class tension between Jan and Tom's mother, Garner highlights where Tom's loyalty lies; in contrast to Chas in *Fathom Five*, Tom sacrifices his family for his middle-class girlfriend and her world. For instance, during the lobster dinner, he makes fun of his mother with Jan: [Tom's mother said] "The nights are drawing in". / [Tom said] "As Thomas à Becket said to the actress". / Jan spluttered. / "You what?"

said his mother" (*RS* 15). Tom's quip refers to jokes based on the phrase, "as the actress said to the bishop", which gives his mother's comment on the weather a sexual overtone. However, by using "Thomas á Becket" instead of "bishop", Tom turns it into a more sophisticated and satirical comment: "Thomas á Becket" not only refers to Tom's name, but also indicates a scene shortly before Becket meets knights in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) (Eliot 74).[7] The women's chorus in the scene anticipates the darkness that will follow on Becket's murder. This phrase may also be understood as signalling Tom's suicidal feelings in the final pages of the novel. At this point in *Red Shift*, for those who know Beckett's play, this also suggests that Tom, regarding his mother as the chorus of working-class women in Eliot's play and himself as Thomas á Becket, implies that she belongs to a different class. He does this by using his cultural capital, his knowledge of the play, with which his mother (and, indeed, most working-class people) would not be familiar. Although the majority of the meanings hidden in the joke do not express what Tom is consciously thinking, the conversation illustrates how Tom hurts his mother by using his knowledge and intellectual ability. Garner repeatedly shows Tom behaving in similar ways to his mother. When Tom finds out that his mother has been confiscating Jan's letters, he again shows his loyalty to the middle-class girl by introducing Lewis Carroll's cipher into their letters (*RS* 96-98). This makes their letters impossible for his mother to read, forcing her to acknowledge the unbridgeable cultural gap between her and her son.

Tom's attitude reflects Garner's own adolescence in which he denigrates the people in his working-class community (Garner, "Achilles in Altjira" 51): "at the age of fifteen, I had, without justification or desire, verbally savaged another human being" (Garner, "Inner Time" 121). Similarly, Tom's middle-class education has equipped him to hurt the people around him (Benton 8); as Jan tells him, "You savage the people near you" (*RS* 88). In this respect, Tom is both a victim of the class society and, metaphorically, a soldier who kills his own people for the dominant class. Unlike the parallel figures, Macey and Thomas Venables, who are both soldiers for the dominant group, Tom does not actually kill others. Instead, reflecting Garner's view that "We can commit crimes of violence psychically worse than the drawing of swords" (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 21), he emotionally hurts people around him, while his loneliness and despair make him a danger to himself.

[7] Although there are several plays which feature Thomas Becket, such as Alfred Tennyson's *Becket* (1884) and Jean Anouilh's *Becket* (1958; film 1964), Eliot's play has more relevance to the dialogue between Tom and his mother than others.

The dualism of Tom – a victim and a soldier – is echoed in the other story lines. Macey (in his ordinary state) and Thomas Rowley are sensitive, kind and powerless victims. Macey, however, displays Tom's savageness and aggressiveness when he embarks on a berserk killing-spree. To do this, Macey has to be in an altered state: "I'm outside when Macey's killing" (*RS* 71). "Macey" (the berserker) is Tom, as the fact that Macey sees "bluesilvers", which is "The blue and silver train" (*RS* 189), in his berserk state confirms. Macey is not even his true name; he calls both Tom and Thomas, whom he sees in his visions, Macey (*RS* 72). More directly reflecting Tom's dualism, Thomas' story features two Thomases: Thomas Rowley and Thomas Venables. Although generally Thomas Rowley is regarded as the main protagonist of this story line, Thomas Venables is also one of the main protagonists linked with others: for instance, Macey sees a vision of being Thomas Venables during his killing (*RS* 72). Just as Tom is a loyal soldier for the dominant culture, so Thomas Venables is a merciless soldier who kills his former neighbours without hesitation when he is ordered to do so by his superior. The two Thomases represent the two sides to Tom. Thus, in a scene where Thomas Venables stabs Thomas Rowley (*RS* 175-76), this can be seen as corresponding to Tom's suicide attempt indicated in the final pages, and the coded letter after the story (*RS* 187-88, 190-91).

The Fault of the Dominant Culture

The dominant culture in which Tom believes is depicted as a problematic one, which not only makes Tom hurt the people around him but ultimately leads him to suicide, or suicidal feelings at least. In this respect, the two story lines set in the past are used to highlight the problems in Tom's present. While Thomas Rowley represents what Tom lacks, Macey is the character who metaphorically represents the uprooted-ness of the scholarship boy. In this respect, the Roman culture in Macey's story reflects the dominant culture in the twentieth century. Garner invites readers to draw parallels with how scholarship boys were selected by the education system for their academic ability which would make them useful to the State, just as Macey, who was taken captive at the age of seven and used as a fighting machine by the Romans because of his ability to go berserk (*RS* 71), serves Rome. Macey has so thoroughly internalized the values of the

Roman Empire that he kills even his own people without hesitation or regret.[8] The Macey storyline acts out the damage Tom inflicts verbally. Significantly, in terms of Garner's views on the way class is exercised, Macey has not achieved a high position in the Roman hegemony. He does not question the fact that he is overlooked because he accepts the Romans' view that his ability to see visions is a sign of madness; Macey thinks of himself as "Lame-brain. Goofball, screwed up bluesilver" (165). This reflects the fact that by internalizing middle-class culture, typically a scholarship boy was forced to believe that "there is something shameful and wrong about you... that you are undeserving, unentitled" (Kuhn 117; see also Chapter 1). As will be shown, in spite of his extraordinarily high academic ability, Tom suffers from feelings of inferiority to well-off people due to his internalized middle-class views.

Through similarities between the Celtic boy and the scholarship boy, Garner highlights the cultural relations and power mechanism between the dominant and the dominated which, whether based on race or class, share much the same ground. But, the more important function of the two stories set in the past are to highlight brutality and faults of the dominant culture in which the scholarship boy, Tom, blindly believes. For instance, what is at the heart of the Roman massacre in Macey's story is not meant to be historically accurate. Its function is to call attention to the brutality of the dominant culture in Tom's era – in other words, the modern Western civilization. According to Neil Philip, one model of the Roman massacre in *Red Shift* is the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War (Philip, *Fine Anger* 94).[9] That is, the Roman soldiers' speech is modelled after American soldiers' speech during the Vietnam War (see Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 20). As Philip points out, the massacres in *Red Shift* also recall the massacre of Native Americans described in Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970; Philip, *Fine Anger* 94).

The massacres in Macey's and Thomas' stories furthermore highlight how "civilized" men of the dominant class attribute brutality to natives while concealing or failing to recognize their own cruelty. The Roman troop leader Logan rationally plans and orders the massacre of innocent villagers, including women and children, for their own survival. Since, from the Roman soldiers' point of view, the massacre and the rape of a girl are actions they understand to be against Roman morals (*RS* 38, 40), to do these

[8] This is in part because of his age. Although Macey's exact age is not shown, he is probably around twelve years old (*RS* 29, 71), judging from the way he is treated by others: for instance, see the way that the Celtic girl takes care of him, or that people of Cats tribe ignored his threat as a child play (*RS* 77). The Celtic girl is about 15-years-old (*RS* 41).

[9] Philip found that Garner's research file contains numerous cuttings of My Lai massacre.

deeds they disguise themselves as members of a militant Celtic tribe, "the Mothers"; they attribute their own brutal acts – the acts of "a goddam animal" (*RS* 40) – to the culture of "the Mothers".[10] However, Garner clearly shows that their view is hypocritical. For instance, it is suggested that massacres of Celtic people have occurred repeatedly under Roman rule; as Logan states, "You've seen this before" (*RS* 37). The story thus shows that the Roman Empire, which Macey has believed in as superior to his own, is at least as brutal and blood-soaked as the local militant tribe. While the Barthomley massacre during the Civil War is modelled on an actual incident,[11] as with the episode in the Roman era, the Barthomley massacre is carried out by order of a Royalist major who refers to himself as "a civilized man" (*RS* 175) and uses logical arguments to justify his order to kill innocent villagers (*RS* 175):

> Consider: if I torture these fellows, they will, eventually, say what I wish to hear: will it be true? If they volunteer without torture, they are cowards, and I would not trust them. If they don't speak, how can I know their thoughts?... They are to be put down (*RS* 175).

In addition, the "civilized" officer also justifies his permission for the systematic rape of women in Barthomley: "They [the soldiers] are louts, sir. But they earn their keep, and one has to give them their heads now and again, or I fear they would prove intractable" (*RS* 171). *Red Shift* repeatedly exposes the "civilized" men or the ruling groups' attempt to justify their brutal acts. "Civilization", clearly, has lapses. Almost all the educated men in *Red Shift,* including John Fowler, the son of the Rector, for whom villagers are killed, are flawed because their "heart and head" "have never met" (*RS* 146-47). They can think logically, but cannot sympathize with people neither understand emotions of people. By the depiction of these massacres, Garner suggests that this is ultimately the true character of the dominant culture in which Tom has believed. This view arises, in part, from Garner's finding in his grammar school, where pupils had "great intellectual ability and no emotional maturity" (Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 21).

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[10] Except for the troop leader Logan, who is Roman, probably all the soldiers have been recruited from Celtic tribes. Those soldiers are therefore removed from their original cultures by being turned into Roman soldiers, and their experiences in some ways correspond to those of scholarship boys. This is particularly so in the cases of Buzzard, who is killed by Logan for refusing to be "tribal" (*RS* 40), and Face, who has so thoroughly adjusted to Roman culture that he is now uncomfortable when placed in a "tribal" situation (*RS* 105).

[11] For the historical fact of the Barthomley massacre and the novel, see Philip, *Fine Anger* 95-96.

Garner constructs parallels between the three story lines to highlight the problems of scholarship boys. For instance, in the end Macey returns to his roots, which Tom is unable to do; Thomas Rowley has the strength to accept his wife's pregnancy after she has been raped, while Tom cannot accept that Jan once had a relationship with an older man. Macey's and Thomas's stories end by affirming the true strength of love and with hope for the future. In contrast, in the last scene of Tom's story, Tom is in despair and loneliness. On the one hand, Garner carefully prepares Tom's failure to return to his home culture. While Garner was able to reconnect with the richness of his original culture because his family was deeply rooted in the land ("Achilles in Altjira" 50; "Fine Anger" 6),[12] Tom does not have this same connection. He comes from a line of soldiers, and his parents do not have strong ties with any local community or the land – as is symbolized by the fact that their home is a caravan. On the other hand, this rootless scholarship boy is provided with a chance to have the connection with the land and the rooted culture by the supernatural power which enables him to see the visions of the past. The reason for Tom's failure, therefore, is best understood by looking at his connection to the stone axe, which Jan names "Bunty". In Macey's story, the axe is a tool that helps him go berserk; in Thomas' story it is treated as a "thunderstone", a charm in the folk religion. The stone axe is a shamanistic tool which meditates three characters' relationship by a power which cannot be explained by the modern dominant culture. In this respect, Tom's and Jan's "Bunty" represents the residual culture rooted in the region. Although landscapes and buildings also link the three stories, the axe is the only item personally owned by all three characters. In the twentieth century, Tom has the choice either to keep it as befits a supernatural tool, or to remove it from the land.

Although some scholars suggest that "the axe is essentially an evil object" (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 89), it brings its former possessors, Macey and Thomas Rowley, extraordinary luck. Thomas survives the massacre while Macey has been kept alive by the Romans only because of the stone axe which enables him to go berserk. Therefore, the stone axe is not necessarily "dangerous and corrupting to its owner" (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 89), but rather it saves its owners' lives. In the logic of the text, the Bunty could have helped Tom and Jan to overcome their difficult situation, as Jan wants it when their relationship is in danger (*RS* 160). For Jan, who has gone to

[12] Garner states, "The physical immobility of my family was the lifeline. My family is so rooted that it ignores social classification by others. On one square-mile of Cheshire hillside, the Garners *are*. And this sense of fusion with a land rescued me" ("Achilles in Altjira" 50; "Fine Anger" 6).

London, the Bunty is an indispensable item to connect her to Tom and their place. The Bunty, named after Jan's budgerigar which died from loneliness, is a symbol of her need for love. In contrast to Tom, who feels loneliness in closeness, Jan's need for love is expressed as a need for the physical closeness which she does not have in her relationship with her busy professional parents: "You don't know what loneliness is. My parents. They understand. They understand all the time, but time's what they never have" (*RS* 138). Now physically distant from Tom, she needs the Bunty to connect them. However, finding that the Bunty is an academically valuable votive axe from Breaker Period, Tom sells it to the British Museum. Although this is rationally the academically right decision – at least the kind of behaviour approved of in school – it brings catastrophic result for Tom and Jan's relationship: As Jan puts it, "You sold what I'd lacked" (*RS* 187).

Tom's treatment of the stone axe represents the faults of the dominant culture at many levels. On the one hand, selling the Bunty is a consequence of his internalised capitalism and sense of inferiority. Tom, who is frustrated with his financial state, feels inferior to a rich man who has seduced Jan. Tom sells their Bunty for money to spend on taking Jan out, to compete with the rich man. On the other hand, his inability to understand what the Bunty means to him and Jan is the fault of the dominant culture, in which the axe is "only a chunk of diorite" with archaeological value, but without living value in people's lives (*RS* 187). Tom has simply done what he has learned to do in his school. In contrast, unlettered Macey and Thomas Rowley and his wife Margery treat the axe according to their cultures: Macey buries the axe in a sacred place for the Celtic tribe (*RS* 184), while Thomas and Margery place it in their new house's chimney for luck. Thanks to these acts, which are, in the modern point of view, illogical, the axe reaches Tom and Jan, a new generation of people who belong to the place. The history of people and the stone axe is, however, finished by the scholarship boy: it is "Shut away: no touching: a label. A number written on it: Indian ink: a catalogue" in the British Museum (*RS* 162). The consequence is that the axe now has only archaeological value. The power and meaning seen in the stories of Macey and Thomas has been lost (Butler, "Alan Garner's *Red Shift*" 50).

The Bunty storyline highlights the scholarship boy's inability to understand the residual culture which has been preserved in the rural working-class and his difficulty in reconnecting with that culture (see Garner, "Alan Garner Part 2" 21). However, at the same time, Macey and Thomas Rowley have shared similar problems with Tom. As has

been shown, Macey has believed in the Roman culture, and Thomas, due to his inferiority complex, attempts to break the thunderstone, the stone axe (*RS* 51-52). In this respect, female characters have more important roles than the protagonists. As Garner explains, a motif of *Red Shift* is the ballad, *Tamlain*. (Garner, "Inner Time" 111); the recurrent theme in the three intersecting stories is the rescue of the male characters by their female partners (see Butler, "Alan Garner's *Red Shift*"). The Celtic girl kills the Romans who have captured Macey, and leads Macey to the Celtic world. Thomas's wife Margery protects Thomas from John (*RS* 93, 114, 122-23) and his mistreatment of the thunderstone (*RS* 51-52), and finally saves him from the massacre. Similarly, Jan can understand the value of the Bunty and Tom better than the highly intelligent scholarship boy. Jan can see both the axe and the boy as filling gaps in middle-class culture. Nonetheless, she is an inadequate heroine to save the boy due to her background and her culture. As Peter J. Foss points out, the only chance to save male partners "is through the intercession of the maiden-figure who recognises the possessed god in her man" (Foss 11).

However, while the Celtic girl sees Macey's vision as "the god" in him, a shamanistic gift Jan, or modern science, sees their visions as madness or illness.[13] In other words, the Celtic girl and Margery belong to cultures in which Macey's ability to go berserk and Thomas' fits can be seen "in mythical term... [as] a shamanistic access to therapeutic and transformative powers" (Davis 237). Therefore, both succeed in supporting and leading their male partners. Jan, however, can lead Tom nowhere because, as a nurse – and thus representing modern scientific culture – Jan cannot understand Tom's condition in mythical terms. What Jan can do (just as Tom has done to the stone axe) is to refer Tom to her parents, who are psychiatrists, turning Tom into "a patient. A number in a file" (*RS* 185). This reflects Garner's view that "the nature of myth is to help him [a man] to understand the boundaries, to cross them and to comprehend the new" ("Inner Time" 108). People who embrace cultures in which myths have important space have emotional strength to cross boundaries including boundaries of time. Thomas and Margery have the culture; Macey lacks it but the Celtic girl restores him to the culture. Therefore, they can emotionally survive periods when societies are radically changing. In the modern Britain, in a rural working-class culture, such as Garner's original, a myth had the role to support people emotionally (Garner,

[13] See also McCallum 157; because readers more often share the modern scientific view, as for "Tom's emotional outbursts", "many commentators posit mental illness".

Taliesin's Successors). However, it was already lost in the dominant culture. Therefore, the dominant culture which Tom and Jan embrace is shown as incapable of supporting people who cross boundaries, such as scholarship boys who cross the class boundary.

Voicelessness of the Scholarship Boy

Although Garner's ideal is reconciliation between the dominant culture and his inherited working-class culture, *Red Shift* shows his struggle for reconciliation rather than a successful fusion of the two cultures. We can see this particularly through representation of language in the novel. Garner considers that North-West Mercian, and many of the regional dialects in Britain, are more suitable for expressing feelings than the language of the dominant academic culture, which distances feelings, because the subordinate languages include more Germanic/Anglo-Saxon words. In Garner's view, "we use the Germanic when we want to be direct, close, honest: such words as 'love'... The Romance words are used when we want to keep feeling at a distance, so that we may articulate with precision" ("Achilles in Altjira" 45; "Fine Anger" 2). In *Red Shift*, for instance, Macey points out that he cannot find words for his feelings because Roman does not have words for feelings (*RS* 164). Such feelings about languages are formed by Garner's class habitus. Garner was "at home in the fourteenth century, and finding the English of later centuries comparatively alien" (Garner "Achilles in Altjira" 47) due to the resemblance between his original language and the fourteenth century English of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. But British people whose dialects do not resemble the language of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* would not feel at home when reading the work. *Red Shift* also demonstrates that while Tom, who speaks Standard English as his second language, suffers from difficulty in expressing his emotions, Jan, whose mother tongue is Standard English, does not.

Garner's feelings about language were shared by other scholarship boy writers. For example, the nature of Standard English and academic thinking is also depicted in Raymond Williams' *Border Country* (1960). The scholarship boy protagonist, a lecturer whose father is a railwayman, hears a separate language in his mind in his parents' home in a Welsh valley, where people speak English but not the Standard English he speaks in academic circles: "He was trained to detachment: language itself, consistently abstracting and generalizing, supported him in this. And the detachment was real in another way. He felt, in this house, both a child and a stranger" (*Border Country* 83).

Garner's literary ambition of "bridging between English and my first language" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 282) is more successfully achieved in his *Stone Book* quartet (1976-78), in which North-West Mercian has authentic voice not only in dialogue but also in the narrative.[14] *Red Shift*, on the other hand, illustrates the scholarship boy's loss of voice, arising from the conflict between two languages and cultures.

In *Red Shift*, the difference between the regional dialect and Standard English generates misunderstandings and conflicts. The argument between Jan and Tom's mother is intensified by their different ways of talking. Tom's mother speaks in a direct way, relying on emotional connections: "'I knew what you were the moment I set eyes on you', said his mother. 'I felt a shiver right down my spine. And our boy. See what you've done to him. Standing there, crying his heart out'" (*RS* 23). In contrast, Jan employs a middle-class logical way of arguing, even when she is upset: "You're afraid... Afraid we're doing what you did when you had the chance. And what if we have? Who are you to preach?" (*RS* 22). These two ways of speech show what Garner sees as representative characteristics of two class cultures – the emotional, direct and concrete working-class culture and the logical, abstract middle-class culture (Garner, "Fine Anger" 10; Garner, *Signal Approach* 282, 307). As was discussed in relation to *Fathom Five*, this view is shared by Westall. Misunderstandings arising from the difference between the Standard English and the regional language, or the cultural difference represented by the languages, are particularly highlighted in the story of Thomas during the Civil War. Thomas and John's argument is depicted three times in two languages from three perspectives (*RS* 88-93, 111-14, 122-23). John, the son of the Rector and a "Bachelor of Arts, aged nineteen years" (*RS* 174), is like Tom: an educated and emotionally incapacitated young man, whose "Heart and head... have never met" (*RS* 146). Thomas and his wife Margery are ordinary, illiterate villagers who speak the regional language. John's voice is rendered as Standard English and is sharply different from Thomas' and Margery's use of regional language. Use of language is connected to point-of-view and humanity: from John's perspective, he is blameless, while in other versions, John is shown insulting and bullying Thomas. Although John Fowler, judging from other scenes, is far from blameless, the blow between Thomas and John ultimately arises from the gap between languages or "translation loss" when they interpret the

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[14] See Garner's interview conducted by Chambers in *Signal Approach to Children's Books*. Garner analyses his use of North-West Mercian in the works.

meanings in different dialects. As Thomas states, perhaps John “didn’t mean” what Thomas has thought (*RS* 149).

Red Shift also highlights Garner’s struggle to regain his voice. In the late 1970s, after publishing *The Stone Book* quartet, he stated: “It was twenty years before I could write like this” referring to the fact that he had learned “to suppress the first language” (Garner, *Signal Approach* 282) which had “been rendered non-literate and non-functional” in the dominant culture (Garner, “Fine Anger” 9). When he wrote *Red Shift*, he was still struggling to restore his “first language”, and Garner’s pessimistic view of the time, in terms of regaining a working-class voice, features Tom’s story. Tom’s failure to regain his voice is an inevitable consequence of the current cultural environment with its emphasis on class hierarchies and financial success. Macey can regain his voice because the Roman Empire has already lost its control in this region. At the end of the story, on the earth where all Romans disappear and Celtic tribes regain power, Macey finds his words which he has lost due to the imposed Roman culture (*RS* 188): “I’ve found words... For what I wanted to tell you”, which is love (*RS* 188). In contrast, the last scene of Tom’s story emphasizes Tom’s voicelessness. Tom usually speaks in Standard English fluently; his vocabulary of Latin origin words is much broader than that of most ordinary working-class people, as his father admits (“He’s a walking dictionary”) (*RS* 42).

Despite this, or perhaps *because* of this, he does not have his own words to express his feelings. When he is emotional, he becomes almost voiceless, because his acquired language suppresses his feelings. When he is upset, his speech becomes fragmented and descriptive as it reflects the structures of his original language, but he has less fluency than his parents. Sometimes, as in the argument between Tom and his parents in the first scene in their caravan (*RS* 22-23), he loses his powers of speech altogether. In contrast, Jan’s speech become more logical and fluent when she is upset (see *RS* 22-23, 185-86). The contrast is vivid in their argument on their last date because at this point Tom is already disillusioned with the dominant culture and turns his back on the middle-class way of talking:

> [Jan said] “Like what? Now you listen! Who was upset because his parents couldn’t talk about it [having sex] when it wasn’t true? Now it is, and my parents can, without blaming... Now you’re all one thing, and I don’t know what to do... No talk, no fun, just grab. Why?”

> "Catch up," he said. "Rub out. My mistakes. My clumsiness. Next time it'll be all right, every time, and it isn't. Next time will make up for him – and me. Never..." (*RS* 185-86)

Jan, as always, is logical and argumentative, while Tom's speech, although it is actually meaningful, is apparently illogical, because it is too descriptive and too fragmented. There can be multiple interpretations of each of Tom's words, but basically he means as follows: Tom feels he needs to "catch up" sexually with the man with whom Jan has had a sexual relationship to "rub out" Jan's past. But he and Jan have failed to have proper sex; every time when they have failed, Jan has made excuses, "my mistakes", "my clumsiness", and said "next time it'll be all right", but it has not been all right and never will be; that is why they cannot have fun like before. Tom's speech here also echoes the historical recurrence of events in the connecting stories and Tom's failures other than sex. This fragmented expression is constructed according to the rules of his original culture rather than the logical middle-class way of speech. This argument, in this respect, represents Tom's incomplete return to his roots.

Some scholars suggest that Tom is falling into madness in the final pages of the novel (Nikolajeva "Insignificance of Time" 131). However, what is depicted is the performance of madness as anti-rationality/anti modern dominant culture. On his last date with Jan, Tom acts as Tom O'Bedlam (*RS* 187-88) from *King Lear*.[15] On the one hand, doing so shows Tom's inability to express his feelings. As Jan complains, "You can't put two words of your own together! Always someone else's feeling!" (*RS* 187). However, on the other hand, Tom expresses his views and regret effectively through the quotations. Just as in *King Lear*, mad men or those who disguise themselves as mad or fools often tell profound truths, at the end of *Red Shift*, Tom, in the guise of Tom O'Bedlam, attempts to acknowledge the fault of the rational dominant culture which he has embraced. In this respect, *King Lear* is a highly calculated choice. Michel Foucault, in *Madness and Civilization* (1961; first published in English in 1967), proposes that "the invention of madness as a disease is in fact nothing less than a peculiar disease of our civilization" (Cooper, "Introduction" viii). He refers to *King Lear* as a text of pre-modern madness: "the bitter and sweet madness of *King Lear*" is madness of "*desperate*

[15] After the performance of *King Lear*, there is a reference to Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* again: "The knights are drawing in" (*RS* 188). In the last scene of *Red Shift* (*RS* 188), the repetition of "I have smelt them, the death-bringers" (Eliot 72, 73) and "I have smelt Death" (Eliot 72) in the play also echoes with Tom's quote from *King Lear*, which is followed by "I smell the blood of a British man" (*King Lear* 3.4.179-180). Tom implies his death and his acceptance of it by these quotations.

passion" (Foucault 27), which is not yet "bound to Reason" (Foucault 60). The story of *King Lear* endorses a similar scepticism towards rationality and cleverness. In *King Lear*, evil characters, such as Goneril, Regan, and Edmund are cleverer and more rational than innocent and honest characters such as Cordelia and Edgar. *King Lear* places emphasis on the importance of feeling over rational thought (*King Lear* note 392): Edgar's line in the last scene "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (*King Lear* 5.3.323), is what Tom needs to do. Betrayal and blindness are also shared themes. Tom shares the emotional blindness of King Lear and Gloucester, who cannot see their children's true hearts until they are betrayed. In the same way, Tom has not been able to see the true value of the axe and people around him. In the end, Tom is betrayed by the culture he has believed in. The literate, yet voiceless, scholarship boy uses *King Lear* as a desperate attempt to express his feelings and views.

King Lear, a work written before "the Age of Reason" (when, according to Garner, English literature was disconnected from the rich tradition of British literature), represents Garner's attempt to fuse folk literary cultures. The play is based on the tale of King Leir, a mythological Celtic king in pre-Roman era, making it a good text to illustrate the richness of the tradition before folktales were excluded from mainstream literature. A short quotation from one of Tom's speeches demonstrates this: "No words, no words: hush. Child Rowland to the dark tower came. His word was still" (*RS* 188). This quotation, Edgar's line, is taken from a ballad of Roland.[16] The following sentence in the original lines, "'Fir, fo, and fum, / I smell the blood of a British man'". (*King Lear* 3.4.179-80), also derives from another ballad, *Jack the Giant Killer* (*King Lear* note 284-85). Due to its rootedness in British folk tradition, *King Lear* can effectively express Tom's feelings in ways the modern dominant culture cannot. However, Tom never regains his own voice in the novel. The minimalist narrative style of the novel also represents Garner's difficulty in gaining a voice as a scholarship boy writer. Usually, the narrative voice has the most authority in a novel. Therefore, Garner has to avoid Standard English, because to write in Standard English would be to imbue the dominant culture with legitimacy and authenticity. Conversely, writing entirely in a regional dialect would make the book almost incomprehensible. In the *Stone Book* quartet, he infuses North-West Mercian in the Standard English-based narrative. However, in *Red Shift*, the minimalist narrative style, or the voiceless narrative is

[16] Garner's *Elidar* is based on "Child Roland and Burd Ellen" (Garner, "Inner Time" 110).

inevitable, because it features the scholarship boy who has lost his original tongue by assimilating the dominant culture.

Overall, *Red Shift* illustrates the scholarship boy's loyalty to the dominant class, the destructive effects of the cultural assimilation, and his disillusionment with the dominant culture as well as his desire to return to his roots and the difficulty of doing so. The final pages of the story, therefore, strongly highlight Tom's despair and anger (which, for the scholarship boy, is literally beyond description) by using allusions and contrasting images of two other storylines instead of using Tom's or the narrator's voices. *Red Shift* does not represent Garner's literary ideal, "a true and Northern voice integrated with the language of literary fluency" (Garner, "Fine Anger" 10), even though the voice is included in some characters' speeches. Instead, the novel represents the anger against the dominant culture and the cultural deprivation, which drives the scholarship boy writer to pursue the ideal.

PART I CONCLUSION: RISK AND REALITY

Although scholarship boys' views and tastes were altered by their education, one area where their attitudes tended to be unaffected was parenting. This is exemplified in an exchange from the 1970s between Alan Garner and Aidan Chambers following criticism of a scene from Garner's *Stone Book*. The pair considered why the scene had proven problematic. Chambers, who had taught a course on children's literature for teachers, commented that, in his experience, the issue arose from differences in what middle-class and working-class readers regarded as good parenting:

> when I have read *The Stone Book* to teachers there is always at least one person, and usually more, who objects to the scandalous way in which the father allows Mary to climb that ladder and then goes and puts her on top of the weather cock and spins her round... There is one sociological aspect of it... the working-class would not have protected, do not protect, their children in such a way, and would have connived at what Mary's father does. This is something that has never got into children's books. (Chambers, *Signal Approach* 325)

For Chambers, the way Mary's father, a stonemason who has been repairing the church spire, trusts her to manage and enjoy the experience of being on a weathercock was normal and acceptable for people with a working-class sense of parenting, but it was not the kind of behaviour seen in the middle-class culture. Alan Garner supported this conclusion:

> Risk was a natural part of my childhood, and had nothing to do with a lack of parental affection or concern. But I realize that this is a nicety that many adults don't understand... The working-class philosophy is, "If anything was up, we'd know soon enough", rather than the more protective, "Oh dear, what can the matter be? (Garner, *Signal Approach* 326).

Garner's account indicates that scholarship boy writers, at least Garner and Chambers, were not afraid to show child characters in risky situations, because in the culture in which they grew up it was a "natural part of childhood".

Risk takes many forms in children's literature. Chambers, Garner, and Robert Westall are all known as writers who challenged the forms and taboos – including around child safety – of children's literature. Among the sensitive areas their scholarship boy novels broached between the 1960s and the early 1980s are sexual experiences involving young people under the legal age of consent (*Breaktime*, *Dance on my Grave*), masturbation (*Breaktime*), incest (*The Owl Service*), adultery (*The Machine-Gunners*) and prostitution (*Fathom Five*); violence such as death in conflict and murder (*The Machine-Gunners*, *Red Shift*) and rape (*Red Shift*). Before the 1960s depictions of adolescent sexual desires and jealousy were rare in British children's books; scholarship boy writers were among the pioneers of such themes in children's books. Class politics and some aspects of working-class culture were also seen as controversial topics until scholarship boy writers began to fight for their inclusion in the 1970s. As this thesis has shown, although they never became an organised group, this collection of individual writers who shared similar backgrounds and came to writing for children at much the same time made a lasting impact. Their shared background resulted in a new sense of what could – and should – be written for children. Together, they succeeded in adjusting the boundaries that had been drawn around children's literature by generations of middle-class writers, editors, publishers and critics.

The contribution of scholarship boy writers to reshaping publishing for children in Britain lies not only in what they wrote about, but also in adjustments to how children's books were written. For instance, until the 1960s it was an unwritten but widely observed rule that children's books should have happy endings (Chambers, personal interview). However, as Tucker suggests, the desire to see happy endings or "the urge to protect children from premature cynicism in their fiction may also be linked to social class" ("Depressive Stories" 206). Most of Westall's novels have bitter endings, while Garner's *The Owl Service* and *Red Shift* end tragically, and strong anger and despair run through each. Although they are best remembered for breaking the rules, other scholarship boy writers such as Jan Needle and Robert Leeson (who this thesis does not discuss in detail due to limitations of space) had similar tendencies. Reacting to what they regarded as the bitter realities of life for those from the working-class and/or racial minorities, they found the traditional happy endings of children's and YA

literature, which are often achieved by having characters conform to the status quo, problematic (see Trites). The challenges to long-established traditions in children's publishing found in writing by scholarship boys were not confined to endings. As the preceding chapters have shown, the work of both Garner and Chambers are often stylistically demanding too. These writers did not hesitate to deploy modernist and otherwise experimental styles that had not previously been seen in children's books.

Scholarship boy writers' realistic approaches to sensitive subjects often became obvious targets for those who believed children's literature should show the world in the best possible light and end happily. Traditionally, children's books conformed to a middle-class rule that, "what you disapprove of, you don't mention" (Berg LB/05/03/52). The activist author, editor and critic from this period, Leila Berg, points to the fact that, because of its English middle-class morality, an unspoken rule of children's books at the time was: "The only things you do mention are the things you approve of, and hold up as good examples" (Berg LB/05/03/52). Those who broke this rule were often misunderstood. For instance, *The Owl Service* and *Fathom Five* were criticised for classism, despite the fact these works, themselves, *criticised* classism. Westall's *The Machine Gunners*, which was seen by some critics as "in the forefront of the new realism movement" (Hunt, *Children's Literature* 305), was criticised for violence and bad language (see Chapter 6). Jan Needle's *My Mate Shofiq* (1978), which deals with white working-class children's violence and racial prejudice against Pakistani children, was not only criticized as racist, but also banned in some schools (Berg, LB/05/03/03; Hunt, *An Introduction* 149). Looking back on this period, Berg commented on the irony of the response to Needle's book: "So this book, which is deeply anti-violent and deeply anti-prejudiced, was for a long time banned [in some comprehensive schools], because it was 'prejudiced' and 'violent'" (LB/05/03/03).

By depicting what they had experienced and observed as realities of childhood, rather than providing a softer, idealised version of childhood, scholarship boy writers changed the image of childhood in British children's books. The image of the "happy and innocent childhood" (Nikolajeva, "A Dream of" 306) – not only sexually but also politically and morally – had been highly valued and kept in British children's literature until the middle of the twentieth century (see Nikolajeva, "A Dream of" 306-07). However, the writers from the working-classes did not hold to the middle-class image of innocent and regulated childhood, which was sustained by middle-class lifestyles. In their novels, childhood is not necessarily safe and carefree. Furthermore, children often

behave in ways which are far from innocent and obedient, but rather are streetwise and independent of adults. The child characters in *The Machine-Gunners* are illustrative of this: the working-class children cheat and lie to adults such as policemen and a teacher to keep the machine gun. In spite of this, these children are depicted as normal, good-natured and patriotic. In other words, the image of childhood is more complicated and rounded than in most traditional middle-class writing. Scholarship boy writers, furthermore, do not pretend that children are free of prejudices. Although certain kinds of classism, racism and sexism had gone unnoticed in writing for children before the 1960s, scholarship boy writers highlighted the danger of children's prejudices. In the 1960s, Garner's *The Owl Service* was unusual in highlighting children's classist and racist attitudes; by the 1970s, even in books for primary school pupils, scholarship boy writers including Bernard Ashley, Leeson, and Needle were regularly depicting racial tension and conflicts. Their works show that ordinary children are not politically innocent, but are prejudiced and capable of hurting others.

Because their work did not conform to long-standing ideas about children's literature, scholarship boy writers for children were often in conflict with those who had the power in the field of British children's literature. The scholarship boy writers undertook to make their case by actively participating in debates, by producing quality work that spoke to a changing world, by working with (and sometimes as) teachers and librarians, and by becoming part of the establishment they were helping to reconfigure. The second part of this thesis considers their activities in publishing and criticism as part of this transformative process.

Part II

CHAPTER 5: CLASS CULTURE AND CHILDREN'S BOOK PUBLISHING

> It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work – critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.). So it has to take into account not only... the social conditions of the production of artists, art critics, dealers, patrons, etc., as revealed by indices such as social origin, education or qualifications, but also the social condition of the production of a set of objects socially constituted as works of *art*, i.e. the conditions of production of the field of social agents (e.g. museums, galleries, academies, etc.) which help to define and produce the value of works of art. (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 37)

> The question can be asked in its most concrete form... who is the true producer of the value of work – the painter or the dealer, the writer or the publisher, the playwright or the theatre manager? (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 76)

According to Pierre Bourdieu, since "works of arts exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized", "producers of the meaning and value of the work" (*Field of Cultural Production* 37), such as critics and publishers, have to be examined to understand literature (*Field of Cultural Production* 37). As Part I of this thesis has shown, works by scholarship boy writers in the 1960s and the 1970s often featured working-class lives and culture which had not previously been seen in British children's books. However, this was only a small part of their activities in the period. Scholarship boy writers not only contributed to the radical change of British children's literature through writing fiction but also in their roles as critics and activists who were working to break down the social class barriers that shaped the children's book industry. This

second part of the thesis looks at how the scholarship boy writers fought to change the field of British children's literature.

Today the hegemony of publishers is being challenged by various kinds of publishing software and new ways of financing the publication of books. However, at the time – and for most of the history of commercial literature – the books that reached the public were made available through publishing houses, and reflected their editors' usually middle-class tastes and calculations about books' potential. In 1980, the editors of *Children's Books Bulletin* argued, "Publishers can thus be seen as significant forces of control of what literature is available to children" (*How Much Truth Do We Tell the Children?* 33). As will be shown, by the 1970s, children's book publishers' class bias was frequently argued by advocates for books featuring the working-class and racial minorities, including some scholarship boy writers. Such arguments were rarely seen in British children's literature before the 1960s, because working-class/scholarship boy writers and their works were virtually excluded from the world. This chapter focuses on the initial struggle to include working-class books in mainstream children's literature in 1960s and 1970s Britain.

As Raymond Williams explains, the emergence of "working-class writing" was difficult because "the effective predominance of received literary forms" limited and conditioned what was produced (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 124). Although in the late 1950s a significant number of writers from the working-class emerged in adults' literature, most of them experienced long periods of having their manuscripts rejected (Laing 62-64). John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) was repeatedly rejected from 1951 to 1955 (Laing 62); Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) was accepted by the fifth publisher to whom it was sent (Laing 63); and David Storey's *This Sporting Life* was rejected eight times up to 1958 (Laing 63). These writers' first, and most representative, novels were written in the early 1950s, but most publishers did not see value of writing featuring working-class life until some of these works began to succeed (Laing 62-64). It was the time when conditions of external change helped writers, and so eventually those writers published their novels, but it was not a straightforward process.

The situation was similar in British children's literature throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. The bias of children's editors in favour of white middle-class children's books in the mid-twentieth century has been pointed out by various scholars (see Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 6, 11-14; Reynolds, "Publishing Practice" 30-31; Pearson, 13, 62,

156; Wright 50). As the editors of the *Children's Book Bulletin*[1] pointed out in 1980, until the 1970s, the role that [most children's book] editors play is in the selection of the manuscripts that they will publish (a selection made from thousands submitted)" was "censorial" (*How Much Truth Do We Tell the Children?* 33). As will be shown, scholarship boy writers, being critics and editors themselves, strategically worked to change the field of British children's literature so that the new literary form could be published.

Barriers to Publishing Books for Working-Class Children

Readers' and editors' tastes and judgements are inevitably class-bound, as Pierre Bourdieu argues (see Bourdieu, *Distinction*). In publishing, editors' class bias was often effectively masked simply as conventions or as an issue of literary quality. Literary 'quality', it must be remembered, was generally defined by middle-class/upper-class cultures. In 1974, Robert Leeson discussed the need for books for working-class children, as well as need for books for 7- to 12-year-olds, in an article in *Signal*, "Boom" (1974) (for the role of *Signal* see Chapter 7). Two letters from editors associated with different publishing houses, Susan Dickinson from Collins publishers and J. J. Curle from Macdonald and Jane's, appeared in the following issue in response to Leeson. Since *Signal* was a relatively radical journal founded and edited by Aidan and Nancy Chambers (see Chapter 7), these editors, presumably, were relatively supportive to the new kind of books. Yet the letters are revealing of the class attitudes that lie behind the editors' excuses.

The Collins' editor, Dickinson, wrote that Leeson was 'is in danger of over-emphasizing the literary needs of working-class children" because she believes it is not necessary for "100% of children to be readers of books" (Dickinson, letter 106). This editor maintained that only "literate working-class children" who were likely to be absorbed into the middle-class in future through their education were likely to read books about middle-class life, and often did so as a "form of escapism" (Dickinson, letter 106). This kind of attitude was, until the 1970s, widely seen in the children's book industry (see Reynolds, "Publishing Practice" 31; Blishen, "Interview with Edward

[1] *Children's Book Bulletin: For News of Progressive Children's Literature* (1979-81) was one of short-lived radically progressive magazines around 1980 by Children's Right Workshop; see Moss, "The Seventies in British Children's Books" 48, 54.

Blishen" 75; Royds, "Interview with Pam Royds" 326). Most editors of mainstream children's books supported the situation that saw working-class children being required to assimilate into middle-class culture if they were to be regular and enthusiastic readers of children's books. This meant that, in these editors' eyes, those who did not assimilate (i.e. the majority of working-class children) were effectively outside the audience of British children's literature.

At the heart of the letter from the Collins' editor is her negative view of working-class lives. She rhetorically enquired: "Does the son of a shop steward want to read about the life of a shop steward?" (Dickinson, letter 106). One of the problematic ideological barriers to publishing books about the working-class was that the culture and life of the middle-classes were seen as superior to those of the working-classes (Tucker, "Setting the Scene"11; Reynolds, "Publishing Practice" 30-31). The prejudice that working-class lives and views are inferior, so that children should not read about them, or "disliked about reading about such circumstances" (Hildick 32), was a widespread middle-class belief in and around children's book publishing until the 1960s.[2] Leeson was told when he tried to promote books for the working-class that "we don't want to rub their [working-class children's] noses in it" (Leeson, personal interview). This was also, as will be further argued later, one of the main reasons why Leila Berg's *Nippers* series, featuring working-class lives, was criticised by some teachers: they believed "it would be better to raise their [working-class children's] sights" (*Reading and Loving* 99) than recognise and accept working-class children's life. Such middle-class views formed and sustained the homology between the field of British children's books and the dominant class.

The two children's book editors writing in *Signal* also insisted that by the 1970s it was impossible to find writers who could write for "a particular class [the working-class] of child" (Dickinson, letter 106) because "the author will be middle-class, even if his father was working-class" (Dickinson, letter 106; Curle, letter 107). There is general agreement that before the 1960s, there was a shortage of writers from the working-class; John Rowe Townsend, for instance, makes this claim in *Written for Children* (6th ed., 246). However, the critical writing of scholarship boy authors in the 1960s and the 1970s suggest that it was not a *lack* of writers, but rather the *exclusion* of such writers by editors that was the problem. Leeson makes this point in his response to the editors

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[2] See Aidan Chambers, a typescript (21 May 1966) returned from *TLS*, 24 June 1966 in Aidan Chambers Archive Box 2;Wallace Hildick, *Children and Fiction* 32; Pearson 71-72; Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 11.

in the dialogue between him and two editors published in *Signal*, noting that "such writers have appeared in adult writing" (Leeson, reply to letters, back cover). Significantly, the work of writers from working-class backgrounds who emerged in the late 1950s, such as Alan Sillitoe and Keith Waterhouse, though not for children, was also popular among ordinary teenagers in the late 1960s (see Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 78, 151-52).[3] Aidan Chambers, in a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1966, pointed out that publishers' ideology and class prejudice was the true cause of the lack of working-class children's fiction:

> The publishers won't be bothered to find the writers who can [sic] write like this [contemporary stories for average teenagers] because they have mis-information which suggests 'that sort doesn't read anyhow, and certainly doesn't want stories about people like himself living as he does'. (Unpublished article, 21 May 1966)

More importantly, by the 1970s there were already a considerable number of scholarship boy (and girl) writers for children who wished to write stories about the working-class, but could not find publishers for their work. This is in line with Bourdieu's observation that "The manuscripts a publisher receives are the product of a kind of pre-selection by the authors themselves according to their image of the publisher" (*Field of Cultural Production* 133). It is not certain how many manuscripts were actually rejected by publishers on the basis of working-class content. However, since publishers' reluctance to publish such books was well-known early-career writers who wished to write the new kind of children's books perhaps reluctantly but still voluntarily followed literary conventions until the mid-1970s.

Initially, Robert Leeson belonged to this group. Leeson's first two books, *Beyond the Dragon Prow* (1973) and *Maroon Boy* (1974), took the form of historical novels in which the protagonists are not working-class, because he assumed children's publishers would prefer such conventional novels (Leeson, personal interview). Historical fiction was an important genre in the 1960s and the 1970s, and for writers such as Leeson it provided a useful backdrop for discussing topics such as class and race in ways that were acceptable because they were disguised by the historical setting

[3] Although there was not a case that scholarship boy writers for adults published children's books, Aidan Chambers as the editor of Topliner asked Keith Waterhouse to write a book for his paperback label for teenagers (Chambers, Letter to Waterhouse, 4 July 1966).

(Wright 204, 216). This was, therefore, Leeson's strategy for becoming accepted as a children's writer. After he earned a reputation as a children's writer with these early works, Leeson produced his first book in a contemporary working-class setting, *The Third Class Genie* (1975). However, the work was initially rejected by the hardback publisher which had published his previous two historical novels, and was only accepted by a paperback publisher, which was then regarded as inferior (Leeson, personal interview). It was hardly a decision solely based on the book's quality, since *The Third Class Genie*, which is still in print as a Collins Modern Classics, is today his most representative work and, according to Leeson, it sold very well immediately after publication (Leeson, personal interview; no sales figures have been located). The decision arose, in part, from the fact that paperbacks were more affordable and a more familiar format for most state-school pupils. Therefore, for instance, the books in Chambers' Topliner list were also paperbacks. In the 1970s, an increasing number of radical and/or popular books for ordinary teenagers were being published as paperbacks (Pearson 31-33). However, since paperbacks were still looked down on – for instance, Leila Berg saw pupils who were told by teachers that "paperbacks are not books" (*Reading and Loving* 78) – and so were critically neglected, *The Third Class Genie* was not reviewed by critics when it was first published, though it eventually got reviewed later when, unusually, the book was re-published as a hardback edition in the early 1980s (Leeson, personal interview). This case illustrates the process that the first children's books for and about the working-class had to go through before being accepted in the marginalized area of children's book publishing. Only after these books had proved successful or profitable – in other words, only after they had begun to change power relationships in the field of children's book production – did they begin to be accepted in the mainstream.

Leeson was hardly alone in writing conventional novels despite authors' wishes to write more radical novels. Scholarship girl writer Gene Kemp began by writing conventional animal stories beginning with *The Prime of Tamworth Pig* (1972), *Tamworth Pig Saves the Trees* (1973) and *Tamworth Pig and the Litter* (1975), even though she "wanted to write books that would be more provocative – and more relevant – to today's children" ("Gene Kemp", *Contemporary Authors Online*). According to Leila Berg, until the 1960s, "If you suggested perhaps non-middle-class children might like something [children's books] they could identify with, they [middle-class writers and teachers] pointed to stories about animals or gnomes" (Berg, *Reading and Loving*

85). In other words, when a writer wanted to write for working-class children in the early 1970s, animal stories were one of the few genres that would be welcomed by publishers. By 1977, Kemp felt able to produce a book featuring state primary-school pupils, *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*. Once the book was published, it won the Carnegie Medal, and Kemp established her position as a writer of the new kind of school stories, set in a state school and a local community (for her school stories, see Watson, *Reading Series Fiction* 190-204; see also Cross).

A similar pattern is seen even in the writing career of the celebrated writer, Alan Garner. In his first two novels, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) and *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), the protagonists are middle-class children who visit their ex-nanny's house. Charles Butler considers these books to represent an established "convention of British children's fantasy fiction of the 1950s and the 1960s that mysteries that have eluded the locals for centuries will yield their secrets to visiting middle-class children" (Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 111). Due to his "concession" (Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 112) to the southern, urban and middle-class viewpoint, Garner later dismissed these earliest books (Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 112). These cases demonstrate how the conventions of the field worked at the time to restrict the emergence of new writing. Writers could not completely be free from the conventions – or middle-class culture, in this case – of the field. These authors' strategy of beginning their careers by writing more conventional novels worked. Their books about the working-class or state school pupils were eventually published, and became influential and even canonical. Their success was enabled by a radical change in the British children's book market in the period that they helped to initiate. Since in the 1970s, despite publishers' apparent reluctance, as will be discussed, stories set in state schools were actually long-awaited by many. Once their books were published, it was not difficult to prove the value of such books. To consider the conditions which enabled their success, economic factors – the reluctant editors' last excuse for their non-publication – has to be examined.

The Economics of Working-class Children's Books and Rise of Scholarship Boy Teachers

The editors' letters that appeared in *Signal* suggest that the main reason for the reluctance to publish books about the working-class was simply that "we have to sell the

books we publish, and sell enough to make a profit"(Dickinson, letter 106). Robert Leeson, who "had many discussions with publishers, trying to persuade them to publish more books for working-class children" (Leeson, personal interview), recalled "there is no market. That was their mantra" (Leeson, personal interview). Profit became more of a concern when working-class children's books was the issue. In the 1960s and the 1970s, "A commitment to 'quality'", which is, in reality, defined by editors' middle-class tastes, "rather than profit is certainly a central theme in publishers' own definitions of their aims" (Pearson 11). Such publishers' attitude of seeking middle-class quality rather than profit has an economic rationality, because "quality" earns good reputation, or what Bourdieu calls as "symbolic capital", which can be converted into profit in the long term (see Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 75). Working-class novels, by contrast, usually did not earn that kind of capital.

However, there was actually a huge market for books for working-class children in the 1970s: the state school. As will be discussed further, what radical editors in the late 1960s and the 1970s such as Chambers and Berg achieved was to highlight the potential profitability of this market by successfully selling large quantities of books to schools. The fact that, in the mid-1970s, some publishers still assumed that there was not a market for working-class children's books was not simply because, as Hildick points out, working-class children and their parents rarely bought children's books (Hildick 32). Rather, it reflects the influence of librarians who were the most influential purchasers of children's books in the 1960s thanks to abundant state funds (Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 13; Reynolds, "Publishing Practice" 26; Leeson, personal interview; Chambers, personal interview). Although Tucker considers that public librarians' demand for books featuring the working-class in the 1960s changed publishers' attitudes (Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 13), according to scholarship boy writers, this was not exactly the case. Both Leeson and Chambers consider that it was teachers, becoming the new influential purchasers of children's books in the 1970s, who radically changed the publishers' attitude (Leeson, personal interview; Chambers, personal interview). Although Chambers' and Leeson's views are not based on research, the state of public libraries in the 1960s suggest that librarians were less likely to be a significant force for promoting books for the working-class.

In the 1960s, the majority of library users were middle-class (Kelly 383-385). It was not that librarians *failed* working-class users; rather, due to the historical middle-class dominance of English literature, the habit of reading fiction had become a foreign

practice for the majority of working-class people in the mid-twentieth century. Researchers in the 1970s highlighted the fact that children of manual workers read books much less than children of non-manual workers, while there was a much smaller gap in the number of reading magazines and comics, which were generally dismissed by adults (Whitehead, et al., 61-62, 66-68; Heather 48-49, 81). Pauline Heather (1981), in research conducted in 1979, also reports that often "Many [working-class] parents are opposed to reading" (41), "or the local population tended to be 'anti-culture'" (35) in schools which largely consists of pupils from council housing or whose fathers are in manual occupations, while parents tended to be supportive and encourage reading in schools in more middle-class areas (31, 32, 34).

Chambers recalls that there was "a working-class non-literary culture" (Chambers, personal interview). Until a middle-class boy asked him to go to a library together when he was about 11 or 12 years old, Chambers himself had never thought of using a library (Chambers, personal interview). By contrast, Leeson was a regular library user (Leeson, personal interview), but he considers that he and his family were exceptional in his community (Leeson, personal interview; see also Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 8). These two writers belong to the generations when "the children's department of many public libraries were ill-equipped, poorly stocked and badly staffed, and thousands of schools had no effective library" until the 1950s (Kelly 398). But the percentages of library memberships (see Kelly 382-383, 385) suggest that, by the 1960s, library borrowing was not a part of ordinary working-class lives. What the advocates for books for the working-class attempted to change, therefore, was this "working-class non-literary-culture", which was conditioned by the middle-class dominance of fiction. Librarians became "Conscious of the danger that libraries originally intended for the working-classes might develop into cosy middle-class book club" (Kelly 426-27) in the late 1960s and the 1970s. However, the change was felt, for the advocates for books for the working-class, not as radical as the emerging influence of radical teachers, who were keen to find books for non-readers or "reluctant readers", those who were reluctant to read fictions.

School teachers became an influential voice in the world of commercial children's literature as a result of the expansion of school libraries and increasing usage of children's books in classrooms. Since 1945, an increasing number of libraries were established in schools, and the abundant post-war public expenditure on education allowed schools to buy many books for their pupils (Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 13).

Aidan Chambers, who was a teacher-librarian in the 1960s, and was a lecturer on an in-service course of children's literature for teachers in the 1970s, states that teachers, who did not buy children's books for their classrooms before, began to realise the use of children's books in teaching in the 1970s (Chambers, personal interview). As a result, in the 1970s, state school teachers and school librarians bought books for their pupils in large quantities (Chambers, personal interview). This market shift ultimately enabled a radical change in children's books. The two earliest and most influential attempts to publish books for working-class children in the late 1960s, Leila Berg's Nippers and Aidan Chambers' Topliner, therefore, were both for schools.

What was more important, however, is a change of ideology in the new generation of teachers from the 1960s. The 1960s and the 1970s was a time when some radical teachers were conscious of the political nature of education, and who saw the old education system as a kind of oppression set up by the ruling class (Long 243-44). Teachers in non-selective state schools had been traditionally "drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of the upper working-class" (K. Evans 122) since the 19th century because most middle-class people were reluctant to take the job.[4] Despite teachers' backgrounds, as has been shown in Part I, until the mid-twentieth century, cultural assimilationism was the dominant ideology in British education system: working-class pupils were required to acquire middle-class culture to be successful in the school. This cultural process of class reproduction in educational institutions, however, began to be criticized by left-wing scholars including scholarship boy researchers such as Jackson and Marsden and Raymond Williams from around 1960 (see K. Jones 54-64). The claim that "what counted as culture – the central set of meanings and values which the school tried to inculcate – required alteration" (K. Jones 63) became "the argument of an important minority on the British left, and a preoccupation of teachers associated with New Left" (K. Jones 63).

Chambers, who was part of the same generation of teachers, explains how the scholarship boys and girls were at that time:

> A lot of them [scholarship boys and girls] became teachers. They did that because they wanted to educate the ordinary people... We thought we could achieve a literate, even a literary, population... We had a huge belief in the power of art... to refine your intelligence and to lift you out

[4] See also R. Lowe 28; K. Evans 122, 130-31; Plummer 10.

of the restrictions of the working-class. But what we did not want to do was to make everybody into middle-class people. (Chambers, personal interview)

The biggest difference of these teachers from the old type of teachers was the point that they did not want to "make everybody into middle-class people". Children's books which had been mostly about middle-class life until the 1960s were a part of the cultural assimilationism. In fact, in the 1960s, some teachers were still against books about working-class children. For instance, in a letter to Berg, an editor of *New Humanist* described his encounter with a teacher who criticized a story because she regarded working-class speeches in the story as "bad language", believing "many children from poor homes, if you give them proper education, can become really intelligent and quite changed. (!) [sic] I should know – *I'm a communist*!" (Macy, Letter to Berg 19 Feb. 1973). This old type of teacher, whatever her political beliefs, believed working-class children had to be "changed", while the new, emerging type of teachers did not necessarily want to assimilate pupils into middle-class culture.

By the late 1960s, a considerable number of English teachers in state schools were willing to recognize and positively evaluate working-class cultures (K. Jones 64, 86).[5] They knew from their experiences that most pupils were reluctant to read books because the contents of the books were not relevant to their lives, and so they were looking for the new kind of books which were relevant to ordinary state school pupils' lives (Chambers, personal interview; Leeson, personal interview; Hildick 32). According to Paul Long, in this period some progressive schools used working-class/scholarship boy novels for adults and films published in the late 1950s and the 1960s, as well as more traditional folk songs and D. H. Lawrence. Even some studies about the working-class, such as Jackson and Masden's *Education and the Working-class* and Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, were adopted as texts for English lessons (235-36). In this climate, teachers began to recognize the uses of children's literature. "This created a huge market", Chambers says, "And that's the market that Topliner [Chambers' paperback label] fed" (Interview with Aidan Chambers). The size of the educational market is suggested in a letter from an editor to Robert Westall. Macmillan's editor, Marni Hodgkin, explained to Westall about two offers for the rights for a paperback edition of his *The Machine-Gunners*: while Penguin Books' Puffin was

[5] For the post-World War II progressive movement in English teaching in Britain, see also Long 215-53.

much more famous and prestigious, Macmillan's Topliner, selling books directly to schools, could sell as well as or even better than Penguin (Hodgkin, Letter to Westall 7 Nov. 1975; Westall, *Making of Me* 194). Furthermore, radical teachers were not simply purchasers of children's literature in the period. As Chambers recalls, "many of the writers who came up in the period were or had been teachers" (Chambers, personal interview), such as Bernard Ashley, Chambers, E. W. Hildick, Gene Kemp, and Westall.[6] Those critics/writers from state schools asserted, from the inside of the children's book industry, the necessity of books featuring working-class lives.

Being Editors to Change Children's Book Publishing

Although, as has been shown, the 1970s was a time when the conditions had begun to enable radical changes of British children's literature, change was brought about through individual struggle. In the late 1960s, Leila Berg and Aidan Chambers started to publish a series of books for state school pupils from Macmillan Education. These were historically important attempts, and also illustrative examples, of how individuals contributed to the change of children's book publishing in the period. Berg's Nippers was intended for state primary school children, as an alternative to established middle-class reading primers, such as the *Janet and John* series. In 1966, Berg, who was a left-wing journalist/writer from a Jewish middle-class background, was asked by Macmillan to be an editor/writer of a new series of study books for primary school children. Leila Berg recalls her decision to accept the job and her aim with Nippers in a note in her archive:

> I thought maybe this is my chance to do something that hasn't been done before. To show these kids who are just starting to read – whose parents mostly don't read books – that books are connected with life – real life – *their* [sic] life. That books – real books – reflect the readers. (LB/05/03/03).[7]

Berg was concerned with the fact that most available books for young children at that time were the kind of books featuring privileged middle-class families, and so working-

[6] Here I list only those who were influential advocates and/or writers of books for working-class children. For other former teachers, see Pearson 24.

[7] See also Berg, *Reading and Loving* 83.

class children could not find themselves in the books (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 83).[8] Berg considers that the exclusion of working-class characters from children's books is ultimately a denial of real working-class children: "they grow up feeling they have no right to exist" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 84). In Berg's view, middle-class children's books had worked to deprive working-class culture of meaning and value. She argues that working-class children "are supposed to have the 'right' longings, joys, fears, preoccupations [in books], while having 'wrong' experience" in their real lives, and therefore a working-class child "is learning that he, the real person, is not fit to be in books" (*Reading and Loving* 109-10). Similarly to Alan Garner's criticism against education and the dominant culture (see Chapter 4), Berg considers that working-class children were forced to learn denial of their culture and themselves by learning to read. Berg, as a supporter of the progressive education movement, saw Nippers as a chance to change this cultural process of class reproduction. Her aim with Nippers was to achieve a position in which "every child throughout the country, whatever his background... would be able to find at least one story that recognised and reflected his own family" (*Reading and Loving* 93).

For Berg, the problem lay at the heart of the shortage of books for working-class children was not whether superficially working-class characters were featured or not. The true problem, for Berg and her fellow advocates, is whether working-class children can see "reflection of themselves" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 84) or can "recognize themselves" (Leeson, "What Were We" 60) in those books. Some working-class characters had been always depicted in British children's books. But, as scholarship boy writers and critics argued in the 1970s, working-class characters' roles were mostly limited to villains, supporting characters who are less intelligent than middle-class characters, or subjects of charity who need help from middle-class characters (Dixon, *Catching* Vol. 1 48; Leeson, *Children's Books and Class Society* 40; Westall, "How Real" 41). In the 1960s, an increasing number of books featuring working-class characters as main protagonists were already being written by middle-class writers. As John Rowe Townsend observed in 1973, "The back streets have become something of a bandwagon" (*Pied Piper* 240). However, most "working-class books" written by middle-class writers were, ultimately, books for middle-class readers. In her briefing of the Nippers sent to Macmillan, Berg explains: "of these very few" books featuring working-class life, "some are patronising and 'slumming', others can only be read by

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[8] See also Chambers, personal interview; Leeson "Boom" 7; Leeson, personal interview; Hildick 32.

children with educated backgrounds" (*Reading and Loving* 83-84). Correspondingly, Leeson criticised the fact that "but for all the subtlety and sympathy", books in the 1960s, such as Townsend's *Gumble's Yard* (1961), retain "an outside view" (*Children's Books and Class Society* 38).[9] Advocates felt that middle-class writers' novels about the working-class in the 1960s often merely reflected middle-class desires and stereotypical views, even if they wrote the novels with the good intention of rectifying the dearth of children's books about the working-class (Leeson, personal interview; Chambers, personal interview). In parallel with Valerie Walkerdine criticising middle-class scholars in the field of working-class study for only seeing "an exotic fantasy" of the working-class (Walkerdine 209), Leeson contends that only a small "section of the working-class which has excited the attention" of the middle-class had been featured in children's books until the early 1970s (Leeson, *Children's Books and Class Society* 38).

As an alternative for the very middle-class 'Janet and John' type of school readers – which, according to Berg, even middle-class children disliked – Nippers was successful (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 45-50). However, Berg's success in including working-class culture in children's books triggered anger amongst some teachers, who believed that working-class life had no place in books for children. In 1967 and 1969, when Berg sent schools samples to ask teachers' opinions, she received some furious letters criticising the stories about working-class children and their families as "ridiculous", "disgusting", "silly" and "immoral" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 89, 91, 97). Their reactions are illustrative of the relationship between class cultures, education and children's books as a part of educational tools in mid-twentieth-century Britain. The criticisms Berg received clearly arose from the ideology that saw working-class culture as inferior and inappropriate. The letters say such things as, "We are here to educate 'up' not 'down'" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 98); "it conveys a wrong sense of values and poor standards of behaviour to the child" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 99); and "The morals of the book are completely wrong" (*Reading and Loving* 99).

Berg, in response to such accusations, concludes that: "The trouble was, Nippers stirred in such teachers awareness of a conflict between reality [of working-class children] and what they were trained to teach" (*Reading and Loving* 100). Teachers were trained to teach the dominant culture which was regarded as universally "right" and "good": correct English was Standard English with the English middle-class accent;

[9] Townsend was regarded as one of the most successful writers who wrote about the working-class in the 1960s. Leeson sees his books as good "sociological exploration" (*Reading and Righting* 122).

good manners were defined by middle-class practices. Reflecting Berg's view as a supporter of the progressive education movement, which validated children's original cultures, Nippers challenged the old-style teaching philosophy and the cultural hierarchy which was associated with the social order.[10] In the late 1960s, when Berg received the letters, however, as has been shown, the dominant ideology in education was already changing. Berg, in fact, received three times as many encouraging letters from teachers as indignant ones (*Reading and Loving* 92). Many teachers, who held the new belief in the importance of educating working-class children without converting them into culturally and ideologically middle-class, welcomed books like Nippers.

Nippers was an important intervention in the field of British children's literature because of its challenge to the dominant view in the field. For many children's writers in the late 1960s, Berg's attempt to reflect working-class lives in children's books was a totally new concept. Since writers assumed children's editors would dislike realistic depictions of working-class children, they usually modified working-class characters' speech and manners. For instance, when Berg received Helen Solomon's manuscript for her Nippers, she found that children in a mining village in Staffordshire said "Mum" as if they were Londoners (*Reading and Loving* 109; LB/05/03/67). When Berg asked the writer why she used "Mum" instead of "Mom", which the writer confirmed is what real children said in the region, she replied, "Well I thought that's what editors always want you to say" (LB/05/03/67). The idea of realistic working-class children in children's books was so radical at the time that Berg had to impress on writers her policy that "children should use the words they really *did* [sic] use" (LB/05/03/67). As has been shown, and as this example reveals, publishers' attitudes indirectly restricted contents of British children's literature. In this respect, Berg effected change not simply through her line of published books featuring the working-class, but also through her attempts to alter the mindset of new and established writers.

Another influential children's editor in the period was the scholarship boy writer, Aidan Chambers. While Berg, initially, was not so willing to be an editor, Chambers consciously entered children's book publishing to increase books for ordinary state school pupils. In the 1960s and the 1970s, Chambers worked in almost every sphere of British children's literature in an attempt to reshape the field. Although by the late 1960s Aidan Chambers already had a few published works, he was not famous as a novelist until the publication of *Breaktime* in 1978. In this period, as a teacher-librarian,

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[10] See Berg's *Risinghill* (1968).

he energetically engaged in criticism to increase books for ordinary comprehensive-school children. Eventually, he decided to publish such books by working with publishers. After an unsuccessful attempt with another publisher, Chambers was invited by Macmillan Education, with whom he eventually started his own paperback label, Topliner, to provide books for state schools in 1968 (see Pearson). Being a teacher, critic, and editor, Chambers attempted to bridge the cultural gap, drawing on his own experiences as a scholarship boy well acquainted with the working-class "non-literary culture" and of the value of reading (see Pearson 190-91).

While Berg's Nippers was for young children who were beginning to read, Chambers' Topliner was designed for average, secondary-modern school pupils, or "the reluctant reader", to use his term.[11] The reluctance of teenagers to read books was a relatively well-known problem at that time.[12] Part of the problem was the gap between children's books, which were mainly written for younger children, and adult books, which were still too difficult for the average secondary-school pupil. Chambers' Topliner was intended to bridge children's books and high-brow adult books (see Pearson 79-80, 172-73). Another aspect of this problem was social class. In *The Reluctant Reader* (1969), Chambers does not discuss social class explicitly as a main factor of the reluctance – and it was true that some middle-class teenagers were also reluctant to read fictions. However, as Paul Long states, "reluctant reader" was, in effect, one of the labels and euphemisms for working-classness during the period (Long 218). Chambers' intended readers – the "average and just below average young in the secondary modern streams" (Chambers, Letter to Waterhouse, 4 July 1966) who were "the submerged sixty percent of our school population" (Chambers, "Back Ground Sheet") – were, after all, mostly working-class teenagers, who would go into the labour market as unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers.

Correspondence in the archive supports the fact that Chambers was conscious of the class problem behind the reluctance of average teenage readers. In a letter discussing a list of books for secondary modern school pupils, Chambers stated, "this is very much a Grammar School stream selection... It is certainly biased towards popular middle-class authors, who are, in my opinion, not to be highly recommended" (Letter to Douglas-Boyd, 5 Dec 1965). A book list for secondary school pupils in the 1960s tended to be biased towards middle-class authors, since "In the grammar schools, libraries usually

[11] For comprehensive research on Topliner, see Pearson.
[12] For reluctant readers, see also John Foster ed., *Reluctant to Read?*; Pearson; Moss, *Part of the Pattern* 31-33. In the Aidan Chambers Archive, articles about reluctance of teenagers are collected.

chose to follow the socially superior public schools" (Tucker, "Setting the Scene" 6), and secondary-modern schools were also imitating grammar schools (Lowe 107). However, Chambers knew from his experience as a teacher-librarian that most secondary-modern school pupils disliked middle-class authors (Chambers, personal interview; Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 133). Similarly to other advocates for working-class books such as Berg, Wallace Hildick and Robert Leeson, Chambers considered that middle-class culture of children's books alienated working-class children from reading (See Chambers, *Booktalk* 47, 80-83), and that is why the majority of children and teenagers rarely read "good" children's books, even though they read comic books and popular paperbacks which met working-class tastes (Chambers *Reluctant Reader* 20-40; Chambers, *Booktalk* 47, 80-83).[13] In a letter to ask Keith Waterhouse for a manuscript, Chambers explained that the average teenagers did not read more than "cheap-and-nasties they find in paper-backs in grocery stores" (Letter to Waterhouse, 4 July 1966) because of the shortage of novels which "set in their everyday lives and which entertain them by a strong plot and a handling of the subjects that are in their minds" (Letter to Waterhouse, 4 July 1966). Booklists for reluctant readers in his *The Reluctant Readers* are certainly biased towards books about the working-class and American novels, while most classic or award-winning British middle-class novels were not included (*Reluctant Reader*, Appendix, 145-55). What Chambers attempted to promote was in short quality teenage fictions featuring working-class and lower-middle-class lives.

Topliner was highly successful commercially (Chambers, personal interview).[14] However, since it was, in essence, an attempt to challenge the assimilationism in education and to support the new philosophy of teaching which validates pupils' original cultures, it is unsurprising that Topliner received furious letters from some teachers for its supposed "bad language" and "low moral standard".[15] The problem is summarised in the statement of a teacher: "Of course, I am perfectly well aware that

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[13] Scholarship boy writers themselves were more familiar with children's comics in their childhood. In their generation, *The Dandy* and *The Beano*, was particularly popular and are often mentioned in their works or remarks. For example, Garner states, "From my own childhood, what I value as much as anything is the iconoclastic publishing of two comics, *The Dandy* and *The Beano*" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 328); Chambers also read *The Dandy* and *The Beano* in his childhood (Chambers, personal interview); in Westall's *Fathom Five*, Cem likes the comics. For the launch of Topliner, Aidan Chambers also researched popular teenage magazines (see Pearson 176-78). His archive keeps some magazines which Chambers collected.

[14] See also Hodgkin, Letter to Westall 7 Nov. 1975; Westall, *Making of Me* 194.

[15] For instance, see Letter to Chambers, 5 Jan. 1978; Letter to Macmillan Education, 30 Jan. 1978; Letter to Chambers, 31 May 1977.

children do come across this type of expression, but in this school... cannot condone its use" (Letter to Chambers, 31 May 1977). It was a matter of whether they accepted real children's language in children's books or not. Due to these complaints, Aidan Chambers prepared a "confidential" document, "A Defence of those Topliner recently attacked", in December 1977. Letters in Aidan Chambers archive suggest that Chambers and his senior editors' replies to complaints were written based on this document. In the three-page document, Chambers named novels which teenagers read, such as *A Kestrel for a Knave* (1968), *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), Alan Sillitoe's novels, *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), and *Sons and Lovers* (1913), to point out that language and violence in Topliner books were more moderate than in these novels. As the fact that these novels (except for *The Lord of The Flies* and *Catcher in the Rye*) were about the working-class suggests, the elements which were criticised by teachers were working-class culture.[16] In this respect, however, it is not clear to what extent Chambers' defence was effective, because teachers who were against inclusion of working-class culture in children's books more often disliked the books listed by Chambers. For instance, *A Kestrel for a Knave* was, according to Berg's note in her archive, "banned" in a secondary school (LB/05/03/03). In fact, a series of letters from the same teacher in the Aidan Chambers archive indicates that Chambers' explanation actually fuelled, rather than quelled, the teacher's anger.[17]

Topliner was a radical attempt to change the field of British children's literature. It was not an attempt to seek the dominant position in the field by gathering symbolic capital, or by taking the same measure and taste of "quality" middle-class children's books. As Chambers himself says, "Topliners were thought to be populist" (Chambers, personal interview), so Topliner's "literary quality" did not become as high as Chambers, as a writer, sought. By abandoning the ambition of being "quality" or "high" label, which inevitably entails greater concessions to the dominant class culture, however, Topliner more successfully challenged the principles and assumptions in the field. According to Bourdieu, "the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer" (*Field of Cultural Production* 42). As has been shown, in the 1960s, working-class

[16] In the case of Topliner, criticism often arose not only from classism but also from racism. For instance, *Us Boys of Westcroft* was condemned for "bad language" due to black children's dialect (see Pearson 199-201; Chambers, personal interview).
[17] For instance, see Letter to Chambers, 5 Jan. 1978; Chambers, Letter to M. 23 Jan. 1978. Letter to Macmillan Education Managing Director. 10 Feb. 1978. Josephs, Sydney [Managing Director]. Letter to M. 22. Fec. 1978.

writers were effectively excluded from being children's writers by the field of British children's literature. However, Topliner and Nippers transformed the established definition of children's writers. While few famous writers wrote for Topliner, it succeeded in "introducing new and controversial writers to the children's books" (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 133); Nippers also played a similar role in giving opportunities for unknown new writers from various backgrounds. In this way, Nippers and Topliner pioneered the field for working-class and left-wing writers in children's book publishing.

More importantly, the attempts by Chambers and Berg changed publishers' and writers' assumptions of what could be published as children's books. As has been shown, publishers' attitudes to or writers' assumptions of what publishers would prefer effectively restricted the kind of books published as children's books. However, by 1980, the commercial success of Nippers and Topliner, as well as the success of the *Grange Hill* series[18] and other novels written by writers from the working-class, changed most publishers' attitudes. At the same time, Berg's and Chambers' attempts were significant in the way that they re-imagined the intended readers of children's books. In the field of children's literature, unlike adult literature, the criteria of what makes good children's books are ultimately established by the image of the intended child readers. As has been shown, until the mid-1970s, some children's book publishers excluded the majority of working-class children from the intended readers of their books. The Topliner's and Nippers' series of books, in which the implied readers are ordinary state school pupils, demonstrated that children's books were not only for the traditional readers, middle-class children. These attempts helped to reshape readers' and critics' assumptions of, and generally class status of, British children's books. Although Nippers and Topliner are almost forgotten today, in terms of the struggle to change the field of British children's literature, they had very significant roles.

While Topliner's and Nippers' success were conditioned by the change of the market in the period, ultimately only the conscious efforts of individuals could reshape the field of British children's literature. If Chambers and Berg had not been there in the late 1960s, the change might not have happened at all, because the condition of the market and society which enabled their success lasted less than a decade. In this respect,

[18] For the impact of *Grange Hill* series, Phil Redmond's BBC TV series featuring the comprehensive school, see Richards 17-20. The *Grange Hill* series was novelized by Leeson, who was succeeded by another scholarship boy writer, Jan Needle, whom Leeson recommended as his successor (Leeson, personal interview). According to Leeson, the novelizations of *Grange Hill* were commercial highly successful (Leeson, personal interview).

Chambers' scholarship boy background and his cultural capital was also important. Ultimately, only those who possessed a high amount of cultural capital, such as scholarship boys, were able to fight this type of class struggle by getting into the position of publishers. In addition, as will be further discussed in Chapter 7, scholarship boy writers for children in the period engaged in criticism, which also helped in changing publishers' attitudes. Using their cultural capital in full they fought to change the field of British children's literature.

CHAPTER 6: ARGUMENTS OVER SWEARING IN ROBERT WESTALL'S *THE MACHINE-GUNNERS*

After the initial class barrier of British children's book publishing was broken by the mid 1970s, books featuring working-class life and culture were published in increasing numbers. This change was particularly symbolized by the moment when Robert Westall's *The Machine-Gunners* (1975) won the Carnegie Medal. The Carnegie Medal, which is awarded by the Library Association, had been known as being relatively conservative in taste. Astonishment at the rapid change of British children's literature is marked in a letter from Westall's editor Marni Hodgkin to Westall:

> What an absolutely smashing Monday morning you have given us! Wow! People kept telling us that THE MACHINE-GUNNERS [sic] ought to get the Carnegie… but we didn't really pay them much mind for we thought the Library Assoc. wouldn't have the nerve. They're a pretty prim lot – or have been up to now. Maybe this is the dawn of a great new day! (Hodgkin letter to Westall, 17 May 1976)

As the editor's letter indicates, Macmillan published *The Machine-Gunners*, knowing it was a radical novel which could potentially be controversial. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Macmillan was at the time a rare children's book publisher which actively published books about and for working-class children. Nippers and Topliner were published by Macmillan Education, while Robert Westall's first novel, *The Machine-Gunners* was by Macmillan Children's Books. Although these two were different divisions, correspondence in Aidan Chambers and Robert Westall archives show that editors in children's book departments of these two often worked in collaboration. For instance, as was shown in Chapter 3, when Westall worked with his *Fathom Five*, his editor asked the opinion of Aidan Chambers, who was then Topliner's editor. Therefore, even though Marni Hodgkin herself was a member of the established middle-class, she and her team had much more understanding or tolerance of working-class culture than the average middle-class children's book editor. Generally, reactions to *The Machine-Gunners* "were pretty well polarized" (Triggs 12). On the one hand, the novel was highly praised for its literary quality and thrilling story. Yet it "still causes

problems to many librarians and teachers" and other adult readers (Thwaite 125).[1] An article in *Books for Keeps* in 1983 rightly attributes the reaction in the 1970s to its depiction of class: "There were those who were shocked by its uncompromising realism, its strong language and its firm delineation of the British class system from the inside" (Triggs 12).

As this chapter shows, what was regarded as "strong language" or "bad language" in British children's literature in the 1970s, were closely related to depictions of working-class culture. Apparently in the 1970s, inclusion of the working-class in children's books were not directly criticized, but, instead, class signifiers such as language were criticized. For instance, soon after the announcement of the novel's award, a complaint letter from librarians appeared in the journal of The Library Association:

> We were distressed to find that violence and bad language should now be so acceptable, and indeed are sufficiently praiseworthy to be awarded a medal… The book has much bad language which is accepted as everyday speech by the children in the story, and the description of the violence are altogether too vivid. (P. Jones and seven librarians, letter, 497)

This letter never mentions "class". The question here is, what this "bad language which is accepted as everyday speech by the children" actually was. Although "violence" was also in a close relationship with working-class writing in the period, this chapter focuses on language to illustrate how the oppression of working-class culture operated in British children's literature. It is usually difficult to demonstrate a correlation between class culture and so-called "bad language". What makes *The Machine-Gunners* such a useful text is that, thanks to Puffin's attempts to reduce swearing in the novel, the nature of the words which were regarded as "the bad language" can be revealed and analysed.

In fact, the debate about swearing was confined not only to children's books. It was a part of wider class conflict seen in various media in the mid-twentieth century because, in Britain, attitudes about swearing have been where class difference vividly

[1] Reviews of *The Machine-Gunners* including ones appeared on local newspapers are collected in Robert Westall Archive, RW/12/03/01/01. See also *Children's Literature Reviews* Vol. 13 249-51.

appeared ever since "the rise of the middle-class in late seventeenth century England" (McEnery 72):

> It was through the goal of distinguishing itself from the lower classes that the middle-class began to seek a role of moral leadership... In doing so, the middle-class moral reformers identified bad language as something which was morally wrong and hence not a signifier of middle-class status. (McEnery 72).

Since the middle-class set the use of "bad language" as a class marker between them and the working-class, as Geoffrey Hughes (1991) argues, the middle-class was distinctively strict about swearing:

> within the English class system, both the upper- and the working-classes, preferring directness to euphemism in most things, maintain traditions of fairly heavy swearing, so that most of the 'four-letter' words thrive in these socially separated circles. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie maintains strict taboos against any such utterance. (Hughes 251)

In the 1960s and the 1970s, censorship and taboos of swearing were gradually relaxed, but still where the middle-class was predominant, such as in children's book publishing, swearing was unsurprisingly taboo, while the scholarship boy writers had different attitude about swearing due to their background and class identity. Therefore, in the period, the debate about swearing was frequently entailed when scholarship boy writers attempted to include working-class culture in British children's books.

The scholarship boy writers themselves were fully aware of this class conflict in the guise of debates over swearing. Chambers explains the language of British children's literature in relation to the cultural hierarchy of middle-class "Latin or French euphemisms" and working-class "Anglo-Saxon" words:

> The French we use when we want to be polite. So we talk about going to the toilet. Toilet is French. It's not Anglo-Saxon's. It's called a shit house in Anglo-Saxon. That's thought by the middle-class to be rude. Bad language. But it's not bad language. It's Anglo-Saxon... [In

> children's books] There are certain words, you don't use, because they're thought to be rude, or bad language. Because the primary, the dominant part of the culture linguistically, was Latin or French euphemisms, and the tradition of English children's writing used those Latin, polite, as we think of them, words. The demotic writers – including Lawrence actually – began to use the language that the ordinary Anglo-Saxon language users use and put it into a literary novel. Gradually, it was accepted in an adult novel, but not in a children's book [in the 1970s]. So that was another battle that was going on. (Chambers, personal interview)

As Alan Garner argued (see Chapter 4), English regional dialects – which were often spoken by the working-class – were thought to include more Anglo-Saxon origin words than Standard English or academic language, which included more Latin origin words (see Garner, "Fine Anger"; "Achilles in Altjira"). Although, according to Geoffrey Hughes, the idea that "'four letter words' are exclusively Anglo-Saxon in origin" is "the popular misconception" (24), the fact that "the equation of 'four-letter' and 'Anglo Saxon'" (Hughes 35) is widely seen in Britain endorses the relation between the working-class language and "bad language". This hierarchy of words was conditioned by the history of the class system in Britain. Garner, and other writers from the working-class, challenged the hierarchy and the restriction of words allowed in literary works, by using the vocabulary that was widely used by the working-class but was regarded as "bad language" by the middle-class.

Outside children's literature, the expansion of the vocabulary in English literature by working-class/scholarship boy writers can be seen in adults' literature in the mid twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, censorship concerned with taboo words was widely seen even in adult literature (Hughes 191). The trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960, in which scholarship boy scholars such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams were invited as witnesses and which Penguin eventually won, is an example of the class-bound censorship and the end of it. Words such as "fuck" had rarely been allowed to be in published books before *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. As Hoggart stated, "The first effect, when I first read it, was some shock, because they don't go into polite literature normally" (Rolph 98-99). Scholarship boy/working-class novels around 1960 also include considerable numbers of swearwords. As Chambers points out, however, the change of British adult literature

was not reflected in British children's literature until the scholarship boy writers for children fought their own battles, because of children's literature's closer relationship with education.

Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the scholarship boy writers for children were consciously widening the vocabulary allowed in British children's literature. In the case of Nippers, in the late 1960s, even a scene showing "one child saying to another child 'shut up'" (Berg, *Reading and Loving* 91) was regarded as inappropriate by some teachers. Even in books for older children, few swearwords were allowed. For instance, in 1965, Alan Garner's editor made him remove the word "bastard" from his manuscript for *Elidor* (Garner, *Signal Approach* 289). Some teachers also disliked "ungrammatical speech", such as "can't", because children's books were, in their views, supposed to be a model of "good" writing for children (Berg, "Nippers" LB/05/03/53). These examples indicate that, since children's literature was an important part of the cultural reproduction, its language was particularly strictly controlled by the dominant class. In other words, inclusion of subordinate languages in children's books was potentially an effective way to change the dominant culture. Therefore, Alan Garner was consciously changing "received English" by using non-standard English, the regional dialects, in his books (Garner, *Signal Approach* 283). Having been "beaten out" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 282) of his original language, the North-West Mercian, Garner attempted to change the language allowed in educational institutions by including the regional language in the mainstream children's books (Garner, *Signal Approach* 283). Westall's usage of swearwords in *The Machine-Gunners* can be seen as an expansion of this movement. As will be shown, it marked the inclusion of a particular kind of swearwords which served as a class signifier into the very mainstream British children's literature, signified by the Carnegie Medal and Puffin.

Of course, few children's writers, including scholarship boys who pioneered the usage, believed that swearing could be used indiscriminately in children's books. Although Chambers and Garner discussed the potential usage of swearwords in children's books, they felt that it had to be carefully controlled (see Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 105-06). Chambers was cautious of indiscriminately supplying teenagers with adult working-class novels such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, because such adult novels include swearing and disturbing themes without consideration for young readers (see *Reluctant Reader* 83-84). This attitude was also shared by Westall. In fact, Westall, as a father and an experienced teacher, carefully controlled the

amount and the level of swearing in the book. He states that “I allowed the boys in my book *minimal* swearing” (“Defence of – and by – Author” 39). In *The Machine-Gunners*, therefore, most offensive four letter words, such as “fuck”, are not used. Illustratively, in the sequel to *The Machine-Gunners*, *Fathom Five*, which contains similar kinds and amounts of swearing, there is a scene narrator describes as “Dad... said something unprintable” (*FF* 68). As this example shows, Westall did not simply reflect the reality of the working-class, but carefully chose words acceptable for a children’s book.

Westall’s usage of swearwords in his book was not simply motivated by his desire to depict realistic working-class characters, but was also a child-centred decision. In his own defence for *The Machine-Gunners*, Westall explains that he used certain amount of swearing in his novel because real children in state schools would use even more swearing “as part of the male adolescent’s toughness ethic” (Westall, “Defence of” 39) and “any boy who does not swear today gets himself regarded as a freak or Establishment lackey. And who wants to read books about freaks and Establishment lackeys?” (Westall, “Defence of” 39). This statement endorses Westall’s view that children’s books should reflect real children’s – or ordinary state school pupils’ – views and tastes so that the books could appeal to children who were reluctant to read the conservative middle-class kind of children’s books. However, in the 1960s and the 1970s, what was at the heart of arguments over working-class language in children’s books was not whether real children would use them or not, but was whether adults in children’s book publishing would accept the language or not. As will be shown, Westall’s sense of appropriate language as a scholarship boy was considerably different from the one of professional middle-class people in the mid-twentieth century. This engendered the controversy.

Macmillan Version and Puffin Version: Puffin’s Removal of Swearwords from *The Machine-Gunners*

Although Macmillan’s editors must have known that some adult readers would react against the book’s swearwords, manuscripts in the Westall archive show that they did not attempt to reduce swearing in the novel. I conducted an approximately 20 per cent sample test of *The Machine-Gunners*’ manuscript in the Westall archive at Seven Stories (the manuscript consists of 2 books and 1 file of loose papers): pages with numbers ending in 0 or 1 were checked; in addition, I checked some pages where

swearing is frequently used in the published novel. Although there are numerous alterations, the amount of swearing was about the same, or in some cases increased in the first Macmillan Children's Books edition in this range. The only instance of the speech being modified to reduce offensiveness is "Nazi sod" (*MG* manuscript RW/01/01/01 10), which becomes "Nazi pigs" in the published version (*MG* 1975, 12). However, in other places, swearing actually *increased* in the published book. For example, "bloody" in Audrey's daddy's speech in the published version is not seen in the manuscript (*MG* Manuscript RW/01/01/03 101; *MG* 1975, 159). In the following part, three times as many as "sod offs" are seen in the published version:

> Manuscript:
>
> > "Go back. Get away Leave us alone", screamed Chas, his face [?working].
> > "Go back or we'll shoot" Suddenly he hated them all. He went in shouting "Sod off, you bastards. Leave us alone". (*MG* manuscript RW/01/01/03 124)
>
> Macmillan Children's Books first edition:
>
> > "Go back, sod off. Leave us alone", screamed Chas. "Sod off or we'll *shoot*". Suddenly, he hated them all. He went on and on shouting. "Go away! Go away! Sod off, you bastards. Leave us *alone*!" (*MG* 1975, 184)

These alterations show that Westall consciously added swearing when he prepared the manuscript for publication, and that Macmillan Children's Books was not opposed to its usage in the novel. It was probably because Macmillan understood that the swearing used in *The Machine-Gunners* was, as will be shown later, Robert Westall and Chambers regarded as words widely used by working-class people in their everyday lives in the 1940s, when the novel is set.

Overall, in the published version, characters tended to speak less standardized English than in the manuscript. For example, the first speech of Chas's Dad in the published book is "You remember that lass in the greengrocer's?"(*MG*, 1975 7). However, in the manuscript he uses "girl" instead of "lass" (*MG*, manuscript RW/01/01/01 1). Clogger's Glaswegian is more emphasized in the published version to highlight his Scottish working-class background:

Manuscript:

> "Easy! I left a note for ma aunt while they were snoozing off their dinner. I cycled to Alnwick and posted a postcard from their [sic]. They'll think I'm across Carter Bar and into Scotland by this time". (*MG*, manuscript 27)

Macmillan Children's Books:

> "Easy! Ah left a note for ma auntie whilst they were snoozin' off their dinner. Ah biked tey Otterburn an' posted a postcard there. They'll think Ah'm away ower the Scottish border by noo". (95-96)

As a rule, Westall included more working-class speech characteristics when he revised the manuscript for publication. This is in contrast with what happened when Puffin published the novel a few years later. The actual process of this revision is unclear, because of an absence of correspondence before the publication. However, these alterations suggest that either Westall became more conscious of the inclusion of working-class culture and/or Macmillan's encouraging attitudes let him be released from the self-imposed restriction of the language allowed for children's books. As has been shown in Chapter 5, publishers had power indirectly to restrict what could be produced as children's books. As will be shown, overall the case of *The Machine-Gunners* illustrates the detailed process of how the power of publishers controlled production of children's books directly and indirectly.

In spite of its reputation for controversy, offers for the paperback rights to *The Machine-Gunners* came not only from Macmillan's own paperback label, Topliner, but also from Penguin Group's Puffin. As Lucy Pearson (2010) details, these two paperback labels had very different characters. Puffin's editor, Kaye Webb, was respected for her more middle-class selections. For Puffin, the inclusion of *The Machine-Gunners* in its list was, in fact, a radical attempt to mark a significant shift (see Wright 260). Since Puffin was a much more reputed label than Topliner, Westall chose Puffin; for his career as a novelist, his first novel being published by Puffin carried symbolic value and prestige. However, unlike Macmillan Children's Books, Puffin could not tolerate the swearwords in *The Machine-Gunners*. A letter from Kaye Webb to Westall (held in the

Westall archive at Seven Stories) shows Puffin's view on swearwords which were accepted by Macmillan Children's Books:

> One of the things I had wanted to talk to you about at our abortive lunch was THE MACHINE GUNNERS, and getting rid of some of the swearing in it. I know this sounds a bit lilly-livered but now that we have the Federation of Puffin School Bookclubs selling direct into schools and to the children... with just a short blurb attached to a picture of the book, we are running into problems with prissy parents writing to headmasters. (Webb, Letter to Westall 10 Jan. 1978 RW/14/01/20)

Although the impact on school sales was Webb's excuse for removing the swearwords, as has been shown, Topliner sold books which included some swearwords to schools. Still, Puffin's adverse reaction to swearing was unsurprising. While Macmillan Education was keen to cultivate books for state primary and secondary modern school pupils – "average children", in their words, which, in reality, meant mainly working-class and lower middle-class children – Puffin was more popular among established middle-class and upper-class families. In an interview by Kim Reynolds and Nicholas Tucker, Kaye Webb proudly states:

> I think we set this high standard and the whole idea was that you could trust a Puffin. I can remember meeting the Duchess of Kent. She said, 'I don't know what I'd have done without Puffin', she said, 'I felt so safe'. And most of the parents who wrote in and said that (Webb, *Oral Archives* 374).

This type of trust is what Bourdieu terms "symbolic capital"; that is, "a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits" (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 75). To keep this trust, Puffin had to be conservative in relation to children's behaviours and language in books, although in the case of *The Machine-Gunners*, Webb herself felt uncomfortable with the swearwords (Wright 260-66). Webb's letter to Westall decisively says, "the man who heads the Federation and selects the books read it beforehand and decided all the bloodies, bastards and sods etc. made it rather a gamble. (Does 'gyet' mean the same as 'git'? If

so I think it's harmless.)" (Webb, letter to Westall 10 Jan. 1978). The tone of this letter suggests that reducing of swearing was not a recommendation, but rather an inarguable decision which had already made by the reputable paperback publisher.

The Removed Swearwords

Puffin edition of *The Machine-Gunners* was published in 1977 with reduced amounts of swearing. The process of removal of the swearing is not clear, but the quality of editing – for instance, a change from "a bloody-minded neighbour who did sneaky things" to "a sneaky minded neighbour who did sneaky things" – suggests that it was not by Westall's hand, but rather by a copyeditor who was less concerned with literary quality than with the quantitative number of certain swearwords. Since, according to Westall's correspondence, in this period paperback publishers often altered his manuscript without consulting with him, it is likely that this editing was undertaken without Westall's full supervision (Westall, Letter to Lynnet, 4 May 1989 RW/14/06/03-08). I compared the first Macmillan edition and the Puffin edition to clarify which words Puffin removed. Words removed or changed from the first edition are listed in Table 1. Since, in *The Machine-Gunners*, indirect speech (i.e. that not enclosed in quotation marks) is frequently used, the following data include words in indirect speech. Speakers of particularly frequently removed/changed swearwords are shown in Table 2. These words, removed from the original edition, give us an idea of what was regarded as "bad language".

Table 1: The removed swearwords

Words	Removed/changed (times)	Kept (times)
bloody, bloody-minded	13	14
bugger, buggers	7	8
sod, sods, sodding	6	6
frigg, frigging	2	0
By God, Bleeding Christ	2	3

Although in the letter from Webb, “bastard” was also listed as a target swearword, it seems Puffin agreed to accept it since, no use of the words was changed. North-East dialect was also not exempt. As is indicated in Webb’s letter, “gyet” was allowed. This is at least in part because, although characters speak Geordie, the language is moderated and pure dialect words are rarely used in *The Machine-Gunners*. The words most often removed were various forms of “bloody”, “bugger” and “sod”, but not all instances were excised. For example, while 13 usages of “bloody” were removed, 14 were retained in the Puffin edition. Overall, about half the instances of swearing were removed or changed into what were regarded as more acceptable alternatives by the editor, such as “damn”, “gyet”, “swine”, “hell” or “faffing”. The removed/changed words included various forms, such as noun, adjective, verb, etc., which was a characteristic of English swearing.[2] For example, “sod”, the origin of which is sodomite, has the following variations in the published novel: “the sodding Germans are coming” (*MG* 1975 156) “Sod Winston Churchill” (*MG* 1975 159), “the Nazi sod!” (*MG* 1975 174), and “Sod off” (*MG* 1975 142). There is not a distinguishable criterion for which usage of the swearwords were removed. In addition, sometimes the offensiveness of the speeches were not necessarily reduced by the editing process. Examples include changing “Dozey sods” (*MG* 1975 27) to “Dozey swine” (*MG* 1977 26), or from “Because I bloody say not” (*MG* 1975 73) to “Because I damned well say not” (*MG* 1977 72). Overall, it seems that Puffin rather haphazardly selected instances in order to reduce the *overall number* of certain swearwords.

On the other hand, as Table 2 shows, decisions about which character swore were more consistent.

Table 2: Users of “bloody”, “bugger” and “sod”

Who	Removed/changed	Kept
Children (total)	**9**	**9**
Chas	5	6
Cem	2	2
Clogger	1	1
Other (one of children)	1	0
Adults (total)	**19**	**19**

[2] For general flexibility and usage of swearwords, see Hughes 31.

Parents and family	11	8
Chas's Dad	3	4
Chas's Nana (grandmother)	4	3
Chas's Grandad	0	1
Audrey's Daddy	4	0
Other Adults		
Neighbours and Locals	2	3
Police men	2	0
British soldiers (Navy and Home Guard)	3	1
Polish army officers	0	7
Stan (teacher/Home Guard officer)	1	0

Although less space is given to adult characters in the novel, alterations to their use of swearwords were more than twice as frequent as in the case of child characters. This result is easily explained, however, since adult characters swear more frequently than children: children use "bloody", "bugger", and "sod" only 18 times (9 removed/changed), while adults use these three swearwords 38 times (19 removed/changed).[3] Although, as has been shown, the librarians accused children in the novel of using "bad language", child characters merely speak the milder version of the language of the community which their parents and grandparents speak. The fact that child characters swear less reflected the reality that working-class grammar school pupils – all child characters in the novel are grammar school pupils – were likely to speak "better" language than their parents, because, generally, grammar schools discouraged children from using dialects and swearing (see Part I). Also, reflecting the real world, the users of the swearwords are class-bound in the novel. All children who swear in the novel are from the working-class; the middle-class boy Nicky never uses the words, "bloody", "sod", and "bugger".

On the contrary it seems that speakers of the swearwords were carefully taken into consideration. Chas's parents and grandparents, who belongs to "the respectable working-class", frequently use "bloody", "sod" and "bugger", but only about half of the

[3] In addition to this, actually adults use "By God" 4 times (1 changed, 3 left by Puffin's editing) and "Bleeding Christ" 1 time (changed).

usages of these words were removed. On the other hand, every time that Audrey's father, who is lower-middle-class, uses these three words, it was changed in the Puffin edition. However, this does not necessarily mean that middle-class speakers' swearing is more frequently removed, because middle-class speakers more often use other swearwords felt by the editor to be more acceptable, such as "damn". In the same vein, British policemen's and British soldiers' swearing are rarely tolerated in the Puffin edition (kept only 1 out of 6), while Polish soldiers' usage of "bloody" (7 times) in their broken English are all retained. This tendency suggests that the editor, whoever it was, was keen to correct the language of characters who represented authority, and should serve as positive role models for children.

The distribution of swearwords edited by Puffin overall highlight that what Puffin could not tolerate was not so much the "bad language" spoken by children, but the amount of swearing in the speech of ordinary adults in Garmouth (the fictionalized Tynemouth). Since *The Machine-Gunners* is Westall's semi-autobiographical novel, it reflects the reality that swearwords such as "bloody", "bugger" and "sod" were frequently used in the North-East working-class life of the 1940s. Aidan Chambers, recalling his formative years, confirms that, in the North-East of England, "sod, bugger and bloody were frequently used by working men" (Chambers, Email to Takiuchi, 2 Mar. 2013). The original usage of swearing in *The Machine-Gunners* largely corresponds with what Chambers recalls:

> My father often told people to bugger off or cursed some bloody annoyance or called people he didn't like sods. He was far from alone in this! But he never used 'fuck' – at least in my hearing. (Chambers, Email to Takiuchi, 2 Mar. 2013)

It was realistic that working-class characters in the novel use these kind of swearwords, particularly during the stressful time of the war. Therefore, as has been shown, Macmillan Children's Books, which was consciously including working-class culture in children's books, tolerated the amount of swearing, because they understood it not simply as swearing but as working-class language. In this respect, the editorial dispute over the swearing in *The Machine-Gunners* was an issue of inclusion of working-class language in British children's books.

Indeed, the swearwords which Puffin's editor targeted were particularly class-bound swearwords, which were widely used by the working-class but rarely by the middle-class. For example, "bloody", which was the most frequently used and removed/changed swearword in *The Machine-Gunners*, was historically a signifier of the working-class. According to the OED entry in 1887, "bloody" was "now constantly in the mouths of the lowest classes, but by respectable people considered "a horrid word", on a par with obscene or profane language" (quoted in Hughes 172; J. Green 109).[4] Although today, "bloody" is regarded as "very mild" swearing (McEnery 30), in England, throughout the early twentieth century, the bourgeois taboo of "bloody" continued: "bloody" was rarely printed in the press and the book, and was perceived as an unprintable swearword (Hughes 186, 250). In 1936, "bloody" was still described as "most offensive to polite ears" (Wyld 387; Hughes 250). In the 1960s and the 1970s, when ordinary lives of working-class people were often featured in various media, "bloody" was already seen in some books and TV programmes, but was still controversial. For instance, a BBC comedy, *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965-75), which featured the foul mouthed Alf Garnett, whose speech was punctuated by the use of "bloody" and other swearwords, was attacked by the conservative campaigner, Mary Whitehouse (McEnery 114-16).

When Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was adapted into a film in 1960, the British Board of Film Censors complained about swearwords in the film (see Hitchcock *Working-class Fiction* 80-81). The majority of swearwords of which The British Board of Film Censors disapproved largely corresponds with the swearwords removed from *The Machine-Gunners* by Puffin: these consists of "'bogger', 'Christ' or 'sod'", "'bleddys', 'bloodies', 'bleedings' and 'bastards'" (Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 81). Particularly "bugger", which in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is spelled as "bogger" to indicate regional intonation, was the word which The British Board of Film Censors "simply cannot accept" and "have not yet accepted the use" (Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 81). The explanation for this was that:

[4] In the late nineteenth-century in the Unites States and Australia, "bloody" was already not regarded as indecent, as in England (Hughes 171-72). Other frequently used swearwords in *The Machine-Gunners*, "bugger" and "sod", were also very British profanities. These words were not considered obscene in the United States already in the early twentieth century, and today are uncommon in American English (Hughes 169; Dundes).

> I [one of the board] know that 'bugger' is freely used in such places as the public bars of provincial pubs, but I doubt whether the average working man uses it much in his own home in front of his wife, and that ought to be more the standard for us to adopt, even in films obviously designed for the factory-worker section of society. (Quoted in Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 80)

This statement first shows that how little the member of The British Board of Film Censors, and generally middle-class people, who controlled the media at the time, knew about working-class usage of swearwords. They did not have the knowledge that working men used the word in front of wives and children. More importantly, similarly to Puffin, even if The British Board of Film Censors knew that the use of the swearwords was realistic, they did not want to include the words: "I appreciate that words of this kind are normal in the speech of the type of people that the film is about", but "I hope... that this script will be revised and these words omitted" (quoted in Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 81). That is, the decision was not based on whether real people *used* these words, but rather on whether or not the dominant class allowed them. To sustain the status quo, the dominant class (or the people who dominated the field) had to exclude the taste and views of the working-class or the newcomers because, according to Bourdieu, such new taste could change the whole structure of the field (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 57-58, 108). Therefore, Hitchcock, analysing the "overt class prejudices that runs through" the reports (Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 81), points out that "it is as much who is using the language as the language itself that is the issue here" (Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 81). Swearwords frequently used by middle-class people could be tolerated, because it assured the dominant taste of the field, but swearwords solely used by working-class people were disallowed in films and public spaces. Puffin's editorial attitude reflected these established, middle-class attitudes towards working-class swearwords in the mid-twentieth century. Swearwords such as "bloody", "bugger" and "sod" were targeted as unacceptable language for children's books not simply because they were swearwords, but rather that they were "working-class swearwords". Conversely, middle-class swearwords such as "damn" could more easily be tolerated.

The case of *The Machine-Gunners* highlights how the power to exclude working-class writing operated in publishing of the time. For Puffin's editors, they were

merely removing unacceptable swearing. The librarians who criticised the award of *The Machine-Gunners* believed they were simply attacking "bad language" in children's books. They were unlikely to recognise that they were attempting to exclude working-class culture from children's books; it was not recognised as *class culture*, but as *bad culture*. This is the way in which class operates culturally, and how working-class culture was excluded from mainstream children's literature (and also adult's literature). Even if no one could be said *directly* to be against working-class writings, still the exclusion of working-class culture could perfectly be operated in British children's book publishing because what the dominant class needed to suppress in the subordinate culture was merely the unawareness of their own class-bound tastes and judgements.

At the same time, the fact that Puffin's editors did not remove all swearwords from working-class characters' speech highlights the change of British children's literature. It was, probably at least in part, because Westall strongly objected to the removal of swearing. However, the reduced number of swearwords that were allowed to remain in the Puffin edition demonstrates the shift. By the time of the publication of *The Machine-Gunners*, Puffin's editor Kaye Webb already recognised that her linguistic tastes, the strict attitude against swearing, was becoming old-fashioned in the industry (Wright 260). In the interview by Reynolds and Tucker, Webb also mentioned the difficulty of editing the swearwords: "It was very difficult because one had to acknowledge that this was happening and that writers were deliberately conveying what they wanted to convey" (*Oral Archives* 374). In the mid-1970s, however uncomfortable the children's book editors personally felt, they knew that it was the language actually used by the people, and understood that they had to reflect the real life of working-class children in children's books. This change, as will be further discussed in the next chapter, was a result of long-term efforts by scholarship boy writers and critics since the late 1960s.

Process of Incorporation and Decrease of Swearing

As Raymond Williams considers, emergent culture – such as the culture formed by the scholarship boys – is always incorporated into hegemony (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 123-27). The incorporation can take "a form of acceptance" (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 125), just as *The Machine-Gunners* was awarded the prestigious Carnegie Medal and became absorbed into the British children's literature

mainstream. In return for the acceptance, however, works belong to the emerging culture often face power to reduce and alter its challenging nature (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 124-26). Westall gives an illustration of this process:

> [After the success of T*he Machine-Gunners*] The amount of swearing in my books dropped; the intellectual content, the scholarship and research grew. I began writing books for the children of publishers, librarians and the literary gent of *The Times*... [sic] now that I am at last conscious of what I was doing, I look round and see so many "good" children's books written for the same bloody audience. Books that gain splendid reviews, win prizes, make reputations and are unreadable by the majority of children. (Westall, "How Real" 37-38)

Here, in the late 1970s, Westall reflects on his response to being accepted, referring to his second and third novels, *The Wind Eye* (1976) and *The Watch House* (1977). In this article, Westall saw the amount of swearing in his books as an indicator of working-class culture. In other words, for him, ultimately the inclusion of "bad language" in British children's literature was a part of class struggle against the dominant class and culture.[5] Being aware of this aspect, Westall was proud to have included swearing in *The Machine-Gunners*, particularly after he realized that the majority of "good" children's books without swearing were "written for the same bloody audience", "twenty percent of people" who "own eighty per cent of the property" (Westall, "How Real" 37-38). However, because the success of *The Machine-Gunners* encouraged him to write "good" (i.e. middle-class) children's books, the amount of swearing dropped in *The Wind Eye* and *The Watch House* commensurately.

As will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, since the reviewing process of British children's books in the 1960s and the 1970s was largely dominated by the middle-class, Westall's conventional books featuring the middle-class indeed gained much better reputations than the books he wrote for "eighty per cent of kids" ("How Real" 38). For example, a reviewer for *Children's Book Bulletin*, writing in 1980, averred that *The Watch House* was "arguably Westall's finest book", while the sequel to *The Machine-Gunners*, *Fathom Five* (1979), in which he returned to the working-class setting, was

[5] Generally, "bad language" was used "as a challenge to authority" (McEnery 104) in the mid-twentieth century.

reviewed as "on every level a dreadful book" (30). As Bourdieu points out, critics have certain influence on the production of arts and literature (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 35). To be accepted by publishers and to be well-received by critics, writers were encouraged to write unchallenging styles of books; in this way, the power to incorporate radical writers into the dominant culture as unchallenging forms worked. Therefore, writing for working-class children was not an easy task, even for writers from the working-class. A scholarship boy writer like Westall was, due to his high literacy, capable of writing middle-class style novels.[6] To remain loyal to the working-class, Westall needed conscious determination to "write a really dreadful book... one that will get me dragged to the head critic's study and given six of the best" ("How Real" 38).

As Bourdieu states, usually artists "cannot ignore the value attributed to them, that is, the position they occupy within the hierarchy of cultural legitimacy" (Field of Cultural Production 136). Westall, however, as this passage shows, was able to be aware of this power and make the decision to remain loyal to his roots. Westall was not alone in this regard. Most scholarship boy writers for children were conscious of the processes detailed above. In the late 1970s, Alan Garner criticised "a movement to turn books for children into tracts for authority" in the British children's book industry (Garner, *Signal Approach* 327). In this period, the group of scholarship boy writers in British children's literature shared similar ideas and a loose sense of unity to transform what was then bourgeois British children's literature (Chambers, personal interview). As will be discussed in the next chapter, the scholarship boy writers actively engaged in criticism to change the middle-class nature of children's book reviewing. Due to their activities, the field of British children's literature which engendered the critical values of works was changing. Outside of children's literature, numerous scholarship boy intellectuals, whose representations are Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, highlighted the experience of scholarship boys and gave insight to the power which culturally suppressed the working-class. These individual activities in every field, aggregating into the emergent culture of scholarship boys and girls, were challenging hegemony of Britain in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Class-consciousness of the 1960s and the 1970s was, in this respect, an important condition for the vigorous activities of scholarship boy writers for children. In

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[6] Although Westall did not major in English literature, his abundant knowledge of English literature is demonstrated in his correspondence in Robert Westall Archive. See Westall, Letter to Hodgkin, 5 Aug. 1989. MH/01/07.

terms of the class struggle, therefore, the 1970s was a heyday for scholarship boys. However, in line with the change of society in the late twentieth century heading to "classless" Britain, in which, ostensibly, class discourses lost power (Cannadine 13-15, Driscoll 1-3), eventually the power to suppress "swearing" became overwhelming for Westall. In adult's literature, by the 1980s, the majority of the emergent writers from the working-class was already losing fame or excluded from the canon (Chambers and Prior 135; Driscoll 4; Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 89; Laing 81). In children's literature, this kind of direct exclusion of working-class/scholarship writers from the mainstream did not occur. However, in this supposedly "classless" society, scholarship boy writers for children were losing their vital power to defend the inclusion of working-class culture, while the suppression of certain parts of working-class culture, such as swearing, continued. The majority of the scholarship boy writers for children were incorporated into the dominant part of the field, becoming less "working-class" writers. Correspondence in the Robert Westall Archive indicate that Westall had constant battles with editors over the inclusion of swearing and other radical topics. In the 1970s and the 1980s, his works had often been altered by his editors, and some paperback editors even made "alterations to the text without letting you know till you get the proofs" (Westall, Letter to Lynnet, 4 May 1989 RW/14/06/03-08). Due to the constant editorial disputes, by the late 1980s, Westall already abandoned the battle to include swearing. He wrote to an editor: "The good news is that I have given way entirely about swearing. I am getting rather tired of swearing myself. Let sex and violence be enough!" (Westall, Letter to Lynnet, 4 May 1989).[7] Westall's change of mind was probably in part because, by the late 1980s, swearwords in his books did not signify class as it did in the mid-twentieth century; the swearwords used in the 1940s, the period Westall most often depicted, were already incorporated into the dominant culture or forgotten by the new generation of working-class people. The concessions over swearing in the 1980s and the 1990s, therefore, might not change the challenging elements of his novels.

The problem, however, is that the legacy of this struggle has slipped from view today due to the lack of attention to the scholarship boy writers' attempts and class issues of British children's literature. For instance, today, the available edition of *The Machine-Gunners* is – even though it is a Macmillan Children's Books' paperback –

[7] In previous letters to the same editor in 1988, Westall also mentions it: "I don't mind about the revision of the swearing" (Letter to Lynnet, 22 April 1988); see also Letter to Lynnet 19 May 1988.

based on Puffin's edition, with only half the amount of original swearing.[8] Few have cared to restore the swearing, presumably because it has been regarded as merely "bad language". In other words, historically, middle-class dominance of the field of British children's literature has effectively undermined at least a part of the class struggle Westall fought, even though, at the same time, Westall changed the field by including some working-class culture. The case of *The Machine-Gunners* highlights that literary works are not simply products of writers' free imagination, but are produced through the relation between the writer and the institutions such as publishers, which usually embody the dominant culture of the society. The alterations between the manuscript in the archive, Macmillan's first edition, and Puffin's edition (still in use today) suggest that, ultimately, it was publishers' attitudes that had a marked effect on the text. This means that, as for working-class literature (and most literature of subordinate groups, in this light), published works often do not straightforwardly show the writer's ideology and intentions. To appreciate radical writers such as scholarship boys, therefore, we always need to revisit the time to examine conditions of the field of the production.

[8] *The Machine-Gunners*, Macmillan Children's Books, 2001 edition and 2012 edition.

CHAPTER 7: CLASS AND CHILDREN'S BOOK CRITICISM

> The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work. Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it, which is thus designated as a worthy object of legitimate discourse... and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art. (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 35-36)

While publishers directly conditioned the emergence of working-class novels, it is also important to consider the role of critics when thinking about the production and reception of children's books. After all, as Bourdieu states in the above quotation, criticism is one of the conditions of the production of literature. Book reviews and reviewers had a major influence on children's publishers (Colwell, *Oral Archive* 117). Prestigious children's book awards, such as the Carnegie Medal, were also "important for the kind of publishing they confirm" (N. Chambers, "Book Post" Sep. 1979, 176). As Peter Hunt (1991) states, ultimately, "Critics create the intellectual climate which produces the text" of children's literature (*Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* 143). 1970 saw two important journals dedicated to children's literature launched. One was *Children's Literature in Education*, an academic journal of children's literature, which continues to this day; the other was *Signal*, founded by the scholarship boy, Aidan Chambers, and his wife, Nancy Chambers. While *Children's Literature in Education* has established its position in the field as an academic journal, *Signal*, which was described as a "magazine" of children's literature, did not. Abandoning the ambition to be established and authentic, however, *Signal* had a role in changing the field of British children's book criticism. This chapter looks first at issues surrounding children's book criticism in the 1960s and the 1970s. It goes on to discuss how *Signal* supported the efforts of scholarship boy writers to change British children's literature by reshaping children's book criticism.

In 1960s and 1970s Britain, there were few full-time professional critics of children's literature. Many critics and book reviewers simultaneously acted as children's publishers, editors and/or writers (Pearson 23-24; Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 123-24). For instance, critics such as Frank Eyre worked in publishing; Geoffrey Trease, Jill Paton Walsh, Wallace Hildick, John Rowe Townsend, David Rees and Robert Leeson were novelists as well as critics. Some were novelists before they began reviewing, while others, such as Townsend and Leeson, were journalists who reviewed children's books and later went on to become professional children's writers. Several operated across three or more spheres of the British children's book industry. Philippa Pearce was an editor, a writer, and a critic, whereas Aidan Chambers was a teacher-librarian, an editor, a writer and a critic. In some journals, it was common for librarians and teachers to review children's books (Pearson 24). Children's book reviews tended to reflect reviewers' interests and roles as well as their social and ideological biases.

Robert Leeson described the children's book world of the 1960s and the 1970s as a "self-satisfied" "small world" where reviewing was done by a "fairly small circle" which mainly concerned middle-class families (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 123; "Boom" 5). Although in the 1970s, the field of British children's book criticism saw intense struggles due to the increasing number of scholarship boy critics/writers, in the 1960s, the field was largely dominated by middle-class/upper-class values and tastes. During that decade, the Carnegie Medal clearly favoured the books published by Oxford University Press, which the writer, critic, anthologiser and broadcaster Edward Blishen described as interested in "the aristocratic reader" (Blishen, Oral Archives "Interview with Edward Blishen" 75; see also Barker, "Prize-Fighting" 46). This bias meant that, during the 1960s and 1970s, scholarship boy writers were often frustrated with critics and book reviewers. Even as the situation began to change in the 1970s due to the increasing engagement of scholarship boy writers with criticism, most scholarship boy writers felt that critics and reviewers generally gave more favourable reviews to traditional novels with middle-class settings (Leeson, personal interview). For instance, Leeson recalled that, "In a couple of cases, the same reviewers who praised my historical novels were somewhat slighting about my modern stories", stories which featured the working-class (Leeson, "Faces over my Typewriter" 157). Similarly, as has been shown, Robert Westall found that his books that were more middle-class in style

and concerns, notably *The Wind Eye* and *The Watch House*, received better reviews than his more radical novels about working-class children (Westall, "How Real").

This perhaps unintentional critical bias endorses Bourdieu's analysis of the field of cultural production. Critical discourse does not only judge the value of the work, but is also an affirmation of the critic's legitimacy to judge the work (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 35-36). Writing a book review, a critic affirms the legitimacy of his/her cultural capital and position in the literary field. For instance, *The Wind Eye*, which features a middle-class family (the father is an academic), and includes "staple constituents of English children's fiction" (Salway, "Fantastically Familiar" *CLR* 252), was preferred by critics because it confirmed the dominant taste and culture in the field, which assured the legitimacy of critics who possessed the dominant taste. For the same reason, to secure their own position, established critics typically attempt to exclude or dismiss work geared to different tastes. Since critics' taste is inevitably shaped by class habitus, they are likely to suppress the emergence of writing which belongs to a different class. However, this process usually works at unconscious and personal levels because of the nature of class habitus (see Bourdieu *Field of Cultural Production* 133). Even though Ann Thwaite gave a favourable review to *Fathom Five*, she acknowledged at the time that "I prefer Robert Westall exploring the relationship between truth, belief and legend (for instance in *The Wind Eye*)" (Thwaite 125). This "personal preference" works, unconsciously, as political and ideological make-up. As long as middle-class "truth, belief and legend" were central to books, they can avert their eyes from subjects such as class and racial conflict in modern Britain. Thwaite shows herself to be self-aware when she distinguishes between her preference and her evaluation of *Fathom Five*. However, Thwaite was rather exceptional – most children's book critics in the 1960s and the 1970s could not separate their class-bound tastes and ideologies from their critical evaluations. Due to the condition of the cultural field, class-bound taste and judgement were often recognized as legitimate literary taste, or as objective evaluation.

According to Bourdieu, "Critics serve their readerships so well only because the homology between their position in the intellectual field and their readership's position within the dominant-class field is the basis of an objective connivance" (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 94). In the case of British children's literature, however, the relationship between readers and critics was not as straightforward as it was for literature more widely, since most children's books were purchased by adults. In the first half of the twentieth century, the audience of British children's literature was

thought to be white middle-class children (Leeson, *Children's Books and Class Society*). However, as has been shown in Chapter 5, in the 1960s and the 1970s, some advocates in the field were enlarging images of child readers, including working-class and non-white children as intended readers of children's books. In the 1960s, about 85 per cent of children's book sales were to institutions such as schools and public libraries, and therefore teachers' and librarians' opinions were influential (Kamm, "Children's Book Publishing and the Educational Market" 31). Librarians had their bulletin, *Library Association Record*, where, as was shown in Chapter 6, ordinary librarians sent letters for publication. Although some teachers, librarians and parents who had progressive views contributed to the radical change of British children's literature (see Chapter 5; Leeson, personal interview), those who complained to publishers were more often conservative. Even in the 1970s, most publishers remained keen to meet their middle-class customers' demands, and often overlooked working-class children as potential readers of their books. Summing up the situation in the late 1970s, Alan Garner, who had been involved in disputes with his editors because they wanted to remove some of the elements of working-class life in his novels on the grounds that, "teachers and librarians might object" to them (Garner, *Signal Approach* 326), stated that "if the adult can dictate to the editor and the editor can commandeer the author, then where is the story? Where is the child?" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 327). For Garner, the kind of adults' interference was an obstacle to achieving his literary aim of incorporating rural working-class culture into British children's books (Garner, *Signal Approach* 327).

This condition of the field meant that children's book critics were more likely to be influenced by adult purchasers such as teachers, librarians and parents rather than child readers. Indeed, few book reviews were written for children, so the views of these adult opinion-makers heavily influenced criticism. In correspondence with Chambers in 1967, Garner accused critics of turning books into "teacher-fodder" or "material through which to make the correct responses for the gaining of approbation" (Letter to Chambers, 13 July 1967, 1). As was discussed in Chapter 5, children's books had been used in the way to assimilate children into the dominant culture by some teachers. Garner criticised some adults' attempts to use children's books as a tool to reproduce the dominant culture and to produce followers of authority (see Garner, *Signal Approach* 327). In the 1960s, such "Bad criticism" which exposed the "rotten heart of education" (Letter to Chambers, 13 July 1967, 1) in children's books made Garner "anti-critic" (Garner, Letter to Chambers, 13 July 1967, 1).

This kind of frustration was not unique to Garner, since the field of children's book criticism was highly politicised in the 1960s and the 1970s. Depictions of race, class, and gender were particularly targeted by both conservative and radical activists, due to the importance of books and reading as educational tools. Wallace Hildick (1970) claimed that when he discussed the lack of books for working-class children in the 1960s, he received fierce reactions:

> At all events, letters and counter-articles began to fly about like shrapnel – some accusing me of wanting to bolshevize children's books, some praising what they considered to be my social democratic crusade, and few, if any, recognizing that all I wished to do was help fill a certain gap. (32)

Such reactions suggest that in the mid-twentieth century, many adults subconsciously regarded children's literature as an important political tool capable of influencing ideology and the dominant culture. Most scholarship boy writers were conscious of the role of children's literature in the cultural process of class reproduction, but most of them were also positively aware of the potential power of children's literature to change the class system. As Leeson states, "education is the key [for social mobility] – and the key to education is reading" (Leeson, "Robert Leeson Replies", back cover). Therefore, they actively engaged in not only creative writing but also criticism with a view to changing the children's book industry.

The movement to increase children's books for working-class children was a potential threat to the middle-class. Advocates of books for and about working-class children consistently faced overreactions from middle-class people who "fixated on this point that radicals wanted to ban the middle-class children's books" (Leeson, personal interview; Chambers, personal interview; Hildick 32). This illustrates Bourdieu's point that "the fundamental stake in literary struggles is the monopoly of literary legitimacy" (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 42). Like Hildick, Chambers regards the antagonism of the critical establishment as the result of a misunderstanding: "They thought that I was totally against their kind of book. I wasn't. I was saying that's all very well, but there is a lot missing here" (Chambers, personal interview). However, even though the advocates of books for the working-class were merely expanding the work that could be done by children's books, this meant that the dominance of the

middle-class standards and taste in the field, which many middle-class critics and writers had seen as universally valid and on which their positions were relied, was being eroded. This was the real threat for them, because “a new product and a new system of tastes... is to push the whole set of producers, products and systems of tastes into the past” (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 108). Leeson points to middle-class writers’ fear of being “pushed out” when advocates of books for the working-class began to debate the topic:

> Some of my fellow writers didn’t like what I was saying because they were middle-class people, and they felt that they were going to be pushed out. They couldn’t, they could only see in terms of monopoly. They wanted to control children’s books and I was interested in having children’s books of a universal kind to appeal to all classes. (Leeson, personal interview)

What we can see in Leeson’s account is that, for middle-class writers, it was as much an ideological battle as one about the subject matter of books. Leeson was presenting another set of values, a “universal kind of appeal to all classes”, in which traditional children’s books were losing some of the value secured through affiliation with the dominant middle-class. Since the value of a work is not produced by a writer but through collective opinion, such a change in the value in the field changes the meaning of the work and has an impact on all the positions of existing critics and writers in the field (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 30-31, 58, 108). In this respect, the emergence of scholarship boy critics was, for middle-class writers, an even bigger threat than the emergence of scholarship boy writers. Referring to his article about middle-class cultural predominance in British children’s literature, Aidan Chambers recalls: “the people who were within the strong tradition of English children’s writing were very uneasy about it. I was called a rabble-rouser” (Chambers, personal interview). Such writers who were afraid of the emergent movement of books for the working-class were among those who reviewed children’s books in the 1960s and the 1970s. During these years, therefore, critics generally did not have any neutrality amid the rivalry between conventional writers and emerging scholarship boy writers. As Leeson states, “it was possible for writers to encourage friends, destroy enemies, and make territorial signals

to warn intruders off their chosen fields" through book reviewing (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 124).

Reluctant Readers and Literate Critics: Aidan Chambers and a Review of *The Owl Service*

One characteristic of children's book criticism then and now is that critics, literate adults, and professionals judge books *on behalf* of children, some of whom do not belong to the same culture as the critics. In other words, the mechanism of class homology between writers, critics, and readers which, according to Bourdieu, dominates high literature, does not straightforwardly work in the field of children's literature (see Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*). As has been shown, since the late 1960s the gap between literate critics who wrote reviews and "real children", which included – or, more often, specifically *referred to* working-class and lower-middle-class children – were increasingly pointed out by teachers who purchased books on behalf of their pupils. In other words, unlike in adult literature, left-wing critics could and did argue that children's books were supposed to be for and to represent *all* children. This line of argument furthered the cause of radical scholarship boy writers and critics as they struggled to reshape the field in the 1970s. Overall, however, change came about through the collective efforts of a relatively small group of individuals. Among these, Aidan Chambers, who co-founded *Signal*, is an illustrative example of how a scholarship boy teacher recognized the gap between children's book criticism and working-class child readers, and how he consciously participated in the struggle of the field of children's book criticism.

In the 1960s, Chambers, as a teacher-librarian at a secondary modern school, struggled to find books which his pupils could enjoy. He recalls, "I had a library of 6000 volumes... 75 per cent of it was fiction. Most of it, they [pupils] wouldn't read" (Chambers, personal interview). This was not only Chambers' experience. Many teachers and teacher-librarians had similar experiences in the 1960s, and they pointed to the middle-class nature of juvenile fiction which alienated working-class children (Chambers, personal interview; Leeson, personal interview; Hildick 32). As has been shown, therefore, Chambers became an editor of children's books to increase the kind of books ordinary state school pupils would enjoy. At the same time, in the late 1960s, Chambers recognized the need to change children's book criticism. For him, the tipping

point was Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967). *The Owl Service*, which won the then relatively conservative Carnegie Medal, was generally a highly praised work; within a decade of publication it came to be regarded as a modern classic (see G. Fox 38). However, as will be further discussed in the next chapter, reviews of the novel in the 1960s and the 1970s often displayed a mixture of misunderstanding and hostility arising from its depiction of class issues. Chambers, who read the novel with his pupils, realized the problem of the field of children's book criticism due to an illustrative gap between a review of the novel and the reactions of his pupils.

It was Philippa Pearce's review of *The Owl Service* (1967) for *Children's Book News* that particularly spurred on Aidan Chambers' anger against children's book criticism. In the field of British children's literature in the late 1960s, Philippa Pearce, a middle-class children's book writer who had won the Carnegie Medal for *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), and was in the established position as a writer of the traditional style and as an editor for Oxford University Press and Andre Deutsch. Although there was no obvious rivalry between Garner and Pearce, it was unlikely that a radical novel featuring the political tensions between the English middle-class and the Welsh working-class could be reviewed without bias by such a writer, who was inevitably involved in the struggles in the rapidly changing field. Chambers expressed his frustration with Pearce's review in a letter to Garner of 21 July 1967. Pearce, he said "completely misses the point" of the novel (Chambers, Letter to Garner, 21 July 1967). He went on to question her attitude to subjects which had rarely been seen in children's books such as class and adultery. Chambers particularly took issue with Pearce's observation that:

> there is a masterly appreciation of class idioms and snobberies, and an awareness of their deadly potentiality as weapons. Not the happiest of subjects for young readers, some may say. Others will be almost certain to add that even unhappier is the choice of illegitimacy and adultery, jealousy and revenge as recurring themes in the story. (Pearce, Rev. of *The Owl Service* 165)

The fact that she did not go on to discuss "the unhappy subjects" and avoided direct criticism can be understood as a product of her British middle-class inclination to resort to euphemism, and/or because she wanted to avoid being seen as classist. However,

although Pearce does not show her own views on the subjects of class and adultery, by appearing to put forward the views of "others", the review suggests a generally negative response to the inclusion of such topics in the novel. According to Bourdieu, "The dominant are drawn towards silence, discretion and secrecy, and their orthodox discourse... is never more than the explicit affirmation of self-evident principles which go without saying and would go better unsaid" (*Field of Cultural Production* 83). In other words, her avoidance of controversial topics was perhaps an unconscious tactic to secure her own position as an authority.

Chambers' letter further highlights the fact that critics' allegiance to the dominant culture prevented them from appreciating the scholarship boy writer's work. As he wrote to Garner,

> she has a vague feeling, non-verbal yet... that there is something... that makes OWL SERVICE [sic] is some way... unsuitable, or maybe just not a normal childr n's [sic] book [...] She tries her hand at talking about their 'understanding' of the book. What tripe. She wants them to understand with their neatly trained heads. And misses the point that this is just what one would rather they didn't. (Chambers, Letter to Garner 21 July 1967)

In Chambers' view, Pearce failed to appreciate the novel because, relying on her middle-class training in reading, she approached it as if the novel were a traditional children's book based on middle-class culture.

As was shown in Chapter 4, Alan Garner was determined to incorporate working-class culture in his novels. Although his novels are also, in part, based on his training in middle-class literary tradition, to appreciate his novels fully, a reader needs to accept the way his literary style is based on rural, working-class cultural tradition. According to Chambers, the most important element in *The Owl Service* is the "quality which works instinctively through the guts rather than the head" (*Reluctant Reader* 103), while British middle-class children's books placed "their emphasis on verbal awareness, on intellectually satisfying plot patterns, descriptions and narrative" (*Reluctant Reader* 103). *The Owl Service*, similarly to *Red Shift*, is one of Garner's attempts to reappraise the power of rural working-class culture. This culture had been suppressed by the bourgeois English culture which, as Garner and Chambers saw it, relied heavily on

reason and logic. Therefore, to understand the novel, a reader has to accept a reversal of values. Although today, after the era of postmodernism, critics are familiar with such views, in the 1960s they were difficult to understand or accept, because they challenged the principles on which their own positions in the literary field relied. In other words, the middle-class critics' reading experience, knowledge and positions, which assured their authority as critics, were obstacles to understanding the novel. Chambers considers that this is why Pearce failed to comprehend *The Owl Service* and believed that children, who were less educated than she was, "are 'likely to understand too little' of *The Owl Service*" (Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 103). However, reading the book with his pupils at the secondary modern school where he taught, Chambers revealed that children with much less cultural capital in fact understood the novel easily.

Chambers read the book with pupils who were going to leave school at the end of compulsory education, and who were generally considered as non-academic "reluctant readers" – those who did not read except for comic books, magazines, and pulp fiction. It was an unconventional thing to do at the time. Since middle-class critics struggled to understand the novel, *The Owl Service* was generally regarded as a demanding book which was suitable only for academic-minded pupils. A review in *The Junior Bookshelf* stated that "the second reaction after reading it [*The Owl Service*] is the one which might be labelled 'Librarians' Panic' – who on earth will read it?" (389). It is true that young children can hardly understand the story, and it was obvious that *The Owl Service* was a book for teenagers. The problem for librarians was that "not many of us could guess which [child] will take to it" (389). Chambers' pupils in the least academic class in an average secondary modern school were the last kind of readers whom librarians thought of. In the 1960s, most librarians and some teachers rarely distinguished the reluctant readers who were reluctant because of the classist nature of fiction from those who were slow to learn to read or children with reading difficulties (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 133; Garner, Letter to Chambers 13 July 1967). As Chambers states, at the time people thought that "Nothing would seem to be further from the kind of story reluctant readers of whatever intelligence would find attractive" (Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 102) than *The Owl Service*, which "bemused and disturbed" most middle-class critics (Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 102).

For Chambers, his pupils' reactions to *The Owl Service* was an exciting discovery which gave him insights into the fundamental problem of the reluctant reader – or the problem of British children's books. A series of Chambers' letters in his archive

show the details of his increasingly exciting experiment with reading *The Owl Service* in his classroom.[1] Chambers' first excitement was that he "felt so distinctly the power of the story-teller over his audience" when he read the novel (Chambers, Letter to Garner 13 Sep. 1967). His pupils were fully absorbed in the story. Chambers found that Garner's writing style was well-suited for reading aloud to an audience of ordinary teenagers: "I really have never met a book that reads so well aloud" (Chambers, Letter to Garner 13 Sep. 1967). This is because "the characters are so clearly defined" and "because it is not larded up with purple passages or philosophical remarks", which are often seen in middle-class children's books in the period (Chambers, Letter to Garner 13 Sep. 1967). In addition, presumably this is also because Garner's literary forms stems from the oral tradition of folktales (for the oral tradition, see Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 1-16; Zipes), and Garner consciously chose words from oral vocabulary over Latin-origin words (see Garner "Fine Anger" or "Achilles in Altjira").

Chambers' pupils overall understood *The Owl Service* much more easily than many adults, including Chambers himself, expected. They understood the use of myth and so the relation between the *Mabinogion* and the contemporary story line in the novel, without difficulty. For example, from clues told as the myth in the novel, they noticed that Huw is the father of Gwyn long before the book reveals this fact (Chambers, Letter to Garner20 Sep. 1967). As the Pearce's example shows, literate adults who tried to interpret the story based on middle-class cultural conventions were more likely to fail to comprehend the novel in part because it is not constructed in the logical way that they expected:

> If one approaches *the Owl Service* receptively with one's feelings, however, one understands it completely. 4c [the class Chambers read the novel] did just this. It is the way they approach everything they read, because that is the kind of people they are. (Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 103).

[1] Aidan Chambers sent a series of letters to Alan Garner to report his pupils' reactions when he read *The Owl Service* in his class. Chambers, letter to Garner 13 Sep. 1967; 20 Sep. 1967 ; 22 Sep. 1967; 4 Oct. 1967; 19 Oct. 1967; 14 Oct. 1967. See also Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 99-104. Another of Garner's books, *Elidor,* also became popular among Chambers' pupils after a pupil who had despised the award-winning type of children's book as "a uni-thing [university-thing]" (Chambers, Letter to Garner, 13 Sep. 1967), found *Elidor* was "good" (Chambers, Letter to Garner, 13 Sep. 1967; see also *Reluctant Reader* 100-01). As Chambers notes: "I had to send a boy out of school to buy extra copies of ELIDOR" (Chambers, Letter to Garner 22 Sep. 1967).

In other words, because the novel is based on a culture closer to their own, the working-class teenagers known as "reluctant readers" could understand the novel without difficulties (Chambers, personal interview). Philippa Pearce considered that child readers would not understand topics such as class and adultery in *The Owl Service*: "My repeated objection, however, is not that young readers (and adults too, for that matter) may understand too much, but that they are likely to understand too little"(Pearce, Rev. of *The Owl Service* 165).

When she wrote this, Pearce presumably did not imagine the book being read by average state secondary school pupils who grew up playing in the streets and listening to their working-class parents' and neighbours' conversations. One of Chambers' pupils was "a toughy whose mother divorced the father for adultery. The boy lived with his mum, who slaved, and then went to live with his father..." (Chambers, letter to Garner 13 Sep. 1967). Such pupils understood topics such as adultery and class conflict easily from subtle clues, because they knew from their own everyday experience the behaviours and issues regarded as unsuitable for children by some middle-class critics. As will be further discussed in Chapter 8, *The Owl Service*'s rebellious working-class characters and unresolved class anger also disturbed some middle-class critics. The ending of the novel, however, did not trouble the pupils, as they saw it as the reality of unending class conflict (Chambers, *Reluctant Reader* 103-04; Chambers, personal interview; see also Chapter 8): Chambers' largely English pupils seeing English middle-class Roger as "one of them" and Welsh working-class Gwyn as "one of us", said "Those boys, like Roger, will never understand us, or, we don't understand them" (Chambers, personal interview).[2] As will be discussed in the next chapter, while this interpretation is the most straightforward and convincing way of reading the novel, middle-class critics usually did not read it in this way.

Chambers' letters record that *The Owl Service* created a reading boom in his school: "The boom is on. 4C [a class] passed it on to 5B who passed it on to 5A and now little kids are coming up and saying can they have service please cos somebody says its good" (Chambers, Letter to Garner 22. Sep. 1967). In contrast to a senior English teacher who "finds 'I can't understand all the modern talk at the opening', so he's only read the first three pages" (Chambers, Letter to Garner 22 Sep. 1967). Chambers learned from the contrasting reactions to *The Owl Service* between literate

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[2] His correspondence shows that one of his pupils was Welsh, but since the school is in Stroud, presumably the rest of pupils were mostly English (Letter to Garner 20 Sep. 1967).

adults and his “reluctant” teenage readers that the fundamental problem of children’s books which his pupils had rejected was class culture on which books were based (Chambers, personal interview). As Robert Leeson observes, the reluctant reader “was in fact the great unrecognised critic of the 1960s and the 1970s” who pointed to problems of children’s books “by their stout resistance” against reading children’s books (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 146).

Signal: An Attempt to Change the Field of Children’s Book Criticism

The differences between Chambers’ pupils and Philippa Pearce, the writer and critic, highlights the gap between the literary tastes of middle-class critics and ordinary state school pupils. The problem, however, was not the gap itself, but rather critics’ lack of awareness of it. Critics from the middle-class could appreciate works without middle-class bias if they were aware of the effects of class habitus and acknowledged that they were immersed in the values of a particular culture. In the 1960s, however, generally most middle-class children’s critics were still unaware of the fact that their literary taste was not universally valid, but rather was defined by their class. As such, they were unwilling to accept another kind of taste formed by working-class habitus, since they were trained to regard it as inferior to their own taste (see Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 122, 138; “Boom” 7). Correspondence between Alan Garner and Aidan Chambers in July 1967 shows Chambers’ frustration with the situation of children’s book criticism: agreeing with Garner, who criticised the state of children’s book criticism as “the rotten heart of education” (Letter to Chambers 13 July 1967 1), Chambers described it as “the rotten heart of art” (Letter to Garner 18 July 1967 1):

> I just keep thinking that you can’t sit back if there is anything to be done that will lift us out of the slough of despond children’s books are in, underneath all that gloss and shout-about that says we produce *the most* beautiful books of THE MOST beautiful kind, and all in the garden is blooming, tra-lar. (Letter to Garner, 18 July 1967 1-2).

This account shows Chambers’ determination to change the field of children’s book criticism. Although Chambers, who wished to write his own novels, was not happy to spend extra time on the issue of criticism, he felt the necessity of doing so (Letter to

Garner, 18 July 1967 1-2). It also highlights Chambers' awareness of the fundamental problem: "The most beautiful books of the most beautiful kind" in the 1960s were, in short, middle-class books written by middle-class writers. These "beautiful" and "good" middle-class books were praised by critics who did not share the scholarship boy and left-wing critics' view that they alienated working-class children (Chambers, *Booktalk* 47, 80-83; Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 122-24).

In the view of the scholarship boy writers, in the 1950s and the 1960s, most middle-class children's book critics, writers and publishers displayed "a self-confident, tolerant deafness" (Leeson, *Reading and Righting* 123) because they rarely heard defiant voices. In other words, the field of British children's literature was firmly dominated by the tastes and views which stemmed from the dominant class to the extent that there was no room for argument. As Bourdieu states, "The dominant are drawn towards silence, discretion and secrecy" "to perpetuate the status quo" (*Field of Cultural Production* 83), because unless newcomers "break the silence of the *doxa* and call into question the unproblematic, taken-for granted world of the dominant groups", their positions are secured (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 83). The lack of argument, therefore, meant continuous exclusion of working-class readers and culture from the world of British children's literature. To change the situation, the scholarship boy writers and advocates of books for the working-class had to raise the problem, but in the 1960s, there were few places where radical writers and critics could argue such issues. Aidan Chambers, therefore, decided to make the place for discussion. After the encounter with Pearce's review of *The Owl Service*, he began to design *Signal* with Nancy Lockwood, whom he married in 1968. Lockwood, originally from the US, was trained as an editor at the *Horn Book*, a specialist magazine about children's literature in the US. In the UK, she edited *Children's Book News*, a review magazine which was published by the Children's Book Centre, a specialist bookshop in London. It was in *Children's Book News* that Pearce's review of *The Owl Service* appeared. It was Garner who introduced and recommended Nancy Lockwood as an editor who was willing to change British children's book criticism to Chambers, who was angry about Pearce's review (Garner, Letter to Chambers, 11 July 1967; 13 July 1967). Since Aidan Chambers did not have the necessary experience, it was Nancy Chambers who took on the major editorial roles in *Signal*. According to Aidan Chambers, "My contribution was mainly discussing the work of the magazine with her... We discussed everything; I read everything before publication. But the magazine was in all editorial respects Nancy's"

(A. Chambers, E-mail to Takiuchi, 30 June 2014). In short, although editorial responsibility was entirely Nancy's, and she selected articles, Aidan's ideas and views were always behind *Signal*.

From January 1970, *Signal* appeared three times a year until 2003, when the final issue, number 100, was published. It was not supported by any institution, but had contributors and subscribers from all over the world. According to Nancy Chambers, the number of subscribers "hovered above and below the 1000 mark for much of *Signal*'s life" and "Of the entire subscriber list about 20-25% were overseas" (N. Chambers, E-mail to Takiuchi, 25 Jan 2015). Since the majority of subscribers were educational institutions and libraries, the number of readers was much greater, and *Signal* was undoubtedly influential in the field. Contributors included a variety of critics, writers, librarians and scholars. It was not only for radical and left-wing critics and writers, but quality contributors of any kind were welcomed (though, as will be shown, when conservative articles appeared, often radical critics' counter-arguments were later published). Generally, Nancy Chambers "intended that each issue would exhibit a variety of kinds of writing" (N. Chambers, E-mail to Takiuchi, 25 Jan 2015) rather than gathering radical articles. Due to the limited space, only a few examples directly relevant to class and scholarship boy writers are discussed in this thesis, but in the 1970s, *Signal*'s contributions included a variety of topics such as race, gender, Young Adult writing, and sex.

Providing a place for discussions of radical topics in children's literature, *Signal* had a significant role in the history of British children's literature. Particularly for scholarship boy writers who had effectively been silenced due to the lack of places to voice their opinions until the 1960s, it was an important publication. Robert Leeson and Robert Westall frequently contributed to *Signal* in the 1970s and early 1980s. Their contributions, such as Leeson's "The Best of Both Worlds?" and "Faces over my Typewriter", and Westall's "How Real Do You Want Your Realism?" and "The Chaos and the Track", demonstrate their attitude toward writing for state-school children and teenagers. Such articles, which call attention to child readers outside of the small circle of middle-class people, effectively raised awareness among children's book critics of the importance of books for such audiences. They also pointed to the problems of children's book publishing and criticism in articles such as "Boom" and "How Real Do You Want Your Realism?" In "Boom", Leeson warned that the tendency to judge children's books by "adult literary taste in review journals" (8) would turn the majority

of children – i.e. working-class children – further away from books. Gathering such previously unheard voices in one place, *Signal* changed the collective belief and views in the field of children's book criticism.

Furthermore, Aidan and Nancy Chambers' editorial policies and techniques encouraged radical discussion. Their editorial attitude was to encourage discussion. For instance, when Peter Graves' article, "Sven Wernström: Traditionalist and Reformer", a favourable article about a Swedish Marxist children's writer, appeared in *Signal* in 1978, Chambers also invited a Norwegian librarian to respond. The Norwegian librarian, Kari Schei, stated, "lots of adults fear him and his books, or perhaps rather: his influence on his readers. We end up with the old question: to what extent are children influenced by the books they read?" (83). Responding to this article, Graves argues the question "do we believe that politically committed books can make suitable reading for children?" (84), and concludes "we need a lot more – of all sorts and from right across the political spectrum" (84). The editors invited the librarian's article to encourage Graves, whose original article merely introduced the foreign Marxist writer, to discuss further politics in the world and British children's literature. This is *Signal*'s typical editorial technique to pursue discussion further and further by inviting opposite opinions.[3]

This technique was enabled by *Signal*'s style as a "magazine" rather than an academic journal. One characteristic of *Signal* is that it deliberately did not seek academic formality, even though a considerable number of articles were contributed by academics. *Signal* was concerned with providing the place for discussion for anyone who was concerned with children's literature. Contributions in any form and a range of styles were welcomed: for example, important discussion often appeared in its section of "letters". As has been shown, in 1974, when Leeson's article "Boom", in which Leeson discussed critics' and publishers' neglect of books for older children and working-class children, appeared in *Signal*, as responses to Leeson's article, two letters from publishers appeared in the next issue of May 1974. As has been shown in Chapter 5, those publishers' letters were even more revealing of their class attitudes than Leeson's original article and Leeson had opportunity to argue his points more directly in his response to the letters. Sections of open correspondence, including "Book Post", which was correspondence between Nancy Chambers and Lance Salway, and "Book

[3] According to Garner's letter, "a policy of publishing pro and anti reviews of the same books" was what Nancy Chambers wanted to develop (Letter to Chambers, 24 July 1967).

Post Returns", which was responses to "Book Post", were also often a place for important discussion.

Finally, *Signal*'s selections of "reprinted articles" in the 1970s illustrates its editorial technique. For example, Westall's "How Real Do You Want Your Realism" was originally a lecture not intended to be printed. By printing Westall's lecture, as a reprinted article, *Signal* attempted to provoke argument over taboos in children's books and middle-class nature of children's book criticism.[4] The editors sometimes chose rather conservative articles, which Aidan Chambers may personally have objected to. The decision to reprint John Rowe Townsend's article "Standards of Criticism for Children's Literature" in 1974, which was originally published in *Top of the News* in 1971, is a good example. In the article, Townsend discusses book-centered criticism and child-centered criticism, but his arguments connote problems, which can be seen in the following paragraph:

> Those of us with purist tendencies are also perhaps too much inclined to turn up our noses at the "book with a message". For the message may be of the essence of the work, as in the novels of D. H. Lawrence or George Orwell... If the writer engages himself with a contemporary problem he may be engaging himself most valuably with the mind and feelings of the reader; and to demand that he be neutral on the issues raised is to demand his emasculation. Nevertheless it needs to be said from time to time that a book can be good without being immensely popular and without solving anybody's problems. (Townsend, "Standards of Criticism" 104)

In this paragraph, Townsend insists that critics do not need to take the "message" of a book into account when they evaluate a children's book. This claim is apparently reasonable, even though the "message" refers to class and socialism in this context, since he names D. H. Lawrence and George Orwell as examples of those who write books "with a message". Townsend himself was a writer who wrote books featuring the "problems" of a working-class family in the 1960s and was praised for it (see *Pied*

[4] The article in *Signal* is an abbreviated version. In the Aidan Chambers Archive, correspondence and the unabbreviated version of the lecture is kept. Nancy Chambers suggested removing some part of the transcript but the part discussing politics and class was left untouched (N. Chambers, Letter to Westall, 12 Dec. 1978).

Piper 236). In this respect, his statement might reflect his uneasiness at being praised, not for his novels' literary quality, but simply for writing about such topics. However, as Leeson later argued, Townsend's article includes problematic assumptions. For example, what is the politically "neutral" position? Who are "those of us" being inclined to dislike socialism in children's books? In short, Townsend assumes that the status quo is made up of politically neutral, and conservative middle-class critics who disliked inclusion of socialism and working-class culture as "Those of us with purist tendencies", while labeling left-wing critics as child-centered; in other words, as "anti-quality" critics. In doing so, he effectively secures the old standard of literary quality and taste, and middle-class ideology in the field of British children's literature. As has been shown, such assumptions, which regarded working-class culture as inferior to middle-class culture and as opposed to literary quality, were prevalent in the field of British children's literature in the 1960s and the 1970s, and this was what the scholarship boy writers, such as Aidan Chambers, were fighting against. The decision to reprint the article is, therefore, at first surprising. In fact, in later issues, Townsend's article worked as the impetus to provoke radical arguments.

In 1975, in response to Townsend's article, Leeson's "To the Toyland Frontier" appeared in *Signal*. Leeson points out that Townsend's assumptions of "universal standard" and "intellectual consensus" are actually white middle-class consensus and standards (Leeson, "To the Toyland Frontier" 20):

> More than ever today, when the hegemony of the middle-class is challenged and the workers tread so close on their heels they "gall their kybes", is it *seen* [sic] to be illusory. Speaking of world social changes, of the shocks to the old imperialism that have affected the appeal of writers like Ballantyne, Mr. Townsend says "we have suffered... a fatal loss of confidence". We? (Leeson, "To the Toyland Frontier" 20)

Here, Leeson reveals Townsend's ideology, which is hidden in the disguise of intellectual consensus, and establishes it as old-fashioned conservative view. In other words, re-reading the previously taken-for-granted assumption as problematic, Leeson attempts to change the dominant view in the field. Leeson further argues that children's literature, which was closely linked with "the rise of the bourgeoisie" (Leeson, "To the Toyland Frontier" 20), had been an instrument of bourgeois cultural dominance: it had

been a tool "to pass on the precious gift of literacy and education imbued with its own ethic; an attempt to provide a universal and lasting [bourgeois] standard or judgment on writing" (Leeson, "To the Toyland Frontier" 20). He reveals the mechanism by which conservative middle-class critics had, in assuming a "neutral" political position, conserved the middle-class nature of children's literature unconsciously but effectively, and ultimately contributed to the reproduction of class. Revealing such a political aspect of children's books and the fact that "All books have their message" (Leeson, "To the Toyland Frontier" 23), Leeson challenged the dominance of middle-class views in the field of British children's book criticism.

By providing a place for discussion and energetically encouraging discussion, *Signal* contributed to the work of changing children's book criticism. However, the power to suppress arguments over "controversial" topics such as class worked on different levels. For instance, when Aidan Chambers was accused of being a "rabble-rouser" for discussing problems associated with the middle-class nature of British children's literature,[5] in a personal letter to Garner, Chambers described a fellow writer's reaction in this way: "she'd read it [his essay discussing class] and told me I had a chip on my shoulder! Back to your kennel, dog: don't you know your place yet?" (Letter to Garner, 23 Mar. 1978). As the phrase "don't you know your place yet" shows, Chambers, as a scholarship boy, experienced an oppressive pressure when he discussed class in a middle-class dominated world. As Westall depicts in *Fathom Five*, scholarship boys were in a precarious position: "Even if you climbed really well, they wouldn't let you join the club. And if you climbed badly, they'd kick you down the hill again" (*FF* 1979 166). To criticise class in British children's literature, the scholarship boys had to take the risk of social rejection and exclusion from both their peers and the middle-class community where they now lived. In this respect, *Signal*'s other role was to connect scholarship boy writers. When each scholarship boy had been isolated, their voices could have easily been silenced by the middle-class peer pressure. Gathering their voices in one place, providing a sense of solidarity or the sense of fighting to change British children's literature together, *Signal* enabled them to resist against the power to silence their voices.

The scholarship boy writers, taking up the role of critics and challenging the critical establishment, changed the fundamental values and criteria in the field of British

[5] See Chambers' article appeared on an American journal, *The Horn Book*. *Horn Book*, 52.5 (1976): 532-38. Reprinted in *Booktalk* 83.

children's literature, such as what is a good children's book, and what can be published as a children's book. This was a highly effective strategy, but was available only to those who possessed high amounts of cultural capital. The scholarship boy writers for children were, unlike some of the Kitchen Sink writers in adult literature, highly educated. Although some writers, such as Leeson, initially did not enter a university, by the 1970s, most scholarship boy writers for children, including Leeson, had experienced higher education, and had had successful careers as journalists or teachers. Therefore, unlike worker-writers, once they gained a place to voice their opinions, they were able to argue class problems in literary forms which middle-class critics had to accept. The subordinate position of children's literature in the British literary hierarchy, in this respect, also helped. In terms of criticism, children's literature was still an immature genre, in which the few literate male middle-class/upper-class critics who dominated the field of adult literature participated. As such, when this group of highly educated and highly motivated scholarship boys entered the field, they were able to establish their positions relatively easily.

Chambers and Leeson were among the most influential children's book critics of their generation. Chambers, who became an influential figure as a critic and an editor of children's books, wrote numerous children's book reviews starting in the late 1960s. When Westall's *The Machine-Gunners* was published in 1975, it was Chambers who reviewed it for *Times Literary Supplement* ("War Efforts" 1056). In contrast to Pearce's review of *The Owl Service*, Chambers, unsurprisingly, gave a favourable review to the then highly controversial novel. In this respect, *The Machine-Gunners*' critical success, symbolized by the surprising award of the Carnegie Medal, was ultimately a product of the scholarship boy critics' success in changing the field of children's book criticism. As Bourdieu states, "The work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art" (Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production* 35). Changing the collective belief in the field, the scholarship boy writers made the foundation of almost revolutionary change of British children's books in the 1970s.

CHAPTER 8: THE CONCLUSION OF *THE OWL SERVICE*: CRITICAL IGNORANCE OF CLASS ANGER

Criticism not only affects publishing trends, but in the long run also establishes received interpretations of a novel, and creates a received history of children's books. As such, criticism received by a novel on initial publication still shapes our understanding of it, and is more or less affected by the historical condition of that original criticism. Such historical research on criticism is, for the majority of working-class/scholarship boy books for children, not available due to the shortage of reviews and studies. Debate concerning the conclusion of *The Owl Service* is, however, a rare and an illustrative example of how our understanding of scholarship boy novels has been affected by the legacy of class struggle in the world of mid-twentieth century British children's literature.

Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*, which was awarded both the Carnegie Medal and the Guardian Award for 1967, has generated a substantial body of research that assumes many different perspectives. One approach is to identify and explicate correspondences between the novel and the background story as it is found in the fourth branch of *Mabinogion*, *Math Vab Mathonwy*. The original Welsh tale features Lleu Llaw Gyffes whose uncle, Gwydion, makes a woman from flowers for Lleu who is prevented from having a human wife by his mother's curse. However, the flower-wife, Blodeuwedd, falls in love with another man, Gronw Bebyr, and they attempt to murder Lleu. In revenge, Gwydion turns Blodeuwedd into an owl and Lleu kills Gronw. In *The Owl Service,* the cursed love triangle has been repeating itself across the centuries in the Welsh valley in which Lleu killed Gronw, and the story is about its most recent cycle involving three twentieth-century teenagers, Gwyn, Roger and Alison. The relationship between the novel and the myth has been explored by Kathleen Herbert (1981), C. W. Sullivan III (1989), Sarah Beach (1994), Donna R. White (1998) and Robert A. Davis (2006). Paul Hardwick (2000) discusses representations of adolescence in the novel. Neil Philip (1981) and Charles Butler (2006) have covered these and many other aspects of the novel: parents, narrative style, the landscape, the Welsh-English relationship and the conclusion of the novel. Among these topics, Sullivan notes, the conclusion of the novel "has occasioned more debate than any other aspect of the book" (Sullivan III, "One More Time" 46). This makes the part of the novel a particularly good example of how the field produces and suppresses certain meanings of a novel.

As Philip acknowledges, "Opinions about the ending of *The Owl Service* differ sharply" (71). Sullivan III concurs: scholars are "by no means in agreement about the novel's ending" ("One More Time" 46). The problem of interpretation arises from the fact that in the final pages of *The Owl Service*, when the life of upper-middle-class English girl Alison is at risk, the main protagonist Gwyn refuses to save her in spite of the fact that he is in love with Alison. It is Alison's step-brother, Roger, who has previously not been a sympathetic character, who saves Alison. Since as a convention of children's books, readers expected a happy ending in which the main protagonist saves the heroine, many critics regarded the ending as surprising and scholars have endeavoured to explain this. As indicated above, critics have tended to turn to the myth to help explain this ending: Gwyn as Lleu Llaw Gyffes is doomed to fail to save Alison (Sullivan III, *Welsh Celtic* 133). However, the conclusion of *The Owl Service* departs from the original myth in some significant ways: Roger/Gronw is not killed, and Alison/Blodeuwedd escapes being turned into the owl, the ostracised bird in the myth. The question, therefore, is why only Gwyn fails to escape the pattern set by the tale, and is incapable of saving Alison.

Scholars have overlooked the importance of class in this novel, particularly in relation to the ending. As Neil Philip points out, this ending is often regarded as problematic by critics because, failing to understand why Gwyn refuses to save Alison, they feel "a betrayal of Gwyn" (Philip 71).[1] However, as will be shown, the inevitability of the ending is actually obvious only if we see the ending from the scholarship boy's point of view. As has been shown, Chambers' pupils, who were mostly the working-class, did not find the ending of the novel difficult to understand; nor did they see Gwyn's act as a betrayal. The inadequate understanding of the book's ending has mostly arisen from scholars' insufficient attention to the role of class, lack of knowledge about scholarship boy experiences, and the middle-class bias of the field of children's book criticism. Although the class tension has frequently been mentioned in discussions of the novel over the years, Gwyn's position as a scholarship boy and the nature of the class barriers he faces have not been adequately recognised.[2] Even those like Andrew Taylor and C. W. Sullivan III, who have specifically attempted to put an end to the controversy over the ending, overlook this aspect of the class dynamic in the novel.

[1] For a variety of interpretations of the ending and examples of critical frustration see Sullivan III, "One More Time" 47.

[2] For examples of studies which mention class, see Philip 68; Sullivan III, *Welsh Celtic Myth* 28; Davis 230; White 93; Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 154. However, these studies only briefly explain the role of class, in a word or a sentence.

The even more important problem is that scholars have overlooked class tension within British children's book criticism. "The most obvious cause of dissatisfaction identified by critics... is the ending of the novel" (Taylor 94), but no one has examined the possibility that critics' dissatisfaction arose from their own ideology. Scholars who discussed the ending of *The Owl Service* in the 1990s, such as Taylor and Sullivan III, accepting critics' neutrality, overlooked critics' class attitudes and views on children's literature. In fact, a close examination of reception history reveals that the scholars' assumption, that "critics have struggled with this ending since the novel first appeared" (Sullivan III, "One More Time" 47), is not exactly correct. Critical frustration with the ending of the novel was initially not so apparent. In 1967, among five lengthy book reviews that appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Times Educational Supplement*, *Growing Point*, *Children's Book News*, and *The Junior Bookshelf*, no review criticised the ending of the novel. As will be shown, it is since the 1970s, when the battle in the field of children's book criticism became intense, that the ending has come to be labelled as confusing.

The Scholarship Boy, Gwyn

Although the main focus of this chapter is on reception history, this first section analyses how class forms Garner's story. The inevitability of the ending is carefully calculated and prepared by Garner. *The Owl Service* is another of Garner's scholarship boy tragedies in which the protagonist's scholarship boy position is used as a determinant of the tragic ending (see Chapter 4; Garner, *Pied Piper* 226). *The Owl Service* is set in Wales. Although Garner carefully relates working-classness to Welshness in the story – all middle-class characters are English in the story – in the 1960s, cultural suppression of Welsh working-class culture was not exactly carried out in the way that happened in England due to nationalistic movements in the country. As was shown in Chapter 4, growing up in England, the young Alan Garner had his "first language", North-West Mercian, suppressed by his teachers in schools. However, Gwyn is having both Welsh language and Welsh heritage encouraged by his teachers. This is in keeping with the rise of Welsh nationalism in the 1960s (K. Jones 44).

Garner thus constructs Gwyn's mother, Nancy, as an ambitious mother who internalizes the prejudices against Welsh working-class culture, to set Welsh as "a marker not just of nationality but of class" (Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 156). Nancy,

having once been heartbroken in class/racial tensions in her rural Welsh community due to the love triangle involving a English middle-class man, left her valley with her baby, Gwyn. Since then, as a working-class single mother, she has had endeavoured to improve her son through his education. Not only has she removed Gwyn from their original place, as a way to achieve her ambition to educate Gwyn into a middle-class person, but Nancy also forbids Gwyn to speak Welsh, because she sees Welsh as a labourer's language (*OS* 18-19):

> You know I won't have you speaking Welsh. I've not struggled all these years in Aber [Aberystwyth] to have you talk like a labourer. I could have stayed in the valley if I'd wanted that. (*OS* 18-19).

As is shown here, she has deliberately removed Gwyn from their original culture to achieve her ambition to make him a middle-class person, though, at the same time, Gwyn has inherited knowledge of the valley from her (*OS* 60, 76). Although Nancy's attitude to Welsh reflects the dominance of English middle-class culture in the house where she works as a domestic servant, Standard English was required for social success even in Wales (Paulasto 27-33).[3] Clever and ambitious Gwyn, like many scholarship boys in the 1960s, feels it necessary to sacrifice his original culture for his future success. As Lockwood points out, Gwyn's uncertain identity is symbolised by his language, grammatically-correct Standard English with a Welsh accent, and the fact he is taking elocution lessons (Lockwood 90-91). Gwyn's elocution course teaches him Received Pronunciation (RP) which was required to enter a middle-class world (Trudgill 77; Honey 152-53).[4] This shows that Gwyn has internalized the dominant culture and so willingly, not only for his mother's sake, has rejected his Welsh working-class culture. This denial of his original culture makes him rootless and fragile against an attack on his class position.

While in *Red Shift* cultural deprivation is at the heart of the story, in *The Owl Service*, Gwyn's anger more directly arises from social class barriers. A part of Gwyn's frustration arises from his limited educational opportunities. As was shown in Part I, under the Tripartite System, many bright pupils left school early, in spite of their

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[3] In his essay, Garner mentions a Welsh woman who had never allowed Welsh to be spoken in her house after she had spent one week as a maid in London (see Garner, "The Beauty Thing" 206).

[4] For varieties of languages spoken by Gwyn and other characters, see Lockwood (1992). The Welsh accent was associated with lower social status than RP (Paulasto 27-33; Giles 259-60).

academic ability, particularly when their parents were unsupportive and/or their income was low. Nancy, who has started to work at the age of 12 (*OS* 52), merely aspires to make Gwyn a clerk (*OS* 94). Scholars sometimes regard Nancy as merciless because she deprives Gwyn of his further education (for instance, see Beach, "Breaking the Pattern" 23; Philip 67), but Nancy is merely a typical mother of the scholarship boy in the 1960s (see Chapter 1).

What is more important than the limited education opportunity in terms of the ending of the novel is the social exclusion which the scholarship boy faces. Due to his mother's efforts to free her son from the confinement of a rural working-class community, Gwyn does not have any friends in the valley. He is also emotionally detached from his mother, as were many scholarship boys and girls. While Nancy encourages Gwyn to acquire middle-class culture, she suspects her son is beginning to look down on her, as middle-class people do. She says "I've not slaved all these years in Aber so you can look down your nose at me like one of them" (*OS* 60). Corresponding to Garner's experience that his father took his sons' words as "intellectual attack" because he was "so alien" (Ganer, *Taliesin's Successors*), Nancy's suspicion derives from the fact that her only child has become so "alien" to her. On the other hand, similarly to Tom and young Garner, Gwyn hurts his mother deliberately because he is frustrated with his mother's working-class views and behaviours.[5] For instance, Gwyn points out his mother's grammar mistakes to annoy her (*OS* 61).

Therefore, at the beginning of the story, Gwyn's only friends are the English, middle-class teenagers, Alison and her stepbrother Roger. Despite his position as a temporary servant, Gwyn as an educated teenager seeks equal relationships with Alison and Roger. However, Gwyn faces rejections from Alison and Roger. Although critics and scholars tended to attribute their actions to their personal issues, these three adolescent characters are under strong influence of their classist parents and their actions are largely conditioned and motivated by their class positions. As shown in Part I, in scholarship boy novels for teenagers, class tensions are typically reflected in father-son relationships in the home and/or by their relationships with middle-class girlfriends. One problem of such focus on domestic class tension is that the bigger picture of the class problem is often obscured. To overcome the problem, in *The Owl Service*, Garner makes a miniature of class society in a holiday house to illustrate the scholarship boy's

[5] Garner states, "*The Owl Service* was written largely from a subconscious need to understand why, at the age of fifteen, I had, without justification or desire, verbally savaged to another human being" ("Inner Time" 121). See also Chapter 4.

social position. All three main teenage characters – the scholarship boy (Gwyn), the son of *nouveau riche* (Roger) and the upper-middle-class girl (Alison) – have single parents who represent three different class cultures and views. In addition, Huw, a gardener, represents Welsh working-class culture which is placed outside of the middle-class house. Garner highlights the social isolation of a scholarship boy in this miniature world.

Gwyn finds himself attracted to Alison and thinks the feeling is reciprocated until Alison refuses to see Gwyn due to her mother's forbiddance. According to Garner, Alison's mother suspects the possibility that Gwyn is a child of Bertram, Alison's uncle, which means that Alison and Gwyn might be half-sister and brother, as Margaret secretly had a relationship with Bertram ("Coming to Terms" 28). However, since there is little to suggest this in the novel, scholars agree that the novel represents class as the main reason of Margaret's forbidding Alison to see Gwyn (Philip 67; White 86). Margaret's attitude merely represents a common sense of her class in her generation; as an upper-middle-class lady, she cannot tolerate that a servant speaks to her daughter in a friendly manner, addressing her just by her first name "Alison", and wooing her as if he is in an equal social position. Gwyn also understands Margaret's forbiddance in the light since he satirically says, "'It's quite in order, Miss Alison'… 'And I'll use the tradesman's entrance in the future'" (*OS* 79). In spite of her feeling, Alison submits to her mother because she is afraid to risk her upper-middle-class social circle, which is represented by her membership of a tennis club and the choir, for the romance with Gwyn (*OS* 117-18). This is conditioned by Alison's gender and class position: at the time, a woman maintaining her class status depended on appropriate marriage. If she were to choose Gwyn over her mother and her class, she would risk social exclusion as a punishment for her behaviour, just as, in *Mabinogion*, Blodeuwedd is punished for choosing her lover by her own will.

As a result, Alison's suffering in the final scene of the novel arises from the class tensions in which she is caught. As she says, Gwyn and her mother are "tearing me between you" (*OS* 120) due to their conflicted views, which Alison cannot choose without sacrificing one of them, or choosing between love or social acceptance. Critics and scholars have tended to see the ending was "up to Gwyn and/or Roger" (Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth* 132), while it is possible to see, as Watson says, "Alison – not Roger – is at the centre of the scene" (77). As will be discussed, critics' confusion over the ending mostly arose from an underestimation of Gwyn's class anger and working-class characters, but the underestimation of Alison has also contributed to the confusion. The

critics' tendency to disregard Alison was widely seen regardless of their political attitudes and class backgrounds. For instance, while David Rees thinks the problem is that "readers feel the wrong boy gets the girl" ("Alan Garner" 287), Robert Westall is similarly unhappy with the ending because he thinks a "Public schoolboy [sic]... wins the day" in a battle in which "working-class boy fights middle-class boy for upper-middle-class girl" (Westall, "How Real" 41). However, what is depicted in the final pages is by no means a competition between Gwyn and Roger to win Alison. In the final pages of the novel, Alison is saved by responding to Roger's words, which tell her that she is not owls but flowers (Filmer-Davies 25). Blodeuwedd's curse arises from the fact that Blodeuwedd, who was made from flowers, did not have a right to choose her husband (*OS* 55). Similarly, Alison suffers from the class tension because she believes that, if she chooses her love (which "flowers" represent), she would be socially excluded, just as Blodeuwedd is turned into an "owl". Therefore, when Roger says, Blodeuwedd is "not owls. She's flowers" (*OS* 156), whether Roger understands it or not, he is virtually acknowledging that Alison can be free from the confinement of her class. In other words, Roger acknowledges that Alison can choose Gwyn, if she wants. On the other hand, Gwyn, as a potential illegitimate lover of Alison – and therefore, in a way, as a Gronw figure – cannot release Alison from the tension without giving her up, because he does not belong to the same social group with Alison.

The social class barrier that Gwyn faces is even more obviously epitomized when Roger sneers at Gwyn's elocution lessons, describing them as "the complete Improva-Prole set, or the shorter course of Oiks' Exercises for getting by the shop" (*OS* 121). Roger here despises both the fact that Gwyn's circumstances mean that he has to give up his schooling and self-educated working-class people general. In doing so Roger, as a representative of the middle-class, forces Gwyn to realize that the middle-class will never accept a scholarship boy as "one of us" (*OS* 114). This scene brings about Gwyn's metaphorical death in subsequent chapters (*OS* Chapter 21-23), indicated by the fact that the narrator does not use Gwyn's name. Gwyn's metaphorical death corresponds to the episode in *Math Vab Mathonwy* when Lleu Llaw Gyffes is temporary killed, or turned into an eagle, by Gronw, who attacks Lleu's secret weak point, as divulged by Blodeuwedd. However, to understand the damage caused by Roger's verbal attack fully, readers need to understand not only the myth, but rather Gwyn's vulnerable position as the scholarship boy. Gwyn is not sensitive to Roger's verbal attack to his Welshness because he is solidly Welsh: when previously he has been called a "Welsh

oaf" (*OS* 85) by Roger, it seems not to damage him. On the other hand, Gwyn, being faithful to the dominant middle-class culture, has been stretched between two classes, just as Garner's metaphor of the elastic (see *Signal Approach* 308), and so the class issue, hurts him deeply. Moreover, just as Roger says, even if Gwyn is cleverer than Roger, whatever efforts and sacrifices Gwyn has paid, he is likely to be a shop clerk; and even if Gwyn manages to move upward, as Roger shows, socially the middle-class would not accept him.

Critics, seeing Roger's motive for the verbal attack as jealousy (which is indeed one of his motives), have often overlooked the fact that Roger's position and class prejudice is as important as his jealousy about Alison. Scholars from relatively classless countries have often mistaken the class position of Roger. For example, Sullivan III, Beach, and White, regard Roger and Alison as both "upper-class", according to their countries' class system (Beach 24; White 78; Sullivan III, "One More Time" 46). However, in the class-conscious mid twentieth-century Britain, the class system was more stratified. Alison is solidly upper-middle-class, but Roger is not, though he is, at least, middle-middle-class. Roger's father, Clive, is "nouveau riche" (Philip 73) and one of "standard caricatures of the chinless, witless, public-school type" (Rees 287) who does not have a background as securely elite as Alison and her mother. In other words, culturally we see here the so-called "U [upper-class] and non-U" class division between them. Alison is aware that Roger and Clive's class background is unsuitable for her family: "'Clive's sweet, but he's a bit of a rough diamond, isn't he? Mummy's people were very surprised when she married him'" (*OS* 113).

Even though Gwyn cannot distinguish the difference within the layers within the middle-class, his mother Nancy, as a housekeeper for a upper/upper-middle-class family, detects Clive's background from his eating manner, and condemns him: "He's not even a gentleman!"(*OS* 83). Due to his class position, which is not so far from scholarship boys, Clive has to castigate scholarship boys as "the worst" kind, "barrack-room lawyers", and insists that "brains aren't everything, by a long chalk. You must have the background" (*OS* 81). Learning this prejudice from his father – it is only after the conversation with his father that Roger begins to show classist attitudes – Roger insists that however intelligent Gwyn is, he is "not one of us, and he never will be" (*OS* 114), while Alison can sympathise with Gwyn from her secure class position. In other words, Roger attacks Gwyn's class background because of his own insecurity: he has to secure his and his father's class position by distinguishing themselves from the scholarship boy,

and excluding the emergent class of scholarship boys from "one of us". The incident between Gwyn and Roger, therefore, is not simply a quarrel between two adolescent boys over a girl, but it reflects middle-class anxiety and class conflict in mid-twentieth-century Britain.

Facing this social exclusion, Gwyn eventually returns to his roots. As Garner returns to his original culture thanks to his family's strong ties with the land (Garner, "Achilles in Altjira" 50; "Fine Anger" 6), in *The Owl Service*, the strong historical bond between Gwyn's ancestors and the land, which itself has supernatural power to capture Gwyn, makes him return to his birthplace. Finding out that Huw is his father, Gwyn takes his identity as an heir of the spiritual Welsh lord which has continued since the era of *Mabinogion*, despite the fact that Huw, materially, is merely a penniless labourer. In other words, Gwyn overcomes self-denial of his roots by accepting counter-hegemonic, rural working-class views. This identity, however, intensifies Gwyn's anger against English middle-class Alison and Roger, rather than allowing him to forgive their class prejudice. In this respect, critics often show insufficient understanding. For instance, Filmer-Davies considers that Gwyn fails to save Alison because "he is not Welsh enough" (Filmer-Dacies 25; see also Lockwood 91). However, in the final pages, Gwyn's identity as a Welsh man of the valley is solidly established, and it is clearly shown that Gwyn has the ability to save Alison, since Huw says "He can… But he is not wanting" (*OS* 155).

Similarly, although Lockwood is right about the way that Gwyn "cannot use his own voice to her [Alison]" (Lockwood 91), his reading is inadequate in terms of what silences Gwyn's voice; it is not because of Gwyn's uncertain identity. In the final pages of the book, Gwyn speaks in Welsh, except for when he verbally attacks Roger (*OS* 155). However, since the English middle-class siblings do not understand the language – in other words, since Gwyn's original language is oppressed in the British hegemony – his voice is silenced. However, overall scholars have more often tended to overlook the importance of class by focusing on the Welsh-English tension, which is less directly concerned with the plot. Since English dominance placed the Welsh traditional culture in the lower position, the English-Welsh tension and class tension is inseparable. However, as has been shown, when Roger attacks and hurts Gwyn, which causes Gwyn's anger (as exhibited in the ending), what lies at its root is class. After all, Gwyn's social isolation and anger only arises from his class position: if he was an upper-middle-class Welshman, Gwyn could be a rightful boyfriend of Alison. Therefore,

views such as “The pride that keeps Gwyn from saving Alison is a Welsh pride and stubbornness built over centuries of Welsh-English conflict and antagonism” (Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic* 118), although in some ways correct, is still inadequate without consideration of class.

What is highlighted in the final pages of *The Owl Service*, in the scene in which Gwyn refuses to save Alison, is strong class anger. In the final pages, Gwyn no longer sees people who belong to the English middle-class, as individuals. At the crisis, when Alison is in agony, apparently due to Blodeuwedd’s curse, Gwyn refuses to help Alison:

> ‘I’ve stayed to help you [Huw] and the valley, not this lot’, said Gwyn. ‘These two are nothing’.
> ‘You are the three. You have made this together’, said Huw.
> ‘I’m not doing anything for them. I’ve finished’. (*OS* 154)

This Welsh dialogue (transcribed as English by Garner) shows, as well as Gwyn’s sense of responsibility as the heir of Welsh Lord, Gwyn’s sense of “them and us”, which has not been apparent in his speech or attitude until this point. As the fact that Gwyn does not address Roger or Alison by name even once in the final pages illustrates, Alison and Roger become nameless others such as “this lot”, “These two” and “them” for him, after the incident in which Roger verbally attacks and excludes Gwyn from “one of us”. Since this kind of social conflict has been the cause of recurrent tragedy in the valley, Huw tries to persuade Gwyn to overcome the antagonism – “You are the three”, whatever their backgrounds are – but Gwyn “can’t” (*OS* 155) accept this. On the one hand, he cannot accept the concession to the dominant class/race in the social circumstance in which the oppression and exclusion continue; more directly, it is because Roger does not change, or at least does not apologize for his view that Gwyn cannot be “one of us” due to his class background. Roger, who does not understand what hurts Gwyn, merely succeeds in convincing Gwyn that Alison has not laughed at him (*OS* 156). The apology for Roger’s personal fault in mocking him – but not in his class prejudice behind it – cannot resolve Gwyn’s class anger. Therefore, Gwyn, being unable to resolve his anger, refuses to save Alison.

Reception History: Silencing of Gwyn's Anger

Although the ending of *The Owl Service* allows multiple interpretations, when we focus on class, the ending becomes more straightforward. The inevitability of the ending, read in the light of class tension was therefore not difficult to understand for readers in late-1960s Britain, when class consciousness was more central than it has subsequently become. Particularly, for scholarship boys and working-class readers, as Chambers pointed out, this element was the great strength of the novel (Chambers, *Booktalk* 83), since it was one of few children's books which represented a kind of working-class anger. While the strong class conflict that existed in the 1960s made the ending meaningful for British readers, the scholarship boys' experiences were also familiar for other British readers. Around 1960, in Britain, many popular novels, films, plays, and television dramas featuring the scholarship boys and girls appeared. Examples include *Room at the Top* (novel 1957; film 1959) *Billy Liar* (novel 1959; film 1963),[6] *A Kind of Loving* (novel 1960; film 1962), *A Taste of Honey* (play 1958; film 1961), or, indeed, the soap-opera *Coronation Street* (1960-).[7] Gwyn was seen as one of these angry scholarship boys in the 1960s, and therefore Garner has "often been presented as an angry writer" (*Labrys 7*, 85) who depicted the scholarship boys' anger against class society.

In the late 1960s, even middle-class children's critics understood the novel in a way which is considerably different from today's understanding. Today, generally Gwyn is seen as nothing but one of three main teenage characters, and the ending is regarded as "surprising for most readers" (Taylor 95) in the way it "overturns the reader's expectation" (McGillis). However, in 1967, critics generally saw Gwyn as the most important of the protagonists, and the ending as an inevitable conclusion of the novel. For example, a review in *The Junior Bookshelf* describes the book as Gwyn's story, and does not even mention Roger's name (391). Likewise, the reviewer of *The Times Literary Supplement* felt "the sense of inevitability" (1134). Because these reviewers – including Philippa Pearce, who wrote that "there is a masterly appreciation of class idioms and snobberies, and an awareness of their deadly potentiality as weapons"

[6] While Billy was educated in a grammar school in the film, in the novel, he has finished secondary technical school.
[7] Granada Television, which is located in North-West England and is famous for *Coronation Street*, also broadcast a TV drama adaptation of *The Owl Service* (1969-70). However, in the TV drama, Gwyn's presence is decreased and more scenes of Roger and Clive added.

(165) – understood the importance of class in the plot, and saw the inevitability of the ending, even if they might personally have disliked the topic being depicted in a children's book (see Chapter 7).

The question, therefore, is when and how Gwyn's class anger and the inevitability of the ending became forgotten. The fact that non-British scholars and British scholars of later generations have tended to overlook the role of class is, in part, a consequence of changing British society and internationalization of children's book criticism. Chambers now suggests that today's teenagers might not understand the novel, because Gwyn's anger cannot be so eloquent in today's British society, where one's class background matters less, or differently (Chambers, Personal Interview). Indeed, foreign critics in relatively classless countries such as the US, Canada and Australia, have, since the 1960s, tended to overlook these class tensions and have failed to see the inevitability in the final pages. For example, a 1968 book review in *The Washington Post* describes the novel as "a drama of young people confronted with the challenge of moral choice" without mentioning the class tension (104). Likewise, Canadian writer Eleanor Cameron, in her essay on *The Owl Service* in 1969, in which she discusses Welsh-English problems at length but does not refer to class, criticizes the ending as "conveying mere prettiness of conceit" (107). The tendency to underestimate Gwyn, accompanied by the underestimation of class tension, is, in fact, more pronounced among overseas criticism: for instance, an encyclopaedia published in the US, *British Fantasy and Science-Fiction Writers Since 1960* (2002), explains: "The central characters are Alison and Roger". The full meaning of *The Owl Service*, as contained in the tragedy of the scholarship boy Gwyn, is only visible when the strong class barrier and the class conflict which Gwyn faces are understood.

However, the reception history of *The Owl Service* in Britain suggests a more political process in which Gwyn's anger was silenced. In the 1970s, some British critics began to devalue class tension and Gwyn's social anger by criticising the ending as confusing and by proposing a new interpretation, namely that Gwyn fails to save Alison because of his problematic personality. In 1976, Chambers criticised the class bias of some middle-class critics who thought that the ending of *The Owl Service* "mars the story and is a weakness when, in fact, it is the book's great strength" (*Booktalk* 83). Three years later, public school-educated British writer, David Rees, objected to Chambers' claim and insisted that "The ending is, by any standards, confused and not a

strength" ("Alan Garner" 286). Rees discusses the ending without mentioning class tension:

> The reader, by identifying with Gwyn, is lulled into forgetting that he is just as maimed... The ending, then, is surely right intellectually but it is fair to say that the author should not have asked us to be so much on Gwyn's side emotionally... ("Alan Garner" 287)

Rees here attributes Gwyn's failure in saving Alison to his "maimed" personality instead of class tension, and further suggests that readers should not see Gwyn as the main protagonist with whom readers should identify. Rees consistently attempts to undermine the importance of class in the novel:

> Aidan Chambers's remarks point, rightly, to the interesting class tension in the book, but here again there is weakness, not strength. Gwyn is any working-class boy with a chip on his shoulder that grows to an enormous size when confronted with the closed doors of the moneyed English middle-class… ("Alan Garner" 287)

This remark shows that, unlike foreign critics, Rees clearly understood that Gwyn's anger arose from the class barrier, "the closed doors" of the middle-class. But he condemned it as a "weakness, not strength" of the novel. To delegitimise Gwyn's anger against the class society, Rees deliberately did not accept the class tension as the factor that determined the ending, but emphasized Gwyn's personal faults.

What Rees sees as weakness – "Gwyn is any working-class boy" ("Alan Garner" 287) – was, as Chambers pointed out, a strength of the novel from scholarship boy and working-class readers' point of view, particularly in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, Bob Dixon and Robert Westall stated that the role of working-class characters in children's books had been not only minor, but also "determined by his or her attitude towards the power establishment" (Dixon, vol. 1, 48): if they are not obedient to the establishment, their role is "criminals" (Dixon, vol. 1, 48) or "baddies" (Westall, "How Real" 41). None of main working-class characters in *The Owl Service*, however, are obedient to the middle-class characters and class hierarchy. The main protagonist, Gwyn, is the scholarship boy who is potentially a threat to the class system. The cook's son is not

only cleverer than the master's son, but also seduces the master's daughter, but Gwyn and the implied author believe that he has the right to do so. Huw is a gardener who insists he owns the valley: 'Oh, their name is on the books of the law, but I own the ground, the mountain, the valley' (*OS* 75). In spite of his views, Huw is not a villain, but a key character, the only adult who knows the truth and who can help the three teenagers. Nancy attempts to subvert the social order by marrying an upper-middle-class man, her master. Her opinion that she "should be sitting at that table today saying potatoes was cold, not them" (*OS* 89) also challenges the social order. When many children's authors assumed a reader would live in a house with servants, but would not "be aware of housemaids and cooks, nannies and gardeners" (Chambers, *Booktalk* 47), Garner depicted such frustrated and defiant working-class characters. *The Owl Service* was, therefore, a rare and important book in the way it features realistic and radical working-class characters in the late 1960s. When Rees criticized the angry scholarship boy as the weakness of the novel, he was, in effect, opposing this new type of realistic working-class characters, which, in the late 1970s, was already infiltrating mainstream British children's books. In other words, by criticizing working-class views and characters in *The Owl Service*, whether he intended to or not, Rees worked to perpetuate the old status quo, the middle-class dominance of the field.

Rees criticised the depiction of Roger and Clive as "standard caricatures of the chinless, witless, public-school type, observed externally" by "particularly the frustrated working-class observer" (287). This overlooks the fact that *The Owl Service*'s viewpoint is largely positioned as the frustrated working-class boy, Gwyn's. In other words, Rees attempts to read the novel from the middle-class characters' perspectives, despite the fact that the novel is intended to be read from a working-class perspective. In *The Owl Service*, as well as in *Red Shift*, Garner often depicts the same scene from different perspectives, from both working-class and middle-class points-of-views. For example, a quarrel between Nancy and Roger about Roger's pictures, which Nancy has removed from a table, is first depicted from Roger's viewpoint as a quarrel with the stupid and insolent housekeeper (*OS* 80), and then Nancy retells the incident in her dialogue with Gwyn as harassment from the selfish and arrogant middle-class boy (*OS* 88). These collisions between middle-class perspectives and working-class perspectives engender class tension. They are designed to challenge middle-class views by presenting working-class ones later, but a reader can read the novel from middle-class perspective, if he/she chooses to do so, because in some parts Alison and Roger are focalized.

However, the ending of *The Owl Service* requires readers to see the class barrier from Gwyn's, the ordinary frustrated working-class boy's, perspective to understand its inevitability emotionally. Rees, disliking the working-class perspective, proposed to read the novel from a middle-class perspective, or, more precisely, insists that Garner should have written the novel in the way that "the reader's sympathies would not have been tilted so dangerously towards Gwyn" (Rees, "Alan Garner" 288) but would have tilted towards Roger and Alison (Rees, "Alan Garner" 287-88). In his view, the angry working-class boy should not be regarded as the main protagonist.

Ultimately, Rees attempted to rewrite the scholarship boy novel into a middle-class novel. In the 1970s, amid the intense battle in the changing field of British children's book criticism, it is not surprising that a highly literate and respected critic who embodied the dominant culture, such as Rees (a Cambridge graduate and a lecturer at Exeter University), consciously or unconsciously, ignored the class tension and working-class views in *The Owl Service*. The problem is that Rees' article has been historically influential, and indeed, ultimately *did* succeed in rewriting the meaning of the novel. There have been cautions against reactionary movement in the field. For instance, Peter Hunt (1981) criticises Rees' essays as "pseudo-criticism", which judges books by assuming "a consensus opinion" ("Criticism and Pseudo-Criticism" 17) without recognising critic's own "social, political and moral attitudes" ("Criticism and Pseudo-Criticism", 17).[8] Rees' class assumption in the essay is clear: his "us" and "the reader" are obviously from the dominant social group which does not want to see the ordinary working-class boy or the working-class frustration in British children's books. However, most critics and scholars have accepted Rees' opinion that the ending of *The Owl Service* is so confusing that readers may "feel that they have been cheated" (Rees, "Alan Garner" 286) as a fact rather than the middle-class counterattack (for instance, see Philip 71; Taylor 95; Sullivan III, "One More Time" 47).

On the one hand, this was, in part, due to the internationalization of children's book criticism and the change of British society. Since foreign scholars and the later generation of British scholars did not know the state of British children's book criticism in the 1970s and/or the significance of social class in Britain, they did not think to examine critics' class attitudes. On the other hand, Rees' article's influential power

[8] Strictly speaking, Hunt does not refer to Rees' essay analysed in this chapter. The book which Hunt criticises is Rees', *The Marble in the Water* (1980), which is a collection of essays that appeared in *The Horn Book*, but Rees' article about *The Owl Service* is collected in the next book of the same series, *Painted Desert, Green Shade* (1984).

suggests that the majority of people in the field of British children's literature supported his view. As Neil Philip (1981) states, "many" (71) felt the ending to be "a betrayal of Gwyn" (71). In this respect, perhaps Rees merely represented the dominant view in the field, in which the majority of people were from the middle-class. In fact, in spite of the class bias clearly seen in his essay, Rees was never a conservative, old-style writer. As one of few openly gay writers in the late 1970s, he was, rather, an emerging radical writer. Therefore, Rees' essay was not simply a conservative writers' attack on the newcomer to sustain his position in the field, but was probably an attempt unconsciously which arose from his "embodied culture". Presumably, he was unaware of the fact that he was attacking the inclusion of working-class culture and imposing middle-class views. Because of his class habitus, and because of the state of the literary fields, Rees unconsciously, but successfully, disguises middle-class views as the collective voice in the field of children's literature, and his class-biased view masquerades as a class-neutral criticism. This is, at least in part, why his opinion has been regarded as legitimate and become influential.

In the course of their attempts to explain the ending which has been regarded as "a betrayal of Gwyn, to be a cheat" (Philip 71), British scholars have shifted emphasis on to Roger, out of the assumptions proposed by Rees that the ending is determined by "individual faults and inadequacies" (Taylor 100) of Gwyn and Roger, rather than class tension. Victor Watson, in 1983, explained critics' consensus of the time as follows:

> This [the closing pages of *The Owl Service*] is usually regarded, I believe, as a 'surprise ending', showing Garner's skill in inducing his reader first to give his sympathies to Gwyn and then unexpectedly showing us that it was Roger all along who was the nice boy capable of rescuing Alison. (Watson 77)

Although Watson considers this view as a misreading due to its ignorance of Alison, overall he confirms Rees' view. Watson, overlooking the role of class tension in the novel, thinks that "the novel has serious weaknesses" (77) in terms of an inevitability of the ending. In Watson's view, Gwyn's anger arises merely from the fact that "Roger has made a tasteless and unkind joke – that is all" (Watson 80). Succeeding those dominant views in children's book criticism, Andrew Taylor (1992) considers that "Garner has deliberately built this surprise into this novel" (96) so that readers must reconsider their

views on Roger and Gwyn (96-99). By the 1990s, when the initial response was already forgotten, these assumptions were widely shared by scholars as a received interpretation inside and outside of Britain (for instance, see also McGillis). In this way, in the history of children's book criticism, Gwyn's class anger and class conflict, highlighted in the ending scene, were effectively silenced.

This process of undermining class anger was also abetted by left-wing critics. Except for a few scholarship boys, such as Chambers and Westall, left-wing critics generally ignored or even attacked *The Owl Service* for classism. For instance, in the late 1970s, Bob Dixon criticised Garner for showing his class prejudice in the ending of *The Owl Service*, by depicting Roger's victory *(Catching* vol. 2, 150). Partly, this tendency arose from, as Watson points out, critics' ignorance of female characters (Watson 77). As has been shown, when we pay enough attention to Alison, the ending *cannot* be interpreted as Roger's victory. More importantly, however, since *The Owl Service* does not confirm the standard narrative of early twentieth-century Marxism, left-wing critics who expected a simple socialist story did not understand what Garner attempted in the ending of the novel. In *The Owl Service*, Garner illustrates the living value and power of the Welsh myth preserved in the rural working-class culture. The superiority of the residual culture over the dominant culture is represented by the depiction of Huw as the only adult who knows what is happening in the valley and how to save Alison. Roger has despised Huw, but in the ending, Roger gives up his loyalty to the dominant culture and accepts Huw's words, which represents the value of the residual culture. In this respect, the ending of the novel highlights the victory of the rural working-class culture over the dominant middle-class culture. This ending, however, does not challenge the economic ruling of the dominant class neither does it confirm the effectiveness of this kind of militant class struggle. Ultimately, it indicates that the working-class gains nothing from the irresolvable class conflict.

In addition, in the field of children's literature, left-wing reluctance to appreciate class depiction in the novel presumably arose from a belief that children's books had to represent ideals, rather than reality. Regardless of their political attitudes, critics have often tried to see what they believed as ideal in children's books. In 1981, Fred Inglis, while he criticized middle-class snobbery in children's books, stated his belief that "children's reading... is always and endlessly capable of being relocated in the classless paradise" (50). Inglis believes a child's innocent moral value, without being affected by adult ideologies, can achieve the classless paradise (51-52). *The Owl Service* clearly

denies this optimistic view, and confirms strong class conflict and prejudices among British children. The middle-class teenage characters in the story can never be free from their own class prejudices, which they (innocently) learn from their parents. The working-class teenager's class antagonism is also destructively strong. As Chambers' pupils thought, the ending shows a view that "those boys, like Roger, will never understand us [the working-class], or we don't understand them" (Chambers, personal interview); Gwyn's strong class anger cannot be relocated in a classless paradise. Therefore, the ending of the novel, which makes the overwhelming destructive power of the class system and endless conflicts between classes on readers so impressive, was disagreeable for some left-wing critics, who believed that children's books had to support an imagined, classless future. This desire to see a classless paradise portrayed in children's books, which was shared by critics regardless of political orientation, ultimately silenced Gwyn's class anger.[9]

As has been shown, *The Owl Service* is a good example of how the critical field produces or reduces the meanings of a novel. Since the field of literary criticism usually consists of people who possess a high amount of cultural capital, and because, usually, the majority of such people are from the dominant class, the dominant tastes and views of the field accords with ones of the dominant class. Thus, the radical meaning of *The Owl Service* was reduced in the critical history, because critics read the novel according to the dominant rules and criteria in the field. Since this was avoidable only if scholars were aware of the effects of class in the field of children's book criticism, this example highlights both the danger of insufficient research into the critical field and the persistence of class in the literary field, which operates as long as this unawareness continues. However, even if class anger was deleted from the received critical consensus and official history of British children's books, it is also true that many teenage readers probably inscribed radical meaning by themselves. *The Owl Service* was "in the UK the kind of classic widely prescribed in schools" (Hunt, *Children's literature* 67) and "perhaps the best-known 'classic' of modern fiction for the early teenager: approved by librarians, teachers, conscientious parents, children's literature pundits (and apparently well-liked by children also)" in the 1970s (G. Fox 38). By concealing true meanings from the eyes of adults of the dominant class, *The Owl Service* effectively conveyed working-class views and values to younger generations of readers. In this respect, the ambiguity of the novel, which allowed some middle-class adult readers to

[9] For the desire to see happy stories in children's books see Tucker, "Depressing Stories".

read only what they wanted to see, might, in the long run, be an effective challenge to British cultural hegemony.

CONCLUSION: "THE AWARENESS OF STANDING BETWEEN TWO CULTURES"

In the late 1970s, Raymond Williams explained that, as a novelist, he had felt the "social importance" (Williams, *Politics and Letters* 272) of writing a scholarship boy novel, but discovered "the forms for it weren't easily accessible" (Williams, *Politics and Letters* 272):

> The new [literary] forms of the fifties, to which many writers [from the working-class] quickly turned, were usually versions of the novel of escape... Their theme was really escape from the working-class... they were not about what interested me most, which was a continuing tension, with very complicated emotions and relationships running through it, between two different worlds that needed to be rejoined. There was no form for this [in 1960].

As has been shown, what the three scholarship boy writers for children, Chambers, Garner and Westall, attempted in their writings largely corresponds to what Williams explains here as his literary aim. The works of scholarship boy writers for children, as has been shown, are illustrative of the tension between classes and rejoining the two worlds. This was because their works were produced through the writers' "awareness of standing between two cultures" of the working- and middle-classes (Garner, "Achilles in Altjira" 53). Similarly to Williams, therefore, the scholarship boy writers for children were conscious of what they saw as the failure of their precursors in adult writings. Garner, for instance, strove to elevate working-class heritage by writing about it in a highly literary way. His idealisation of the rural working-class meant that he generally disapproved of working-class/scholarship boy writers producing "escape" stories in the 1950s and the 1960s because of their failure to integrate their inherited working-class cultures in their writings (Garner, Letter to Chambers, 22 Mar. 1978). Garner believed the values and cultural richness of working-class cultures were capable of producing writing that was superior to the current range of bourgeois novels (see Garner, Letter to Chambers, 22 Mar. 1978; *Signal Approach* 307), because in "the stuff of peasants" (Garner, "Fine Anger" 6), a writer could find crucial aspects of old English culture which had been lost from the dominant culture. Garner's extensive research into folk

tales and myths has been driven by this ambition to recover English literature from bourgeois culture. Although he was principally concerned with rural culture, Garner also saw the richness of working-class culture in the popular culture of the time. He points to the subtle influence of comic strips such as *The Dandy* and *The Beano*, which were very popular among working-class children in their generation (Garner, Interview in *Signal Approach* 328). Valuing "the healthy questioning of all authority" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 328) in these comics, he explains, "I'd like to think that in everything I do a little of the genetic structure of *The Dandy* and *The Beano* is passed on" (Garner, *Signal Approach* 328).

However, Garner believes that a scholarship boy writer also had to use the required middle-class culture to achieve his literary aim. The majority of working-class writers from the mid-twentieth century, in his estimation, failed to make the best use of their inherited working-class culture to produce quality literature, because of their mindless denial of academic culture, particularly a tendency of "a disdain for controlled and structured form" ("Fine Anger" 6). Similarly, Chambers wanted not only to write about the working-class, but also "to be part of the great English tradition" rather than the part of the working-class writers in the 1950s and the 1960s who attracted attention because of their depictions of the working-class rather than their literary qualities (Chambers, personal interview). Chambers' conscious departure from working-class modes of writings and his developing literary ambitions around 1960 can be seen in a radical change in his style and the forms he uses. Between Chambers' earliest Young Adult novel, *Cycle Smash* (1967), and *Breaktime*, which adopts aspects of James Joyce's style, he constantly experimented in a search for more sophisticated and complex forms. Not all scholarship boy writers were as interested in style as Garner and Chambers, but even those who were more concerned with left-wing politics, such as Westall, Leeson and Needle, produced well-constructed and intellectually demanding books. They wrote critical parodies of classic children's books in an attempt to overturn the bourgeois ideologies in the classics; for instance, Leeson's *Silver's Revenge* (1978) is a sequel to *Treasure Island*, which questions middle-class and white characters' morality, and Needle's *Wild Wood* (1981) is a retelling of *The Wind in the Willows* from a working-class perspective. Westall's *Fathom Five,* the title of which is an allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is, in part, a parody of classic middle-class children's adventure stories in which typically middle-class boys catch working-class villains. Such techniques of parody, and a tendency to write *against* tradition, are enabled by

their knowledge of classical works and abilities to decode and reconstruct the stories in order to criticise the hidden ideologies of the originals.

While the scholarship boy writers' of children's books are characterized overall by such uses of two class cultures, which sometimes create tension within the works, at the same time, these writers were conscious of the particular role of children's literature as a part of the education system. As has been shown, scholarship boy novels for children reveal the cultural process of class reproduction through the education system, and the way cultural incorporation into middle-class school culture could engender anxiety and conflict with working-class families and communities. As their novels show, scholarship boys often experienced school as psychologically damaging and traumatizing. The education system frequently worked to restrict working-class pupils' possible futures, and to limit the potential to resist and challenge authority and the establishment. Annette Kuhn, a scholarship girl scholar, summarizes the effect of grammar school education in this way:

> The price they [scholarship girls and boys] were asked to pay for their education was amnesia, a sense of being uprooted – and above all, perhaps, a loss of authenticity, an inability to draw on the wisdom, strengths and resources of their roots to forge their own paths to adulthood. (Kuhn 117)

In keeping with this view, Chambers, Garner and Westall depicted class tension and alienation of the scholarship boys, but did so in ways that worked to resolve it. Their semi-autobiographical novels ultimately emphasize the importance of working-class culture and explore a way to retain the connection with the working-class while using what they gained from education. By exposing mechanisms of class control alongside positive portrayals of working-class life, they helped the next generation of working-class pupils to overcome class barriers. Their effect was not confined to working-class readers; as has been shown, it was middle-class unawareness that had the most significant role in class reproduction in education and literature. By raising awareness of the mechanism of class reproduction among educators, publishers, and critics, they contributed to change of the class nature of the field of British children's literature.

As a part of this struggle, as Part II has shown, scholarship boy writers actively worked to change the dominant views and criteria of good children's books in

children's book publishing and criticism. As Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production (see *The Field of Cultural Production* and *The Rules of Art*) predicts, this was an effective strategy for change. Most of their aims as set out in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, such as that children's literature should be inclusive of all classes and races of children, are now largely accepted and implemented. Ultimately, their success in changing children's book publishing and criticism enabled the scholarship boy children's writers' long-lasting success, unlike their counterparts in adult literature (Chambers and Prior, 135; Driscoll 4; Hitchcock, *Working-class Fiction* 89; Laing 81). The scholarship boys' success in writing for the young was helped by multiple conditions which supported their struggles, such as the emergence of the school market and left-wing/liberal teachers and parents. It was also, in part, because children's literature had been largely neglected by people of the dominant social group (see Hunt, *Understanding Children's Literature* 1). In other words, perhaps they were allowed to be canonical and influential only in the field of children's literature because of its lowly position in the British literary hierarchy. Its lowly position in the literary hierarchy has surely engendered the neglect of these writers in studies of general English literature. A parallel image between the working-class and juvenile also reminds us of the fact that, as Troy Boone (2005) highlights, the middle-class often rhetorically treated the working-class as juvenile in order to justify their control. Children's literature, however, as one of the first places where children encounter many aspects of their culture, proved to be a significant medium for cultural reproduction; it could change the dominant culture of the new generation by introducing new ways of thinking about culture in relation to class. As has been shown, most of the scholarship boy writers engaged in the struggles in the field because they were conscious of the important role of children's literature in the reproduction of class in Britain. In this respect, these writers are not only important for their contributions to British children's literature, but also to the changes their writing and activities in the field helped bring about over time in British cultural hegemony more generally.

Where Next?

Since scholarship boy writing for children is a subject that has been largely neglected, this thesis has focused on three of the most influential figures in the 1960s and the 1970s to highlight the core issues around scholarship boys and British children's

literature in the period. Inevitably, it covers only a small part of the broad topic of the working-class and modern British children's literature. There is scope for many other studies in this area, and there are several British children's writers from the working-class who merit serious study. Some of these were scholarship boys and girls of the same generation as the writers discussed here; others avoided some of the conflicts associated with being educated away from one's class and so offered different views of working-class life. For instance, Richard Armstrong (1903-86) left school at the age of 13 to work in a steelworks before joining the Merchant navy. Armstrong won the 1948 Carnegie Medal, and between 1943 and 1970 he wrote at least 11 other children's novels, most with working-class characters. Other scholarship boy writers for children in the mid twentieth century also need further investigation if a more complete picture of their contribution to children's literature is to be achieved. Where this thesis concentrates on semi-autobiographical work, it would be valuable to consider Robert Leeson's output, and his decision to avoid writing about scholarship boys. This was, he claimed, in part because he was afraid of how former scholarship boys who had become teachers might react to such books, but it also reflected the fact that Leeson was more interested in "ordinary" working-class children than the elite selected to receive grammar-school educations (Leeson, personal interview). Leeson's concerns indicate that not all kinds of scholarship boy writings were acceptable in the period covered here. For instance, the three writers' scholarship boy novels are biased towards the upper segment of the working-class who became successful grammar school pupils. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the division between the upper and the lower parts of the working-classes was significant. Chambers, Garner, and Westall were all "upper working-class", which was typical of working-class grammar school pupils (see Jackson and Marsden). Leeson and Jan Needle were from poorer backgrounds, and initially did not enter higher education; in other words, they belong to the type of pupils who were more likely to *rebel against* the authority of their grammar school and the values they sought to instil in them. Although Garner depicts a scholarship boy from the lower section of the working-class in Gwyn in *The Owl Service*, in general scholarship boy characters are the type of scholarship boys who were *assimilated into* middle-class culture, rather than those who left school early, and rejected school culture. This tendency indicates that only the more literate, the more conformist scholarship boy novels, which stems from the upper-working-class, were allowed to emerge in the field of British children's literature. To understand this boundary of the scholarship boy

novels, analysis of works of the scholarship boys who did not depict scholarship boys is required.

In addition, obviously those scholarship boy novels published between the 1960s and the early 1980s are biased towards white male experiences due to the writers' backgrounds. Scholarship boy writers such as Leeson, Needle and Ashley were some of the earliest writers who depicted serious racial issues in children's books, and Chambers' Topliner was one of few labels which actively sought black and Asian writers, even though, in the 1970s, the number of writers he could find was still limited (see Pearson, 191-95). However, the relationship between race and class has been largely unexplored. While racial biases reflect the fact that this was relatively early in the phase of British mass immigration, the gender bias is not. British children's literature, historically, had seen a much higher proportion of female writers than in adult literature because children's books were regarded as belonging to the female territory of the nursery (Hunt, *Understanding Children's Literature* 1). Despite the number of female writers of children's books, however, female working-class/scholarship girl writers only emerged in the late 1970s, confirming the view that working-class girls were "oppressed both within class [by gender] and [within gender] by class" (Plummer 7). In the late 1970s, writers from the working-class, such as Gwen Grant (1940-), Gene Kemp (1926-2015), and Susan Price (1955-) published novels.[1]

The representation of working-class girls in their novels in terms of class have, however, rarely been explored. For instance, Kemp's *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (1977), which received the Carnegie Medal and the Other Award for her portrayal of a clever and empathetic tomboy, Tyke, has attracted attention in light of feminism and the history of school stories (see Richards; Watson, *Reading Series*). However, Kemp's challenge against the gender stereotype – Tyke is a working-class girl, whom most readers regard as a boy until the revelation of her real name in the final pages (Cross 138-39) – also needs to be explored in light of historical context of class and gender. Scholarship girls who became academics, such as Walkerdine and Steedman, argue that during the brief flourishing of working-class art between the 1950s and the 1970s, a positive image of working-class young men was created, but working-class girls continued to find only negative attributes and shame in their backgrounds, and did not contest them on the page. For instance, Carolyn Steedman points out that Jeremy

[1] Among them, only Kemp is a scholarship girl. Grant left school at 15 and educated herself in a night school and Open University; Price was educated in a comprehensive school and got a publishing contract with Faber when she was 16, abandoning further education.

Seabrook's recollection that "we [scholarship boys] were all picaresque heroes of our own lives" (Seabrook 262), could not be applied to scholarship girls in the same generation (Steedman 15). Beverley Skeggs (1997), analysing working-class women's class experience, states: "Whereas working-class men can use class as a positive source of identity", "Class is experienced by the women as exclusion" (Skeggs 74), because "the label working-class when applied to women has been used to signify all that is dirty, dangerous and without value" (Skeggs 74).[2] This was the condition of the cultural field which limited the emergence of female working-class writers, and in which context, the writers' works have to be examined. Much remains to be done if the relationship between class, gender, race and children's literature during this influential period is to be understood. This thesis has, I hope, begun this work.

[2] For gender and class culture featured in British school stories, see also Hollowell.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview with Aidan Chambers

HT: I'd like to ask about your novels about grammar school boys, such as Ditto in *Breaktime* and Hal in *The Dance on My Grave*, though they are not necessarily grammar school boys, but their experiences are similar to those of the first generation of grammar school boys.

AC: In both those books, they are grammar school boys.

HT: They are grammar school boys?

AC: Yes, both in *Breaktime* and *Dance on My Grave*, they are grammar school boys. You have to remember that I didn't read until very late, when I was nine. I could read individual words, and with struggle, sentences, but I didn't read books. English children were expected to read fluently by the time they were seven. No one understood why, but it meant that, as still happens, if you can't read or find reading difficult, they assumed you were stupid, that you were not very clever [...] And they treated you like that. I was at a very bad primary school. This was during the war. I started school in 1940, and was in that same primary school from 1942 until 1945. The teaching was appalling, absolutely awful, and brutal. We were punished with the cane – slashed across the hand with a bamboo stick – because I couldn't do my arithmetic, couldn't do maths, I had trouble with figures.

HT: When you couldn't do math, your teacher hit you?

AC: Yes.

HT: That was terrible.

AC: Yes, it was terrible. Every Friday, for a whole year.

HT: Every week?

AC: Every week. Because, I didn't get enough of my sums right. If you didn't get enough of them right, they punished you. This was the old belief that if you punished the child, he would learn, which, of course, was quite wrong. And in those days, there was an examination, when you were eleven years old, called the eleven plus, and that determined whether you would go to the academic school, the grammar school or not, and of course I failed it. At that point, we moved to another town, where the education system was very good. But the teacher at the new primary school I went to, told my mother that I was at least two years behind. They did their best to help me, but I was only there for 6 months, before I had to go to the non-academic secondary school, which in those days was called the secondary modern school. It was non-examination system, based upon an idea that you should give these not very clever children a basic education, a lot of arts and crafts such as woodwork and metal work, because they thought you would become skilled and unskilled manual workers. But it so happened, that in 1944, the year before I moved from the awful school, the government passed an Act of Parliament, called the 1944 Education Act, which said that there should be a second chance at thirteen-and-a-half for children who had failed their eleven-plus. In the brief that they were what were called late developers, which in America are called late bloomers.
So as I went to the grammar school at 13 and a half, and at the age of 16, took an examination that everybody took in grammar school, which decided whether you would stay on at school until you were 18, or would leave and get to a job. The question I was asked all the time was "What are you going to do?" They assumed that I would leave at 16.

HT: Teachers assumed you were leaving?

AC: Except for Jim Osborn, the senior English teacher. He was the one who opened my mind to literature. He made me a real reader. He was a wonderful but very stern teacher.

HT: So, before you met that teacher, you didn't read many books?

AC: Not much, at all. When I moved to the new town, to Darlington, I had no friends, of course.

There was a boy who lived across the road, who was the same age as I was, and he befriended me. He came to my house and said, “Hello, I live across the road. What are you going to do on Saturday?” And I said, “I don’t know”. He said “Would you like to come with me to the library?” I had never heard of a library. I didn’t know what a library was.

HT: So you had never borrowed a book?

AC: No. Never. And when I looked back, I know that every time we went shopping with my mother in the town where I was born we passed the library, and she never mentioned it. The teachers never mentioned it either.

HT: Teachers never mentioned it?

AC: Never. In the secondary school, there was a library in the school but it was never used […] No one ever borrowed them.

HT: No one used it?

AC: Nobody.

HT: So, it was not only you, everyone in the school.

AC: Yes, in the secondary modern school. This was a working-class non-literary culture. My parents never read books, they read the newspaper. My father read things to do with his work, he was a wood worker, and an undertaker, and he would read about his garden, he was a very good gardener. And my mother read women’s magazines. I used to read comic books, they were called *Dandy and Beano*, which were very famous, they’re still around, you can still get them. What we did was go to cinema. So I was brought up in a cinema […] None of my family, my extended family, none of them read, except my grandmother, my father’s mother. She had been born into a rich family, and she had run away with the butler from the next door family.

HT: A butler from next door?

AC: A butler, a servant from the next door family. She ran away with him. So she was cut out of the will.

HT: What happened to them after they ran away?

AC: Her family cut her out. So she didn't inherit anything. And my grandfather lost his job as a butler. For a while he was a chauffeur, and then he lost that job, because the First World War started and he had to go down the mine. All this area was a mining area. And the towns in which I lived were in a mining area. So, all my male relatives apart from my father were miners […] That was my background. When I went to the grammar school, I was reading what the boy across the road told me to read. He was the one who took me to the public library.

HT: He always read books?

AC: Yes. His father was a middle-class person. He was a salesman. Not like my family at all. So they read in the way middle-class people read, for pastime pleasure, and he went to the library every Saturday to borrow the books he wanted.

HT: Do you think that ordinary middle-class boys went to library every week?

AC: In those days, they tended to. Yes. And in Darlington […] there was a very good library […] And there was in the grammar school, where, of course, we had to read certain books.

HT: As text books?

AC: Yes. For English. I mean we had to read Shakespeare, we had to read poetry, we had to read the classic novels. So that it was very difficult for me, because I'd never done it before. But Jim was very, very good. […] And when everybody thought that I would leave, my father wanted me to join him in the work he was doing. The head

teacher said, "What you going to do?" And I said, "I want to stay at school". And he said, "But what do you want to do? You haven't got any Latin. You haven't got any Greek. You haven't got a foreign language. You can't go to university. What you want to do?" And I said, "I want to study English with Mr. Osborn". And the Head said, "I don't know why you want to do that".

HT: Why did the head master say that?

AC: Because he thought that I was not clever enough, and because I wouldn't be qualified to go to university. To get to University you had to have Latin. And you had to have a foreign language. I hadn't either of those. So he thought that I should leave at 16 and get an ordinary job. But I wanted to go on studying English. And Jim said, "Yes, you are going to come into my sixth form [for the 16 to 18 year olds]. He handpicked his students […] This comes into *Dance on My Grave* […] "What can you do with English literature?" […] It was Jim who decided that I would be a teacher, and he decided which college I would go to. Because in those days, to be a teacher in primary and secondary modern schools, to as train a teacher, you didn't need to have Latin or a foreign language, because those colleges were not university colleges. They were simply there to train teachers who would teach in the primary schools and the secondary modern schools, not in the grammar schools.

HT: Not in the grammar schools?

AC: Not in the grammar schools. To get into the grammar school as a teacher, you had to have a degree from a university, and you didn't get any training as a teacher. You simply got your degree and that qualified you to teach. Whereas I went to a college where they trained you to be a teacher. And that was what I did.

HT: What did your parents think when you decided to be a teacher?

AC: Well, it was Jim who decided, and he just told them, "Your son is going to be a teacher", and they said, "If Mr. Osborn says that, I suppose that's what's going to happen". School had a great importance in those days.

HT: So, they just accepted what they were told by the teacher?

AC: My mother knew that the only way out of the working-class was to be educated. To get me into the grammar school was important to her. Therefore what the grammar school said I should do she went along with.

HT: She was very keen to educate you?

AC: Yes. Because that would mean I would not become a miner. She knew that was hell. I didn't want to be a joiner like my father, a wood worker. She didn't know what I could do. All she knew was she wanted me to be educated so that I had better choice of what I could do. So once I was at the grammar school, she just went with what they said I should do.

HT: What about your father?

AC: He was pleased that I went to the grammar school because that was a rise in status. But he really wanted me to join him, to work with him.

HT: In *Breaktime*, Ditto has some trouble with his father, and your relationship with your father was similar to those of Ditto's?

AC: Yes, a little bit. By the time I was twelve, after we moved to Darlington, my father realized that I didn't like the things he liked. I didn't like football, I didn't like all the things he did, and he kind of gave up on me. […] So he tried very hard when I was 16 to make me join him, to do what he did as a worker.

HT: At that time, was he a woodworker or an undertaker?

AC: He was an undertaker by that time […] You see, many, many, in my generation, people of my age, and the next generation up from mine, people who would now be in their sixties, a lot of us, had this experience of being born into the working-class, then the 1944 Education Act opening up the grammar school system to us, and many of us went through that system. And what it did to you, almost deliberately – I mean it was

almost consciously done to you – was, as in my case, they removed you from the working-class, and educated you into the middle-class. But you knew you didn't belong to the middle-class. You weren't born into it.

HT: So there was a class barrier? That was cultural or social?

AC: Both. England was very class conscious then. It still is really. But it was very class conscious then, and the grammar schools were very middle-class schools. They tended to have children who had been born into cultured families, who were reasonably well-off, though not well-off enough off to send their children to private schools, who turned out to be professionals, solicitors, doctors, lawyers, that kind of occupation, and shop owners – a lot of them were very good, successful, shop owners, trades people. They were readers, though not highbrow readers, but they were readers. And they looked down on the working-class and looked up to the aristocracy and the upper-class people. When you were born into the working-class and then went through the grammar school, everybody knew where you came from. They knew you didn't belong to them.

HT: Was it the way of speaking?

AC: Everything.

HT: Everything?

AC: Yes. They can tell where you lived. I lived, as American would said, on the wrong side of the tracks. I lived in the working-class area. And I had to come through town into the middle-class area to go to school. Because the grammar school was in the middle-class area. In the old days, it used to be a boarding school […] And they were very aware of that history and tradition. They spoke in a more educated accent, which I didn't, of course. So everything about you, they knew where you'd come from. And you were very aware of that attitude towards you. So we were educated out of the roots we were born into, but didn't become, and didn't want to become, a traditional middle-class person. So we were outsiders.

HT: Did you become an outsider because of the grammar school education? What made you different from other people? For example, in grammar school you changed your accent?

AC: Not yet. That happened to me when I was in college training to be a teacher. That's why what I speak now is Received Pronunciation. I was trained to do that, they elocuted me, that was another way of removing you. And you see, you had to do homework from school. Secondary modern children never did any homework. You had to do exams. Secondary modern pupils never did exams. You had to read a lot. Working-class people didn't read a lot. They trained you in rugby not in soccer, not in football. At that time rugby was a middle-class, private school game. So football was looked down on. Cricket was very important. Sport was very important […] So there were many things that, even when you were at home, began to mark you off as being different, not only from your family, but from the boys and girls whom you had grown up with.

HT: So your parents saw you were different?

AC: Of course.

HT: What did your parents feel? They were happy or they were not?

AC: They were happy that I had gone to the grammar school because that was a status thing, I'd gone up in the world, I'd get a better job. The down side was, they didn't know what to do with me, because I'd changed in what I talked about, and I didn't talk about it to them, I didn't talk to them about Shakespeare, I didn't talk to them about D. H. Lawrence, I didn't talked to them about poetry, they didn't go to the theatre to see Shakespeare. You see? So immediately, my parents began to feel as though I was cutting them off, which of course I was, and that unsettled them, they didn't know what to do with me. But all the time, there was the thought that I was going to get a better life.

HT: So, at the end of *Breaktime*, the parents of Ditto try to make efforts to understand Ditto even though they are different because of his education. The parents still want their son to be educated. And your autobiography is very similar to Ditto's?

AC: Very similar. Hal in *Dance on My Grave*, is very close to the way I was. The scene with Jim, Hal's teacher, is Jim Osborn. It's a portrait of him. […]

HT: Richard Hoggart said that the scholarship boys suffered from anxiety and uncertainty, did you experience that?

AC: Yes, absolutely. Because you didn't know where you were. And to succeed in a grammar school, when you had a late start as I did, made you very anxious. Because, you see, Richard Hoggart passed the eleven plus, so when he went, he joined with everybody else of the same age, which made it easier for him. He was also a cleverer man than I am academically. He is an academic. He is a wonderful man. I like Richard very much. He is a lovely man. But he went through all that business of anxiety, of the being a scholarship boy, coming to school and going back into the working-class area at night, having to sit and work at the kitchen table with all the family around. I mean, I was lucky. I was an only child. I didn't have any brothers and sisters so I had my own room, which was very unusual for a working-class boy. Hoggart went to grammar school at the age he should have gone, at the age of 11, whereas I didn't. So my anxiety was much stronger even than his. Because everybody knew that I got there late. And as I mentioned to you, a lot of my generation went through this. A lot of them became teachers. They did that because they wanted to educate the ordinary people. In other words, they believed education shouldn't be restricted to middle-class people as a privilege. Everybody should have a good education. So we were on a kind of ideological mission. I was. To educate the people of the kind that I had been. We went into education with that intention. Of course, it didn't work for various reasons, but at the time we thought it would. We thought we could achieve a literate, even a literary, population. We believed we could do that. Many of us went into English literature because literature was the thing that saved us. I can remember in college as a training teacher almost all of us were like that. We had a huge belief in the power of art, particularly literature, but theatre, music, painting, to refine your intelligence, and to lift you out of the restrictions of the working-class. But what we did not want to do was to make everybody into middle-class people. We wanted to produce a de-classed, an egalitarian, democratic society. And we thought such a society was based on a literate and literary education – that literature was the heart of education: story, poetry, theatre.

HT: Did you meet many teachers from the working-classes in the training college?

AC: Yes, almost all of them were.

HT: Almost all of them?

AC: Almost all of them.

HT: Middle-class students did not go to training colleges?

AC: Some did. But most of them went to universities. If they'd gone to a training college, they thought they'd failed. And there were people like that in my college, who had gone teaching because they had failed to get into university. They became teachers because it was a second choice. Whereas I wanted to be a teacher because I wanted to be a teacher.

HT: In *The Reluctant Reader*, you pointed out the lack of books about scholarship boys – or the first generation grammar school boys, so when you wrote *Breaktime* you were conscious about the topic? Or was it unconsciously done?

AC: No, no, no, it was conscious.

HT: It was conscious?

AC: Oh, absolutely. I was 40 when I started writing that book, 1975. And I knew even when I was writing it that it was a book that I wished I could have written when I was 16. But it took me that long to find out how to do it, and to become skilled enough. I was very aware that what I was dealing with was a boy who has gone to the grammar school, and was having to deal with what was happening to him. The other thread of course, was a sexual one. But it was mainly to do with the crisis the boy is going through. He is in a crisis. It's a kind of literary breaktime. So in that story, which takes place in a few days, is everything that I had been feeling over a period of years, from the age of 14 to 18. It was packed into that story, about school, about family, about girlfriends, about sex. And Morgan in that book is a middle-class boy.

HT: Yes, I felt that.

AC: He is a traditional middle-class boy who has no time for literature. He thinks the sciences are what matter. Literature is phony.

HT: Morgan is confident. Do you think that is because of his class position?

AC: Absolutely. That's what those boys had. And of course, university strengthened this. They had huge self-confidence.

HT: Ditto didn't have the confidence.

AC: No, no.

HT: Because of their class position? Because Ditto and Hal are from working-class but they are removed from it?

AC: Well, in *Dance on My Grave*, there is complication, because he doesn't yet know that he is gay […] So that book is complicated by the fact that Hal is a scholarship boy, his parents are working-class parents who don't know what to do with him, his relationship with his father is fragile, it's breaking down, the man doesn't know what to do with him, the mother is nervous, and neurotic, and Barry is very, very confident, middle-class, his family owns a business, he's predatory, bisexual, only interested in sex, not in the person […]

HT: How long do you think this problem existed?

AC: I think it began to break down in the 1970s. The 1970s were the time when everything loosened up, and when it became fashionable to talk with very working-class accents and to like all the things that the working-class liked – pop music and hard rock, all that stuff, which was not traditionally middle-class. And so the whole cultural fabric began to break down and change. People like the Beatles were genuinely working-class boys. They made the change attractive […]

HT: So, when *Breaktime* was published, the society was already,

AC: Yes, to be honest, *Breaktime* is a very 1950s book.

HT: Very 1950s?

AC: I mean, I made it look like it was happening in the 1970s, but in fact, if you look it carefully, it is socially and culturally much more like the late 50s and early 60s.
[…]

HT: You pointed out in an essay that until the 1970s, children's literature alienated working-class children because of the middle-class culture in books, and the writers' voice. I'd like to know about this topic. Perhaps I should start with *The Owl Service*. Because I think that novel is an example of this problem, a reversed version.

AC: Yes, it is. That's the heart of that novel. Because Gwyn, the central character, comes from the working-classes. His mother is a servant, and the house, the family in the house, are from the middle-class. And there is constant tension between them, particularly between Gwyn and the other boy, Roger, and with Alison, Roger's sister, in the middle between the two boys. So it is about class, and in particular in that book, it is about how language is used, the difference between, in his case of course, Welsh vernacular and vernacular English as spoken by the ruling class, and English as spoken by the middle-class who don't speak the Welsh.

HT: When the novel was published, I think the middle-class critics thought it was difficult because they did not understand the novel in the way the novel should have been understood, while ordinary teenagers understood the novel better because they did not have the assumptions like the middle-class critics and they could easily sympathize and identify themselves with Gwyn. I think middle-class critics felt uncomfortable with Gwyn's anger. Gwyn shows very strong anger.

AC: There's some truth in that. When the book came out, some of the better critics weren't arguing about that aspect of the novel. They thought that was very well done.

They were arguing about whether it was a children's novel or not. And they said it wasn't. But they didn't call it a teenage or a youth book. That distinction wasn't being made at the time. So that was where the first argument centred. The better critics were very aware of how well written it was. And they were aware of the class difference but I think they were uneasy about that. Because it wasn't obviously a working-class book. But it wasn't obviously a middle-class book either. So it's breaking all the rules, it's breaking all the boundaries.

HT: In the book, there is one working-class protagonist, and two middle-class main characters, but I think Gwyn is the main protagonist.

AC: Absolutely.

HT: And usually, readers should identify themselves with Gwyn.

AC: Yes.

HT: But today, sometimes, in critical studies Roger and Alison are more emphasized than Gwyn. I think that is very strange.

AC: Yes, I haven't read the recent criticism of it, but I can see that might happen. And I think you are right in what you said before, that the social problem raised by the book isn't now such a problem. So youngsters now think "What's the fuss about it? Why are they are making such a fuss of it?" Because they're not in a position to read it historically. They want to read it as if it is now, and it takes a sophisticated adult critic to be able to read it in the context of its time.

HT: I'm interested in how your pupils read *The Owl Service* in the 1960s.

AC: In 1967?

HT: Yes, in your class in the secondary modern school.

AC: I can clearly tell you about that. Because I read it aloud chapter by chapter day by day to a group of 15-year-old youngsters, who were not at all clever: they were not good at writing, they were not good at anything in academic terms; when they left school, most of them would become unskilled or semiskilled workers, in factories or on farms. So the assumption was that those young people wouldn't be able to read the book anyway. And so I read it aloud to them. Now what was interesting to me was they understood Gwyn, absolutely, totally. They understood what had gone on, between his mother and Huw Halfbacon, which I hadn't understood. They knew there was incest here. They told me.

HT: Why did they understand it easily?

AC: Because it was in their culture […] They knew this kind of thing went on. It was never talked about. I had not thought of it. And when I was reading the book to them, I happened to say to them one day, "Do you understand what's going on with Nancy and Huw Halfbacon?" "Oh, yes", they said. I said "What? I don't know", and they told me. It was a revelation to me. However, notice, they got this book because I read it aloud to them. They would never have read it by themselves.

HT: But, after your class, did they read the book by themselves?

AC: Yes, some of them did. 5 out of the 13. They were 13 in the class. 5 of them came to me and said "I want that book".

HT: At that time, it was unusual?

AC: Yes […]

HT: I'm particularly interested in the conclusion of *The Owl Service*. Because many critics found the conclusion was difficult.

AC: Yes, they did.

HT: I think your pupils did not.

AC: No.

HT: How did your pupils interpret the conclusion?

AC: You must understand they had had no training in literary interpretation. So they just took it for what it was.

HT: For example, I think ordinary working-class readers, when they read the conclusion of the novel, they still sympathize with Gwyn until the end. But it seems critics tended to think that they have to change their sympathizing character at the ending. Do you think that was a particularly middle-class interpretation?

AC: You tell me how you think the book ends. What happens at the end?

HT: I don't think readers need to change their sympathizing character just because Roger admits his fault and the value of Welsh culture in the valley.

AC: But does the book end with reconciliation or not?

HT: No. I don't think there is reconciliation.

AC: They don't come together?

HT: No, not at all.

AC: That's what my kids understood. Those boys, like Roger, will never understand us, or, we don't understand them. So they were saying, whatever went on in the book, it couldn't have a happy ending of a traditional kind. And they appreciated that because they believed it was real. You see, within the children's book world at that time there was an unease about any story which ended uncomfortably, because they believed that children should have comfortable endings.

HT: I think maybe it was for middle-class adults. I don't think working-class children felt uncomfortable when they found the ending showing a huge gap or the conflict between "them and us". But I think middle-class adult readers felt uncomfortable when they found anger against middle-class and class society.

AC: Maybe. One can't ever make a blanket judgement about people. I'm sure many of the middle-class critics could understand the ending. But there was still, in the children's book world, a feeling that you shouldn't end a book in a way that unsettles the reader. Somehow we have to make them feel good. This book did not make them feel good at the end. It left it open, and at the end, the antagonism was still there. It has not been resolved, and the whole point about this story, the *Mabinogion* story, is that it's going to go on endlessly repeating itself through time. So Garner was being true to the original story that he uses as a device throughout the book, the *Mabinogion* story […] Now, that was what unsettled people. But it didn't unsettle the children, the young people – they were not children, they were teenagers, adolescents, because the ones I was teaching said "Well, that's how it is". You know, they've got really difference. Now, those like myself wanted it to be different. Politically we wanted it to be different. We were trying to break down those barriers. And the novel is saying, "The conflict is going on".

HT: Did you hear Alan Garner actually say that?

AC: No, I am saying the narrator. The narrator of the story. The narrative of that book is saying this is going to go on throughout history. Rather as Shakespeare does, in the great tragedies, it's really saying this is endless […]

HT: Alan Garner likes William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*. Is that the same kind of book? Do you think that's why some working-class writers liked *The Lord of the Flies*?

AC: […] They liked it because it was a metaphor of the world, the truth of humanity. It's brilliantly written, but not written in the manner of the high middle-class, the high literary culture from Jane Austen trough to Virginia Woolf. It's much more like D. H. Lawrence, who all of us were great admirers of in my generation. Because D. H.

Lawrence come out of the working-class. He was a miner's son who wrote what is still the only great masterpiece of English working-class life. It's a brilliant book, *Sons and Lovers*. We all loved that book. And in a funny sort of way, the Golding, isn't like that, but it was aside from the English tradition. It was somehow different. So it set a standard for writing, the use of the language, and it set a standard for metaphor, the use of metaphor, of how you could tell a story that is a universal truth but seems to be set in the modern world. And I think that appealed to us.

HT: I found in your archive that when you interviewed Alan Garner, you and Alan Garner talked about the demotic writers when your remarks were not recorded, and I am interested in who the demotic writers were. Could you tell me, if you still remember?

AC: I don't. I'm just about to read that interview again, because I'm about to re-publish it on my iPad app. By the demotic writers, we would, I think, have meant – they might not be names that mean anything to you – Alan Sillitoe, people like that, who were working-class writers.

HT: Angry Young Men and Kitchen Sink writers?

AC: Angry Young Men weren't quite that. Kingsley Amis wasn't a working-class boy, Larkin wasn't a working-class boy, John Wain was – he was part of that group for a while. But Alan Sillitoe and writers like him – social realists – came out of the working-class some of whom but not all had been educated in grammar schools, and I think that might be what Alan and I were talking about but I don't remember.

HT: So, the demotic writers were from a working-class background but not all of them had gone to grammar schools.

AC: Yes. And we didn't admire all of them.

HT: In the letter, Alan Garner denied that he is like the demotic writers.

AC: Yes, that's right, exactly. Because Alan, you see – this is where it gets very subtle, both with me and with him. We had come out of the working-class. We had been

educated in very high-quality grammar schools: Alan was educated in the best grammar school in Britain, Manchester Grammar School. He had been educated classically, Latin and Greek. I didn't have Latin and Greek, but Jim, my English teacher, had set a standard for what great writing was like. What we admired was great writing. We were not really interested in doing something for the working-class.

HT: The demotic writers were, for example, the writer of *Billy Liar* or…

AC: *Billy Liar* by Keith Waterhouse, yes. Keith Waterhouse was like that. Barry Hines, who wrote *A Kestrel for a Knave*, now always called *Kes*: he was out of the working-class and became a teacher and wrote *Kes*, which is about a working-class boy, in a very bad school, a secondary modern school. Alan and I didn't want to be part of that. We wanted to be part of the great English tradition.

HT: In *The Reluctant Reader*, you named books like *Billy Liar* and *Kind of Loving*, as adult books for teenagers. Were these books teenagers' favourite books?

AC: You see, what you have to understand is that *The Reluctant Reader* is about education. It's about what teenagers like the ones I was teaching would read, and what they wanted to read. It was not about literature as a literary act. But if you look at the book again, you will see the central book that I choose as an example of what would be best is *The Owl Service*. And what I am really saying – and I don't think I said it clearly enough – is that these books that they will read are all very well, but they are not of the standard of *The Owl Service,* which is where we should be going. You see? I was looking for literature which was of a very high quality of writing, and which was about that kind of person, without it being tailor-made, so that they could easily read it. So there are two things going on here: whether I am talking about children – what they would read, what they should have to help them read – and literature, and what kind of literature I wanted to have for them, that they didn't know they wanted or would read. And Alan's *The Owl Service* was the test piece.

HT: Do you think that was because *The Owl Service* was written by a writer who is from a working-class background and he wrote the views of working-class in the novel?

That's why ordinary teenagers liked that novel better than other middle-class children's literature?

AC: You have to be careful here. *The Owl Service* in its heyday, at the height of its fame, was being used, being given to pupils in the grammar schools. It was not given in the non-academic schools.

HT: So, the grammar school students liked *The Owl Service* better?

AC: They were given it by their teachers whether they liked it or not.

HT: Liked it or not.

AC: It was a set book, because the teachers admired it so much. So they read it with the 14- and 15-year-old. They read it with them. They studied it with them. And that went on for a long time. In my kind of school, the secondary modern school, very few teachers were bringing that book to the youngsters, because they thought they wouldn't be able to read it.

HT: But, in fact, they could understand the novel very well, when you read it aloud.

AC: Yes, but I was a very different teacher. I was not a traditional teacher.

HT: And your pupils, in fact, liked the story.

AC: When they heard it. I serialized it. I gave them a chapter a day.

HT: Do you think your pupils would have reacted if you had read other more middle-class novels, like, for example William Mayne's?

AC: They wouldn't have liked them.

HT: They didn't like that kind of book?

AC: No. William Mayne wrote within the great traditional of English high style: he was quite brilliant at it. But most of the children I tried to get to read it didn't like it. It didn't connect with them. It was about characters for whom they had no feeling. The language puzzled them. William is absolutely middle-class writer.

HT: When the novel is about middle-class life, readers need to know the middle-class culture, so working-class children felt "these books are not ours"?

AC: That's the word they used. I mean, I had a library of 6000 volumes, within 3 years from getting to that school, starting from nothing. 75 per cent of it was fiction. Most of it, they wouldn't read. That's why I wrote *Reluctant Reader*. Because it was an examination of what they would read. We need books that connect with them. How do we get them? That's why I started Topliners. You see, where you have a body of people in the country who have not been educated into the dominant culture, they feel like outsiders. And they're aware of it. So that when I became a reader because of Jim, and I was given Jane Austen or Graham Greene – although Jim did not like Graham Greene, but the great English tradition which he made us study – because of the way he told me about those writers I could appreciate how good they were. But they didn't speak to my heart. It was intellectual. The one who spoke to my heart was D. H. Lawrence, and Jim never mentioned him. I found him by myself.

HT: He didn't mention Lawrence?

AC: No, never. I found him for myself, by accident. That was the first book I ever read which was a novel about somebody like myself. As soon as I read it, I felt I wanted to do that. I wanted to write books which were of my kind, the kind that I wished that I had and the kind that identified me. The kind like *Sons and Lovers* in which the central character, Paul Morel, begins as a miner's son and becomes something more: he's educated out of his roots, but with very strong views about where he stood and what he was and that he wasn't like the established culture, he was breaking the rules, which is why in the end he had to leave England. Now, that's how I felt and I wanted that kind of book for the kids, so they would find themselves in the book. Because I knew once I found myself in a book then I read the great tradition differently. I could like it. The only writer who transcended this, for me, was Shakespeare. From the moment I first

saw his plays performed, when I was 14-and-a-half, in this town, in Newcastle, at the theatre with Jim, I knew that was nothing like Jane Austen or whatever, this was something else. And there is a historic reasons for this that, why it's like that. So, Shakespeare and Lawrence identified me but then, like many of my generation, the literature we felt most at home with was American literature.

HT: Yes, you wrote that in "The American Writers and British Readers".

AC: Yes, that's right. Because America is not same, because its literary culture is not embedded in one class. And it was exotic. America seemed wonderful to us because of American films. Everybody wanted to go to America. And it didn't have to do with the English class system. And so we read a lot of American fiction. Hemingway was hugely important to us, for example, and Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck – a whole slew all of them. So we were taught how to appreciate the grand English tradition, but it was a long time before we felt at home with it.

HT: When you wrote that essay, criticizing the class nature of children's literature, how did other critics reacted to the essay? Did you receive any response?

AC: This is the one about The American and British?

HT: Yes, "The American Writers and British Readers" and when you criticised middle-class nature of children's literature.

AC: That were very strong reactions against me.

HT: So other critics from middle-class backgrounds, disliked it?

AC: Oh, yes, absolutely. The people who appreciated me were the teachers who were working in the kind of school I was working in. And they were in the majority, of course. 60 per cent of the population went to that kind of school. All those teachers had to teach their kids to be literary. That's what we thought, but they were having trouble, so when I came along and others also – it wasn't just me – saying "Look, here's the problem, this is what we need", they were all highly positive. But the people who were

within the strong tradition of English children's writing were very uneasy about it. I was called a rabble-rouser.

HT: So they disliked a kind of anti-establishment ideology?

AC: Yes, exactly. And they didn't know where it was going to go. What would it do? They thought that I was totally against their kind of book. I wasn't. I was saying that's all very well, but there is a lot missing here.

HT: Yes, 60 per cent of…

AC: Yes, that we need to do something about. And they would say to me, "But you can't tell writers to write that stuff". And I said, "But we have to start somewhere". And of course probably we'll get an awful lot of not very good stuff. But until we get that, and people see that it can be done, the standard can't rise. And that's exactly what happened; historically, that's what happened. People like Robert Westall and another North-Easterner, David Almond, are beneficiaries of that movement. Robert Leeson, is another. They are the third generation who could write at a high level about ordinary everyday working-class people.

HT: In the 70s, Robert Westall criticised the critics and adult readers.

AC: Yes he did. He was very rude about them.

HT: I read the essay that appeared in *Signal* later.

AC: But, you see, by then, that point-of-view was being accepted.

HT: It was accepted?

AC: It was beginning to be accepted. And so people found Robert provocative and amusing, but didn't reject him, because the movement had begun, it was happening and they were accepting what was being said as actual that had to be done something about, while when I started I was having to break that all down.

HT: I found, in your archive, some Topliner books were criticised by teachers in the late 70s. Some criticising letters in the late 70s, when you published books written by black writers.

AC: Yes, Topliners were thought to be populist. Do you understand what I mean? Low-level quality, specially produced for these people, not literature really, and pedagogic. And when books like *Us Boys of Westcroft*, which was the book about black pupils in London, came out, they never received high level reviewing. They were reviewed in teachers' journals because they were thought these were for teachers, and one or two people who did review them in traditional reviews were very rude about them […]

HT: I think books about the working-class could be in the same way attacked by conservative people. Did you receive such reactions against books about non-black working-class, I mean white working-class?

AC: Yes, we did. Because these critics always used the same arguments: the characters talk badly, use rude words; all that stuff. As though, in adult literature, you didn't get this. There has always have been a thread in children's books, at least in English children's books, which thought the books should be about moral education, about making you into a morally good person, and that they should teach about proper good behaviour, acceptable good language. Of course, that's not what literature is about.

HT: I read that editors did not like dialects or regional languages. They tried to eliminate them from children's books.

AC: There is a problem about writing and spelling phonetically, the way an accent sounds. I don't like it. Because for the reader it's different when you hear it, but when it is spelt in an odd way on a page, the reader has trouble: it holds up the reading, when they're trying to work out what this funny spelling sounds like.

HT: Even if they did not write in a phonetic way, it seems some words were…

AC: Yes, for instance, with Alan Garner's book, *The Stone Book*, on the first page, you get the sentence, "That was father's baggin", and critics said "Nobody knows what a baggin is". Well, the context, is obvious, it's his meal. It's his meal for work. It's not a problem. It's the only odd word on that page, a very short passage. So what Alan was doing was taking regional words but not spelling them phonetically but placing them in the sentence in such a way that the context communicated their meaning. So you may never have heard the word before, but in the context you could understand what it meant. Shakespeare does that. It's not strange. It only felt strange in English children's books, because people thought it shouldn't have strange words in it that children don't know. Well, that's nonsense.

HT: Robert Westall was criticized for bad language and violence in *The Machine Gunners*. Do you think this "bad language" is something to do with working-class language or it was just really bad language?

AC: In English, you've got a problem, because English is a combination of Anglo-Saxon and French. The French we use when we want to be polite. So we talk about going to the toilet. Toilet is French. It's not Anglo-Saxon's. It's called a shit house in Anglo-Saxon. That's thought by the middle-class to be rude. Bad language. But it's not bad language. It's Anglo-Saxon.

HT: So, ordinary language used by ordinary people sounds rude when middle-class people heard it?

AC: Yes. There are certain words, you don't use, because they're thought to be rude, or bad language. Because the primary, the dominant part of the culture linguistically, was Latin or French euphemisms, and the tradition of English children's writing used those Latin, polite, as we think of them, words. The demotic writers – including Lawrence actually – began to use the language that the ordinary Anglo-Saxon language users use and put it into a literary novel. Gradually, it was accepted in an adult novel, but not in a children's book. So that was another battle that was going on.

HT: Why was it not accepted in children's books? Because of educational reasons?

AC: Because the theory was children should be taught polite language. And if they found these so called rude words in a book, they'd think "Oh, it's all right to use them". So it was a cultural decision. To speak properly, as it used to be called, was to use this euphemistic, Latin and French kind of language, particularly for the parts of the body or natural functions, so that for instance in French terms you would be said to urinate not to piss, you would be said to move your bowels, not to shit […]

HT: If you had realistically written novels in the 60s and 70s would editors not accept them?

AC: There were some things they wouldn't allow through. I faced this, not so much in language but in content. In *Breaktime*, published in 1978, the boy masturbated and there was a sex scene that was intimately described, and my editor – my publisher at that time was William Heinemann – saw it, and said "I'm not going to publish this book". I talked to The Bodley Head, because The Bodley Head was then the only publisher in Britain who had decided to have a young adult list. So you knew this was not meant for children, and that was a protection. And the editor immediately said, "We will publish this". And I said, "Won't you get trouble?" She said, "Perhaps, but we are prepared to face it. Because we think it's important. We love the book. We think it is well written. It's realistic. It's true. Therefore we're going to publish it". It was banned in some places. Some libraries banned it.

HT: Banned?

AC: Yes. You were not allowed to borrow the book unless you were over 21. And you had to ask for it.

HT: 21?

AC: Yes, and you had to ask for it. It wasn't on the shelves.

HT: So, you wrote a young adult novel, but teenagers couldn't read the book?

AC: Not in some of the libraries: it was banned. And there were some schools which wouldn't buy it. So the young readers found it only in libraries that were courageous enough to stock it, or they came across it in bookshops or their friends told them about it. It was never studied in schools, not at that time. The same was true of *Dance on My Grave* […] I was careful not to use the words, the fuck words, because that would have made it totally impossible. There was enough to cope with, without that. But what did surprise us was that we didn't get as much of a bad reaction as we had expected […]

HT: I think school libraries bought many children's books. How much did they buy and how important were they? If there were not libraries in secondary schools, how could books for teenagers have been published?

AC: This is also part of the history. Up till middle of the 1970s into 1980, the primary buyers of children's books, youth books whatever, were public librarians. So publishers were very concerned about them, they would take them out to lunch, to try to persuade them to buy new books. The schools, didn't buy that kind of book before that time, they bought the traditional classics. And then in the late 1950s, the school leaving age was put up to 16, so there were all these kids, at the height of adolescence, with everything that means, and the teachers were saying, "What are we going to give these kids?" Most of them were not literary kids. And I came on the scene with Topliners. Then other publishers began to publish that kind of book. And teachers bought them. And they also discovered children's books. For instance in 1970, I was invited by the University of Bristol Education faculty to teach what we called in-service courses […] I was invited to teach children's literature, because teachers wanted to know more about it. That was in 1970. Between 1970 and 1990, the major buyers of books particularly at the older end, became teachers, not the public librarians.

HT: Teachers bought books for school libraries?

AC: Yes, they bought children's books and used them in class for the first time: that didn't used to happen. And there were many of them, you see. In the '60s and '70s, there was a lot of money being put into education to buy books, so they were buying in large quantities. They would bought whole class sets. For instance, they would buy 30 copies of *A Kestrel for a Knave* so that all the pupils had one to read while they were

studying it. This created a huge market. And that's the market that Topliners fed. It wasn't the public libraries. It was teachers who made it. And the teachers became the primary buyers. That went on until the mid 1990s, when great changes were made in education. Because of the Conservatives and what they wanted. And then the primary buyers became parents. Not children, not the teachers so much or the librarians, the market shifted. And that dictated the kind of books published. It still does. Now the library system, isn't as well founded as it used to be and there is less money for books in schools […]

HT: In the 1960s and 1970s, still librarians were-

AC: Very powerful.

HT: …and also in the '70s teachers were.

AC: Yes, teachers became big buyers of the books.

HT: Do you think ordinary children bought more books?

AC: Yes, because there was a school bookshop movement. People like me were arguing that real readers buy books, they don't just borrow, they buy them. And, there was still lot of money around. There were various firms, one called Scholastic Publications, which was an American firm, which set up a school bookshop movement. They went into schools and sold directly to the kids. And at the same time, the teachers began to invite the writers of those books into school to talk to the kids. And the government funded that through the Art Council. So we now got this circus of teachers reading that kind of book for the kids, buying for the kids, authors going into schools talking to the kids, and the school bookshop movement trying to sell directly to the kids. And this went on through the '70s and the '80s and then began to die away in the 1990s.

HT: I think in that situation of the 1970s, views of teachers and librarians were very important for children's literature. I think some teachers were from working-class backgrounds.

AC: Many of them.

HT: In the ‘70s, there were more teachers from the working-class than middle-class?

AC: I wouldn’t say more. But there was an increasing number of them.

HT: I thought middle-class teachers had been more influential. Because I read that some publishers hesitated to publish radical novels, because teachers or librarians disliked them.

AC: That’s true too. I mean, they had their own prejudices also. But when you look at the writers who came up in the late 60s into the 70s, a lot of them were or had been teachers. Robert Westall was a teacher. I was a teacher. Jan Mark was a teacher; she was very, very popular and famous. Many, many of the writers who came up in the ‘60s and the ‘70s had been teachers or were teachers. That was not true before then, so the effect on the education system, on the literature became very, very powerful, very strong. I think David Almond taught for a quite a bit. An exception is Roald Dahl: he didn’t. But many of the writers who came up in the period were or had been teachers […]

HT: Why were most radical writers in the 60s and 70s from working-class backgrounds?

AC: Because you have to know the culture. When a middle-class writer tried to write about the working-class, they got it wrong because they hadn’t lived it.

HT: I found some writers from middle-class backgrounds wrote about the working-class.

AC: Yes they did; but it's never right, it doesn’t work. Because theirs is a stereotypical view. So there was both an ideological influence – working-class writers wanting to write for the culture from which they came and to which they belonged. And also the fact that that is what they knew. The rule is: write about what you know, not about what you don’t know […]

HT: Why did you and Alan Garner write for teenagers rather than younger children?

AC: That's a difficult question to answer. I think it's a question for a psychologist really. For both of us, when we were about 14, 15, 16, 17, our lives were changed.

HT: Because you were grammar school students?

AC: Yes. And everything that happened to us then was a major event and I think we wrote about it to come to terms with it in ourselves. Alan does it particularly with *The Owl Service* and *Red Shift*. Then with *Stone Book*, in which the girl is 14, he resolves the dilemma and comes to terms with his background. And after that he stops. He doesn't produce anymore books for the young. I've taken longer. For me, *Breaktime*, *Dance on My Grave*, *Now I know*, *The Toll Bridge*, are all dealing with that matter in myself. When you get to *Postcards from No Man's Land* I have dealt with it mostly. And when you get to *This is All* it's not a concern at all, I'm interested in the girl, and in her life and what she is doing […]

HT: If you hadn't gone to grammar school, do you think you would have become a writer?

AC: […] If you are saying, would I have been a writer if I had stayed in a secondary modern school, and become a joiner, it's unlikely because what made me into a writer was finding D. H. Lawrence, which happened to me because I was in a grammar school. I wouldn't have found him otherwise. I wasn't reading anything. And I wouldn't have been sufficiently educated in the use of language.

HT: So, without grammar school education, you would not have become a writer?

AC: I don't think so. You can never be sure about such things. But the grammar school educated me, I had to deal with the fact that I came from somewhere else, and admired the high tradition of English writing, but I knew I didn't belong there. So I had to work out how to write about what I know, and write at the standard of the high English tradition. So I wasn't ideologically saying I want to write about the working-class; it

happened because that's what I knew. But then if you look at the boys, even in *Breaktime*, they are not really working-class boys.

HT: Because they are grammar school boys?

AC: Yes, they are […]

[End]

Additional Questions for Aidan Chambers

1. **HT:** How well did you know other working-class writers in the 1960s and the 1970s? Did you have a sense of solidarity or did it feel as if you were making a stand on your own? How conscious were you of what figures like Robert Leeson were saying in the 1970s? Was there anyone who particularly impressed you in terms of class arguments?

AC: I knew quite a lot of writers in the late '60s and the '70s, because I was editing Topliners at that time and running courses for teachers at which writers were invited to speak. I think we did have a sense of common purpose and of pushing the boundaries of fiction for the young. I was aware of Robert Lesson's work and others, both writers and academics. Some are quoted in *The Reluctant Reader*. I wouldn't pick out anyone as especially outstanding.

2. **HT:** It seems apparently class was more frequently argued and also working-class writers were more often criticized in the 1970s than in the 1960s. Do you think there was middle-class counterattack in the late 1970s, when the number of working-class novels increased? Or the class arguments just became apparent in the 1970s because working-class writers became more influential, while working-class voices were silenced until the 1960s?

AC: I wouldn't say there was a middle-class counter attack. Rather there was a continuing discussion that started in the later 1950s and went on through the 1970s that centred either on educational needs practice or on literary questions – such as John Rowe Townsend's famous distinction between 'child' people and 'book' people (which I thought spurious at the time and still do). I don't think the argument was as much

concerned with the middle-class defending their position as their worry that books which attempted to reflect working-class life would not be written to the standard of literary quality thought worthy of respect.

3. **HT:** In a letter I found in your archive, it was written that Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* impressed you when you were "adolescent" (This adolescence meant your early 20s?). How was Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* important for you? Was it important because of the description of "scholarship boy" or because working-class culture was described in the book?

AC: I was in college, aged 21 when Hoggart's book was published. So I was using the word 'adolescent' rather loosely – except that I think my adolescence did last until my mid-twenties. But I think that is fairly normal. However, I was a late developer.

The book was important to me for both the reasons you identify – because I was a grammar-school boy and because it described the working-class condition and the connection between the two.

4. **HT:** Were there any other (other than D. H. Lawrence) fiction and non-fiction works that strongly influenced you?

AC: Many. I read voraciously from the age of 15, and still do. I'd need to write an essay on this topic in order to do justice to those writers who influenced me.

Appendix B: Interview with Robert Leeson

HT: I'd like to ask about children's literature in the 1960s and 1970s about critics and your novels in the '60s and '70s.

RL: I think if I give you some of the background to the children's books, that may help. In the '30s, when I was a boy, there were very little, almost nothing, for working-class children. There were not any children's books in libraries, either. And when I went to library, I was allowed by the librarians to choose from the adult books so I used to read the adventure books written for adults, and that meant, mainly authors who were dead, passed on. And the few stories, children's stories for working-class children, which was published in the 1930, I missed them completely [...] It was in the 1950s that Wallace Hildick began to write children's books and he wrote a series of books about Jim Starling and that was published first in 1954, and his reason for writing working-class children's books was that he was a teacher, in Dewsbury in Yorkshire, and the books, the children's books, there were available had no impact on his pupils at all, pupils didn't like them. And he realised that the books that they were reading, offered to read, had no meaning to them. So he wanted to write stories about similar types of children.

HT: So, he found that the conventional children's books were incomprehensible to working-class children because the settings were middle-class.

RL: The setting was middle-class, the characters were middle-class. And for example, there's a quite famous children's book, called *Swish of the Curtain* about amateur dramatics, and it is full of complaints about the waitress in the cafe, serving bad meals, as though the waitress was responsible for the meals, and so it couldn't expect these pupils to relate to people who complain about the waitresses in cafes. So, that is when Wallace Hildick began to write in the 1950s. And I met his books 20 years later, it wasn't until the 1970s, when our own children were beginning to read, that I began to interest myself in children's books. Things began to improve in the 1960s, but there were very little. And I had many discussions with publishers, trying to persuade them to publish more books for working-class children.

HT: How was the publishers' reactions? They welcomed or didn't like the idea?

RL: They didn't like the idea. They said "there is no market". That was their mantra: there is no market for it. And one teacher said to me, "we don't want to rub their noses on it". You know, like, when you train a puppy, not to mess on the floor, you'll rub it noses on it. And she said, "They don't publish working-class children's books, because we don't want to rub their noses on it". That was the attitude. The editors in these publishers published the kind of books which they used to like themselves when they were children, so that the middle-class children's book continued by in larger. And then, it wasn't until, I think the first one who changed consciously was Wallace Hildick, who said that he wrote children's books that his pupils could relate to. Then in 1974, Bernard Ashley, who was a head teacher in a school in London, spoke in a recent radio broadcast about going along the high street and looking in W. H. Smith, in the 1950s, and not seeing a single book that he could offer to his pupils. So he wrote one himself, and he's written 40 books since then, mainly about working-class children [...] And of course, in this radio programme where Bernard Ashley spoke, they interviewed a number of teachers who said that I could not find children's books relating to when I grew up myself, which is mainly in the northern counties, and I couldn't find books which my pupils wanted to read. So, when I wrote my *Third Class Genie* in 1973 […] this was a bestseller immediately because it dealt with the questions of race, questions of class. But I felt that previous writers had missed the point. Jan Needle – I think you know his best book, *My Mate Shofiq* – emphasized realism: and realism to him meant writing about working-class, because for him the working-class was the majority and working-class, children's books were about the minority. Of course, this is most dramatic with the school story. When I grew up, the school stories were all about boarding schools […] It was not simply about the minority. I think 5 per cent of all the children in this country go to private schools, but when I was a boy, all children's literature about school were about private schools […] So that it wasn't until the 1970s, the publishing industry began to realize. I think it is because of the teachers. More working-class people became teachers, and they began to choose to ask for books that working-class pupils could read.

HT: When you published *The Third Class Genie*, how did critics and publishers react?

RL: The hardback publishers, there were hardback and paperback publishers, didn't want to publish it. But the paperback publisher said "I think this book is new and modern and I should publish it". So she published it as a paperback. So *The Third Class Genie* appeared first in paperback and it wasn't until years later that a hardback edition was published.

HT: So children's book publishers were generally not happy with the kind of stories in the '70s?

RL: The point is this. The personnel of the publishers were very much middle-class young women, because the men didn't want to get involved in children's books: because there was very little promotion, they prefer to stay in the adult field. So the adult books were mainly staffed by men, and the children's books were entirely staffed by women. And they were young middle-class women who wanted to read the same sort of stories they've read when they were a child.

HT: So, most publishers' editors preferred middle-class stories?

RL: But there were exceptions, like, for example, Oxford University Press in 1937, published Frederick Grice's book, *Bonny Pit Laddie*, because they thought it's pretty good about young miners; you should have it. And of course, they had this point-of-view, which I support and always did support, that you want books about working-class children, not because they were working-class but because they are the majority and books that are about middle-class children are only about a minority therefore they are not typical. To get a typical children's book you need one that will appeal to all classes and to do that you must make the place. I tried to convince the publishers that I was not against publishing middle-class children's books. Some of them were afraid that I wanted to ban middle-class children's books and the first book about school book about a comprehensive school, called *Hal* [written by Jean McGibbon] […] It was criticised by *The Times* because it was "not realistic". It was "driven by ideology", they said, "not by recounting real life". And I think that was a fair criticism. That because Jean McGibbon was driven, wanted to write a book about a day school, she concentrated on that, rather than getting a good story. So this was the problem: that many of the books

about working-class children in the 1970s were not successful because they were written from an ideological point-of-view. People wanted to write working-class stories.

HT: What kind of people were they? These writers were from middle-class backgrounds?

RL: Yes, Yes. I think from middle-class backgrounds in most cases. They did it out of conscience. They wanted to write books that working-class children would read. But working-class children didn't want to read them because they were not very well-written, because working-class children, like middle-class children, like a well-written book. And this is the problem. In the 1970s, because there were more working-class children's books written and published, then you got a better input from the writers, the writers who had talent of storytelling began to interest themselves in the working-class genre. But it took many years, and I had many, many debates with fellow writers because they were all fixated on this point that radicals wanted to ban the middle-class children's books. And we didn't want to do at all, not at all. We just wanted to have the working-class children included.

HT: It seems when writers from working-class backgrounds wrote realistic working-class novels, they were often criticised by critics because of the real working-class life or languages.

RL: Yeah, but of course, I found that when I made friends with the children's editor of *The Times* and he used to criticise my books, because he said I was writing from a radical point-of-view, and I had pointed out to him that I wasn't. I was writing stories. And that these happened to be based on my experience as a working-class person, and therefore the working-class children got to relate to them.

HT: It seems often working-class writers novels were criticised because of anti-establishment attitudes, from middle-class point-of-view. Do you think there were different ideology in middle-class world and working-class world? And in middle-class books and working-class books?

RL: I think that in the middle-class book got a better treatment by the conventional critique because that was the kind of book that they were used to, they were accustomed to. The best example I can think of is the school story. Because they accepted the school story even it was terrible […] And I found that many publishers did not want to publish. I wrote all together 20 novels set in day schools. And it is interesting that in 1949, Geoffrey Trease – he wrote his book about Robin Hood – he was asked by a school girl, "Why are there no books about day schools? Why they're always all about private boarding schools?" And so he went to away to try to write and he wrote his first book *No Boats on Bannermere*, I don't know if you know that novel, it's in 1949 it was published, and he wrote a series of books about Bannermere which are probably out of print now. But the thing is he tried to write stories of the day schools, because he knew there was demand for them. Pupils in day schools wanted, and I wrote as I said, 20 novels set in day schools, most of my ordinary children's books were school stories. But publishers didn't like it.

HT: Did you experience any arguments about your novels with publishers?

RL: In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a continuous debate between writers like myself and publishers. You see, I was also a literary editor of *The Morning Star* newspaper, so I had the access to the publishing editors, the publishing houses. I met them, and they used to debate together, and some of my fellow writers didn't like what I was saying because they were middle-class people, and they felt that they were going to be pushed out. They couldn't, they could only see in the terms of monopoly. They wanted to control children's books and I was interested in having children's books of a universal kind to appeal to all classes. I don't think they could get their heads around this idea of the universal children's book. But the arguments was resolved in the 1980 when the *Grange Hill* TV series came. This was 20 million viewers, just in this country.

HT: I hear that the TV series was also controversial when it was broadcasted.

RL: Yes, it was a sensation.

HT: I watched DVD of the series, but I couldn't understand why it was controversial.

RL: No. Because you have to be used to the ambiance of the British children's book to understand. People used to write letters to *The Radio Times* and say, "So this is what comprehensive schools are really like!" It was a political attitude they were very, very hostile to the idea. They used to say that "I don't like the bad language the children use". And I used to say, "There is no bad language in. The BBC won't allow bad language in its serials". And, of course, the reason why they thought it was bad language was because they didn't like the accent of the people, the actors', the young actors'.

HT: In the 1970s, it seems when writers wrote dialects in children's books, sometimes they were criticised for writing bad languages. Do you think it was true or did you experience such disputes?

RL: I introduced some bad language into my books, because I knew that children used it, and I wanted realism. And I remember one parent writing, complaining, and I had to write a letter to her, explain to her: this is what children say behind your back, you think that you know your children but you don't, your children speak different language at school. And of course this is the whole point of the argument. That the children had the different world, different language, and the genius of Phil Redmond, who wrote the *Grange Hill* series, was that he recognized this. His father was a comprehensive teacher, and he went to the comprehensive school, and he was bullied so he knew what the life was like for the average downtrodden child. So that he knew what language they used, and his scripts, I read 20 of his scripts before I wrote the books, and they were brilliant scripts. Because each line of dialogue helped to show the character of the child, and he recognized that working-class children are not a grey mass: they are individuals with individual characters. And that is what makes the Grange Hill series different. […] I said I will write them on one condition that I can write my own stories, I don't have to novelize the existing television stories. I got Phil Redmond's agreement. He wanted original stories. […] I wrote four *Grange Hill* novels, and after four novels I felt I'd said all I can say, so I said to the editor of Collins "I don't want to write any more", and she said, "what can we do?" I said, "Ask Jan Needle". So they asked Jan Needle, and Jan Needle took over the stories. Because I knew that Jan Needle understood what I was talking about.

HT: Did you know Jan Needle?

RL: He wrote *My Mate Shofiq* […] his main focus is on race, rather than class. He wanted to, what he said was that not only do they ignore the working-class child; they ignore the black and brown child, as well. And I think this is true, this is one reason Gene Kemp wrote her book, because she felt girls were ignored as well. So that there was a range of people ignored. When, in the 1970s, the Children's Rights Workshop approached me to join them in launching The Other Award for children's books. These would be working-class in content, anti-racist and feminist. In other words, there would have all the virtues which none of the children's books that existed had, and we called this The Other Award. And that was a great successful one, it lasted. I think that it included Gene Kemp's book, and then Frederick Grice wrote a book in the 1970s about the general strike in 1926, called *Nine Days' Wonder* […] and we gave that The Other Award, because we felt it should be encouraged: it was not a big selling book. And that brings me to the last point I wanted to make: that is that did we have any influence on working-class children readers? And I can't tell you. I can't give you a proper answer to that, because I haven't seen any figures. You see, I think my first *Grange Hill* books sold a million copies, but I don't think they were new readers. They were readers of existing books, who switched to *Grange Hill*.

HT: Do you think in the 1970s, working-class children read books or most readers were middle-class children?

RL: I think that there would be some new readers, but there were not the mass readers we hoped for. And I think what the change of attitude of publishers, so that, today, a publisher would publish a book even if it were about working-class children, provided it good book. One time they wouldn't consider it on ideological ground, but now I think that what my book and the debate achieved was to change the attitude of the publishers so that the field is now open, what they call a level play field.

HT: Was it about 1980s that publishers changed their attitude?

RL: 1980s, yes. I think that 1980s and 1990s […]

HT: Until the 1970s, publishers were unwilling to publish books about working-class children?

RL: Yes, generally speaking that was true.

HT: And when publishers published novels about working-class children, how did critics react?

RL: At first, they thought within ideological terms: this is radical. They thought it as a duty of publishers to include the radicals: in order not to be reactionary, they had to include the radical. They didn't appreciate the point about universality of literature.

HT: So when you wrote about ordinary children, critics thought it was radical?

RL: I think that the tone of criticisms changed during the 1970s and The Other Award which was a positive thing. The editor of The Bookseller said to me "I'm very pleased that your award has a positive feature, I thought you are against everything". That was the attitude. They thought radical must be against the system.

HT: When I interviewed Aidan Chambers, he said when he discussed class nature of children's books in an essay in the 1970s, he was accused by other fellow critics. Do you think discussing class in children's literature was a taboo?

RL: It's very difficult to remember, but I was fortunate in the sense that two things happened in the 1960s. One was the development of The Federation of Children's Book Groups, which was formed by parents, and parents wanted change because they had their children going mainly not to private schools but to state schools. And then there was the School Bookshop movement: the schools wanted to encourage reading opened book shops on their own and the librarians and teachers ran these bookshops […] One reason for the success of *The Third Class Genie* was that the school bookshops bought the book in large quantities. At first, the sales was very slow, the conventional sales was very slow, but then I discovered that in one year, 2000 copies had been sold, there was mainly to these school book shops because the teachers in London, in particular, wanted books that the pupils would read, books that they could pass around in class. And that,

and the organization for parents changed matters quite radically I think. They helped to, you see, when I first raised the matter, working-class children's books, I was told there was no market, but soon as The Federation of Children's Book Groups and school bookshop movement began to operate, there was a market. So the publishers began to see there were. So what I would say, in the 1970s, whether there was more working-class readers or not, certainly more working-class books published, so that it is very difficult: one would expect to see the radical increase in the number of readers but I haven't observed that by myself. But I don't know of it. I think the change has been in attitudes rather than that.

HT: How were the people who wrote book reviews of children's books in the 1960s and 1970s?

RL: *The Times* was the first in hostile to the new radical working-class school story. Particularly, *Times*' children's editor had the review of *Hal* in which he compared this book unfavourably with Antonia Forest's book, book series about private schools. He said, how on earth could a pupil at Hal's school know anything about the Tridentine Mass, whereas the child going to Antonia Forest' schools, of course, would know about the Tridentine Mass. I felt that his arguments were fatuous: that he was concerned for political reasons to rubbish the comprehensive school novel. But as I say, the *Grange Hill* series put a stop to that the argument, because it perfectly clear that 20 million viewers, this is what the average school child wants. It floored the opposition.

HT: In the 1970s, Robert Westall criticised critics, because when he wrote for ordinary children, critics criticised his novels. And when he wrote novels which critics liked, actually ordinary children did not want to read such novels.

RL: Yes, that's right. That was an argument used about the school story that the private school story continued because that is what working-class children want: they don't want to read about themselves; they want to read about better-off children. This is the rationale of the private school. They believed that you don't send – the headmaster of private school, was quoted in one book – he said that you don't send your boy to a school where he will be mixed with lower-class: you send him to where he will be mixed with upper-class. And the snobbery behind that the feeling. But the *Grange Hill*

stopped that because it was perfectly obvious that what the average school child wanted was a comprehensive, a day school stories about themselves. And the all characters, which is why some people thought they were using bad language because they were ordinary north London accent and such, they were like people from outer space for a lot of the critics. A lot of. Don't forget. critics were class-bound themselves, but I think that has changed quite a lot. Because *Times Educational Supplement* is in particular started to, I think 20 years ago, ask teachers to review books for them and the result was that you got much broader.

HT: When did it start?

RL: I think from '80s onwards, from the '80s onwards. The situation began to change radically. And I played a part of it, but only a part. But all these other writers I mentioned were doing same things that I was, but some of them not in the same way.

HT: I think many of these writers were educated in grammar schools.

RL: In many cases, yes. Because when I was 11, the only prospect for the intelligent working-class child was to get a scholarship to a grammar school, otherwise you left school at 14 to work.

HT: Some writers wrote novels about grammar-school students, but I think you didn't write about.

RL: I preferred to write about comprehensive school. Because I felt that was more typical of working-class.

HT: Yes, in the '70s, there were already not many grammar schools.

RL: I think the grammar schools gave a good education to 20 per cent of the population, so that the future teachers very often came from grammar schools. People from working-class origin were sometimes turned ideologically by the grammar schools, so that I found that one had to be careful what one said about grammar schools. Because teachers who'd gone to grammar schools as children were very indignant if you

attacked the grammar school, and yet I felt the grammar school was inadequate. It only touched 20 per cent of children. When I got my scholarship in 1939, I was the only one from our village to get a scholarship. The only one. The rest of the boy on the estate, they stayed in ordinary day schools, and went to work when they were 14.

HT: Grammar school gave a kind of middle-class education, so the education made...

RL: Yes, an upwardly mobile education.

HT: Yes, so some pupils felt loneliness in their community and families because of grammar school education.

RL: Yeah, you see, our grammar school was divided between scholarship children who were considered the A-class and paying children, ones whose parents paid for them, they were in B-class. And every year, they had to take examinations, so that top four from the B-class came into A-class. The bottom four from the A-class went down to the B-class. So that our grammar school recognised that scholarship children were more intelligent.

HT: Do you think the grammar school education was important for your writing?

RL: Yes, I think so. Because the English teacher, when he gave every weekend we had essays to write, I never wrote an essay. I always wrote a short story [...] It was the only education after 16, after 14 that matter, and therefore I was privileged, I felt. And those scholarship children who came from working-class homes, they did well, because they knew their parents were supporting them. Because my father had four children, all of whom got scholarships and on the estate, the council estate where we lived, people thought he was mad, because he didn't send his children to work at 14. Everybody else sent their children to work at 14 to make more money for the family.

HT: So going to grammar school was strange in the estate?

RL: I think, you see in those days you left school at 14, and if your parents were working on the farms, you could leave school at 13, to work and go on the farms, so that

the grammar school was the only place you could have education up to 16. I left school at 16. My brother was asked to stay on until 18, but he preferred to go in the army. When he came out from the army, of course, the government had a good policy of offering free grants to university so he was able, when he came out of the army, to go universities. I refused to go to university, because I felt university was a class institution.

HT: University was middle-class institution?

RL: Yes, I think so. But I was mistaken, I think, because university provides education. In the 1940s, the university had changed radically, and I think a lot of the working-class teachers who came into the schools in the 1960s and helped to further the cause for working-class children's literature, had been to university in the 1940s.

HT: Yes, universities or teacher training colleges.

RL: Our boy went to a comprehensive school in Hackney and his history teacher had been in the tank corps during the war. When he came out, he'd got to university and become a teacher. He is still a radical.

HT: Yes, many writers and teachers in the 1970s were educated in grammar schools and then went to universities or teacher training colleges.

RL: Yes, I think that there was a large-scale social changes in the '60s and '70s and they eventually had their reflection in children's books. I think that the writers played a very important part but only a part: if the teachers had not been running the school bookshops in the schools, and the parents had not been running the children's book groups, then I think the writers', working-class writers' job would have been much more difficult.

HT: Do you think when you were a child, ordinary working-class people read books?

RL: My mother was very keen on reading. So was my father. But they were unusual people. And there's no library in our local village, so I had to go down 2 miles on my bicycle to the next town, to go to the library there. And the librarian used to give me

books to take home for my mother and father. He used to send Ethel M. Dell for my mother and Zane Grey, cowboy books for my father. So they used to read what I called easy fiction: fiction there was not very demanding. But they were very well educated in reading, and when *Under Two Flags* by Ouida was presented as film, they knew that this was not faithful to the book because they read the book. So they were aware of what you might call "better book", but they preferred the easy reading. And I think that was true generally speaking of working-class children.

HT: Do you think there was change of reading habits in the 1960s and 1970s?

RL: Yes, I think that these organizations of the parents of children did spread the idea of reading. Because they, unfortunately, one of the problems was that a lot of schools had reading method, by which they trained the children, the youngest children, 5-year-old, 6-year-old. They had a wrong approach, and I don't think, today that there has been a big change […] But one of the problems for working-class children I think is that it differs from middle-class children where there are books in a house. You see we have books, so our children grew up surrounded by books and even if our daughter couldn't read it in conventional terms, she understood what she was looking at. So that middle-class children had that advantage they grown up surrounded by books. But working-class children, very often their parents do not read. And I think I was different because, partly because my parents read, and my father in particular was very keen on education. He realized that, he believed, he missed chances because of education, a lack of education […]

HT: Your first novels in the '70s were historical novels, not about working-class children. Why did you begin from historical novels?

RL: Because the fashion, that was history books. That the reason why Geoffrey Trease started with history books, because nothing else could get published.

HT: So publishers did not like state-school stories but they liked historical books, that's why you began,

RL: Yes, I began with historical books, and I wrote *The Third Class Genie* when I felt more confident. What I wanted to write.

HT: How did reviewers think about *The Third Class Genie*, comparing with your historical novels?

RL: Historical novels were well reviewed. Because they were historical novels and they were only interested in whether the ideology were there or not. Whereas *The Third Class Genie*, at first, there were no review at all, because paperback books did not get reviewed. Average critics would not review a paperback book. They assumed it was a repeat of a hardback book.

HT: I think after *The Third Class Genie*, almost all your book are about state school children, how about reviews for these books?

RL: I think once people got used to the idea in the '70s and '80s of the working-class children being the characters in books – at first, they reacted against the whole principle, but once they got used to the idea of working-class children, then they reviewed the book from a point-of-view if it is a good story. And when in the case of *Third Class Genie*, the real reviews began when it was published as a hardback.

HT: When was that? In the '80s?

RL: I think it was – ten years after.

HT: *Harold and Bella, Jammy and Me*, I think the book is your semi-autobiographical novel?

RL: Yes, that's right, very much. I wanted to write short stories which working-class people actually related to. So I wanted to convince them that they could write too. So the best thing I could do was to write stories around my own experience, and I would say to them, "I've written this story about what happened to me, and you can your story about what happens to you". And that was the purpose of that book. And it was successful. […]

HT: Did your novels ever criticised because of political ideology?

RL: I think, I'm not sure. Yes, there was some. My book about Tucker Jenkins, post *Grange Hill*. It was about him, he was like most young people in this country in the 1980s. He was out of work when he left his school. And his father said to him either you get a job or going back to school. And he struggle to get work and he didn't want to go back school. And one critic said, "Why is this writer so obsessed with failure?" They saw being out of work as failure on the part of individual. Whereas I saw it was matter of policy. I think it was typical of the argument. Generally speaking, critics did not accept that they have a political point-of-view. They see themselves as, *The Times* children's editor used to say, it is between the ivory tower and market place. He didn't recognise any political influence, and I said, "Look, if you think I invented the politics, you are mistaken. You are politics as well as I am. It is just different politics".

HT: So critics and publishers did not recognize their own political attitudes?

RL: The publishers were very opportunistic, I think. When they realize there was a market for working-class children books, and they switched in the 1980s. They realized that. You see, one time they would rely on library sales for books. When I started to write, you could get 3000 sales in libraries, but when I finished writing, you were very lucky if you get 300. But in the 1980s, the focus switched from the libraries where the librarians, the chief librarian particularly, they were tended to be more conservative.

HT: So, the librarians were influential?

RL: Later on, in the 1980s, the same influx of people of working-class origin came into libraries as well as into the schools. But it was a slower process because the libraries were more conservative.

HT: In the '60s and '70s libraries bought many books, but the librarians were more conservative?

RL: I think so. They were conservative in their tastes.

HT: And they were influential to the market?

RL: They were interested in what would their viewers read, their subscribers would read. And that was last year and the year before. There was a tradition. But the teachers had a more immediate point-of-view. They had to deal with the class today. They had to buy books for children to read. There were some teachers who were hostile but generally speaking teachers wanted books that their class could relate to.

HT: In the '60s and the '70s, librarians and teachers were most influential people in children's literature?

RL: Yes, I think it is true. In the 1960s, the librarians had chief influence. In the 1970s and '80s, the influence, needle swung towards the teachers. I think that's true. That the teachers were the market, the chief market. And of course the rise of the paperback in the 1980s onwards: one time, paperbacks were only published two years after the hardback had finished. But that's why it was unusual for *The Third Class Genie* to be published as an original paperback. It was first published as paperback, and later as the hardback. The usual process was hardback for two years and then paperback if you were lucky. Whereas, from the 1980s, the focus on the paperbacks and of course in the school bookshops, the paperback was what the children could buy, they could afford. When *The Third Class Genie* was first published, it cost only a few pence, later on it cost more […]

HT: Do you think class and politics were taboo in children's books in the 60s and 70s?

RL: Well, I can say is that it was never prevented my books from being published. What it did, I think, was affected was the way in which they were received by certain teachers, by certain librarians.

HT: Certain teachers and librarians were against political ideology in the books?

RL: One or two, but a minority. But generally speaking, they, the teachers particularly were more concerned with what their children, their pupils would relate to.

HT: It seems some teachers did not like dialects and accents of North England.

RL: I think that's true. There was this North-South divide, except in the big cities in London and Birmingham, the tendency is for teachers to be more radical, but in the Home Counties around London, they tend to be more conservative in their outlook.

HT: Do you think books by Angry Young Men or Kitchen Sink writers, like Alan Sillitoe, working-class writers for adult books, were influential in children's books? Or they were different movement?

RL: Alan Sillitoe was very popular when I was in. I became interested in children's books in the late 1960s, when our children aged about 10, and there were issues of what they were reading became very important [...]

HT: When you published *Reading and Righting*, how did people respond?

RL: The first edition of that book was sold away straightaway. Then it was reprinted that was not sold out. I think altogether between 7 and 8000 copies were sold. I think it's particularly popular in teaching training colleges where the lecturers used it to train teachers in children's literature.

HT: So it was influential.

RL: I think so, yes. But, I think that the those critics who didn't like my books have just happy to see me disappear. They don't want to have an argument.

HT: They don't have argument, or they avoid argument?

RL: One time there were quite arguments but nowadays not at all.

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