How Boys Become Men:
Examining the Representation of Boyhood Masculinity in Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857)

by

Caryn Leigh Oram

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Supervisor: Professor David Medalie

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL & ETHICS COMMITTEE

Declaration

Full name:	Caryn Leigh Oram
Student Number:	16016174
Module:	Magister Artium (English)
Title of dissertation:	How Boys Become Men: Examining the Representation of Boyhood Masculinity in Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857)

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Abstract

Masculinity today is a highly contested subject. In current cultural discourse, it has frequently been viewed as a deeply embedded social system that is harmful and dangerous. In this dissertation, I wish to explore the period in boys' lives where masculinity is learned and to consider the possibility of instilling more positive forms of masculinity. This aim has directed my focus to consideration of the schoolboy environment, specifically as it is depicted in Thomas Hughes's well-known novel, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) [1993]. In the novel, Hughes presents a loosely fictionalised depiction of Rugby, a renowned and elite British school for boys. The story is set in the nineteenth century, during the years of Dr Thomas Arnold's headmastership.

Hughes's novel is pertinent to my exploration of masculinity due to the character development of its protagonist, Tom Brown, during his schooling at Rugby. Tom's journey offers insight into how young boys develop in this environment. In conducting an analysis of Hughes's novel, I explore the influence of Dr Arnold, who is renowned as a significant historical figure and educator, as well as the interactions among the schoolboys themselves.

The novel is analysed alongside an exploration of R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and criticisms of it, in order to understand how masculinity as a social phenomenon is able to operate and sustain itself. I also explore research conducted on masculinity in the nineteenth century to provide an appropriate historical context, as well as on boys in modern schooling environments, in order to develop a theoretical framework on boyhood masculinity. Through an analysis of *Tom Brown's School Days*, a famous account of boyhood experience, I aim to discern what values and expectations masculinity instils in boys, and to identify aspects of masculinity which may be deemed to be beneficial for boys' overall development.

Keywords

Masculinity, masculinities, toxic masculinity, boyhood, schoolboys, Thomas Hughes, Thomas Arnold, nineteenth century, public schools, nineteenth century boyhood, nineteenth century masculinity

Contents

Introduction

In current cultural discourse, the notion that we are experiencing a crisis of masculinity is a contentious subject and one that is difficult to navigate with an appropriate level of delicacy. I preface this dissertation with this statement, as my aim will be to investigate masculinity, the potential crisis it faces, and how, within the setting of popular discourse, one can advocate for a positive model of masculinity that serves society by helping to shape and guide boys. For this project can be said to rest on one question: if everything about masculinity is harmful, toxic, and generally negative, how are we supposed to raise boys, and especially boys who will *not* perpetuate the models of patriarchal dominance we know unarguably to be a dangerous reality?

The Victorian era handed down to modern society many of the codes and norms we still recognise today, which offers the opportunity to bridge from modern masculinity as a point of departure into the historical context and framework of nineteenth-century life. While the state of modern masculinity motivates this research, the focus is specifically on adolescence and boyhood historically in the nineteenth century. This aim has directed my focus to a consideration of the schoolboy environment within this period as a setting in boys' lives where masculinity is learned.

This dissertation is therefore rooted in an investigation of the well-known nineteenth-century novel *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) [1993]. Written by Thomas Hughes, it is a fictional account of the real historical setting of the English boys' school, Rugby. The novel is set in the nineteenth century, during the years of Dr Thomas Arnold's headmastership. Thomas Hughes was a pupil at the school (Nisbet, 1954: 426-430), and recollections of his time at Rugby, as well as general commentary on the environment, are interspersed throughout the novel. Given that Hughes is under no obligation to provide factual information in *Tom Brown's School Days*, it will be through the use of historical accounts of Rugby school in tandem with the stories in the novel that I will investigate the life of boys in the nineteenth-century public school in order to explore masculinity within the setting.

Essentially, I wish to explore where and how masculinity is learned by boys, which is what has led me towards an investigation of the all-male schoolboy environment. With school as the

setting in which children spend a significant period of their developmental, impressionable lives, I believe it is a worthwhile place to explore. *Tom Brown's School Days* is pertinent to my exploration of masculinity due to the character development of its protagonist, Tom Brown, during his schooling at Rugby. Tom's journey offers insight into how young boys can develop in this environment. As stated, I wish to explore the point at which masculinity is learned by boys. I posit that this occurs at this young schoolboy age, and I will demonstrate this by conducting an analysis of Hughes's novel. Furthermore, fiction, with its capacity to offer layered representations of lived experience and characterisation, is useful for the exploration of ideologies and social forces such as masculinity. I will explore both Hughes's portrayal of the revered Dr Arnold in such an environment, as well as the interactions among the boys themselves. I have also chosen to explore Hughes's novel because it is an exceptionally well-known and much-read text; even considered to be the archetypal 'schoolboy' novel in some regards.

I use this famous account of boyhood experience in order to discern what values and expectations the discourse of masculinity instils in boys, and subsequently in men, and what consequences this learning ultimately produces. The aim is motivated in part by current ideologies that are shaping Western society, in which masculinity is mostly viewed as a harmful, problematic phenomenon and in which any attempt to rescue masculine identity is a dangerous endeavour.

It should be stated that while I wish to argue for what I will refer to as positive masculinity, and thereby engage critically with the modern narrative of masculinity, I will not defend the concept in its entirety. Rather, I will critically engage with masculinity in order to identify points which recognise the potential for negative and destructive attributes – and I do believe elements of these critiques are justified – while also exploring these issues with the aim of defending what ought to be preserved in a masculine model. I offer with this research an interpretation of what is valuable to boyhood.

Ultimately, this dissertation can be said to form part of an extensive body of research about both the novel and nineteenth-century masculinity in general. While this may be the case, I am motivated by the reality that little exploration has been carried out regarding positive masculinity specifically, and it is with this that I hope my research will offer an alternative and supplementary approach to the wider scholarship in this field.

As stated earlier, the schoolboy setting is a conducive environment for the investigation of boyhood masculinity. This is not only due to the school being the environment within which children, especially boarding students, spend a significant portion of their time, but, in the case of the all-boys school, the lack of a female presence in the setting can be said to intensify the experience of learned masculinity for boys, as opposed to how one might learn to navigate one's masculinity in a less 'bullish' environment. As I shall demonstrate using the historical accounts supporting this research, boys' public schools were, initially, lawless and brutish places. Boyhood in such an environment seemed to require a certain level of toughness and resilience on the part of the boys. Weakness in any form could be detrimental, both socially and physically, as aggression and violence were very much a part of the early iteration of the English public school.

In both *Tom Brown's School Days* and historical accounts, Dr Thomas Arnold, who presided over Rugby as headmaster from 1828 until his death in 1842 (Britannica, 2023a) is an integral figure in the school, with a profound impact on the public school system and the boys under his leadership. The inclusion of Arnold is a key element of masculinity within the novel. In non-fictional accounts, Dr Thomas Arnold is recalled as an enigmatic, larger-than-life man and one who took up the "significantly perplexing" (Strachey, 1918: 204) mantle of reforming the chaotic and rowdy Rugby school. It is partly thanks to his presence in *Tom Brown's School Days* that I am able to use the novel as a blueprint for discerning what could be deemed as "positive" attributes in the constitution of masculinity. As I shall demonstrate, there is a stark contrast between how masculinity can be destructive - as shown in the interactions between the boys and the general practices and norms of the school pre-Arnold - and how the masculine figure can be a force for extreme good, guiding and shaping boys to embody values and ways of being that cannot reasonably be deemed damaging or toxic.

The novel offers another key symbolic character, the fictional pupil George Arthur, who presents as a timid boy whom others characterise as effeminate. The unfolding of his journey at the school and how he is engaged by other students also provide – as the later analysis will demonstrate – a crucial window into the formulation and performance of masculinity, both positively and negatively. Ultimately, *Tom Brown's School Days* recreates for the reader the world of the boys' school, and with the historical accounts to enrich my textual analysis, I use this novel to present an analysis of nineteenth-century boyhood, allowing me to structure an

argument for the 'good parts'. As stated, I will discern what values and expectations masculinity instils in boys, and subsequently in men, and what consequences this learning ultimately produces.

Tom Brown's School Days (1857): a summary

Using, for the most part, a third-person omniscient style, interspersed with direct comments from the authorial voice, *Tom Brown's School Days* is set in the 1830s at Rugby school in England. In the novel, Hughes routinely breaks the narration of the story to insert commentary, reflections on his own experiences, and advice to the schoolboy reader of the story. This is useful in discerning his own opinion on the public school and understanding what he is trying to impart through the novel. Furthermore, Hughes appears to write about Rugby as it was in his time, in terms of the activities that went on. This also helps in envisioning what the school might have really been like, as, for example, after the incident where Tom is held in front of a fire and sustains burns, in an act referred to as roasting, Hughes (1857: 168) gives the following remark: "I trust and believe that such scenes are not possible now at school, and that lotteries and betting-books have gone out; but I am writing of schools as they were in [my] time, and must give the evil with the good."

The novel begins with an account of Tom's early childhood in the countryside, where he attends the local school and spends his time playing and learning to wrestle. Tom's father, whom the reader is introduced to as the Squire, is a steady paternal presence, and Tom's home life is pleasant and stable as a whole. After some time at the local school, he is sent to a private school for a year, but his time there is cut short when he is sent home due to an outbreak of fever. Upon his return, he persuades the Squire to send him to Rugby, eager to become a public school boy (Hughes, 1857: 62). From here, the reader follows Tom's journey of personal development as he matures during his time at the school while navigating friendships, misbehaviour, bullying, and responsibility.

Upon arrival, Tom is befriended by a boy named East, who will become one of his closest friends throughout his time at the school (Hughes, 1857: 83). East plays an important role in Tom's development, as together they transform over time from mischievous, disobedient younger form boys into responsible, conscientious leaders in the school. Eleven-year-old Tom is placed in the lower form when he first starts at Rugby but is able to move into the same form

as East and other boys his age after the first semester, proving himself academically competent to do so.

The older boys of the fifth and sixth forms at Rugby are both revered and feared. The social hierarchies and politics of the school are laid forth from the beginning: the lower-form boys are inferior to the fifth and sixth, and fagging, the public school system of younger boys' performing chores or duties for senior boys, is well-established. Physical aggression and dispensement of so-called justice are commonplace, as is the consumption of beer provided by the school for the older boys.

Fortunately for Tom, East has good standing in the school as a lower fourth-form boy, and it is thanks to this that Tom is noticed in a positive light by a particularly important older boy, Brooke, who is one of the leaders in the school and much admired, as is evident by a speech he delivers later in the novel (Hughes, 1857: 114-116). East is one of the few younger boys selected to play in a school rugby match taking place on the day of Tom's arrival, and as a consequence of this, Tom ends up playing as well. Putting his body on the line to defend his team's goal, he earns the approval of Brooke, who asks East who the boy is: "Well, he is a plucky youngster, and will make a player" (Hughes, 1857: 106). This is cause for huge celebrations for Tom and East, indicating the significance for young students of the attention and approval gained from the older boys in the school.

Unfortunately, Rugby's older boys are not all of the same calibre as Brooke, and Tom soon encounters Flashman, one of the most savage bullies in the school. As mentioned, he is responsible for severely injuring Tom by holding him in front of a fire, and this is one of many incidents of gratuitous, pointed physical aggression committed by the fifth-form boy. Tom and East have several run-ins with him and ultimately lead a rebellion of sorts against the unlawful fagging practices that Flashman and other less respectable boys undertake (Hughes, 1857: 153-154).

The other crucially important element within the Rugby environment is the influence and impact of Dr Arnold, who has begun to make changes in the school, much to the disdain of some older boys. This is alluded to in the aforementioned speech given by Brooke on Tom's first night, where he states that he has heard the sentiment, which he does not approve of, "There's this new Doctor hasn't been here so long as some of us, and he's changing all the old

customs. Rugby, and the School-house especially, are going to the dogs. Stand up for the good old ways, and down with the Doctor!" (Hughes, 1857: 115).

On the other hand, Tom's experience of Arnold is consistently positive, as he is profoundly affected by the sermons the headmaster delivers each week, as well as their personal interactions. Hughes describes on a few occasions throughout the novel his own experience of the Doctor when he attended Rugby. He says of the sermons:

> What was it that moved and held *us*… We listened [to] a man whom we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength, striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world… The warm living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides, and calling on us to help him and ourselves, and one another." (Hughes, 1857: 131-132; emphasis added)

Tom's early years at Rugby are ones occupied with general misbehaviour and troublemaking with East. Despite beginning his school career as a diligent student, once he and East are placed in the same form, his initial conscientiousness fades away, as the "temptations of the lower-fourth soon proved too strong for him, [and he] became as unmanageable as the rest" (Hughes, 1857: 146). Eventually, their consistent misbehaviour comes to the attention of Arnold, who gives them an ultimatum, warning them that he will have no choice but to expel them should they continue to wilfully disobey the rules of the school (Hughes, 1857: 188). It is also at this juncture that the character of George Arthur is introduced in the novel: the person who will be largely responsible for Tom's development in the remainder of the story.

George Arthur, referred to by surname, is placed in Tom's care as a mentee when Tom returns from his school holiday. Arthur is described as a small, timid young boy, the type of personality that would not necessarily do well in a place such as Rugby without the guidance of another well-established pupil. Arthur is also devoutly religious, stunning his dorm on his first night by praying at his bedside before going to sleep, despite being extremely nervous about doing so. This has an intense effect on Tom, making him reflect on his behaviour and general approach to school and life (Hughes, 1857: 206). Ultimately, the introduction of Arthur is the beginning of Tom's shift into becoming a mature, responsible young man, and for the remainder of *Tom Brown's School Days*, Tom steadily leaves behind all rule-breaking activities.

The novel draws to a close by moving forward to a cricket match on the final day of Tom's school career at Rugby. Nineteen years old and captain of the cricket side, he is described as a "strapping figure near six feet high, with a ruddy tanned face and whiskers, curly brown hair and a laughing dancing eye" (Hughes, 1857: 310). Bound for Oxford, Tom has grown into a young man who has endured and flourished at Rugby.

Discourses around masculinity: an overview

As mentioned, I will use the novel as a site in which to explore the traits and values masculinity instils in boys and men. Current Western ideologies mostly perceive masculinity as a harmful collection of beliefs and behaviours, leaving no room for any positive aspects to be extracted. Political scientist Warren Farrell expands on men's issues in his book *The Boy Crisis: Why Our Boys Are Struggling and What We Can Do About It* (2017), unpacking the state of boyhood today and what factors influence young boys' development. The title of Farrell's book speaks volumes. In the midst of the current cultural narratives, it appears that boys and men have lost almost all certainty of how to be in the world. When almost everything about masculinity is wrong, how exactly are males to behave, and what values should they have? The current state of masculinity is what has led to this investigation of the nineteenth-century cultural environment, with the aim of ascertaining which elements of what was taught then were valuable instead of harmful, demonstrating the importance and necessity of positive masculinity.

There is a large body of literature on the subject of masculinity, and, for my purposes, I will look at this research in three categories: hegemonic masculinity, nineteenth-century masculinity and adolescence, and the schoolboy environment. Hegemonic masculinity, a theory first devised by R. W. Connell in 1987, will form the theoretical foundation for this research. This theory posits that the 'version' of masculinity that is hegemonic is the masculinity in which a certain set of traits or behaviours is elevated over others, deemed to be, and tacitly accepted by, the general public within a given culture, as the ideal to strive for:

> [Hegemony] means a social ascendency achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and

> cultural processes… Ascendency which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice. (Connell, 1987: 234)

> Hegemonic masculinities were distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities… only a minority of men might enact [hegemonic masculinity]. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it… (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832)

This theory is completely relevant to the negotiation and learning of masculinity within a certain setting, such as the schoolboy environment. Certain ways of presenting oneself as 'manly' among peers will grant more social acceptance than others, and those certain ways, tacitly accepted by all who subscribe to that cultural space, are the traits that make up the hegemonic masculine model of the day. I will utilise Connell's theory in my investigation of the dynamics between the boys in *Tom Brown's School Days*, using it to critically discuss the notion of positive and negative masculine models as they present in the novel and to investigate to what extent the *positive* masculinity can become the prevailing model. The theory has been revisited regularly by scholars since its development, and not without critique. In arguing for positive masculinity, I will utilise these critiques in order to account for the claim by Connell, as pointed out by her critics, that there can be no positive model.

Hegemonic masculinity thus forms the foundation of this dissertation's theoretical framework. I will focus on theories of hegemonic masculinity first before taking the concept and contextualising it within the nineteenth century, exploring the concept of the ideal male figure in the nineteenth century and how men in this period engaged with this ideal. I will then explore how this ideal factored into boyhood and translated into the behaviours and expectations present in the schoolboy environment, leading the discussion from a general engagement of the theory into a direct conversation with the novel.

Since R. W. Connell is the pioneering academic for the theory of hegemonic masculinity, her work is my point of departure. In *Gender and Power – Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (1987), she defines the concept and examines gender as an overarching structural influence in social dynamics and states that institutions, such as the school, are the place where gender relations have the most significant influence: "Gender relations are present in all types of

institutions. They may not be the most important structure in a particular case, but they are certainly a major structure of most" (Connell, 1987: 120).

Connell's theory has been revisited many times and, as already mentioned, has not escaped criticism either. The critiques laid against her notion of hegemonic masculinity are a crucial component informing my own research. Richard Collier is one such scholar who has made what I believe to be valid criticisms of Connell's theory due to the negative connotations the concept of hegemonic masculinity appears to hold. Connell acknowledges this in her own work, stating that Collier:

> criticises the concept of hegemonic masculinity through its typical use in accounting for violence and crime. In the 'masculinity turn' in criminology, Collier suggests, hegemonic masculinity came to be associated solely with negative characteristics that depict men as unemotional, independent, nonnurturing, aggressive, and dispassionate. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 840)

Furthermore, it is a "crucial defect in the concept of hegemonic masculinity that it excludes 'positive' behaviour on the part of men" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 840). It is this observation put forward by Collier, that hegemonic masculinity diminishes the space for masculinity to be anything other than negative, that I intend to use in my own exploration of models of masculinity. It will be through critiques such as Collier's that I will formulate such arguments.

Masculinity in the nineteenth century carried with it a set of characteristics and ideas about the appropriate manner of conduct for a man. Indeed, the Victorian era brought about a change in public etiquette and societal norms, leaving behind certain ideas of manliness present in the eighteenth century, which, as Michèle Cohen (2005: 312) describes, involved "hunting, riding, drinking and 'wenching'". While this did not account for all eighteenth-century masculine practices, it is an element which was far less prominent in the nineteenth century. Before exploring the masculine themes present within *Tom Brown's School Days*, it must be established precisely what ideal masculinity in the nineteenth century looked like and how men responded to and navigated it. The challenge in formulating modes of manhood in the Victorian period was to leave behind these elements of the eighteenth century, walk a fine line between politeness and decorum, and not sway so far in this direction as to land in a state of effeminacy.

One had to be polite, but not too polite. Such demands would make society a challenge for the respectable middle-class man to navigate. Indeed, scholars have concluded that an element of anxiety accompanied the performance of masculinity in the nineteenth century. Cohen (2005: 313) explains:

> A critical aspect of polite gentlemanliness was precisely that it was not homogeneous but, rather, rent with anxieties, in particular the anxiety about effeminacy, because tensions between masculinity and refinement made it difficult for a man to be at once polite and manly.

Indeed, effeminacy was a major concern for men during the Victorian period. David Medalie (2020: 188) explains that the "pathologising of effeminacy during this period [is] a further manifestation of this preoccupation and the corresponding determination to place anything which did not conform to [hegemonic masculinity] beyond the bounds of social inclusion."

In terms of boyhood, examining how this masculine anxiety interacts with adolescence is a key step in contextualising hegemonic masculinity within the boy environment. Anxious masculinity has been found to be present within current-day school settings, as indicated by researchers such as Jill Heinrich. In her interviews with various boys, she found that fear "consistently emerged as a compelling force in their lives" (Heinrich, 2013: 106) and that the boys were painfully aware of what they should and should not do. She states that "most compelling was the fear of 'not measuring up' to the hegemonic masculine ideals that regulated school life, and so masculinity became an ongoing performance that required the boys to appropriate certain subject positions to earn approval from male and female peers alike" (Heinrich, 2013: 107). Examples in *Tom Brown's School Days* will demonstrate that anxious self-consciousness is present within the school, as Tom strives to look tough, not show any weakness, and seeks the approval of the older boys whom he idolises.

Anxiousness around embodying masculinity is a key aspect in exploring the boyhood development of the pupils at Rugby. With the aforementioned societal transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, young boys were faced with the challenge of adopting behaviours and values that embodied the nineteenth-century ideal man. This meant growing out of certain behaviours. For example, intense physicality in the form of fist fighting to settle disputes, a prior practice of defending one's honour, now became brutish and improper. Raising

young boys to balance boisterous, physical natures with the ideals of a nineteenth-century man can indeed be understood as challenging, provoking great anxiety over how to behave, made more troubling by the worries around behaving too effeminately. Scholars such as Joseph Bristow and Alan Sinfield provide detailed insight into how the fear of being perceived as effeminate was used to reinforce certain models of masculinity and suppress differences. I shall explore the work of both in Chapter 1 in order to locate the importance of effeminacy in the production of masculinity.

The Rugby schoolboy environment specifically, both the true historical setting and the fictional world of the novel, is the third component of the overall framework to be used in this dissertation. Factual accounts of the public school help to explain the ways in which boys conducted themselves and embodied masculinity, and the events within *Tom Brown's School Days* can provide examples of this, together assisting in the discernment of what positive aspects can be drawn out of the setting of the all-boys school, and the behaviour therein.

Various scholars, such as Fabrice Neddam (2004), have written specifically about Rugby both before and during Arnold's headmastership. Neddam makes a crucial observation about the Rugby environment and the dynamics of boyhood masculinity in this environment:

> A gap existed between the particular form of 'moral masculinity' [Dr] Arnold wanted Rugby schoolboys to adopt and the different masculinities that actually emerged from the interactions of that miniature society. Bullying is particularly understood not only as an institutionalised form of rebellion but also as a gendered practice which consisted in rejecting what was considered effeminate. (Neddam, 2004: 303)

David Turner, in *The Old Boys: The Decline and Rise of the Public School* (2015), also makes direct reference to *Tom Brown's School Days* in commenting on the "archetypal" characters in the novel as representations of the boys in real public schools:

> The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries marked the nadir of the public schools, a time when boys such as Flashman were given free rein to terrorise the school, and even many well-meaning boys like Tom Brown learned little in the classroom that was useful. Given this, there are two central questions in this book.

> First, how did the public schools sink into the state described in [*Tom Brown's School Days*], and in more purely factual accounts of the period? Second, have they improved since the days of Flashman and Tom Brown…? (Turner, 2015: x)

As Neddam (2004) indicates, boyhood masculinity in the novel can be roughly split into two areas because, as examples from the text will demonstrate, there is a contrast between Arnold's vision of the Rugby boy, and what the boys actually got up to in his absence. Hence, biographical accounts of Arnold, like that provided by Strachey, are necessary in order to understand more fully the specifics of the headmaster's vision.

In Chapter 1, the scholarship on masculinity in both current and nineteenth-century contexts will be explored deeply before providing a detailed textual analysis of the novel in Chapter 2. Through these chapters, several questions will need to be addressed. Beyond simply showing how masculinity is depicted in *Tom Brown's School Days*, I will also consider whether moments within this text can convincingly demonstrate examples of *positive* masculinity. I have acknowledged that this subject matter is motivated by a desire to challenge the widely held present-day view that masculinity is wholly negative. However, an important aspect of my exploration of the topic will be to consider whether a nineteenth-century text can aid in demonstrating that this period is truly relevant to the modern climate. Is it possible to use *Tom Brown's School Days* to highlight the elements of masculinity that ought to be preserved today by exemplifying how those elements benefited boys in the past? And, ultimately, as I do not reject the notion that some elements of masculinity are indeed detrimental to boys and men, this dissertation must address whether it is possible to consider the entirety of the boys' experience during their schooling and still be able to prove that parts of this were beneficial and produced healthy, strong young men.

Chapter 1

As I have stated in the Introduction, masculinity today is a contentious subject. To suggest that there is a crisis of masculinity is an invariably loaded statement in current discourse, and talking about men's issues in popular culture is often pushed back against with a sentiment that to acknowledge them means a dismissal of women's issues. But this is not necessarily the case. After all, as stated, our society needs to produce men who will not perpetuate and enable the oppression and dominance that threaten women and girls.

If we declare that nothing about being a man is good, what are we supposed to teach boys who will grow up to be men? This is what necessitates the identification of a version of masculinity that can be deemed to be positive. Emotionally well-adjusted and stable young boys will not be produced by the removal of all traces of masculine behaviour. "Toxic" masculinity is what must be interrogated and challenged. In doing so, we can identify what values and behaviours are indeed negative, remove them, and address what is left.

In this chapter, I will explore masculinity by first considering the current discourse on masculinity in popular culture, as this is what motivates my dissertation. I will then move on to a discussion of hegemonic masculinity, which, as mentioned, forms the theoretical foundation for this research. I will also explore the literature on masculinity within modern school settings. Thereafter, I will examine masculinity in the nineteenth century, as well as boyhood during this period, which will set out a framework for discussing *Tom Brown's School Days*.

I will consider what masculinity encompassed during the Victorian period, particularly with the expansion of the middle class during the Industrial Revolution, the newly emerged figure of the breadwinner husband, and the separation of the domestic and public spheres. Connected to this historical context is the cultural shift in the definition of manliness between the eighteenth century and nineteenth century, male aggression and restraint, chivalry, and masculine anxiety. In exploring the history of this period, I will set out a detailed theoretical framework regarding the period in preparation for discussing the novel within this context.

Masculinity in popular culture and current social discourse

In order to locate this discussion, the discourse around masculinity today must be examined first. Broadly speaking, there is a sentiment that today, despite the progress we have made over centuries and recent decades, women are still subjected to patriarchal oppression and that men, even unknowingly, hold power over women by virtue of the fact that they are male. While visible indicators of men's control over women, such as the lack of right to vote or own property - issues that were present during the Victorian era - are no longer present in the Western world, society is not completely freed from the deeply embedded patriarchal currents that inform many of our interactions. While I, the author, may have the right to vote, can access birth control and have agency over my sexuality, and various other significant forms of progress achieved through the first to third waves of feminism, I still experience certain realities that come with the territory of being a woman through other pressures, restrictions and fears. Classic examples are catcalling and unsolicited remarks from male strangers, being unable to walk or run comfortably alone, particularly in the evening, the enduring reality of the gender pay gap for jobs that can be done by men and women, and, of course, the ongoing rates of domestic violence experienced by women. The following statistics elucidate my point:

- In 2018, a survey conducted by the nonprofit organisation Stop Street Harassment reported that 81 per cent of women had experienced a form of sexual harassment in their lifetime (Chatterjee, 2018).
- In the United States, the gender pay gap between men and women has improved by two per cent in 20 years, with women earning an average of 82 per cent of what men earned in 2022, as opposed to 80 per cent in 2002 (Pew Research Institute, 2023).
- Globally, one in three women has experienced either sexual or physical violence, typically at the hands of an intimate partner (WHO, 2021).

How are such issues related to masculinity? The underlying conceptual framework that informs gender issues is the patriarchal structure that we recognise both historically, and, in accordance with the issues at hand, still today. In feminism, the problem of patriarchy has led to a current state in which it is perceived by some that everything masculine only serves to bolster and reinforce the pervasiveness of patriarchy, and it is, therefore, the case that masculinity as an entire concept is dangerous or toxic, not only to women who continue to experience patriarchy but for men as well, as they are faced with the societal pressures to 'be a man', as it were. But,

while it is true that masculinity can be a harmful social construct for young boys, demonising it entirely is not the solution. As I have questioned at the outset, how should boys be raised if everything about being male is considered problematic?

Several key insights are useful in considering the problem with dismissing masculinity entirely. Popular discourse is rife with arguments and counterarguments about the problem of masculinity. An appropriate place to begin is by examining a term that is recognised not only in academia but also in popular discourse: toxic masculinity. Indeed, it was this term that heralded my own introduction to concepts surrounding masculinity. It is a point of entry that is not bound up in complex academic theory and has been widely discussed in recent years in cultural discourse. Carol Harrington (2020: 3) gives insight into the term, beginning with the following explanation of its origins: "Toxic masculinity emerged within the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s, coined by Shepherd Bliss. Bliss confirmed to me in a 2019 email that he coined the term to characterise his father's militarised, authoritarian masculinity." The concept of toxic masculinity has thus existed for some time, but the concept has gained strong traction in recent years. Harrington (2020: 3) adds:

> During the 1990s and early 2000s, toxic masculinity spread from men's movements to wider self-help, academic and policy literature. This literature posited that emotionally distant father-son relationships produced 'toxically' masculine men. In *Man Enough: Fathers, Sons, and the Search for Masculinity* (1993), family therapist Frank Pittman argues that men who lack adequate fathering pursue unrealistic cultural images of masculinity and feel a constant need to prove their manhood.

Pittman's view links thematically with the work of Warren Farrell, a key theorist I will draw on. In his text, *The Boy Crisis* (2017), Farrell investigates the widely accepted claim that boys are struggling across many social markers today and how the lack of a strong male role model/father figure has a detrimental impact on a young boy's development. What is important to note is that in this early stage of the concept of toxic masculinity, psychological theories by the likes of Pittman or Steve Biddulph, as Harrington explains, argued that "boys need a strong bond with a father figure/male mentor to avoid becoming toxically masculine men. Boys need the right kind of masculinity, the idea goes, and mothers can't give this to them" (Harrington, 2020: 3).

Importantly, Harrington (2020: 3) also explains that "toxic masculinity [was viewed] as culturally normative but curable through engaging men with fatherhood, positing an essentialist notion of masculine emotional development." Don Eberly, the founder of the U.S. National Fatherhood Initiative, said in 1999 that "Young men badly need to see mature masculinity modelled [out]. Well-seasoned masculinity fundamentally transforms the aggression of young males by capturing their masculine energy and directing it toward socially constructive pursuits" (Eberly in Harrington, 2020: 3). Fatherhood was therefore deemed a vital factor in healthy masculine development for both men and boys.

In *The Boy Crisis* (2017), Farrell opens by reflecting on the potential catalyst for the decline in how boys are performing, namely divorce:

> Later in the seventies, as I began to witness a sharp increase in divorces, I also noticed that many children were living primarily with their moms. The cultural meme about dads was focused on dad's money, not on his involvement. So when dads did not pay child support, we labelled them 'deadbeats'. (2017: 29)

Farrell (2017: 30) observes that the increase in divorce rates appeared to rise in tandem with instances of "students whose productivity and attitude uncharacteristically deteriorated, [who] ultimately shared [that] their parents were in the throes of a divorce." Through his findings, Farrell arrived at an important theme: "dad deprivation" (2017: 30).

Farrell also puts forward a key insight regarding a perception of maleness that ties in with masculinity even as it was structured during the nineteenth century, if not actually inherited from that period. Speaking of the 'normalcy' of men going to die in wars, he asks why it seems that we are blind to the idea that there could even be a crisis for men. He states:

> [It is] because, for much of our history, blindness to boys' deaths is the way we, as a society, have survived. When our very survival is dependent on our sons' willingness to die, sensitivity to the death and suffering of boys and men is in competition with our survival instinct. To win wars, we had to train our sons to be disposable. We honoured boys if they died so we could live. We called them heroes. (2008: 74-75)

In addition to this, he observes that "to prepare our sons to fight and potentially die, we had to train our sons to repress their feelings" (Farrell, 2017: 74). Farrell then turns again to divorce to consider the 'collateral' effects caused by this event. He explains that "Boys' two senses of purpose – sole breadwinner and warrior – were diminished. Dad-deprived boys had less guidance for alternative senses of purpose. Many boys experienced a 'purpose void'" (Farrell, 2017: 79).

While Farrell's scope in *The Boy Crisis* (2017) is far wider than what I have referenced here, I am interested in the fact that divorce as a phenomenon is a direct influence on the problems boys appear to be faced with today. The concept of dad deprivation and the consequences of that lack of fatherly guidance are relevant for my purposes as a reason, in some cases, for boys being troubled and potentially embodying negative masculine traits. The consequences of that troubled experience for boys can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms/perceptions, which result in the opportunity for toxic masculine traits to form. In other words, there is a vicious cycle that cannot necessarily be broken by removing all male guidance, as dad deprivation has shown.

Returning to the situation of men, as opposed to boys, another popular idea in current social discourse is what I will call the 'end of men' mentality. A narrative has formed in current society that we have less 'use' for men than we used to, in the breadwinning sense. Today, women in the West have access to opportunities that just a few decades ago they did not have. The dependency on men to provide has lessened as women have entered the workforce, and on top of this, post-industrial development has done away with many of the blue-collar occupations that men a few decades ago would be able to take up in place of white-collar, university-educated roles. To explain, Harrington (2020: 4) refers to the "gendered fall-out" triggered by the post-industrial evolution of the job sector:

> Toxic masculinity provided a discourse for diagnosing men's problems in the face of the gendered fall-out from deindustrialisation, during which well-paid jobs in 'masculine' occupational sectors disappeared while feminised service sector occupations expanded. (Harrington, 2020: 4)

This change in the workforce has a dual effect. One, it creates a restriction in the 'dating pool,' as women seek out partners who are on (at least) equal earning and status terms as they are. And, two, it contributes to a loss of purpose in how masculinity was defined up until then. According to data from the Pew Research Center in 2012, having a spouse with a desirable job is a priority for 80 per cent of women intending to marry (Patten and Parker, 2012). This means that for a society where women now make up the majority of college enrolments and benchmark desirability in careers along the lines of higher education, men who are not university-educated are less desirable than men who are, and the number of men who are is significantly lower than that of women with a tertiary education. Kathleen Elliot (2018: 17) provides insight into an important aspect of this issue, demonstrating the progress women have made in recent years:

> After decades of working to expand opportunities for women, there [is] progress toward gender equality. Women now earn the majority of bachelor's degrees and one-third to one-half of all law and medical degrees (US Census Bureau, 2012). They are represented in boardrooms, newsrooms and classrooms and occupy powerful positions in government, business, science and arts. Young women can play sports, take high-level math courses and pursue ambitious careers often without the kinds of hurdles that their mothers and grandmothers faced. Schools have played an important role in these developments through improving access to high-level classes, encouraging girls to excel in subjects dominated by men, growing athletic programs and developing curricula that include women's contributions in diverse fields.

Given that more women in Western societies are now university-educated and seeking a partner who is equal in status, the dating pool is thus constricted, and a significant proportion of men are categorised as less desirable. In looking at the grand picture, we can see the strands come together. If boys are doing worse in school, they are not getting accepted into universities. They are not getting married. And, as casual hookup culture - another key element of modern society - prevails, the rate of children born to single mothers has risen. Boys are raised without father figures and are thus dad-deprived, and the vicious cycle continues.

Referring again to the idea of men experiencing a loss of purpose, we find that the social identity men could previously associate with 'manliness' slowly disappeared as the 'end of

men' became a growing reality in the West. With the breadwinner role diminishing, the tenets of male identity arguably became less concrete. It makes sense that therapists and policymakers such as Eberly would look to and stress the importance of fatherhood for men and boys. There needed to be something that men could align with to orient themselves. Harrington (2020: 4) explains:

> There were calls for welfare systems to include fathers when offering family services, [arguing] for engaging men with fatherhood so that 'their wildness is tamed to the extent that they can adjust to the discipline of domestic routines and remain with their children and partners and in their families…' (Ferguson & Hogan, 2004: 8). Similarly, Jennifer Randles' (2013: 869) research on the U.S. 'Thriving Families' programme [found] it promoted heterosexual marriage and engaged fatherhood as, in the words of the programme's executive director, 'a civilising influence on men.'

Another interesting element highlighted by Harrington is that, in this initial phase, toxic masculinity was a term primarily applied to marginalised men. Referring to work by Terry Kupers, she explains, "Terry Kupers' research on men in prisons argued toxic masculinity involves the need to aggressively compete and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities in men… Toxic masculinity also includes a strong measure of the male proclivities that lead to resistance in psychotherapy" (Harrington, 2020: 4).

Here, we begin to see the connection between "male proclivities" and masculinity in the popular understanding we have today, where male tendencies in general are viewed negatively.

Harrington explains that, when used in this way, the term toxic masculinity was able to be used to denote aggressive and criminal behaviour as well as men in marginalised settings. Hence, discourses on toxic masculinity at the time "typically invoked notions of 'natural' male dispositions" (2020: 5). Such essentialism denotes how masculinity can be viewed as a social construct. Indeed, in current discourse, the term toxic masculinity is typically used to delineate misogynistic behaviour, being tough and not showing any emotion or victimising and bullying others for being effeminate. In a *New York Times* article, Maya Salam (2019) asks: "[W]hat can come of teaching boys that they can't express emotion openly; that they have to be tough

all the time; that anything other than that makes them 'feminine' or weak?" As Harrington (2020) explains, the term has existed for decades, but with the #MeToo[1] movement in 2017 during the Harvey Weinstein trial, and the highly contentious Gillette[2] commercial in 2019, toxic masculinity as a concept surged forth to become part of popular social justice vocabulary today. As feminist ideas formed around the toxic masculinity complex, masculinity in general came to be perceived as problematic. It is also at this point that criticism of the use of the term toxic masculinity as a concept emerged. Harrington (2020: 5) explains:

> [Critics] imagined the label as part of a feminist project motivated by misandry. Christina Hoff Sommers (2003), complained that 'gender equality experts' in government wanted to socialise boys away from 'toxic masculinity' out of misguided rejection of differences in the character, interests, and abilities of men and women. Likewise, an article on family therapy argued that the phrase had become 'part and parcel of the scholarly and popular clinical literature' that represented a 'deficit perspective' toward men (Dollahite, Marks, & Olsonm, 2002, p. 262). From this perspective, talk of toxic masculinity indicates a feminist anti-male bias even though proponents of the term were often conservatives seeking to 'reform' marginalised men and stabilise patriarchal heterosexual family norms.

Douglas Murray (2019) explains how, in many ways, masculinity has become a dirty word. As mentioned, the Gillette commercial released in 2019 caused a major moment of reckoning, with people from both sides of the argument about whether masculinity is a problem weighing in on the moment. Murray explains that at the time of the commercial, the American Psychological Association officially released guidelines for psychologists to deal with men:

> An article explaining the rationale claimed that 40 years of research showed that 'traditional masculinity – marked by stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and

[1] The #MeToo movement is a social movement that gained significant momentum during Harvey Weinstein's sexual misconduct trial. While originally started in 2006 by Tarana Burke, the #MeToo movement became a major social response to the Weinstein trial in 2017, as it encouraged more and more women to come forward with their stories of sexual harassment and assault. (Britannica, 2023b)

[2] In 2019, Gillette released a commercial titled "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be." The commercial portrayed various scenes of aggressive male behaviour, 'mansplaining,' and sexual harassment in a bid to highlight the prevalence of such issues in society and challenge toxic masculinity. The response to the commercial was extremely polarised, with some stating that it demonised men and masculinity and supporters lauding the company for speaking about social issues. (Topping, Lyons, & Weaver, 2019)

> aggression, is undermining men's well-being'. To tackle these 'traditional' aspects of masculinity, the APA produced some new guidelines in order to help people in practice 'recognise this problem for boys and men'. In its guidelines, the APA defined traditional masculinity as 'a particular constellation of standards that have held sway over large segments of the population, including anti-femininity, achievement, eschewal of the appearance of weakness, and adventure, risk, and violence'. (Murray, 2019)

What is interesting to note is that the APA article, written by Stephanie Pappas (2019), recognises many of the same conditions that Warren Farrell and other advocates *for* men's issues are concerned with. After listing the ways in which men "still dominate professionally and politically," the article states:

> But something is amiss for men as well. Men commit 90 per cent of homicides in the United States and represent 77 per cent of homicide victims. They're the demographic group most at risk of being victimised by violent crime. They are 3.5 times more likely than women to die by suicide, and their life expectancy is 4.9 years shorter than women's. Boys are far more likely to be diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder than girls, and they face harsher punishments in school—especially boys of colour. (Pappas, 2019)

These observations are made by the likes of Farrell but, arguably, with an entirely different agenda. There is an acknowledgement of the same facts, but different conclusions are drawn from them. One side sees these issues that men face as a result of toxic masculinity, which has proven itself to be a contested term which is used in different ways and for different agendas. The other sees that men are falling behind, not necessarily simply due to the existence of masculinity but because, in many ways, boys are simply being left behind for the reasons that Farrell explains. Elliot (2018) provides a consolidation of this. Following on from her above-quoted statement about the progress women have made in recent decades, she states:

> [We] tend to think of inequality only in terms of those on the losing side… Gender inequality is considered a women's problem, something that does not involve men and that can be addressed by focusing on women alone. Hence, the decades of trying to address gender inequality through programs and policies aimed at

> advancing and empowering women and girls, but with very little attention paid to examining masculinity; how we raise boys and think about boys and men… [This focus] allows dominant or toxic masculinity, masculinity based on simplified norms and understandings of traditionally masculine characteristics such as violence, physical strength, suppression of emotion and devaluation of women (Connell, 2005; Pascoe, 2005; Posadas, 2017) to flourish unfettered. (Elliot, 2018: 18)

Here, we have both a recent definition of toxic masculinity, as well as a key insight into how perceptions about masculinity, men, women, and gender issues have led to a focus on women that has positioned masculinity and men as a less important concern. For boys learning to be men, this is not good. We have spent this time focusing on uplifting women, as we should, but as a result, we have not necessarily offered much to boys. While recent conversation around these issues has noted the lag in boys' progress as opposed to that achieved by girls, these facts are not new, with literature on the subject of boys 'being left behind' dating back to as far as 2007 (Sax, 2007).

We find ourselves in a current cultural moment where masculinity and maleness are largely viewed as problematic or toxic. To quote Harrington once more:

> Feminists have adopted toxic masculinity as shorthand for characterising homophobic and misogynist speech and violence by men. Since 2016, a notable number of media stories used "toxic masculinity" [to] describe the poor behaviour of powerful white elite men in contrast to its earlier applications to marginalised men.

The term is firmly lodged into the discussion, and it appears that it has become a blanket concept. A more nuanced approach would explore to what extent we can reasonably say that all of it is toxic. We can attempt to do so by exploring what conditions could allow boys to flourish.

Examining the theory of hegemonic masculinity

As mentioned in the introduction, this dissertation is grounded in the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity, an area of study developed by R. W. Connell, who is widely recognised as the pioneering theorist in hegemonic masculinity. In her seminal work, *Gender and Power - Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (1987), the roadmap for the concept is laid out as a response to the question of how masculinity (and femininity) are able to operate at a societal level. As a point of departure, the following, some of it quoted earlier, is important in terms of how masculinities can become hegemonic:

> [Hegemony] means a social ascendency achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes… Ascendency which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice. Second, 'hegemony' does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives. It means ascendency achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated. (Connell, 1987: 234)

Robert Morrell offers further insight into this, explaining that "masculinity is a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute. It is socially constructed and fluid. There is not one universal masculinity, but many masculinities" (Morrell, 1988: 4). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily actually represent the behaviour of most men going about their daily lives. As Connell (1987: 324) says, "The cultural ideal of masculinity need not correspond at all closely to the actual personalities of the majority of men." In fact, the masculinity that becomes elevated as the hegemonic ideal, according to Connell, often instead consists of models of masculinity that are 'fantasy' in some sense: based on movie characters, elite sports stars, etc. What is promoted as the ideal is not actually what men are like, but it is what they need to be seen emulating in order to be accepted as a man.

Another aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it keeps powerful men in place, sustaining their power, because, again, these powerful men are seen to embody the ideal of masculinity that all men in society should model in order to be accepted. Connell (1987: 235) explains:

> The public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support. The notion of 'hegemony' generally implies a large measure of consent. Few men are Bogarts or Stallones, many collaborate in sustaining those images.

In sum, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as an elevation of a certain set of traits or behaviours deemed and tacitly accepted by the general public within a particular culture, as the ideal to strive for, over others. Furthermore, it need not actually include the behaviours of everyday men, it can be modelled on an agreed-upon figure who symbolises that masculinity, such as a sports icon or film actor.

Connell's work is also relevant to my study of masculinity in the schoolboy setting due to her observations about how masculinity operates within institutions. In *Gender and Power* (1987), she examines the structure of gender as a key influencer in the overall structuring of society. Importantly, she argues that institutions are the place where gender relations have the most impact. This claim allows one to create a direct link to the institution of the school. Furthermore, Connell takes a different approach to the institutions that should be considered, stating that, "When the social sciences have made the connection, [between gender and institutions] it is usually by picking out a particular institution as the bearer of gender and sexuality. The family and kinship have usually been elected to this honour" (Connell, 1987: 119).

This observation by Connell creates the need to consider how this connection with gender works when it is observed in other institutions that are not interpersonal. "Gender relations are present in all types of institutions", Connell states, "they may not be the most important structure in a particular case, but they are certainly a major structure of most" (Connell, 1987: 120). This affirms the notion that focusing on the nineteenth-century school environment is a worthwhile area to explore using Connell's insights. In fact, Connell makes direct reference to gender in the school environment, explaining that "we found [in a study conducted] an active although not always articulate politics of gender in every school… Especially amongst students, some gender patterns are hegemonic – an aggressive heterosexual most commonly – and others are subordinated" (Connell, 1987: 120). In Chapter 2, I will demonstrate how this dynamic is visible in the Rugby school environment of Hughes's novel.

In an article co-published in 2005 with James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept", Connell offers another useful definition of the term:

> Hegemonic masculinities were distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities… only a minority of men might enact [hegemonic masculinity]. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it… (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832)

What this means, and how it applies to the schoolboy setting, is that in order to become accepted within the social dynamic at play, the boys needed to learn the behaviours and beliefs dictated by whatever was deemed to represent ideal manliness, which in turn was dictated by the current hegemonic form of masculinity. With this in mind, I aim to use this theory to examine how hegemonic masculinity comes to be learned and dealt with by boys, and what results are produced by this dynamic.

In exploring hegemonic masculinity in more detail, it is useful to understand Connell's formulations in *Gender and Power* (1987). As mentioned, discussions around masculinity are contentious, and in order to utilise Connell's work as the basis for my theoretical framework, it is important to understand her ideas foundationally. Yuchen Yang (2020) provides a useful summation of Connell's path to the development of hegemonic masculinity. She acknowledges that Connell was "inspired to theorise masculinities by the 1970s feminist movement and a team project on social inequalities in schools" (Yang, 2020: 319). In an interview, Connell explains:

> In the late 1970s, I began to apply this kind of power analysis in the study of gender. I was not satisfied with the concept of 'patriarchy' as an abstract structure. The idea had to become more concrete, more practical. I wanted to know: who were the patriarchs? How did the structure work? Who made it operate? Essentially that was how I came to formulate problems about masculinity. [We] were looking at gender relations in schools, at hierarchies and exclusions, and the pattern of hegemony leaped out at us. There were different masculinities, there were hierarchical relationships, there was contestation, and there were dilemmas about how

> hegemony was maintained in changing economic circumstances. (Nascimento and Connell, 2017: 3976)

At the time Connell began developing the theory, another served as a prominent feature of the gender studies landscape: sex-role theory. Yang (2020: 319) explains that sex-role theory asserts that it is "socialising agencies like families and schools that initiate boys and girls to conform with and ultimately internalise [roles]". This theory was popularised by sociologist Talcott Parsons in the 1950s. While he did not explicitly name the concept of sex-role theory, his ideas make up the theory as we know it today. Connell provides a thorough recounting of the history of the study of sex and gender in *Gender and Power* (1987) to inform what we recognise today.

In the nineteenth century, following the mobilisation of the early feminist movements, studies on the nature of sex began to emerge. Freud, through the research method of psychoanalysis, took on sex from the angle of human development and the emotional or inner life. Prior to this, biological and scientific approaches were used to attempt study of sexuality and gender. Connell explains that Freud's approach "led to a focus on the life history as the unit of analysis rather than the species, the body, or the syndrome" (Connell, 1987: 27-28). Importantly, psychoanalytic life history research methodology enabled the production of accounts of masculinity and femininity.

Following on from these initial events, academia continued to be a wrestling ground for debates about gender. In the developing sciences of sociology and psychology in the early twentieth century, the sex trait/characteristic differences between men and women were being investigated further, resulting in the development and understanding of the concept of a 'social role.' Connell explains, "The notion of a socially-provided script for individual behaviour, first learned and then enacted, was easily applied to gender" (Connell, 1987: 30).

The idea of sex roles came into use during the early 20th century. Throughout, it was widely accepted that there was a phenomenon of 'naturalness' in the apparent differences between men and women. Connell explains that this assumption became vitally important in the attempts to understand the different roles that men and women played: "The most common conception of the psychology of gender is that men and women as groups have different traits: different temperaments, characters, outlooks and opinions, abilities, even whole structures of

personality" (Connell, 1987: 167). This concept she calls "sexual character," explaining that the common perception states that one "set of traits [characterises] men in general and thus defines masculinity." This she calls a "unitary model of sexual character [which] is a familiar part of sexual ideology" (Connell, 1987:167).

With this in mind, one of Connell's key points is that masculinity and femininity are not two standalone, steadfast concepts. It is this that enables the concept of a "hegemonic" masculinity to exist in the first place. Referring to the work by Andrew Tolson in *The Limits of Masculinity* (1977), Connell explains how the interplay between various social factors, such as sexual identity and economic circumstances, can create a "broad distinction between a working-class type and a middle-class type of masculinity" (Connell, 1987: 175). Furthermore, she states that "qualitatively different types are produced within the same social setting" (Connell, 1987: 176). The following excerpt from her research in an elite Australian boys' school is important to note in this regard:

> There are a group ['the Bloods' they are called] which I suppose you can say is a traditional one, the sporting group. [And] sometimes they ride a bit rough over another group who have been called [the] conshies. [From 'conscientious'.] Who are the ones who don't play any games. [They've] all got glasses, short, very fat and that sort of thing… (Connell, 1987: 177)

According to Connell, "the difference between these masculinities is not a matter of free choice by the boys… Larger cultural dynamics can be detected here. But the crucial point is that entering one group does not make the other irrelevant. Far from it: an active relationship is constructed. The Bloods [bully] the [conshies] because being a Blood *involves* an active rejection of what they see as effeminacy" (1987: 177) (Author's emphasis). This is very interesting to consider, because it appears that part of how the Bloods identify themselves is actually with the aid of the conshies, in an othering relationship that enables them to define their own masculinity.

Additionally, Connell notes that the "production of multiple masculinities [can] be seen in studies of other schools" (Connell, 1987: 178). In terms of defining masculinity, she argues that there is an ordering of masculinities at the level of general society, a structural, overarching concept. "This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define

a hegemonic form of masculinity… 'Hegemonic masculinity' is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities" (Connell, 1987: 183). Indeed, Robert Morrell explains: "The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own" (Morrell, 1988: 5).

Connell also draws on the work of Antonio Gramsci to conceptualise hegemony, explaining that it means, as mentioned earlier, "a social ascendency achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond the contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes" (Connell, 1987: 234). Importantly, "ascendency of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendency which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies, and so forth, is" (Connell, 1987: 184).

Another crucial aspect to understand is that hegemony, as Connell explains, "does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives" (Connell, 1987: 184). The ascendency of one form of masculinity does not eliminate all other versions of masculinity, it simply subordinates them. They cannot exist independently. It is this diversity of masculinities, and the possibility of this, that enable the case for positive masculinity to be made.

Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity exists at various intersections. Connell explains that heterosexuality is the key feature of this, and, in turn, then, a primary "form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual" (Connell, 1987: 186). However, homosexuality is not the only oppressed masculine identity encountered in such dynamics. Indeed, subordinated masculinity emerges in any setting where there is a power dynamic between men. In a study conducted by Cynthia Cockburn investigating the dynamics of workers in London, "The workers recalled their apprenticeships in terms of drudgery and humiliation, a ritual of induction into trade and masculinity at the same time. But once they were in, they were 'brothers'" (Cockburn in Connell, 1987: 186). Indeed, the notion of initiation, something familiar across various familial, social, and institutional dynamics for both boys and girls, forms a key component of masculine identity and embodiment, as we shall see in later chapters.

Yang explains that from Connell's research into schools, she and her colleagues concluded that "schools actually hierarchise multiple masculinities… valourising some and marginalising

others" (Yang, 2020: 319). In terms of the operation of hegemonic masculinity, this treatment is indicative of the fact that masculinity is "inherently relational" (Yang, 2020: 319). While this point of relationality is made by Yang in reference to femininity, the same applies to the relations between different types of masculinity, which, as Connell has established, very much coexist, even depending on one another. Hegemonic masculinity is simply "the culturally exalted form of masculinity" (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1987: 592) and the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to [legitimising] patriarchy" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 77). As mentioned previously, most men do not actually embody the hegemonic ideal set forth by the masculinity 'of the day'; instead, they hold a complicit masculinity by tacitly subscribing to and being legitimised by the hegemonic form.

Patricia Sexton suggests that "male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure and considerable amounts of toughness" (Sexton in Donaldson, 1993: 644), explaining that these are the norms that have come to be linked to hegemony in masculinity. Mike Donaldson expands on this, stating that "heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity" and that "the term [was] invented and is used primarily to maintain [a] central focus in the critique of masculinity" (Donaldson, 1993: 645). Indeed, as we will come to see with critiques of Connell's work, the notion is characteristically negative. Furthermore, Donaldson explains that hegemonic masculinity is "a culturally idealised form, [both] a personal and collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, [and] socially sustained" (Donaldson, 1993: 645). Interestingly, Donaldson also states that while right-wing and fascist groups are "constructing aggressive, dominant, and violent models of masculinity… [the] most influential agents are considered to be: priests, journalists, advertisers, politicians, psychiatrists… actors, novelists, musicians… coaches, and sportsmen. These are the figures we look up to as holders of authority or demanders of respect due to their social position… Hegemonic masculinity is naturalised in the form of the hero…" (Donaldson, 1993: 646).

Critiques of Connell's hegemonic masculinity

Connell's theory has been influential in masculinity studies for decades. While her work is the primary source for my analysis of hegemonic masculinity, I will also draw on the scholarship

of theorists such as Demetrakis Z. Demetriou and Richard Collier, who provide critiques of Connell's theory. As criticisms will demonstrate, the theory of hegemonic masculinity has been extensively contested. Indeed, Collier argues against the characteristic connotations of the theory because they focus on the association between masculinity and violence. As stated earlier, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 840) acknowledges this with the following remarks:

> [Collier] criticises the concept of hegemonic masculinity through its typical use in accounting for violence and crime. In the 'masculinity turn' in criminology, Collier suggests, hegemonic masculinity came to be associated solely with negative characteristics that depict men as unemotional, independent, nonnurturing, aggressive, and dispassionate. (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 840)

The critical point made by Collier is that the formulation of hegemonic masculinity and the stereotypes embedded within the concept mean that it is perceived as an entirely negative idea. Indeed, as quoted earlier, it is a "crucial defect in the concept of hegemonic masculinity that it excludes 'positive' behaviour on the part of men…" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 840). Collier's view that Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity diminishes the space for masculinity to be anything other than negative is the precise motivation for this dissertation. The idea of positive masculinity is exactly what I will make a case for.

As Michael Moller explains, "hegemonic masculinity has been used as a means of interrogating the practices, attitudes, and meanings of both masculinities and men" (Moller, 2007: 263). However, as already indicated, the theory has been criticised, which I will explore in detail below. Moller provides two distinct arguments: firstly, that the theory reduces the nuances and complexities of what men, or "the subjects of masculinity", actually do; and secondly, that the "determination of masculinity as dominating overdetermines what men [do], say, and feel" (Moller, 2007: 263).

Moller (2007) also makes a crucial statement that I highlight for my argument. In discussing how Connell's theory understands masculinity as socially constructed, Moller states that "if masculinities are socially constructed, then there must be conditions under which masculinities can change. Further, if masculinities are malleable, at least to some extent, then it becomes less necessary to live with those articulations of masculinity that are damaging" (Moller, 2007:

264). This is central to my argument for positive masculinity and my contention that not all aspects of being male should be dismissed and that that which is negative can be removed without denouncing masculinity altogether.

Moller begins his critique of Connell's theory by arguing that the concept of hegemonic masculinity "invites readers to look 'out there' for particularly nefarious instances of masculinist abuses of power. More mundane practices of masculinity, and of masculine power, tend to go unnoticed" (Moller, 2007: 265). In other words, the theory of hegemonic masculinity has been framed in a way that encourages one to identify and judge male traits on a sliding scale from bad to worse, instead of gauging things more neutrally. Moller argues:

> Connell employs an identifying strategy by which one names what one is looking for - that is, hegemonic masculinity - in advance of finding something which seems to fit its description… One problem with this model of researching and writing about gender and power lies in the critical tendency to nominate particular qualities, practices, and figures of masculinity as problematic. (Moller, 2007: 265)

Furthermore, Connell's concept encourages a focus on only certain aspects of the masculine, the negative aspects of oppression, domination, and subordination. Moller states that this "conditions researchers to think about masculinity and power in a specific and limited way…" (Moller, 2007: 269). Indeed, Demetrakis Demetriou argues that, despite the wide use of Connell's work, little has been done to actually evaluate its "theoretical merit" (Demetriou, 2001: 337). His view supports Donaldson's (1993) argument, as he states that hegemonic masculinity is "a closed and unified totality that incorporates no otherness" (Demetriou, 2001: 347).

Tony Jefferson makes another important point, stating that Connell emphasises the *relational* nature of masculinity, reflected in the fact that one form of masculinity is exalted over others. However, Jefferson explains, "it is still common to see masculinity used *attributionally*, as if it referred simply to a list of 'manly' attributes - competitive, aggressive, risk-taker, strong, independent, unemotional, and so on…" (Jefferson, 2002: 70). The consequence of this is, as Jefferson explains, "to render the notion [of hegemonic masculinity] static, not something which is incessantly struggled over as Connell's theoretical usage insists" (Jefferson, 2002: 71).

For my own purposes, I find it significant that this literature has shown that masculinity is not a fixed concept. In other words, it is possible, for example, to envision a scenario in which rejection of effeminacy as a 'trait' of masculinity is replaced by the acceptance of effeminacy as a 'trait' we recognise of 'typical' masculinity. As such, I believe that the theory of hegemonic masculinity, seen in less static terms, can be a useful theoretical archway for formulating an argument for positive masculinity.

Masculinity and schooling: examining the literature

Jill Heinrich's (2013) study of an American high school provides detailed insight into the subjective experiences of boys in the school setting. Heinrich conducted a long-term observational and interview-based study at a small-town school. She studied the school for a year (Heinrich, 2013: 101), her research offering rich data.

Heinrich's (2013) work offers several key insights. She begins by referencing Connell's own observations:

> Connell's discussion of masculinity as a socially constructed entity is of particular relevance. [Masculinity] is actively constructed in society and that school, society, and the peer milieu all offer boys a place in the gender order… What remains constant [is] hegemonic masculinity's influence in boys' lives, for it requires them to appropriate certain ways of being male to gain acceptance from male and female peers alike. It is through this process, then, that school becomes a major site for the production of masculinity identity among adolescent boys. (Heinrich, 2013: 103)

Heinrich's study explores the "production of masculinity" (2013: 103) within the high school, observing the boys' conduct in the classroom as well as engaging with them in interviews. She explains that the presence of a hegemonic form of masculinity made itself known and felt within the school: "Like most schools, Davidson High offered a repertoire of masculine discourses to its male students, and so multiple ways of being male offered themselves to the boys each day, yet this coexistence did little to undermine the powers of hierarchy and hegemony as some masculine forms were clearly privileged at the expense of others" (Heinrich, 2013: 106). Indeed, a certain combination of traits appeared to be valued as "appropriately male" (2013: 106), those which, Heinrich explains, "many might consider

'stereotypical' or 'traditional' masculine characteristics and behaviours, such as physical strength and athleticism, stoicism and emotional toughness, and heterosexuality" (Heinrich, 2013: 106).

Furthermore, this privileged or celebrated form of maleness also asserted itself in the *denigration* of other, less desirable traits. Heinrich explains that this form was "consistently intolerant of all competing forms [of masculinity]; 'less desirable' ways of being male faced varying degrees of discrimination, and the boys who assumed them typically endured unwarranted ridicule and rebuke from male and female peers alike, thus relegating them to the lower rungs of the school's social hierarchy" (Heinrich, 2013: 106).

An important question to consider, then, is what dictated or signalled to the boys that they needed to behave in certain ways in order to be accepted socially within the school. One of Heinrich's most crucial observations in the study is that of a 'fear-based governance' that determined what the boys inherently 'knew' and also how they knew it. She explains that "throughout [her] private conversations with the boys and observations of them with their friends and teachers, fear consistently emerged as a compelling force in their lives" (Heinrich, 2013: 106). The boys appeared to be hyperaware of what they should and should not do in order to remain aligned with hegemonic masculine ideals within the school setting.

Heinrich explains, "Most compelling was the fear of 'not measuring up' to the hegemonic masculine ideals that regulated school life, and so masculinity became an ongoing performance that required the boys to appropriate certain subject positions to earn approval from male and female peers alike" (Heinrich, 2013: 107). We gain further insight into how the boys viewed these normative expectations from their direct interview responses. There was an "absolute need to disguise vulnerability in the public sphere" (Heinrich, 2013: 107). The following interview excerpt illustrates the boys' understanding of their own position and the expectations that have been instilled in them through their cultural and social upbringing:

> Aiden: It's like society just expects guys to be tough and so you just grow up knowing that's the way it is. Like, take whining, for instance; it's never accepted, no matter what… you're just taught not to complain about it... at least for guys, that is.

> Jack: Yeah, you just learn it early on; as a kid, you're taught not to complain about it.
>
> Interviewer: So, who teaches it to you?
>
> Aiden: Well... it's not just from one thing, but from like everything in society.
>
> Jack: You just sort of learn it growing up. It's like when I used to play baseball, and everyone was afraid of getting hit by a pitch, but no matter what, you were supposed to act like you weren't scared. And if you did get hurt, everyone just told you to 'shake it off' and just deal with it.
>
> Interviewer: Well, what happens if you don't 'deal with it'?
>
> Aiden: You just do, or else you're made fun of. I mean, people might feel kinda sorry for you… inside, that is, but they would still think it's sorta weird.
>
> Jack: Yeah... that's why guys don't do that sort of thing... because you just can't. (Heinrich, 2013: 107)

Importantly, anxiousness emerges as another prevalent factor in the constitution of masculinity. Heinrich's observations of fear-based behavioural choices may be seen as a confirmation of the fact that masculine practice is fraught with anxiety at all levels, including in young boys who are learning how to be men. Heinrich explains that the boys' responses "suggested [they] had internalised, albeit perhaps unconsciously, the host of hidden yet steadfast rules boys learn at an early age" (Heinrich, 2013: 107). It appears that boys are highly cognisant of the fact that certain constraints have been imposed upon them by hegemonic masculine ideals, and they are also hyperaware of the potential danger of transgressing the bounds of what is deemed acceptable by the hegemonic masculinity of their environment:

> Jack's and Aiden's responses revealed an insightful awareness of the restraints that hegemonic masculine codes had imposed in men's lives, for threaded throughout our conversations was the belief that they would suffer immediate rebuke should they fail to measure up to certain cultural expectations society imposed upon them.

> For instance, men should not display emotion or vulnerability in public, and so personal feelings were ones to be guarded, shared with only the most trusted of friends. Any failure to do so was a fatal one, a transgression that would, as the boys emphatically explained, result in ridicule, humiliation, and, most troubling, loss of reputation. (Heinrich, 2013: 108)

Furthermore, Heinrich found that there were certain things one could and could not do in order to maintain social status within the school. Class participation is one noteworthy area, with findings indicating that the boys would not speak up in class for fear of ridicule. As Heinrich notes, "it was the fear of ridicule, and not apathy or stupidity as teachers sometimes assume, [that] generally precluded boys from participating in class, for the process of finding voice was a high-stakes one, laden with considerable risk and consequence…" (Heinrich, 2013: 110-111)

This observation adds a notable element to considerations of boys' poor performance in schools, as discussed with the work of Warren Farrell (2017). The fear-based component could contribute towards this phenomenon, as it defines how boys believe they should behave in order to be accepted and avoid ridicule. The result is likely to be poor performance.

Heinrich consolidates this with the following remarks:

> This portrait of school life the boys painted highlights fear as a driving force in adolescence, for the fear of ridicule, the fear of rejection and the fear of 'not measuring up' to the expectations of others directed the course of their lives. Yet they had also learned to mediate these fears through the sculpting of a masculine identity that aligned itself with hegemonic masculine ideals privileged within the school sphere; this proved an ongoing performance but one worth staging, for it protected them from ridicule and secured a coveted place of prominence in the social hierarchy of a school… (Heinrich, 2013: 111)

What must next be considered, then, is how boys go about shaping their masculinity and defining themselves in relation to masculine ideals. Heinrich identifies two elements: first, by "forsaking the feminine" (2013: 111) and second, by enthusiastically engaging in sporting activities. With the former, we see once again that effeminacy is strictly avoided by the boys as far as possible. Effeminacy, as has been noted, is a major concern in the construction of

masculinity, and one's subscription to the hegemonic ideal (which rejects effeminacy) will ensure social acceptance. Heinrich explains:

> The rule that is repeatedly reinforced to boys is to publicly segregate themselves from all that is coded 'feminine,' for any perception of 'effeminacy' is a failure to 'measure up' to the hegemonic masculine codes sanctioned by society, parents, teachers, and, most importantly, peers. Several behaviours might unintentionally relegate a boy to the dreaded 'unmasculine' category, forcing him to bear the albatross that proclaims his shame to the world and that labels him 'sissy' or 'fag.' The stigmas that accompany these insults are formidable, and so many boys may understandably assume a posture of exaggerated hegemonic masculinity, characterised by aggression, power, and authority, to avoid the charge. Troubling though it may be, such posturing must be seen for what it is — a necessary defence mechanism boys use to disguise feelings of fear and insecurity. (Heinrich, 2013: 111)

Additionally, Heinrich reflects on the ways in which the risks of effeminacy are managed by the boys, explaining that they are mediated through two routes, "pronounced heterosexism and/or homophobia" (2013: 112).

The second 'shaping' mechanism for boyhood masculinity is a significant theme that is reflected in *Tom Brown's School Days*, as I shall demonstrate. Heinrich observed that "an enthusiastic endorsement of the sports ethic proved a favoured route to validate masculine identity and simultaneously [gain] peer acceptance… Sports functioned as a prominent rite of passage and means of acceptance for the boys who clearly sanctioned the collective [belief] that athletic ability is a prerequisite for 'manhood' and sports the natural training ground for the 'traditional' male role" (Heinrich, 2013: 112).

Heinrich explains that there is an identifiable collective notion that engaging in sports is an effective method for building character, a "paradigm which views participation in competitive sports as a singularly positive endeavour that augments physical strength, endurance, toughness, and self-reliance" (Heinrich, 2013: 113). As we shall see, sport is a key theme in the novel and Heinrich's argument is supported by much of the research on masculinity and boyhood. Ultimately, her study offers significant insight into the ways in which hegemonic

masculinity is present within the educational setting, as well as demonstrating how boys feel they must conduct themselves socially in order to achieve status and approval.

Nicole L. Rosen and Stacey Nofzinger explore another key aspect of school dynamics: bullying. This social phenomenon is something widely recognised in school settings and manifests differently in bullying between boys and girls. In their article, Rosen and Nofzinger explore the complex relationship between bullying and masculinity in boys. They begin with a remark that affirms my endeavours, stating that "it is in school that children's views of the world are formed, or challenged, and patterns of interaction are developed" (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 296). This is worth mentioning in that it reiterates that the school is a worthwhile site for investigation, having a profound influence on the developmental years where a child's personality is solidified. Furthermore, Rosen and Nofzinger explain that "during adolescence, peers replace family as the prominent source of socialisation. Schools serve as an especially influential agent of socialisation during this time since adolescents spend much of their time in school" (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 296).

Rosen and Nofzinger state that gender directly influences both how and why boys and girls are bullied: "Children who do not conform to traditional notions of gender expression are often labelled as a 'sissy,' 'tomboy,' 'dyke,' or 'fag'." (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 298-299). Arguably, 'sissy' and 'fag' are slurs typically used when a person is deemed to have behaved in an effeminate manner, once again highlighting the taboo and rejection surrounding this concept. Rosen and Nofzinger explain:

> Girls and boys who do not 'do' their gender in socially prescribed ways are often targets of bullying, as are children who are gay or perceived to be gay. Boys are more harshly judged than girls for breaking traditional gender rules and as a result, often engage in more physical bullying as a means of asserting a heterosexual identity. In other words, boys' participation in bullying is often a direct result of them trying to affirm their heterosexuality and 'manliness.' (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 299)

Rosen and Nofzinger identified four key themes in the dynamics of bullying among boys in school settings: "Heteronormativity, physical dominance, social location, and acceptance of violence" (2019: 307). These themes provide key insights into the different ways that bullying

takes shape, as well as how it is managed by targeted boys. Exploring the theme of heteronormativity, Rosen and Nofzinger state the following:

> Homophobia and heterosexuality are fundamental elements of hegemonic masculinity. Homosexual males and gender nonconformists are considered subordinate to cisgender men. As a result, it is not surprising that boys who do not embody heteronormativity are at risk of being victimised by their peers. (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 308)

Interestingly, Rosen and Nofzinger also found that even heteronormative practices placed boys at risk of teasing. This is worth mentioning in that it serves to highlight further the complex social navigation that must be undertaken by the boys. It was found that relationship status was another source of bullying and often "places boys in a double bind" (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 308). "Boys' heterosexuality is confirmed if they are in a relationship with a girl, however, their independence is compromised if they devote time to their girlfriend" (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 308). Spending too much time with their girlfriend places them at risk of losing face with male peers or being labelled as 'whipped', a concept that is tied to a paradoxical loss of manliness.

In remarking on the theme of physical dominance, Rosen and Nofzinger also mention hegemonic masculinity, explaining that "physical dominance is also a key characteristic, [as] men are expected to be independent, strong, invincible, and brave" (2019: 308). As we have seen with the value placed on sport (Heinrich, 2013), and as will be demonstrated with an analysis of the novel, it appears that physicality is deeply interwoven into the perception of the 'ideal' masculine character. Importantly, Rosen and Nofzinger saw that physical violence was extremely common among boys in their study. In addition, they noted that the boys often responded to questions about physical altercations or threats with nonchalant, dismissive answers, brushing things off as not very significant. Arguably, this non-emotional response is linked to the perception that it is manly to respond with stoicism, that complaining or responding emotionally makes one 'weak.' Indeed, the boys in Rosen and Nofzinger's study responded in a way that promoted a "tough guise" (2019: 309) with responses that lacked strong emotionality. This finding also speaks to the third theme that Rosen and Nofzinger identified, which is the acceptance of violence:

> Given the omnipresence of stereotypical gender norms throughout society, it is not surprising that many boys in this sample supported the notion that 'boys will be boys.' In other words, it is often socially accepted that boys will be aggressive, assertive, and violent just because they are boys (e.g. assuming such traits are innate). Boys' masculine behaviour is excused and accepted as something that is biological and out of their control. This is in opposition to gender scholars who conceptualise gender as being a learned, performed, and internalised role, not based on innate traits… Many responses [suggested] that boys believed it was normal that their male peers would assert their masculinity by harassing them and, as a result, believed that such behaviour did not warrant special attention or was cause for alarm. For instance, a boy in 6th grade explained, 'They just call everyone names because, well, you know we are all boys.' (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 309-310)

Rosen and Nofzinger further explain that the requirement of subscription to hegemonic masculinity is a primary reason for this level of 'acceptance'. The phrase, "take it like a man" is fairly common. If this mentality is encoded into the hegemonic masculinity of the day, then it is unsurprising that boys are accepting violence as normative. Additionally, "if boys shrugged off their experiences as just something that 'boys do,' the victims were able to save face and once again affirm their masculinity" (Rosen and Nofzinger, 2019: 312).

Filomin C. Gutierrez provides further insight into the dynamics that power institutionally situated forms of violence in relation to masculinity. In her 2019 article, "Violence and Hypermasculinity in University Fraternity Initiations: Situating the Reproduction of Masculinity in the Philippines," Gutierrez (2019: 243) demonstrates how "fraternity members [reached] for hegemonic masculinity through the masculine exemplar of toughness." She found that fraternity initiates willingly "subjected themselves to initiations that instrumentalise hypermasculinity through violence" (Gutierrez, 2019: 244). Arguably, this finding also indicates the 'appeal' of stoically accepting suffering or 'taking it like a man.' In this case, it is in the extreme, with the aim of displaying hypermasculinity:

> In their reach for hegemonic masculinity and its exemplars, fraternity men turn to scripts of hypermasculinity that regard toughness and violence as conduits to power. Hypermasculinity is defined here as an adherence to, and exaggeration of, the macho ideological script, enabling men to view violence as manly and danger

> as exciting, [and] that it is through successfully navigating contexts of violence that men achieve the mettle of masculinity. (Gutierrez, 2019: 245)

While Gutierrez's study focuses on the university and fraternity initiations, the social dynamics that drive the actions of her study participants bear characteristics that we can recognise within the schoolboy setting as well. Gutierrez's study is worthy of consideration, mostly for the notable responses of her interviewees.

The concept of a rite of passage is prominent in Gutierrez's work, playing a significant role in the mentality of fraternity initiation. She explains, "Masculinised [institutions] such as military corps and academies are notorious for hazing by humiliating and gay-baiting neophytes to *toughen them up*" (2019: 245; Author's emphasis). The idea is that undergoing such experiences enables initiates to become "closer than brothers" (Gutierrez, 2019: 246). Furthermore, Gutierrez (2019: 253) found that what occurs during initiations is often downplayed and normalised under the requirement to prove oneself to the fraternity.

Another interesting aspect of masculinity that is highlighted by Gutierrez is the thin boundary between masculine performance and homosexual situationality. For, despite the fact that effeminacy is, as we have already seen, extremely taboo, some of the activities and behaviours in the fraternity setting actually carry elements of homoeroticism. Discussing initiation practices with her participants, Gutierrez observed that "psychoanalytic studies on initiations of all-male organisations [point] to how physical and psychological humiliations, often in stylised homoerotic violence, play a crucial role in affirming heterosexual identity and group bond" (Gutierrez, 2019: 245). Furthermore, "the elements of nudity, homoeroticism, and stylised sadomasochism in the paddling of young men in masculinity-oriented initiations have been unpacked by psychoanalytic studies [as] repression of the feminine aspects of the self that paves for a pledge to affirm his masculinity and heterosexuality and become bonded to a brotherhood of men" (Gutierrez, 2019: 255). For all the importance of rejecting effeminacy, homoeroticism often appears in such settings where masculinity is coveted as the most important social currency.

The interview responses offer compelling insight into how men have internalised hegemonic masculinity. For example, one participant said the following when discussing the concept of rite of passage: "In lieu of tribal ceremonies for rites of manhood... You get beaten up… You

have to have a really strong sense of identity; otherwise... if you have a weak inner self… As a young man, it's like I needed to prove to myself that I could handle something like this … It's meant to weed out… those who are weak of heart" (Gutierrez, 2019: 253). Another, reflecting on the physicality of the initiation, said that "it's like the Greek warriors, the Spartans. When you were young, you were taken away for training. They will make you go through all hardships. To mould—as they say—the character" (Gutierrez, 2019: 259).

Finally, Gutierrez notes the immense pride and happiness that come with passing initiation and becoming accepted into the fraternity. This is the ultimate goal in performing masculinity and subscribing to hegemonic ideals: being accepted as a man. "The denouement of the ordeal emerges a tough principled man from a soft timid boy embraced by the fellowship of brothers" (Gutierrez, 2019: 257).

Jane Kenway and Lindsay Fitzclarence focus on violence within the school, as opposed to the university. They consider the concept of tribalism, which has interesting connections to sport and competition, as well as the formation of boys' 'gangs,' where being part of the in-group grants social status. They explain, "Boy groups offer their members peer friendship, pleasure and pride, identity development, excitement and status resources and goals" (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997: 121). As such, performances of masculinity are "directed towards reputation, towards being seen as strong, cool and in control and towards saving face, avoiding humiliation" (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997: 122). Ultimately, one's masculine 'performance' is what dictates whether or not a boy is accepted into the group. Additionally, they explain that "studies of violent older boys in the school and in out-of-school gangs show that much time is spent seeking respect and striving for positional power which is recognised by the group" (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997: 122). This demonstrates that even once accepted into a group, one's position is not settled, and there is a constant negotiation of masculine presentation in order to stay accepted within the group.

Furthermore, they point out that schools "are [directly] implicated in the making of masculinities and that consequently they can be involved in the unmaking of the types of masculinity which are implicated in violence" (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997: 118). This is an important observation for my purposes, as it shows the promise of promoting different and better models of masculinity for boys.

> Adolescence is a time of striving for independence, searching for and experimenting with identity, challenging authority, and focusing away from the family to peer and sexual relationships. Exaggerated hegemonic values are likely both to appeal to adolescent boys and to spill over into violence for many possible reasons. These include the following. Firstly, as a function of their move from childhood to adulthood and their resultant push against authority and search for autonomy adolescent boys may be drawn to risk-taking. Secondly, the exercise of power is most likely to erupt into overt violence when status and identity are uncertain. (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 1997: 123)

Masculinity in the nineteenth century

Having explored the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and masculinity in schooling, I will now explore what the idealised version of masculinity looked like for the Victorian man. There are several key features to be considered, primarily that the nineteenth century saw the expansion of the Victorian middle class through industrialisation, which brought about a subsequent restructuring of social values to what we recognise today as the Victorian valorisation of work. In terms of the hegemonic masculinity of the period, Victorian society stressed the importance of politeness and refinement, and it was out of this that the gentleman as ideal emerged. Furthermore, the notion of anxiety surrounding masculine identity was another pressing socio-psychological phenomenon of the time. I shall explore each of these elements in detail.

John Tosh and Michèle Cohen are among some of the theorists whose ideas I will draw upon with this aim. Tosh recounts the nature of the developing and changing nineteenth-century society in which masculinity emerged. He explains the development of the middle class and the working man, and the historical accounts he provides will be used to develop a picture of nineteenth-century masculinity and how it came to play out in environments like Rugby. Tosh also draws out an interesting differentiation between manliness and masculinity in his work, explaining that, "[perhaps], manliness belongs to another era. 'Masculinities' fits with the post-modernist vision of the world, with its proliferation of identities and its contradictory discourses" (Tosh, 2016: 14). The comment is apt because although I am considering masculinity in a historical context, I am looking at it from the standpoint of our current, modern perspective of masculinity. Tosh's differentiation will be useful in working around the

prevalent modern conceptions in order to build an argument for the positive masculinity I will derive from the nineteenth-century context.

The Victorian period was marked by a strong public turn to moralism and virtue. "Victorian values" is a term arguably given significant 'modern' cultural weight by Margaret Thatcher during her 1983 election campaign, as she stated that she was "grateful to have been brought up by a Victorian grandmother who taught her those values: hard work, self-reliance, self-respect, cleanliness, neighbourliness, pride in country. "All of these things," she said, "are Victorian values" (Thatcher in Himmelfarb, 1995). It is important to understand that Victorian society stressed politeness, decency, decorum and respectability and that these expectations in turn impacted the socially approved way of 'being a man'.

As mentioned, Tosh claims that manliness was an integral measure of nineteenth-century masculinity:

> [Manliness] featured prominently in the earliest work on the nineteenth-century history of masculinities. Here was a clearly delineated discourse which set out what was expected of men, and which was particularly directed to young men and their instructors… It was most clearly articulated in church, chapel, and school, by middle-class exponents for middle-class consumption. Its impact was measured with reference to all-male institutions, such as sports and youth organisations. (2016: 14-15)

Importantly, Tosh recognises Connell's hegemonic masculinity in his theorising, explaining that "manliness was fundamentally a set of values by which men judged other men" (Tosh, 2016: 16). Furthermore, he states that "[assertiveness], courage, independence and straightforwardness were the common currency of manliness… Those qualities provided the basis of a pecking order among men… The prevalence of manly discourse is an effective reminder that masculinity is as much about homosociality as about patriarchy" (Tosh, 2016: 16).

Another important aspect of nineteenth-century masculinity was its connection to the 'imperial endeavour' of the British Empire. Tosh explains: "More than most areas of national life, empire was seen as a projection of masculinity" (2016, 193). Referring to Joanna de Groot, he also states that "manliness and empire confirmed one another, guaranteed one another, enhanced one another, whether in the practical disciplines of commerce and government or in the escape zones of writing, travel and art" (de Groot in Tosh, 2016: 193). Morrell also offers an important

point on this, explaining that "[the] notions of superiority and toughness taught in the [public] schools were reflected in the way in which colonial rule was established. A willingness to resort to force and a belief in the glory of combat were features of imperial masculinity and the colonial process" (Morrell, 1988: 15). Ultimately, the imperial endeavour formed a crucial part of how British men could identify themselves.

However, Cohen provides insight into the fact that an anxiety was also present in nineteenth-century masculinity, as men engaged with the nuanced social dynamics that informed what was deemed acceptable. She explains:

> A critical aspect of polite gentlemanliness was precisely that it was not homogeneous but, rather, rent with anxieties, in particular the anxiety about effeminacy, because tensions between masculinity and refinement made it difficult for a man to be at once polite and manly. (Cohen, 2005: 313)

The challenge was for men to walk the fine line between politeness and decorum, and not swaying so far as to land in a state of effeminacy. One had to be polite, but not too polite. Such demands would make society a challenge for the respectable middle-class man to navigate. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, masculinity in the eighteenth century was not measured by such refined criteria as it was in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Cohen explains that the "early nineteenth century saw a change in the definition of the gentleman and… this change had consequences for the definition of masculinity" (Cohen, 2005: 312). Whereas, as quoted earlier, in the eighteenth century, masculinity was measured partly through "hunting, riding, drinking and 'wenching'" (Cohen, 2005: 312), the nineteenth-century measure of a man was found in his capacity for gentlemanliness.

For my purposes, this poses an interesting question when examining boyhood development in Rugby during Tom Brown's schooling. As young boys, they are faced with the challenge of adopting behaviours and values that are expressed by the nineteenth century's ideal man. This meant growing out of certain behaviours. Intense physicality in the form of fist fighting (as opposed to boxing) to settle disputes, once seen as an act of defending honour, now became something brutish and wrong. Raising young boys to balance the boisterous, physical natures we are accustomed to seeing with the ideals of a nineteenth-century man can indeed be understood as challenging, provoking great anxiety over how to behave. Furthermore, Cohen

explains that in shifting towards the ideal of refinement and politeness, there was a constant worry over becoming too effeminate. In suppressing the elements of masculinity viewed positively in the eighteenth century in order to "[fashion] themselves as polite, men became softer and more refined, but not necessarily more manly" (Cohen, 2005: 313).

As mentioned, the nineteenth century was also a period of major industrial expansion in Victorian England. This was a critical aspect of the changing nature of masculinity during this time. The development of the Victorian middle class and the role of the breadwinner saw changes in work ethic, and family roles, and the subsequent separation of the domestic and public sphere emerged. Tosh explains that "during the period 1800-1914, Britain was first and foremost an industrialising society; [and] it was a society characterised by increasingly sharp category distinctions of gender and sexuality" (Tosh, 2005: 330). Essentially, the changing nature of society led to a restructuring of masculine attributes. The new Victorian values placed importance on the virtues of hard work and duty, and Tosh explains that "the nineteenth century was clearly pivotal in entrenching an entrepreneurial, individualistic masculinity, organised around a punishing work ethic, a compensating validation of the home, and a restraint on physical aggression" (Tosh, 2005: 331).

This shift into the realm of Victorian industrialism was underpinned by "the grand theme [of] transition from a genteel masculinity grounded in land ownership to a bourgeois masculinity attuned to the market. The new commercial society was made possible by, and in turn reinforced, a new manhood. The man of substance and repute came to be someone who had a steady occupation in business or the professions" (Tosh, 2016: 89). From this emerged a twofold identity of middle-class masculinity rooted in work and the home. Tosh explains, "[The] elevation of work as a 'calling,' and the moralising of home as the focus of men's non-working lives. These were the constituents of an integrated gender code: domestic steadiness was conducive to success in business, while the rigours of bread-winning were rewarded by the comforts of home" (Tosh, 2016: 90).

The persona of the gentleman was arguably the hegemonic masculinity of the Victorian period. This 'brand' of male identity is, according to Cohen, something that, in fact, emerged out of the eighteenth century in a complex engagement with another identity, the one of the aforementioned hunting, sporting, wenching man. As mentioned, the hunting man was certainly not the only form of masculinity available to men during the eighteenth century, but

I highlight it due to its stark contrast with the polite gentleman that became the prominent mode of acceptable being for men in the Victorian period.

Cohen argues this point, stating that in the middle class of the nineteenth century, "it was the polite and refined gentleman that represented hegemonic masculinity" (2005: 312). A vital element of this hegemonic masculinity and what it meant for men in the nineteenth century is it made it a requirement that men fit a certain mould of refinement that was actually at slight odds with various elements of 'manlike' behaviour. Refinement actually required various behaviours to be avoided, and decorum dictated things in such a way that not only was nineteenth-century masculinity polite and refined, but, as already discussed, it was also anxious. Indeed, during this time, conduct manuals, popular essays, and various cultural resources abounded, with the aim of explaining how both men and women of Victorian society should conduct themselves. In order to be socially acceptable, Victorian men had to find the balance between maintaining something of their manliness while not becoming brutish, but also, as mentioned above, tempering their refinement to avoid being labelled as effeminate. Effeminacy was a true cultural taboo, given the Victorian sentiments and laws around homosexuality. Indeed, as Joseph Bristow explains in *Effeminate England* (1995), homosexuality and effeminacy became closely associated, in large part due to the writer and art critic Oscar Wilde, whose flamboyant persona created much controversy, and, of course, his unfortunate imprisonment. According to Alan Sinfield, "much of the unease with Wilde's appearance and behaviour [centred] upon 'effeminacy'" (Sinfield, 1994: 25). Indeed, Bristow explains: "In many ways, Wilde served as a convenient focus for a series of anxious displacements and projections about masculinity that were beginning to escalate as sexuality itself became a discrete area of psychological and medical inquiry" (Bristow, 1995: 19).

Culturally, men had to negotiate their gentlemanliness in light of the disdain around 'effeminate' characters such as Wilde. The delicate balance meant that men would likely have been constantly aware of the risk of emasculating themselves by being too polite, while also being polite enough not to be deemed unsociable and therefore, potentially, ineligible. Cohen explains:

> Politeness [required] self-control and discipline of both body and tongue. The 'ease' of politeness was not relaxing, but the effect of artful mastery over one's manners and conduct, in line with the classical legacy of moderation and stoicism on which notions of politeness were ultimately founded. But [men] also had to be

> polished 'out of those manners most natural to them.' If 'natural' manliness was, as variously noted throughout the century, rough, brutal, ungracious, or rude, in fashioning themselves as polite, men became softer and more refined, but not necessarily more manly. (2005: 313)

Arguably, it would appear that a crisis of masculinity was taking place even during this period where the industrialisation of Victorian England gave men a new role to assume in the form of the breadwinner. The ways in which one could acceptably conduct oneself were complex, as we have seen. This observation interests me in that today, when we refer to a crisis of masculinity, it bears the connotations of a loss of purpose and direction, as modern commentary has referred to our current period as signalling the 'end of men.' Ultimately, it would appear that in some form or another, the long history of Western masculine practice and discourse as it was and is known is an unsettled social constellation.

To further illustrate the shifting sands upon which the concept rested, Cohen explains that while politeness ultimately led the way out of the eighteenth century, by the nineteenth century, this way of being in the social sphere had evolved into an understanding and embodiment of *etiquette*:

> [In] the nineteenth century, etiquette replaced politeness. But politeness and etiquette are not synonymous. A key difference is that whereas nineteenth-century etiquette concentrated mainly on 'precise rules of interpersonal behaviour,' politeness, though concerned with social performance, was also an attribute of identity and a social virtue. [In] the early and mid-Victorian period, manliness replaced politeness as a marker of social and political virtue. Politeness [became] increasingly redundant and irrelevant as the 'core values' of manliness increasingly addressed middle-class experience. Politeness did not disappear altogether but continued to be associated with gentlemanliness. (Cohen, 2005: 314)

As we can see, gentlemanliness was actually not a settled hegemonic form of masculinity. Cohen directly links this observation back to Tosh, who, as we have seen, places an emphasis on *manliness* as the cultural currency for men during the nineteenth century. This can be understood as a move away from the anxiety-causing risks of effeminacy that gentlemanly attributes posed. However, one could argue that this further evolution simply caused further anxiety for Victorian men trying to occupy the space of hegemonic masculinity. For now, not

only were politeness and gentlemanliness potentially fraught, but one had to understand and practise etiquette and the distinction of manliness instead. Cohen explains:

> [Politeness] began to be questioned [because] of its incompatibility with a masculine national character. [The period] marked a shift in attitude to chivalry. These tensions contributed to the end of politeness as an ideal for the fashioning of gentlemanliness. At the same time, [politeness] became "feminised" and "domesticated…" (Cohen, 2005: 314)

Tosh also accounts for the potentially jarring fact that gentlemanliness did, in fact, have a foothold in the eighteenth century, explaining that "[t]hese features were not, of course, entirely new. Much of the picture [of] the eighteenth-century middling sort is recognisable to the historian of Victorian bourgeois masculinity… But the social base of this masculinity was much broader in the nineteenth century" (Tosh, 2005: 331). However, as the nineteenth-century industrial complex grew, gentlemanliness, with its association not only with effeminacy but also the idleness of the dandy, became less attractive when set against the hardworking breadwinner, the embodiment of the Victorian valorisation of work. In *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity* (2015), Phillip Mallett provides further explanation:

> Older versions of manhood and manliness, bound up with aristocratic notions of rank and honour, began to lose their hold… central to this new [masculine] subjectivity [was] the emphasis on self-discipline, and in particular the learned ability to control potentially disruptive male energies. Victorian representations of manliness abound in metaphors of iron restraint, patience and reserve, opposed to images of volcanic chaos or excess… Indeed, the struggle for self-mastery could itself be construed as a sign of masculinity, since women, with their supposedly gentler natures, were thought to be exempt from such trials. On this account, Victorian manhood was, by definition, a state of permanent crisis, a site of anxiety and contradiction as much as a source of power. (Mallet, 2015: vii)

As mentioned earlier, another key element of Victorian middle-class society was the separation of the private and public spheres. This divide between home and the rest of the world developed out of the industrial expansion that saw men leaving the home for work while women stayed there to maintain it. Tosh (2005: 332) explains:

> In the middle class, [masculinity] was more firmly locked than ever into a notion of paid, productive work, as wives were excluded from contributing to the business… This was also the period when a 'family wage' for the 'breadwinner,' and a wife dedicated to domestic duties, became the goal of the better-paid worker. This exclusive male responsibility for the family income led to the characteristically Victorian valorisation of work as both moral duty and personal fulfilment. Disciplined attention to business had long been the mark of the self-made man, but nineteenth-century attitudes to work went beyond crude economic rationality… [Work] ceased to be drudgery and became the path to self-making, a creative act conferring meaning on the work and identity of the worker.

To return to Cohen's statement about "national character" (2005: 314), we see that this is an important consideration in the overall evolution of masculinity in the Victorian era. Closely connected to the notion of etiquette, this national character was the next iteration of that learned set of principles one had to abide by in order to be socially accepted. Interestingly, Mallett notes that the public school was an important site for the distillation of character, a crucial link for the purposes of this dissertation. He explains that "training in self-discipline began in the nursery, [but] was, for the boys of the middle class, generally completed in an all-male world (public school) remote from feminine influence" (Mallet, 2015: vii). Mallett further states that character was, in fact, the "keyword in the public school vocabulary, used in its evaluative sense to denote self-restraint, industry and perseverance in the face of difficulty, and when so used a virtual synonym for manliness" (Mallet, 2015: vii). Furthermore, "the notion of character depended on a prior notion of duty," which, as we have seen, was an essential component of Victorian masculinity. As such, the exploration of character and character development as a key pedagogical tool will be a critical part of examining the learning of masculinity in the all-boys setting of the public school. In the second chapter, I will turn my focus to this issue.

In Chapter 2, I will conduct an analysis of *Tom Brown's School Days* while exploring the literature on the history of the English public school to locate this analysis within its proper historical framework. As mentioned at the outset, my study of Thomas Hughes's novel will be conducted in tandem with historical literature of the public school in order to corroborate the authenticity of the incidents and dynamics recorded in the novel. In doing so, I will explore the

positive and negative aspects of how the boys interacted, and how the guidance of Dr Arnold can be viewed as a blueprint for boys learning a positive form of masculinity.

Chapter 2

My exploration of the current literature about masculinity and schools in the preceding chapter has provided a theoretical framework for understanding boyhood masculinity and the influence of the school environment. In this chapter, I will turn my focus to the analysis of the novel, supported by an investigation of the historical context of the nineteenth century, looking at masculinity and schooling within that period in the site of the Victorian public school. With the novel, I aim to focus on two areas. Firstly, I will explore Tom's story and character development as he negotiates his experience at Rugby, as well as the dynamics between him and his peers and teachers. Secondly, I will investigate the fictional and historical representations of Dr Thomas Arnold. His influence contributes significantly to the case for positive masculinity in the novel, and so, in an analysis of the novel, direct attention must be given to the impact he makes. In this, I will aim to demonstrate how elements of Arnold's approach may be seen as positive in the development of the boys under his headmastership.

Analysis of *Tom Brown's School Days*

By conducting a close reading analysis of Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days*, I aim to discern if this novel demonstrates examples of positive masculinity. To do this, I will analyse the text while incorporating historical accounts of nineteenth-century public school life and of Dr Arnold. This will help to discern how much of this historical information is reflected in the novel. In doing so, I aim to seek out moments of positive masculinity, using examples from the novel to support my argument. I will do so by exploring Arnold's influence on the boys of Hughes's fictional Rugby, the interactions and friendships between the boys, and the role of bullying and fagging.

In considering what aspects of the text may make the case for positive masculinity, I suggest that Arnold's influence could be one of the most important. The difference between pre-Arnoldian public school life and the impact made by his reforms cannot be overlooked. Although the impact of his reforms is contested by scholars, as we shall see, boys who were closely connected with him appeared to come away the better for it. As I have shown in Chapter 1, a prominent paternal figure is undeniably a positive force for a boy. Historical accounts correlate with Hughes's descriptions of the headmaster, portraying him as a powerful,

positive influence on public school life. I will explore how this dynamic personality influenced students, both in the novel and in the historical records.

As stated at the outset, I wish to explore what elements of masculinity can be positive for boys. While Arnold's success in reforming the public school is a matter of debate amongst scholars, what he did impart may be viewed as positive. Therefore, his influence will form a key part of my considerations. Arnold's 'strategy' in tasking Tom with the mentorship of George Arthur is another important consideration in my analysis. Not only is this about Arnold's methods or pedagogy, but about the influence of George Arthur himself and the fact that he helps to put Tom on a more responsible, mature path. As I will demonstrate, Arthur, as a sensitive character/personality, is crucial to the exploration of positive masculinity because, in his sensitivity, he represents a 'threat' or 'disruption' yet appears as a positive force that helps create a better character out of Tom. I will explore various examples in the novel to demonstrate this. These aspects will also be considered in contrast to the negative realities of the public school. History reflects that bullying was a serious issue within the schools, which is also reflected in the novel in several scenes, primarily at the hands of Flashman, the main antagonist in the novel. I will also explore various examples of this.

Reviewing again the theory of hegemonic masculinity, we recall that the dominant form of masculinity does not mean the elimination of other forms but the subordination thereof. As Connell explains, it "does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives" (Connell, 1987: 184). Indeed, the school setting offers a multitude of masculinities, and this is also reflected in the novel. When we examine Tom's embodiment of masculinity in contrast to George Arthur, and in contrast to their headmaster, we see that different ways of being emerge. That multiple masculinities appear to coexist is useful in arguing that a positive model of masculinity can be identified despite the negative forms represented by the bullying.

Before exploring the novel, the question must be considered: what would positive masculinity look like? What are positive traits for a boy to learn and adopt? I posit the following: abstinence from physical violence as a mode of conflict resolution or as a show of strength in order to gain approval or be accepted, and not being afraid of or demonising sensitivity. In addition, I would argue that being unafraid to stand against negative practices that others follow out of a need to align with the hegemonic culture would also be relevant. If one argues that the two biggest problems are violence and a rejection of sensitivity, then a boy or man who challenges these

could be deemed to be a positive influence in shaping a healthy masculine identity that is not defined by violent behaviour and is not worried about being connected to emotion. With this in mind, I turn to the novel.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, *Tom Brown's School Days* begins with Tom's early days in his local town. In studying the novel to explore how it deals with masculinity, it is worth mentioning various elements of this early village life. At a local fair (Hughes, 1857: 30-33), accounts of two country games are given, jingling matches and backswording. Both games were played historically in England (Sword and Staff, n.d.; Merriam Webster, n.d.), and I highlight both for how they can be connected to the performance of masculinity. With a jingling match, players are put together in a ring, and all but one are blindfolded. The one who is not has a bell placed around his neck, and the objective of the game is for the blindfolded players to catch the player wearing the bell. As Hughes explains, "...half of them always rush into the arms of the other half or drive their heads together, or tumble over…" (1857: 30).

The jingling match is a setting in which men are willing to come into physical contact with one another, similar to wrestling. I find this interesting, because it highlights a peculiarity within masculine 'codes': Depending on the setting, it is at times considered a sign of effeminacy for men to touch each other, and at others, it is socially acceptable. This highlights the complexity of embodying masculinity and the need for men to understand when it is and is not acceptable to have physical contact.

Backswording offers a different element of masculine performance: organised, sanctioned violence. A form of fencing with wooden 'swords,' the objective of backsword is to draw the blood of your opponent; "[Their] object is simply to break one another's heads…" (Hughes, 1857: 32). As we have seen, sporting prowess is a route via which to prove oneself, and sword sports, with close associations to warfare and warriors in combat, are particularly glorified. As we shall see, there are many moments where Hughes makes reference to warlike imagery, certainly glorifying physical capability and combat. With backsword, playing the game and winning earns one the praise of the spectators, and it is also a chance to show off one's prowess with a sword.

There are a handful of other boys in Tom's village, and in this early part of the novel, there is a telling paragraph from Hughes (1857: 48) describing one boy who is admired and well-liked. His characteristics are important to note:

> But above all, there was Harry Winburn, the quickest and best boy in the parish… He could wrestle and climb and run better than all the rest and learned all that the schoolmaster could teach him... He was a boy to be proud of, with his curly brown hair, keen grey eye, straight, active figure, and little ears and hands and feet [as fine as a lord's].

From this paragraph, readers gain insight into what is considered ideal for a boy to be: physically active and intellectually capable, an all-rounder. It is implied that being athletic, and being an "active figure" are important attributes for being an admirable boy. However, Hughes also indicates that intellectual capability is a positive trait. The "best boy in the parish" is equipped with both skills, being able to learn "all that the schoolmaster could teach him" (Hughes, 1857: 48). As has been discussed, part of Hughes's narration style is to insert direct commentary into the novel, as opposed to conventional third-person omniscient narration. In these moments, the authorial voice offers us his opinions on certain events in the novel and general commentary on the issue at hand. This is useful in understanding the author's stance on matters of boyhood and the public school and helps us to locate the novel within its historical context.

Tom's father, Squire Brown, is not a major figure in the novel, featuring predominantly at the beginning of the story before Tom goes to Rugby. However, the passages in the text that describe him offer some important insights into boyhood while indicating his views and concerns about his son's future:

> [He] believed honestly [that] loyalty and steadfast obedience were men's first duties… [That] a man is to be valued wholly and solely for that which he is in himself, apart from clothes, rank, fortune, and all externals whatsoever… Squire Brown held further that it didn't matter a straw whether his son associated with lords' sons or ploughmen's sons, provided they were brave and honest. He himself has played football and gone birds nesting with the farmers [and labourers]... So he

> encouraged Tom in his intimacy with the boys of the village… and provided bats and balls and a football for their sports. (Hughes, 1857: 48-49)

In this passage, Hughes, through the Squire, offers further insights into what is deemed 'good' for a man to be, or what traits one should possess: "loyalty and steadfast obedience," as well as a strong character, as is indicated by being valued or 'measured' for "that which he is in himself" (Hughes, 1857: 48-49). Tom's father believes that one's personal qualities matter more than one's social status and that in order to be a good man, one should possess a good character. Hence, the Squire models elements of positive masculinity because of what he believes in and, as Tom's father, what he subsequently imparts to his son. This is further supported by the noteworthy contrast between the importance of class status in the public school, and the Squire's disregard for rank, caring not "whether his son associated with lords' sons or ploughmen's sons, provided they were brave and honest" (Hughes, 1857: 49). In the public schools, social standing did play a significant role. This elitism in the school made itself known in the treatment of boys of lower social standing: "Many boys lower down the social scale were singled out for ill-treatment. The historian and churchman Charles Merivale (1808–93) was, as the son of a barrister, not from a poor family – but he was not from the upper classes either. He felt scarred for life by 'the sense of social inferiority which was impressed upon [him] at Harrow'" (Mack in Turner, 2015: 60). Hence, raising one's son with such principles as the Squire's can be deemed an attribute of positive masculinity, seeing as these principles would ensure that Tom did not scorn other boys purely because of their class status.

Also evident in Tom's village life is that playing physical games with the other boys is an important part of his daily activities: "Prisoner's base, rounders, high-cock-a-lorum, cricket, football, he was [initiated] into the delights of them all, and though most of the boys were older than himself, he managed to hold his own very well. He was naturally active and strong, and quick of eye and hand… in a short time, he could run and jump and climb with any one of them" (Hughes, 1857: 52). We must note again the prevalence of descriptors of athleticism, and how this was the yardstick by which Tom could measure up and gain social acceptance with the 'in-group' of the village. Furthermore, wrestling is also one of the pastimes the village boys enjoy, and Tom learns this skill as well: "[He] at first only looked on, [but] it had peculiar attractions for him, and he could not long keep out of it" (Hughes, 1857: 52). Here, we see again the paradoxical nature of physical combat among men. As mentioned with the jingling match, there are certain moments where physical contact between men is not taboo. Wrestling

is one such activity. Indeed, far from being effeminate, "[it was] the way to fame for the youth of the [village]" (Hughes, 1857: 52). That it had "peculiar attractions" (Hughes, 1857: 52) for Tom is also interesting. Hughes suggests that getting into a setting where one could test one's strength is appealing to a young boy, even if it means physical contact with another male.

As mentioned earlier, Tom spends a year at a private school before going to Rugby, a public school (Hughes, 1857: 57-58). At this point in the novel, we are given one of Hughes's first passages of 'direct' commentary, providing insight into the author's views on schooling:

> The theory of private schools is (or was) constant supervision out of school - therein differing fundamentally from that of public schools… It may be right or wrong, but if right, this supervision surely ought to be the especial work of the head-master, the responsible person. The object of all schools is not to ram Latin and Greek into boys but to make them good English boys, good future citizens, and by far the most important part of that work must be done, or not done, out of school hours. (Hughes, 1857: 57)

Hughes's opinion on the purpose of the school is noteworthy, especially because it is aligned with the approach of the Rugby headmaster, Thomas Arnold, who aimed to develop the boys' characters rather than just focusing on their intellectual advancement. Arnold's methods will be discussed in greater detail, but at this juncture, it is important to note that he fostered relationships with his students, even inviting prefects to dine with him and his family each week (Turner, 2015: 95). As Hughes says, the "important part of that work" in shaping his students was done outside of the classroom. Indeed, Hughes's commentary here speaks to the importance of sports and other non-academic activities, as well as the relationships between boys and their masters, when it comes to developing the young boys of the school.

Tom's private school year also provides some events worth considering, one being the first physical altercation the protagonist is involved in. Tom punches a boy after being teased for being homesick and writing a long letter to his mother (Hughes, 1857: 57-58). The dynamics of this event align with what we have seen in the literature on boyhood and schooling. Showing 'weakness' results in mockery, as Tom is called "young mammy-sick" (Hughes, 1857: 58). Already emotional after discovering his letter has been delayed and thinking his mother will believe he has forgotten her, Tom lashes out:

> The idea of his mother waiting day after day for the letter he had promised her at once, and perhaps thinking him forgetful of her, when he had done all in his power to make good his promise, was as bitter a grief as any which he had to undergo for many a long year. His wrath, then, was proportionately violent when he was aware of two boys, who stopped close by him, and one [pointed] at him and called him 'Young mammy-sick!' Whereupon Tom arose, and, giving vent thus to his grief and shame and rage, smote his derider on the nose. (Hughes, 1857: 58)

Here, we see an interaction that has been poorly handled and caused by the more negative 'side' of masculine conduct. Tom was teased for being sensitive, and he was made to feel "grief and shame and rage" (Hughes, 1857: 58), and that teasing was met with physical violence - a poor performance on the part of both boys involved.

This part of the text also provides an example of the warlike imagery incorporated into Hughes's description of the boys' games, as mentioned earlier. Hughes describes the scenes in a way that suggests going to war and a glorification of battle:

> Various were the amusements to which the boys then betook themselves. At the entrance of the down, there was a steep hillock. [This] mound was the weekly scene of terrific combats at a game called by the queer name of 'mud-patties.' The boys who played divided into sides under different leaders, and one side occupied the mound. Then, all parties having provided themselves with many sods of turf, cut with their bread-and-cheese knives, the side which remained at the bottom proceeded to assault the mound, advancing up on all sides under cover of a heavy fire of turfs and then struggling for victory with the occupants, which was theirs as soon as they could, even for a moment, clear the summit, when they, in turn, became the besieged. It was a good, rough, dirty game… (Hughes, 1857: 60).

Phrases such as "assault the mound," "advancing up," and "heavy fire" (Hughes, 1857: 60) all invoke warlike imagery. Hughes's description of the game as a "good, rough, dirty game" is also noteworthy. Rough and muddy play is looked upon favourably as a good pastime for the boys to engage in. Once again, the importance of physical activity as a part of ideal boyhood

is apparent. Especially in 'combat' games such as mud-patties, sporting activities are a way for boys to engage in controlled physical aggression.

Sports also offer an interesting contradiction to consider because even though they are a 'healthy' outlet for aggression, they are still a means for demeaning and bullying boys who choose not to engage in such activities. Given the importance of sport in proving one's masculinity, boys who do not engage are categorised as weak or effeminate. In the novel, George Arthur, who is a sensitive and delicate boy, is described even by Arnold as not looking "as we should like to see him. He wants some Rugby air and cricket. And you must take him on some good long walks" (Hughes, 1857: 201). This suggests that it is considered problematic for a boy not to be interested in playing sports or physical activity. The importance of physical activity for one's health is undoubted, but there is also a cultural attachment to it, particularly for boys, who may be harshly judged if they do not wish to engage in aggressive sports.

As mentioned earlier, Tom's time at the private school is short, and after a year, he is sent to Rugby. Tom and Squire Brown travel together to the inn, where a coach will take Tom to his new school, and here, more important insights are offered in relation to Tom's father. Firstly, Hughes details Squire Brown's meditations on what sort of advice he should give to Tom in sending him on his way to the school:

> I won't tell him to read the Bible and love and serve God, if he don't do that for his mother's sake and teaching, he won't for mine. Shall I go into the sort of temptations he'll meet with? No, I can't do that. Never do for an old fellow to go into such things with a boy. He won't understand me. Do him more harm than good, ten to one. Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn't sent to school for that – at any rate, not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles or the digamma: no more does his mother. What is he sent to school for? Well, partly because he wanted so to go. If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman and a Christian, that's all I want. (Hughes, 1857: 68-69)

The Squire's sentiments about the purpose of school appear to align with historical observations as provided by Turner (2015). Parents sent their sons to the public schools in order to develop their character, not because there was an excellent education on offer there. Indeed,

the public schools of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were very turbulent places. Intense bullying, rebellion against the masters, vandalism and destruction were just some of the commonplace occurrences that featured in public school life throughout the period. As mentioned, Rugby school in *Tom Brown's School Days* is based on the real-life school of the same name. Rugby, Eton, Harrow, and Marlborough were some of the big schools of the day, and all saw periods of total chaos.

Historical accounts such as Turner's indicate that masters had little control over boys and relied heavily on corporal punishment, often to no avail in terms of correcting boys' behaviour. There was little concerted emphasis on actual education, in part due to understaffing and too many boys per master, and bullying and fagging ran rife and unchecked. Indeed, boys who went to the public schools did not go there to receive an education. They went there because their parents believed it was a good testing ground for character development and a place to meet important connections and establish oneself.

Returning to the passage, we see that Squire Brown also offers insight into what is considered truly important: developing into a "brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman and a Christian" (Hughes, 1857: 68-69). It is the Squire's hope that in enduring the public school, Tom will develop a strong and true character. He provides the following advice to his son, and it also provides some insight into the state of the public schools:

> And now, Tom, my boy, remember you are going [to] be chucked into this great school, like a young bear, with all your troubles before you – earlier than we should have sent you, perhaps. If schools are what they were in my time, you'll see a great many cruel blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk. But never fear. You tell the truth, keep a brave and kind heart, and never listen to or say anything you wouldn't have your mother or sister hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home, or we to see you. (Hughes, 1857: 66)

As seen from the historical accounts, Squire Brown's warnings about what lies ahead are apt. Indeed, many "cruel blackguard things" are done in the novel as well. Turner provides insight into the schools as they were historically, reflecting on the 'roasting' that took place, something that happens to Tom in the novel as well:

> This scene [in *Tom Brown's School Days*] is not exaggerated: Junior boys were dangled over the fire at Rugby and other schools. [Roasting] was far from the worst thing that happened at the public schools of the period. In 1885, a boy was killed by bullies at King's College School. As late as 1930, a boy committed suicide because he could no longer face the treatment meted out to 'fags', the younger boys who did duties for the older ones, and were often treated by them with appalling callousness or downright sadism. *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) does not, moreover, look at the most troubling phenomenon of all that was prevalent at the time when it is set: the inclination for senior boys to usurp the authority of the masters themselves through open, organised rebellion. (Turner, 2015: xi)

In the novel, the fictional Arnold has only recently arrived at Rugby himself and begun to make his reforms (Hughes, 1857: 115-116). As such, in the world of the novel, his approach has not yet necessarily made a major impact, and the reputation of the public system environment may still mostly carry negative connotations. This will be demonstrated in later examples from the novel.

Tom sets off to Rugby on a coach the following morning. He shakes hands with his father, "having stipulated [that] kissing should now cease between them… [He] would have liked to have hugged his father well, if it hadn't been for the recent stipulation" (Hughes, 1857: 66). This is revealing, as it serves to impress on the reader that physical affection between father and son, especially in moments of vulnerability, it not appropriate or 'done'. That Tom has internalised this on his own, without the apparent instruction of the Squire, is a potentially telling insight into the nature of hegemonic masculine practice in their cultural moment.

During the coach ride, Hughes makes another direct comment. As a Rugby old boy himself (Britannica, 2023a), Hughes reflects on his own annual journeys to the school by coach and provides the reader with insight into his own opinion. Speaking of the cold, pre-dawn coach ride, he says, "I sometimes think that you boys of this generation are a deal tenderer fellows than we used to be" (Hughes, 1857: 70). This is interesting to consider because it is a reflection on Hughes's own experiences when he was a boy at the school, likely referring to the brutal nature of the environment which, with reforms such as Arnold's, improved by comparison. The implication is that the boys of the newer generations were less tough. They did not go through the same experiences:

> At any rate, you're much more comfortable travellers, for I see every one of you with his rug or plaid and other dodges for preserving the caloric, and most of you going in those fuzzy, dusty, padded first-class carriages. It was another affair altogether, a dark ride on the top of the Tally-ho, I can tell you, in a tight Petersham coat and your feet dangling six inches from the floor. Then you knew what cold was and what it was to be without legs, for not a bit of feeling had you in them after the first half-hour. (Hughes, 1857: 70)

Such assertions seem to indicate that boys in the pre-Arnoldian system were 'tougher.' Again, there is an element of scorn of 'weakness', comparatively glorifying his own rough days at the school. There is an air of judgment in Hughes's commentary, "for I see every one of you" (Hughes, 1857: 70), as if they should be ashamed of themselves as younger generations who have not experienced the same 'trials' and are less manly because of it. It is worth mentioning here that while the novel may be analysed for moments of positive masculine practice, the authorial voice, offering direct commentary that shows his opinion, may not necessarily be an exemplar of positive masculinity itself, offering views which may seem inconsistent or contradictory and in themselves show what a complex and contentious issue masculinity actually is.

Another recurring aspect of Hughes's commentary is talk of things he appears to think of as fondly typical of an Englishman. The coach ride is an example of this: "But it had its pleasures, the old dark ride. First, there was the consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman—of standing out against something, and not giving in" (Hughes, 1857: 70). These comments align with the findings of Chapter 1, that a recognised trait of masculinity is stoicism - endurance without complaint in the face of difficulty. Here, Hughes almost romanticises this, framing it as a cherished part of being a man, an Englishman in particular. It is important to consider this in light of the fact that Hughes has addressed his book partially to the young boy reader. Such an audience would read something like this and potentially internalise what Hughes is saying as part of what manliness entails. This also affects the overall conclusion as to whether the novel can be deemed a text that promotes a positive masculine model.

The narrator also makes another comment in a similar vein a few pages later, remarking how Englishmen have a love of danger: "It's very odd how almost all English boys love danger;

you can get ten to join a game, or climb a tree, or swim a stream when there's a chance of breaking their limbs or getting drowned" (Hughes, 1857: 78). Of course, this is a generalised comment, and one that Hughes himself proves is not universally true in the character of Arthur, who is timid and certainly not adventurous enough to take such risks. However, this comment by Hughes serves as further insight into the author's own views on boyhood, which is helpful in analysing his aims with the novel.

Finally arriving at Rugby, Tom meets the boy who will become one of his closest friends, Harry East. East is an important and fortunate friend for Tom to have made because he is one of the younger boys who has good standing in the school and is not severely bullied. Tom's initial encounter with East is also significant because he also helps Tom ensure he makes a good impression by not wearing the wrong hat, thus saving him from potentially being mocked (Hughes, 1857: 83). East also offers some insight into how new boys are treated, stating, "You see… a great deal depends on how a fellow cuts up at first. If he's got nothing odd about him, and answers straightforward, and holds his head up, he gets on" (Hughes, 1857: 84). Again, we see a similar pattern emerge: if a boy is closely aligned with the hegemonic masculinity present within the school and has "nothing odd about him," (Hughes, 1857: 84) then his assimilation into the Rugby environment will be relatively painless.

The School-house match that takes place on the day of Tom's arrival is another important event and one that helps Tom establish his own good standing. Tom and East's discussion about the match also indicates the importance sport holds within the fictional Rugby world of the novel. Explaining the process of the prefects (known as praepostors) taking register, East tells Tom that on the day of the match, they do not worry about anyone bunking: "Today, [being] the School-house match, none of the School-house praepostors stay by the door to watch for truants of their side; there is carte blanche to the School-house fags to go where they like. They trust to our honour… They know very well that no School-house boy would cut the match. If he did, we'd very soon cut him, I can tell you" (Hughes, 1857: 96). It is apparent that, at Rugby, pupils, sporting and not, understand the importance of attending the match. In another reflection of the 'prestige' that sport and physical ability provide for boys, East himself is on the team (Hughes, 1857: 93), despite being a younger pupil. Arguably, his talent as a player is what has gained him the approval of the older boys in the school.

The match ends with Tom impulsively throwing himself into play to prevent the opposition from scoring (Hughes, 1857: 106). This has the effect of getting him noticed by one of the most popular senior boys in the school, whom the others call old Brooke, "[the] cock of the school, and head of the School-house side, and the best kick and charger in Rugby" (Hughes, 1857: 93). As mentioned in Chapter 1, he calls Tom a "plucky youngster" who will "make a player" (Hughes, 1857: 106).

Hughes's comments on the match offer further insight: "Meet them like Englishmen, you Schoolhouse boys, and charge them home. Now is the time to show what mettle is in you, and there shall be a warm seat by the hall fire, and honour, and lots of bottled beer tonight for him who does his duty in the next half-hour" (1857: 104). This impassioned declaration highlights the importance of the match and once again hints at battle. The latter is found in phrases such as the "heavy and light brigades" (Hughes, 1857: 98) as the boys take their positions on the field before the match begins, and charging "like the column of the Old Guard up the slope at Waterloo" (Hughes, 1857: 105). The use of such military language to describe a sports match can be interpreted as a way to highlight the aggression with which the game is played, and the 'reward' of a seat by the fire and beer makes such activity appealing. Rather than suggesting that engaging in violent contact is made to sound unpleasant, Hughes declares that to throw oneself headlong into the game is what an Englishman ought to do in order to prove his worth. This is important to note, given the significance of the imperial endeavour and how this was closely interlinked with English masculine identity, as mentioned by Tosh (2016) and Morrell (1988).

That evening, the School-house is assembled together to sing, and Hughes's description of the scenes again confirms the historical accounts of chaos and turbulence as commonplace. Instead of a school, it seems more like a tavern, with the boys banging on the tables, cheering loudly, and drinking beer. A table is even broken, but this is not paid much attention by Hughes, arguably indicating that such happenings were normal: "And away goes the pounding and cheering again, becoming deafening when old Brooke gets on his legs: till, a table having broken down, and a gallon or so of beer been upset, and all throats getting dry, silence ensues" (1857: 114).

Brooke is an important character to consider in terms of a positive role model within the school. As head of the house, he is widely respected and does not bully the younger boys. However,

he is due to leave the school at the end of the semester, hence his getting up to give a speech to the school (Hughes, 1857: 114). The younger boys' idolisation of pupils like Brooke is also important, as it demonstrates the potential effect that a positive masculine model led by responsible mentoring could have. Tom and East's reaction to their conversation with Brooke after the match indicates the impact that the approval and attention of an older boy has:

> Old Brooke caught sight of East and stopped, put his hand kindly on his shoulder, and said, 'Bravo, youngster; you played famously… Mind and get all right for next Saturday.' And the leader passed on, leaving East better for those few words than all the opodeldoc in England would have made him, and Tom ready to give one of his ears for as much notice. Ah! Light words of those whom we love and honour, what a power ye are… (Hughes, 1857: 107)

The importance of Brooke's brief attention is reflected in the fact that Hughes's quips that it has the power to make East, who has been injured, feel better, exaggerated by his remark about "all the opodeldoc in England" and also reiterated by the fact that Tom would have given "one of his ears for as much notice" (Hughes, 1857: 107). Both comments stress the significance of being spoken to and praised by one of the older boys. Indeed, William N. Weaver offers a compelling insight into the importance of such relationships between the boys and how Arnold actually leveraged this in his approach in his article, "A School-Boy's Story: Writing the Victorian Public Schoolboy Subject" (2004):

> The educational scheme with which [Arnold] furthered his aims involved motivating like-minded school-boys from similar backgrounds by having them identify with one another and then by refocusing that identification on their [exemplary] headmaster… Arnold was well aware that boys in public schools often formed identificatory peer bonds aligning them in groups that resisted or even rebelled against their masters… Instead, Arnold exhorted the reformed Christian public schoolboy to have a different kind of friendship with his peers… Thus, Arnold's developmental model of male maturation turned school friendships into a vehicle for his evangelical project, containing the potentially subversive energies of boys' habitual bonding by subordinating those bonds to the mature male/male bonds that older public schoolboys chose to develop with their masters. (Weaver, 2004: 457)

Weaver argues that Arnold's approach was informed by a concept called male/male identification. This refers to the process by which the boys were encouraged to form social bonds with one another at Rugby. Peer identification formed a central tenet in Arnold's educational approach, as indicated in the quotation above. Essentially, by Arnold's design, the boys were to be good influences on one another while being inspired to follow the example set by their headmaster. Arnold wrote, "[God] knows that many a lesson, which might come in vain from older lips, is heeded when coming from the lips of a familiar friend; He knows that the mind's and soul's growth never expands so healthfully as in the society of equals" (Arnold, quoted in Weaver, 2004: 457).

As demonstrated by the novel in the above quotation, as well as the fact that Tom thoroughly enjoys doing his fagging duties as they give him an opportunity to peek into the studies of the "great men" (Hughes, 1857: 138), there is a level of reverence and admiration by the younger boys for the older boys in the school. Old Brooke is an excellent example of the level of love and respect that is felt for the sixth-form boys. He is fondly referred to as "Pater Brooke" (Hughes, 1857: 114), and the fact that the whole school also brings itself to silence in the evening in the hall, without needing to be told to do so, is another indication of his status. Several parts of his speech are important to consider, as they provide insights into the state of the fictional Rugby school, and also provide an opportunity to corroborate Hughes's account with the real state of the schools as recorded historically:

> [Now], I'm as proud of the [school] as anyone... But it's a long way from what I want to see it. First, there's a deal of bullying going on... I don't pry about and interfere; that only makes it more underhand and encourages the small boys to come to us [telling] tales, and so we should be worse off than ever. It's very little kindness for the sixth to meddle generally - you youngsters mind that. You'll be all the better football players for learning to stand it, and to take your own parts, and fight it through. But [nothing] breaks up a house like bullying. [Then] there's fuddling about in the public house and [drinking.] That won't make good drop-kicks or chargers of you. [You] get plenty of good beer here… [Drinking] isn't fine or manly, whatever some of you may think of it. (Hughes, 1857: 114-116)

Historical accounts such as Turner's confirm that severe bullying was common within the school, manifesting in some of its most violent forms through the roasting incidents (Turner, 2015: x). Interestingly, there seems to be little recourse for the younger boys who are bullied by those in higher forms within the school, as Brooke instructs them to "take [their] own parts, and fight it through" (Hughes, 1857: 115). This aligns with the notion of Squire Brown and other parents, as indicated by Turner, sending their sons to the public schools to toughen them up and build character. Brooke also addresses the problem of drinking, and makes it sound unattractive by saying it "won't make good drop-kicks or chargers of you" (Hughes, 1857: 115). This is interesting because it places importance on *sports* as the thing that may deter the boys from drinking too much alcohol, highlighting the value with which athleticism and physicality are viewed, as this is the way Brooke chooses in urging his audience not to drink. Importantly, he tells the boys outright that drinking is not "manly" (Hughes, 1857: 115). This perhaps speaks to the earlier insights shared by Cohen (2005: 312) about the shift in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century masculinity. In the cultural shift towards a more morally-directed and refined gentleman in the nineteenth century, old ideals may have lingered on in certain institutions, especially where masculinity is of such importance.

As mentioned earlier, in Tom's fictional Rugby, Dr Arnold has also only recently become headmaster and begun to implement changes. Referring again to Brooke's speech, we see that the fictional head of house says the following:

> …A lot of you think and say, for I've heard you, 'There's this new Doctor hasn't been here so long as some of us, and he's changing all the old customs. Rugby, and the Schoolhouse especially, are going to the dogs. Stand up for the good old ways, and down with the Doctor!' Now I'm as fond of old Rugby customs and ways as any of you… [But] think it over for yourselves. You'll find, I believe, that he don't meddle with any one that's worth keeping...
>
> You all know that I'm not the fellow to back a master through thick and thin. If I saw him stopping football, or cricket, or bathing, or sparring, I'd be as ready as any fellow to stand up about it. But he don't; he encourages them. Didn't you see him out today for half an hour watching us [play]? [And] he's a strong, true man, and a wise one too, and a public-school man too, [and] so let's stick to him, and talk no more rot, and drink his health as the head of the house. (Hughes, 1857: 114-116)

As mentioned, Arnold is considered to be the most significant public school headmaster of the age for the reforms that he brought about. In order to contextualise Brooke's comments here, as well as Arnold's influence in the novel in general, it is helpful to explore the headmaster's history. Indeed, he made many changes to the public school system that created a positive impact on life at the school and the experience of the boys. In *Eminent Victorians* (1918), Lytton Strachey[3] provides a biographical account of Arnold's life. To understand the Rugby headmaster's approach and pedagogy, it is useful to explore his own life and how he came to be headmaster.

Strachey speaks of Arnold's intense religious fervour, which, as we will see, features overtly in *Tom Brown's School Days*. Providing insight into how the headmaster came to be so devout, Strachey explains that Arnold had a crisis of faith in his early life and, in overcoming it, simply doubled down on his convictions. Seeking the counsel of a close friend, "Arnold was 'bid to pause in his inquiries to pray earnestly for help and light from above, and turn himself more strongly than ever to the practical duties of a holy life.' He did so, and the result was all that could be wished. He soon found himself blessed with perfect peace of mind and a settled conviction" (Strachey, 1918: 202-203). Describing Arnold after his crisis, Strachey records:

> All who knew him [were] profoundly impressed by the earnestness of his religious convictions… It was impossible to disregard his deep consciousness of the invisible world and the peculiar feeling of love and adoration which he entertained towards our Lord Jesus Christ… His manner of awful reverence when speaking of God or of the Scriptures was particularly striking. No one could [not] be struck by his absolute wrestling with evil. (1918: 203-204)

The solace Arnold found in religion would completely inform his pedagogy. The intensity of his approach would be required in order to tackle the state of the public schools, as we have seen above. The biographer remarks that the new headmaster would have had quite the task in front of him when chosen as headmaster of Rugby in 1828, describing the British public school as "a system of anarchy tempered by despotism" and "a life in which licensed barbarism was

[3] In reading Strachey's account of Dr Arnold, one should bear in mind, that it is influenced by his polemic and pejorative view of the Victorian period.

mingled with daily and hourly studies of the niceties of Ovidian verse. It was a life of freedom and terror, of prosody and rebellion, of interminable floggings and appalling practical jokes" (Strachey, 1918: 205). Prepared for the challenge, at the age of just 33 years old, Arnold arrived at Rugby in 1828 (Turner, 2015: 93).

Prior to Arnoldian reforms, religion was very much non-existent in the public schools. In fact, at Winchester, Arnold himself was attacked for kneeling at his bed to pray "by boys who took a dim view of such religious display" (Turner, 2015: 93). When he became headmaster, all of this would change. Arnold is said to have introduced some of the most impactful reforms the public school system would see; reforms "seeped in an intensely and very publicly devout approach to life" (Turner, 2015: 94). With Arnold, public school Christianity would become mainstream.

As mentioned earlier, Arnold is an important component in my analysis of schoolboy masculinity. Given that the public schools were in such a terrible state before his time, we can explore how Arnoldian reforms may have created a more positive developmental environment for young boys. We can consider the difference between how sensitive boys and those deemed effeminate were treated before in the schools and how Arnold's approach helped sensitive boys such as Hughes's George Arthur to flourish and not be bullied. We can consider how such a system taught boys such as Tom Brown to treat boys such as George Arthur. This will show how Arnold's methods created the opportunity for a positive form of masculinity to develop within the boys.

Public school Christianity has come to be recognised as an integral part of the Arnoldian legacy of reform. Turner explains:

> In practical terms, public school Christianity largely meant deracinating sins that had taken root at Rugby and elsewhere, sins which Arnold astutely identified. His classification of the 'evils' which might exist in a school included 'systematic cruelty', 'general idleness'... and a bond of evil 'by which a boy would regard himself as more bound to his companions in ties of wickedness than to God or his neighbour in any ties of good'. (2015: 94)

Considering the historical accounts thus far, these 'sins' are accurate. They encapsulate the bullying amongst the boys, the violent behaviour, flogging, and lack of discipline and respect. The last part about a "bond of evil" (Turner, 2015: 94) is something to consider as well. As we will see, this bond can be reflected in the friendship between Tom and his friend East, who are very close, and constantly causing trouble, versus the engineered friendship Arnold creates between Tom and George Arthur, where a sense of duty and responsibility informs Tom's feelings and approach towards George.

Turner (2015: 94-95) offers an excellent consolidation of Arnold's reforms and its impact:

> Arnold's solution to this sinfulness [was] reformation, and his tool was the system of boy government. Boy government, where boys took part in the running of the school, had existed from the very beginning of public school history, but the system had gradually grasped more authority for itself, responding to the power vacuum within schools that arose from the scarcity of teachers. One facet of this was the fagging system, which Arnold described as a necessity in providing for 'regular government' and avoiding 'the evils of anarchy'. Another facet was the closely allied prefect system… [This turned] those who should otherwise have been the ringleaders in every disturbance into an organised and responsible nobility, with power, privileges, and a character of their own to preserve.

One reason why Arnold's approach worked so well was that the prefect system he implemented did not try to remove power or authority from the older boys in the school. Instead, he gave them more responsibility. Turner (2015: 95) explains, "This was done partly through religious exhortation and partly by treating the boys almost as equals. Four prefects were invited to dine with the Arnold family every week – providing them with almost as much access to the throne, and hence prestige within the school, as the teachers themselves." Another indication of the success of such reforms is that the boys under his headship at Rugby held him in high regard. He was liked by his students, demonstrating that his approach was largely appreciated: "Arnold was popular with his boys. In 1839, sixty-one signed a petition that persuaded him not to give up running the house for the senior boys" (Turner, 2015: 95).

However, as scholars such as Weaver (2004) and Neddam (2004) will show, Arnold's reforms were not met with full embrace by the entire school, nor is the impact of those reforms all that

settled. The former is reflected in *Tom Brown's School Days*, as we have seen in Brooke's speech (Hughes, 1857: 114-116). Nevertheless, the reality of Arnold's impact cannot be denied. Indeed, Turner (2015: 95) records that "Arnold's ideas were implemented at other schools by a generation of men who were either educated by him or came under his influence as adults…"

Weaver (2004: 455-456) discusses how the reception of Arnoldian ideals was indeed mixed:

> Arnold's rethinking of the exclusively grammatical emphasis of the nineteenth-century public school classical curriculum; his re-emphasis of the pastoral bonds between masters and boys, especially through the reinvigoration of the tradition of the headmaster performing the school's weekly service; and his encouragement of mentoring bonds among older and younger boys through a revamped, and presumably meritocratic, prefect disciplinary system all served as influential educational templates for Victorian public school reform… Boys and traditionalists at many public schools, including Rugby, staunchly resisted reforms that encroached on the boys' authority to govern themselves.

Building further on the apparent importance of relationships in Arnold's approach, Weaver also explains that, in fact, "the Rugby system often associated individuality with selfish indulgence and used emulation as a measure with which to assess the capacity for Christian leadership" (2004: 463). The sense of the 'greater good' of a brotherhood comes forward in this. Here, it is also important to reflect on one of Arnold's main legacies, mentioned above: the prefect system. Although he did not invent it, he certainly refined it:

> Arnold defended his Rugby prefect system, arguing that the boy governors, 'treated by the masters with great confidence and consideration, and being constantly in direct communication with the headmaster, and receiving their instruction almost exclusively from him, learn to feel a corresponding self-respect in the best sense of the term; they look upon themselves as answerable for the character of the school, and by the natural effect of their position acquire a manliness of mind and habits of conduct infinitely superior' to their nongoverning peers. (Arnold in Weaver, 2004: 463)

Returning to Brooke's speech, we find that there appears to be agreement between what the fictional pupil claims in defending the headmaster and what the historical accounts reflect. Hughes's Arnold seeks only to remove the negative aspects of public school life and does not "meddle with any one that's worth keeping…" (Hughes, 1857: 116) Hughes uses Brooke's speech as a way to defend the headmaster's approach. As an old boy, Hughes's (1857: 118) direct comments on this as the authorial voice offer some insight into the mentality of the public school boys of the time and explain why there was potential resistance to reform: "We looked upon every trumpery little custom and habit which had been obtained in the School as though it had been a law of the Medes and Persians and regarded the infringement or variation of it as a sort of sacrilege." This provides insight into the culture of the school, as well as alignment with what Turner says about how much 'unlawful' power the older boys in the school had prior to Arnoldian times. Hughes's following remarks about Arnold are also noteworthy in understanding the general impression the boys had of their headmaster:

> The boys felt that there was a strong man over them, who would have things his own way… [They] hadn't yet learnt that he was a wise and loving man also. His personal character and influence had not had time to make itself felt, except by a very few of the bigger boys with whom he came more directly into contact; and he was looked upon with great fear and dislike by the great majority even of his own house. For he had found School and School-house in a state of monstrous license and misrule and was still employed in the necessary but unpopular work of setting up order with a strong hand. (Hughes: 1857, 118-119)

This aligns with what the historical accounts record about how Arnold focused on relations with his prefects. It is also important to note that Hughes (1857: 118) refers to the headmaster as a "wise and loving man", demonstrating how it is possible for the headmaster to be a stern ruler, but that this does not imply that he cannot also be kind. In considering how the headmaster might embody positive masculine traits, this is noteworthy, as he demonstrates to the boys that it is possible to be both.

Arnold was not heavily involved in the everyday goings on of the school and actually features directly in the novel very little, so it is understandable that he would have been perceived as one who implemented reforms that disrupted the prior 'ecosystem' of the public school. These final remarks by Hughes are reflected in the historical accounts by Strachey, Turner, and

Neddam. As we have seen, Strachey (1918: 204) notes Arnold's intensity, that "no one could [not] be struck by his absolute wrestling with evil." Given the state of things in the public school, such resolve appears to have been necessary. It is understandable that such a man would seem strict and unapproachable, but, as we see in Tom's first encounter with the headmaster, he is actually a kind, warm man, as noted by Hughes in the previous extract. East and Tom lose their way in the fields after a running race and miss the lock-up time at the school, resulting in their being sent to the headmaster, covered in mud and breaching curfew. Expecting a scolding, they are met with a calm Arnold, "[eyes] twinkling as he looked them over," who simply says, "Well, my little fellows... what makes you so late?' (Hughes, 1857: 140). Indeed, Tom finds that ultimately the Doctor truly is a good and kind man with his students' best interests firmly at heart, as the ending of the novel will demonstrate.

Returning to the state of the school prior to Arnoldian reform, we see that such "monstrous license and misrule" (Hughes, 1857: 199) is evident in several moments throughout the novel. It is, in fact, right after Brooke's speech that we are introduced to the bully, Flashman, and to blanket tossing, one of the various dangerous activities that occurred in the public schools. As the boys prepare to leave the hall, East warns Tom that this will shortly take place: "[There'll] be tossing tonight, most likely, before the sixth [form] come up to bed. So if you [are scared], you just come along and hide, or else they'll catch you and toss you… It don't hurt unless you fall on the floor. But most fellows don't like it" (Hughes, 1857: 121). Importantly, in a bid to show his toughness, Tom resolves not to hide: "[His] heart beat rather quick as he and East reached their room, but he had made up his mind" (Hughes, 1857: 121). Moments later, Flashman and his gang burst into the room and try to grab boys to toss:

> "Who-o-op!" [Flashman] roared, pulling away at the leg of a small boy, who held on tight to the leg of the bed and sang out lustily for mercy…
>
> "Here, lend a hand, one of you, and help me pull out this young howling brute.—Hold your tongue, sir, or I'll kill you."
>
> "Oh, please, Flashman, please, Walker, don't toss me! I'll fag for you—I'll do anything—only don't toss me."
>
> "You be hanged," said Flashman, lugging the wretched boy along; "'twon't hurt you,—you!—Come along, boys; here he is."

This passage demonstrates the brutality with which Flashman treats the smaller boys. Fortunately, he is admonished by his friend, saying that they should not toss anyone against their will, especially after Brooke's speech. Ultimately, Tom and East are chosen as the unlucky candidates, pressured into participating at their own volition because they are not scared. Now, Tom resolves not to show any fear or weakness in front of the bullies. Again, the patterns of these school dynamics are aligned with what the literature on real-life schools demonstrates, as we have seen earlier in the chapter. By 'acting tough,' Tom aims to prove himself to East, his new friend whose approval he seeks, and to the bullies, who must not know they scared him. The boys allow Flashman and his friends to toss them. Despite becoming increasingly distressed, Tom does not give in: "[He] was very near to shouting to be set down… but thought of East and didn't; and so took his three tosses without a kick or a cry, and was called a young trump for his pains" (Hughes, 1857: 124). This is in alignment with Rosen and Nofzinger's (2018: 309) comments about young boys putting on a "tough guise" in peer-group situations, 'taking' his treatment "without a kick or cry" (Hughes, 1857: 124), ensuring he does not display any emotion or weakness. As they observe, the acceptance of violence is a key theme that emerged in their study, and it would appear that this is reflected in Tom and East's allowing Flashman and his gang to toss them, not putting up any resistance, despite secretly feeling otherwise.

As discussed earlier, religion was a vital part of Arnold's approach to Rugby. Religion features prominently in *Tom Brown's School Days*, both in Hughes's descriptions of Arnold's sermons as well as through the influence of George Arthur. Indeed, Hughes portrays the sermons as extremely significant, preempting the first that Tom attends with the following: "And then came that great event in his – as in every Rugby boy's life of that day – the first sermon from the Doctor" (Hughes, 1857: 130). The author offers a powerful description of the scenes: "The tall gallant form, the kindling eye, the voice now soft as the low notes of a flute, now clear and stirring as the call of the light infantry bugle, of him who stood there Sunday after Sunday, witnessing and pleading for his Lord, the King of righteousness and love and glory, with whose Spirit he was filled, and in whose power he spoke" (Hughes, 1857: 130). Indeed, such emotive language would appear to align with the historical accounts of Arnold's religious fervour, as we have seen in what Strachey says. We must also note, once again, the reference to military language in the phrase "the call of the light infantry bugle" (Hughes, 1857: 130). Given that this passage is in praise of Arnold, Hughes is making a positive association between militarism and Arnold, again aligning his narrative with the notion of battle or the army.

Commenting directly once again, Hughes describes his own recollections of the sermons he attended:

> We listened… to a man whom we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength, striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was… the warm, living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another… (Hughes, 1857: 131-132)

It is through descriptions such as these that I believe Arnold is demonstrated as a truly positive figure for the boys, as he is portrayed in earnest in wishing simply to guide his pupils to lead a good life, championing the cause by "striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous," as Hughes explains. These descriptions of Arnold are appropriate for a male figure who is striving to embody a positive form of leadership and masculinity or manliness. In the fictional world of *Tom Brown's School Days*, a figure who is aiming to do and be as Hughes describes here is certainly a candidate for positive masculinity. What emerges as evident is that Arnold really cares about their development, wishing to lead them on a good path. It is also important to note how Hughes describes Arnold as striving against that which was "unmanly and unrighteous." This links to the idea that Arnold was attempting to model and teach a positive form of masculinity, seeing as unmanly and unrighteous are here linked.

Hughes's comments also align with the insights given by Strachey (1918: 203) about the intensity and impact of Arnold's religiosity, the "earnestness of [his] convictions" Through both the historical accounts and Hughes's representation, we are provided an image of an intensely passionate man. Speaking of the effect on Tom, Hughes (1857: 132) also says that "…he hardly ever left the chapel on Sunday evenings without a serious resolve to stand by and follow the Doctor…"

Another integral part of public school life was fagging, the system of younger boys carrying out duties or chores for the older boys. This features in the novel, with each prefect having "three or four fags allotted to him, of whom he was supposed to be the guide, philosopher, and friend" (Hughes, 1857: 133). The latter part of this statement is important because this is the system in its ideal form. The reality in the public schools was, however, far from this. Rather

than enjoying the mentorship of an older boy in the school, 'fags' were abused and bullied, as is mentioned earlier by Turner (2015: xi), who explains that the boys were treated with "callousness or downright sadism."

The issue of fagging may be linked to the wider question of governance of the school. Importantly, and as mentioned before, the public schools of England have a long history of rebellions or uprisings by the students against the masters. Turner explains (2015: 55): "It was [the] Eton rebellion, triggered by an argument over prefects' rights, which uncorked the bottle. Over the following seven decades, there were six full-scale revolts at the school, with the last in 1832. Winchester also saw six – the first prompted, like the Manchester rebellion, by disagreement over a holiday, only two years after Eton had first rebelled. Rugby followed close after with five."

While some rebellions were peaceful, others were not. For example, in 1797, Rugby schoolboys took members of staff prisoner at sword point (Turner, 2015: 55). Many of the rebellions resulted in some form of danger or destruction. That such incidents could take place is perhaps a testament to the nature of the schools, the relations between the boys and the masters, as well as the boys' views of their position within the schools. Turner (2015: 56) explains, "[The] entire public school system was in danger of becoming ungovernable, the rebellions being merely the most spectacular manifestations of a permanent atmosphere of violence." Fagging practices were one of the causes of discord. Rather than the prefects mentoring a few young boys who did duties for them in return, these lower-form boys were made into personal 'slaves' of older boys, creating another opportunity wherein violence and abusive behaviour could occur. While the duties themselves were not necessarily harmful, the power exerted over the young boys and the normalisation of fagging meant that abuse could be meted out to fags who did not follow their instructions correctly. The following describes what the practice of fagging typically entailed:

> George Keppel, the future 6th Earl of Albemarle, recalled a typical day's duties as a fag at Westminster School in the 1810s. He rose as the day broke, brushed his master's clothes and cleaned several pairs of his shoes, went to the pump in Great Dean's Yard to fetch hard water for his teeth, went to the cistern at Mother Gran's for soft water for his hands and face, prepared his breakfast, bought bread, butter,

> milk and eggs 'for the great man's tea', and then prepared his tea. (Turner, 2015: 57)

Some of the rebellions were instigated by the younger boys rising against unlawful fagging. Indeed, an insurgency at Winchester in 1828 was caused by six younger boys protesting against their fagging duties (Turner, 2015: 57). In the novel, Tom and East stage a rebellion of their own against unlawful fagging (Hughes, 1857: 157), which I shall examine shortly. Prior to their rebellion, Tom is actually very willing to take on fagging duties because of his idolisation of the aforementioned "great men" of the sixth form (Hughes, 1857: 133). As demonstrated in his and East's response to their interaction with old Brooke post-match mentioned above, the young boys thoroughly admire the older boys and seek to gain their approval. As I have already mentioned, if done correctly in the manner Hughes describes, the prefect/fagging system can certainly be a channel for positive masculine conduct if the older boys mentor their fags. This is part of what was envisioned by Arnold, and, as one sees with Arthur, it is the exact strategy that benefits both Tom and Arthur. The system gives responsibility to the older boys and provides positive role models to the younger ones.

However, the reality in the public schools was extremely different. Turner (2015: 58) explains that "boys came to believe in such an unsustainably exalted role for themselves partly because of the extreme degree of power which the fagging and prefect systems gave them over other boys." Additionally, many of the boys came from elite families, but, as Keppel's experience shows, this does not mean that they avoided being bullied. Because the schools enjoyed the patronage of these wealthy payers of fees, as well as the prestige of the association, the masters were wary of asserting authority over the boys or punishing them: "The power of senior boys was buttressed by the awareness among masters of the possibility of preferment, in future life, from the families of the grandest pupils" (Turner, 2015: 58).

While Arnold refined the prefect system, and its accompanying fagging system, the contrasting state prior to his arrival is another indication of the positive nature of his reforms and how they were a force for good for his pupils. Turner explores just how bad the conditions at the public schools became and why. One part of it was that the headmasters of the schools sought to make as much profit as possible and often crammed as many boys as they could into the schools. Such cutting of corners was commonplace:

> The practical effect of [Head of Westminster] Busby's neglect is revealed in a letter written in the 1680s by a worried mother. In words that could have come from a twenty-first-century parent fretting about her child's condition far from home, she writes: 'In the great cold school he sits the whole day over without a hat or cap, and all the windows broke, and yet thanks be to God he takes very well with it, though he never sees a fire but in my house.' (Barker in Turner, 2015: 38)

The public schools were also known for the rates of violence and cruelty that occurred within them, with flogging by the masters being one of the most intense aspects of the environment. Turner explains, "Eton's reputation had become so bad by the late 1760s that the Earl of Huntingdon told the Earl of Moira not to send his sons there (or to Westminster) because of 'the risk of debauching their morals'" (Tyerman in Turner, 2015: 51).

Another reason for the level of ill-discipline in the public schools was that the actual school routine was extremely lax. With the ratio of masters to students severely skewed, there was a "light lesson schedule, leaving [students] free to spend much of [their] time lounging around looking for trouble" (Turner, 2015: 62-63). The lack of a sufficient number of staff members accounts partially, too, for the high rates of flogging, as overstretched masters struggled to exercise control over far too many boys. Richard Brinsley Sheridan "blamed the harsh tone of public schools' regimes on these adverse ratios, saying: 'When the number of boys is out of all proportion to the number of masters, nothing short of despotism can establish their government, no principle but fear can support it. Thus the torturer rod is introduced'" (Sheridan in Turner, 2015: 63).

As we have seen thus far, the historical public schools were violent and unproductive. How then could such places become sites within which to instil positive masculine traits in young boys? The answer appears to lie in the headship of the school. While, as mentioned earlier, Arnold is widely considered to be the most influential public school headmaster of the era, consideration must also be given to Samuel Butler, headmaster of Shrewsbury between 1789 and 1836 (Turner, 2015: 65).

Butler's headship was somewhat remarkable for his time, given the fact that, while the other public schools heaved with relentless unrest, Shrewsbury did not see any rebellions during his time as headmaster. Arguably, this is attributed in part to his tempered approach to corporal

punishment. “Writing of [a] boy whose unsatisfactory work seems to have provoked the master’s latest outburst of beating, [Butler] demonstrated to the teacher that encouragement worked better than dire threats… It was much better to set the boy right by asking him a question or two, and making him think, than by intimidating him by threats and anger” (Turner, 2015: 66).

Butler created a system of discipline that turned out to be the formula for successful operations within the school. He adopted a “zero-tolerance policing” (Turner, 2015: 66) approach, punishing small misdemeanours, such as tardiness, appropriately. Butler is also credited with bolstering the prefect system by giving more responsibility to the boys to keep order, and he also did away with fagging. Turner (2015: 67) explains, “[The absence of fagging] reduced two causes of potential rebellion: resentment towards the school among the younger boys, and an exalted sense of power among the older.” Furthermore, at Shrewsbury, internal exams were taken by the boys, which made another significant difference in maintaining order. There were more incentives and requirements to focus on one’s studies. Prior to Butler’s headship, there was “virtually no academic competition at public schools” (Turner, 2015: 69). Increasing the incentive to study would certainly aid in bringing about a sense of discipline.

Ultimately, the significance of Butler’s contributions meant that Shrewsbury, under his headship, fared far better than any of the other public schools at the time. I highlight this in consideration of the fact that such measures created a more stable environment. Arnold, following the methods of Butler, will demonstrate that the implementation of this approach could result in the production of more positive boyhood character development than should such measures not have been introduced.

Returning to the novel, we see that, as mentioned earlier, Tom is initially very eager to do his fagging duties. In addition to this, he also starts out a very diligent pupil, placed in the third form (Hughes, 1857: 132), which he quickly proves is too low for him, having a keen mind and a good foundation in his previous schooling. When he joins the lower fourth form, he is placed with East and other boys he is familiar with. Here, discipline begins to slip as the boys become “as full of tricks as monkeys… making fun of their master, one another, and their lessons” (Hughes, 1857: 145-146).

As mentioned earlier, Hughes (1857: 146) remarks that "Tom had come up from the third with a good character, but the temptations of the lower fourth soon proved too strong for him, and he rapidly fell away and became as unmanageable as the rest." This demonstrates the influence that peers have on one another, as Tom could have chosen to remain a diligent pupil but does not. One might argue that it is also likely that he would have been jeered at by the others if he had chosen to be studious.

Aside from the blanket tossing, there has been little else until this point in the novel that hints at the true nature of the public schools, as recorded by historical accounts. However, when old Brooke finally does leave, along with two other boys who treated the younger pupils well, the energy within the fictional Rugby begins to shift. Hughes explains that the remaining 'eligible' students to be prefects were younger boys simply placed in the sixth form for their intellectual capabilities, and thus they could not exert much influence and were soon overrun by the less honourable fifth- and sixth-formers who abused their rank:

> [Under] this no-government, the School-house began to see bad times… [The] fags were without their lawful masters and protectors and ridden over rough-shod by a set of boys whom they were not bound to obey, and whose only right over them stood in their bodily powers… (Hughes, 1857: 150)

Here, the novel aligns once more with historical records in that it was a fear-based system of abuse that kept the system operational. This excerpt also offers an excellent example of the negative forms of masculine practice that can emerge in such a setting: rule by force. It is the threat of physical violence that keeps the system functioning, governed only by "bodily powers" (1857: 150), as Hughes says. As mentioned by Turner, the majority of the English public schools experienced several rebellions, an unsurprising consequence of such conditions. *Tom Brown's School Days* reflects history accurately in the form of a rebellion against fagging, led by Tom and East (Hughes, 1857: 155). Flashman, a fifth-former and thus one of the main perpetrators of 'unlawful' fagging, has taken East and Tom as his own fags. When the two boys decide not to obey Flashman's orders, they instigate a rebellion. Tom and East resolve not to fag for anyone but the sixth form, for whom it is lawful (Hughes, 1857: 153-154). Word of their actions begins to spread, and more of the younger boys soon join their cause; "[The] war of independence had broken out… Several others present bound themselves not to fag for the fifth form at once…" (Hughes, 1857: 155).

One might ask the question as to why nothing is taken up with the masters of the school. Hughes provides an answer for this, explaining that a sort of code governs the reporting of incidents. It is considered "against public morality and School tradition" (1857: 155) for incidents to be reported to the masters before they were taken to the prefects. Arguably, a standard has been set here by the hegemonic masculine ideals governing the school. In Brooke's speech earlier in the novel, he explains that the prefects "don't pry about and interfere; that only makes it more underhand, and encourages the small boys to come to us with their fingers in their eyes telling tales…" and also reminds the boys that it is actually "little kindness for the sixth to meddle…" (Hughes, 1857: 115).

The expectation is that incidents must be handled on one's own and that to report something is either a weakness or telling tales. Additionally, as mentioned, the reputation of the public school was such that parents sent their boys to the schools as a place to build character and test themselves. It appears that boys could not report incidents, firstly because they did not want to be rejected or scorned by other boys, or secondly because there would be actual ramifications in the form of physical abuse or psychological bullying from the other boys should it be discovered that they reported something. The unlawful fagging that takes place in the novel is not reported, and instead, the young boys take matters into their own hands. Eventually, the majority of the fifth-formers grow tired of trying to fag the younger boys and leave them alone, except for Flashman and his gang, who continue to devote their energies chiefly to Tom and East (Hughes, 1857: 158). This culminates in the roasting scene (Hughes, 1857: 165-166), which, as Turner (2015: xi) confirms, did take place in the schools.

Tom and East lead a rebellion against the unlawful fagging that was instigated primarily by Flashman and his gang. Although, as mentioned, the majority of the fifth-formers end up leaving the fags alone, Flashman and his group still keep up the abuse as much as possible: "The war, in short, raged fiercely; but soon [all] the better fellows in the fifth gave up trying to fag them… As [Flashman's] operations were being cut short in other directions, he now devoted himself chiefly to Tom and East... [He] felt that they had been the first rebels and that the rebellion had been, to a great extent, successful" (Hughes, 1857: 158). Flashman's disdain for Tom and East culminates in the roasting scene, after Tom defiantly refuses to give up his lottery ticket after all the boys draw tickets in the school hall one evening. In response, Flashman declares: "Very well then; let's roast him…" (Hughes, 1857: 166):

> [He] catches hold of Tom by the collar. One or two boys hesitate, but the rest join in… Tom is dragged along struggling. His shoulders are pushed against the mantelpiece, and he is held by main force before the fire, Flashman drawing his trousers tight by way of extra torture…" (Hughes, 1857: 166)

As mentioned, this is the most brutal act of bullying in the novel. Importantly, despite spending several days in the school sick room, Tom refuses to tell any authority figures what happened to him or let any of the other boys report it (Hughes, 1857: 168-169). This is not construed as a fear-based decision; rather, it earns him the admiration of the other boys, who remark that he is "a staunch little fellow" (Hughes, 1857: 166) and the gratitude of his assailants, excepting, of course, Flashman (Hughes, 1857: 169). This, too, may be linked to Rosen and Nofzinger's remarks about acceptance of violence, as well as the importance of putting on a brave face in order to gain approval within the masculine context. If Tom had told the masters what had happened, it is very likely that he would have been judged as a 'snitch', despite the severity of what was done to him. Although it is left to question why Tom does not tell anyone, based on the dynamics we have seen both in the research on masculinity and schooling, as well as the events of the novel, it appears likely that telling would not have been looked upon favourably.

By this point in Tom's Rugby career, he has also become quite accustomed to disregarding the rules, often simply for "the excitement of doing something which was against rules… [Both] of our youngsters, since their loss of character for steadiness in their form, had got into the habit of doing things which were forbidden, as a matter of adventure" (Hughes, 1857: 170). He and East get into trouble quite regularly, fishing out of bounds (Hughes, 1857: 183) and carving their names into the minute hand of the school clock (Hughes, 1857: 186), until, ultimately, they come under the direct notice of Arnold himself. In a final ultimatum, the headmaster sends for them the night before they leave for the holidays:

> [So] up they go to the study. There they find the Doctor, not angry, but very grave. He has sent for them to speak very seriously before they go home [for holidays]. They have each been flogged several times in the half-year for direct and wilful breaches of rules. This cannot go on. They are doing no good to themselves or others, and now they are getting up in the School and have influence. They seem to think that rules are made capriciously and for the pleasure of the masters; but

> this is not so, they are made for the good of the whole School and must and shall be obeyed. Those who thoughtlessly or wilfully break them will not be allowed to stay at the School… and [he] wishes them to think very seriously in the holidays over what he has said. (Hughes, 1857: 188)

Here again, we gain insight into how Hughes's fictional representation of the headmaster aligns with the historical accounts. The Doctor is a fair man who simply wants to get the best out of each of his pupils, and as such, he is not angry at their misbehaviour, simply "grave." That he also makes the point that they need to think about the fact that they have influence is important, because this also demonstrates how he wanted to make good characters of them as boys who would have a positive influence on others.

At this point, George Arthur is introduced into the story, joining the school upon the boys' return from the holidays (Hughes, 1857: 196). This marks a turning point for Tom, as Arnold's strategy of placing George Arthur under Tom's mentorship is ultimately what sets Tom on a better course. Fabrice Neddam offers several key insights into the approach of the historical Dr Arnold, which will be useful to consider at this point in the novel.

When Arnold arrived at Rugby, Neddam explains, he had "his own idea of what a 'real man' should be; his ideal of manliness was clearly at the heart of his educational principles. [He] intended to make the school 'a place of Christian education', an 'instrument of God's glory' in order to 'form Christian men'" (Stanley in Neddam, 2004: 306). One of Arnold's key beliefs was that there were three stages in the development of a man: childhood, boyhood, and manhood (Neddam, 2004: 306-307). Importantly, he believed that boyhood was "an imperfect phase during which the individual not only becomes aware of the existence of those [good and evil] but is also very much attracted by [evil]... Arnold bluntly asserted that his purpose was to shorten the period corresponding to boyhood as much as possible and to hasten the moment when a boy would reach Christian manhood" (Neddam, 2004: 306-307).

Arnold not only wanted to prepare boys for manhood, but Christian manhood. As we have already seen, religion was a fundamental part of his pedagogy. The headmaster provides the following remarks:

> A Christian spirit was one that was characterised by self-denial, self-mastery, and self-restraint; it was one 'which [did] not neglect its school lessons, but really [attained] considerable proficiency in them; a character at once regular and amiable, abstaining from evil, and for evil in its low and grosser forms, having a real abhorrence.' (Arnold in Neddam, 2004: 308)

While, as mentioned earlier, scholars have debated whether his approach and reforms were highly impactful, it becomes clear that Arnold was trying to forge a better path for the boys under his charge. Furthermore, the headmaster was not ignorant of the realities of the public school system, nor unaware of the fact that wrongdoing occurred under his own headship:

> Arnold once told his congregation: 'That [school] is properly a nursery of vice, where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home, and gets, in their stead, others which are utterly low, and base, and mischievous.' The realities of school life thus appear very different from the image conveyed by Arnold's educational policy. His own letters and sermons offer the most telling testimony of the pervasive presence of 'evil' in the school. (Neddam, 2004: 308)

Neddam (2004: 309) provides accounts of bullying from Arnold's time as headmaster. "George Melly, who was at Rugby at the end of Arnold's headmastership, was constantly bullied. He even explained that the attacks on his study were so regular that he had to find another place to stay." Another old boy also recalled the treatment he received when kneeling at his bedside to pray. This is a familiar scene. As we know, Arnold himself was attacked for doing just this, and so is George Arthur in the novel. This particular student recalls being insulted and having shoes thrown at him (Neddam, 2004: 309). Indeed, Neddam (2004: 310) observes that "despite Arnold's principles, religious faith was not very popular in the boys' community." However, Hughes's fictional representation of religion in the schoolboy setting shows that the adoption of religious practice can have a positive impact.

Ultimately, Neddam (2004: 310) observes that there was "a rather large discrepancy between the values that the headmaster wanted his boys to assimilate and those that actually emerged from interactions within that miniature society." While not all Rugby boys were bullying pupils, the headmaster did not stamp it out entirely. Arnold was troubled by this. He believed

that such behaviour could occur because "when boys entered a public school, [they] did not yet possess a Christian character that would enable them to resist temptation, evil was more attractive than good, and therefore the bad elements of the school would very rapidly 'corrupt' and 'contaminate' the boys who had brought some good with them from home" (Neddam, 2004: 310).

In relation to the importance of physicality and ideal masculinity, Neddam points out that athletic types were not bullied as much as the predominantly academic types. Arnold himself said, "A strong and active boy is very much respected; a clever boy is also admired and valued; but a good and well-principled boy meets with very little encouragement…" (Arnold in Neddam, 2004: 315). Additionally, "Arnold [observed that] 'strength and activity of body' were at the top of the boys' 'scale of excellence', while academic achievers were at the bottom" (2004: 315). This demonstrates that even Arnold, while intently focused on his students' character development, placed a large emphasis on the importance of sport.

Additionally, Neddam (2004: 319) offers important insights into Arnold's relations with his students, explaining that he "knew them all individually and was willing to communicate with them." A crucial element of his approach was to treat the boys not as inferiors but more as equals. He received them as "gentlemen and reasonable beings, and ... spoke to them as members together with himself of the same great institution" (Stanley in Neddam, 2004: 319). This is reflected in Tom's first interaction with the Doctor, as discussed earlier. Neddam explains:

> Probably the most characteristic part of his policy was directed at the sixth-form boys, who were also implicitly the school prefects. His close relationship with them was based on trust and mutual respect. He gave them responsibilities and treated them as adults. Not only did he invite them, in parties of four, to have dinner at his table one evening a week, he also invited some of them to go on holiday with his family. Thus, in an unprecedented manner, headmaster and senior boys found themselves almost on the same footing. (Neddam, 2004: 319)

Returning to the novel, we are now introduced to George Arthur. Tom's first impression of the boy is noteworthy:

> [There was] a slight pale boy, with large blue eyes and light fair hair, who seemed ready to shrink through the floor. [Tom] saw at a glance that the little stranger was just the boy whose first half-year at a public school would be misery to himself if he were left alone… This new boy would most likely never go out of the close, and would be afraid of wet feet, and always getting laughed at, and called Molly, or Jenny, or some derogatory feminine nickname. (Hughes, 1857: 196-198)

Tom's impression of Arthur demonstrates the 'risks' that one faces for being timid, quiet, or not very athletic: Arthur would immediately be labelled as effeminate and given a feminine nickname as a mark thereof. Indeed, Tom notes that what he sees in Arthur spells trouble and that he would suffer in the school if left to fend for himself. East's advice to Tom upon his own arrival, as we recall, is that a new boy would manage if "he's got nothing odd about him, and answers straightforward, and holds his head up" (Hughes, 1857: 84). Arthur, with his delicate appearance and timid nature, seems to embody the total opposite of this.

Turner (2015: 60) also notes the abusive treatment of boys "who were in any way different," something that is also identified in the literature on modern school settings, as we have seen in Chapter 1. Exploring the historical public schools, Turner refers to the experience of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley:

> At Eton in the 1800s, the poet Shelley, an individualist from an early age, endured the daily physical bullying of what his classmates called 'Shelley-baits'. Such sensitive [boys] as Shelley are always more likely to have a hard time, no matter what school and era. It is their teachers' pastoral duty to minimise their persecution, but at many public schools of the period, the masters either neglected this duty or even approved of such ill-treatment. (Turner, 2015: 60)

As we have seen, the treatment of boys who are sensitive or effeminate is harsh, as such personalities or traits are considered to be antithetical to the strictures of hegemonic masculine ideals. Turner's remark that some teachers also felt that harsh treatment was justified is noteworthy. This makes sense, given what we have seen about the strict avoidance of effeminacy in the nineteenth century. If this formed part of the hegemonic constellation of masculine beliefs, any boys who showed such traits would have been seen as justifiably ill-treated.

Furthermore, as Turner (2015: 60-61) points out, "apologists for public school cruelty have, over the centuries, argued that strong boys flourished in such adversity; that they were toughened up for future life." Indeed, one Eton old boy explains:

> [He had] hardly known a boy whose spirit had not been broken at Eton; and [while] a public school might be an excellent thing for a youth of hot and violent character, it was not the place for a tender or docile disposition. He responded to his own education by having [his son] educated at home. A boy might have a hard time if he were poor or even if he were not particularly grand; he might suffer if he were different; he might suffer if he were sensitive. He would also suffer simply for being new. [A] boy would have to work very hard indeed to have a tolerable time at a public school, and the route to survival would require an unhealthy process of brutalisation. (Turner, 2015: 61-62)

The introduction of Arthur provides not only a turning point for positive development in Tom but also offers the chance to investigate the sentiment within the school culture on a deeper level. It is interesting to note that the school has some boys who are considered a bit strange, such as Diggs, "a very queer specimen of boyhood" (Hughes, 1857: 156), and Crab Jones, "the queerest, coolest fish in Rugby" (Hughes, 1857: 101). However, these boys are not bullied or shunned. There is, however, a completely different sense of urgency around ensuring that one does not appear sensitive or effeminate in any way. As we have seen through the literature on effeminacy, the element of masculinity that is riddled with anxiety is the need not to appear feminine. It forms a defining feature of how one portrays oneself as masculine: as Heinrich indicates, by rejecting anything that is feminine. This is reflected in Tom's first piece of advice to Arthur, which is, essentially, a survival guide for Rugby:

> "But look here now, you must answer straight up when the fellows speak to you, and don't be afraid. If you're afraid, you'll get bullied. And don't say you can sing, and don't you ever talk about home or your mother and sisters."
>
> Poor little Arthur looked ready to cry. "But please," said he, "mayn't I talk about home to you?"

> "Oh yes, I like it. But don't talk to boys you don't know, or they'll call you home-sick, or mamma's darling, or some such stuff." (Hughes, 1857: 204)

Here we see the importance of hiding one's true emotions and acting tough, once again. Tom provides us with a first-hand account of the things that are deemed acceptable and not, indicating that showing any emotion or sensitivity is not good. This is evident in the fact that even talking about home, or female relatives, is off-limits for boys wanting to avoid being bullied. Furthermore, Tom directly states that showing fear will result in bullying: "If you're afraid, you'll get bullied" (Hughes, 1857: 204). It is also interesting to note that Tom recognises the value of what he is telling Arthur to suppress by encouraging him to talk about it with him in private. This demonstrates that the boys are painfully aware that they are restricted by the hegemonic ideals of the school, and disregarding those will not only result in losing face but in actual violence as well. It is an indication of the fact that the negative elements of masculine practice are affecting the boys, even if they feel they cannot do anything to counteract it except keep their true desires and feelings a secret.

George Arthur as a character can be used to reflect upon both the negative and positive currents of masculinity within the school. Through him, we gain insight into Tom's understanding of what a boy should and should not do to survive in the school, and it is also through Arthur that we see positive shifts towards responsibility and duty in Tom. Indeed, Arthur's impact on Tom appears to be quite profound. On Arthur's first night, he kneels at his bed to pray. Some of the boys laugh, and one picks up a slipper to throw at him. Tom intervenes to protect his charge, throwing his own shoe and threatening the room: "If any fellow wants the other boot, he knows how to get it" (Hughes, 1857: 206). Tom's reaction, within his own thoughts and feelings, to Arthur is intense, as it makes him reflect on a promise he made to his mother "never to forget to kneel by his bedside, and [pray] before he laid his head on the pillow…" As a result, "he lay down gently and cried as if his heart would break" (Hughes, 1857: 206).

As Turner (2015: 93) explains, and has been discussed, religion was not looked upon favourably by public school boys prior to Arnold's headship. Hughes offers direct commentary here that corroborates this, saying:

> It was no light act of courage in those days, my dear boys, for a little fellow to say his prayers publicly… [For Tom], the first few nights after he came… [he] sat up

> in bed till the candle was out, and then stole out and said his prayers, in fear lest someone should find him out. So did many another poor little fellow… [Arthur], the poor little weak boy whom he had pitied and almost scorned for his weakness, had done that which he, braggart as he was, dared not to do. [Tom swore] to himself that he would stand by that boy through thick and thin, and cheer him, and help him, and bear his burdens. (Hughes, 1857: 206-207)

Hughes offers us an intriguing contrast here, demonstrating that the boy who is portrayed as 'weaker' – Arthur – is actually more courageous than Tom, a 'regular' young boy, for Arthur had done what he "dared not to do" (Hughes, 1857: 207). Indeed, Arthur's religious devotion appears to make Tom evaluate himself and realise that he has wandered from the path he believes he should be on. The following morning, Tom himself kneels to pray in front of the dorm. So do another two boys (Hughes, 1857: 209). "He went down to the great School with a glimmering of another lesson in his heart – the lesson that he who has conquered his own coward spirit has conquered the whole outward world" (Hughes, 1857: 209). Such a conviction is certainly aligned with Arnold's views: as has been discussed, Neddam indicates that the headmaster believed that boyhood was a time when the temptations of evil were very strong (2004: 306-307). To finally surpass that "coward spirit" and stand out against the wrongs that had governed him before - troublemaking, disregarding the rules, etc. - was to become a young man in Arnold's view. At this point in the novel, Tom has had a revelation about his behaviour and about what constitutes being a 'good' person: one who is not afraid to be themselves and believe in their values, even if that means being disliked or teased for being different.

Eventually, the reader learns that part of why Arthur is such a sensitive character is because he is recovering from his father's death (Hughes, 1857: 215-216). Tom learns of this fact by accident, discovering Arthur crying in his study (Hughes, 1857: 214). The fact that Arthur is crying in private is perhaps a comment about the pressure to maintain a brave face in public, in order to be accepted and to avoid being teased. Furthermore, it is only to Tom that Arthur will express his feelings, and, should Tom not have happened upon Arthur by accident, it is possible that he would never have known at all. The scene offers insight into Tom's own thought process again, as Hughes writes: "Arthur had never spoken of his home before, and Tom hadn't encouraged him to do so, as his blundering schoolboy reasoning made him think that Arthur would be softened and less manly for thinking of home" (1857: 216).

This is another telling insight into what Tom has internalised about emotional expression and vulnerability in the schoolboy setting he is in. It reflects again the need to put on a tough face, that it is not appropriate to express feelings. As Hughes says, this is Tom's "schoolboy reasoning" (1857: 216), which implies that it is a belief he has developed during his time at Rugby through his own experiences. This again demonstrates the nature of the school as is recorded by the studies discussed in Chapter 1.

However, instead of sharing about home making Arthur more emotional and unsettled, the opposite happens. After he opens up to Tom and realises that Tom will accept his emotions, he begins to settle down within the school. It has not made him more withdrawn or homesick to talk of home and express his feelings; instead, Tom offers himself as friend that he can be open with. Once again, their friendship offers a reflection on both the positive and the negative elements of masculinity within the school, as Tom has not encouraged Arthur for fear that speaking of home would make him "less manly," which, arguably, is a belief that he has picked up simply from being in the school setting and assimilating the hegemonic form of masculinity there present. On the other hand, this moment offers a lesson in positive masculinity because it demonstrates to the reader that expressing one's emotions leads to a good outcome for Arthur. It demonstrates that vulnerability between the boys did not lead to a negative result.

However, the novel offers an interesting contrast to this shortly after, in the 'formal' fight between Tom and Slogger Williams. This pre-arranged fight, seconded and refereed by other boys, offers an interesting window into nineteenth-century masculine practice, reminiscent of the eighteenth-century duels that came before. Indeed, "[a] timekeeper is chosen, a large ring made, and the two stand opposite one another for a moment…" (Hughes, 1857: 258). The fight occurs after Tom comes to the defence of Arthur after he becomes flustered in class and reacts emotionally, to which Slogger responds with scorn, saying: "Sneaking little brute… clapping on the water-works just in the hardest place; see if I don't punch his head after fourth lesson" (Hughes, 1857: 255). Here, we see that emotion is sneered at and shunned as weak, and the result is a physical fight. Hughes also offers an important passage of direct commentary at this point in the novel, providing insight into the opinion on fighting:

> Boys will quarrel, and when they quarrel will sometimes fight. Fighting with fists is the natural and English way for English boys to settle their quarrels… Learn to box then, as you learn to play cricket and football. Not one of you will be the worse,

> but very much for the better, for learning to box well. Should you never have to use it in earnest, there's no exercise in the world so good for the temper and for the muscles of the back and legs. As to fighting, keep out of it if you can, by all means. When the time comes, if it ever should, that you have to say 'Yes' or 'No' to a challenge to fight, say 'No' if you can – only take care you make it clear to yourselves why you say 'No.' It's a proof of the highest courage, if done from true Christian motives. It's quite right and justifiable, if done from a simple aversion to physical pain, and danger. But don't say 'No' because you fear a licking, and say or think it's because you fear God, for that's neither Christian nor honest. And if you do fight, fight it out; and don't give in while you can stand and see. (1857: 268)

For Hughes to say that fighting is the "natural way" for boys to settle quarrels offers telling insight into the beliefs that informed masculinity during the period. To what extent can one reasonably say that competitiveness and aggression are inherent in boys and a 'natural' cause for physical fighting, and to what extent does this occur simply because that is what they have been raised to believe they should do? The above excerpt implies the former, as Hughes states that it is what "English boys" do, indicating a cultural belief that physical fighting is not an unusual thing to occur, nor something that should be frowned upon. Rather, Hughes even frames it as another excellent form of physical activity, placing it alongside cricket and football as a way to exercise. Here again, we see the promotion given to sporting endeavours as valuable. We may be relieved that at least the author instructs his reader to stay out of fighting if it can be avoided, but he also places conditions on why one should say no to a fight, telling the reader that it is cowardly to avoid a fight because you are scared to get hurt. Ultimately, Hughes appears to give a form of advice that is recognisable: that one should stay out of fights and not ever cause them, but should the situation arise, be prepared to fight. The problem, however, is that he also characterises an unwillingness to fight as cowardly, which does not relay a positive message for the purposes of 'healthy' masculinity, implying that being unwilling to fight is a sign of weakness. Such implications call the novel into question for the extent to which it does and does not participate in problematic conceptions of masculinity and we see again how it is a site of contradiction or ambiguity. The ideas about boyhood and masculinity, as reflected in the extract above, are not the only view the novel provides. It is important to consider also how the roles played by Arnold and Arthur in the story provide contrasting opportunities for a positive form of masculine practice to flourish.

As mentioned, Arthur is the reason that Tom transforms into a responsible, respectable student at the school. Not only does his religious devotion encourage Tom to become more devout himself, as demonstrated earlier with Tom's decision to start praying again, but he also persuades Tom to stop using crib notes to do his schoolwork, saying, "Because you're the honestest boy in Rugby, and that ain't honest" (Hughes, 1857: 278). Once again, Arthur makes Tom reflect on behaviours and norms within the school that he has not questioned himself. Arthur challenges Tom, asking him what legacy he wants to leave at Rugby: "What do you want to do here, and to carry away?" (Hughes, 1857: 278). Tom's response is important to consider:

> I want to be A1 at cricket and football, and all the other games, and to make my hands keep my head against any fellow, lout or gentleman. I want to get into the sixth before I leave, and to please the Doctor; and I want to carry away just as much Latin and Greek as will take me through Oxford respectably… [And] I want to leave behind me… the name of a fellow who never bullied a little boy, or turned his back on a big one. (Hughes, 1857: 278)

This declaration by Tom reveals all that is of importance to him in his schooling career. It is worth noting that sporting matters are at the top of the list, again a reflection of the level of importance placed upon physical prowess. However, there are several other noteworthy aspects to his statement that actually position Tom as a character who recognises and is striving towards the attributes which I have named as positive masculine ideals. Firstly, Tom states that he aims to "make [his] hands keep [his] head against any fellow, lout or gentleman." This means that he has identified the importance of not resorting to physical violence, regardless of how the offender behaves or who he is. Secondly, he realises the value of his studies, placing him in the 'all-rounder' bracket identified by Hughes (1857: 48) at the beginning of the novel with Harry Winburn, "the quickest and best boy in the parish." Perhaps most importantly, however, Tom states that he wishes to be known as a boy who "never bullied a little boy, or turned his back on a big one" (Hughes, 1857: 278). With this, I argue that he has embodied the traits of positive masculinity that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. He simply wishes to do no harm, be someone that others can depend upon, and do his best to excel in his endeavours, sporting and intellectual. Furthermore, the fact that he also mentions that he wishes to "please the Doctor" (Hughes, 1857: 278) indicates the impact that the headmaster has had on Tom, as he

seeks to do the things he knows Arnold would approve of. It is ultimately this that Arthur uses to challenge Tom on the use of crib notes:

> "You say, Tom, you want to please the Doctor… Does he think you use cribs…?"
>
> "He was at Winchester himself," said [Tom]; "he knows all about it."
>
> "Yes; but does he think you use them? Do you think he approves of it?"
>
> "You young villain!" said Tom, [half] vexed and half pleased, "I never think about it. Hang it! There, perhaps he don't. Well, I suppose he don't.
>
> [Arthur] said, "I would sooner have the Doctor's good opinion of me as I really am than any man's in the world." (Hughes, 1857: 278-279)

It is the dual influence of both Arthur and Arnold that leads Tom to give up the crib notes, which is the last 'bad' habit that he has stuck to in his school career. Indeed, Arthur's character and the moral authority invested in him demonstrate that a timid and sensitive boy is not to be seen in negative terms. Ultimately, Arthur becomes Tom's most important peer in his developmental journey. If it had not been for Arthur, Tom may never have become as he is when we meet him on his last day at Rugby: "...grown into a young man nineteen years old, a praepostor and Captain of the [cricket]... and let us hope as much wiser as he is bigger… (Hughes, 1857: 310). Indeed, on Tom's last day at Rugby, we meet him as a character who has achieved what he hoped to in the previous excerpt: he is a sportsman, a prefect (a potential indication that he has reached the sixth-form), and he is bound for Oxford after he completes the year. Ultimately, he is depicted as all Arnold could have hoped for him to be.

Hughes's novel certainly provides multiple examples where masculinity is depicted in both a positive and negative manner. From the bullying of Flashman and the internalised beliefs of Tom to the quiet influence of Arnold, the commentary by Hughes, and the intimate, emotional friendship between Tom and Arthur, *Tom Brown's School Days* provides a compelling narrative of boyhood development. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the roles of Arnold and Arthur are certainly the biggest contributing elements in the case for positive masculinity. But to what extent do their actions within the story demonstrate how boys can be taught positive

attributes in such a setting as the public school? In the discussion that follows, I will evaluate this further.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the question must be answered as to whether Thomas Hughes's novel does offer examples of and a roadmap for a positive model of masculinity. In order to discern whether this is the case, a further consideration of *Tom Brown's School Days* in light of the theoretical framework of masculinities studies and the historical context of the nineteenth century must be undertaken.

As I have sought to demonstrate, the fictional Dr Arnold in the novel *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) [1993] is the primary factor for positive masculinity within the novel. This is because it is through his actions and influence that Tom transforms from a rule-breaking schoolboy into the young man we meet at the end of the text. He has renewed his Christian faith, given up the use of crib notes to cheat on his school work, and he has become a prefect and the captain of the cricket team. If not for Arnold, Tom would not have befriended George Arthur, the boy who encourages these positive changes in Tom. As we have seen, Arthur's influence includes encouraging Tom to begin praying again, after first doing it secretively to avoid teasing by other boys, and stopping altogether as time wore on. While the aim of this dissertation is not to lean on religion as the solution for positive masculine models to emerge, it is certainly an integral part of what creates introspection in Tom, which leads to better behaviour. It is, of course, also a firmly integrated part of Dr Arnold's pedagogy, as the historical accounts have demonstrated.

I see Dr Arnold as the primary embodiment of positive masculinity within the text and George Arthur himself as the second factor. Arthur's morals and values also heavily influence Tom. As a sensitive and timid boy, he is at odds with the hegemonic masculinity practised at the school. However, this difference in Arthur has a beneficial effect as he becomes a source of moral authority in the novel. The most striking example of this is the fact that Arthur persuades Tom to give up the use of crib notes, as mentioned, which is something Tom has never even thought twice about prior to being challenged on it, as it is such a normalised part of public-school life. While the giving up of crib notes itself is not necessarily what makes Tom a better young man, it is the principles that motivate him to do so that are important to note. The values and beliefs that Arnold and Arthur manage to instil in Tom are what help him along his way. It is with this in mind that I contend that *Tom Brown's School Days*, although not free of inconsistencies and

ambiguities, as I have shown, does offer a model of positive masculinity that shows how boys can develop in such a setting.

Reflecting on the critical literature that serves as the theoretical and contextual foundation of this dissertation, it is apparent that the theories explored are useful in analysing the novel. Through Tom's character development, the influence of Arthur and Arnold, and the bullying of Flashman, *Tom Brown's School Days* offers a representation of both the 'good' and 'bad' of public-school life and schoolboy masculinity. I believe it is important to highlight the fact that 'good' was able to flourish under Arnold, despite the terrible state of the public schools. Furthermore, it adds legitimacy to Hughes's novel for its representation of the negative aspects of Victorian public schooling.

In this final discussion, I will reflect on the patterns that emerge in the novel that reflect the theoretical and contextual framework set out in Chapter 1, considering the current discourse around masculinity, the theory of hegemonic masculinity, and the state of masculinity within modern school settings.

One of the first things to consider is the crucial role played by a paternal figure. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is extremely important for positive boyhood development, as explained by Harrington (2020) and Farrell (2017). If we take Thomas Arnold, the headmaster, as a paternal figure within the novel, we can see in him an embodiment of Eberly's explanation that "young men [need] to see mature masculinity modelled out… [and that] "well-seasoned masculinity [transforms] the aggression of young males and [directs them] towards socially constructive pursuits" (Eberly in Harrington, 2020: 3). If we consider the state of the public schools prior to Arnoldian reform, as has been explored in detail through the work of Turner (2015), it is possible to say that the positive changes brought about (and reflected in the novel through Tom's development) by Thomas Arnold demonstrate the beneficial effects of a strong paternal figure.

As mentioned, the headmaster had specific aims in his approach to Rugby. The fictional Arnold's strategy of Tom's mentoring Arthur reflects what Weaver (2004: 457) says about male/male identification and Arnold's belief in the power of the boys' friendships in their character development. Arthur, with his values and beliefs, ends up being a profound influence on Tom, possibly helping him more than Arnold anticipated he would. Arthur is assigned to Tom just to give him some responsibility, but, as we have seen, he ends up playing a very important part in Tom's development.

The historical literature on the public schools also speaks about fagging, and how Arnold believed it was a necessary part of the system (Turner, 2015: 94-95). As mentioned, I believe that this system would work well if it operated as intended, and the novel seeks to show this. The prefects to whom the fags were assigned did appear to benefit positively from Arnold's system. As we have seen, they were the students who had the closest relations with the headmaster (Neddam, 2004: 319). Ultimately, it seems that those who did benefit from a close relationship with Arnold were the better for it. Stanley explains that these boys "brought quite a different character with them to Oxford than that which we knew elsewhere. His pupils were thoughtful, manly-minded, conscious of duty and obligation" (Stanley in Neddam, 2004: 319). As far as the novel is concerned, the headmaster's impact on Tom is profound and seen also in the end, particularly when, after leaving the school, he learns of the headmaster's death and returns to Rugby to visit his grave. The novel draws to a close with Tom's thoughts: "If he could only have seen the Doctor again for one five minutes—have told him all that was in his heart, what he owed to him, how he loved and reverenced him, and would, by God's help, follow his steps in life and death…" (Hughes, 1857: 334).

In terms of hegemonic masculinity, we have seen that critiques of the theory argue that it refers to masculinity only in negative terms. We have also established that hegemonic masculinity exists in the subordination of other masculinities, with one 'rising' above the others to be the dominant model that men must subscribe to in order to gain social acceptance amongst other men. The theory of hegemonic masculinity has been very useful in understanding why certain ways of being are promoted or praised over others, something we see in the depiction of Arthur in the novel, a sensitive boy who is more intellectually minded than sporting and athletic. We now understand that, as mentioned in Chapter 1, schools are a major site for the production of masculinity and that they "hierarchise multiple masculinities… valorising some and marginalising others" (Yang, 2020: 319).

If we return to the problem of Connell's theory seeming to focus on negative masculine attributes only, we have seen that one of the most important criticisms of the theory is that it tends to assume a static construction of masculinity. But the novel shows it to be something which changes under Arnold's guidance. Even though he did not eradicate bullying, as Neddam (2015) has explained, the impact of Arnold's influence perhaps is seen in part in the moments where boys stop to consider their poor behaviour, as is evident in the blanket tossing scene when Flashman's friend tells him not to toss anyone against their will. The same is evident in the roasting scene where one boy says, "…what brutes we've been!" (Hughes, 1857: 166). To

reiterate the point made by Michael Moller (2007: 263), "If masculinities are socially constructed, then there must be conditions under which masculinities can change. Further, if masculinities are malleable, at least to some extent, then it becomes less necessary to live with those articulations of masculinity that are damaging." The fact that things were shifting in the school is perhaps a testament to the strength of this argument about hegemonic masculinity and the possibility of positive masculine behaviours.

The various scholars whom I used to discuss masculinity in the modern school setting provide invaluable insight into patterns which emerge within the novel. Heinrich (2013: 106) also confirmed the notion that multiple masculinities and so "multiple ways of being male" offered themselves to boys, and that certain ways of being are privileged over others. We see this again in Arthur, when concern is shown about his not being particularly athletic and, of course, also being highly sensitive or emotional. Indeed, the boys reflect and embody Heinrich's observations of "'stereotypical' or 'traditional' masculine characteristics and behaviours, such as physical strength and athleticism, stoicism and emotional toughness, and heterosexuality" (Heinrich, 2013: 106). We see this in Tom's active discouragement of emotional expression in Arthur, unless they are in private. This also aligns with what we have seen in the literature about hegemonic masculinity requiring and subsisting off the denigration of other forms. Heinrich (2013: 107) mentions the "absolute need to disguise vulnerability in the public sphere," which we see in Tom's telling Arthur he may only talk about home to him, not "to boys [he doesn't] know, or they'll call [him] home-sick, or mamma's darling…" (Hughes, 1857: 204). We see that Tom is just trying to protect Arthur, but he is, of course, enabling this negative masculine conduct as a result. Indeed, Tom has, as Heinrich (2013: 107-108) observes in her own present-day subjects, "internalised [the] host of hidden yet steadfast rules boys learn at an early age… the restraints that hegemonic masculine codes had imposed in men's lives." Tom's discouragement of Arthur's emotional expression also allows for reflection on the notion that masculinity is a performative construct, requiring certain 'sets' of behaviours to be demonstrated in order to align with the socially acceptable way of being a man. As mentioned, even though Tom admits that he does not personally mind if Arthur talks to him about his mother or sisters, he has somehow internalised the belief that this cannot be done in the wider school setting, because it will result in a loss of face amongst other boys. This reflects the performative aspect of masculinity, because it requires that the boys 'perform' a certain 'manly' character, even if it is at odds with how they may be truly feeling. Of course, this aspect of

masculinity is not positive or conducive, but rather indicates the social pressure faced by boys in such settings, and what they must do in order to be accepted by others.

Furthermore, the avoidance of effeminacy is present, as we have seen, both in the modern school settings, as well as the historical and fictional public school setting of the nineteenth century, where effeminacy was also deprecated. In *Tom Brown's School Days*, just the look of Arthur makes Tom concerned: in a revealing excerpt already quoted, Tom sees "[at] a glance [he] was just the boy whose first half-year at a public school would be misery to himself if he were left alone… called Molly, or Jenny, or some derogatory feminine nickname" (Hughes, 1857: 198). By presenting as a timid boy, seen by others as effeminate, Arthur embodies the ways in which, according to Rosen and Nofzinger, "children who do not conform to traditional notions of gender expression are often labelled as a 'sissy,' 'tomboy,' 'dyke,' or 'fag…' Girls and boys who do not 'do' their gender in socially prescribed ways are often targets of bullying" (2019: 298-299). This is reflected in the novel through Tom's belief that he needs to protect Arthur as much as possible, because he believes that Arthur is just the type of boy who will be bullied. To illustrate, we could imagine the ways in which Flashman, should he have still been at the school at the time of Arthur's arrival, would have treated the boy if he had come into contact with him.

As we have seen, the Victorian public schools were notorious for the rates of bullying and misrule that occurred within them. Indeed, as mentioned, many parents sent their sons to these schools knowing that they would be a sort of 'testing ground' for one's character. This has links to what Gutierrez (2019) found in her study of hypermasculinity and the notion of rites of passage. As discussed earlier, the responses of her study participants reflect how the endurance of suffering is deemed to be a rite of passage in 'becoming a man' that "[weeds] out… those who are weak of heart" (Gutierrez, 2019: 253). Such notions are reflective of a more toxic form of masculinity, one that views the endurance of physical and mental abuse as a sign of one's worth as a man. That parents willingly sent their sons to the public schools, knowing that they were in such a condition, is perhaps a reflection on the wider social beliefs around what constituted masculinity. We can look favourably then upon Arnold's reforms for a positive form of masculinity because of the fact that he aimed to eradicate such elements from the school.

In terms of nineteenth-century masculinity itself, we have seen that there was a major preoccupation with politeness and gentlemanliness, and that there was also a significant element of anxiety around masculinity and effeminacy. While *Tom Brown's School Days*

doesn't deal much with the question of politeness, we have seen that concern around effeminacy is present in the aforementioned events and the character of Arthur. However, as Tosh (2016: 14-15) explains, there was also a major nineteenth-century concern with *manliness*, as opposed to gentlemanly refinement. Tosh explains that assertiveness, courage, and straightforwardness were all considered important traits for a man to exhibit. Indeed, in the context of the novel, such traits can perhaps be viewed as a positive form of masculinity. Courage is of particular importance, as it is this trait that empowers Arthur to pray at his bedside on his first night, despite being extremely nervous and not yet having any close friends. Straightforwardness, which can be linked to honesty, is another important trait that informs Arthur and Tom's friendship. By becoming vulnerable and sharing with Tom that his (Arthur's) father had died, Arthur provides Tom with the opportunity to support his friend in an emotional moment. In solidifying their bond through an expression of honest vulnerability, Arthur gains a friend, and Tom learns that emotional expression is not something to be scorned as effeminate. Manliness, then, in this context, can be considered as an alternative to toxic masculinity, in that by embracing the traits of manliness, Tom is able to move beyond anxiety and fear of the effeminate. He can set aside the "blundering schoolboy reasoning [that] made him think that Arthur would be softened and less manly for thinking of home" (Hughes, 1857: 216), and no longer be concerned with telling Arthur to only express emotion in private. He also realises Arthur's courage to be who he is and stand by what he believes in, even if it means being scorned or mocked. This is evident in Arthur's praying on the first night, and also in his decision to be frank with Tom and challenge him on the use of crib notes. We see that manliness, by this definition, delineates the aforementioned traits of courage and straightforwardness outlined by Tosh (2016), and certainly, these prove to be beneficial to Tom as he matures into the sixth-form prefect we meet at the end of the novel.

Another concern central to masculinity in the nineteenth century is the issue of "national character" (Cohen, 2005: 314). Indeed, as mentioned, Mallett (2015: vii) explains that 'character' in the public school denoted "…self-restraint, industry and perseverance in the face of difficulty, and when so used [is] a virtual synonym for manliness". It can be argued that the entirety of Arnold's pedagogical approach was focused on developing the character of his students, so this is extremely relevant to the portrayal of nineteenth-century masculinity and its concerns. However, it is important to note that *national* character is also closely linked with nationalism and notions of empire. In this regard, the novel, appears to link manliness to being British and thus to nationalistic and imperialistic concerns. This is certainly an area in which

the text becomes problematic in presenting itself as a reflection of *positive* masculinity, given imperialism's unquestioned links to oppression and exploitation.

Finally, the question remains whether it is possible to use a nineteenth-century text to shed light on contemporary debates about masculinity. Given that many observations in the literature on modern schooling appear to reflect in the novel, in terms of how the boys conduct themselves and what beliefs or values they internalise, I think that certain aspects of gender negotiation have remained pertinent. With this in mind, I believe that the positive masculinity modelled by Arnold and Arthur can be deemed relevant to contemporary masculinity as well. As mentioned, I believe that positive masculinity constitutes an avoidance of physical violence as a form of conflict resolution, an acceptance of effeminacy and sensitivity and difference, and a belief in the importance of speaking out against instances of violence or prejudice. The fact that the novel demonstrates what outcomes can be achieved when a positive masculine model is constructed lead me to believe that it does indeed lend itself to current debates about masculinity. With the study conducted in this dissertation, it is my hope that I have demonstrated this link.

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