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The Representation of the Public School in the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums*

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Contents

1. Introduction

Whether its readership consists of adults, adolescents or even children, the main aim of most literature has always been to entertain. This BA paper will examine the entertainment of one particular group of readers, namely the English boys and adolescents growing up in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period who found their weekly portion of fiction in the immensely popular boys' periodicals. Even though these juvenile magazines came in all sorts of shapes and forms varying in quality, cost price and lifespan, the differences in content were often negligible. I have chosen to focus on two titles that are considered to be of a higher quality than the cheap Penny Dreadful and that are therefore more appropriate for an in-depth examination, namely the *Boy's Own Paper* (1879-1967) and *Chums* (1893-1941).

The focal point of this BA paper will be the correlation between the boys' magazines and the English public school. Certain well-known characteristics of the public school – with the cult of athleticism as its most prominent one – have served as my point of departure. This is followed by an examination of how these aspects are reflected in the periodicals which so often draw inspiration from the enclosed world of the boys' institution. For my primary sources, I have used a 1923-24 annual of the *Boy's Own Paper* and a 1935-36 annual of *Chums*, complemented by Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) as a thorough background portrayal of public school life.

I will commence this dissertation with a profound exposition of the background of both magazines, emphasizing that although they appear quite similar on the surface, they had some different beliefs. Whereas the *Boy's Own Paper* aimed to encourage its readers to

become morally good Christian gentlemen, *Chums* stimulated a pro-imperialist, patriotic approach to life (Macdonald 522-523). In addition, the former was generally known for its conservatism – preserved by its Christian publishing house, the Religious Tract Society – whereas the latter was more progressive (523). This background knowledge of the magazines will serve as a basis for the interpretation of their contents throughout this paper.

Secondly, I will discuss the different kinds of critiques public schools have received. One of those regarded their divergence from the original principles of foundation to provide poor boys with ecclesiastical training in favour of the elite status for which the public school is still known nowadays (Landow). The serial school story featured in the 1935-36 annual of *Chums*, "The Last Falaise", reflects this concern. Furthermore, the importance of Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* which entirely transformed the hostile public opinion towards the public school (Reed 73-75) will be demonstrated. This hostility regarded the contrasting views on childhood of on the one hand the Victorian writers that adopted a romantic view on childhood, and on the other the adherents of the public school who thought boys should be hastened into adulthood (73-75). Apart from this, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* can also be considered the beginning and the foremost example of the whole school story genre, including those tales that were published in the juvenile periodicals.

Next, a prominent aspect of the public school will be dealt with in depth, namely the cult of athleticism and the anti-intellectualism that it promoted. This subject is worth treating at greater length since the cult of athleticism embodied some of the main values that the public school tried to convey to its students such as loyalty, bravery and team-spirit (Richards 120). Therefore, the cult's causes and evolution will be examined, together with its representation in the boys' periodicals *Chums* and especially the *Boy's Own Paper*. I will argue by use of examples extracted from the latter periodical that it held an ambiguous

attitude towards the cult since it greatly supported athleticism in its school stories but at the same time searched to educate its readers through detailed scientific articles. The analysis of "The Two Captains of Tuxford", a serial school story featured in the 1923-24 annual of the *Boy's Own Paper,* will serve as an illustration of this cult of athleticism.

Overall, the aim of this BA paper is to emphasize and illustrate that the hugely popular school stories in the boys' magazines were endorsed by the social context of Victorian England in which they were written. Since the public school is a typically English phenomenon, the school story genre has also known its widest diffusion in England. So even though the public school has often been an object of criticism, the contents of the two boys' periodicals examined in this paper have always supported the ideology of this institution. I will examine the extent to which the public school has served as an inspiration for the serial school stories featured in these magazines and how the institution's ideology as well as its problems were reflected in this juvenile fiction.

2. History and Beliefs of the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums*

In this first chapter, I will elaborate on the origins and background of the two magazines which form the focal point of my research. This background knowledge will serve as a basis for the interpretations of their contents in the following chapters.

The *Boy's Own paper* and *Chums* were two of the more high-minded and expensive periodicals for British boys and adolescents. Both periodicals were published on a weekly and later monthly basis in the nineteenth century and continued until well into the twentieth century, making them the longest-living and most popular in their kind. The *Boy's Own Paper* started publication in 1879 and only ceased in 1967. *Chums*'s life span was shorter, existing from 1893 until 1941. At the end of each year, a year's worth of magazines was bound into an annual. The examples in this BA paper will be excerpted from the 1923-24 annual of *The Boy's Own Paper* and from the 1935-36 annual of *Chums,* which had by then ceased monthly publication and was only annually published.

The longer stories that were featured in these magazines were usually serialized, with a new part appearing in every number of the magazines. Serialization was very popular in nineteenth-century Britain. Not only entertaining stories for children were serialized, great authors such as Dickens used this means of publication as well. As is also the case in the boys' magazines, a characteristic feature of the stories consisted of the visualization of key moments by use of fitting illustrations. Another great advantage was the spreading of the cost price for the reader over several months instead of having to pay for the entire edition at once. However, serialization did not only present benefits for the reader. It also offered

the writers an opportunity to react to the readers' response as Allingham argues that a "[n]egative response […] could induce a writer to try fresh plot gambits […], to introduce new characters […], and to develop new themes and settings" (Allingham). These negative responses could consist of a drop in sales, but one could also imagine, especially considering the lively correspondence columns of the boys' magazines, that reoccurring comments in readers' letters prompted the writer to adjust his story's plot.

The periodicals considered here, and in the first place the *Boy's Own Paper*, were established as a reaction to a very popular but objectionable type of juvenile literature. The so-called Penny Dreadful contained cheap sensational fiction that entertained upper-working and lower-middle-class boys. However, the more qualitative magazines that will be examined in this paper aimed to protect upper and upper-middle-class boys by offering them a healthy alternative to the improper Penny Dreadful. Instead of mere brainless entertainment, they also tried to incorporate a moral message (MacDonald 521). The pursuit of a morally elevated form of juvenile literature can be connected to the widespread thought that juvenile literature, and therefore magazines read in childhood and adolescence as well, have a major influence on the shaping of the minds and identities of the young readers (Noakes 151). Jeffrey Richards states in his *Happiest Days, The Public Schools in English Fiction* (1988) that "reading in childhood when the mind is at its most impressionable has a lasting effect" (1). Its influence is almost impossible to absolutely prove, but "the pattern of consumption of popular culture contains unconscious evidence" (2). Thus, taking into account the *Boy's Own Paper*'s estimated readership of one and a quarter million in the 1880s (Richards 105), its influence should not be underestimated. Therefore, the differing underlying ideologies of the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums* deserve a profound examination since their publishers each aimed to convey a different message to their young readers.

The *Boy's Own Paper* was an initiative of the Religious Tract Society, a conservative and evangelical publishing house. The Religious Tract Society launched this new juvenile periodical specifically to counteract the Penny Dreadful, as it is stated in its 1879 report, the year in which the *Boy's Own Paper* was founded:

> The urgent need of such a periodical had been long and deeply felt. Juvenile crime was being largely stimulated by the pernicious literature circulated among our lads. Judges, magistrates, schoolmasters, prison chaplains, and others were deploring the existence of the evil and calling loudly for a remedy but none seemed to be forthcoming. (Richards 104)

According to the Christian publishing house, the young readers of the Penny Dreadful were influenced by its sensational content which would stimulate them into juvenile crime. This line of reasoning corresponds to the earlier statement about the lasting impact of literature while still in one's youth. However, creating a healthy and evangelic alternative to this immensely popular and enticing phenomenon was easier said than done, since a combination of "didactic moral instruction" (MacDonald 521) and entertaining stories that would appeal to boys, was not so easy to achieve. In order to appeal to the young readers, they implicitly incorporated morally good examples in entertaining adventure stories, school stories or poems (522). The *DNCJ* (*Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* 2009) states that "[s]uperficially, the paper resembled any other boys' weekly, deliberately mimicking the genre's distinguishing characteristics, bloody violence included, in order to covertly spread its Christian message via subtle moralizing" (70). So the *Boy's Own Paper* was obliged to imitate the main characteristics of the Penny Dreadful, inserting it with a moral tone, in order to appeal to popular taste. This thought converges in the periodical's guiding principle: "an illustrated volume of pure and entertaining reading" (MacDonald 521). Through the

diverting content, the young readers were provided with examples of Christian and gentlemanly behaviour that are reminiscent of Thomas Arnold's educational ideal at Rugby (522). This ideal is generally thought to find its embodiment in the protagonist of Thomas Hughes's school novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (522). Tom Brown, whose moral development is at the centre of the novel, attends Rugby at the time of the headmastership of Thomas Arnold, the great public school reformer who was convinced that next to learning, "the great end and aim of education was the formation of character" (Bradby). Reading this and other school stories indicates that the ideal of turning the boys into morally good Christian gentlemen is closely linked to athleticism and manliness, rather than to real intelligence or academic achievements. A good citizen is, as the sportsman, disciplined, unselfish and loyal (Macdonald 524-525).

The *Boy's Own Paper* saw its sale figures reduced when faced with the fierce competition of *Chums*, launched in 1892 (Richards 106). *Chums* has been considered to be a lighter and more up-to-date version of the *Boy's Own Paper,* due to the inclusion of cartoons, anecdotes and jokes and because of the lack of a large amount of scientific articles like the ones that appeared in the *Boy's Own Paper*. The periodical took a strong pro-Empire position after it had "begun to set its stories on the frontiers of the Empire" (MacDonald 523). *Chums*'s editor, in his foreword to the 1935-36 annual, repeatedly mentions his happiness at being read all over and even further than the British Empire. He tells his readers that "[i]t is something of which we can well be proud that there are boys in all parts of the Empire, yes, and even in out of the way parts of the world outside the Empire, who gladly link themselves with their English friends through their love of CHUMS ANNUAL" (*Chums* 1). Moreover, the annual, apart from a serial school story, contained stories set all over the world, from Africa, over Alaska, to the sea drome of Ace Williams – The Daredevil Pilot

(*Chums* 83). By 1900, in the years before the First World War, "patriotic and imperial enthusiasm" (MacDonald 527) were values gaining importance which caused the jingoism that was celebrated in *Chums* to sell. Even though its evangelic tradition had always been hostile towards militarism, the *Boy's Own Paper* was obliged to respond to the imperialist ideology by stressing patriotic values while still holding on to old-fashioned principles (527). *Chums*, on the other hand, showed great patriotic enthusiasm for war, publishing entertaining and informative articles on soldiers and their military units (529). This also illustrates that *Chums* moved with time and tackled up-to-date topics, as opposed to the very conservative *Boy's Own Paper*. Connected to its jingoism was *Chums'*s support to the scouting movement. Boy scouting was patriotic and apt for fictionalization, but at the same time it could be considered militaristic: it was invented by General Baden-Powell, the scouts wore military uniforms and they practised scouting, a military skill (530). Paradoxically, the *Boy's Own Paper* embraced the Boy Scouts as well, primarily emphasizing their "good citizenship" (533). As a conclusion, MacDonald states that "[t]he publishers and writers of the boys' magazines were convinced that they were training the future generation of citizens, and addressed some of the central issues of the day: the nature of morality, [...], the duty of patriotism" (535). MacDonald emphasizes the publishers' awareness of the shaping influence that they had on their readers, and how this affected their subsequent choice of topics for the periodicals. So whereas the *Boy's Own Paper* aimed to turn its young readers into gentlemen with good Christian morals, *Chums* sought to create patriotic, pro-imperialist citizens.

Even though *Chums* and the *Boy's Own Paper* are often bracketed together, in reality their beliefs differed greatly. Not only did the former embrace a more patriotic and the latter a morally Christian point of view, they also varied in their conservatism, *Chums* being much

more progressive and therefore considered less serious. Moreover, as will be indicated in the following chapters, the *Boy's Own Paper* easily surpasses *Chums* when it comes to the diversity of subjects treated. *Chums* may have formed a commercial threat to the *Boy's Own Paper*, but it never reached the same level of quality that its rival did. Thanks to its conservatism, its high moral standards and its scientific input, conservative middle-class parents approved for their boys to read the *Boy's Own Paper* while growing up.

3. Criticism of the Public School

a. Divergence from Founding Principles

The institution of the public school that nowadays is known for educating the children of the top layer of society and therefore also for delivering future leaders of the country, has not always been left without criticism. One aspect that has often been challenged, in the past but also more recently, are the high tuition fees that need to be paid to obtain this kind of education. This is even more striking when one takes into consideration the fact that a lot of the public schools that now charge high tuition fees were originally founded to provide the poor with clerical training (Landow). However, as George Landow argues in his "Critical View of British Public Schools", "[b]y the nineteenth century many of these schools had become means of upward mobility, not for the poor, but for the upper-middle classes, who wished to move their children into the aristocracy" (Landow). Thus, chiefly for economical reasons, the original principles of foundation were lost throughout time and exchanged for an elite reputation.

This particular aspect of the public school is also criticized in the serial school story that is featured in the annual of *Chums* of 1935-36, "The Last Falaise" by Gunby Hadath. Its protagonist, Falaise, is the last descendent of the founder of the fictional public school he attends, Fallas. The school in question is one of those that have been founded to help poor boys obtain a proper education. However, a lot has changed since its foundation and Fallas too has become an elite public school charging high educational fees. Falaise, a rather poor boy, is able to go to Fallas thanks to a scholarship but quickly discovers that most of the

other scholarship boys are actually perfectly capable of affording the tuition fees as his friend Griffith informs him that

> [o]ne hasn't to be hard up to sit for a schol. here. Our Entrance schols. are open to any and every one, provided he can pass the doctor's certificate and there's nothing in particular against his character. [...] Chaps go in for our Entrance schols. just for the kudos; it's such a swagger thing to be a Templar of Fallas. It gives you a standing afterwards at the 'Varsity. It's a sort of hall-mark you see. (*Chums* 5-6)

As can be derived from this fragment, most 'Templars' – or boys who attend Fallas on a scholarship – are not poor and not especially talented either; on the contrary, they strive to obtain a scholarship for the status it gives them. This is quite remarkable in a negative way since scholarships are usually either merit- or need-based. Falaise finds this situation very disturbing since each wealthy boy attending the school on a scholarship deprives a poor boy of the opportunity for proper education. For this reason, he reacts against the current government of the school, whose principles greatly diverge from the original aims of the founder, Bois de Falaise. A minor character in the school story, old Trimble the butler, aptly describes the problematic state which the increase in fees has caused: "What is going to become, sir, of our traditions now that fathers can't go on sending their sons to their old school? We want the boy to get to the school where his father was. But instead of that, we're getting quite a new sort, sir" (*Chums* 65). Trimble has witnessed the changes in Fallas and disapproves of the sort of elite school it is becoming due to its increase in luxury and its subsequent attraction of a wealthier audience. For the same reasons, Falaise decides to strive for a restoration of those principles of foundation that aspire to provide boys with moderate means with an education since "a school no longer remains a real force when it begins to depart from its traditions and history" (*Chums* 131). Both quotes emphasize the

importance of the preservation of traditions. They imply that once those are lost, circumstances can only change for the worse. Finally, after conquering numerous obstacles, Falaise reaches the goal of his so-called crusade; a reduction of fees is introduced, superfluous luxury is abandoned and scholarships are ascribed to those who need them (*Chums* 335).

The subject of excessive tuition fees and divergence from principles of foundation that *Chums* tackles in this serial school story has received a lot of critique in the past and is still a sensitive topic today. However, this choice of topic does not only serve as a critique, it can also be linked to *Chums*'s desire to stay in tune with its time, as opposed to the much more conservative *Boy's Own Paper.* One could also argue that by dealing with the subject of scholarships and less prosperous boys, *Chums* searches to widen its reading public. Even though the magazine is thought to address wealthy juveniles, this topic does not only appeal to well-off upper-middle-class boys, it also addresses a lower section of society. In general, school-stories are based on stereotypes in order to appeal to every type of reader (Orwell 5). Such an approach is of course commercially motivated, since the more boys can identify themselves with a character in the story, the more copies will be sold. For this reason "the scholarship-boy [is] an important figure in this class of story because he makes it possible for boys from very poor homes to project themselves into the public-school atmosphere" (Orwell 6). Therefore, it can be stated that *Chums* adapted its content in order to compete with more affordable popular story papers such as the *Gem* and the *Magnet*, both published by Harmsworth (MacDonald 524).

b. Low Educational Standards and the Public School's Ideology About Childhood

George Orwell states in his essay on "Boys' weeklies" (1940) that "in England education is mainly a matter of status" and that "[t]he most definite dividing line between the petite-bourgeoisie and the working class is that the former pay for their education" (Orwell 4). Hence, one could assume that, since public schools developed towards educating a wealthier class of society and are therefore much more expensive, the level of education would also be considerably higher than in other forms of schooling. However, this assumption should not be taken for granted. As Bamford states, "[p]ublic schools were guardians of the old tradition" (xii); educational developments were to a large extent ignored and its curriculum usually did not expand further than the classics, shedding insufficient light on both scientific and linguistic or literary matters. The public schools were often frowned upon by outsiders because of their insufficient educational standards and their corporal punishments, which were supposed to toughen up the boys. However, in the 1830s, a lot of schools were reformed following Thomas Arnold's example at Rugby of raising the general moral tone through "effective gentlemanly education" (Reed 59). It is interesting to note how these independent schools which are nowadays so closely linked to the most prestigious universities of Oxford and Cambridge and educate the top layer of society, used to be criticized, problematic institutions.

A work that entirely transformed public opinion about the public school was Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. In the early nineteenth century, prior to Hughes's novel, public schools were treated with hostility in literature, since the education they provided conflicted with the romantic vision of many of the prominent Victorian writers (Reed 73-75).

Whereas most Victorian writers followed the romantic conviction that children are inherently innocent and should not face the evils of the world too early (73), the public school's function was to "hasten boys from childhood to manhood" (74) by dropping them in a rather cruel world where they had to learn to fend for themselves. Remarkably, this idea of hasting the boys into adulthood is still expressed in a little poem by Hilary Brown that was included in the *Boy's Own Annual* that dates from the interwar period (1923-24):

Father to the man!

You want to be so brave, some day, when you to man have grown:
You want to be so plucky – strong – when boyhood's oats are sown.
But don't postpone your bravery: remember, if you can,
That old, old saying that "the boy is father to the man!"

If you are but a coward now, put by your cowardice.
If you are paltry, false and slack, be very sure of *this*-
That little winds of pettiness the fires of meanness fan
Then, what a future for that boy who's father to the man!

But if you set your ideals high: stand straight of heart and soul;
Take up your sword and fight your way to every noble goal:
On all that is unworthy, you will rise and lay your ban –
And, later, know your tussle-time has helped to mould a man! (*Boy's Own Annual* 25)

In this poem, the young readers are told that if they aspire to become strong and brave men – as most of them did – they should lay the foundations of manhood while still in their youth. Thus, according to this ideology, as opposed to the romantic point of view discussed

above, schoolboys should already exhibit this desired bravery in their youth. This could be achieved by setting their ideals high and fighting for their goals instead of postponing action until adulthood and being "paltry, false and slack" in the meantime. Once again, the *Boy's Own Paper*'s stance corresponded to that of the public school, supporting its educational policy that hardly changed since the Victorian era by ingraining this ideology in the boys' minds through fictional entertainment.

The hostility towards the public schools' beliefs on childhood and education were altered by *Tom Brown's Schooldays* considering that this novel "was literally the first work of fiction to present a real world of boys in the setting of a real English public school. And it is still, despite the many recent novels on the subject, the most vigorous, the most convincing, and the most deeply moving of all" (Reed 67). One could therefore argue that Hughes created the character of the schoolboy hero with whom children as well as adults could sympathize (Reed 67-68). In addition, he contradicted the general image of the public school as being a place of pure brutality and tyranny (68). It is remarkable how a novel has played such a great part in transforming the hostility of the public towards this institution into a love for stories set in the public school atmosphere. Decades later, the "muscular correctness" (69) embodied in the character of Tom Brown served as an inspiration for, among many others, the school stories featured in the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums.* Thanks to Hughes, the literary genre of the school story became immensely popular among young boys, adolescents and even girls whether they could afford to attend such a school themselves or whether it was merely a far away imaginary location. One could even wonder whether the history of English children's literature, including that of juvenile magazines, would have been the same without the character of Tom Brown. Up until today, school stories have continued to entertain children and they still carry them along in the enclosed environment of the

school. An obvious example of this is the worldwide best-selling Harry Potter series written by J.K. Rowling since in its essence this is a school story as well.

4. The Public School's Cult of Athleticism and its Representation in Boys' Periodicals

Athleticism, as opposed to intellectual activity, is one of the most striking themes that emerge from the school story genre developed in the boys' periodicals. As Jeffrey Richards states, one could even call this trend a "cult of athleticism" since it "had its gods and heroes, its rituals and its hymns, and it was invested with the kind of religious fervour that Arnold had sought to channel into Christian commitment" (Richards 120). Self-evidently, this greatly popular element of the school story finds its origin in the reality of public school life. Games at school were "seen as an ideal way of putting into effect Arnold's desire to shape character. It directed energy and aggression into productive channels. It promoted manliness and chivalry through the ideas of team spirit, leadership, loyalty, bravery, fair play, modesty in victory and humility in defeat" (Richards 120). In short, Thomas Arnold's ideal of shaping Christian gentlemen was embodied in the moral connotations that accompanied the physical game so that "the concepts of gentleman and sportsman became interchangeable" (120). In this chapter, I will examine the causes and evolution of the cult of athleticism, together with its representation in the boys' periodicals *Chums* and especially the *Boy's Own Paper*. I will argue that the latter holds an ambiguous attitude towards the topic since it greatly supports athleticism in its school stories, but at the same time searches to educate its readers through scientific articles.

a. Causes and Evolution of the Cult of Athleticism

There are several reasons for the popularity of games in the public school and the lack of other entertaining extra-curricular activities could be considered one of them. However, this was not the only and certainly not the most significant explanation for the genesis of the cult of athleticism. J.A. Mangan argues in his *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (1981) that a "lack of respect for learning, contempt for 'bookworms' and admiration for active muscle have been constant features of many public school boys" (106); moreover, "[t]he Public Schools Commision reported in 1864 that their intellectual standards were distinctly unsatisfactory" (106). These substandard intellectual achievements are due to the ingrained idea that engaging in intellectual activity was considered to be an effeminate pursuit. The ideals of English boyhood consisted of manliness, self-control and reliance on action rather than on the world of ideas (106). Moreover, Kelly Boyd argues in her *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain* (2003) that in the second half of the nineteenth century the essentially masculine values of athleticism could also be linked to the elite status of the upper middle class (47). She even suggests that "[t]he function of the tales in the boys' story paper was to crystallize the link between masculinity and class status" (47). The boys' periodicals confirm the stereotype of the upper class as providing the "natural leaders" (47) of society. This social leadership was accompanied by a physical superiority, in that an athletic build consolidated their status. On the one hand, the exciting adventures of elite boys that were told in the stories of these magazines often offered working-class boys a means of escaping from their everyday lives (47). On the other hand, they also offered middle-class boys "roadmaps to manliness" (48), fictional examples of how to deal with the privileges and responsibilities that they were charged with when entering a public school. However, Boyd also states that at the beginning of the twentieth century the schoolboy heroes were more often from a simpler descent (71). "The Last Falaise", the public school

story featured in the 1935-36 annual of *Chums*, exemplifies this evolution since its central character attends the school on a scholarship. Boyd's view on the second half of the nineteenth century can be linked to Matthew Arnold's division of Victorian society in his essay on "Barbarians, Philistines and Populace" in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In this essay Arnold labelled the middle-class as Philistines: superficial people who do not pursue "sweetness and light" (Arnold 99) and are known for their materialism. The aristocracy, Arnold designated as inheritors of the Barbarians as he states that they

> had the passion for field-sports; and they have handed it on to our aristocratic class, who of this passion too, as of the passion for asserting one's personal liberty, are the great natural stronghold. The care of the Barbarians for the body, and for all manly exercises; the vigour, good looks, and fine complexion [...] all this may be observed still in our aristocratic class. (100-101)

Moreover, their chief values were those of "courage, a high spirit [and] self-confidence" (101). These values, combined with the importance of sports, manliness and vigour form the very essence of the Victorian public school. So, even though most of the young Victorians who attended a public school were Philistines and class-mobility was very rare at the times, the boys tried their best to emulate the aristocratic lifestyle of the Barbarians that served as a model for the rest of society. This emulation is also well represented in the boys' periodicals, since the serial school stories are crammed with descriptions of field-sports and glorifications of muscular bodies and they aim to convey those values that triumph on the playing field.

Most headmasters did not only promote sports for the essential gentlemanly values that they represent, such as self-discipline, unselfishness and loyalty. They also downplayed the importance of intellectual activity in order to avoid the possibility that the boys would

start to think for themselves and maybe even rebel. As Mangan states: “Explanations for the distaste with which headmasters viewed intellectually self-confident pupils may lie in the nature of the power structure of schools of the period, and in the emphasis on conformity that was so noticeable a feature” (110). Headmasters preferred their schoolboys to put all their energy into sports and show only little interest in the government of the school in order to prevent them from questioning established doctrines (110).

Finally, it has often been noted that the concepts of chivalry and sportsmanship that are revered in the cult of athleticism are related to the boys’ possible future in the imperial service (Richards 122). The public schools provided adolescents that were physically prepared and valued duty and honour highly. Consequently, they were both physically and mentally ready when the Great War broke out (123). The First World War can therefore be seen as the climax of athleticism. The supposed role of school sports in preparing the boys for war is also expressed in Sir Henry Newbolt’s highly imperialistic poem “Vitai Lampada” (1892). According to Colin Veitch in his essay “’Play up! Play up! And Win the War!’ Football, the Nation and the First World War 1914-15” (1985) Newbolt’s “Vitai Lampada” “can be seen as the ultimate poetic expression of the ideological transfer held to take place between public school playing-field and the battlefield” (366). This poem emphasizes that the values of self-control, team-spirit and courage that accompany the playing-field are needed on the battlefield as well. The famous verses “But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote - / ‘Play up! Play up! And Play the game!’” depict how a young soldier in the battle-field, thinking about his former captain’s cheer, is encouraged by childhood memories of the playing field.

In the *Boy’s Own Annual* that dates back to the interwar period (1923-24), this notion of preparing the boys for their possible future of serving the Empire, is represented as well. In the monthly articles titled “When I leave School?” the boys were given “particulars of

various professions and businesses, etc., offering suitable careers for boys" (*Boy's Own Annual* 12). This feature included job descriptions, requirements, examinations that had to be taken, and information about salary for a wide range of jobs, ranging from mechanical engineer over Indian police service to royal naval medical service (12; 97). As can already be deducted from these examples, jobs in the imperial service were amply represented. Consequently, it is clear that the publishers of the *Boy's Own Paper* sought to match their content with the public school's ideology.

The popularity of games diminished after the Great War but nevertheless they continued to be practiced with enthusiasm in the public schools until World War II. However, the anti-intellectual undercurrent of the games was much more challenged now since educational reforms increasingly focussed on the importance of academic work (Richards 123).

b. Representation in the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums*

Having analyzed the causes of the prevalence of athleticism over intelligence, I will now examine how these evolutions are represented in the content of the annuals of The *Boy's Own Paper* (1923-24) and *Chums* (1935-36). Both annuals date back to the interwar period, which, as stated above, saw a shift in attention in favour of intellectualism. George Orwell states that after the Great War "[t]here [was] a marked advance in intellectual curiosity [...] the post-war papers [were] read by much the same public, but the mental age aimed at [seemed] to have risen by a year or two years – an improvement probably corresponding to the improvement in elementary education since 1909" (9). As opposed to *Chums* which was usually recognized as the less serious of the two, the *Boy's Own Annual* of 1923-24

contained quite a lot of informative and even scientific articles. Moreover, Richard Noakes (2004) points out that a study has shown that "in the 1890s, the *BOP* contained one of the highest percentages (approximately 6 per cent) of material on topics relating to science, technology, nature and health" (153). Examples of this are a detailed explanation of the workings of thermionic valves (*Boy's Own Annual* 23), a closer look at peculiar animals and plants in the monthly section "The Boy's Own Field Club" (*Boy's Own Annual* 67) and even a number of step-by-step how-to pages, for example on "An Electric Motor with no Complications, And How to Make It without Much Trouble" (312). The presence of these articles indicates an awareness of the increased interest in and importance of more serious and educational material. It should be noted that *Chums* contained some informative articles as well but their content cannot be compared with those in the *Boy's Own Paper*. The *Boy's Own Paper*'s complicated and detailed explanations, descriptions and illustrations were of a much higher level than the simplified articles such as "Thrills of the Modern Airway" (*Chums* 25) in *Chums.* They did not only differ in content, the accompanying illustrations were of a whole different calibre as well. The images in the *Boy's Own Paper* contributed to the explanation of the scientific material; those in *Chums*, on the other hand, merely served as an entertaining addition to the text and had no educational value whatsoever. This difference in content confirms the acknowledged fact that the *Boy's Own Paper* was not purely about entertainment but through its great variety of subjects aimed to impart real knowledge to its readers. *Chums*, conversely, was less concerned with its educational purpose and more with sales figures.

However, for several reasons, the depiction of the public schools still deviated from reality and references to the actual classes and their subjects remained strikingly absent even in the twentieth century. In the school stories which are thought to depict life in a

public school, educational elements remained absent and athleticism preserved its prominent role. One explanation for this can be found in the entertaining purpose of the magazines. The authors of the school serials were aware of what the boys and adolescents were eager to read and consequently, they knew what sold. Unfortunately, didactic messages about performing well in the academic field were usually not at the top of the boys' wish list. The seriousness of reality was kept away from the 'fantasy world' which the school story aimed to depict. *Chums* extended this idea to the rest of its content and provided its readers with a carefree getaway into fiction. As mentioned before, the more versatile *Boy's Own Paper* provided a combination of both information and entertainment by incorporating articles on a great variety of subjects. This offered the young reader the opportunity to either read the magazine from cover to cover and be informed and entertained, or select what to read according to his personal interest. By separating these two aspects, the *Boy's Own Paper* remained up to date by means of its scientific articles but at the same time conservatively referred back to the old values of athleticism in its depictions of the public school.

The opening lines of "The Two Captains of Tuxford", a school serial published in the *Boy's Own Paper* in 1923-24, contain a description of the protagonist which corresponds to the pre-war ideal of the Victorian schoolboy as being manly, muscular and ready for action. The fragment sets the tone for the rest of the school story:

> In a green garden running down to the railway in a North London suburb a tall boy walked up and down, his gaze turned upon the ground. For one of his height he was sturdily built: there was less of a characteristic weediness expected in the type. But in Dick Graham there was certainly that quality of endurance which had made his father, in other years, a figure in the school of which he was now so affectionate an

> *alumnus*. Even in his movements – the idle movements involved a stroll in a back garden – Graham showed a leisurely strength as if a call had only to come for action for that body of his to be braced into something persistent and indeed unyielding. (*Boy's Own Annual* 26)

The protagonist, Dick Graham, can be seen as an embodiment of the cult of athleticism. These first words immediately provided the readers with a thorough sketch of the protagonist's appearance and character. The laudatory description of Dick' physique as "tall", "sturdily built" and showing a "physical endurance" served as an example for the schoolboy readers. The emphasis on his muscular build is closely linked to his strong personality since the "endurance" mentioned should be interpreted both in a physical and in a psychological way. His strong body does not only possess the physical readiness for war discussed above, his personality too is characterized as "persistent and indeed unyielding". Graham attends Tuxford with a mission and will not relent before he has achieved his goal. Therefore, he stands for the values so highly esteemed by the pre-war public schools' ideology and cult of athleticism; that is, the shaping of character through physical training. Graham's father sends him to Tuxford, a public school whose state is described as "rotten" (75) because it has lost its former values and discipline. He believes that the school, which he used to attend himself as a boy, will benefit from Dick's presence: "I've a notion Tuxford could be brought back, and I've notion that you could bring it back" (27). The corruption of the school is reflected in the fact that games are not compulsory and only of little significance; consequently, there is a lack of the well-known values represented by sports. One could say that Tuxford has abandoned the pre-war cult of athleticism without the expected increase in intellectual activity. Instead, the lack of compulsory games caused an expansion of the boys' freedom. However, even though the fictional school of Tuxford has

lost its interest in playing the field, the *Boy's Own Paper* has definitely not. Its conservatism found a representative in the character of Dick Graham and the remainder of the story revolves around the protagonist's attempt to restore old values and increase discipline by making games compulsory again. This story illustrates what was stated above, namely that, as opposed to the changing reality, the academic theme continued to be ignored in the fictional public school. Thus, the conservatism of the *Boy's Own Paper* was validated in its representation of the public school since it seemed as if the Great War and the ensuing educational reforms never occurred; "The Two Captains of Tuxford" restored the cult of athleticism by presenting its masculine protagonist as its embodiment.

Chums, the boys' periodical that to a large extent ignored any intellectual or academic development, also tackled a similar topic in the serial school story that was featured in 1935-36, "The Last Falaise". The protagonist, Falaise, just like Graham in "The Two Captains of Tuxford", tries to alter the current state of the school and return to an old but lost set of principles. At first, Falaise is considered an outsider, but when he shows his skills in the field, he acquires respect from the other boys and gains confidence to execute his plan: "They called it 'Falaise's match.' And that was mere justice. For days you heard the Templars talking about him. So the time was ripening for the marked man to make his first move" (*Chums* 139). Through these last words, the narrator stresses Falaise's psychological growth. Consequently, in the next chapter, Falaise delivers a speech to the other Templars (scholarship boys) in which he advocates a return to Fallas's original state, "a school for poor chaps" (*Chums* 194). The acknowledgment he received for his athletic achievements has given him the courage to fully voice his conviction.

From the two examples discussed above, one can derive the social conservatism of the juvenile magazines. Even though they, and especially the *Boy's Own Paper,* did

acknowledge the changing reality of the twentieth century by incorporating scientific articles, this change is completely absent in the actual school stories. Therefore, one can argue that the serial school stories could just as well have been written in the Victorian era since they represent a nineteenth-century Victorian state of mind. Both protagonists drew the confidence and the authority to execute their mission not from academic but from their athletic achievements. Especially the *Boy's Own Paper* assumed quite an ambiguous stance: on the one hand it acknowledged the increased importance of intellectual subjects, but on the other it glorified the cult of athleticism with its underlying anti-intellectualism. Nonetheless, through the importance of the playing-field the school stories did convey some other essential values for the shaping of the young readers' identities and mind, such as courage, team spirit, loyalty – to one's school house but also to one's country – and perseverance, both in the game and in the pursuit of one's beliefs. Hence, the major influence that this juvenile fiction exerted on the minds of its young readers should not be underestimated.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this BA paper was to examine the role and representation of the institution of the public school in juvenile magazines such as *Chums* and the *Boy's Own Paper.* Even though one should not forget that these magazines contained stories and articles on other subjects as well, the theme of the public school was undeniably one of the central threads throughout. For this reason one can state that the phenomenon of the weekly fictional paper for boys and adolescents became one of the most important and most consistent representations of the school story genre. During their lifespan of respectively 48 (*Chums*) and 88 years (the *Boy's Own Paper*), the boys' magazines took their young readers on a weekly/monthly journey into the fictional world of the enclosed environment of the public school. These stories were not only read by public school boys themselves, they also provided an imaginary getaway to those for whom this was a lifestyle that they could only dream of. The boys' magazines and their school stories also offered authors the opportunity to publish their work in serial form; this made it possible to alter a story's plot according to the taste of the audience.

However, the closed social environment of the public school did not only serve as an inexhaustible source of inspiration, the juvenile periodicals also supported its often criticized ideology. Even though it must be acknowledged that the school story featured in the *Chums* annual of 1935-36, "The Last Falaise", does contain some implicit criticism on the general divergence of the public school's original principles and its high tuition fees, in general both magazines showed great support for the institution's viewpoint on education and childhood.

Through glorifying the public school's cult of athleticism, they helped shape Thomas Arnold's ideal of the Christian gentleman. Reading the school stories, articles and poems in which a moral message reminiscent of Arnold's ideology was often incorporated had a shaping effect on the minds of the boys. Apart from the moral interest in the shaping of character, the *Boy's Own Paper* also tried to educate its young readers in a more worldly way through scientific articles.

It can thus be argued that the public school and the boys' magazines were reciprocally useful to each other. Whereas the typically English institution provided this type of juvenile literature with one of its major and most popular topics, these magazines also helped to consolidate the underlying ideology of the public school through those same stories. The boys' magazines owed the popularity of their school stories not only to the characteristic English institution as a never-ending inspirational source, but certainly also to the founding father of the genre, Thomas Hughes. Without these two factors, it is most probable that the genre of the school story, and subsequently also the school tales in the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Chums,* would not have achieved the same status in English juvenile literature.

Finally, taking a leap to the present, I would even suggest that the boys' magazines and their decades of glorification of the public school have contributed to the shaping of its current elite position and the fact that it is known for providing the leaders of society. For this reason their importance is undeniable and one cannot imagine reading the *Boy's Own Paper* or *Chums* without stepping into the enclosed world of the fictionalized public school.

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