



University of Chester



**This work has been submitted to ChesterRep – the University of Chester's
online research repository**

<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com>

Author(s): Carol Edwards

Title: Male-only preserves: Homosocial environments in the nineteenth century

Date: 2013

Originally published as: University of Chester MA dissertation

Example citation: Edwards, C. (2013). *Male-only preserves: Homosocial environments in the nineteenth century*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Submitted version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/311250>

Abstract

This dissertation explores those areas of nineteenth-century life from which women were excluded. Links are made throughout to literary texts as illustrations of how male-only groups were depicted in literature and how homosociality was represented. As well as describing the national picture, examples of male-only environments in Cheshire, which are still in existence in the twenty-first century, are used.

The Introduction describes the background to the project and considers the development of male-only environments in the light of nineteenth-century attitudes to the respective roles of men and women. It reviews expectations with regard to men's behaviour that were current at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and considers the changes in those attitudes that took place during Queen Victoria's reign.

The first chapter deals with public schools and the consequences for young boys of growing up in a female-free environment, paying particular regard to the aspirations of their parents, the pupils' everyday lives and their relationships. Chapter 2 deals with adult male associations and societies: gentlemen's clubs, Freemasonry, and examples of other local groups that survive today. It looks at their rules and rituals, specifically with regard to their attitude to the presence of women. The final chapter is concerned with intense male relationships and nineteenth-century public opinion about them; particular attention is given in this section to literary examples of close friendships between men and to the role of bachelors. Finally, the Conclusion reflects on the complexity of the subject matter and highlights the different perceptions, historical and contemporary, of the changes that took place during the nineteenth century; and considers how much, or little, has changed since then.

**University of Chester
Department of English
MA Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture
EN7204 Dissertation**

Male-Only Preserves: Homosocial Environments in the Nineteenth Century

G25548

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1 - Public Schools: Education and Punishment	10
Chapter 2 - Gentlemen's Clubs, Freemasonry et al	28
Chapter 3 - Nineteenth-Century Bromances: Manly Love	45
Conclusion	58
Bibliography	64

Introduction

It is not realistic to begin to consider men-only environments in the nineteenth century without first acknowledging the position of women in comparison to men, because, according to the historian, Ben Griffin, ‘women in the nineteenth century were oppressed by laws that systematically and deliberately served the interests of men.’¹ Before the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857, a wife did not exist in the eyes of the law; if a husband instigated an action of Criminal Conversation, accusing his wife of adultery, she was not a party to the proceedings and therefore had no role in a court case that could result in her losing her reputation, her property and her children:

Married women in England in the last year of the reign of William IV had *no rights whatever*. They were non-people, being the same legal status as American slaves, regardless of social class.²

A woman of a higher social class had no more rights than a woman of inferior status; they both had to rely on the authority and protection of male relatives. Criminal Conversation proceedings were between two men; the wronged husband sued his wife’s alleged lover, and, with the exception of any female witnesses, hearings were an all-male business. In the case of Lady Caroline Norton in 1836, whose husband sued the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, for having had a sexual relationship with her, Lady Norton was ‘prohibited from appearing in court in her own defence’, although some of the Nortons’ female servants were called to give evidence.³

What was perceived to be important in these cases was the betrayal of one man by another and much of public and social life in the nineteenth century focused on men’s relationships with each

¹ Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.4

² A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), p.306.

³ Diane Atkinson, *The Criminal Conversation of Mrs Norton* (London: Preface, 2012), pp.2-4 and p.173.

other. Outside of the family home, women were insignificant in many areas of men's lives and this dissertation will examine those environments from which men excluded women.

Before the late eighteenth century, the usual venues for 'male conviviality' were: 'the street, the racecourse, the theatre, the coffee-house, and above all the alehouse or tavern'; but inns became increasingly tainted by a reputation for dissipation and by the 1830s were 'off limits for respectable bourgeois men.'⁴ These men, a growing number of whom had experienced a male-only public school education, became increasingly attracted to the idea of membership of private associations: 'Habituated to an all-male society which thrived alternately on comradeship and competition, public school men gravitated towards a world of chambers and clubs.'⁵ Part of the attraction was the exclusion of women from male social life, which continued even after marriage; as the historian John Tosh remarks: 'For those who had the means, the joys of homosocial society were not to be lightly given up.'⁶ The term 'homosocial', which describes the development of 'social bonds between persons of the same sex [...] [and] is applied to such activities as "male bonding"', is important in exploring the connections that men made in these male-only settings.⁷

The significance for men of the homosocial environments available to them was in conflict with the emphasis, particularly in the early nineteenth century, on the importance of domestic life. A man's place was deemed to be in the private arena of the family: 'The home was

⁴ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.124.

⁵ John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.177.

⁶ John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.126.

⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.1.

central to masculinity, as the place where the boy was disciplined by dependence, and where the man attained full adult status as householder.’⁸ Masculine domesticity was also in conflict with the Victorian concept that domestic life was an essentially feminine domain and the outside world inherently masculine:

men were seen as better able to cope with the trials of the public sphere, while women were supposed to maintain purity by remaining in the private sphere, where they could create a domestic environment in which family religion could prosper.⁹

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes these opposing concepts as ‘the increasingly stressed nineteenth-century bourgeois dichotomy between domestic female space and extra familial, political and economic male space.’¹⁰ The resulting confusion is mocked in *The Importance of Being Earnest*:

GWENDOLEN: Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is quite unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don’t like that. It makes men so very attractive.¹¹

Gwendolen is advancing the notion that her father is ‘performing’ his masculinity appropriately by confining himself to his home and family, rather than by pursuing more social or intellectual interests in the outside world; she believes worldly men are ‘effeminate’, and therefore more attractive. ‘Effeminate’ in this context is not a signal of ‘same-sex passion’; until the last decade or so of the nineteenth century, it meant ‘being emotional’ and often involved ‘excessive cross-

⁸ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.2.

⁹ Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, p.40.

¹⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008), p.189.

¹¹ Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in Richard Allen Cave (ed.), *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.334.

sexual attachment.’¹² By neglecting his ‘domestic duties’, a man is not exhibiting ‘manliness’ and is perhaps too interested in the company of women outside the home. However, manliness was a complex notion in the nineteenth century because the term changed its meaning during Victoria’s reign:

To the early Victorians [manliness] represented a concern with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selflessness and integrity; to the late Victorian it stood for neo-Spartan virility as exemplified by stoicism, hardiness and endurance.¹³

Masculine domesticity was at its peak during the first thirty years of Victoria’s reign, when a man’s maturity was signalled by his ability to provide a family home for his wife and children; but domesticity became increasingly to be viewed as ‘unglamorous, unfulfilling and - ultimately - unmasculine.’¹⁴ Masculine domesticity, once a sign of manliness, became exactly the opposite; hence the irony of Gwendolen’s observation. But the ideas are complicated and the debate continued throughout the nineteenth century as can be seen in *The Year of Jubilee*, published in 1895, as Nancy ponders on her role as a married woman:

It comes to this. Nature doesn’t intend a married woman to be anything *but* a married woman. In the natural state of things, she must either be a slave of husband and children, or defy her duty. She can have no time for herself, no thoughts for herself. It’s a hard saying, but who can doubt that it is Nature’s law? I should like to revolt against it, yet I feel revolt to be silly. One might as well revolt against being born a woman instead of a man.¹⁵

¹² Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement* (New York: Cassell, 1994), p.27.

¹³ J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, ‘Introduction’, in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.1.

¹⁴ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.6-7.

¹⁵ George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, (Kindle, 2013), p.367. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

By accepting 'Nature's law' as indisputable, the futility of struggling against the inevitable is emphasised. Nancy and her husband, Lionel Tarrant, eventually agree to an unconventional lifestyle by keeping separate homes, but while the arrangement gives him his freedom, she is still a 'slave' to him and their child. Nancy's attempt at independence, by writing a novel, is dismissed by Tarrant, who emphasises the importance of their respective roles; his (masculine) in the outside world, hers (feminine) in the home:

'[...] as a man, it's my duty to join the rough-and-tumble of more or less dirty ha'pence. You, as a woman, have no such duty; nay, it's your positive duty to keep out of the beastly scrimmage.'

'It seemed to me that I was *doing* something. Why should a woman be shut out from the life of the world?'

'It seems to me that your part in the life of the world is very considerable. You have given the world a new inhabitant, and you are shaping him into a man.'(p.390)

This passage highlights the movement in Victorian attitudes from the importance of male domesticity to the concept that the home was an exclusively female domain. The reader is also aware that Nancy's role of 'shaping' their son is finite because Tarrant has already decided that he 'should have the best education procurable for money, if he starved himself in providing it'(p.345); which means that the boy will be sent to public school, where his 'shaping' will become the sole responsibility of males, both masters and other boys.

This decline of regard for male domesticity coincided with an unprecedented rise in the popularity of all-male institutions and, as a result, '[m]any young men lived their lives in exclusively male spaces': public school, followed by a predominantly bachelor lifestyle of university, the church, the armed services, gentlemen's clubs, Parliament, the City, and the colonial service. While public school replaced a boy's family and home, gentlemen's clubs offered men a home-from-home: 'a distinctly male space existing somewhere between the public and private spheres'; and it has been argued by the historian Amy Milne-Smith, that this

‘homosocial lifestyle’ reflected society: ‘As the schools emphasized all-male life, hierarchy, and obsession with competitive sports, so too did the nation.’¹⁶ Another historian, Jeffrey Richards, agrees, but in addition asserts that popular culture not only reflects the outlook of a nation, it does more: ‘It distils, generates and confirms sets of values, attitudes and ideals which for good or ill cohere to form the national identity.’¹⁷ So the influence between national identity and an individual’s everyday life is a two-way process.

This dissertation will focus on the raise in popularity of the adult ‘world of chambers and clubs’ in the nineteenth century, in which intense relationships between men could develop, and which they could enjoy in the absence of female influence. It will examine the effect of male-only homosocial environments on nineteenth-century attitudes, and consider the traces of a men-only world evident in the twenty-first century. The second chapter will explore the male-only preserves of gentlemen’s clubs, Freemasonry, and other examples of societies which were popular then and which still draw a healthy membership today; the third chapter will consider manly love and the close bonds of friendship between men that flourished in the nineteenth century. But first, in Chapter 1, the public school system as ‘the main site where manliness was supposed to be established’ will be examined.¹⁸

¹⁶ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.9 and p.154.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.1.

¹⁸ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement*, p.64.

Chapter 1

Public Schools: Education and Punishment

According to the historian, A. N. Wilson: ‘One of the mysteries of English life, from the 1820s to the present day, is why otherwise kind parents were prepared to entrust much-loved children to the rigours of boarding-school education.’¹⁹ A solution to this mystery lay in the ‘long-held belief that school was an indispensable introduction to the company of males. It taught a boy to rub shoulders with his peers, to experience competition, and to bend to public authority.’²⁰ While parents may have believed that the experiences their sons would have at public school were indispensable, there seems to have been little parental concern about the curriculum because, for much of the nineteenth century, intellectualism was considered to be of questionable value. As a result, the focus of attention of a public school education hinged on the development of ‘character’ in boys: ‘Character was there to correct the excesses and foibles of intellect; ‘cleverness’ was something to be wary of.’²¹ Consequently, it has been claimed, ‘very few eminent Victorian scientists emerged from the public schools’; and while Charles Darwin might be proposed as an exception, he was not recognised to have any particular academic ability when he attended Shrewsbury School; he was, in fact, rebuked by the headmaster, Butler, for working at chemistry experiments with his brother rather than concentrating on the classical curriculum

¹⁹ A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), p.278.

²⁰ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.105.

²¹ Geoffrey Best, ‘Militarism and the Victorian Public School’, in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.140.

the school provided.²²

In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, we learn that Squire Brown sent his son to Rugby to turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian.²³ Some nineteenth-century parents may have shared Squire Brown's expectations, but, according to J. A. Mangan, an historian of education and sport, there were other class-based reasons; aristocratic parents sought a public school education for their boys to reinforce their 'social separateness', while for the wealthy middle classes it provided access for their sons to the upper reaches of society.²⁴ As T. W. Bamford, another education historian, explains, for a school to achieve public-school stature, it 'must provide a classical education and be expensive enough to exclude the lower and lower middle classes at least.'²⁵ This consciousness of class barriers, and how to cross them, was a strong motive for parents when choosing a public school education for their sons. The connections their sons would make at school seemed to be more important for parents than the instruction in the classics they would receive. Parents who decided to send their boys away from home knew that public school 'connected only those who had been there, a narrow

²² A. J. Meadows and W. H. Brock, 'Topics Fit for Gentlemen: The Problem of Science in the Public School Curriculum', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), p.95.

²³ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Kindle, 2013), p.32. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

²⁴ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p.128.

²⁵ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), p.37.

social band compared with the whole population.²⁶ And most significantly, they knew that the ruling elite sprang from the public schools:

The children of the upper middle class joined those of the aristocracy in the public schools and were turned into gentlemen, with a common code of behaviour and belief. Elite schooling gradually replaced noble birth as the identifying badge of the ruling class.²⁷

Many nineteenth-century leaders came from public schools, which have been described as ‘a reservoir of leadership potential.’²⁸ The Duke of Wellington was a pupil at Eton for three years;²⁹ and Gladstone’s middle-class parents certainly seem to have had foresight in their choice of school for their son because A.N. Wilson maintains that ‘Eton made him, and he remained obsessed with the place to his dying day.’³⁰ It could be argued that the same still holds true in the twenty-first century: the current Prime Minister, David Cameron, attended Eton; his deputy, Nick Clegg, attended Westminster; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, attended St Paul’s.³¹ As Sedgwick observes: ‘School itself was [...] a crucial link in ruling class male homosocial formation’, because the connections made at school were, and are, carried on

²⁶ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982), p.8

²⁷ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.10.

²⁸ T. W. Bamford, ‘Thomas Arnold and the Victorian Idea of a Public School’, in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.63.

²⁹ Geoffrey Best, ‘Militarism and the Victorian Public School’, p.131.

³⁰ A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, p.280.

³¹ www.gov.uk/government/people/david-cameron (accessed 5 July 2013)
www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7046587.stm (accessed 5 July 2013)
www.bbc.co.uk/news/10343316 (accessed 5 July 2013)

into adult life.³²

What public school also did was remove boys from their family; the literary critic, Isabel Quigley, argues: 'it cut out all that was feminine in life: the presence and personality of women, their companionship and influence.'³³ Apart from some masters' wives or a school nurse, this was undoubtedly true; masculine company and values were deemed to be all that the boys needed and this lack of female influence had a lasting effect:

The effects of this conditioning were not confined to school. It was observed that back at home boys became more formal with their mothers, more distant from their fathers, and more callous towards their sisters - tendencies which prepared boys better for the all-male society of the public sphere than for their future roles as husbands and fathers.³⁴

A public school education, therefore, was more likely to equip men to be bachelors than family men, clearly setting up a conflict with the presumption that a man needed a home and a family to develop his 'manliness' successfully.

Men who had been educated at public school could recognise others as being part of the same 'old boy network' through their standardised English pronunciation, use of public school slang, and their public school manner:

To be a 'public school man' was a ticket of general social acceptability in a period when rapid social change and much greater movement between social classes made it important to have some ready means of identification between men of similar values, outlook, and general background.³⁵

³² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.176.

³³ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.7.

³⁴ John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.118.

³⁵ J. R. de S. Honey, 'Tom Brown's Universe: The Nature and Limits of the Victorian Public Schools Community', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.21.

This ability to recognise a kindred spirit enabled men to make swift judgements about new acquaintances. Charles Dickens will have been aware of this when, although writing about an earlier age, he alerts his readers to Sydney Carton's hidden qualities by making them aware he is 'old Sydney Carton of old Shrewsbury School'; handy shorthand to raise doubt about the initial unfavourable impression that Carton has made.³⁶ The nineteenth-century reader would know that the public school boy, '[a]lmost unconsciously [...] absorbed a complete code of behaviour which would enable him to do 'the right thing' in any situation.'³⁷ And Carton, it transpires, is no exception.

The anomaly of public schools being elitist rather than, as the name suggests, being accessible to the public, began in the middle of the eighteenth century when the old public schools, originally founded in the sixteenth century for the education of the poor, became gradually 'fashionable with the aristocracy, as they had not been before.'³⁸ One such is Shrewsbury School which was founded in 1552 and was one of the seven schools named in the Public Schools Act 1868; the others were Eton, Winchester, Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse and Westminster.³⁹ While in the early nineteenth century public schools 'merely reflected the prevailing values of a dissolute aristocracy', growing demand by the increasingly wealthy middle class resulted in new 'public' schools being founded as the century progressed; about half of those still existing at the end of the twentieth century had been founded between 1841 and

³⁶ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.85.

³⁷ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days*, p.13

³⁸ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.18.

³⁹ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury: The Four Foundations* (London: James and James, 1990), pp.11,45,47.

1900.⁴⁰ Almost inevitably a hierarchy developed, demonstrated by schools refusing to play matches against those they considered to be inferior. As Quigley asserts: ‘So much for the public schools’ vaunted democracy, even in relation to other public schools.’⁴¹ Even an elite school like Shrewsbury was not exempt. When the captain of the cricket team wrote to the captain of the Westminster Eleven in 1866 proposing an inter-school match, he was snubbed on the grounds that Shrewsbury was not on the list issued by the Committee of the Public Schools Club (composed of Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Westminster and Winchester). The response from the captain of the Shrewsbury Eleven was equally haughty:

Sir,

I cannot allow your answer to my first letter to pass unnoticed. I have only to say that a school which we have Camden’s authority for stating was the most important school in England at a time when Westminster was unknown, which Her Majesty has included in the list of public schools by the royal commission [⁴²], and which, according to the report of the commissioners, is more distinctly public than any other school, cannot be deprived of its rights as a public school by the assertions of a Westminster boy, or by the dictum of the self-styled Public Schools Club. I regret to find from your letter that the Captain of the Westminster Eleven has yet to learn the first lesson of a true public school education, the behaviour due from one gentleman to another.⁴³

The distinction he makes between the actions of a ‘boy’ and what was expected of a ‘gentleman’ will have wounded the Westminster cricket captain since the purpose of a public school education in the nineteenth century was to mould the raw material of boyhood into the finished product of a perfect gentleman. Captain Hook might not spring immediately to mind as a good

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days*, p.9 and p.11.

⁴¹ Isobel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.56.

⁴² The Clarendon Commission 1861-4 was set up to investigate the condition of public schools, leading to the Public Schools Act 1868. (A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, p.280).

⁴³ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, pp.48-9.

example, but he had been educated at Eton and he ‘retained the passion for good form.’⁴⁴ His concern that Peter Pan is unexpectedly showing ‘good form’ is only appeased when he manages to provoke Peter into kicking him instead of stabbing him: ‘At last Hook had got the boon for which he had craved. ‘Bad form,’ he cried jeeringly, and went content to the crocodile’ (p.204).

The business of public schools, Mangan suggests, was in ‘manufacturing heroes out of hooligans, conformity out of individualism and order out of anarchy.’⁴⁵ The success of this objective is questionable given that, according to A. N. Wilson, in the early years of Victoria’s reign ‘the major public schools remained insanitary nests of bullying, sexual depravity and - as far as a general knowledge of the natural or social world was in question - ignorance.’⁴⁶

However, these drawbacks did not prevent middle-class parents from seeking to gain access for their sons to the elite ruling class, and the opportunity of climbing the social ladder:

the early prerequisites for membership in this powerful but nebulous class - to speak with a certain accent, to spend years translating Latin and Greek, to leave family and the society of women - all made one unfit for any other form of work, long before they entitled one to chance one’s fortune actively in the ruling class.⁴⁷

But becoming fit to be a member of the ruling class was far removed from the bad behaviour of public school boys in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; there had been a prefects’ strike at Eton as early as 1768, and at Winchester alone there were seven rebellions

⁴⁴ J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens and Peter and Wendy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.188 and endnote. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁴⁵ J. A. Mangan, ‘Regression and Progression: Introduction to the New Edition’, in J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p.xxxii

⁴⁶ A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, p.279.

⁴⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p.177.

between 1770 and 1828.⁴⁸ Hostilities broke out at Shrewsbury in November 1818 about the lack of food, and the headmaster, Butler, became so alarmed for his safety that he asked the town mayor for armed protection.⁴⁹ The historian, Jeffrey Richards, refers to public school life during this period as having a ‘general background of vandalism and indiscipline’ and gives examples of the ‘less wholesome leisure pursuits’ of the boys, such as ‘stone-throwing, poaching, birdsnesting and, at Marlborough, beating frogs to death.’⁵⁰ Mangan refers to the ‘wildness, brutality and irresponsibility of Harrow boys’ continuing as late as 1845.⁵¹ Tom Brown’s introduction to his fellow pupils’ behaviour is on the coach taking him to Rugby for his first term. The guard tells Tom:

“Werry free with their cash is the young genl’m’n. But, Lor’ bless you, we gets into such rows all ‘long the road, what wi’ their pea-shooters, and long whips, and hollering, and upsetting every one as comes by, I’d a sight sooner carry one or two on ‘em, sir, as I may be a-carryin’ of you now, than a coach- load.”(p.36)

Tom is clearly unconcerned by this and listens to the guard’s stories avidly, whilst he ‘couldn’t help hoping they were true’ (p.38). In fact, the behaviour of some Shrewsbury boys in 1817 was worse than their fictional counterparts. Complaints were made about schoolboys travelling on top of the coach to Chester, completely out of the control of the coachman and armed, not with whips, stones or pea shooters, but with loaded pistols, who were harassing villagers along the

⁴⁸ John Chandos, *Boys Together: English Public Schools 1800-1864* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p.31.

⁴⁹ John Chandos, *Boys Together*, pp.186-8.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Richards, ‘Introduction’, in J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p.xxiv.

⁵¹ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.31

way; during the same period, '[l]ocal worthies charged Salopians with a catalogue of offences which included theft, violence to travellers on the public highway, intimidation, extortion, coining money, and consorting with criminals and prostitutes.'⁵² Their headmaster, Samuel Butler, seems to have been at his wits' end when he wrote in 1817:

I do not know how I can either confine the boys more securely at night or provide effectually for their good conduct during the day. I am at present lost in baffling and uneasy conjecture.⁵³

And in a circular sent to parents in December 1818, he implores them not to let their sons return to school after Christmas with loaded firearms.⁵⁴ The 'relative powerlessness of the authorities' is demonstrated here with the headmaster struggling, and apparently failing, to maintain order.⁵⁵ Butler, it seems, was driven to extremes because one punishment he introduced, unique to Shrewsbury, was a form of sensory deprivation known as Rowe's Hole:

Named after a frequent occupant, this was a box, slightly larger than a coffin and the shape of a Punch and Judy booth, in which even 'younger boys' were confined for hours, and were sometimes forgotten overnight by the master who had ordered the confinement.⁵⁶

Perhaps not surprisingly, this episode is not referred to in the official school history. A more humane attempt to ensure discipline at public schools at about this time, was in encouraging the boys to be involved in organised sport; athleticism was beginning to be actively promoted 'as an

⁵² Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.51.

⁵³ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.51.

⁵⁴ John Chandos, *Boys Together*, p.189.

⁵⁵ Eric Dunning, 'The Origins of Modern Football and the Public School Ethos', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.169.

⁵⁶ John Chandos, *Boys Together*, p.185.

antidote to vandalism, trespassing and indiscipline.⁵⁷ In particular, football was becoming increasingly popular as masters began to recognise the value of organised sport ‘as a means of keeping the boys busy and out of trouble, and later for its character-building attributes.’⁵⁸ At Shrewsbury, it was not until 1836, with the appointment of a new headmaster, that extra provision for games was introduced, and at the same time, probably to tackle other problems that will be discussed later, single beds for all boarders were provided.⁵⁹

While the masters struggled with problems of discipline, the boys had to deal with fagging and bullying; two notorious features of the public school system that were inextricably linked and that Mangan calls: ‘the tyranny of boys over boys.’⁶⁰ Edward Thring, headmaster at Uppingham from 1853 to 1887, had attended Eton in the 1830s and he described ‘the cruelty, the squalor, the official indifference and lack of privacy in a graphic sketch of life in the rat-infested Long Chamber which housed fifty-two boys’, who were unsupervised from 8 pm until the morning.⁶¹ His experience was not unusual; in the 1830s most of the arrangements in public schools for teaching, dining and sleeping were communal:

Usually the boys ate in one large dining-hall and slept in large dormitories. There was virtually no privacy, and the masters took little interest in the social life of the boys, who in many cases developed their own self-governing

⁵⁷ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.33.

⁵⁸ Michael Charlesworth, Robin Mouldsdales, Robin Trimby, Mark Dickson and Christopher Sturdy, *Shrewsbury School Football and The Old Salopian F.C.: An Illustrated History* (Midsomer Norton: Selwood Systems, 1995), p.3.

⁵⁹ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.52.

⁶⁰ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.32.

⁶¹ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, pp.43-4.

republics ruled over by the senior boys or prefects.⁶²

Thring had discovered how uncomfortable and distressing life could be for boys at public school and so he set about ensuring his pupils had privacy and dignity by providing private studies and single dormitory cubicles. He also made sure there were checks on the power of the prefects.⁶³

An early exception to poor public school facilities was at Rugby, which was rebuilt between 1809 and 1816 and provided separate classrooms and individual studies for the boys.⁶⁴ In Tom Brown's fictional schooldays at Rugby these changes did not prevent the abuse of younger boys by the older ones; the narrator declares that if older boys do not abide by certain principles, then school can be 'a place where a young boy will get more evil than he would if he were turned out to make his way in London streets' (p.78). This is illustrated when Tom and his peers are victimised by Flashman and his cronies, although it is clear that bullying is the boys' problem and that masters should not be expected to come to their aid; the expectation was that 'the boys should overcome it by public opinion and prefectorial supervision, not the masters by closer control.'⁶⁵ Tom Brown and his peers suffer when the young men of the sixth-form are not able to control the fifth-formers who are making the younger boys' lives a misery: "“And so we get a double set of masters,” cried Tom indignantly - “the lawful ones, who are responsible to the Doctor at any rate, and the unlawful, the tyrants, who are responsible to nobody”” (p.79).

The tradition of senior pupils controlling the behaviour of the juniors, and using them as

⁶² Malcolm Seaborne, 'The Architecture of the Victorian Public School', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.178.

⁶³ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.45.

⁶⁴ Malcolm Seaborne, 'The Architecture of the Victorian Public School', p.179.

⁶⁵ Patrick Scott, 'The School and the Novel: *Tom Brown's Schooldays*', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p.45.

unpaid servants (fags), was one of the key features of public school life; the range of a fag's duties were wide:

Fagging [...] was continuous and compulsory, a kind of bondage. Outside class a junior was likely to be pounced upon for almost any task - cleaning shoes, making fires, sweeping up, shopping. He might be posted as a general lookout to warn of the approach of authority, or be sent out fishing or poaching. Cooking was a normal chore, and so was warming beds by lying in them. On suitable occasions he could be forced to play football, or act as a kind of retriever on the cricket field.⁶⁶

The warming of beds has connotations of close physical contact between older and younger boys, which will be considered later. The system of fagging was particularly harsh at Winchester and Rugby until the late 1860s at least, but it is claimed to have been 'generally mild' at Shrewsbury.⁶⁷ Shrewsbury School prefects or monitors, known as 'praepostors', wielded considerable independent power in the nineteenth century, power that was argued to be necessary because there were six or fewer masters with over two hundred boys to manage.⁶⁸ The situation was even worse at Eton where, in 1809, there were between seven and nine masters to control five hundred and fifteen boys.⁶⁹ 'Fagging' was called 'douling' at Shrewsbury, a reference to the Greek word for slavery, and a very apt word when the burden of a fag's tasks are considered; the system was not finally abandoned at the school, with the agreement of the senior boys, until the middle of the 1960s.⁷⁰

As well as entitlements to the benefits of fagging, prefects had similar, but lesser, powers

⁶⁶ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.68.

⁶⁷ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.68.

⁶⁸ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.61.

⁶⁹ John Chandos, *Boys Together*, p.86.

⁷⁰ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p. 52 and p.63.

than masters to punish boys, including flogging them; and flogging was argued to be 'remedial and religious; it scourged the body in remembrance of the penalties of sin.'⁷¹ Customs varied between schools, but often, as a deterrent to others, serious offenders were punished in front of the whole school, with a shocking range of possible implements, depending on the circumstances:

For simple offences they relied on sticks, rods or canes; for the severest cases split canes, thongs or a tightly bound mass of switches specially and freshly made up each day. Occasionally the weapon was weighted with lead, or else, for extra effect, the ends were left supple and pliant to lick around the edge to the tender regions where the sting was really felt.⁷²

The more vicious implements, and the fact that masters sometimes lost their temper, made the practice even more barbaric and could result in serious injury; Bamford reports that a boy's back could be reduced to 'a lacerated mass of scored meat and congealed blood' from being beaten.⁷³ A deplorable record is allegedly held by Moss, headmaster of Shrewsbury from 1866 to 1908, who subjected one boy to eighty-eight lashes. The incident, which took place in 1874, was known as the 'birching scandal', and it attracted nationwide publicity because the boy's parents, from a leading Shropshire family, were outraged and called for an enquiry. However, Moss did not lose his post because flogging was perceived to have 'a central role in the Victorian public school system'; Moss had apparently administered forty-nine strokes to another boy on the same day.⁷⁴ A vivid description of the fear created in boys by the threat of caning is given in F.

⁷¹ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.49.

⁷² T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.66.

⁷³ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.67.

⁷⁴ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.69 and p.63, and T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.66.

Anstey's novel, *Vice Versa*, in which Paul Bultitude has magically changed places with his son, Dick, and is sent back to Dick's boarding school in his place. Paul is about to be caned in front of the other boys for some misdemeanour of Dick's:

With these awful words the Doctor left the room, leaving Paul in a state of abject horror and dread which need not be described. Never, never again would he joke, as he had been wont to do with Dick in lighter moods, on the subject of corporal punishment under any circumstances - it was no fit theme for levity; if this - this outrage were really done to him, he could never be able to hold up his head again.⁷⁵

Paul's terror when faced with the reality of his son's life at school finally causes him to have some empathy with Dick; hence the subtitle of the novel: *A Lesson to Fathers*.

The ultimate punishment was expulsion, which was 'the automatic penalty for stealing, riots, flagrant defiance and sexual offences'; although schools were often reluctant to publish details about expelling pupils.⁷⁶ There was a distinct tentativeness about revealing sensitive information, especially about homosexuality; Bamford, writing in 1967, remarks:

We know that [homosexuality] was widespread, and indeed still is, but the extent and intensity of it is mere conjecture, for the Victorian pall on sex applied consistently even in memoirs, in contrast to the frank reminiscences of more recent years. There are plenty of meaningless phrases, such as 'immorality', 'evil', 'laxity', but nothing precise.⁷⁷

Similarly, Quigley asserts that in the school story, sexuality seems to be 'undiscussable': 'the word used for it, characteristically, was 'beastliness', which inhibited further enquiry.'⁷⁸ It seems that disregarding the issue was often preferable to tackling it, although there were attempts to

⁷⁵ F. Anstey, *Vice Versa or A Lesson to Fathers* (London: John Murray, 1882 (Kindle, 2013)), location 2690.

⁷⁶ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.71.

⁷⁷ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.72.

⁷⁸ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.126

control the problem; schools began to provide separate compartments in dormitories, and some headmasters, such as Benson at Wellington, considered installing ‘wire entanglements’ on top of the partitions; at other schools the doors and shielding walls were removed from toilet cubicles.⁷⁹ Privacy was thereby increased in the dormitories, but removed from the lavatories. In spite of these signs of concern, Quigley notes that: ‘there seems to have been little watching and snooping [...]; above all little sense that friendships between boys of different ages or between boys and masters were necessarily suspect or undesirable.’⁸⁰ This is discernable in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, when, although close emotional bonds between Tom and his friends are vividly described, the issue of sex is touched upon only once, in respect of one of Tom’s fellow pupils:

He was one of the miserable little pretty white-handed, curly-haired boys, petted and pampered by some of the big fellows, who wrote their verses for them, taught them to drink and use bad language, and did all they could to spoil them for everything in this world and the next.(p.110)

This description highlights the characteristics of these boys which are stereotypically ascribed to women: ‘little’; ‘pretty’; ‘white-handed’; ‘curly-haired’; it also stresses their vulnerability, malleability, and lack of education or experience. There is an enigmatic footnote in respect of this passage:

A kind and wise critic, an old Rugboean, [sic] notes here in the margin: “The small friend system was not so utterly bad from 1841-1847.” Before that, too, there were many noble friendships between big and little boys; but I can’t strike out the passage. Many boys will know why it is left in.(p.110, footnote)

The author clearly expects all those who have had experience of a public school education to know exactly what he is referring to, while at the same time minimising the suspected sexual abuse of young boys.

⁷⁹ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.72.

⁸⁰ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.128.

Histories of public schools are similarly coy, especially with regard to sexual relationships between masters and their pupils, which is perhaps not surprising, given that they are at least partly advertisements for the school. But even in an otherwise academic book, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian School*, first published in 1981 and updated in 2000, the author is remarkably circumspect when he refers to the downfall of the headmaster of Harrow, C. J. Vaughan, who he describes as being ‘foolishly indiscreet’, explaining in an endnote: ‘He wrote love letters to his pupils.’⁸¹ Vaughan resigned suddenly and mysteriously in 1859 and accepted a bishopric in 1863, only to decline it a week later.⁸² Vaughan’s behaviour was unexplained until over a century later, when, in 1964, it was revealed that a pupil’s father had forced him to resign, ‘because of his sexual relations with at least one boy’, although the father had agreed to the matter being kept secret ‘on condition that Vaughan did not accept any important ecclesiastical post’; it was the threat of exposure that prompted Vaughan’s withdrawal from the appointment as bishop four years later; in 1879 Vaughan became Dean of Llandaff, presumably not such an important post as to merit further intervention by his accuser, the father of J. A. Symonds.⁸³ In any event, the circumstances were the result of a rather more serious offence than one of indiscreetly writing love letters, as related by Mangan.

There was a similar incident at Shrewsbury, albeit in the first half of the twentieth century, but equally suppressed. In 1932, a housemaster, J. B. Oldham, was asked to resign and the official history of the school by Colin Leach deals with the circumstances of his ‘failing’ with

⁸¹ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.44 and p.277 (endnote).

⁸² T. W Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.151

⁸³ T. W Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.151.

a trite reference to a quotation from *Othello*: ‘Schoolmasters have been known both before and after to love not wisely but too well’; Oldham was not excluded from the school and Leach remarks that ‘it is good to recall that Oldham was to be allowed to give many more years’ service to the school as its historian and Librarian.’⁸⁴ Perhaps the library was considered to be far enough removed from the temptation of having direct responsibility for the care of the boys. In spite of the tendency to suppress details of sexuality in the schools, there is no doubt that ‘the sexual morality of boys became a pressing issue for teachers in the 1880s.’⁸⁵ Richards suggests that this was a result of an increasing concern nationally about homosexuality, and that it brought about a distinct change in attitude towards ‘the close relations which had prevailed in public schools between boys and between boys and masters.’⁸⁶ This is not borne out by the response to Oldham’s behaviour at Shrewsbury School over fifty years later.

When young men left public school, they tended to seek out those who had similar backgrounds to themselves, and, as Bamford observes, the ‘half-way house between school and the adult world is the Old Boys’ Society.’⁸⁷ As an ‘old boy’, ex-pupils are able to delight in the kind of nostalgia that Tom Brown is already indulging in as he leaves Rugby:

And the next morning after breakfast he squared up all the cricketing accounts, went round the tradesmen and other acquaintance, and said his hearty good-byes; and by twelve o’clock was in the train, and away for London, no longer a school-boy, and divided in his thoughts between hero-worship, honest regrets

⁸⁴ Colin Leach, *A School at Shrewsbury*, p.83.

⁸⁵ Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.107.

⁸⁶ Jeffrey Richards, ‘“Passing the Love of Women’: Manly Love and Victorian Society’, in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.111.

⁸⁷ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools*, p.84

over the long stage of his life which was now slipping out of sight behind him, and hopes and resolves for the next stage upon which he was entering with all the confidence of a young traveller. (p.178)

No doubt Tom will soon be considering which clubs to join in order to retain some aspects of the homosocial life he has relished at school. The rise in popularity of public schools during the course of the nineteenth century, which is paralleled by the expansion of gentlemen's clubs and other men-only organisations, has been noted as being 'hardly accidental.'⁸⁸ The male-only environments that ex-public school boys gravitated towards in adult life will be considered in the next chapter.

⁸⁸ Amy Milne-Smith,, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.154 (endnote).

Chapter 2

Gentlemen's Clubs, Freemasonry et al.

William Cobbett in *Advice to Young Men* asserted: 'It is in the power of *every father* to live *at home with his family*, when not *compelled* by business, or by public duty, to be absent.'⁸⁹ But it was not only business or public duty that kept men away from their families and domestic life; they often chose to spend their leisure hours elsewhere too. A man's place during the nineteenth century has been declared to have been in the family home, 'not only in the sense of being his possession or fiefdom, but also as the place where his deepest needs were met.'⁹⁰ However, it is safe to conjecture that in many men's lives home did not meet all of their needs, because there was a rapid growth in the number of gentlemen's clubs being formed; in the West End of London, the number of clubs increased by fifty percent during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁹¹ These gentlemen's clubs were a natural progression from the clubs formed in coffee-houses during the previous century:

The eighteenth-century coffee-house was a place where like-minded men could meet, read the newspapers and discuss the affairs of the day. It provided a space away from home and the hurly-burly of the tavern, the Houses of Parliament or the Stock Exchange. Certain coffee-houses became favoured by certain groups, political or otherwise, and from there it was but a short step to form an exclusive club which had a recognised membership and barred outsiders.⁹²

From holding members-only meetings in a coffee-house, it was just another short step to

⁸⁹ William Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men, And (Incidentally) to Young Women* (London: Henry Frowde, 1829 (Kindle, 2013)), Location 3277.

⁹⁰ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.1.

⁹¹ John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.186.

⁹² Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p.xxiii.

building their own premises. The exclusivity of the new gentlemen's clubs was signalled by 'the construction of grandiose, public-looking buildings for member-only use.'⁹³ 'Public', in this context, as with 'public' school, being used to indicate the exact opposite; clubs were very private, 'self-selecting elite male' societies.⁹⁴ In George Gissing's novel, *In the Year of Jubilee*, the frontages of the several clubs in Pall Mall are described as having 'coldly insolent facades', a description that could probably as easily be applied to some of the members inside the buildings.⁹⁵ A Frenchman, Francis Wey, visiting London in the 1850s called the clubs 'impregnable fortresses' after he was taken to the Reform Club in Pall Mall.⁹⁶ He is referring not only to the impossibility of getting past the porter in the lobby without an accompanying member, but also to the difficulty of being elected as a member:

It is not an easy thing to be elected to the most exclusive clubs, and a membership confers such an enviable notoriety that one has seen most distinguished, well-bred people wait patiently even ten years for such an honour to be conferred on them.(p.51)

It is easy to understand then why gentlemen's clubs have been described as 'bastions of class privilege.'⁹⁷ Wey attempts to explain to his countrymen, who find social life in London less congenial than the café society of Paris, why this may be so:

⁹³ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined a Nation* (London: Harper Press, 2008), p.374.

⁹⁴ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 41

⁹⁵ George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee* (Kindle, 2013), p.61.

⁹⁶ Francis Wey, *A Frenchman Sees the English in the 'Fifties*, trans. Valerie Pirie (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935), p.50. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁹⁷ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined a Nation*, p.374.

Sixty clubs, analogous to the one I have just described, and harbouring practically the entire male element of the upper classes, in palaces where luxury and comfort are of the most lavish description, would leave scant patronage for good *cafés* and *restaurants*. Clubs take the place of them all with advantage. They are a perfect substitute for the *café*, the reading-room and the restaurant. Therefore, far from being deprived by the rigidity of decorum from the amenities of French life, the Englishman has improved on them. That is why the spurious luxury of our public establishments does not impress him; he finds it gaudy, and the animation and allurements of female society seem to him a poor exchange for the quiet, the comfort, the large scale on which everything is conducted in his club.(p.63)

He describes club life with approbation, in spite of the lack of female company; gentlemen's clubs, as the name suggests, barred women and were known as 'Eveless Edens.'⁹⁸ The phrase suggests that the Garden of Eden was more idyllic before Eve put in an appearance to spoil things for Adam. The exclusion of female influence was one of the attractions for middle-class and upper-class men who wanted to be members of a club; not because men wanted to eliminate women entirely from their lives, merely that there was a 'desire to maintain discreet [sic] sites of single and mixed-sex life.'⁹⁹ But this was often at the expense of their home life; indeed gentlemen's clubs were perceived to be 'a refuge from home and married life.'¹⁰⁰ According to Thackeray in his series of satirical articles compiled in *The Book of Snobs*, women were well aware of this, and were envious of men's opportunities to escape from home:

I have very seldom heard even the most gentle and placable woman speak without a little feeling of bitterness against those social institutions, those palaces swaggering in St James's, which are open to men; while the ladies have but their dingy three-windowed brick boxes in Belgravia or in Paddingtonia, or in the region between the road of Edgeware and that of Gray's Inn.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ 'Club Manners', in *The World: A Journal for Men and Women*, 2nd July 1884, p.9.

⁹⁹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.11.

¹⁰⁰ Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, p.19

¹⁰¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Book of Snobs: By One of Themselves* (Kindle, 2013), p.105. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

He adds that in his grandfather's time it was Freemasonry 'that roused their anger'; and Freemasonry will be considered further later in this chapter. Thackeray contends that he has sympathy for women's attitude to men-only organisations because, he argues, married men should be at home with their wives (p.107). John Tosh highlights the conflict for men between the duties and responsibilities of domestic life and the attractions of socialising with other men:

The heavy moralizing of home ties conflicted with two longstanding aspects of masculinity. The first was homosociality - or regular association with other men.[...] Secondly, domesticity was difficult to square with the traditional association of masculinity with heroism and adventure.¹⁰²

Gentlemen's clubs certainly provided the opportunity to socialise in an all-male environment, but only the more disreputable clubs were likely to provide any sense of risk or adventure. One such disreputable club is the Beargarden in *The Way We Live Now*. The name of the club is apt; a bear-garden is figuratively 'a scene of strife and tumult' and there are several examples of both in the novel.¹⁰³ The Beargarden is described as 'the worst' type of club which 'had been lately opened with the express view of combining parsimony with profligacy'; profligacy because everything 'was to be luxurious' and parsimony because 'the luxuries were to be achieved at first cost.'¹⁰⁴ When the club is eventually forced to close, one of its members laments its loss while unconsciously revealing what went wrong:

"And so this is the end of the Beargarden," said Lord Nidderdale with a peculiar melancholy. "Dear old place! I always felt it was too good to last. I fancy it doesn't do to make things too easy; - one has to pay so uncommon dear for them. And then, you know, when you've got things easy, then they get rowdy; - and, by George, before you

¹⁰² John Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.6.

¹⁰³ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 6th September 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, (Kindle, 2013), p.19. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

know where you are, you find yourself among a lot of blackguards.”(p.513)

Becoming a member of the wrong type of club, like the Beargarden, was as detrimental to a man’s reputation as being blackballed at a respectable club.¹⁰⁵ It was therefore important to become a member of the ‘right’ club, one which accepted only the ‘right’ sort of member: ‘Even if a man met all of the requirements of class and distinction, an equally important qualification to his success as a candidate was always his sociability and amiability.’¹⁰⁶ The ability to fit in with his fellow members, to be ‘clubbable’, was a vital part in the vetting process and the politics of club membership could not be avoided:

Blackballing scandals, jockeying for club membership, and political disputes in clubland are important not simply in and of themselves, but because they reflect the structures of power and status within a homosocial world.¹⁰⁷

Being acknowledged as an acceptable member of society was an important aspect of club life because clubs were places where men ‘forged and cemented their class and gender identities’.¹⁰⁸ Mr Alf in *The Way We Live Now*, had ‘come up’ in the world and, because his background was unknown, he had difficulty in being elected to a club: ‘He had been blackballed at three or four clubs, but had effected an entrance at two or three others’ (p.11). Probably it was the less highly regarded clubs, with members of his own rank, that found him acceptable as a member.

The social life in his club mirrored a man’s business and public life, but, most significantly, the club was designed to be an alternative to home: ‘An Englishman’s club for the

¹⁰⁵ Blackball: to record an adverse vote against (a candidate) for membership of a club or other society by placing a black ball in the ballot box; to exclude (a person) from a club, etc., as the result of such a ballot (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 6th September 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.43.

¹⁰⁷ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.56.

¹⁰⁸ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.2.

time being is his private house. The members represent his family and friends.’¹⁰⁹ Men used their club when they wanted to ‘escape from the feminized home’ and sought the exclusively male company they had enjoyed at school: ‘Raised in the all-male environment of the public schools, adult men fled the female-centred house for more familiar environments.’¹¹⁰ As Milne-Smith explains: ‘The club appealed to men who liked to be sociable and enjoyed the company of both close friends and, to some extent, unknown peers.’¹¹¹ That is, unless they were like Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes, as Sherlock explains to Watson:

There are many men in London, you know, who, some from shyness, some from misanthropy, have no wish for the company of their fellows. Yet they are not averse to comfortable chairs and the latest periodicals. It is for the convenience of these that the Diogenes Club started, and it now contains the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town. No member is permitted to take the least notice of any other one. [...] My brother was one of the founders, and I have myself found it a very soothing atmosphere.¹¹²

It seems unlikely that the fictional Diogenes Club would have met most clubmen’s needs. In another Sherlock Holmes story, the risk of being exposed as a card cheat, which would result in being barred from his club and would ‘mean ruin’, leads a man to murder a fellow member; for Colonel Moran, committing murder was preferable to being disgraced.¹¹³

As mentioned earlier, gentlemen’s clubs were a development of political coffeehouses, and the early clubs in London, founded in the eighteenth century, ‘were for those primarily

¹⁰⁹ John Hatton, *Club-Land, London and Provincial* (London: J. S. Virtue and Co., 1890), p.iii.

¹¹⁰ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.110.

¹¹¹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.9.

¹¹² Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter’, *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), p.380.

¹¹³ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Adventure of the Empty House’, *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), p.552.

interested in politics or gambling.’¹¹⁴ Some clubs, like Brook’s or White’s, only had a political ‘tinge’, while others, like the Reform Club and the Carlton Club were overtly political.¹¹⁵ Other clubs were set up as libraries or news rooms and became increasingly popular, until, by the end of the nineteenth century, gentlemen’s clubs were seen as ‘an indispensable part of elite men’s lives.’¹¹⁶ This expansion was not restricted to London, but was also taking place in the provinces, although clubs outside London developed in ways which were perceived to be unlike those in the capital. In 1890, the situation was described by Joseph Hatton:

Club life in the provinces is essentially different from that of London. Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, all the great towns and cities outside the metropolis, go to bed early. [...] The provincial club-man rarely dines at his club. [...] Luncheon is the great meal of the day in provincial clubland.¹¹⁷

The idea that men in the provinces liked to be tucked up in bed at home earlier than their counterparts in London might be explained by the following observation about Chester life before there was a gentlemen’s club to go to:

[1807] A year in which oil and candles were the only illuminants of Chester; when the Rows (and possibly the streets as well) were, in all probability, infested after dark by footpads, and wives had good cause for alarm if husbands tarried too long at the Three Crowns, or some other hostelry. The day of the “Club” had not yet arrived.¹¹⁸

Generally, provincial clubs were intended to satisfy the same range of needs as London clubs, for

¹¹⁴ Neville Carrick and Edward L. Ashton, *The Athen# SYMBOL 230 \f "Times New Roman" \s 10#um Liverpool: 1797-1997* (Liverpool: The Athen# SYMBOL 230 \f "Times New Roman" \s 10#um Liverpool, 1997), p.4.

¹¹⁵ Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs*, p.213.

¹¹⁶ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.2.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Hatton, *Club-Land, London and Provincial*, p.57.

¹¹⁸ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club: An Historical Sketch*, Second Edition, with additional material by N. W. Lovelock (Chester: W. H. Evans & Sons, 1990), p.11.

example: the Athenæum in Liverpool, founded in 1797, was a library and news room;¹¹⁹ in Leeds there was The Conversation Club;¹²⁰ and in 1808 in Chester, the Commercial News Room, to become known in 1884 as Chester City Club, was opened.¹²¹

According to the official history of the City Club, originally published in 1958 to celebrate its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, only nine clubs still existing were founded before Chester City Club; seven in London and two in Liverpool, and only five of those occupy their original premises, as does the City Club.¹²² On 23rd June 1808, there was a ‘Supper and Ball’ to celebrate the official opening of the Commercial News Room the next day; and it is to be hoped that the ladies enjoyed the event because the next time they were allowed over the threshold was in 1953. As Frank Maddox observes: ‘one wonders if afterwards the proprietors said (to themselves) “Well, they’ve seen it and from now on it is to be exclusively ours”!’¹²³ In the club history written in 1958 the attitude with regard to women is illustrated :

For some considerable time it had been apparent that the infiltration of ladies into most sporting and many social clubs was a fact that had to be faced by all clubs and accepted with as good a grace as possible. Ladies of course had their own clubs, and many social clubs - once exclusively masculine - had, if not an actual ladies section, a room set apart in which members could entertain their ladies. The Chester City Club had however until quite recently stuck to its masculine guns. The first cracks appeared in the defences when a proposal was made to hold a mixed cocktail party in the club to commemorate the coronation of H. M. Queen Elizabeth II.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Neville Carrick and Edward L. Ashton, *The Athenæum Liverpool: 1797-1997*, p.3.

¹²⁰ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.80.

¹²¹ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.11.

¹²² Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.10.

¹²³ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.40.

¹²⁴ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.31-2.

The use of the word ‘infiltration’ to describe the presence of women sounds as if they are regarded as very like an infestation of vermin, although they are still steadfastly referred to as ‘ladies’. No wonder that the proposal to hold the event was considered to be ‘perhaps the most momentous decision in the Club’s history.’¹²⁵ Progress is slow with regard to Chester City Club; this is how a Ladies’ Evening held in 1987 to celebrate the refurbishment of one of the rooms, renamed the Harrison Room in honour of the architect who designed the building, was reported:

The President and Chairman of the Board both spoke and to the delight of all present the President’s wife gave a pretty speech of thanks, which was possibly the first time a female voice had been heard formally in the Club.¹²⁶

The original subscribers who held their first meeting to discuss the setting up of a news room in 1806 would have been mortified by this development because it would not have occurred to them to invite women onto the premises after the official opening. It was taken for granted that proprietors, who from 1885 became known as members, would be male and ‘in all probability a representative cross section of the middle class community’: doctors, lawyers, clergymen, and prominent tradesmen.¹²⁷ In the current rules of the club, there is no reference to the sex of members, but candidates for admission must be over twenty-one and they have to be proposed and seconded by members; any member can object to a candidate and the election of members is ‘vested solely in the Committee.’¹²⁸ Although Rule 4(c) says: ‘Words importing the masculine gender shall include the feminine and the neuter and vice versa’, members are referred to as ‘he’

¹²⁵ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.32.

¹²⁶ N. W. Lovelock, ‘The Last Thirty Years’, in Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club: An Historical Sketch*, Second Edition, with additional material by N. W. Lovelock (Chester: W. H. Evans & Sons, 1990), p.72.

¹²⁷ Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club*, p.44.

¹²⁸ *Rules of the Chester City Club*, 1st January 2010, p.3.

although the text otherwise tries to remain gender neutral by using 'Candidate', 'Member' or 'visitor'. That is until Rule 23:

Every Member who has duly paid his subscription shall have liberty to introduce gentlemen to the Club as guests subject to such restrictions and regulations as shall be made from time to time by the Committee and posted in the Club.¹²⁹

It is quite clear that women are no more welcome in Chester City Club, other than by invitation to specific 'Ladies' events', in the twenty-first century than they were in the nineteenth. In the nineteenth century, even 'strong-minded' women like Mrs Hittaway, Lord Fawn's sister in *The Eustace Diamonds*, balked at the idea of approaching a gentlemen's club:

She had asked her brother to come and dine with her, but he had declined. His engagements hardly admitted of his dining with relatives. She had called upon him at the rooms he occupied in Victoria Street, - but of course she had not found him. She could not very well go to his club; - so now she had hunted him down at his office.¹³⁰

As Milne-Smith explains: 'For elite men, the club was a unique site where they could define their own society free from the influence of women.'¹³¹ But some men were willing to attempt a rebellion; writing in 1911, Ralph Nevill takes issue with the legality of barring women, and gives an account of a man who took his wife to his club:

As regards the admission of ladies to clubs, it is very doubtful if, according to the strict letter of the law, ladies can be excluded from any institution of this sort which admits strangers, for there is no mention of sex in any book of club rules. Indeed, a member of a certain military club is said once to have brought his wife to dine, and defied the authorities by asking for the book of rules, in which he triumphantly pointed out that there was no stipulation as to sex.¹³²

¹²⁹ *Rules of the Chester City Club*, 1st January 2010, p.6.

¹³⁰ Anthony Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.88.

¹³¹ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.15.

¹³² Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs: Their History and Treasures* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911), pp.148-9

It is notable that the attempt was made only once, and that over a century later men-only clubs still exist.

Some women's clubs were eventually set up, and it is interesting that in 1895 the downfall of Oscar Wilde began with a note left for him at a mixed-sex club, the Albemarle.¹³³ However, the 'true heart of clubland' in London remained staunchly male throughout the nineteenth century, and while some clubs began to allow women as guests, no gentlemen's clubs 'seriously discussed including women as members until after the Second World War.'¹³⁴ Furthermore, there are still some clubs, like the Chester City Club, that remain 'homosocial bastions' today.¹³⁵

One famous fore-runner of the nineteenth-century gentlemen's club was the Kit-Cat Club, which was formed in London in the 1690s.¹³⁶ After the Kit-Cat Club's demise in the 1720s, several of its younger members joined a rather more secret organisation, the newly fashionable Freemasons; the English Freemasons Grand Lodge was formed in a tavern near St Paul's Cathedral in 1717, and it has been claimed that Freemasonry 'may be viewed as the longest-lived of eighteenth-century London Clubs.'¹³⁷ In earlier times, members of Lodges had been mostly 'operative' or working stonemasons, with just a few 'speculative' or theoretical Masons.¹³⁸

¹³³ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.70.

¹³⁴ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, pp.162-3.

¹³⁵ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland*, p.165.

¹³⁶ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined A Nation*, p.19.

¹³⁷ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined A Nation*, p.371

¹³⁸ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins and Possessions of the Cestrian Lodge No. 425: A Millennium Record* (Chester: Cestrian Lodge, 2000), p.40

However, throughout the seventeenth century, ‘operative’ artisans were gradually replaced by ‘speculative’ gentry, and in the early eighteenth century ‘the upper classes moved in on the small gentry just as the small gentry had moved in on the ‘operative’ artisans a century earlier.’¹³⁹ During the nineteenth century there was an ‘explosion’ of English Lodges; at the end of the eighteenth century, there had been three hundred and twenty Lodges but in 1903 the three thousandth Lodge was formed, and this increase in interest came from the middle and professional classes.¹⁴⁰

This surge of interest in Freemasonry in the nineteenth century can be explained by the fact that becoming a Mason was seen as a route to crossing social boundaries:

with the Industrial Revolution the brotherhood came back as a convenient organisation for the serious (male) social climber, who was able to exploit connections running all the way up to the royal family, and the enormous circle of instant ‘brothers’, in the great struggle to make money and get a step ahead.¹⁴¹

Becoming a Freemason gave a man access to ‘an enormous circle of acquaintances in most walks of life’, and the opportunity to make contact with others from higher social backgrounds, rather as had happened in the public schools: ‘the English public schoolboy could continue to be public schoolboy in the intimacy of the Craft.’¹⁴² Thereby making the connections in adult life that a boy’s parents had hoped for when they sent him away to school. Freemasonry became popular in the provinces too, because it tapped into a national desire to return to an idealised

¹³⁹ Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons* (London: Granada Publishing, 1984), p.25.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood*, p.36.

¹⁴¹ Barbara Rogers, *Men Only: An Investigation into Men’s Organisations* (London: Pandora Press, 1988), p.78.

¹⁴² Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood*, p.36.

past: ‘Masonic mythology and ritual were much more about a return to the rural idyll of the medieval artisan than the urbane and determinedly lax habits of the Kit-Cat Club’; and men were also attracted to the concept of exclusive membership, rather as they were to the gentlemen’s club.¹⁴³ The secrecy that surrounds masonic rites and rituals might also have been an attraction for new members; and it is often the secrecy that provokes hostility. John Lawrence, a clergyman opposed to Freemasonry, whilst acknowledging that ‘the real secret of Freemasonry is ‘the fellowship’’, condemns it for ‘anti-Christian belief.’¹⁴⁴ The secrets kept by Freemasons and the restricted knowledge available to outsiders are the reasons that Masonic ritual is only hinted at in literature. Charles Dickens was not a Freemason, but had several friends who were and he appears to have some knowledge of Masonic ceremony.¹⁴⁵ In *Our Mutual Friend*, Mr Boffin’s humiliation by Wegg hints at the performance of mystic rites:

Mr Boffin, as if he were about to have his portrait painted, or to be electrified, or to be made a Freemason, or to be placed at any other solitary disadvantage, ascended the rostrum prepared for him.¹⁴⁶

The isolated position of a man being initiated into a Lodge is revealed here, because, of course, he has no idea about what is about to happen to him, being ignorant of the ceremony before becoming a Freemason. In *Bleak House* Lady Dedlock amuses herself by imagining her enemy, Mr Tulkinghorn, as a Freemason: ‘he is at the head of a lodge, and wears short aprons, and is

¹⁴³ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club*, p.372.

¹⁴⁴ John Lawrence, *Freemasonry - A Way of Salvation?* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1982), p.11 and p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.masons.org.au/news/135-2012-dickens-year.html>, accessed 23rd August 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Kindle, 2013), p.388.

made a perfect Idol of, with candlesticks and trowels.’¹⁴⁷ In this way, she is able to think of him as a slightly ridiculous figure and so diminishes her dread of him. In the Sherlock Holmes stories, references are made to the wearing of Masonic insignia: ‘gold ring with Masonic device’; ‘an arc and compass breastpin’; ‘the watch charm’; ‘a Masonic tie-pin’; which Holmes uses to identify victims or culprits.¹⁴⁸ However, there is one serialised story, ‘The Valley of Fear’, involving the Ancient Order of Freemasons who refer to each other as ‘Brother’, are members of Lodges, have an identifying hand grip and passwords, and which, apart from the violence of some of its members, seems to bear some resemblance to Freemasonry.¹⁴⁹ Thackeray’s *Book of Snobs* contains an entertaining story which, he claims, explains his family’s aversion to Freemasonry:

It was my grand-aunt [...] who got into the clock-case at the Royal Rosicrucian Lodge at Bungay, Suffolk, to spy on the proceedings of the Society, of which her husband was a member, and being frightened by the sudden whirring and striking eleven of the clock (just as the Deputy-Grand-Master was bringing in the mystic gridiron for the reception of a neophyte), rushed out into the midst of the lodge assembled: and was elected, by a desperate unanimity, Deputy-Grand-Mistress for life.(p.105)

Thackeray’s imaginary grand-aunt never revealed the secrets of the mystic rites she had witnessed, but he says that no other member of her family joined the Craft or had ‘worn the dreadful Masonic insignia’ (p.105). This story again gently ridicules Freemasonry and, for the purposes of this dissertation, draws attention to the fact that the practice of Freemasonry was not confined to London, but was actively pursued in the provinces.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.646.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, ‘The Red Headed League’, ‘The Adventure of the Norwood Builder’, ‘The Adventure of the Retired Colourman’, in *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), pp. 21, 113, 556, 1,088, 1,091.

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Valley of Fear’ in *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), pp.888-9.

In Chester, although there had been three lodges in 1725, all named after the inns in which they met, by the 1740s the Royal Chester Lodge, the forerunner of Cestrian Lodge, was the sole survivor, with only six or seven members.¹⁵⁰ Freemasonry began to be slightly more fashionable when the Mayor of Chester became Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1754, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were still only twenty members.¹⁵¹ No Lodges are recorded as being active in the city for the five years before Cestrian Lodge was formed in 1834 by eleven members of the former Royal Chester Lodge and seven others. Cestrian Lodge moved to the premises it still occupies in Queen Street in 1883 and it has a gallery of photographs of all of the past Masters of the Lodge from 1895 onwards, although the earliest one is of Col. Hon. Wellington Cotton, who was Worshipful Master in 1848. To reveal the calibre of Cestrian Lodge Freemasons in the nineteenth century, of the twenty seven members in 1844, there was ‘one Noble Earl, one Viscount (a Peer of the Realm), one Noble Lord, a Baronet, three Members of Parliament, two Learned Recorders, one Town Clerk, two Learned Members of the Bar and four members of the Faculty.’¹⁵² There is no record that any of the remaining members were stonemasons, but occupations listed include: Mine Owner, Surgeon, County Surveyor, Judges’ Marshal, Schoolmaster, Cheese Factor, and Merchant.¹⁵³ Tradesmen, therefore, were able to mix with the nobility on equal terms within the Lodge, perhaps one of their motives in joining, but no representative of the original trade of stonemasonry remained.

¹⁵⁰ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, pp.9-11

¹⁵¹ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.11 and p.15.

¹⁵² B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.21.

¹⁵³ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.67.

One of the interesting aspects of Freemasonry in Chester in the nineteenth century was the public face of the Lodge; it was normal practice for foundation stones to be laid by a Freemason, for instance that of the Market Hall in 1862, and the formal Consecration of Cestrian Lodge in 1836 included a procession through the city in full regalia, led by a military band.¹⁵⁴ Just as with the Chester City Club, women were, and still are, kept at arm's length in respect of Cestrian Lodge. When the Freemasons enjoyed 'a sumptuous banquet followed by twenty-four toasts' at the Royal Chester Hotel after the Consecration in 1836, ladies 'were admitted by ticket into the Orchestra to view the scene.'¹⁵⁵ And even in the twenty-first century, women are only invited to Queen Street once a year for the 'Cestrian Ladies Dinner Party', an innovation begun in 1959.¹⁵⁶

There are other examples of men-only clubs, originating in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, which are still in existence locally. The Tarporley Hunt Club, founded in 1762, is restricted to a maximum of forty members and although it has a Lady Patroness, who must be a spinster, and the Rules state that if a woman is appointed as Master or Joint Master of the Cheshire Hounds she can become an 'ex officio Supernumerary Member' for her term of office, ladies are not eligible to attend the Hunt Dinners.¹⁵⁷ The Mid-Cheshire Pitt Club, which currently has about two hundred and fifty members, is the twentieth-century successor to the Northwich Pitt Club, initially founded in 1814 for Tory supporters; by 1818 its main motivation was

¹⁵⁴ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.19 and pp.42-3.

¹⁵⁵ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.19

¹⁵⁶ B. D. Bate and J. R. Willis, *The Origins, History and Possessions of Cestrian Lodge*, p.26.

¹⁵⁷ *Tarporley Hunt Club 1762-2012*, Rules, November 2012, p.3.

opposition to the repeal of the salt tax, however, the toast is still given to ‘The Immortal Memory of William Pitt the Younger’ at their dinners.¹⁵⁸ It was one of over fifty Pitt Clubs in the country dedicated to preserving the memory of William Pitt the Younger (1759-1806); there are now only three left: Mid-Cheshire, Cambridge, and London.¹⁵⁹ Once again, women are invited to one ‘mixed’ dinner a year, although members can invite male guests to other meetings. It seems that, apart from the Tarporley Hunt Club, an occasional invitation to these male-only associations is deemed to be enough to keep the ‘ladies’ happy. Tarporley Hunt Club members’ wives, along with the Lady Patroness, have to content themselves with the honour of wearing the ‘Green Collar’, which is part of a strict uniform the men wear for hunting and at their dinners.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Charles G. Fifield, Archivist, Mid-Cheshire Pitt Club, e-mail dated 12 August 2013.

¹⁵⁹ www.cheshirepittclub.com/history-archive.asp (accessed 31st July 2013)

¹⁶⁰ Gordon Ferguson, with addenda by William Spiegelberg, ‘A Short History of the Tarporley Hunt Club’, in *Tarporley Hunt Club 1762-2012*, p.14.

Chapter 3

Nineteenth-Century Bromances¹⁶¹: Manly Love

It seems almost inevitable that men who have been brought up in the all-male environment of public school and go on to inhabit a predominantly adult male world of business, politics, the armed forces, clubs and other organisations, should be likely to establish close bonds with each other, and it is therefore no surprise that intimate friendships between men were common in the nineteenth century.¹⁶² Sometimes these relationships verged on the sensual. In the BBC 2 series, *Stiff Upper Lip*, Ian Hislop told the story of Admiral Horatio Nelson's dying words to the captain of his flagship, HMS *Victory*: 'Kiss me, Hardy'; it was Hislop's contention that at the beginning of the nineteenth century this open display of affection between Nelson and his old friend made him more of a hero, but that by later in the century public sensibilities had altered:

the Victorians were so embarrassed by Nelson's last appeal to Hardy that they changed the story; they decided he was rambling in Turkish, and he said 'Kismet', which means fate: 'Kismet, Hardy.' There was a man giving in to what fate had in store, which was much more stoical.¹⁶³

Hislop's reading of this change in attitude is supported by the sociologist Peter M. Nardi. Nardi explains that the nineteenth-century stance on same-sex, romantic, even erotic, friendships was that such close relationships were not interpreted as sexual because sex was linked with reproduction, and two men could not reproduce. Close male relationships were therefore

¹⁶¹ Bromance - colloq. (orig. US). Intimate and affectionate friendship between men; a relationship between two men which is characterized by this. Also: a film focusing on such a relationship (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 6th September 2013).

¹⁶² John Tosh, *A Man's Place*., p.109.

¹⁶³ Ian Hislop, *Ian Hislop's Stiff Upper Lip*, BBC 2, broadcast on 2 October 2012.

regarded as platonic. He claims it was not until the decade or so before the turn of the century that same-sex relationships became ‘medicalized and stigmatized’ and that as ‘the stigma attached to same-sex touch and intimacy grew, [...] a form of male relationships was gone.’¹⁶⁴ While this may be so, Nardi has not taken account of the intimate relationships at public school between boys or boys and masters, which, although often concealed, were recognised as potentially sexual much earlier in the century; for example, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, referred to in this context in Chapter 1, was published in 1857. However, the boundary between sexuality and sensuality between boys at school was imprecise because, ironically, ‘sensuality was not only permitted, it was demanded; but it was a sensuality in which physical contact was channelled into football mauls, and emotional feelings into hero worship of the athletic ‘blood’.’¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey Richards has described the different kinds of love experienced by public school boys: chaste, romantic friendship; hero worship; and homosexual (not necessarily including physical intimacy); but he asserts that the ‘official approved brand of love was manly love’, preparing the boys for close male friendships as adults.¹⁶⁶ There are many examples of manly love in the nineteenth century: Robert Louis Stevenson and W. E. Henley; Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier; F. N. Charrington and Hon. Ion Keith-Falconer.¹⁶⁷ *In Memoriam* was Tennyson’s extended expression of grief for, and tribute to, his friend Arthur Hallam; it is a

¹⁶⁴ Peter M. Nardi, “Seamless Souls”: An Introduction to Men’s Friendships’, in *Men’s Friendships* (London: Sage, 1992), pp.2-3.

¹⁶⁵ J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p.187.

¹⁶⁶ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1988), pp.184-5.

¹⁶⁷ Jeffrey Richards, “Passing the Love of Women’: Manly Love and Victorian Society’, in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 108-9.

poem about bereavement and its impact lay in the ‘anxious/innocent treatment of same-sex love’, although it is claimed that later on ‘Tennyson was at some pains to disavow excessive intimacy with Arthur.’¹⁶⁸ This was likely to have been a response to the change in attitude highlighted by Hislop and Nardi. However, Tennyson did not draw back from expressing his affection for Hallam in the poem, provocatively using ‘cross-sex analogues’ for himself or Arthur Hallam as: maiden; poor girl; wife; fiancée; and bride.¹⁶⁹ For example, he likens himself to a lovesick girl:

He past; a soul of nobler tone:
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is set
On one whose rank exceeds her own.¹⁷⁰

Situating Hallam as a desired object in a higher social circle than himself makes the poet appear to be unworthy of love, and emphasises the hopelessness of his cause. The intensity of Tennyson’s grief is being vividly described but it is not surprising that, given the female metaphors, some critics have identified ‘a strong homoerotic current’ running through the text.¹⁷¹ This is a good example of what Sinfield is referring to when he discusses how, in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, manly friendship was continued to be seen as positive, ‘but in danger, always, of collapsing into disreputable sensuality.’¹⁷² Sometimes, a modern reading of the intense feelings involved in a nineteenth-century fictional relationship, and the emotional language used, can

¹⁶⁸ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement* (New York: Cassell, 1994), p.59.

¹⁶⁹ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, pp.57-8.

¹⁷⁰ Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, in Francis O’Gorman (ed.), *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), p.94, ll.1145-8.

¹⁷¹ Francis O’Gorman (ed.), *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), p.89.

¹⁷² Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, p.62.

reveal an unconsciously comic passage; in *The Light That Failed*, manly love is described with a metaphor that sounds like a euphemism:

Torpenhow entered the studio at dusk, and looked at Dick with eyes full of the austere love that springs up between men who have tugged at the same oar together and are yoked by custom and use and the intimacies of toil. This is a good love, and, since it allows, and even encourages, strife, recrimination, and brutal sincerity, does not die, but grows, and is proof against any absence and evil conduct.¹⁷³

This passage is sentimental but one is left wondering what Kipling had in mind when he used the phrase ‘men who have tugged at the same oar together’; a schoolboy might have some suggestions.

The blend of the sentimental and erotic with the spiritual elements of manly love is common in the descriptions of intimate male friendships; Tosh proposes that ‘the extravagant language employed between friends may have been born of literary convention, or it may have been the closest that men of conventional conscience could get to expressing carnal affection.’¹⁷⁴ The second proposition infers that there must always be a sexual undercurrent to an intense male friendship, for which there is no evidence, but there is evidence to suggest that men’s friendships in real life had an effect on the portrayals of relationships in literature. It has been stated that the close friendship between Sir John Franklin and Sir John Richardson was central to Charles Dickens’s collaborations with Wilkie Collins and to the plot, involving a selfless act of bravery, of *A Tale of Two Cities*.¹⁷⁵ When Sir John Franklin’s team failed to return from an exploration of the Arctic in 1845, Sir John Richardson made up a party to search for him, which was

¹⁷³ Rudyard Kipling, *The Light That Failed*, (Kindle, 2013), location 741.

¹⁷⁴ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.110.

¹⁷⁵ Ruth Glancy, ‘Contextual Overview: *The Frozen Deep* and Other Biographical Influences’, in Ruth Glancy (ed.), *Charles Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.14.

unsuccessful; some relics of the lost party were eventually found in 1854 by another team led by Dr Rae.¹⁷⁶ Dickens was fascinated by the details of the expeditions and he wrote two articles called ‘The Lost Arctic Voyagers’ in December 1854 for *Household Words*.¹⁷⁷ In February 1856, Richardson wrote a biographical account of Franklin, which Dickens mentioned in a letter to John Forster, written a month later:

Lady Franklin sent me the whole of that Richardson memoir; and I think Richardson’s manly friendship, and love of Franklin, one of the noblest things I ever knew in my life. It makes one’s heart beat high, with a sort of sacred joy.¹⁷⁸

Dickens admired Richardson’s feelings for Franklin to the extent that he felt uplifted and the spiritual element of his response to their friendship is captured in his use of the word ‘sacred’. There is much to explore in all of these examples of manly love; however, the focus of the rest of this chapter will be on examples of intense, but seemingly non-sexual, relationships between males depicted in nineteenth-century fiction.

Charles Dickens portrayed an example of manly friendship and love in *Our Mutual Friend* with the relationship between Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer Lightwood, who had ‘once been boys together at a public school’ and are referred to as ‘two old school fellows’, emphasising their shared past and explaining their intimacy.¹⁷⁹ Having arranged to rent a ‘bachelor cottage’ by the river together for the summer (p.84), Eugene fantasises about the

¹⁷⁶ Harry Stone (ed), *The Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens: Household Words 1850-1859*, Volume II (London: Penguin Press, 1969), p.513.

¹⁷⁷ Charles Dickens, ‘The Lost Arctic Voyagers’, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal conducted by Charles Dickens*, No. 245, 2nd December 1854 and No. 246, 9th December 1854.

¹⁷⁸ Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (eds), *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Volume Eight, 1856-1858 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.66.

¹⁷⁹ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Kindle, 2013), p.10 and p.85. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

pleasure of living together in a lighthouse, cut off from society, and Mortimer wonders whether 'there might be a degree of sameness in the life' in such an isolated location:

'I have thought of that also,' said Eugene, [...] 'but it would be a defined and limited monotony. It would not extend beyond two people. Now, it's a question with me, Mortimer, whether a monotony defined with that precision and limited to that extent, might be more endurable than the unlimited monotony of one's fellow-creatures.' As Lightwood laughed and passed the wine, he remarked, 'We shall have the opportunity, in our boating summer, of trying the question.' 'An imperfect one,' Eugene acquiesced, with a sigh, 'but so we shall. I hope we may not prove too much for one another.' (p.85)

The two friends might almost be discussing the merits of embarking on an exclusive relationship, like a marriage, and it is notable that they consistently use their first names, in contrast with another close fictional partnership, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. Holmes and Watson's relationship has been described as: 'that of the bachelor clubman's world, epitomised by the habitual use of surnames, which effectively precludes a sexual intimacy which would surely have stretched to the use of Christian names.'¹⁸⁰ The use of first names does not inevitably expose a sexual relationship between Mortimer and Eugene, but the depth of their affection and loyalty is revealed after Eugene is seriously injured; Mortimer says that they have 'long been much more than brothers' (p.433) and he talks like a lover to his friend:

'You wanted to tell me something, Eugene. My poor dear fellow, you wanted to say something to your old friend - the friend who has always loved you, admired you, imitated you, founded himself upon you, been nothing without you, and who, God knows, would be here in your place if he could!' (pp. 434-5)

The intensity of the dialogue emphasises the 'manly love' they feel for each other; Eugene expressly tells Mortimer that he loves him (p.438), but only at the time when he asks Mortimer to arrange his marriage to Lizzie, thereby dispelling any concern about their sexuality. The point is reinforced later when Eugene declares that he loves Mortimer 'next best on earth' to Lizzie

¹⁸⁰ Jeffrey Richards, "Passing the Love of Women': Manly Love and Victorian Society', p.109.

(p.478), and so the supremacy of heterosexual love is established.

Holmes and Watson's relationship is not so obviously intimate. Even Holmes's farewell letter to Watson, written at the Reichenbach Falls when he realises that he may have to sacrifice his life in order to destroy Moriarty, is curiously formal, although acknowledging Watson's probable grief at the loss of Holmes:

I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you.¹⁸¹

The letter ends with a perfunctory nod towards Watson's wife and a much warmer declaration of Holmes's attachment to Watson: 'Pray give my greetings to Mrs. Watson, and believe me, my dear fellow, Very sincerely yours, Sherlock Holmes' (p.426). The tone of the letter and the inclusion of his first name is significant; it is partly an indication of Holmes's fondness for his friend and partly an acknowledgement of Watson's reciprocal affection. Mrs Watson is destined to be brusquely disposed of in a brief passage after Holmes's return: 'In some manner he had learned of my own sad bereavement, and his sympathy was shown in his manner rather than his words. "Work is the best antidote to sorrow, dear Watson,"'; and soon Watson is anticipating, with pleasure, the adventure ahead: 'It was indeed like old times when [...] I found myself seated beside him in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket and the thrill of adventure in my heart.'¹⁸² Watson's limited grief for his wife, who he had once ardently courted, is in contrast to his thoughts when he believes that Holmes is dead: 'him whom I shall ever regard as the best and

¹⁸¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Final Problem', in *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), p.426. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

¹⁸² Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Empty House', in *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986), pp.544-5.

wisest man whom I have ever known' (p.426). In this case, manly love has a stronger hold over Watson than his feelings for his late wife, while the text manages to retain a solid 'manliness' in Holmes and Watson's feelings for each other.

Holmes and Watson were strangers when they decided to share lodgings, unlike Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn, whose experiment in living together for the summer must have been successful enough for them to subsequently share chambers in the Temple. Mortimer's reflection on his longstanding attachment to Eugene reveals the depth of his affection:

Despite that pernicious assumption of lassitude and indifference, which had become his second nature, he was strongly attached to his friend. He had founded himself upon Eugene when they were yet boys at school; and at this hour imitated him no less, admired him no less, loved him no less, than in those departed days.(p.167)

Eugene had been a schoolboy role model for Mortimer, a hero to worship, and neither of them seem to have matured beyond that relationship; Mortimer's juvenile devotion to Eugene and Eugene's juvenile fixation with Lizzie Hexam, which he is unable to describe or explain to his friend, hint that both men are examples of the boy-man defined by Jeffrey Richards as: 'the permanent adolescent, whose emotional clock stops and remains fixed at a certain age.'¹⁸³ The implication is that, for some, a public school education retarded the process of maturing into a fully functioning adult, in contrast to the purpose of the experience which was to prepare boys for the obligations of adulthood; as in the case of Tom Brown who grows towards maturity by having to take responsibility for someone weaker than himself.

Tom Brown's relationship with George Arthur reveals how boys became reliant on each other at public school, and how each, the stronger as well as the weaker, could gain from the experience; Quigley calls them 'warm, ennobling friendships between older and younger

¹⁸³ Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days*, p.6.

boys.’¹⁸⁴ When Tom sees George, ‘a slight, pale boy, with large blue eyes and light fair hair’, he understands what George’s fate will be at school unless he has a guide and mentor: ‘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 other derogatory nickname.’¹⁸⁵ The use of girls’ names for good-looking boys at public school was not unusual and often resulted in the boy being targeted by older boys for sexual abuse, as was the case at Harrow when Vaughan was headmaster.¹⁸⁶ When George falls ill, Tom realizes how fond he is of him: ‘Never till that moment had he felt how his little chum had twined himself round his heart-strings’ (p.148). It is striking how sentimental the description of Tom’s feelings are and that Tom even uses an affectionate diminutive, ‘Geordie’, for George, although they both refer to other boys by their surnames. Tom even feels ‘a pang of jealousy’ when George talks about another boy (p.149). The boys’ relationship is strong and mutually beneficial: George Arthur tells Tom: ‘you, who’ve been my backbone ever since I’ve been at Rugby, and have made the school a paradise to me’(p.151); and Tom acknowledges to Mrs Arthur that he owes ‘everything good in him to Geordie’ (p.155); so the mutual benefit that the boys have gained from their intimacy is made explicit to the reader. Isabel Quigley contends that: ‘Hughes introduced his readers to a public-school world in which there was plenty of room for feeling and warmth;’ and in which ‘loving friendships between boys aroused no uneasy feelings in themselves, their masters, or their

¹⁸⁴ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982), p.127.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (Kindle, 2013), p.102. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

¹⁸⁶ T. W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys’ Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), p.72.

readers.’¹⁸⁷ But this is to ignore the reference to ‘the miserable little pretty white-handed, curly-haired boys petted, and pampered by some of the big fellows’ (p.110), which suggests sexual behaviour between the boys, and which Tom fears would be George Arthur’s lot if he had no protector.

The intimate friendships that developed between men were, John Tosh explains, a consequence both of the ‘carefully policed contacts between males and females’, and the attraction young men inevitably had for those who had the benefit of a similar, good quality, education to themselves; women had at best only a limited access to education and so, men were drawn towards their male peers.¹⁸⁸ However, relationships between older and younger men were also familiar, and one example in literature is that between Roger Carbury and Paul Montague in *The Way We Live Now*. Roger, although not directly related to Paul, describes their relationship in terms of family ties: ‘We have been like brothers together, - one brother being very much older than the other, indeed; or like father and son.’¹⁸⁹ His affection is reciprocated and ‘the two men were fast friends’ (p.39), but their relationship is tested when they both fall in love with the same woman; an example of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls ‘erotic rivalry’, which describes a triangular romance, either heterosexual, homosexual, or homosocial, or some combination as here.¹⁹⁰ The intensity of Roger’s attachment to Paul, and the consequent sense of betrayal he feels, is vividly described as he tries to reconcile his desire for Henrietta with his affection for

¹⁸⁷ Isabel Quigley, *The Heirs of Tom Brown*, p.60.

¹⁸⁸ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.109.

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (Kindle, 2013), p.109. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

¹⁹⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.162.

Paul:

When had a father been kinder to a son, or a brother to a brother, than he had been to Paul? His home had been the young man's home, and his purse the young man's purse. What right could the young man have to come upon him just as he was perfecting his bliss and rob him of all that he had in the world? (p.48)

And Paul is equally troubled about the position they find themselves in when he speaks to

Henrietta about his feelings for Roger while giving her the opportunity to choose between them:

“Look here, Hetta,” he said. “It is no good going on like this. I love Roger Carbury, - as well as one man can love another. [...] I love him better than any man, - as well as a man can love a man. If you will say that you love him as well as a woman can love a man, - I will leave England at once, and never return to it.” (p.209)

Paul has no qualms about confessing his love for Roger, but is careful to separate his ‘manly’ love from conventional, heterosexual love; he feels the need to emphasise this difference twice in a comparatively short passage, just to make the point absolutely clear. Roger’s feelings for Henrietta are strangely qualified; he had ‘assured himself with certainty that he did love her better than any other woman’ (p.79), whereas it is unequivocally stated that ‘he loved Paul Montague well’ (p.77); Roger’s manly love for Paul is more clear-cut than his love for Henrietta. When Henrietta chooses Paul, Roger resolves to remain one of a particular kind of male character who frequently appears in nineteenth-century fiction - a bachelor. Sedgwick asserts that the bachelor, made popular by Thackeray and other early and mid-Victorians, was ‘a type that for some men narrowed the venue, and at the same time startlingly desexualized the question, of male sexual choice.’¹⁹¹ It is only by embracing the role of ‘bachelor’, and consequently becoming asexual, that Roger can resign himself to Paul and Henrietta’s marriage.

The frequency of the appearance of the bachelor in nineteenth-century literature

¹⁹¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 188.

reinforces the contention that ‘the sense that marriage and friendship were mutually exclusive became more pervasive’ over the course of the Victorian period.¹⁹² Mr Alf in *The Way We Live Now* is a typical example:

He was a good-looking man, about forty years old, but carrying himself as though he was much younger, spare, below the middle height, with dark brown hair which would have shown a tinge of grey but for the dyer’s art, with well-cut features [...] He dressed with the utmost simplicity, but also with utmost care. He was unmarried, had a small house of his own in Berkeley Square at which he gave remarkable dinner parties. (p.11)

Mr Alf’s attention to his appearance, including dying his hair, highlights his freedom from care and responsibility for anyone but himself; he presents himself as a dandy.

The attractions of club life for both married men and bachelors have been detailed earlier, but the particular pleasures of bachelor life are vividly described in *The Paradise of Bachelors*; an account of a dinner party for nine bachelors held in private chambers near Temple Bar in London:

It was the very perfection of quiet absorption of good living, good drinking, good feeling, and good talk. We were a band of brothers. Comfort - fraternal, household comfort, was the grand trait of the affair. Also, you could plainly see that these easy-hearted men had no wives or children to give an anxious thought. Almost all of them were travelers [sic], too; for bachelors alone can travel freely, and without any twinges of their consciences touching desertion of the fire-side.¹⁹³

This passage gives a flavour of the attractions for men of the company of their peers. The lack of responsibility for anyone but themselves intensifies the pleasure of these men’s lives who, unlike their married peers, do not have a duty to provide a home for a family; for them there is no ‘conflict between fireside and homosocial pleasures.’¹⁹⁴ It seems that for some nineteenth-century

¹⁹² John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.126.

¹⁹³ Herman Melville, ‘The Paradise of Bachelors’ in *The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids* (Good Readings, First Edition 1855 (Kindle, 2013)), Location 122.

¹⁹⁴ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.136.

men life was much more agreeable without the aggravation that women and children bring.

Decent lodgings, a good club, and male company were all they needed.

Conclusion

In 1867, John Stuart Mill, in the course of a speech in the House of Commons, said the following:

In former days a man passed his life among men; all his friendships, all his real intimacies, were with men; with men alone did he consult on any serious business; the wife was either a plaything or an upper servant. All this, among the educated classes, is now changed. The man no longer gives his spare hours to violent exercises and boisterous conviviality with male associates.¹⁹⁵

Mill's comments accord with the historian John Tosh's observation that in 'any society where women are regarded as markedly inferior or different, close friendships between males is likely to flourish.'¹⁹⁶ As we have seen, men-only associations did continue to flourish until the end of the nineteenth century, and so the situation as perceived by Mill was not so straightforward. His understanding of the change in men's perceptions of their wives is particularly interesting in the context of this dissertation; perhaps there had not been as much progress as he hoped or believed, because not only were men continuing to enjoy 'boisterous conviviality' away from women at the time of Mill's speech, some men are still drawn to male-only associations that provide the same opportunities in the twenty-first century. The major difference is that many male-only organisations have been subject to the 'infiltration' of females in the last hundred years. Of the seven schools referred to in the Public Schools Act 1868, three: Eton, Harrow, and Winchester, still cater for boys only; Westminster, Charterhouse, and Shrewsbury, admit girls in the sixth form; and only one, Rugby, is fully co-educational, although Shrewsbury plans to become co-

¹⁹⁵ John Stuart Mill, House of Commons speech on 20th May 1867, reported in *Hansard*, Vol. 187, cols. 821-3.

¹⁹⁶ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.109.

educational in 2014.¹⁹⁷ And while many gentlemen's clubs now admit lady members, there are several, including White's in London and the Chester City Club, who do not. The current law in relation to single-sex clubs is significant in this respect; in an article written in 2010 for *TIME World*, Eben Harrell explains:

Because of an idiosyncrasy in the law, single-sex establishments that do not allow those of the opposite gender on the premises - even as guests - can keep their exclusive status. The law only kicks in when one sex is given preferential treatment.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, a gentlemen's club can prohibit women from joining, but a mixed-sex club cannot exclude female members from particular areas in the club.

The expansion of male-only environments in the nineteenth century, from public school onwards, can be partly explained by the increase in the possibility of social mobility, which was one consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Public schools and gentlemen's clubs enabled the aspiring, and newly wealthy, middle classes to have access to the upper classes and to cross social boundaries, in the same way that Freemasonry, 'providing a ladder extending from the lower middle class to the Royal family itself, offered great advantages to those who could learn to climb it.'¹⁹⁹ Social climbing seems to have been the impetus for the heightened interest parents

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.etoncollege.com/Registration.aspx> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.harrowschool.org.uk/1738/overview/faqs-about-the-school> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.winchestercollege.org/admissions> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.westminster.org.uk/sixthform/girls-sixth-form.html> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.charterhouse.org.uk/admissionsintroductions> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.shrewsbury.org.uk/page/admissions> (accessed 10th September 2010) <http://www.rugbyschool.net.history> (accessed 10th September 2010)

¹⁹⁸ Eben Harrell, 'Britain's Men-Only Clubs Have to Let in the Ladies', in *TIME World*, 18th November 2010. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2031777,00.html> (accessed 11th September 2013)

¹⁹⁹ Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons*, p.36.

took in ensuring their sons had the best public school education they could afford, and men were keen to join the best gentlemen's clubs they could afford.

As well as increasing a man's chances of reaching a higher social level, male-only environments met some men's more fundamental, personal needs; spending time away from home enabled them to forget, if only temporarily, their responsibilities, and to enjoy the company of like-minded peers: 'Men's retreat to homosocial spaces and activities signalled not only an escape from the Victorian home, but also a search for a new form of emotional life.'²⁰⁰ But as the century progressed, the close bonds of affection that men enjoyed with each other became tainted by suspicions about their sexual behaviour; there was an increasing possibility that an intimate, platonic relationship, which had been socially blameless earlier, was at risk of being interpreted differently:

Because the paths of male entitlement, especially in the nineteenth century, required certain intense male bonds that were not readily distinguishable from the most reprobated bonds, an endemic and ineradicable state of what I am calling male homosexual panic became the normal condition of male heterosexual entitlement.²⁰¹

Sedgwick's phrase, 'homosexual panic' is not too strong to describe the concern about same-sex passion that developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. Existing disquiet was heightened by the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, which brought to light the practise of homosexuality masquerading as homosocial behaviour; before this time, as Sinfield pithily states: 'Not only did this love not dare to speak its name, it hardly *had* a name.'²⁰² Intimate

²⁰⁰ Amy Milne-Smith, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.111.

²⁰¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008), p.185.

²⁰² Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement* (New York: Cassell, 1994), p.3.

friendships between men were reinterpreted, and even the confirmed bachelor, if he was an effeminate aesthete or dandy, became suspect.²⁰³ Tosh seems to agree with these changed perceptions about nineteenth-century male friendships and homosocial environments: ‘Any code which is so resolutely homosocial and so indifferent towards women must, we suppose, be founded on a culture of same-sex desire’²⁰⁴ However, he is assuming a level of sexual desire between men involved in any platonic relationship. Sex is not the driving force behind all men’s desire for male company, either in the nineteenth century or now; it may be one element for some, but for others there are other, non-sexual, objectives: social climbing; escape from the pressures of home or work; making business contacts; enjoying the company of like-minded peers.

Middle-class men in the nineteenth century were able to mix in socially superior circles by joining closed-membership groups, thus creating new ideas about what it meant to be a successful man. This exclusively masculine world was disconnected from the family home and was by definition closed to women:

Middle-class men’s claims for new forms of manliness found one of their most powerful expressions in formal associations. The informal, convivial culture of eighteenth-century merchants, traders and farmers was gradually superseded by an age of societies.[...] This network of association redefined civil society, creating new arenas of social power and constructing a formidable base for middle-class men.[...] This public world was consistently organized in gendered ways and had little space for women.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, p.122.

²⁰⁴ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.189

²⁰⁵ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), p.416.

Separating public and private spheres was therefore ‘profoundly gendered.’²⁰⁶ However, according to John Tosh, male-only association is necessary to ensure that boys and young men acquire ‘manliness’ and he cites ‘recent cross-cultural studies’ which:

have emphasised that full masculine status is the gift of one’s peers; it builds on the foundation of boy-life outside the family, and is accomplished by economic or military achievements in the public sphere, often marked by a rite of collective, men-only initiations. A fine balance is struck between competition and comradeship as young men learn how to become part of the collective (male) voice of the community.²⁰⁷

If the findings of these late twentieth-century studies are correct that only males can affirm each other’s masculine status, then they contradict the nineteenth-century concept, also put forward by Tosh, that ‘home was central to masculinity.’²⁰⁸

The complexity of the debate about masculinity in the nineteenth century is unmistakable. In spite of this, the historians Mangan and Walvin assert that the influence of the Victorians continues; they claim that ‘recent male dominance owes much to the ideal of manliness, shaped and nurtured as a Victorian moral construct by influential and often overlapping groups of nineteenth-century writers, educationists and activists.’²⁰⁹ While it is problematic to agree with this claim when manliness was not a static concept throughout the Victorian period, the nineteenth-century schools, clubs and organisations described in this dissertation, which are surviving successfully in the twenty-first century, does give it credence.

²⁰⁶ Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.40.

²⁰⁷ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.3.

²⁰⁸ John Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p.2.

²⁰⁹ J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, ‘Introduction’, in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p.2.

Francis Wey, the nineteenth-century French visitor to London, observed that ‘[a]ll Englishmen of the same class lead similar lives, think alike, reason alike, and are condemned to identical pastimes.’²¹⁰ The shared background of the men he met, mainly educated at public school before moving into a world of exclusively male society, would explain why Wey came to this conclusion. Common experiences, language, and attitudes were, and are, powerful mechanisms for male-bonding, and homosociality is still a significant part of many men’s lives. While women’s rights have changed dramatically in the intervening period, the continued existence of male-only environments indicates that some things have not changed since the nineteenth century, and that the influence of the Victorians is not easily extinguished.

²¹⁰ Francis Wey, *A Frenchman Sees the English in the ‘Fifties*, trans. Valerie Pirie (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935), pp.64-5.

Bibliography

Primary Texts

- Anstey, F., *Vice Versa or a Lesson to Fathers* (London: John Murray, 1882 (Kindle, 2013))
- Barrie, J. M., *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens* and *Peter and Wendy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Cobbett, William, *Advice to Young Men, And (Incidentally) to Young Women* (London: Henry Frowde, 1829 (Kindle, 2013))
- Conan Doyle, Arthur, 'The Adventure of the Empty House', 'The Adventure of the Final Problem', 'The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter', 'The Adventure of the Norwood Builder', 'The Adventure of the Retired Colourman', 'The Red-Headed League', 'A Study in Scarlet', in *The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes: Complete Works* (Ware: Omega Books, 1986)
- Dickens, Charles, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Dickens, Charles, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 2003)
- Dickens, Charles, *Our Mutual Friend* (Kindle, 2013)
- Dickens, Charles, 'The Lost Arctic Voyagers', in *Household Words: A Weekly Journal conducted by Charles Dickens*, No. 245, 2nd December 1854, and No. 246, 9th December 1854
- Gissing, George, *In the Year of Jubilee* (Kindle, 2013)
- Hughes, Thomas, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Kindle, 2013)
- Kipling, Rudyard, *The Light That Failed* (Kindle, 2013)
- Melville, Herman, 'The Paradise of Bachelors' in *The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids* (Good Readings, First Edition 1855 (Kindle, 2013))
- Mill, John Stuart, *Hansard*, Vol.187, cols. 821-3, House of Commons Speech, 20th May 1867
- Tennyson, Alfred, *In Memoriam*, in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2010)
- Thackeray, William Makepeace, *The Book of Snobs: By One of Themselves* (Kindle, 2013)
- Trollope, Anthony, *The Eustace Diamonds* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Trollope, Anthony, *The Way We Live Now* (Kindle, 2013)

Wey, Francis, *A Frenchman Sees the English in the 'Fifties*, trans. Valerie Pirie (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935),

Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in Richard Allen Cave (ed.), *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (London: Penguin, 2000)

Secondary Texts

Atkinson, Diane, *The Criminal Conversation of Mrs Norton* (London: Preface Publishing, 2012)

Bamford, T. W., *Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys' Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Son, 1967)

Bamford, T. W., 'Thomas Arnold and the Victorian Idea of a Public School', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)

Bate, B. D., and J. R. Willis, *The Origins and Possessions of the Cestrian Lodge No. 425: A Millennium Record* (Chester: Cestrian Lodge, 2000)

Best, Geoffrey, 'Militarism and the Victorian Public School', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)

Carrick, Neville, and Edward L. Ashton, *The Athenæum Liverpool: 1797 - 1997* (Liverpool: The Athenæum Liverpool, 1997)

Chandos, John, *Boys Together: English Public Schools 1800-1864* (London: Hutchinson, 1984)

Charlesworth, Michael, Robin Mouldsdales, Robin Trimby, Mark Dickson, and Christopher Sturdy, *Shrewsbury School Football and the Old Salopian F. C.: An Illustrated History* (Midsomer Norton: Selwood Systems, 1995)

Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1988)

Dunning, Eric, 'The Origins of Modern Football and the Public School Ethos', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)

Ferguson, Gordon, with addenda by William Spiegelberg, 'A Short History of the Tarporley Hunt Club', in *Tarporley Hunt Club 1762-2012*

- Field, Ophelia, *The Kit-Cat Club: Friends Who Imagined a Nation* (London: Harper Press, 2008)
- Fifield, Charles G., Archivist, Mid-Cheshire Pitt Club, e-mail 12 August 2013
- Glancy, Ruth (ed.), *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)
- Glancy, Ruth, 'Contextual Overview: *The Frozen Deep* and Other Biographical Influences' in Ruth Glancy (ed.), *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: A Sourcebook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)
- Griffin, Ben, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Harrell, Eben, 'Britain's Men-Only Clubs Have to Let in the Ladies' in *TIME World*, 18 November 2010
- Hatton, John, *Club-Land, London and Provincial* (London: J. S. Virtue and Co., 1890)
- Hislop, Ian, *Ian Hislop's Stiff Upper Lip*, BBC 2, broadcast on 2 October 2012
- Honey, J. R. de S., 'Tom Brown's Universe: The Nature and Limits of the Victorian Public Schools Community', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)
- Household Words: A Weekly Journal conducted by Charles Dickens*, 2nd and 9th December 1854
- Knight, Stephen, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons* (London: Granada Publishing, 1984)
- Lawrence, John, *Freemasonry - A Way of Salvation?* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1982)
- Leach, Colin, *A School at Shrewsbury: The Four Foundations* (London: James and James, 1990)
- Lord, Evelyn, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008)
- Lovelock, N. W., 'The Last Thirty Years', in Frank Maddox, *Chester City Club: An Historical Sketch*, Second Edition, with additional material by N. W. Lovelock (Chester: W. H. Evans & Sons, 1990)
- Maddox, Frank, *Chester City Club: An Historical Sketch*, Second Edition, with additional material by N. W. Lovelock (Chester: W. H. Evans & Sons, 1990)

Mangan, J. A., *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000)

Mangan, J. A., 'Regression and Progression: Introduction to the New Edition' in J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000)

Mangan, J. A. and James Walvin, 'Introduction' in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987)

Mangan, J. A., and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987)

Meadows, A. J., and W. H. Brock, 'Topics Fit for Gentlemen: The Problem of Science in the Public School Curriculum', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)

Milne-Smith, Amy, *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Nardi, Peter M., "'Seamless Souls": An Introduction to Men's Friendships' in *Men's Friendships* (California and London: Sage, 1992)

Nevill, Ralph, *London Clubs: Their History and Treasures* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911)

Newsome, David, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: John Murray, 1961)

O'Gorman, Francis (ed.), *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2010)

Oxford English Dictionary Online

Quigley, Isabel, *The Heirs of Tom Brown: The English School Story* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982)

Richards, Jeffrey, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988)

Richards, Jeffrey, 'Introduction', in J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 2000)

Richards, Jeffrey, "'Passing the Love of Women": Manly Love and Victorian Society', in J. A.

- Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987)
- Rogers, Barbara, *Men Only: An Investigation into Men's Organisations* (London: Pandora Press, 1988)
- Rules of the Chester City Club*, 1st January 2010
- Scott, Patrick, 'The School and the Novel: *Tom Brown's Schooldays*', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)
- Seaborne, Malcolm, 'The Architecture of the Victorian Public School', in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and London: University Of California Press, 2008)
- Simon, Brian, and Ian Bradley (eds), *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975)
- Sinfield, Alan, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement* (New York: Cassell, 1994)
- Stone, Harry (ed.), *The Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens: Household Words 1850-1859*, Vol. II (London: Penguin Press, 1969)
- Storey, Graham and Kathleen Tillotson (eds), *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol. Eight, 1856-1858 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- Tarporley Hunt Club 1762-2012*, Rules, November 2012
- The World: A Journal for Men and Women*, 2nd July 1884
- Tosh, John, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999)
- Wilson, A. N., *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003)
- www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7046587.stm
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/10343316

www.charterhouse.org.uk

www.cheshirepittclub.com/history-archive.asp

www.etoncollege.com

www.gov.uk/government/people/david-cameron

www.harrowschool.org.uk

www.masons.org.au/news/135-2012-dickens-year.html

www.rugbyschool.net

www.shrewsbury.org.uk

www.time.com/time/world/article

www.westminster.org.uk

www.winchestercollege.org