Ideology and the Class Bully: Enid Blyton's *Malory Towers*

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Nasty, spiteful, petty, vengeful — and these are the attributes of the 'good' or socially acceptable characters in Enid Blyton's Malory Towers stories. The middle class ethos that pervades this series encourages the acceptance of certain values, beliefs, attitudes and consequent behaviours as not only normal but admirable and in doing so promotes a false consciousness that accepts bullying as a societal norm. Each story in the series repeats the theme of the triumph of the 'good' girls over the recalcitrance of the 'problem' girls. This theme is further repeated for the series as a whole with the 'spoilt' and 'selfish' Gwendoline who appears at the start of the first book, **First Term at Malory Towers**, finally being defeated in the final pages of the last book, **Last Term at Malory Towers**. The behaviours that are produced by the ethos of this middle class public school demonstrate that bullying attitudes and behaviours are learned and that bullies are also victims, but of social conditioning. Correlatively this work also demonstrates the bullying of women to enforce their conformity to patriarchal values as embodied in the middle class ethos of Malory Towers.

Sheila Ray (1982) considers that the school stories 'rank high amongst the best of Enid Blyton's work' (Ray 1982, p.200) and that

Last Term at Malory Towers is probably Enid Blyton's most mature work (p.199). However, Blyton's Malory Towers series demonstrates a concept of the bully as a construct of middle class ideology and to commend the work, as Ray does, is to further reinforce the negative aspects of this ideology.

The oppressive influence of patriarchal paternalism that can still be found in contemporary society has its origins in the 'middling sort' class of merchant-craftsmen of the seventeenth century that adopted the mantle of a form of Puritanism which had more to do with power and control than with religious reform (Leeson 1976, pp.19-20). The overriding insistence of this influence is the need for conformity which leads to 'a fear of what is different or unusual, the fear of the non-conformist and the unconventional, a fear of anything that's new and threatens change' (Dixon 1977, p.70). This fear leads to a need to dominate as a class in order to resist change.

The argument regarding Puritanism and control provides some serious basis for Cooper's lighthearted exposé of the British class system in which she argues that middle class ideology embraces a belief in the 'Puritan Ethic, in the cultivation of such virtues as diligence, frugality, propriety and fidelity' (Cooper

1979, p.28). The attitude becomes that of admiration of the pursuits of these ideals and condemnation of perceived recalcitrance. The behaviours that ensue are those that promote both social and academic dominance. Individuals or communities that do not conform are oppressed or scorned.

Children's books have underlying them 'the preoccupations and values of the middle class' (Leeson 1976, p.11) which originated in that 'period when feudalism gave way to capitalism, when a new social system brought new classes to the fore, not the least the middle class which sought by education and other means to consolidate a new-won position' (Leeson 1976, p.42). The urge to consolidate 'new-won position(s)' required that the emerging middle class must educate its own. This need eventuated in the establishment of grammar schools for the children of middle class families and a 'new kind of book for children destined not just to fill their parents' shoes but to go higher if possible' (Leeson 1976, p.20). In time a proprietorial attitude evolved in which the middle classes believed that 'what had long ago been achieved at the cost of social strife, now seemed theirs, by "natural" law' (Leeson 1976, p.32). This attitude constitutes a false belief that middle class ideology is the only acceptable

ideology. Authors of children's literature have almost exclusively been of middle class origin and have written from a middle class perspective which, being predominantly male, tends to view women and children as subordinate.

Echoes of this ideology and the struggle to 'consolidate' the presence of a middle class in English society are to be found in Blyton's works and they emanate in the form of snobbery, spitefulness and petty dominations, all of which may be classified as bullying behaviours. In the Malory Towers series these influences are represented iconically in that Blyton presents a particular view of the world that signifies an ideal state, a utopia in which the 'good' are always rewarded and the 'bad' receive their just desserts. A comparison with their own realities might leave young readers feeling not only cheated but encouraged to believe that the attitudes and behaviours of the 'good' characters are socially acceptable and those to which they ought to aspire. This representation demonstrates the power of middle class ideology to oppress difference in any form.

In England, the period between the wars was a time of social change which saw the breaking down of a homogeneous middle class into a diversity of sub-

classes. It might be argued that writers who emphasised the values of class in their works in this period, either consciously or unconsciously, feared the consequences of this time of flux and wrote accordingly. Leeson argues that:

Fear of change is a powerful stimulus to creative escapism . . .

and that:

Deeply rooted conventional attitudes, traditionally accepted outlooks speak to us with an unconscious air of authority . . . the author of books reflecting a very limited middle class background and experience can tell you with utter honesty: 'I am not concerned with class, only with people.'

(Leeson 1976, p

Authorial ideology, then, becomes part of literary creativity as is evidenced in Blyton's works. Blyton maintained that she was interested only in her public, her child readers, and out of concern for their welfare wanted to bring the children of the world, the 'ideas and ideals' (Dixon 1977, p.58) of England. But these 'ideas' and 'ideals' that are implicit in her works demonstrate her conscious or unconscious concerns, not only with class, but with middle class dominance and superiority.

Blyton's formative years of

childhood and adolescence, when social conditioning is at its most influential, were those years prior to the first World War when the middle classes still formed the backbone of the Empire and the Blyton's family life was middle class (Stoney 1974). But Blyton wrote against the background of the social changes of the inter-war and post war years, and the 'deeply rooted conventional attitudes' of her formative years that pervade her stories demonstrate her middle class fear of those changes and hence her desire to maintain the 'status quo'. As Blyton herself states:

I do not write merely to entertain . . . What is said to them they are apt to believe and follow . . . my public, bless them, feel in my books a sense of security, an anchor, a sure knowledge that right is always right . . . Naturally, the morals or ethics are intrinsic to the story — and therein lies their true power.

(Cited in Dixon 1977, p.57)

The 'morals or ethics' then become a 'natural' or 'invisible' element in the text and serve to reinforce the iconic influence which, in turn, reinforces the 'true power'. The misuse or abuse of such power constitutes oppression or bullying. This attitude indicates both authorial bullying and that of a middle class adult bully imposing

particular moral and ethical values onto young readers who, being at the whim of diverse political, social and economic environments, may experience difficulties in accommodating them. Blyton's authorial approach demonstrates not only a non-acceptance of the validity of such differences and resistance to change but also her own desire for the 'anchor' of middle class conventionalities. Such ideological imposition is a sophisticated form of propaganda, and propaganda is a bully behaviour.

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, education had been the preserve of the male as Virginia Woolf powerfully demonstrates in **A Room of One's Own** in which she compares the long history of male education to the recent and financially deprived educational facilities for women; and even more effectively in **Three Guineas** when she demonstrates in Part One that female advancement has historically been sacrificed to that of the male. To further dissipate the influence of the mother over the son in a patriarchal culture, upper class sons were invariably educated in public boarding schools such as the famed Eton and Harrow. Public schools that emulated such institutions soon became the bastions of middle class education. The public boarding school setting of the

Malory Towers series is a stereotype of male middle class education. For women and young girls to be subjected to an educational experience in such an environment constitutes an oppression of their femininity and a coercion to internalise dominant male values. The characters in this setting are as much bullied as they are bullies.

The first view of Malory Towers leaves the reader in no doubt as to the masculine properties bestowed on this particular form of education which is presented as an icon of the middle classes. This depiction of the school also demonstrates the high regard that Blyton had for this institution and all that it represents in this series:

Darrell looked. She saw a big, square-looking building of soft grey stone standing high up on a hill The hill was really a cliff, that fell steeply down to the sea. At each end of the gracious building stood rounded towers. Darrell could glimpse two other towers as well, making four in all. North Tower, South, East, and West.

The windows shone. The green creeper that covered parts of the wall climbed almost to the roof in places. It looked like an old-time castle.
(1991 [1946], p.19)

This is a representation of middle class ideology as solid and fortress-like. It is a patriarchal bastion that is rendered in 'soft' grey stone, an image that might well denote female internalisation of 'hard' male values. This fortress comes complete with the sea symbolising the moat, and with steep sides that protect the chosen and keep out the threatening or the unwanted. The four towers look into all corners of the globe, all knowing yet also ever watchful for the enemy. The 'old time castle' image demonstrates a perception that this ideology is of ancient standing and thus a 'natural' element in the world. This image of middle class self-propagation as being part of antiquity might also denote a perceived envy of an older dominant class structure: the feudal system of aristocrat and serf. The image is one of complete domination and the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent properties bestowed on this edifice would correlate with the serf's perception of the aristocrat and the victim's perception of the bully.

In keeping with the fortress-like image, the management style of the school is authoritarian, and fear is part of this style:

Darrell felt frightened of this calm, low-voiced Head Mistress, and hoped she

would never have to be sent to her for misbehaviour.

(1991 [1946], p.30)

and

Zerelda, who would have laughed at the thought of being scared of any teacher, when she first came to Malory Towers, actually found her heart thumping away hard as she went to find Miss Grayling . . .

(1991 [1951], p.362)

Not only is there this fearful respect of authority in the form of the Head Mistress, Miss Grayling, but also a rigid hierarchy that reflects the class structure of nineteenth-century society and is based on the hierarchical structures of the older established public boys schools. At the top is Miss Grayling, then there are the teachers, head girl of the school, head girl of each form (year) and a further head girl of each 'dormy'. The only element missing is the 'fag'. This hierarchical influence is reinforced by each form of girls enjoying a superior status to the form below it:

first-formers were such small fry (they) weren't even worth taking any notice of!'

1992 [1949], p.23)

'But I'm in the fifth now and you're in the fourth. You

can't come tagging after a fifth former'

(1992 [1950], p.171)

Punishments are based on this hierarchy in that the senior girls may hand out punishment to the less senior:

She [Darrell] fished out the Punishment Book that all fifth formers were allowed to have and wrote June's name down in it.

(1992 [1950], p.201)

This hierarchical system demonstrates a role model of superiority and dominance that promotes the bully/victim situation in two ways: it oppresses femininity in that it promotes masculine values over feminine and it also promotes individual power and control rather than group welfare. In this system everyone is 'kept in [their] places' (1991 [1947], p.165) and each form of girls fears that above it, a system in which Darrell remembers 'how scared she had been of sixth formers too' (1992 [1951], p.318). But all this fear and apprehension is meant to be perceived as correct because this is 'the finest school in the kingdom' (p.318). However, Blyton's Malory Towers is based on a model of school management style that would promote bullying:

Schools and classrooms which rely on status differentials,

where hierarchical divisions of power are evident, and where strict and impenetrable barriers are imposed between staff and pupils, offer the conditions under which bullying can flourish. They do this in two main ways. First, the official sanctioning of status and power as mechanisms for control creates an ethos within which the misuse of power can thrive. Secondly, such structures make it very difficult for pupils to seek help if they are being victimised, or for them to negotiate for conditions which make them less vulnerable.

(Rogers, 1992, p.52)

And nobody does attempt to seek help with bully problems at Malory Towers because, in keeping with the Puritan ethic of 'control', such problems are accepted as normal behaviours and the girls are expected to abide by the unwritten (masculine) rules of independence and stoicism in order 'to learn to stand on [their] own feet' (1992 [1949], p.23). This attitude embraces both the neo-romantic influence that children are not capable of 'evil' (bullying viewed as normal behaviour) and the liberal humanistic ideology of individual responsibility and self knowledge through suffering, and serves to reinforce, or justify even, the concept of 'correct' position in

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the pecking order of society and not 'telling' of a bully situation.

The desire for conformity can be a double edged sword requiring that standards are neither too low nor too high. An individual who does not or cannot conform is made to feel inferior and thus ashamed as may be seen in **Second Form at Malory Towers**. The levelling process is demonstrated in the idea of imposing a limit on the amount of money the girls may have at the school: 'no girl in your form is allowed more pocket money than that' (1991[1946], p.12). This egalitarian ideal causes problems for Daphne who overcompensates for her family's disadvantaged financial status with a pretence of wealthy upper class standing:

> *'I pretended my people were
> very rich. I- I had a photo on
> my dressing table that wasn't
> my mother at all - it was a
> very grand picture of a
> beautiful woman ...'*

(1991 [1947], p.302)

But this upper class image is aiming too high for Malory Towers and Daphne is perceived as having 'too many airs and graces' (p.178). The character of Daphne is brought down by being depicted as a thief stealing from the other girls in an attempt to sustain the pretence of wealth (p.296). This

character is punished for two reasons: for 'being of' the despised upper class and for being symbolic of 'failed' middle class. Ironically Daphne is the only middle class child to be punished as a character in that she is represented as middle class but flawed. Daphne is not punished by the overriding authority of Miss Grayling but is judged by her peers who decide that Daphne has more good in her than bad (after all she is still middle class) and is given another chance (p.307).

It might be argued that the girls are also bullied by a school ethos in which, as in most public schools of this era, there is an inordinate emphasis on the importance of intellectual competition by way of exams to the point where some of the girls feel the need to cheat or feign illness in order to avoid the 'disgrace and humiliation' (1992 [1949], p.102) of failure. In **Second Form at Malory Towers**, Ellen is a scholarship child who is desperate to do well to justify the 'honour' of being accepted into Malory Towers and not disappoint her lower class family (1991 [1947], p.248). As with Daphne, the character of Ellen is also being punished for a class transgression. The metaphor of cheating in Ellen's situation could well imply that the child is cheating by being in this middle class

stronghold at all. Ellen is obsessed with the end of term tests:

> *She knew the end of term tests
> were coming along, and she
> wanted to come out well in
> them. She must. So she was
> working hard every minute.*

(pp.243-4)

This obsession to do well results in Ellen becoming intolerant of and extremely rude about the intrusions of the other girls into her study space:

> *'Really!' said Daphne, as
> Ellen walked out of the room
> and banged the door.
> 'What awful manners that
> girl's got! What's the matter
> with her?'*

(p.243)

As well as demonstrating that Ellen is under stress, this episode also represents the lower class as vulgar and disruptive or 'out of control' and thus inferior. This emphasis is further reinforced when Ellen rationalises the concept of cheating: 'It is easy not to cheat if you don't need to. Is it easy not to cheat if you do need to?' (p.252). Ellen's need to do well is exploited when, knowing cheating to be wrong, the character is depicted as 'losing control' by attempting to cheat (pp.268-270). In this episode the lower class is demonstrated as morally weak and in need of being 'fortified' by the morally

strong middle class. Evidence that this lower class character is 'deserving' of both her token position in this middle class utopia and of further 'fortifying' by its values system is demonstrated when Miss Grayling, representative of infallible middle class authority, decides to allow Ellen a second chance.

Gwendoline, who does not adhere to the virtues of 'diligence' or 'propriety', fails to properly accept the challenge of the exams:

> *Miss Carton, the history mistress, knew that the School Certificate form was well up to standard except for miseries like Gwendoline, who didn't even know the Kings of England and couldn't see that they mattered anyhow. She used her sarcastic tongue on Gwendoline a good deal these days, to try and whip her into some show of work, and Gwen hated her.*

(1992 [1949], p.44)

In spite of being thus bullied by Miss Carton, Gwendoline does not value either of these middle class icons - hard work or the Kings of England - and so feigns a 'weak heart' in order to be sent home and thus miss the tests (p.103). But Gwendoline's desperate ploy does not work because her father's values are naturally in accord with the school ethos and he sends her

back to 'fail and be humiliated', to teach her a lesson about the consequences of disregarding Puritan Middle class ethics (pp.121-2). Hence Gwendoline is bullied twice, by the school and by her father, for not conforming to the values of middle class ideology. It is ironic that, in the setting of Malory Towers, the behavioural strategies employed by Gwendoline to avoid the oppressive exams, are typical of the 'strategies' women of the last century used to 'escape' oppression, when 'Doomed, often, to a life of disappointment', it was not strange 'that nervous depression with all its concomitant evils, should follow' (Showalter 1978, p.130).

In this competitive and authoritarian environment, the Head Mistress, Miss Grayling, exhorts new students (and the reader) to embrace the values of this middle class establishment:

> *One day you will leave school, and go out into the world as young women. You should take with you eager minds, kind hearts, and a will to help. You should take with you a good understanding of many things, and a willingness to accept responsibility and show yourselves as women to be loved and trusted. All these things you will be able to learn at Malory Towers - if you will. I do not count as*

our successes those who have won scholarships and passed exams, though these are good things to do. I count as our successes those who learn to be good-hearted and kind, sensible and trustable, good sound women the world can lean on. Our failures are those who do not learn these things in the years they are here.

(1991 [1946], p.30)

By stressing the Puritan ethic of soundness as a value for women over academic achievement, this speech mimics the anti-intellectualism of the male boarding school. As well it demands an ideal of women as good supporters rather than good leaders and thus promotes the notion of women as being inferior to men and slaves of society. There is a sad and ironical paradox here in that this speech demonstrates the extent to which women are socialised (read bullied) by patriarchal values. Here is a famous and influential female author 'speaking' through the voice of a successful career teacher advising young girls of their true place in society: one of subservience.

Variations of this speech are repeated to the new students in each story of the series, and, as well as the downgrading of women and intellectualism, when taken in context with the values, attitudes and behaviours

that demonstrate the 'least attractive ethical practices of schoolchildren' in the works, there also seems to be a condoning of 'sundry kinds of anti-social behaviour' (Hollindale 1974, p.154).

In the Malory Towers series the non-conformist is compelled to conform by being subjected to the subtle and the not-so-subtle oppression implicit in this middle class establishment. Ray demonstrates a positive view that the girls of Malory Towers 'are what their families, their upbringings, their circumstances and their special gifts, have made them' and that 'the action (of the stories) arises from their characters' (p.196). Perhaps Ray does not recognise the pervasive atmosphere of dominance and conflict at Malory Towers, or as Chambers describes it, 'the underlying characteristic of her [Blyton's] children who all really want to dominate each other' (Chambers 1985, p.45). Ray's attitude is symptomatic of the internalising of middle class values that view superficiality and conformity as correct.

Throughout this series it is the upper class character, Gwendoline, previously educated at home by a governess, who is constantly and consistently bullied. This character is 'punished' in the text for the class transgression of being of the 'uncontrolled' and

'feminine' upper class in this controlled and masculine middle class environment. Before she is made to conform to the stereotypically constrained image of 'a proper little schoolgirl' (1991 [1948], p.435) with her hair tied back in pigtails, Gwendoline is presented as the aberrant child with 'her hair long and loose down her back' who is 'clinging to her mother and wailing' when all the other girls and their respective parents are being 'jolly' and 'sensible' (1991 [1946], p.14). This 'uncontrolled' image of Gwendoline might also be viewed as a 'figure of disorder' and representative of the 'potential disrupters of masculine boundary systems of all sorts ... and dangerously part of chaos itself' (Showalter 1990, p.8) and thus a difference to be feared and repressed within pigtails and stoic reserve.

The power of words does much to create certain images in this scene. 'Jolly' and 'sensible' denote the masculine values of fortitude and emotional restraint which are commendable in this culture whilst 'clinging' and 'wailing' have connotations of the dependently primitive female and the histrionic, and suggest deviance. A further image conveyed in this scene is that of an upper class character acting in an infantile manner to the condescension of the mature middle class characters. The

implication is that Gwendoline, by being thus deviant, is unacceptable and therefore perceived as being deserving of the treatment she receives at the hands of the staff and the students at Malory Towers.

In this first book of the series, the teasing and mocking of Gwendoline on the train ride to Malory Towers by the other girls (pp.17-18) is ignored by and thus seems to be condoned by Miss Potts, the supervising teacher, who has already 'sized her [Gwendoline] up and knew her to be a spoilt, only child, selfish, and difficult to handle at first' (p.16). Although there are many instances of nasty behaviour from Gwendoline as well as towards her, by far the most telling scene comes in **In the Fifth at Malory Towers**, when Gwendoline is saying goodbye to her parents and governess:

Gwen's farewells were a standing joke at Malory Towers. There were always tears and fond embracings, and injunctions to write soon, that went on for ages between her and her mother and her old governess, Miss Winter, who lived with them.

(p.188)

The shows of emotion that Gwendoline and her mother display are unacceptable in this middle class environment that

seeks to break the bond between mother and child. Stoicism is a virtue and the more emotion, or non-conformity, that is displayed the higher the levels of unacceptability and the more hostility is attracted.

Not only are all the girls lined up at the windows mimicking and mocking the farewell scene but Gwendoline's father also mocks and thus condones this collective bullying behaviour. At a cultural level this is the rule of patriarchy scorning non-conformity, whilst at an individual level it is a demonstration of the use of the father/daughter relationship to impose middle class ideology. The message conveyed is twofold: that unless women conform to patriarchal values they will be rejected and that unless the daughter conforms to the father's values she will likewise be rejected. This scene is distasteful for the 'herd victimization' of nastiness, for the betrayal of the daughter by the father and because it serves to reinforce the notion that the character of Gwendoline is deserving of the bullying behaviours directed at her.

In **Last Term at Malory Towers**, and after almost six years of being teased and mocked, Gwendoline is coerced into conventional leave-takings:

> *But Gwen was on her guard now. Too often had the girls*

> *imitated her weeping farewells. She stepped out of the car, looking rather solemn, but very dignified. She kissed her mother and Miss Winter, her old governess, and wouldn't let them be silly over her.*

> (p.307)

'Silly' in this case equates with being female (mother and governess) and Gwendoline has decided not to be 'silly' any more. Instead she adopts the more acceptable 'solemn' and 'dignified' stance, which by implication, must be a masculine stance. This new behaviour meets with conventional standards and thus disappoints the girls who were expecting to 'feast [their] eyes on this one [a weeping farewell]' (p.307).

In the last pages of **Last Term at Malory Towers**, Gwendoline is led to see the error of her ways. Instead of following the feminine upper class tradition of going to 'finishing school' in Switzerland where 'all the best people send their girls' (p.308), Gwendoline is forced to conform to the expectations that the other girls share and go to university or to work. To be further brought under control, Gwendoline also needs to conform to the 'lower' expectation of earning a living which is more in keeping with the Puritan ethic of hard work. This

is because her father, having been taken ill, is now an invalid. Gwendoline writes to Darrell:

> *It's mother who is so difficult ... She just cries and cries. Well, I might have grown like that too, if this hadn't happened to me. I shall never be as strong minded and courageous as you, Darrell - or Sally - or Bill and Clarissa - but I don't think I'll ever be as weak and selfish as I was. You see - it wasn't 'too late' after all. And that has made a difference to me. I fell as if I have been given another chance. .*

> (p.441)

This evangelical consciousness of conversion demonstrates the acceptance of imposed values that is also typical of the bully/victim dyad:

> *Sadly, over time a cognitive change seems to occur in both bullies and their victims; the victims begin to believe that they deserve the attacks, the bullies that their actions are warranted*

> (Bjorkquist et al. 1982, in Besag 1989, p.28)

As well as Gwendoline believing that she has been wrong in the past, the reader, too, is encouraged to believe that Gwendoline has been wrong and that the values and conse-

quent actions espoused in the stories are correct. Also sadly, Gwendoline, having accepted the values, attitudes and behaviours prevalent in this middle clas establishment as being correct, now judges her mother's behaviour as 'difficult' and unacceptable. Blyton conveys the notion the mother/daughter relationship ought not include demonstrations of need and emotion. In the stereotypical flatness of storyline and character representation in this series there is no explanation given by Blyton as to why this mother and daughter cling to each other, just condemnation and ridicule that they do. A whole 'other' story could be written in regard to the rigours of living with a husband and father who espouses the values of oppression and conformity as many women and children could attest to. However, at no time has any compassion been shown for an immature and protected child who has not only never been away from home before, but has never previously experienced a formal school environment.

This lack of compassion and concomitant bullying attitude is demonstrated in the brutal way that the 'heroine' of the series, Darrell Rivers, speaks to and thinks about one unfortunate child on her first night at Malory Towers.

'Maureen! What on earth's

the matter?' whispered Darrell. 'Surely you're not a first night sniffer? At your age?'

Maureen's voice came shakily to Darrell. 'I'm always like this at first. I think of Mother and Daddy and what they're doing at home. I'm sensitive you know.'

'Better get over being sensitive then,' said Darrell, shortly. In her experience people who went around saying that they were sensitive wanted a good shaking up, and, if they were lower school, needed to be laughed out of it.

(1992 [1950], p.173)

This exchange also promotes the erroneous belief that sensitivity is something to be ashamed of and laughed at, or to be treated with violence. Another time and another place, at a distance from this middle class culture, Darrell, instead of acting the bully towards Maureen may have perceived the child's unhappiness and attempted to resolve it in a more humane manner.

There are others who are depicted as not conforming to middle class values and who suffer the consequences. These others include those of foreign extraction, the treatment of

whom, in this series, contains echoes of colonialism and imperialism. Edward Said (on colonialism) 'has written about the practice of designating familiar space as "our land" and the unfamiliar space beyond as "barbarian land"' (Stephens 1992, p.279). The term 'barbarian' carries connotations of inferiority, a point supported by Dixon's contention regarding imperialism, that 'it seems impossible to subject people to an alien rule without believing in their inferiority' (Dixon 1977, p.76). The attitude that Blyton conveys in her treatment of these particular characters is one of British superiority over lesser mortals.

This sense of superiority in regard to foreigners is apparent when the French mistresses are characterised as unpredictable in behaviour and 'regarded with great amusement' by the English mistresses (1992 [1949], p.44). The French mistresses are also depicted using an imperfect form of the English language which adds to the image of inferiority (1991 [1946], p.52). These non-British characters are further disempowered by having them made prey to the jokes and pranks of British schoolgirls (1992 [1949], p.45) who, conversely, adopt a manner of 'fearful respect' towards those members of the school staff (including Matron, who is not on the teaching staff)

of British origin. The image created conveys a message of 'acceptable' disrespect of foreigners.

Zerelda Brass, who is American, has a name that leaves little doubt about the perceived qualities of either Zerelda or her country. Brass looks like gold but is not the real thing so the American aspirant can never be the real Briton. Because Zerelda is depicted very much as her name suggests, Darrell thinks, along with her classmates, that she is 'going to have some fun with her and take her down a peg or two' (1991 [1948], p.345). Zerelda's American education is not up to the standard of Malory Towers (p.358) so she must be humiliated and degraded by being put down to a lower form (p.361).

Of the 'others' there is Josephine, daughter of the 'nouveau riche', whose father is represented as a 'loud voiced man' who drives an 'enormous American car' and whose mother is 'much overdressed' (1992 [1951], p.303). Jo is made to feel ashamed of her father:

Jo tried to pull him [her father]*back, and cast an agonized glance at her mother. Jo was beginning to realise that her father hadn't very good manners. Why, why, why did he shout so, why did he always have such a bright*

red shiny face, why did he poke people in the ribs and tell silly jokes?

(p.386)

And Jo's family do not conform:

'they laugh at the rules of the school, they tell Jo not to bother to keep any rule if she doesn't want to, they send her parcels of things she's not supposed to have, and far too much money . . .'

(p.378)

Neither do Jo's parents 'give Jo the backing up and the help' (p.415) that she needs in order for her to conform, which further demonstrates Jo's parents' lack of due deference to the middle class ideology of the school. The parents and Jo are made to pay the consequences when Jo is depicted as a thief and expelled (p.399). The character of Jo is the only one with no redeeming features and the only one to be expelled — perhaps this is the class that the middle class fear the most. As Dixon points out, Blyton's stories have an 'insistence on conformity — and conformity to the most narrow, establishment-type beliefs, practices and values'; and 'the stress on middle class English ... implies its opposite, which is that other people will be held in contempt, despised or hated to the degree that they deviate from this assumed norm' (Dixon 1977, pp.68-9).

In spite of the Malory Towers series being considered by some to be among Blyton's more mature work, there are too many instances, perpetrators and victims of this middle class bullying that pervade the works to include all of them in a few pages. So pervasive is the influence that one is left wondering how many of Blyton's readers, and there have been and still are very many all over the world, have grown or will grow to adulthood with the subliminal belief that the · 'overpowering snobbery, the meanness and vengefulness of so much of the morality, the herd victimization of silliness and vanity' (Inglis 1981, p.165) of Blyton's 'superior middle class children' (Mullan 1987, p.79) comprise socially acceptable behaviour?

Inglis implies that Blyton betrays her child readers with a 'particular "promise of happiness" (that) cannot be kept' (Inglis 1981, p.190). This happiness is a world of 'narrow snobberies and vengefulness' that Blyton valued and desired but which could not be translated back into the real world because life would become disastrous. A possible interpretation of Inglis's view is that, through Blyton's stories, children can give vent to feelings that would be unacceptable in their own realities. This interpretation is supported

when Inglis further states that no 'normal' child would attempt to live out these influences and hence the 'novels transform ... into a safe anaesthetic' (p.191). I would disagree with this particular piece of complacency and argue that the vulnerability induced by the influence of this 'safe anaesthetic' would allow the values of dominance and oppression of difference, whether of class, gender or race, that pervade Blyton's stories, to subliminally encourage bullies to believe that 'their actions are warranted' and victims to believe 'they deserve the attacks'.

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Biographical Note

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