

10-2014

“Scholarship Boys” in Twilight: The Memoirs of Six Humanists in Post-Industrial Britain

D. L. LeMahieu

Lake Forest College, lemahieu@lakeforest.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://publications.lakeforest.edu/history_pubs

 Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), and the [Intellectual History Commons](#)

Citation

LeMahieu, D. L. “Scholarship Boys’ in Twilight: The Memoirs of Six Humanists in Post-Industrial Britain.” *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 4 (2014): 1011-31. Post-print version.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Lake Forest College Publications. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Lake Forest College Publications. For more information, please contact levinson@lakeforest.edu.

‘SCHOLARSHIP BOYS’ IN TWILIGHT:
THE MEMOIRS OF SIX HUMANISTS IN POST-INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN

Richard Hoggart’s portrait of ‘Scholarship Boys’ in *The Uses of Literacy*, first published in 1957, described the psychological tensions and social predicaments that affected many academically gifted working and lower-middle class males in early twentieth-century Britain. Drawing heavily upon his own experience, Hoggart argued that ‘each boy is between two worlds: the worlds of school and home; and they meet at few points.’¹ Encouraged by some and mocked by others, scholarship boys constantly negotiated the conflicting expectations of parents, teachers, peers, and their own ambitions. Hoggart knew personally that they assimilated these contradictions in complex ways. Their academic achievements separated them from their class origins, which they sometimes imperfectly concealed and other times publicly celebrated. But they never remained fully at home among the cultivated elites whose habits they both imitated and deplored. Class allegiances confounded an evolving personal identity.

The autobiographical elements of Hoggart’s work immediately attracted attention. F.R. Leavis thought that he should have written a novel instead of a confessional sociological tract.² Raymond Williams, himself the author of an autobiographical novel, endorsed Hoggart’s approach in the inaugural issue of the *New Left Review*. Williams recalled how much his own childhood experience affected his assimilation of high culture.³ Yet, as Ben Jones recently observed, subsequent historians have often remained suspicious of ‘retrospectively constructed accounts’ of social class and upward mobility.⁴ Some critics detected the aroma of nostalgia; others invoked the postmodern wariness about human agency within more determinate social

discourses; still others challenged the distorting biases of masculine narratives. Jones seeks to re-establish the legitimacy of the personal and the autobiographical that helped shape early Cultural Studies. In a book that draws upon working-class reminiscences of Brighton in the 1950s and 1960s, he argues that autobiographical memories ‘need to be reconsidered as radical reclamations of experience.’⁵

This reconsideration might also apply to the memoirs of former scholarship boys. For purposes here, the life-writing of six prominent British humanists—Eric Hobsbawm, Frank Kermode, A. H. Halsey, Harold Perkin, Bryan Magee, and Hoggart himself—provide an imperfect sample of the broader, deeply varied experience of academically gifted working and lower-middle class males in the twentieth century.⁶ Despite many differences, these writers shared much in common. First, they were born between 1917 and 1930, a demographic cohort that benefitted from the 1902 Education Act but missed the reforms of the Education Act of 1944.⁷ For the lower middle and working classes within this cohort, ‘the special place examination taken at age 10 or 11 became the crucial instrument of academic selection.’⁸ Second, each of these figures came to prominence during a period when the enormous expansion of higher education transformed intellectual life in Britain. What Guy Ortolano called ‘the meritocratic moment’ encompassed the creation of new academic elites that prospered in the mid-twentieth century as new universities were founded and student populations catapulted in size.⁹ Then, beginning in the 1970s, this triumph of social-democratic planning found itself under siege, as budgets contracted, academic jobs became scarcer, and universities experienced what Halsey called ‘the decline of the donnish dominion.’¹⁰

Third, each of these men classified themselves in their writing as heterosexual, an identification that became increasingly important as gender gradually displaced social class as a

source of political antagonism. Though deeply reticent about their private lives, these writers largely embraced the goals of identity politics even when sometimes, and not without irony, they became informed of their own hegemonic status. Fourth, each of these figures supported the Left during a complicated period of structural economic change and political realignment.¹¹ Loyal to the ideologies of their social origins, they rose to prominence in an era when the Labour Party helped shape an evolving consensus about Britain's future. They then witnessed the gradual disintegration of this vision when Classical Liberalism unexpectedly revived as an emancipatory force claiming the future as its own. From childhood to old age, the 'two worlds' of the scholarship boy kept changing.

This essay does not attempt to do collective biography but instead what might be called 'collective witness.' It links more conventional intellectual history with the emerging field of 'life-writing.'¹² Each of these figures was a 'self-creation' in a double sense: their successful careers depended upon enormous individual effort and their written reflections upon these lives became itself a self-fashioning. Hoggart, Hobsbawm, Perkin and Halsey wrote more conventional autobiographies that charted their lives from birth. Magee composed two volumes of vividly detailed reminiscences of his youth and adolescence, as well as *Confessions of a Philosopher* that selected incidents from his life to illustrate philosophical problems. Kermodé fashioned a short, highly selective memoir that self-consciously pursued certain themes in his life. Despite these differences in form, these autobiographies help answer a number of questions about the subjectivities of a historically unique group of academic intellectuals. What was the source of their social and intellectual ambitions? How do they portray the challenges to their masculinity in their youth and the transformation of gender relationships in their maturity? What was their response to Thatcherism and other threats to social-democratic thinking? And finally,

how did they characterize the existential realities of old age? By the end of the twentieth century, scholarship boys had become emblems of a vanished past, a fate which their memoirs often pondered in moving detail.

Outsiders to Insiders

Each of these memoirs re-counted success stories: awards won; scholarships attained; academic promotions; recognition beyond youthful expectations. Hoggart noted with pride his rise in status to a ‘classless professional’ and acknowledged that he enjoyed a ‘life of privilege.’¹³ Halsey charted his grand journey ‘from an obscure working class housing estate to a well-known Oxford college.’¹⁴ Perkin celebrated his “good life” and at one point described relaxed living in his country estate where his children took riding lessons.¹⁵ Hobsbawm conceded that ‘it has been an extraordinarily enjoyable life, comfortable, varied by travels...combining work, discovery and holiday, novelty and old friendships’¹⁶ Though some critics asserted that academic stars, particularly on the Left, rarely confronted their own institutional privilege and power,¹⁷ the life-writing of scholarship boys painted a more nuanced picture. Despite occasional examples of triumphalism, arrogance, and complacency, they frequently acknowledged the unique historical context of their upward social mobility. ‘Post-war life,’ Hobsbawm recalled, ‘was an escalator which, without any special effort, took us higher than we ever expected to be.’¹⁸

Yet, beyond chronicling the obvious struggles and triumphs of successful careers, the memoirs of scholarship boys also revealed a deeper journey of alignments and allegiances that often complicated their worldly ambitions. Even when they eschewed the confessional mode or disparaged emotional subjectivities, these writers disclosed intellectual and personal

commitments that both fueled and transcended their personal quest for recognition. At some point in their youth, they discovered a humanistic vision or a social cause that deeply engaged them. Sometimes these experiences alienated them from their friends and family. At other times, they provided a vital connection between the personal allegiances of their youth and the professional alignments of their maturity. Each story remained different but each provided a variation on a theme.

Born in 1918, Richard Hoggart lost both his parents before he was eight years old. He lived with his grandmother who encouraged him to study hard and leave ‘the dreary, without-perspective, working-class life against which she always inwardly and sometimes outwardly raged.’¹⁹ The first to pass the eleven-plus examination in his school’s history, he attained one of the few scholarships offered by Cockburn High School to the students of South Leeds. At first he studied for ‘tenaciously utilitarian’ purposes, but then, by chance, he discovered the poetry of Swinburne. ‘The rhyme, the alliteration, the assonance, the vowel play, the vivid imagery, the interplay of vowels and consonants, the surge up and the down in a dying fall, the whole run of the thing, all carried you along.’²⁰ Hoggart committed himself to the study of literature. After he wrote an essay that began ‘Thomas Hardy was a truly cultured man’ his headmaster questioned what he meant by the phrase. Initially flustered by the question---did the headmaster not know about culture?—Hoggart pursued the connection between literature and culture that later would help define his career.²¹ He learned how to challenge the conventional understanding of both culture and society. More important, poetry and literature offered him an alternate world whose inner richness and evocative narratives departed radically from the inhibiting customs of his childhood and social class. Listening to conversations of working men, he became profoundly dissatisfied with their ‘limited enthusiasms and dismissals...the endless repetitive arguments

about...royalty or sport or show biz...the equally endless and conventional sexual chit-chat' that seemed to define them.²² In a few extraordinary pages, Hoggart described the inner migration of a scholarship boy from one world to another. Although he claimed not to feel 'superior or scornful' to the men of his social class, he remained at best in tension with key elements of their identity. This tension would later manifest itself in *The Uses of Literacy* and many subsequent works in which Hoggart asserted the superiority of high culture long after others marginalized it as elitist and anti-democratic.²³

Early in his life Frank Kermode came to 'love words, whatever they meant—not even knowing what they meant—more than the world.'²⁴ During his career as a literary critic and in his memoirs, Kermode masterfully evoked the ambiguities of language to inhabit the uncertainties, ironies, and doubts of both literature and his own personal identity. He entitled his autobiography "Not Entitled" and throughout the book he inserted the phrase in all its multiple meanings to deflect any unequivocal understanding of its definition. The epigraph quoted Shakespeare's Coriolanus: "He was a kind of nothing, titleless." Born on the Isle of Man, Kermode and his friends would pretend to be wealthy tourists and enjoy "exceptional liberties to which we were certainly not entitled."²⁵ Awkward and temperamental, he 'wasn't entitled to be my father's boy.'²⁶ Serving in the Navy during the Second World War, he discovered that fines would be docked from pay as "Not Entitled" or 'N.E.' in the ledger, which sailors deemed a 'North-Easter' or, more often, a 'fucking northeaster.'²⁷ After he became the King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge, he discovered 'that I had become a sort of nobody, yet a nobody with a title, with a carnival crown.'²⁸ Kermode invoked the opacities of language to complicate the narrative arc of his successful career: the binary of Outsider and Insider becomes intertwined in ways that defy each characterization.

Yet, like Hoggart, Kermode recalled a seminal experience—‘the great moment of my childhood’-- that helped illuminate his allegiance to humanism. One evening as an adolescent he had a vision of ‘unusual fullness and integrity comprising: the smoke falling from a dense array of chimney-pots into the chilly dark of the street, the lights of Newby’s shop brightening from moment to moment, pretty Marion clattering her pails, many possibilities of presence that belong to the word if not to the world.’ Kermode noted that this experience ‘belonged to me alone’ and that others ‘had no notion of the plenitude of which they were part.’ It leads him to ask other philosophical questions: ‘did other persons, when they ate oranges, experience the taste I had of orange?’²⁹ He soon committed himself to ‘the long labour of learning how to pretend to know something a little better than I did, and to know how to say it with apparent clarity to others, all similar in certain respects, all knowing how to use the same language as mine to explain their recognitions of smoke and oranges.’ Literature connected Kermode to others: it helped collapse the temporal and psychological distances that separated individual subjectivities from each other. It enabled him ‘to believe that we communicate, that we may be distinct yet not divided.’³⁰ For all his elusiveness and deliberated irony, Kermode revealed the logic and inner motivation behind his successful career.

‘My inner life,’ Bryan Magee recalled in his memoir of childhood *Clouds of Glory*, ‘...was often in conflict with my outer situation.’³¹ He grew up in Hoxton, one of the poorest areas of London during the interwar era. His father sold men’s and boy’s clothing; his mother never wanted children and made that clear to both Bryan and his sister. ‘Her feelings never took on those of a normal mother....She resented the two of us for being a nuisance.’³² Once she promised a special birthday present for her son; then deliberately failed to give it to him. She put down his dog, claiming that it ran away.³³ ‘She made a habit of hitting me in the face.’³⁴ Magee

loved his father and grandfather, who returned his affection. Plagued by claustrophobia, a fear of heights and powerful aversion to needle injections, he found solace in a fantasy life fueled by American films. He also came to love classical music, which his father played on the gramophone. Bryan became completely absorbed by the sound, unable to divert his attention to anything else. He discovered *Parsifal* to be ‘beautiful beyond words...I heard the *Fledermaus* overture as not only comparably beautiful and profound but also infinitely sad—it brought me to the edge of tears every time I heard it.’³⁵ Like Kermode, his isolation from others prompted him to ask foundational philosophical questions. He wondered about the beginning of time and the existence of God. Once when he closed his eyes and covered his ears, he became overwhelmed by the possibility of solipsism.³⁶

Initially he did not like school but teachers noticed his high intelligence and he gained a scholarship to Christ’s Hospital, where he thrived. ‘It imbued me with a different value system: telling the truth, keeping my word, being loyal to friends and also, amazingly, behaving decently to everyone else, never cheating or taking what did not belong to me.’³⁷ Yet, when he returned to Hoxton, he became an object of ridicule. ‘”Blimey, ‘ark at ‘im! Don’ e talk posh!”...Everything I said sounded like something out of a comic, and they said so; housemasters, rigger, Latin, chapel, the incredible uniform.’³⁸ Once again, Magee retreated into music. ‘Music came to me not *as if* from a different world but actually from a different world, from some order of being and reality unconnected with anything in the space I occupied.’³⁹ Magee would not pursue a conventional academic career, in part because he found the formal study of philosophy in Britain to be narrow and blinkered. He wrote books about both music and philosophy, including an interpretation of Schopenhauer, an unfashionable figure among academic philosophers in Britain.⁴⁰ His work as a broadcaster included a series of interviews

with prominent philosophers, *Men of Ideas*, where he sought to popularize a discipline far removed from most viewer's lives.⁴¹ During his career, he sought to connect 'the worlds of school and home' described in Hoggart's famous chapter.

Eric Hobsbawm was not a typical scholarship boy. Born in Egypt in 1917 to English expatriates, he moved with his Jewish parents to Vienna when he was two years old. His father died in 1929 and his mother two years later, the family money long since lost. Hobsbawm lived with relatives in Berlin from 1931 to 1933 before enrolling in St Marlebone Grammar School, an institution founded to serve London's lower middle-class. Describing himself as isolated and remote, Hobsbawm 'took to examinations as to ice-cream' and considered his schoolwork 'as intellectually on the master's level and superior to the rest.' Rejecting the social pretensions of the school, he was nevertheless grateful to the institution for introducing him 'to the astonishing marvels of English poetry and prose.'⁴² He won a major scholarship to Cambridge where he became a member of the Apostles and eventually obtained a Ph.D.

Yet, it was his conversion to Communism during the 1930s that would define him. Like others in his generation Hobsbawm was attracted to the comprehensiveness of a doctrine 'linking inorganic and organic nature with human affairs, collective and individual, and providing a guide to the nature of all interactions in a world of flux.' The strict discipline of Marxism appealed to him: 'if the Party ordered you to abandon your lover or spouse, you did so.' The Party 'got things done when others did not.'⁴³ These characteristics, however, only partially explained Hobsbawm's deep commitment to an ideology that others found disingenuously authoritarian and profoundly destructive. Hobsbawm was in Berlin when the Weimar Republic crumbled. Although he never particularly identified himself as Jewish—'I have no emotional obligations to

the practices of an ancestral religion'⁴⁴—the rise of Nazism drove him to the Left where his participation in mass rallies affected him viscerally.

Next to sex, the activity combining bodily experience and intense emotion to the highest degree is the participation in a mass demonstration at a time of great public exaltation.

Unlike sex, which is essentially individual, it is by nature collective, and unlike the sexual climax, at any rate for men, can be prolonged for hours... We belonged together. I returned home to Halensee as if in a trance. When... I reflected on the basis of my communism, this sense of “mass ecstasy”... was one of the five components of it— together with pity for the exploited, the aesthetic appeal of a perfect and comprehensive intellectual system, “dialectical materialism”, a little bit of the Blakean vision of the new Jerusalem, and a good deal of intellectual anti-philistinism.⁴⁵

The sensual experience of willful immersion in a crowd—of absorption in a righteous cause-- paralleled classic descriptions of religious ecstasy and conversion. It also mirrored, in part, the more secular and modern enthrallment of some Germans during the Nuremburg rallies. Critics of Hobsbawm's autobiography often complained that it neglected his inner life: Stefan Collini deemed it ‘that curious hybrid, an impersonal autobiography’ and Perry Anderson grumbled that it recorded ‘virtually nothing of his emotional life.’⁴⁶ Yet, as a revolutionary Communist, Hobsbawm rejected the personal life. In theory if not in practice, he considered himself most authentic when he shed the boundaries of self and the preoccupations of bourgeois individualism. The title of his book reflected this ideology: *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life*. As a Marxist, Hobsbawm chronicled the intersection between one individual and the larger dialectical forces of history.

A. H. Halsey was born in Kentish Town, one of eight children of a railway worker gassed in the Great War. 'Our child's world in the 1920s was moneyless.'⁴⁷ Raised in a house without electricity, Halsey never slept in a room of his own until he was an adult. His scholarship in 1933 introduced him to a new world in which 'cleverness or performance was the measure.' Halsey learned to lead a 'double life' in which the 'the school was seen by me as a sustained cultural assault on my family.'⁴⁸ At Kettering Grammar School a charismatic wounded veteran taught him the value of English, but Halsey initially decided against pursuing scholarship and in late 1939 became a sanitary inspector's boy. The war changed everything. Halsey joined the RAF though a series of training delays meant that he never saw combat. More important, he decided to go to university 'determined to learn fast, not to waste time, especially chasing women.'⁴⁹ Throughout his life, even when unsure of his ambitions, he was infused by a sense of religious mission and a Puritan work ethic. 'I do prosaically believe that we are sent onto the earth to glorify God's creation by diligent labour at our calling.'⁵⁰

Sociology allowed Halsey to blend his enthusiastic support for democratic socialism with his religious sense of vocation. Upper-class suspicion of the discipline made it all the more appealing. His research into how education improved upward social mobility connected his deepest values with an 'objective method of data collection and analysis,' As he could now admit, 'in one important sense it was a sociological expression of autobiographical experience—a projection of the country we had learned in our families, schools, and local communities.'⁵¹ Halsey distrusted Marxists, associating them with middle-class intellectuals who could provide elaborate rationalizations for Stalin's thuggish authoritarianism. 'Classical sociology may perhaps be best thought of as the liberal reply to Marxism.' With others that he encountered at

the London School of Economics, Halsey made a virtue of his early disadvantages. ‘Ours was indeed a provincial radicalism.’⁵²

Harold Perkin claimed he was born to become a social historian. His father was a skilled building worker and his mother was the illegitimate daughter of an impoverished farm labourer. Other members of his extended family ‘covered the whole gamut of class except for the landed aristocracy.’ Early in his childhood Perkin developed ‘an acute sense of the inequalities of life...It had little to do with ability or intelligence, or with looks or good manners.’⁵³ Always self-confident—one reviewer said Perkin ‘does not do diffidence. He scores zero on self-doubt’⁵⁴—he won all the school prizes. A new history master helped focus his talents. ‘I was obsessed with how the world I knew, the visible world industrial world around me...and the classes that inhabited it came into being...I was filled with that divine discontent that is the driving force of intellectual inquiry.’ For Perkin the writings of Karl Marx did not provide a satisfactory answer to his questions. Marx’s proletariat ‘bore no relation to the actual workers I knew, who were economically split, politically divided and as snobbish towards their supposed inferiors as the bosses themselves.’ Like Hobsbawm, Perkin also allowed personal experience to inform his formal study of the past. But Perkin, a democratic socialist, mistrusted ‘the intolerant, authoritarian streak in the communists and fellow-travellers.’ He developed ‘an antipathy to what I called public school lefties.’⁵⁵

Despite their many differences, each of these scholarship boys charted successful careers motivated by something more than crass ambition. The arc from social outsider to cultural prominence involved allegiances and commitments with profound idealistic roots that sometimes compared to religious experience. Poetry revealed an aesthetic alternative to the quotidian bleakness of industrial life. A pantheistic vision created a desire to bridge intractable

psychological differences. Music crafted harmonies missing from the home and the street. Mass solidarity erased the boundaries of the personal isolation and provided the visceral motivation to understand a larger dialectic. Religion infused politics with a sense of vocation. The injustices of social class mandated historical explanation. Scholarship boys sought deeper explanations to justify their passages, both external and internal, from one world to another.

Masculinities

The conventional portrayal of Scholarship Boys stressed how academic success propelled upward social mobility and the personal adjustments associated with living ‘between two worlds.’ The emphasis centered on the relationship between academic achievement and social class. But these six memoirs also revealed another, parallel narrative about gender: how scholarship *boys* became adults during an era when the relationships between men and women underwent a major historical transformation. In an industrial economy, academically inclined boys in working and lower middle class neighborhoods confronted challenges to their developing male identity. As they matured and the economy changed, their intellectual skills became prized at about the same time that physical prowess, though still admired in sports, the military, and certain fictional genres, became less functional in a post-industrial marketplace. Second-wave feminism, largely if often passively supported by these left-leaning humanists, helped legitimize a broader modification of gender roles in the late twentieth century.

The classroom accomplishments of scholarship boys distanced them from other males, both young and old, who frequently associated humanistic culture with softness and the feminine. In working-class households it was frequently the mother, not the father who encouraged good work at school. As Hoggart put it, the scholarship boy “sits in the women’s

world.”⁵⁶ None of the six memoirs examined here dwelled upon how these academically gifted boys were bullied by their peers, though none ignored it altogether. Frank Kermode admitted that he could not do normal things as a child, like tie shoelaces, and that as the teacher’s favorite he was made a victim. He recalled that ‘we have not yet abandoned the idea that terror in one form or another is a good preparation for adult life.’⁵⁷ Bryan Magee faced constant violence. Both in his Hoxton neighborhood and at school, he described himself during those days as “high-strung and gabby.”⁵⁸ A. H. Halsey learned the limitations of academic mastery when the headmaster pulled him out of an infant class to demonstrate to 13 year olds how to solve quadratic equations. ‘Later that morning I was totally immersed by these gentlemen in the playground water butt and so learned a vital lesson about types of cultural virtuosity and the context in they could be safely revealed.’ Another incident became more formative. Halsey watched in helpless fear as one of his friends stood up to bullies in a schoolyard brawl. ‘I never ever recovered from the screaming protest of “coward” within me.’⁵⁹

Some of these scholarship boys developed strategies for dealing with bullies. Hoggart found that ‘clever talk’ helped extricate him from tricky situations, though he once struck a tormentor in the face at an arts camp, an unusual venue for such physical encounters.⁶⁰ Harold Perkin also combined talk with action. “I had a way of confronting an aggressor and twisting back his hands so that he landed on the floor, to general laughter...I also made them laugh with jokes, and dirty songs, and imitations of teachers.”⁶¹ Halsey gained proficiency at a number of sports including rugby. Magee ‘made the discovery that by unbridled fury of attack I could rout boys bigger and older than myself. Later he would ‘fight when attacked, but hated it, and was scared of being in any fight other than the one I could win without getting hurt.’⁶² Yet, the presumed effeminacy of learning and academic achievement never entirely disappeared. When

Kermode's superior officer in the Navy discovered that he could write well, he "paid me many ironical or obscene compliments. 'What the hell are you, Cosmos? A fucking poofter?'"

Kermode added that 'it was fortunate that he did not know I wrote poems and songs and tried to play the violin.'⁶³ In the RAF Halsey learned 'to conform to the "macho norms"' though he remained painfully insecure about his own competence and courage. 'I realized that people like me were the sort who eventually went yellow and were publically shamed as persons lacking moral fibre, the dreaded LMF. I shall never know.'⁶⁴

Yet, as these memoirs demonstrated, youthful inadequacies might be transformed into instrumental advantages. Toughness and self-discipline could express itself mentally as well as physically. Mastery and dominance might be applied to an academic subject rather than a game of football. The presumed inferiorities of class affiliation could be transformed into an aggressive struggle against oppression. The informality and vulgarity of the lower orders, once a matter of contempt, might indicate a virility and authenticity lacking within the 'effete' upper-classes. These autobiographies revealed how stereotypes of gender and class camouflaged the compensatory adjustments made by scholarship boys as they forged their identities over time.

None of these memoirs discussed second-wave feminism in any detail, though some indicated their personal approval of feminists. Hoggart noted that feminists disapproved of his chapter on working-class mothers in *The Uses of Literacy*, though he protested their characterization of it as 'inverted male chauvinism.'⁶⁵ Halsey recorded with displeasure the limited opportunities for academic women before the 1970s, though he remained cautious about 'the powerful rise of the more strident forms of feminism.'⁶⁶ Still, as he wrote elsewhere, 'liberal masculine guilt responded to a just claim for more equality.'⁶⁷ Perkin, in particular, took great pride in his wife's achievements and, in language not entirely appreciative of the

movement's goals, recalled that when they met 'she was a feisty young woman of wit and intelligence who was a cut above the empty-headed bimbos I had been fruitlessly chasing.'⁶⁸ Most, however, eschewed discussion of their personal lives. Kermode lamented that 'success with women called for talents I didn't and never would possess.' Of his two wives, he wrote that 'they were in their entirely different ways close friends, and the first of them, the correct beauty, the censor, the terrified, gave me the great gift of children.'⁶⁹ Only Hoggart described at length his role as husband and father, recording in evocative detail how the 'pleasures of family life express themselves in pictures, rituals, jokes, words, smells.'⁷⁰

In their guardedness and discretion about their personal lives, scholarship boys may have aligned themselves with earlier behavioral codes, though Hoggart, Magee and Halsey come closest to the confessional style that the women's movement and the mass media helped validate in the late twentieth century. Indeed, working-class stereotypes about masculinity in the early twentieth century became increasingly dated when both men and women began assuming jobs in a service economy. Former scholarship boys streaming into academia and the communication industry helped pave the way for a reconfigured, post-industrial masculinity that proved more multi-dimensional and tolerant than residual clichés about 'feminized boys.'⁷¹ Conversely, the emergence of strong women posed challenges to the Left, whose progressivism sometimes became confounded by individuals who violated their norms of feminine behavior and their brand of emancipatory politics. Nowhere was this transgression more clear than in the case of Margaret Thatcher, a Scholarship Girl.

Thatcherism and the Ordeal of the Left

Hoggart considered Margaret Thatcher 'my Aunt Ethel come back to life. I was brought up with, precisely, hauntingly, that shrill, nagging, over-insistent way of speaking, that bossy-pants way

of walking, that remorseless insistence on always being right.’⁷² Calling himself ‘a once-born socialist,’ Hoggart detested the ‘the relentless economic determinism, the unshakeable assumption that letting the market rip will produce its own justifications.’ Yet he admitted that ‘the Falklands and Gulf campaigns and the attack on certain bad trade union practices were justified; and that the poll tax had some elements of sense to it.’⁷³ Magee also broke with orthodoxy. He changed ‘from being a liberal socialist to being a liberal non-socialist’ and in 1982 joined the newly-formed Social Democratic Party after serving as a Labour MP for Layton since 1974. Disillusioned by the Labour’s increasingly radicalism and allegiance to state control, he defined his political position as ‘Thatcherism plus Welfare.’⁷⁴

A. H. Halsey supported those at Oxford who opposed awarding Mrs. Thatcher an honorary degree. As a Christian socialist, he rejected her philosophy of individualism and her endorsement of materialistic values. ‘We must share,’ he wrote. ‘Our greatest difficulty is to recognize the needs of strangers.’⁷⁵ Thatcher and her government contributed to the ‘fall of social sciences in Britain’ by denigrating sociology as a ‘pretentious mistake.’⁷⁶ Halsey’s prolific career helped established the academic legitimacy of his discipline: now this legacy became endangered. Yet, it was not only Thatcherism which threatened his social-democratic fusion of politics and objective academic research. The youth culture of the late 1960s and 1970s made Thatcher’s task easier. ‘Piecemeal social engineering was anathema to the new neo-Marxist and the “new right” radicals. Positivism in the sense of patient counting of heads became a term of abuse, relieving students of the obligation to read the books so labeled.’⁷⁷ Like Hoggart, Halsey scorned the new youth culture though, as he put it, ‘I was suspicious of my own prejudice.’⁷⁸ By the end of the century he supported Tony Blair, whose politics benefitted from

the disillusionments of both a ‘frantic’ Thatcherism and the ‘strategic evils of a failed and discredited Marxism.’⁷⁹

Harold Perkin best illustrated a not infrequent tension in academics between their professional analysis and personal opinion concerning the revival of Classical Liberalism in the late twentieth century. Like Halsey, Perkin devoted a considerable period of his academic career to understanding the role of social class in British history. As his memoir detailed, his book on *The Origin of Modern English Society, 1780-1880*, first published in 1969, created a new genealogy for the class system during the Industrial Revolution that documented ‘the triumph of the entrepreneurial ideal, the victory of active capital and competition over both the aristocratic ideal of passive property...and the working-class ideal of labour value and cooperation.’⁸⁰ His subsequent book on *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*, published twenty years later, chronicled the growing division between two middle-classes in the twentieth century. ‘The business middle class looked to profit and capital gains and resented taxation and interference of any kind by government. The professional middle class, by contrast, earned their living by salaries and fees and...saw their livings increasingly dependent on government and therefore on taxation.’⁸¹ In persuasive empirical detail, Perkin provided deep structural reasons for the ‘the backlash against professionalism’ which emerged in Britain during the 1970s and which would dominate the 1980s, when Perkin taught in the United States, ‘a country still more dedicated to the free market.’⁸²

Yet within the same memoir Perkin’s visceral loathing of Mrs. Thatcher and her policies seemed to ignore the historically structured origins of her victories which his scholarship explained dispassionately. Perkin rarely questioned his own deeply-held political allegiances. He first met Thatcher in the early 1970s, when she became Secretary of State for Education and

he represented the Association of University Teachers. He acknowledged that she ‘treated us with favour’ which proved ‘quite different from the Thatcher who came to hate us later.’⁸³

When she became leader of the Conservatives and then Prime Minister, he offered more vivid insults of her gender and class. ‘Sir Keith Joseph and his blue-eyed girl, Margaret Thatcher, hijacked the Conservative Party for the politics of individual self-interest.’ ‘Like her petty-bourgeois father, she hated the working class...An Oxbridge scholarship boy...myself, I was ashamed to find such an amoral and recklessly anti-social politician...coming from a similar background.’ Her political success was due, in part, ‘to an unfeminine bellicosity.’ Perkin contrasted the ‘greed and self interest’ of the Conservatives with the ‘values of the disinterested service providers’ that he and other professional academics presumably embodied. Near the end of his memoir, he condemned New Labour as ‘a gang of Americanized free marketers...bearing no relation to the moral, caring, social-democratic party I supported for over fifty years.’⁸⁴ This rhetoric indicated the distress that Perkin and other academic humanists endured as Classical Liberalism thrived. Old prejudices, remarkable in their intensity, erupted when the ascendancy of professional elites became challenged.

Even before Perkin, Hobsbawm warned that structural changes in the economy would undermine the Left. In his 1978 lecture ‘The Forward March of Labour Halted?’ he argued that the labour movement would not ‘realize the historic destiny once predicted for it.’ More specifically, he recognized that the militant trade unionism of the 1970s only served narrow economic self-interests and would split the Labour movement. ‘The illusion’, he wrote in his memoir, ‘lay in the belief that the Labour Party thus captured by a mixed minority of sectarian leftwingers would somehow remain united, gain in electoral force, and would have a policy capable of standing up the attack of Mrs. Thatcher’s class warriors, whose force they

systematically failed to grasp.’ Hobsbawm liked and personally admired Michael Foot, but he admitted that ‘the three years of his leadership were a disaster.’ A Communist who refused to leave the Party in 1956 when the Hungarian Revolution and the disclosures of Stalin’s crimes disillusioned many of his comrades, Hobsbawm proved to be remarkably pragmatic in the 1980s, supporting *Marxism Today* and endorsing Neil Kinnock’s efforts to reform the Labour Party. Still, ‘things fell apart for moderate reformist social democrats as well as for communists and other revolutionaries.’⁸⁵

Hobsbawm argued that Thatcher succeeded ‘primarily though not exclusively, on the deep divisions of her opponents.’ Like Perkin, his critique involved both moralism and melancholy. Thatcher was a revolutionary, though ‘not one for the better,’ who appealed to ‘greed and jingoism.’ Unleashing the ‘anarchism of the lower middle class’ she ‘obliterated most of the traditional British values and made the country unrecognizable.’ New Labour carried forward her business agenda. ‘We wanted a reformed Labour, not Thatcher in trousers.’ Perhaps signalling his own movement away from collective thinking, he noted that the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that ‘we, or at least I, no longer had many hopes.’ Yet, to the dismay of many reviewers of his autobiography, Hobsbawm refused to denounce Communism or the ideals that first attracted him to the Party in the 1930s. ‘The world may yet regret, faced with Rosa Luxemburg’s alternate of socialism or barbarism, it decided against socialism.’ Critics charged that historically it was socialists who often proved to be the barbarians, but Hobsbawm deflected the accusations. He concluded his book with the reassertion of a basic principle. ‘Social injustice still needs to be denounced and fought. The world will not get better on its own.’⁸⁶

Yet, as their memoirs often disclosed unintentionally, the careers of scholarship boys were not entirely alien to the entrepreneurial ideal. Indeed, Halsey made the comparison between academics and entrepreneurs in 1971 long before its ironies became inflammatory to the Left.⁸⁷ Harold Perkin's distinction between two types of professionals in the twentieth century sometimes obscured their commonalities. In the case of scholarship boys, their rise to prominence depended upon excelling in vigorous competitions. They made their own decisions and controlled their own time. They constantly needed to create new intellectual products that differentiated themselves from others in the field. They founded new journals and institutional centers of academic inquiry. They were rewarded with money, prestige, and fame. Their autobiographies not infrequently resembled the inspirational stories found in Samuel Smiles' Victorian bestseller *Self-Help*. Perkin's autobiography, David Cannadine wrote in his obituary, 'recorded a remarkable life—of striving, of self-help, and of upward social mobility, as he participated in some of those very historical trends and developments which had charted and described in his own books.'⁸⁸ Yet, at the end of their careers, these men also acknowledged limitations and losses unanticipated in their youth.

Old Men: The Sense of an Ending

'I have often written about imagined or fictive endings,' Frank Kermode wrote in his memoir, 'and said they are all images of the real one. Fall and cease...it makes sense of everything, even if one would prefer a different kind of sense.'⁸⁹ As always, Kermode absorbed the rich ambiguities of language in ways that others missed. His book *The Sense of an Ending*, first published in 1966 and aptly reissued in 2000 explored how various writers in Western civilization reflected upon the Apocalypse. Anticipation of the End forced them to ponder the significance of their lives. His book of literary interpretation tried to 'make sense' of the ways

they accomplished this task.⁹⁰ Kermode's memoir offered another version of this tripartite meaning: it fashioned in language how he as an individual interpreted his approaching demise (it made sense of his sense of a sense of an ending).

Life-writing customarily occupied this complex role and it illuminates an often neglected aspect of historicism. The unique and infinitely complex life-worlds of historical periods was experienced by its inhabitants at different points in the life-cycle. The 1960s, like the 1920s, may have been defined by its youth, but it was inhabited differently by the aged. Victorians shaped the 1920s just as Flappers affected the 1960s.⁹¹ As their memoirs revealed, Scholarship Boys made sense of themselves and of post-industrial Britain with ideals, assumptions, and memories from an earlier period. Their sense of an ending took many forms as they reflected on people and landscapes that had disappeared. They struggled to capture in language what no longer existed and what it all meant. They came to understand how death defined life, not unlike the existentialists of their youth.

They all wrote about people who were gone: family, friends, neighbors, teachers. Kermode recalled at length the eccentric officers with whom he served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War: 'Call to me all my mad captains.'⁹² Hoggart pondered the 'forgotten people' of his early life: 'they are now out of time and history. They were provincials, they worked in unfashionable institutions.'⁹³ Distant characters came alive. Perkin's favorite Aunt Liza made roast beef and Yorkshire pudding 'on an open fire, which had special gadgets to hold the meat dishes and saucepans.'⁹⁴ Magee knew a Miss Rutland, 'dressed always in black from head to foot, in clothes appropriate at the time of Queen Victoria's death, in mourning for her fiancé, who had been killed in the Boer War.'⁹⁵ Halsey's Uncle George, denied an expected loan hours before his wedding, borrowed the money from a tram driver who gave him the passenger

fares that he just collected that morning.⁹⁶ Elderly men put their lives in perspective. Writing about his mother, Hobsbawm noted that ‘I am now old enough to be the grandfather of a woman who died at the age of thirty-six.’⁹⁷

People disappeared, but so did landscapes. In *The Country and the City*, first published in 1973, Raymond Williams demonstrated how longing for vanishing rural landscapes remained a persistent feature of English culture going back hundreds of years. Each generation lamented the loss of a countryside which they presumed timeless but in fact constantly changed. The environment of youth instilled a sense of permanence that time inevitably betrayed.⁹⁸ Even Williams himself did not escape this sense of loss. His autobiographical novel *Border Country*, first published in 1960, recreated a small Welsh community whose landscapes and social values eroded over time.⁹⁹ Yet, like other radical figures in the British past, Williams partly based his critique of modernity, as well as his vision of a socialist future, on his memories of Pandy and the surrounding Welsh countryside.¹⁰⁰

For other scholarship boys in post-industrial Britain, it was the urban, not rural, landscape that disappeared. In *The Uses of Literary* Hoggart celebrated the neighborhoods of his youth that outsiders found ‘understandably depressing...street after street of shoddily uniform houses...mean, squalid and in a permanent half-fog.’ Yet to those who lived there, as Hoggart demonstrated in vivid detail, these settings were ‘small worlds, each as homogeneous and well-defined as a village....’¹⁰¹ Hoggart warned about ‘urban renewal’ during the 1950s but only in old age would he fully grasp the transformation of working-class landscapes. When he visited Hunslet he discovered his old house had disappeared, ‘bulldozed with hundreds of others so they could build Hunslet Grange, one of the worst large housing developments of Sixties Britain. That too has gone, its demolition helped on by building deficiencies and the refusal of people

after the mid-Seventies to accept rabbit-hutch housing....¹⁰² He approved more of the newer housing, but the places of his youth vanished like the people who once lived there.

In *Clouds of Glory* Bryan Magee also wrote about ‘a vanished world’ not only of his childhood but pre-war Hoxton ‘and all the things it represented.’¹⁰³ Magee excelled at portraying the sights and sounds of this impoverished area of London.

Scattered along both sides of the street, in amongst shops of the other kinds, were cafes and pubs, eel-and-pie shops, fish and chip shops, sausage and mash shops. Mingling with the crowd and living off it were beggars and tipsters, pickpockets and policemen, some people being slipped illegal bets, others carrying placards warning of wrath to come. The sound of it all was multi-layered: a background noise of hundreds of people talking at once in the open air, over which individual voices were heard calling out to one another, and on top at that, overriding everything else, the air-splitting cries of stall-keepers, all shouting at once, each trying to draw attention to his particular goods by shouting either his wares or his prices, the jokers also joshing with the passers-by or with his neighboring stall-keepers.¹⁰⁴

The Blitz destroyed large parts of Hoxton: the Magees were bombed out of their home. Post-war reconstruction took care of the rest. ‘Council estates of multi-story apartment blocks have been built over the areas where whole streets were, so that the lines of the streets themselves have been obliterated.’ A distinctive corner near their shop where four roads converged became a commonplace roundabout. Old populations left to be replaced by immigrants. Part of Hoxton became an artist’s colony. ‘The Royal Shakespeare Company advertises its courses for drama students as taking place in “fashionable Hoxton.”’¹⁰⁵

Magee knew that when he died a whole world died with him. Like other scholarship boys he struggled to summon that world from memory and invoke it in words. ‘What is *actually* lived, *actually* felt, *actually* thought, can never find an equivalent in language.’ When once he stumbled across an object from his youth, ‘I cannot put into words the piercingness or depth of the nostalgia I felt.’¹⁰⁶ Hoggart strained to narrate his life in chronological order because ‘you are at all moments the boy, the elderly man, the middle-aged man, the youth just setting out; you constantly shuttle between them all as events stir memory.’¹⁰⁷ Kermode expostulated at length about the mysteries of language and memory. As more years pass, his earlier life became ‘a time of myth, its world a region of fantasy.’ He constantly sought passage into the microclimate of a former time. ‘What I, what all need is a madeleine or a *phrase de Vinteuil*, even stumbling on an uneven but memory-packed paving stone might do it...exposing the real and not the shadow.’ With customary irony, he rejected distilling a complex story to a thematic pattern. ‘It tempers the prevailing northeaster of time. It is a means of giving life the calm coherence of myth.’ He warns that autobiographies became marred not by ‘mendacity but good writing’ which inevitably proved ‘economical with the truth.’ Ultimately the fantasies of both memory and imagination informed the best memoirs. ‘Writing truthfully of one’s life therefore requires what seem to be a scandalous breach of the promise to be truthful.’¹⁰⁸ Kermode’s paradox underscored the inaccessibility of the past whose disappearance can never be fully reclaimed in memory or in language.

Less enamored of these mysteries, Hobsbawm argued for the responsibility of the historian. He began his autobiography with a group photograph of children and their mothers from 1922 sent to him by a woman he had not seen for over seventy years. ‘She had immediately concluded that I must be the Eric with whom she and her sisters had played long,

long ago.’ Hobsbawm deftly offered some background to the picture taken in Vienna, noting that after the two families parted, it was only the extraordinary events of European history that bound their lives together. ‘A rediscovered common childhood, a renewal of contact in old age, dramatize the image of our times: absurd, ironic, surrealist and monstrous.’ Eric would live in Britain; the woman would become an actress in wartime Berlin ‘performing under our bombs...to an audience some of whom may well have rounded up my relatives...for transport to the camps.’ History matters even to those ignorant of how it influences them. ‘It is the autobiographical historian’s business not simply to revisit it, but to map it.’ With the passage of time, the photograph disclosed five small children unaware that ‘they would have make their way through the most murderous as well as the most revolutionary era in history.’¹⁰⁹

Temporality preoccupied the life-writing of many scholarship boys. ‘I realize more sharply than ever before,’ Hoggart observed, ‘that the sense of aging and of the nearness of death comes to us at markedly different times. Some begin to show it, not physically but in temperament, before they are out of their forties; others in their fifties and yet others only in their sixties.’¹¹⁰ Hoggart noted how time ‘goes faster and faster’ as he aged. All the beautiful women that he knew became old. When he looked in the mirror, he no longer saw the person that he imagined. ‘We don’t necessarily have Yeats’s rage at being fastened to a dying animal, but know what he meant.’ Once again, as in his youth, Hoggart felt a man apart, separated from others by his age and driven to write about his experience. Home and a large family provided him comfort ‘though I have not entirely lost the sense of loneliness which first struck when our mother died on the clip-rug up in Chapeltown, Leeds.’¹¹¹ Hoggart’s three volume autobiography began and ended with a death in the family. His sense of an ending started early.

Already by age 60, Halsey became aware that people treated him differently, ‘lots of past tense and use of me by younger colleagues as a memory bank.’¹¹² Then, during a routine medical checkup, a doctor informed him that he aortic aneurysm which threatened his life. Three delays from the National Health did not please him but finally a surgeon replaced his aorta with ‘a stretch of dacron.’¹¹³ Powerful anaesthetics induced hallucinations about Arabic script on the curtains, confused memories of Hong Kong, the sudden appearance of his mother, and the oppressive insistence ‘that I produce the answer to three questions, who, where, and why was I.’ For a time he thought that he had been wounded in the First World War, not unlike his father. He listened to the howls of a fellow patient nearing death. As Halsey gradually recovered and could return home for further convalescence, he knew what he must do. ‘I had had my intimation of mortality. The time had now come to record a life.’¹¹⁴

From an early age, Bryan Magee feared death. ‘I didn’t want to die...I was swept by a sense of unutterable sadness, real grief, true mourning for myself. I was confronting the loss of everything. And there was nothing I could do about it.’¹¹⁵ As he matured, he initially put aside these dark thoughts, but then in mid-life once again lapsed into crisis. He spent four years writing a novel, *Facing Death*, which fictionalized his apprehensions about oblivion. ‘By the end I had been ravaged by the process but felt I had come through.’ Like others of his generation, he embraced the poetry of Philip Larkin, even if he dissented from his politics. ‘Aubade’ captured his dread and resignation: ‘Death is no different whined at than withstood.’ Magee embraced the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre although he acknowledged the obscurity of the former and the superficiality of the latter. Anxiety about death became integrated into choices about life. The sense of an ending enhanced the meaning of the ongoing present, the *nunc stans*. ‘I concentrate on my conscious self-awareness and try to understand

what it is.’¹¹⁶ Magee embraced philosophy not only as an academic subject, but as a living guide to understanding. He integrated metaphysics into quotidian existence.

The historian Perkin looked to the future at the end of his autobiography. The last volume of his trilogy, *The Third Revolution*, charted the role of professionalism in a number of post-industrial societies, including Japan and the United States. It detailed how the business elites and the philosophy of the free market exacerbated the rise of economic inequality as they extracted more and more of the resources for themselves. ‘Professionals are excellent servants but exceedingly bad masters, and need to be held in check by democratic forces.’ With typical forthrightness, Perkin compared himself to Cassandra and he feared that, like her, no one would listen. He concluded his book with these words: ‘we can choose to manage our affairs equitably or we can pursue unlimited self-interest to mutual destruction. Let us pray we make the right choice, for the alternative is Armageddon.’¹¹⁷ This apocalyptic sense of an ending recalled Kermode’s book on the subject. For Perkin, the paradoxical relationship between self and general interest at the heart of capitalism no longer applied: greed was not good.

At the end of his memoir Kermode described himself looking out his bedroom window. When he bought the house in Cambridge, the garden in the rear contained ‘the head of a fierce lion, broken off from the south wall of King’s Chapel during restoration work.’ He thought that the space needed something else, ‘a household god or goddess to assure that I was at home.’ Friends gave him a statue of Diana, ‘an arrow in one hand, a bow in the other.’ Kermode looked at her every morning when he rose from sleep. In winter she was covered in frost. ‘Henceforth she will preside over this garden and the commonplace house in it, and as long as she belongs there, I will belong there also, or be as close to belonging as I am entitled to be, for as long as I am entitled to be.’¹¹⁸

The collective witness of these six scholarship boys enrich substantially the sociological portrait drawn by Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy*, composed when he was still in his thirties. Hoggart understood the psychological tensions created by the ‘two worlds’ of home and school. These memoirs detail how these conflicts became more complex as de-industrialization and the rise of a service economy transformed the nature of class, gender, and nation. The Britain which scholarship boys both inherited and help shape departed radically from the expectations of their youth and early manhood. Hoggart also knew how life experience affected career choices. These memoirs validate the often concealed subjectivities behind ‘objective’ scholarship and academic success. They demonstrate how scholarship boys foreshadowed the feminist insistence that the ‘personal is political.’ Finally, in their poignant existentialism and struggle to capture lost worlds, these memoirs subvert the casual prejudices against the old that occasionally contaminate social discourse. Even as yesterday’s men, scholarship boys still astonish.

ENDNOTES

¹ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 242. Variously defined, ‘scholarship boys’ have been part of British history for hundreds of years.

² Richard Hoggart, *A Sort of Clowning, 1940-1959* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 206.

³ Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, ‘Working Class Attitudes,’ *New Left Review*, 1, 1 (January-February, 1960), 26.

⁴ Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 3.

⁵ Jones, *Working Class*, 201.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (New York: New Press, 2002); Frank Kermode, *Not Entitled: A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995); Harold Perkin, *The Making of A Social Historian* (London: Athena Press, 2002); A. H. Halsey, *No Discouragement: An Autobiography* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996); Bryan Magee, *Clouds of Glory: A Hoxton Childhood* (London: Pimlico, 2003); Bryan Magee, *Growing Up in a War* (London: Pimlico, 2008); Bryan Magee, *Confessions of a Philosopher: A Personal Journey Through Western Philosophy from Plato to Popper* (New York: Modern Library, 1997); Richard Hoggart, *A Measured Life: The Times and Places of an Orphaned Intellectual* (New Brunswick and London: 1994). Note that the American edition of Hoggart’s autobiography combines the three books published in Britain into one volume while retaining the same pagination. The titles of these volumes are: *A Local Habitation: 1918-1940*; *A Sort of Clowning: 1940-1959*; and *An*

Imagined Life: 1959-1991. In all notes, I cite the first words of the British title, followed by the page number.

⁷ Here are the birthdates: Hobsbawm, 1917; Hoggart, 1918; Kermode, 1919; Halsey, 1923; Perkin, 1926; Magee, 1930.

⁸ A. H. Halsey, A. F. Heath and J. M. Ridge, *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class, and Education in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 24, 26. These authors create two cohorts for this group (1913-22 and 1923-32) but also combine the two for analytical purposes on page 33.

⁹ Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy: Science, Literature and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

¹⁰ A. H. Halsey, *Decline of the Donnish Dominion: The British Academic Professions in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). For an earlier analysis, see A. H. Halsey and M. A. Trow, *The British Academics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹¹ The bibliography is enormous. I have found particularly useful the following: Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain. Volume 3: Structural Change and Growth, 1939-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alec Cairncross, *The British Economy Since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom, 1951-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009); Brian Harrison, *Finding a Role? The United Kingdom, 1970-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2010); W.D. Rubinstein, *Elites and Wealthy in Modern British History: Essays in Social and Economic History* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1987); David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Simon J. Charlesworth, *Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2000); Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

¹² On the subject of life-writing, I have found helpful: Sven Birkerts, *The Art of Time in Memoir* (Minneapolis: Greywolf Press, 2008); Vivian Gornick, *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: a History* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009); Linda Anderson, *Autobiography*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2011). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹³ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 206-8; *Imagined Life*, 83.

¹⁴ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 5.

¹⁵ Perkin, *Making*, 155.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 313.

¹⁷ Cynthia G. Franklin, *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 9. See also the comment by Cornell West quoted in Bruce Robbins, *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (London: Verso, 1993), 3.

¹⁸ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 223.

¹⁹ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 25.

²⁰ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 175.

²¹ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 179.

²² Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 182.

²³ See Sue Owen, ed., *Richard Hoggart and Cultural Studies* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). See also Stefan Collini, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 219-30.

²⁴ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 6.

²⁵ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 15.

²⁶ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 31.

²⁷ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 83.

²⁸ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 250.

²⁹ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 51.

³⁰ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 53.

³¹ Magee, *Clouds*, 207.

³² Magee, *Clouds*, 119.

³³ Magee, *Clouds*, 235.

³⁴ Magee, *Clouds*, 122.

³⁵ Magee, *Clouds*, 213.

³⁶ Magee, *Confessions*, 9-10.

³⁷ Magee, *War*, 157.

³⁸ Magee, *War*, 208-9.

³⁹ Magee, *War*, 218.

⁴⁰ Bryan Magee, *Aspects of Wagner* (London: Ross, 1968); Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997). Magee also wrote extensively on Karl Popper. See, for example, Bryan Magee, *Karl Popper* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

-
- ⁴¹ Bryan Magee, *Men of Ideas* (New York: Viking Press, 1978).
- ⁴² Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 93, 95.
- ⁴³ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 97, 133, 135.
- ⁴⁴ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 24.
- ⁴⁵ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 73-4.
- ⁴⁶ Stefan Collini, *Independent*, 14 September 2002; Perry Anderson, 'The Age of E.J.H.,' *London Review of Books* 24, 19 (3 October 2002): 3.
- ⁴⁷ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 15.
- ⁴⁸ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 23.
- ⁴⁹ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 43.
- ⁵⁰ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 19.
- ⁵¹ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 57.
- ⁵² Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 53.
- ⁵³ Perkin, *Making*, 9, 16.
- ⁵⁴ Paul Smith, 'Professor Among Professionals,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 June 2003.
- ⁵⁵ Perkin, *Making*, 40, 41, 46.
- ⁵⁶ Hoggart, *Uses*, 242.
- ⁵⁷ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 57.
- ⁵⁸ Magee, *War*, 206.
- ⁵⁹ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 19.
- ⁶⁰ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 169.
- ⁶¹ Perkin, *Making*, 36.
- ⁶² Magee, *Clouds*.

⁶³ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 102.

⁶⁴ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 36.

⁶⁵ Hoggart, *Sort of Clowning*, 243. On this issue see Sue Owen, 'Hoggart and Women' in Owen, ed., *Hoggart*, 227-242.

⁶⁶ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 235.

⁶⁷ A. H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 127.

⁶⁸ Perkin, *Making*, 44.

⁶⁹ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 121, 166.

⁷⁰ Hoggart, *Sort of Clowning*, 183 and following.

⁷¹ On issues of masculinity, see among others, Christine Skelton, *Schooling the Boys:*

Masculinities and Primary Education (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001); Beverley

Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender* (London: Sage, 1997); Michael Roper, *Masculinity*

and the British Organization Man Since 1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mairtin

Mac an Ghail, ed., *Understanding Masculinities: Social Relations and Cultural Arenas*

(Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), esp. 203-217. Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane

Kehily, eds., *Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities* (Houndsmill:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Mike Donaldson, 'What is Hegemonic Masculinity?' *Theory and*

Society, 22 (1993), 643-57; Linda McDowell, 'Masculine Discourses and Dissonances: Strutting

"Lads", Protest Masculinity, and Domestic Respectability,' *Environment and Planning D:*

Society and Space, 20 (2002), 97-119. An interesting early work is Andrew Tolson, *The Limits*

of Masculinity (London; Tavistock, 1977).

-
- ⁷² Hoggart, *Imagined Life*, 265-6. The definition of Thatcherism remains contested. See especially the essays in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, eds., *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ⁷³ Hoggart, *Sort of Clowning*, 78; Hoggart, *Imagined Life*, 265.
- ⁷⁴ Magee, *Confessions*, 28, 326.
- ⁷⁵ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 105.
- ⁷⁶ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 228.
- ⁷⁷ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 233.
- ⁷⁸ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 174.
- ⁷⁹ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 117.
- ⁸⁰ Perkin, *Making*, 149. See Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
- ⁸¹ Perkin, *Making*, 207. See Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- ⁸² Perkin, *Making*, 221.
- ⁸³ Perkin, *Making*, 127-8.
- ⁸⁴ Perkin, *Making*, 222-224; 258.
- ⁸⁵ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 264, 267, 271, 275. See Eric Hobsbawm, Martin Jacques and Francis Mulhern, eds. *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (London: New Left Books, 1981).
- ⁸⁶ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 273, 274, 276, 279, 281, 418. See also his more recent work: Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx and Marxism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), esp. 344-419.

⁸⁷ A. H. Halsey and M. A. Trow, *The British Academics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 169.

⁸⁸ David Cannadine, 'Harold Perkin,' *Guardian*, 23 October 2004.

⁸⁹ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 260.

⁹⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1966] 2000).

⁹¹ See, for example, Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain: Essays in Memory of John Clive* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-28.

⁹² Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 83.

⁹³ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 121.

⁹⁴ Perkin, *Making*, 10.

⁹⁵ Magee, *War*, 21.

⁹⁶ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 9.

⁹⁷ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times*, 39-40.

⁹⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁹⁹ Raymond Williams, *Border Country* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960).

¹⁰⁰ D. L. LeMahieu, 'Honest to God and the Discourse on Patriarchy in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain,' *Christianity and Literature*, 51, 1 (2001), 49-51.

¹⁰¹ Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*, 52.

¹⁰² Hoggart, *Imagined Life*, 300.

¹⁰³ Magee, *Clouds*, 342.

¹⁰⁴ Magee, *Clouds*, 55-6.

-
- ¹⁰⁵ Magee, *Clouds*, 37, 341.
- ¹⁰⁶ Magee, *Confessions*, 79; Magee, *Clouds*, 13.
- ¹⁰⁷ Hoggart, *Sort of Clowning*, 220.
- ¹⁰⁸ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 154-56.
- ¹⁰⁹ Hobsbawm, *Interesting Life*, 1-2, 6-7.
- ¹¹⁰ Hoggart, *Local Habitation*, 4.
- ¹¹¹ Hoggart, *Imagined Life*, 288, 294-95, 299.
- ¹¹² Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 2.
- ¹¹³ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 3.
- ¹¹⁴ Halsey, *No Discouragement*, 4.
- ¹¹⁵ Magee, *Clouds*, 133-4.
- ¹¹⁶ Magee, *Confessions*, 292, 229fn (Larkin quotation), 260-1, 460. Larkin appealed to an entire generation of British intellectuals.
- ¹¹⁷ Perkin, *Making*, 296-97. See also Harold Perkin, *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- ¹¹⁸ Kermode, *Not Entitled*, 262-63.

ABSTRACT

The memoirs of six prominent British humanists—Richard Hoggart, Eric Hobsbawm, Frank Kermode, A. H. Halsey, Harold Perkin, and Bryan Magee---provide an imperfect sample of a broader, deeply varied experience of ‘scholarship boys’ in the twentieth century. This essay links more conventional intellectual history with the emerging field of ‘life-writing.’ These autobiographies help answer a number of questions about the subjectivities of a select group of academic intellectuals. What was the source of their social and intellectual ambitions? How do they portray the challenges to their masculinity in their youth and the transformation of gender relationships in their maturity? What was their response to Thatcherism and other threats to social-democratic thinking? How did they characterize the existential realities of old age? By the end of the twentieth century, scholarship boys had become emblems of a vanished past, a fate which their memoirs often pondered in moving detail.

KEY WORDS: scholarship boys, life-writing, masculinities, Thatcherism, post-industrial Britain