

**Class Ideology and Values in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* and Hilaire Belloc's
Cautionary Tales for Children and *New Cautionary Tales***

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Pro Gradu -tutkielmani käsittelee luokkaideologioita ja arvoja Roald Dahlin teoksessa *Matilda* (1988) ja Hilaire Bellocin teoksissa *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907) ja *New Cautionary Tales* (1930). Tavoitteenani on tarkastella, miten henkilöihahmoja ja heidän elämänsä kuvataan, minkälaisia yhteiskuntaluokkiin sidottavia arvoja he heijastelevat, ja mitä arvoja lukijalle esitellään hyväksyttävänä tai tuomittavana.

Tutkielmani teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu kolmesta osiosta. Ensimmäisessä tutkin lastenkirjallisuuden suhdetta ideologiaan yleisellä tasolla. Toisessa osiossa tarkastelen Louis Althusserin marxilaista teoriaa ideologiasta, jonka mukaan instituutiot kuten koulu, uskonto ja kirjallisuus välittävät ideologista sisältöä. Althusserin mukaan näiden välittämä ideologia on useimmiten yhteiskunnassa jo vallalla olevaa ideologiaa, tosin näitä arvoja kyseenalaistavaakin ideologiaa esiintyy. Althusser esittelee myös käsitteen interpellaatio, joka kuvaa prosessia, jonka kautta teksti määrittelee lukijan, ja vaatii lukijaa omaksumaan tietyn roolin lukemisen ajaksi. Teoriaosion kolmas alaluku käsittelee Pierre Bourdieun teoriaa, jonka mukaan henkilön mieltymykset esimerkiksi pukeutumisen, harrastusten ja taiteen suhteen ovat vahvasti sidoksissa hänen luokkataustansa ja -identiteettiinsä.

Teorialukuja seuraava analyysiosio on jaettu kahteen osaan; toisessa käsitteelen Roald Dahlin *Matilda*-teosta, ja toisessa Hilaire Bellocin teoksia *Cautionary Tales for Children* ja *New Cautionary Tales*. Molemmat osiot on edelleen jaettu kolmeen alalukuun. Dahlin kirjasta käsitteelen ensin sitä, miten hahmojen ulkonäköä ja heidän pukeutumistaan on kuvattu. Toiseksi tarkastelen hahmojen ajanvietetapoja, ja niiden yhteyksiä eri yhteiskuntaluokkiin. Kolmanneksi keskityn siihen, miten kirjassa on kuvailtu ruokaa ja ateriointia. Bellocin teoksia käsitteelen myös kolmen eri aiheen avulla. Ensin tarkastelen Bellocin runoissa mainittuja esineitä ja aktiviteetteja, ja sitä, minkälaiseen yhteiskunnalliseen asemaan niillä viitataan. Toiseksi analysoin hahmojen yhteiskunnallisen aseman kehitystä, eli Bourdieun termin heidän sosiaalista kehityskaartaan. Viimeiseksi käsitteelen sitä, miten alempan yhteiskuntaluokkaan kuuluvia on kuvattu Bellocin runoissa.

Tutkimuksessani selvisi, että Dahlin teoksen henkilöihahmojen mieltymykset myötäilevät Bourdieun ajatuksia eri yhteiskuntaluokkiin kuuluvien esteettisistä mieltymyksistä. Kirjassa esitettiin Matildan ja hänen opettajansa keskiluokalle tyypilliset mieltymykset parempina vaihtoehtoina kuin Matildan vanhempien edustamat, alemman keskiluokan tai työväenluokan valinnat. Bellocin runoissa taas on pinnallisesti esillä ylimmälle yhteiskuntaluokalle tyypillistä elämäntapaa, mutta asenteet alempia luokkia kohtaan ovat kaiken kaikkiaan hyväksyviä, eikä Dahlin kirjassa yleistä sosiaaliluokkaan perustuvaa pilkkaamista ja väheksymistä esiinny.

Avainsanat: lastenkirjallisuus, ideologia, arvot, yhteiskuntaluokka, Dahl, Belloc

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1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine three books by two authors; *Matilda* (first published in 1988), by Roald Dahl, and *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907) and *New Cautionary Tales* (1930) by Hilaire Belloc. I will concentrate on the ideology found in these texts and determine whether the texts promote the values pertaining to, and typically associated with, a specific social class. I will utilise the theories of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu in concluding whether, and how, these texts are promoting class values.

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British author who wrote poems, novels, and short stories, but is nowadays undoubtedly best known for his children's books, which have been, and continue to be, incredibly popular. Dahl's short stories often have very dark humour, and many of his children's books also include a perhaps surprisingly twisted sense of humour.

Matilda tells the story of a little girl, called Matilda Wormwood. Matilda's parents are villains in the book; they are “beastly” to Matilda, neglecting and verbally abusing her. Luckily Matilda is both incredibly intelligent and remarkably self-sufficient for her age. She teaches herself to read, and is soon breezing through the literary classics in the village library. Her parents mock her, as they do not value books or reading, instead choosing to watch television. Before long, their abuse causes Matilda to fight back, which she does by secretly doing practical jokes that embarrass her parents, such as putting superglue on her father's hat.

Matilda begins school and meets her teacher, the kind Miss Honey. However, she also meets the headmaster, the sadistic Miss Trunchbull, who becomes the main villain of the book. After she punishes Matilda unjustly, Matilda develops magical powers that allow her to move objects telekinetically. The cause of her temporary magical powers is not conclusively answered, but Miss Honey speculates that the cause might have been Matilda's enormous intellect, which was not being stimulated at school. After learning that Miss Trunchbull has also bullied and mistreated Miss Honey her whole life, Matilda decides to take action, and devises a plot that frightens Miss Trunchbull to leave the school permanently. Matilda's magical powers disappear once the wrongs are corrected and

she is able to move to a more demanding class at school. At the end of the novel, Matilda's parents flee the country to avoid being prosecuted, and Matilda moves in with Miss Honey, thus creating a happy ending.

Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) was a prolific Anglo-French writer, whose work includes for example poetry, essays, and historical and political writing. Belloc is today most remembered for his poetry, and like Roald Dahl, especially his verse for children. *Cautionary Tales for Children* was first published in 1907, and *New Cautionary Tales* in 1930. Both, as well as Belloc's other writing for children, continue to be in print to this day. *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales* are both collections of poems, each poem telling the story of a recalcitrant child who receives a punishment for his or her bad behaviour. Belloc's cautionary tales are essentially parodies of the genre of cautionary tales or stories, which usually describe the horrible consequences that befall those children who disobey their parents or transgress societal rules in some way. The cautionary story is a genre of children's literature that originated in the late eighteenth century, and became popular in the following century (Carpenter and Pritchard 1984, 104-105). The stories, sometimes written in prose, other times in verse, warned naughty children about what might happen to them if they did not behave (Carpenter and Pritchard 1984, 104). The cautionary tale differs from the moral story in the consequences that the child protagonists face; in moral stories the children usually “mend their ways” and survive with warnings or, at most, with small injuries, whereas in cautionary tales more severe injuries or even death is common (Carpenter and Pritchard 1984, 359). After the first, earnest, cautionary stories, became versions that mixed tragedy with humour, the first of these is mentioned by Carpenter and Prichard to have been *Struwwelpeter*, which was published in English in 1848 (1984, 104). Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*, in 1907, was the first book that completely parodied the genre with its disproportionate and outrageous repercussions (Carpenter and Pritchard 1984, 104).

It could be argued that because of the sophisticated satire of social mores and the parody of literary conventions of moral tales, Belloc's cautionary tales are not really children's texts at all, but rather intended for adults. The poems can certainly be enjoyed by adults, and I do believe at least

some of them have parts that a child might not be able to fully appreciate, such as in the poem “Lord Lundy”, where the protagonist's total failure in his political career results in being ordered to “go out and govern New South Wales!” (*Cautionary Tales for Children*¹, 57). A child reader or listener might not interpret the “punishment” the protagonist receives as commentary on the attitudes of the British towards Australia, as an adult would most likely do. However, despite these signs of an intended double readership, I will consider the books to be children's literature, as I find that the texts imply or even directly address children as the intended readers at least as much of the time as adults. Peter Hunt also maintains that children's literature as a category is highly nebulous, and that any work can be announced as a children's book by practically anyone, whether writer, publisher or reader of said work (2001, 4).

In *Matilda*, certain values that can be linked to specific social classes are fairly easy to recognise as the story underlines the importance of literature and education. The books Matilda reads as a very young child are classics of the western literary canon, and seem to be listed almost as a guide to the reader as to what kind of literature to read and appreciate. Dahl's characters are often rather exaggerated, and here, too, there seem to be only two kinds of people in the story: the nice, educated people, such as Matilda herself and Miss Honey, and the vulgar bullies like Matilda's parents and Miss Trunchbull. It is not difficult for the reader to figure out which characters they are meant to relate to in the story.

Ideology manifests in a different way in *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*. The poems describe the lives of members of the upper class, and as such may be seen to enforce the values of that class. Many of the poems emphasise the need to behave in a socially appropriate way, or the importance of having the approval of others in one's social circle. However, as the upper class lifestyles are depicted satirically and the genre of cautionary tales is parodied in Belloc's poems, we may question whether the values transmitted are those that uphold, or those that ultimately subvert,

¹ Hereafter, for brevity, I will use *CT* for *Cautionary Tales*, *NCT* for *New Cautionary Tales* and *M* for *Matilda* when citing sources after citations.

upper class values.

Despite the nearly unparalleled commercial success of Roald Dahl's children's books, it is very difficult to find academic discussion or research concerning them (Hunt 2001, 56). In fact, Peter Hunt argues that the dearth of research on Dahl's work is symptomatic of the division of books into either literature or popular culture, and that since Dahl's children's books are considered to belong to the latter group, they have not been deemed worthy of academic study by researchers (Hunt 2001, 56). I have also discovered a similar lack of study on Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*. As they both continue to be printed and read to or by children, I find the texts a highly relevant object of research still today.

As *Matilda* and Belloc's books are written in very different eras, *Matilda* fifty years after *New Cautionary Tales* and over eighty years after *Cautionary Tales for Children*, it is clear that society and class structures have not stayed the same between the time these books have been written and first published. While analysing what the texts reveal specifically about attitudes to social class I will also be comparing them to see how the passage of time has affected these descriptions of social classes, which I believe will be an interesting to examine. I have chosen to analyse these books in my thesis because I find that the topic of class ideology and the matter of either cementing it or subverting it is very relevant to them, as well as being an important consideration in children's literature in general, as I will discuss in the following section.

2. Children's Literature, Ideology and Class

The theory background of my thesis consists of three sections. First, I will discuss ideology in children's literature. Secondly, I will examine the Marxist theory of ideology as formulated by Louis Althusser. Thirdly, I will discuss Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste as an expression of social class.

2.1 Ideology and Children's Literature

Before I move on to the Marxist theories of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu and examining what they say about ideology and class, I will use this section to consider how ideology in general relates to children's literature.

All writing encompasses the ideology of its writer, and any writing that aims to make the reader see things from the writer's perspective, including literature aimed at children, can be considered a form of indoctrination (Riukulehto 2001, 9). John Stephens also agrees with this statement, and points out that language itself is saturated with ideology, and thus any discourse includes an ideological component already because of the language it uses (Stephens 1992, 1 and 8). Both Sulevi Riukulehto and Stephens thus note that children's literature, like all literary forms and genres, must contain ideology, whether it is clearly visible in a text or harder to find (Riukulehto 2001, 12 and Stephens 1992, 1-2). Stephens states that there are two layers of ideology in a story. There is the moral of the story, in other words what the story teaches or helps the reader to see, which is necessarily imbued with ideology. But in addition to this, also the way the story presents human life, relationships or reality may be seen as ideological, in that it makes the reader view these things in a certain way, even if the story is fiction and the actions as such untrue. Stephens claims that because of this two-layered structure of ideology that it contains, fiction should be considered an especially potent vehicle for transmitting values and ideological content. (Stephens 1992, 2.)

The values literature promotes are the values of those who create it; the writers, editors, publishers and the whole system that manufactures literature, which means that literature naturally promotes the values that support the system and keep it operating (Stephens 1992, 69; also Zipes 2001, 2). The values that are considered important at the time of writing in society are likely to influence the ideology of a text (Stephens 1992, 69). Peter Hunt agrees that the ideals and values in texts for children, as in other writing, depend on the society the text is written in (Hunt 2001, 18). The free capitalist market also promotes the texts that seem to support the ideologies that are already common and accepted in society: the people purchasing books choose ones that suit their own ideals,

and thus encourage the writers, editors and publishers of such books to produce more of the same type of book in order to make a profit (Richards 1992, 1).

However, as Stephens notes, the inclusion of ideology in texts is not merely a side effect of book publishing or an attempt at brainwashing the readers, but a fact pertaining to the nature of narratives: one of the main reasons narratives are used in human societies is for the exact purpose of passing on morals, attitudes and values to the readers or listeners of the story (1992, 8). All texts contain ideological content, regardless of whether the writer intended it to be there, or whether we as the readers are aware of it while reading (Hollindale 2011, 9). Hollindale also points out that we as readers are not empty vessels that take on whatever ideology a text offers us, but that at any time when we come into contact with a text, we already possess some, previously learned, ideological thoughts and views, and those affect how we encounter and interact with the ideology in a new text (2011, 9).

There is a tendency to view children's literature as not serious literature, as a genre that does not examine important issues, and this view easily leads to the idea that children's literature contains no ideology, that it is "innocent" or "ideologically neutral" (Hunt 1991, 142). Hunt notes that a text that appears or aims to be "unpolitical" is in reality usually one that promotes the dominant ideology of the society, which in the case of Western literature, is liberal capitalism (Hunt 1991, 147). Riukulehto and Egoff both state that children's literature is, in fact, more inclined to be heavily ideological than other genres of literature, as it is intended to help mould children into decent members of society, to civilise and socialise them, which necessarily involves ideological persuasion (Riukulehto 2001, 9; Egoff 1981, 2).

According to Jeffrey Richards, all "popular fiction", a category in which he includes the genre of children's literature, serves as a means through "which society instructs its members in its prevailing mores and ideas, its dominant role models and legitimate aspirations" (Richards 1992, 1). In addition to merely presenting different ideological standpoints, popular fiction can also actively encourage and rally for certain views while rejecting others, thus helping the public to form opinions

on matters, and can in this way be seen functioning as “a form of social control” (Richards 1992, 1). The makers of children's literature, like those of any other genre, have to choose what topics to discuss, and this process necessarily promotes some issues while ignoring others (Richards 1992, 1). The issues that are brought to the attention of the readers in literary works may be seen as more important because of the fact that they have been chosen and not others, and they are not necessarily related in any neutral way, as popular fiction can be used as a tool that “legitimises, glamourises and romanticises particular mindsets” (Richards 1992, 1). Richards claims that “[g]eneric literature ... functions as a ritual, cementing the ideas and beliefs of society, enforcing social norms and exposing social deviants” (1992, 1).

Children's literature, then, is not and cannot be any less ideological or political than any other genre. In fact, some critics argue that because of its nature, works of children's literature are often trying harder to conceal their ideological views, or even pretend that those views and values are the opposite of what they really are (Hunt 1991, 142). Both Hunt and Dennis Butts agree that children's literature often depicts society in an idealised way, but that it also, perhaps unwittingly, exposes the truth about how society actually differs from this ideal in reality (Hunt 1990, 2; Hunt 2001, 8 and Butts 1992, xii). Although, as Butts states, texts differ in that some are more supportive of the dominant values or the status quo, while others try to promote change in society (1992, xiii), much of children's literature is considered to be very conservative (Hunt 2001, 5 and 12; Zipes 2001, 2). Webb states that “[r]epression and subversion are characteristics common to a great deal of writing for children” (2000, 11), but Hunt argues against this statement, and states that while at first glance much of children's literature may seem subversive, a deeper study often reveals the opposite, a “profound conservatism” (Hunt 2001, 5). Many children's texts seemingly allow the reader to decide for himself or herself what to think about the text and its meaning, but in reality the reader is strongly guided to reach the judgments the writer has intended the reader to reach (Nodelman 2008, 36). As Lana White notes, it is also common for children's texts to follow the protagonist's personal development until the point where the child protagonist grows up enough to become an accepted

member of society, and place the ending of the story at that point (White 2000, 18). The maturation of a child is thus complete when he or she accepts the values that the writer and society expect from him or her (White 2000, 18).

Since children's literature is often intended to civilise and socialise its young readers, its texts may have especially strong ideological components and arguments, whether those be against or for the current dominant values of society (Inglis 1992, 88). The genre, from its very beginnings, was designed to do double duty; “both to entertain and to instruct, to inculcate approved value systems and acceptable gender images” (Richards 1992, 2). Stephens states that children's literature is generally “purposeful” in terms of its ideology: the stories are intended to share the cultural values of the writer and teach them to the child readers (1992, 3). As Stephens notes, children's literature does aim at “moulding” the child readers into socially acceptable people (1992, 3), and that, concretely, this means that children's literature tries to “intervene in the lives of children” (1992, 8).

Children's books are then instruments of socialising and educating children (Stephens 1992, 8; Hunt 1991, 53). Though there is also unconsciously imparted or unintended ideology in children's texts, Hunt states that children's literature is often purposefully didactic, and includes elements of “deliberate indoctrination” (Hunt 1991, 117). Children's books, then, are designed to mould, to socialise, civilise and educate their readers. Riukulehto even claims that to be a good children's writer, the author must become an educator, as one of the functions of a good children's book is to educate (2001, 9).

Because childhood is considered to have an exceptional importance in the development of a person, children's literature is also seen as a significant tool that can have a great effect on the child readers, and thus, the way society, through the new generations, evolves (Hunt 1991, 17). Hunt writes that children's books are “culturally formative and of massive importance educationally, intellectually, and socially” (Hunt 1990, 2). Children's literature affects its readers' cultural knowledge and literacy skills (Hunt 1991, 17-19), and allows children to learn the customs of their society (Egoff 1981, 2). In addition, because child readers are in the process of development and growth, they may not be able

to filter influences as adults do, and may be more susceptible to the ideology in a text than adults would be (Hollindale 2011, 12). Hollindale also points out that as both the reader and the protagonist are often children, children's texts have a strong theme of “becoming” something or someone, a fact that may further strengthen the ideological, socialising power of a text (Hollindale 2011, 12).

As children's literature is used to socialise and educate children, and this process is generally seen as hugely important, the genre of children's literature has more to do with issues of control than other types of literary texts. Firstly, children are often the objects of controlling, as despite the fact that the socialisation process presumably tries to produce independent, active members of society, children are often not given the power to be independent agents, but are expected to do as they are told and adopt the society's dominant values instead of thinking for themselves (Stephens 1992, 120). This process and its inner conflict are played out also in children's texts. Children need to be raised and educated, but all instruction and education is also controlling, as it restricts and guides the child's actions or thoughts (Stephens 1992, 132). Secondly, children's books are also a way of controlling children, as the books and stories are made and written by adults, whose intention is changing the child, however subtle or well-meaning the intention is (Hunt 1991, 51-52). Hunt notes that some children's narratives include a strong “adult voice” that controls and guides both the child protagonist and the child reading the story (Hunt 2001, 5). Because the readers are children, the power balance between the author or narrator and the reader is much more uneven than if the readers were also adults, and thus more convincing (Hunt 2001, 256).

Children's literature is also itself the object of many attempts of control or censorship, as its special readership, children, are seen as a group that cannot be allowed to read whatever they choose, and who must be protected from some subjects or styles (Hunt 2001, 12). Children themselves have also a very limited ability to affect what kind of literature gets written or published, as they often do not purchase their own reading material. Marshall notes that when parents choose literature for children, they often choose the books that they themselves enjoyed reading as a child, or books that they intend to be “educational” for the child (1982, 120). Hunt also writes that even when children

are allowed to choose for themselves, they can only “choose from what is there to be chosen”, in other words, what has already been written, published and is on offer for the child in the shop or library (Hunt 1991, 143). Also, the child will already have been exposed to the ideologies that permeate his or her environment at home and at school, and this will affect what literature they choose even when they are “free” to do so (Hunt 1991, 143).

As mentioned above, when choosing books for children, parents favour the books they read as children and liked (Marshall 1982, 120; also Grenby 2008, 5). Grenby notes that this means that children's literature “is affected by a time-lag” in that stories may become or remain popular for a long time after their original time of publishing (2008, 5). Egoff agrees with this, and adds that publishers use the affection adults have for their own old favourites and sometimes time the release of new editions of old favourites so that they are published in time for general gift-giving times, for example Christmas (Egoff 1981, 19). Egoff states that the “classics” of children's literature are purchased more because they are seen either as more worthy texts or as definitely appropriate books for children (1981, 19). Because of these factors, children's literature that makes its way to the child reader may be rather old and thus embodies values and ideology from the time of the text's first publishing, and probably more conservative values than very recently published texts.

The values that are most common in children's literature are middle class values, as the middle class has been in control of publishing literature for children since the genre first originated, in the eighteenth century (Nodelman 2008, 101). Nodelman even goes so far as to define the whole genre of children's literature as “the literature produced for and in order to construct the subjectivity of the children of the middle class” (2008, 177). Hunt notes that when authors have tried to portray protagonists and events that embody a more working class way of life, these texts have sometimes been berated for their language and values (Hunt 1991, 150). As Hunt states, written texts are seen as powerful things, and their contents must be controlled (Hunt 1991, 150).

Hollindale has divided the types of ideology that can be found in a text into three different groups (2011, 36). The first is “active ideology”; this is the ideology that the writer has intentionally

written into the story, that he or she wishes the reader to absorb and embrace (Hollindale 2011, 36). This type of ideology is often the easiest to see in a text, and it is consciously transmitted by the writer (Hollindale 2011, 37). If an author wishes to question dominant societal values or practices, it would usually be done using active ideology, as the writer would be consciously attempting to change the views of the readers (Hollindale 2011, 37). The second category of ideology is “passive ideology”, by which Hollindale means ideology that the writer has unconsciously included, such as any of his or her “unexamined assumptions” about the world and society (Hollindale 2011, 39). These values are usually ones that are common in society, which is exactly why they slip by unexamined (Hollindale 2011, 39). Hollindale also notes that the passive values of a text may be contrary to the active values of the same text, as the writer may be explicitly championing a value but unconsciously undermining it at the same time (2011, 40; also Stephens 1992, 43). Hollindale has named the third type of ideology “organic ideology”, which is the ideology that permeates the culture and time in which the text is written (2011, 42). This type could also be called “zeitgeist ideology” (Hollindale 2011, 42). Where and when a text is written will have a considerable influence on the values and ideology that text will embody and promote (Hollindale 2011, 42).

One reason that the reader acquires and adopts the ideology of a text is because the text gives the reader clues as to how the text is intended to be read, and who the suggested reader of the text is, and the actual reader must adapt to this role in order to fully understand and enjoy the story (Hunt 1991, 84). Hunt suggests that texts written for children are even more likely to “create their audience” in this way, because they are clearer about the role the reader is supposed to take, and also because the author or narrator has more power over the child reader than an adult reader (Hunt 1991, 84). A story that is tightly controlled by the narrator can be seen as downright “proscribing thought” to its readers, as it is difficult to read against the intended interpretation (Hunt 1991, 116).

A technique that is often used in children's literature and that can be very effective in teaching values and ways of thinking is the use of a child protagonist whom the reader is meant to identify with (Stephens 1992, 4). This positions the reader “inside” the story, and they are less likely to

question the actions or thoughts of the character (Stephens 1992, 4). If the story is strongly focalized through this protagonist or the narrator, the reader has to adapt the values of the character or narrator while he or she reads the story, and thus momentarily abandon their own values and identity (Stephens 1992, 68). Stephens describes this reading persona as a “false self” that is unconsciously created to make sense of the story and which has values identical to those of the story’s focalizer (1992, 69). The problem with this is that the creation of this false self is often unconscious, and the reader does not realise that they are adopting the values of the text, even if they are not always permanent (Stephens 1992, 69). Stephens claims that strongly identifying with the focalizer “leaves the readers susceptible to gross forms of intellectual manipulation” as their own selfhood is disturbed during reading (1992, 4). Practices that may weaken the identification with a character are those that, for example, show that the protagonist is not infallible, or that create distance between the reader and the character, both of which help the reader to separate his or her own identity from the character's identity while reading (Stephens 1992, 68). Intertextuality and “carnavalesque, interrogative textuality” can also be useful, in that they draw attention to the fictitious nature of the story, and may prohibit strong identification with the protagonist or narrator (Stephens 1992, 82).

2.2 Louis Althusser's Theory of Ideology

In this section I will utilise the work of French Marxist critic Louis Althusser. Louis Althusser's thinking on ideology is very relevant to my thesis, as it sees literature as a device that transmits a society's dominant ideology and so ensures that the ruling class stay in power.

In Marxist theory, the structure of society is thought to consist of different “levels”; the infrastructure, which is the economic base where material goods for example are produced, and the superstructure, which Althusser divides into a further two parts, the “politico-legal” level of the State and the law, and the level of ideology (Althusser 1984, 8). However, the base level of the infrastructure always determines “in the last instance” the developments that happen on the higher levels, in the superstructure (Althusser 1984, 9). I will return to this idea of the predetermination of

art in a later paragraph.

The State, in Marxist theory, is an instrument of repression which aims to further the causes of the ruling class and secure its position in power, especially in relation to the working class, whose exploitation the capitalist system depends on (Althusser 1984, 11). Here Althusser defines the ruling class as “in the nineteenth century, the bourgeois class and the 'class' of big landowners” (1984, 11). As an addition to the Marxist theory Althusser introduces the ideological State apparatuses or ISAs. In contrast to the repressive State apparatus, which works through the government, the legal system, the police and the army among others, the ISAs are institutions such as churches, the institution of family, schools, and the cultural ISA, which includes literature (1984, 17). As Althusser notes, the State apparatus is by definition one unit, but the ISAs are a collection of independent institutions and establishments, which are united by the dominant ideology (1984, 18 and 23).

A major difference between the Repressive State apparatus and the ISAs is that the former relies primarily on force, or the threat of force, to function, that is, to uphold the position of the ruling class and the capitalist system, and only secondarily on ideology, and the latter primarily on ideology (Althusser 1984, 18). The ISAs do also use oppression, but Althusser observes that this is often “concealed, even symbolic” (1984, 19).

Althusser sees a strong hold on the ISAs as crucial in regards to a social class maintaining power in society; therefore battles to gain control over the ISAs can be significant parts of class struggle (1984, 20-21). Also, despite the dominance of the ruling ideology, the ISAs can often be where conflicting ideas, such as those of the exploited classes, are presented. (Althusser 1984, 21 and Ferretter, 2006, 85.)

Althusser defines ideology as a “system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group” (1984, 32). Furthermore, ideology is seen as “a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1984, 36). Ideology does not, then, describe the actual, “real” conditions or the world in an absolutely true way, but is an “illusion” through which humans see the world (Althusser 1984, 36). Althusser notes that

ideology does “make allusion to reality” and that by examining the ideology we are able to learn about the world (1984, 36). Peter Barry quotes Goldstein, who says that ideology can be thought of as “a system of representations at the heart of a given society” (Barry 2009, 157). As Barry notes, we are often not aware of the ideology that dominates our culture, even though it affects the society and culture on all levels (2009, 157).

An important distinction is the one between ideology, and ideologies. Althusser separates these, and states that ideology in general “has no history”, as it has always existed as part of human life, while certain, specific ideologies do have histories that can be examined throughout the ages (1984, 33). As Jorge Larrain states, ideology in general is essential to humans, as it helps to “secure cohesion among human beings” and thus enables our living together in societies, while also helping humans to understand and make sense of the conditions in which we live (Larrain 1983, 91). Specific ideologies, on the other hand, are always “expressions of class positions” (Lovell 1980, 237) and sometimes promote the dominant ideology of the society in an effort to keep the ruling in power and the dominated in their places (Larrain 1983, 91-92). The established, or prevailing ideology of a society, such as capitalism and bourgeois ideology, is then the dominant ideology, while any other ideologies that are struggling to gain power are dominated ideologies.

Althusser claims that ideology is “material”, by which he means that ideologies are not merely mental structures, but that they are visible in the actions and practices of people and institutions (1984, 39-40). Ideology is always part of an apparatus, and through that it becomes concrete actions (Althusser 1984, 40). For example, the religious apparatus of church causes religious people to attend church services and pray, while the apparatus of school causes children to go to school every day and study (Althusser 1984, 41, also Ricoeur 1994, 62). Though the ideology acts through these apparatuses, it produces concrete actions (Althusser 1984, 40-41).

I will now return to the aforementioned concept of predetermination of art. There is some debate among the critics over whether the base structure affects cultural products such as art and literature, which are parts of the superstructure, directly and totally, or whether the superstructure has

“relative autonomy” (Althusser 1984, 9). As Barry mentions, Althusser intends to grant art some freedom, and not insist, as strict Marxism might demand, that art is always directly dependent on the economic base (Barry 2009, 157). Cliff Slaughter (1980, 206) also agrees with Althusser that literature is not only an “ideological mechanism through which the ruling class establishes its hegemony”. But unlike Slaughter, who argues that literature gives meaning to readers' lives even when the ideology it possesses is no longer relevant, Althusser still sees literature's role as “a form of self-knowledge of ideology” (Slaughter 1980, 208; also Althusser 1984, 174-175). In other words, even when literature is not only functioning as a vehicle for ideology, it mostly differs from such vehicles in that it makes ideology in society visible (Althusser 1984, 174-175; Slaughter 1980, 208; Eagleton 1978, 83 and Mulhern 1994, 162).

Althusser wants to mitigate the idea that the realities of the economic base determine art directly and totally (Barry 2009, 157), but the concept of “relative autonomy” of art is problematic for several reasons. If art is not placed in the category of the ISAs, which are apparatuses that specifically work to propagate the dominant ideology, itself dependent on the economic base, where could it be placed? As Eagleton points out, placing art in any other category seems to overvalue art compared to the other ISAs (1978, 84, also Mulhern 1994, 164). A further complication is that Althusser grants this autonomy only to “authentic art”, by which he means better, higher quality art (Althusser 1984, 173-4). However, this is extremely vague, and seems to leave the reader the responsibility and freedom to decide whether a text is “authentic art” or not (Eagleton 1978, 86). Given that children's literature has only in recent decades been accepted as a genre equal to any other and, for example, as a subject worthy of academic study, we may suspect that Althusser would probably not have included it in the category of “authentic art”.

A central concept in Althusser's writing about ideology is the idea of interpellation which is a way that ideology creates subjects (Lovell 1980, 237). Interpellation will be a useful concept in the later analysis chapters of this thesis and will help in recognising the ideology in the primary texts.

Interpellation is a process through which individuals are being “hailed” as subjects by ideology,

for example through reading a book and thus being subjected to the ideology in the book. The ideology present in the text “constitutes” the individual as a specific type of subject, and the individual recognises himself or herself in this image of a subject, and accepts the role offered to them (Althusser 2003, 54). The individual does not have to actually already be the type of subject the text demands, instead, the act of reading the text moulds the individual towards a specific subject position (Althusser 2003, 54). According to Althusser, the ideology addresses the individual as if they were already the subject it is aiming to produce (Althusser 2003, 55), and the subject is thus convinced that he or she, personally, is the subject that is being addressed (Althusser 2003, 54).

The act of being interpellated and accepting the position are not conscious, and the individual retains the illusion that they are in charge of their identity, and does not notice how the act of being called as a certain type of person and the act of accepting that role, changes or moulds the position they take up in the social system. As Abercrombie et al note, to the subject, this process seems to honour his or her “unique individuality”, and the subject does not realise that the position they are being prescribed is not their own conscious choice (Abercrombie et al 1980, 22). Barry adds that the subject continues to see himself as a free agent, and that this is actually beneficial to the process of accepting the offered role (Barry 2009, 158). Althusser states that the process of interpellation is not “an act of pure force ... but an enterprise of conviction-persuasion” (Althusser 2003, 52).

The individual is “always already” in the process of being constituted as a subject, as he or she is always surrounded by ideology, and his or her position may be altered by different ideological stimuli. As Terry Lovell phrases it, the “self is always in question, always available for temporary or permanent reconstitution” (Lovell 1980, 239). Though the process of interpellation and constituting one's identity as an individual in a social system is ongoing and not a single act, Richard Johnson notes that there may be a single “*moment* of self-creation, or active appropriation”, when the individual embraces their class destiny and their individual place in the social structure (Johnson 1979, 75).

Since the function of the dominant ideology is to maintain the capitalist social system

and preserve the status quo, the positions that ideology generally assigns to subjects are also positions that support that system (Abercrombie et al 1980, 22 and Lovell 1980, 238). Lovell states that to really enjoy a “classic realist text”, one must accept the viewpoint that is offered within the text, and that realist texts (which is here considered a very wide category by Lovell, essentially containing most literary texts) in fact aim for the reader to agree with them, to accept the reality described in the text (1980, 239-240). This process then allows the ideology of the text to mould the reader's thoughts and attitudes while also presenting the existing social order as normal and uncontroversial (Lovell 1980, 239).

The subjects are then influenced to fulfill a position in the social system and to become proponents of this system, all the while they are under the impression that they have made these choices independently (Lovell 1980, 238). However, all texts do not carry the dominant, bourgeois ideology (Larrain 1983, 93). It is also possible for a text to have a revolutionary, proletarian ideology (Larrain 1983, 93). Such texts interrogate the dominant values and social system, and interpellate their readers as subjects who in turn question the dominant ideology (Larrain 1983, 93). As Larrain clarifies, this is how the ISAs can function as supports for the dominated ideologies (1983, 93).

What is termed as “classic realist text” here is a text that requires the reader to take up a certain, designated role or viewpoint to be able to read and understand the text (Lovell 1980, 240). A “revolutionary” text is “open” in the sense that the reader is not confined to a predetermined way of reading, but has an active role in making the meaning of the text (Lovell 1980, 240). However, as Lovell points out, no text can be completely “open” for any and all interpretations, and the reader is always expected to adopt the role assigned to him or her in the text, at least to some extent (Lovell 1980, 240). “Classic realist texts”, in other words texts that are likely to manifest the dominant ideology of Western culture, also generally hide their “processes of production”, thus legitimising their world view and the ideology behind it (Lovell 1980, 240). The “revolutionary” text, on the other hand, may show these processes that have influenced the writing or publishing of the text, and draw the reader's attention to the text as a product and to the fact that the text is trying to influence the

reader (Lovell 1980, 240). As Lovell states, the problem with this divide of “classic realist texts” that have dominant ideology, and the “revolutionary” texts that express dominated ideologies, is that the revolutionary texts, which may use literary methods such as intertextuality or metafiction and perhaps avant-garde style to make the ideology explicit, attract mostly a bourgeois audience (Lovell 1980, 241 and 249-250). What is popular among the petit bourgeoisie or the working class in literature or art in general are the “familiar” forms and styles, in other words the realism which is most likely to express the dominant values of the bourgeoisie (Lovell 1980, 241).

2.3 Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Class Habitus and Taste

In addition to Louis Althusser's theory, I will use the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the social stratification of taste, which he has written about in his extensive book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (first published in French in 1979). Bourdieu's theory will allow me to examine the material and cultural preferences of the characters as matters pertaining to their social class. This will be useful when analysing the different tastes of Matilda and her parents, and the objects and activities referenced in Belloc's poems.

Bourdieu defines “taste” as “manifested preferences” (1984, 56). These preferences can be in any area of practices that are performed or goods that are consumed, for example “music, food, painting, literature, hairstyle” (Bourdieu 1984, 6). Taste in such matters is often thought of as an inherent quality of a person, but according to Bourdieu's theory, taste is, in fact, very much a social concept (1984, 59). A person's taste depends on and declares his or her social class (Bourdieu 1984, 57). Those who belong to the same social group or class are linked by similar tastes, and those from different social classes are divided by their different tastes (Bourdieu 1984, 56). Bourdieu notes that people feel “sympathy” towards people whose habitus is similar to their own, and “antipathy” towards those whose habitus signals a different class from their own (1984, 241). Bourdieu even claims that aversion to other lifestyles is one of the most powerful barriers between the social classes (1984, 56). Taste reveals how a person has classified himself or herself, and it is a tool that is used to determine

another person's social class (Bourdieu 1984, 56). All objects or practices are compared to the other possibilities in the same field, and evaluated as either signs of prestige, or of vulgarity (Bourdieu 1984, 483). According to Bourdieu, choices are often expressed through rejection, by declaring the other choices as undesirable, thus revealing the preferred one (1984, 56).

A person's tastes in all the different fields, in films, clothing, sports and so on, together combine to create his or her lifestyle, “a unitary set of distinctive preferences” (Bourdieu 1984, 173 and 175). The reason that this set is “unitary”, is that all these choices, these tastes in different matters are determined by what Bourdieu terms a “habitus”. The habitus is a manifestation of social class, an “internalized form of the class condition” (Bourdieu 1984, 101). The habitus is “internalized”, in other words, it is a mental structure that guides the person towards certain practices and goods. The social class and status of a person decides their habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 170), and the mental structure of the habitus in turn determines the person's taste in aesthetic matters. As Bourdieu writes, the habitus has both embodied parts, in other words mental “dispositions”, and parts that are material, for example goods and qualifications that the person has acquired (1984, 110).

The class habitus has “schemes” that have developed during “collective history”, and an individual amasses them during his or her own “history” (Bourdieu 1984, 466-467). These schemes of the habitus are especially powerful because they are not conscious or articulated (Bourdieu 1984, 466), but function unconsciously and automatically (Bourdieu 1984, 466). The habitus guides the person, who does not make conscious, examined choices in every matter of “taste”, but who trusts their instinct to choose the right option for them (Bourdieu 1984, 233). John Codd clarifies, that the choices made are neither “mechanistic nor voluntary”, but that the habitus guides us to notice certain options and not to notice others, thus both promoting and inhibiting practices (Codd 1990, 139). The habitus is also malleable, and does not necessarily stay the same for a person's lifetime, as it may be impacted by changes in one's social standing, for example through education (Mahar et al 1990, 11). Likewise, the habitus is not necessarily passed on from one generation to another without changes (Mahar et al 1990, 11). The practices that receive positive encouragement from the community are

developed further, whereas the practices that are met with disregard or negative consequences are repressed (Bourdieu 1984, 105). The lifestyle that is the result of a person's taste in all the different areas of taste, is thus an expression of the habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 172). The lifestyle signals the social standing of a person (Bourdieu 1984, 172), and its value is regulated socially, in comparison and negotiation with other lifestyles (Bourdieu 1984, 175).

The habitus is systematic, and “unifies” all the practices and goods of an agent, so that they all produce the same effect and emit the same signals about the person's social status (1984, 173). Similarly, the practices of the members of the same social class are adjusted and adapted to create a common, collective practice (Bourdieu 1984, 172-3). As Bourdieu notes, this “harmonization” is not conscious or deliberate, but happens unconsciously and automatically (1984, 172-3). The class habitus, then, is a mental structure that creates practices and dispositions, and also works to unify them. It unifies all the practices of an agent, and also the practices of that agent with those of all the other people of his or her social class (Bourdieu 1984, 101).

The class habitus is an integral part of the concept of a social class, along with a “position in the relations of production”, as we associate social classes with the habitus that they are usually linked with (Bourdieu 1984, 372). As Loïc Wacquant marks, Bourdieu's interpretation of social class does not follow the strict Marxist idea that social class is exclusively determined by a person's place in the structure of production, but acknowledges that social class is shown in the habits of consuming products and practices, which are determined by the habitus shared and created within the class (Wacquant 2000, 117). Because of its strong connection to social class, the habitus also has an important function in the classification of people. As a person's habitus indicates their social class, others are able to read the signs and perceive even small differences between the different habitus of various groups or classes. (Bourdieu 1984, 170). All material goods and practices have connotations that link them to a certain social class or a fraction of a class. Purchasing a specific item or partaking in a certain activity, for example, are practices that are socially classifying, that classify the person doing them, and show his or her place in the social order. (Bourdieu 1984, 233). For this reason, Chris

Wilkes calls social class “a process of learning and re-learning of classifications” (Wilkes 1990, 123). According to Bourdieu, the system of social classes is “inscribed” in people, and they do not need to be conscious of the class system to obey its rules (1984, 472). People are led by their habitus to practices and goods that fit a person in their position and social class, and they naturally refuse practices that their low social standing would prevent them from partaking in (Bourdieu 1984, 471). Thus, the consumption of material objects or cultural products validates the existing social order and the separation of the classes (Bourdieu 1984, 7).

What separates the social classes from each other, is the different amount of capital that they have (Bourdieu 1984, 114). This capital can be for example economic, cultural or social, and can be in various forms, including skills, information or knowledge, or relationships (Bourdieu 1984, 113-114). Bourdieu maintains that capital can be used in numerous “fields” or markets, each of which assigns a value to the skill or competence in question (1984, 94 and 113). Examples of these fields are, among others, the home, workplace or school, each of which designates its own price for any and all competences and forms of capital (Bourdieu 1984, 86). The prices are socially determined, and are liable to change. The fields also work in encouraging or discouraging the agent to acquire certain skills or practices, depending on what is seen as valuable and worthy of having, and what is seen as negative and unwanted (Bourdieu 1984, 85).

All forms of capital are not equally valued, as capital can be either “dominant” or “dominated” (Bourdieu 1984, 310). While an ideology, as mentioned earlier, is dominant if it is the prevailing ideology in a given society, and dominated if it is an alternative ideology to the dominant one, the dominance of a type of capital refers to the degree that the type of capital is valued in a given society. The most highly regarded type of capital, the “dominant principle of domination”, is regulated by “struggle” that happens within the dominant class (Bourdieu 1984, 310). Already obtained capital can be traded for other types of capital, “more accessible, more profitable or more legitimate” (Bourdieu 1984, 131), and as the dominant form of capital is the most valued of all types of capital, it has the highest market value (Bourdieu 1984, 310). Through the trading of one kind of capital for

another, and other “reproduction strategies”, people attempt to maximise the profit they receive from the capital they already possess, and to gain more of it, which, in turn, will sustain or better their standing in the social system (Bourdieu 1984, 125 and Mahar et al 1990, 13).

What is important in terms of one's habitus are both the amount of capital one has altogether, and the ratio of dominant capital to dominated capital in all of that capital (Bourdieu 1984, 131). The structure of one's capital can be either symmetric, in other words, one can have little of any type of capital or a large amount of all types of capital, or asymmetric, which is when one has little of one type of capital but a substantial amount of another kind (Bourdieu 1984, 115). As Bourdieu notes, a “chiasmic” construction is comparatively common in regards to economic and cultural capital; if a person has plenty of one, they are likely to have significantly less of the other type (Bourdieu 1984, 317).

Within a social class, there are different “class fractions” which have roughly the same amount of capital altogether, but the “asset structures” are different. In other words, one fraction comprises of people who, for example, have more cultural capital and another fraction of people who have mainly economic capital. Both fractions belong in the same social class and thus have approximately the same amount of overall capital. (Bourdieu 1984, 114.) However, the type of capital one has does also significantly affect the habitus of a person, therefore each class fraction has its own distinct lifestyle (Bourdieu 1984, 260).

A concept that I will utilise in examining some of Belloc's poems is that of a “social trajectory”. A social trajectory is the development of a person's status in society in the course of their life (Bourdieu 1984, 111). People from the same social class often have the same social trajectory, but some members of a social class will have either lower or higher trajectories than their peers (Bourdieu 1984, 111). The matters that determine a person's social trajectory are the total amount of capital he or she has; whether that capital has increased, decreased or stayed at the same amount; and the structure of capital, what types of capital he or she has and how much of each type (Bourdieu 1984, 123). These are naturally governed by both individual decisions and actions and larger, collective

events or circumstances (Bourdieu 1984, 110). The habitus is then determined by the amount and type of capital possessed and the social trajectory that the person follows (Bourdieu 1984, 260 and 264).

Most of cultural capital is acquired from two sources: cultural practices and values may be learned at home from the family, or learned at school (Bourdieu 1984, 66). The cultural learning that happens within the family environment is usually unconscious and not explicitly planned, whereas the learning that happens at school is naturally largely intentional (Bourdieu 1984, 28). The school transmits a certain type of cultural knowledge: information on legitimate culture in certain fields that are deemed suitable for a scholastic approach (Bourdieu 1984, 28). However, the school also inadvertently teaches attitudes and competences that it supposedly does not aim to teach, thus “imposing cultural practices” on the pupils and students (Bourdieu 1984, 26). The school then prepares the pupils or students for a specific position in the society, and directs each of them towards more or less valued paths in education, and later, career (Bourdieu 1984, 25). In addition, the school teaches the students the cultural practices and preferences that belong to the person who inhabits the position in the social structure that the school is preparing them for (Bourdieu 1984, 26).

The cultural learning that is the effect of schooling typically concerns legitimate culture that is more scholastic, but through schooling a student may also gain a disposition to legitimate culture that allows for them to unintentionally absorb cultural practices and later branch out into other, less legitimate and less scholarly areas of culture (Bourdieu 1984, 23 and 28). Of course, those students who have received cultural capital from their families already possess this disposition towards legitimate culture and do not need to learn it at school (Bourdieu 1984, 66 and 70). In addition, the more cultural capital a person has received from his or her family, the more effective the cultural inculcation of the school is, thus giving those who have inherited cultural capital from the family an even more considerable advantage (Bourdieu 1984, 23 and 133).

Moreover, cultural capital is valued differently depending on its origin (Bourdieu 1984, 66). The way one has acquired cultural capital may even be more significant than the actual competences

one has, as cultural capital inherited from the family is much more valued than that learned at school or acquired later in life (Harker 1990, 93-94). Harker adds that since inheriting cultural capital from family is a sign of a bourgeois upbringing, it can be seen as a form of capital in and of itself (1990, 93-94). What is learned at school is an approach that is more “methodological”, more rational, and focused on facts and knowledge, whereas the cultural competences and approach learned from the family from early childhood onwards are marked by “ease”, “self-confidence” and “familiarity” with legitimate culture, regardless of whether one has factual knowledge of a specific subject (Bourdieu 1984, 66). Members of the bourgeoisie may perceive the cultural competence of someone who has received the bulk of his or her cultural capital from school as “pleasureless thought” (Bourdieu 1984, 66), and manifest a dislike for the scholastic approach to culture (Bourdieu 1984, 91). The social origin of a person is most easily detected from the cultural practices that are furthest from the subjects taught at school, the less academic or less legitimate fields (Bourdieu 1984, 63). Competence in these practices can be very valuable in terms of symbolic profit, as acceptance and belonging in the bourgeoisie often depends on the seniority of the person or his or her family in the bourgeoisie, meaning that the longer one has been a member in the bourgeoisie, the more highly regarded one is (Bourdieu 1984, 63).

The ideological State apparatus of family is then more effective than the apparatus of school in transmitting ideology in the form of cultural capital to children and students. As mentioned in the previous section, Althusser states that apparatuses often spread the dominant ideology of society, but that they may also promote dominated, revolutionary ideology (1984, 21). The school system, however, teaches mainly, both deliberately and unconsciously, cultural capital and knowledge that is considered legitimate and valued by the bourgeois, thus enforcing the dominant ideology of the bourgeois. Thus even if a person is exposed to dominated ideologies at home, they will likely be educated in an environment that primarily supports the dominant ideology, and disdains the ideology that he or she has learned at home.

Bourdieu notes that one of the things that help maintain the class system and obscure the

effects of social origin on a person's life is the concept of natural taste (1984, 68). This idea of natural taste only accepts the manner of relating to culture that is present in those who have inherited the culture, in other words, ease and familiarity, and dislikes the studied, scholarly approach that is learned at school (Bourdieu 1984, 68). It naturalizes the differences in acquisition of culture, which are differences of social origin, and turns them into a question of the quality of a person's character by suggesting that there is only one legitimate way of relating to culture, that of the bourgeois (Bourdieu 1984, 68 and Codd 1990, 150). Derek Robbins notes that the bourgeoisie actually benefits from the idea that its refined taste is a natural attribute of its members, as it presents them as inherently more sophisticated, and others as less sophisticated by nature (Robbins 1991, 120). Wacquant adds that ignoring the role of the social class and treating the matter as personal differences “legitimizes inequality” (Wacquant 2000, 117). This ideology is also visible in the school system as the school works as a system of classification with an impression of neutrality, yet its evaluations, “grounded in nature”, are experienced as critiques of the total, human value of an individual (Bourdieu 1984, 387). The school rewards those student with the dominant, bourgeois habitus, and operates from the assumption that it is the “correct” habitus and available for anyone, when it is actually a symbol of a class status and thus not equally available for all (Harker 1990, 87). Robbins remarks that Bourdieu dismisses the idea that schooling would offset the effects of the different social backgrounds of the students (Robbins 1991, 123). Instead, Bourdieu, discussing French society in the nineteen seventies, argues that the educational system is one of the main structures that uphold the social system because the educational accomplishments of an individual are seen to be based on his or her natural talents, when a person's educational success is largely determined by his or her social origin (1984, 387). The ideology of natural taste or charisma then places the responsibility of a person's destiny on him- or herself, ignoring the limitations and obstructions that the class system presents for others (Bourdieu 1984, 390). There are elements of the concept of natural taste visible in Dahl's *Matilda*, as Matilda and her parents are from the same social class, but are depicted as having very different tastes in matters of cultural capital, for example in pastimes, and this is justified with Matilda's naturally

“better” taste.

As mentioned above, the different pastimes, hobbies and cultural goods available all signify a social position (Bourdieu 1984, 233), and by choosing from the selection it is possible to indicate any relevant difference one might wish regarding one's social class or fraction, gender, or other group identity (Bourdieu 1984, 226). In addition to signifying the social group that one belongs to, cultural practices and aesthetic preferences are used to demonstrate the distinction of the agent, especially in comparison to the lower classes (Bourdieu 1984, 60). Bourdieu argues that these choices are usually made in relation to those of the other social groups closest to one's own (1984, 60), and that often the aim is to both distinguish oneself from the group right below oneself in the social order, and to identify oneself with the group right above one's station in the social structure (1984, 246). The unconscious pursuing of distinction (Bourdieu 1984, 249) is often assisted by denying the preferences of others, especially those just below one in the social system, as competition is fiercest with the groups that are closest to each other (Bourdieu 1984, 60).

This desire for distinction leads to choosing activities and goods that are seen as distinguished and valued. As Bourdieu remarks, distinction is often defined as the negation of what is popular, “easy” or “simple”, which are attributes that are seen to mark a practice as childish or culturally less legitimate in comparison with things that require getting accustomed to, or things that demand a considerable amount of time and effort, which are perceived as more evolved (1984, 486). Some activities are seen as distinguished because they are rare, whereas others are deemed “vulgar” because they are common and easy (Bourdieu 1984, 176). In the middle are some activities that are classed as “pretentious” because they are seen to be too ambitious for those who attempt them (Bourdieu 1984, 176). Practices may retain the appearance of distinction long after the original reason for which they were thought of as such, for example the requirement of large amounts of money or a membership at a club, has expired (Bourdieu 1984, 209). Similarly, some practices remain devalued because they were historically done by the working class (Bourdieu 1984, 209).

Practices are performed because the agent receives some form of profit from them, either

instantly or later (Bourdieu 1984, 212). Bourdieu comments, however, that it is not always easy or even possible to know what profit a person expects or receives from his or her practices, as the same activity can be partaken in for several different reasons, and yield different profits for different people or social groups in different circumstances (1984, 209-211).

Bourdieu maintains that the members of different social classes have, on average, different amounts of knowledge of culture, with those in the upper class, the bourgeois, having the most cultural capital and those in the working class having the least cultural capital (1984, 318). Bourdieu notes that this is not because the lower classes are “indifferent” or “hostile” to cultural pursuits (1984, 318). The lower classes effectively cannot achieve distinction, since as soon as they adopt a practice or an object, its popularity renders it vulgar in the eyes of the upper classes (Bourdieu 1984, 61, 247 and 249). At any social level, distinction comes from something that is not common to all who belong in that same group, as what is taken for granted cannot be distinguished (Bourdieu 1984, 247). Bourdieu notes that products and practices that are new either to a particular social group or new altogether, are often seen as rare and thus valued, but as they become more widely adopted, they lose their status (Bourdieu 1984, 247). Thus the mark of distinction keeps moving forward as the new products and practices replace the old ones as distinguished (Bourdieu 1984, 247-248).

Bourdieu divides tastes into three categories according to social classes: “a sense of distinction” refers to the dominant, bourgeois taste, “cultural goodwill” to that of the petite bourgeoisie, and “the choice of the necessary” to that of the working class (1984). The differences in tastes are not directly determined by differences in income, as the same amount of money can be used very differently by people from different social classes (Bourdieu 1984, 177). Bourdieu describes the bourgeois taste as “understated, sober, discrete” (1984, 249), as opposed to the perceived pretentiousness of the petite bourgeoisie and the simplicity of the working class, which stems from economic reasons (1984, 227). In the bourgeois habitus and practices “form and manner” are most important, instead of “substance and function” (1984, 196). Bourdieu depicts the habitus of the bourgeois as “ease within restraint”, again maintaining the importance of behaviour and style to the bourgeois (1984, 311). The “bourgeois

distinction” depends on things that school does not, at least not completely, teach (Bourdieu 1984, 91), such as ways of dressing, speaking or bodily movement, and if one possesses those qualities, “scholastic knowledge” is unnecessary (Bourdieu 1984, 91). As Wilkes points out, “cultural stupidity” is not very damaging to the bourgeois, whose status depends on other matters, whereas for a member of the petite bourgeois appearing culturally ignorant would be far more serious (Wilkes 1990, 121). This can be seen later on in discussion of some of the poems of Hilaire Belloc, which portray members of the bourgeoisie. In addition to these types of practices or ways of being, certain skills, such as knowing how to dance or playing bridge, may advance a person's entry and acceptance into the bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 1984, 91). The bourgeoisie is divided into two main fractions (Bourdieu 1984, 176). The dominant fraction, those with the most economic capital, whose tastes could be described as expensive and exclusive (Bourdieu 1984, 219), enjoy such pastimes and occupations as “hunting or betting”, “business trips and expense-account lunches, boulevard theatre”, “luxury cars and a boat, three-star hotels and spas” (Bourdieu 1984, 283). The dominated fraction of the bourgeoisie consists of those who have more cultural than economic capital, for example artists, intellectuals and teachers (Bourdieu 1984, 176). Bourdieu describes the dominated fraction's tastes as an attempt to trade the smallest possible amount of economic capital for the greatest possible amount of cultural capital, or distinction (1984, 219). Examples of hobbies or preferences are “reading, and reading poetry, philosophical and political works”, “museums, classical music” and “camping, mountaineering or walking” (Bourdieu 1984, 283).

The petite bourgeoisie is most markedly characterised by its struggle towards legitimate culture (Bourdieu 1984, 58 and 327) which is motivated by its particularly powerful hopes of ascension in the social structure (Wilkes 1990, 128). The petite bourgeoisie regards culture very highly (Bourdieu 1984, 321), but it lacks the casual relationship to legitimate culture that the bourgeoisie has (Bourdieu 1984, 319). Instead, these aspirations for distinction result in the bourgeoisie viewing the petite bourgeoisie as “pretentious” (Bourdieu 1984, 246-247). The petit bourgeois is too eager to adopt the legitimate lifestyle, too “avid but anxious, naive but serious”

(Bourdieu 1984, 327) to ever be able to master the bourgeois composure and indifference, as and he is always seen by the bourgeois as either too modest and “ignorant” or “flashy” and “pedantic” (Bourdieu 1984, 247). In addition, the petite bourgeoisie are concerned about appearances as they do not want to expose their lack of legitimacy to others (Bourdieu 1984, 57, 201 and 253). Other social classes, in comparison, do not have this anxiety as the choices of the bourgeois are legitimate by the sheer power of being chosen by a member of the bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 1984, 327), and the status of the working class, as the least distinguished group, prevents it from suffering this anxiety (Bourdieu 1984, 253). Bourdieu argues that the petit bourgeois respect for authority and quest for legitimacy causes him to select the “safe”, classic options (1984, 331), or the most “accessible” of the legitimate options (1984, 294). Codd describes the petite bourgeoisie as seemingly having knowledge of legitimate culture, but says that it “lacks subtleties and tacit knowledge” that the dominant class has (Codd 1990, 142). However, it is precisely the desperation of the petit bourgeois for distinction which ensures that he will never reach it (Bourdieu 1984, 249), and all the measures that the petit bourgeois may take to acquire cultural capital will, at the most, grant him the scholastic, learned kind of capital, the less valued form of cultural capital. Furthermore, should the petit bourgeois acknowledge and acquire some form of legitimate culture, his acquiring it would result in its loss of value, as what the petit bourgeois chooses, becomes petit bourgeois (Bourdieu 1984, 294 and 327).

Bourdieu has named the taste of the working class “a choice of the necessary” (1984, 378), which refers to the way working class taste prefers function and practicality over style or form (1984, 376). This taste is dictated by the economic means of the class, but it is also embraced by members of the class (Bourdieu 1984, 372). Bourdieu maintains that this embracing of necessity shows adaptation to the social reality of the class (1984, 372). The taste for what is necessary can be seen in preferences for that which is simple, “straightforward, unpretentious” (Bourdieu 1984, 199). Contrary to the petite bourgeoisie, where the struggle for distinction is an individual battle for which members may even sacrifice social relations (Bourdieu 1984, 337), the working class especially values social capital and social cohesion (Bourdieu 1984, 384). As Bourdieu notes, the working class depends on

its solidarity, class consciousness and “fighting strength” (1984, 384). The need for social cohesion manifests in the emphasis on conforming to class norms, and anything that is seen as pretentious is disapproved (Bourdieu 1984, 380-381). Aspirations that are deemed too high, or appearances or tastes that differ from the group's norms are strongly discouraged, as they are seen to threaten the solidarity of the group by refusing its tastes (Bourdieu 1984, 380-381).

3. Ideology in *Matilda*, *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*

In the analysis section I will examine the texts of *Matilda*, *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *The New Cautionary Tales*. First I will be concentrating on *Matilda* in three subsections that focus on appearances, pastimes and food, respectively. I have chosen these themes, as they are areas of taste where the tastes of Matilda and Miss Honey are strongly juxtaposed with those of Mr and Mrs Wormwood, Matilda’s parents. Next, I will focus on Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *The New Cautionary Tales*, which I will approach together, as they have very similar poems. The analysis of Belloc's texts will also be divided into subsections according to theme; firstly I will consider the objects and activities described in the poems, secondly the social trajectories of the characters, and thirdly the attitudes towards lower social classes that are expressed in the poems.

3.1 *Matilda*

In *Matilda*, the characters of Matilda and her nice teacher, Miss Honey, are often strongly contrasted with the characters of Mr and Mrs Wormwood, and Miss Trunchbull, Matilda’s awful headmaster. The depictions of these characters are heavily ideological, in that they promote the tastes of some of the characters while criticizing those of others. I have chosen the three themes of the subsections; appearances and style, pastimes and food, because they are discussed at length in the book, and clearly demonstrate ideological bias in the text.

3.1.1 Appearances and Style

In this section I will examine the way that the outer habitus, in other words the appearances of the main characters of *Matilda* are described in the book. Clothes and looks can be seen as one way to express the social class of a character, and how those are depicted can convey ideological bias towards certain classes or sympathy towards others.

I will first concentrate on the characters of Matilda's parents, as they play an especially large role in the first chapters of the book, before Matilda enrolls in school. Before beginning school and meeting the headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, Matilda's parents and her father especially, can be seen as the villains of the story. Secondly, I will look at how Matilda herself is depicted. Thirdly, I will focus on the two teachers Matilda encounters at school, the wonderful Miss Honey and the awful Miss Trunchbull, perhaps the main villain of the story.

Matilda's father's, Mr Wormwood's outer habitus is described several times in the book, as his character is very much Matilda's adversary in the beginning of the story. Mr Wormwood is first depicted to us as “a small ratty-looking man whose front teeth stuck out underneath a thin ratty moustache. He liked to wear jackets with large brightly coloured checks and he sported ties that were usually yellow or pale green” (*M*, 17). Typically to Dahl, the characters and their outer features are rather exaggerated, and this is especially the case with those characters who are the villains, in *Matilda* the parents and Miss Trunchbull. Mr Wormwood is no exception, and he is mostly portrayed in very unflattering terms. The lively illustrations, done by Quentin Blake, further help create an image of an unpleasant and slightly ridiculous man with a checkered suit and hair that sticks up. However, in this first quote, the clothes of Mr Wormwood are still described in a fairly neutral way compared to later depictions; although the jackets have “brightly coloured checks” the reader is not yet forced to agree with an aesthetic judgement regarding the tastelessness of such jackets. Likewise the colours of Mr Wormwood's ties are not explicitly pronounced tacky, although the verb “sport” here does suggest that wearing such ties is seen as an inferior choice.

Matilda is treated badly by her parents, who call her “ignorant and stupid” (*M*, 22), and do not

understand her liking for books and reading. After an argument with her parents, Matilda decides to get revenge every time they treat her badly by playing a practical joke on them. During the first of these incidents Matilda places superglue in her father's hat, so that the hat is then glued to his head (*M*, 24). The hat is “one of those flat-topped pork-pie jobs with a jay's feather stuck in the hat-band” (*M*, 24). Furthermore, it is noted that “Mr Wormwood was very proud of it. He thought it gave him a rakish daring look, especially when he wore it at an angle with his loud checked jacket and green tie” (*M*, 24). Pork pie hats can be seen as a fashionable choice, but the hat is described in terms that make it sound tawdry and vulgar: “one of those flat-topped pork-pie jobs” (*M*, 24). Mr Wormwood's pride of the hat, and the feather that has been placed in the hat, signify his attempt at style, an attempt at a more legitimate habitus. The ridiculousness of the hat, in combination with the “loud checked jacket and green tie” (*M*, 24) is a clear instruction to the reader on how to view Mr Wormwood's habitus. Mr Wormwood is attempting to look stylish, but he is failing miserably, and the fact that he cannot see it himself, makes him seem ridiculous. This ambition from Mr Wormwood to try to look fashionable reveals the disposition that Bourdieu states as that of the petit bourgeois; trying hard to adopt the legitimate way of dressing, but only managing to seem pretentious (Bourdieu 1984, 58 and 327).

After the hat is discovered to be stuck to Mr Wormwood's head, his wife tries to remove it. She blames him for getting superglue on the hat, saying that “I expect you were trying to stick another feather in your hat” (*M*, 27). Here the thought of another feather in one's hat is seen as vanity and reaching beyond one's place, and getting one's hat stuck on would almost serve as a justified punishment for it. Mr and Mrs Wormwood do not succeed in removing the hat that day: “Mr Wormwood had to keep his hat on all through supper in front of the television. He looked ridiculous and he stayed very silent” (*M*, 29). Mrs Wormwood's reaction to this incident is also stated (*M*, 29):

And later on, as she watched her skinny little husband skulking around the bedroom in his purple-striped pyjamas with a pork-pie hat on his head, she thought about how stupid he looked. Hardly the kind of man a wife dreams about, she told herself.

Mr Wormwood is being described in very harsh terms. His teeth that stuck out have been mentioned

before, and now he is called a “skinny little husband”, and looks “stupid” (*M*, 29). Mr Wormwood's nighttime clothes, striped pyjamas, seems neutral enough, but paired with the pork-pie hat, the effect is foolish. The next day, the hat has to be cut off Mr Wormwood's head, and the act also removes a great deal of hair while still leaving traces of the glued hat on his forehead. Thus the removal of the hat also makes Mr Wormwood appear ludicrous (*M*, 30). In the example above, Mrs Wormwood does not seem to understand Mr Wormwood's ambition regarding style, and may be seen as rejecting the petit bourgeois aspiration for legitimate style. As noted earlier, Bourdieu remarks that it is common for people to dismiss the options they deem to be for someone from a higher social class than they are (1984, 380-381). This suggests that Mrs Wormwood sees the pork pie hat and the added feather as being above the stylistic choices that a man of her husband's social class should be making.

Altogether, the punishment that Matilda originally devised to revenge her father's meanness towards her seems to have morphed into a punishment for his vanity and evidence of the ridiculousness of his attempt at legitimate style. It does not matter if Mr Wormwood is momentarily wearing something fairly innocuous and legitimate, such as the striped pyjamas during the night, the hat serves as a reminder of his bad taste and lack of distinction.

Mrs Wormwood has a smaller role in the book than her husband, and as she is not the target of Matilda's practical jokes, her appearance is not depicted as many times as that of Mr Wormwood. Still, her looks are not portrayed favourably when they are depicted (*M*, 21):

She was a large woman whose hair was dyed platinum blonde except where you could see the mousy-brown bits growing out from the roots. She wore heavy make-up and had one of those unfortunate bulging figures where the flesh appears to be strapped in all around the body to prevent it from falling out.

This description is typical of Dahl's style in that an adversary of the main character is caricatured and her body is made to sound almost grotesque. Mrs Wormwood dyes her hair but the undyed roots of her hair are showing, thus making the hairdo appear untidy. Her “heavy makeup” is also noted, and both of these can be seen as criticisms of her appearance that suggest that her habitus is lacking, that it is not viewed as legitimate.

Mrs Wormwood's hair is a detail of her appearance that is mentioned several times. The next

time her hair is referred to on page 50: “[a]s we already know, Mrs Wormwood's hair was dyed a brilliant platinum blonde, very much the same glistening silvery colour as a female tightrope-walker's tights in a circus.” Here the fact that Mrs Wormwood's hair is dyed, and dyed blonde, is again seen as a detail worth mentioning. In addition to merely commenting on these facts, the hair is now compared to “female tightrope-walker's tights” (*M*, 50). This comparison is both comical and derisory because tights can be seen as a slightly vulgar subject and also because injecting the image of a circus performer extends the attributes we associate with the circus - for example something that is extravagant, garish or ridiculous - to Mrs Wormwood's hair. It is clear that dying one's hair platinum blonde is seen as tasteless, but because Mrs Wormwood as a villain in the book is presented as thoroughly tasteless or even repulsive, her natural hair colour is also described unfavourably as “the nasty brown hairs that kept growing from the roots underneath” (*M*, 50). Thus the dyed platinum blonde hair and the undyed roots that show the natural colour of Mrs Wormwood's hair are both derided, leaving Mrs Wormwood with no choices in haircare that would appear as legitimate and stylish.

Interestingly, while Mrs Wormwood seems to judge her husband harshly for his attempts at more legitimate style, she herself also exhibits some signs of the petit bourgeois desperation and pretentiousness (Bourdieu 1984, 176). Mrs Wormwood dyes her hair, but her unnatural platinum blonde colour and the visible, undyed roots mean that the dyeing only draws attention to her lack of sophistication. The heavy make-up and grotesque figure are also clues that Mrs Wormwood's appearance does not have the ease, subtlety or understated style that defines the legitimate, bourgeois style (Bourdieu 1984, 249).

The second practical joke that Matilda plays on her father is the result of Mr Wormwood trying to teach Matilda's brother to make the calculations that he has had to make during his day selling used cars. Mr Wormwood has had a successful day at work, and returns home in good spirits:

In came Mr Wormwood in a loud check suit and yellow tie. The appalling broad orange-and-green check of the jacket and trousers almost blinded the onlooker. He looked like a low-grade bookmaker dressed up for his daughter's wedding, and he was clearly very pleased with himself this evening (*M*, 44).

The difference between this description of Mr Wormwood's appearance and the first one is quite striking. When Mr Wormwood's appearance is first depicted, it is said that "He liked to wear jackets with large brightly coloured checks and he sported ties that were usually yellow or pale green" (*M*, 17). Here, the colours of the jacket and the tie are also remarked upon, as well as the fact that the jacket has a checkered pattern on it. However, where in the first description the disapproval towards Mr Wormwood's style was mostly implied by the colours and the verb "sport", in this one the displeasure is spelled out clearly. The suit is "loud" and has an "appalling" pattern, and the trousers "almost blinded the onlooker" (*M*, 44). The comparison to "a low-grade bookmaker dressed up for his daughter's wedding" is openly classist, and suggests that one should not look like a bookmaker. The fact that Mr Wormwood seems happy while dressed like this, is a sign that he not only lacks legitimate style, but also the intelligence needed to realise this fact, and be suitably ashamed of his appearance. In contrast with the first depiction, this later one is very forceful in its condemnation of Mr Wormwood's appearance, and demands that the reader agree with these statements, including the value judgement regarding bookmakers.

Mr Wormwood tries to teach Matilda's brother the calculations, but the brother struggles to do the subtractions and additions even with a pen and paper. Meanwhile, Matilda calculates the correct result quickly in her head. Mr Wormwood refuses to believe that Matilda could have done that, and accuses her of cheating and then lying about it. Being accused of cheating enrages Matilda, and she decides to get her revenge the next day. This second practical joke, in which Matilda pours her mother's hair dye in her father's hair oil, works in a similar manner to the first practical joke, and also undermines Mr Wormwood's appearance and taste. Mr Wormwood's pride, this time in his hair, is again a crucial element that results in his hair being the target of the joke.

Matilda's father had a fine crop of black hair which he parted in the middle and of which he was exceedingly proud. "Good strong hair," he was fond of saying, "means there's a good strong brain underneath."

"Like Shakespeare," Matilda had once said to him.

"Like who?"

"Shakespeare, Daddy."

”Was he brainy?”

”Very, Daddy.”

”He had masses of hair, did he?”

”He was bald, Daddy.”

To which the father had snapped, “If you can't talk sense then shut up.” (*M*, 50).

Mr Wormwood is mocked for being vain and caring about his hair, for his lack of general knowledge, not knowing who Shakespeare was, and for not understanding the joke. This also reveals the position the reader is assumed to take, as, to use Althusser's terminology, the text interpellates the reader as someone who understands the joke, in other words, someone who knows who Shakespeare was and what his portraits look like.

Mr Wormwood's morning haircare routine includes rubbing into the hair some ”OIL OF VIOLETS HAIR TONIC”, spelled all in capital letters to emphasise that this is meant to be seen as laughable (*M*, 52). The manner of applying this lotion to the hair is also brought up as comical and ridiculous (*M*, 52-53):

This hair and scalp massage was always accompanied by loud masculine grunts and heavy breathing and gasps of “Ahhh, that's better! That's the stuff! Rub it right into the roots!” which could be clearly heard by Matilda in her own bedroom across the corridor.

The floral name of the hair product, “oil of violets hair tonic”, is already hinting that using it may not be seen as masculine or tasteful, and Mr Wormwood's method of applying the lotion, making loud noises and attempting to draw attention to himself, definitely contrasts with Bourdieu's concept of legitimate, higher class style, which is above all understated and restrained, and emphasizes form and manner over function (Bourdieu 1984, 196). Simply using a hair tonic with a floral name might not be a transgression against legitimate style, but using it in the manner that Mr Wormwood does, deliberately attracting attention to himself and gasping loudly, demonstrates that one lacks the restraint that a member of the bourgeoisie is expected to have (Bourdieu 1984, 311).

The hair dye that Mrs Wormwood uses to touch up her roots between hairdresser's appointments is strong peroxide, and as Mr Wormwood rubs a mixture of his original lotion and the dye into his hair the next morning, his hair is dyed a silvery colour. Mr Wormwood is only informed of this fact when he arrives for breakfast, and his wife screams and drops his breakfast tray when she

sees him: “Mr Wormwood's fine crop of black hair was now a dirty silver, the colour this time of a tightrope-walker's tights that had not been washed for the entire circus season” (*M*, 56). Matilda's revenge has targeted the one physical thing that Mr Wormwood had reason to be proud of, and ruined it. The reference to a circus performer's tights is now directed at Mr Wormwood, when previously his wife's hair colour was the object of that joke. The idea of dirty, unwashed tights serves to make Mr Wormwood's new silvery hair slightly repulsive and ridiculous. Mrs Wormwood is not pleased with her husband's new hair colour, and thinks he has dyed it intentionally: “Why did you do it, you fool! It looks absolutely frightful! It looks horrendous! You look like a freak!” (*M*, 56). The son's opinion of Mr Wormwood's new hair colour is that “[i]t's the same colour as Mum's only much dirtier-looking” (*M*, 56). Not only is Mr Wormwood's accidental silvery hair announced hideous, but his wife accuses him of dyeing it: “What on earth were you trying to do, make yourself look handsome or something? You look like someone's grandmother gone wrong!” (*M*, 56). Mr Wormwood is blamed for dyeing his hair because of his vanity, and his wife in this accusation also makes a snide remark about handsomeness being apparently out of Mr Wormwood's reach. Mr Wormwood then asks to use a mirror to see his hair for himself, and Mrs Wormwood gives him her powder compact. Mr Wormwood, trying to use the small mirror in the compact, manages to empty the powder “all over the front of his fancy tweed jacket” (*M*, 56). Mr Wormwood's colourful jackets have been mocked on several occasions in the book, and now, when he is wearing a more acceptable jacket for once, Matilda's practical joke culminates in the jacket being covered with powder. It seems that although Mr Wormwood is derided for his unrefined clothing, he is not deemed worthy of wearing more legitimate or elegant clothing, either, as his “fancy” tweed jacket is ruined.

The looks of Mr and Mrs Wormwood are discussed once more and Mrs Wormwood's appearance even becomes a topic of conversation when Miss Honey visits the Wormwoods at their home after Matilda's first day at school, to discuss Matilda's extraordinary intelligence. Mr Wormwood opens the door, and Miss Honey's impression of him is “a small ratty-looking man with a thin ratty moustache who was wearing a sports-coat that had an orange and red stripe in the material”

(*M*, 86). Mr Wormwood is wearing a sports-coat, with a stripe of perhaps clashing colours, but otherwise his clothes are not elaborated on or mocked terribly. His facial features, as well as his small moustache, are called “ratty”, an adjective that seems to forebode the dislike Miss Honey will soon take to him.

Mrs Wormwood, as seen from the perspective of Miss Honey, who meets her for the first time, is a “large platinum-blond woman” (*M*, 88). Again, the dyed blonde shade of Mrs Wormwood's hair is noted, in addition to her size. Miss Honey is astonished to find that Matilda's parents are not impressed with her talents, and she asks Mrs Wormwood does not the fact that Matilda is, at age five, reading adult literature “make you jump up and down with excitement” (*M*, 91).

”Not particularly,” the mother said. ”I'm not in favour of blue-stockings girls. A girl should think about making herself look attractive so she can get a good husband later on. Looks is more important than books, Miss Hunky...”

”The name is Honey,” Miss Honey said.

”Now look at *me*,” Mrs Wormwood said. ”Then look at *you*. You chose books. I chose looks.”

Miss Honey looked at the plain plump person with the suet-pudding face who was sitting across the room. (*M*, 91-92)

Mrs Wormwood has already made a poor impression on Miss Honey by not being interested in her daughter's talents, and by exhibiting bad manners, for example complaining about missing her television show because of Miss Honey's visit. Now Mrs Wormwood announces that she considers good looks to be more important to girls than education, a statement that Miss Honey as a teacher certainly disagrees with, as the reader is expected to do also. In addition to this, Mrs Wormwood's emphasis on looks is ridiculed and undermined by the image of her we see through Miss Honey's eyes, as a “plain plump person”, and the description of her “suet-pudding face”, a concept that is surely meant to induce disgust in the reader (*M*, 92).

In comparison with Mr and Mrs Wormwood, the appearance of Matilda, although she is the protagonist and heroine, is not described very much in the book. Matilda's clothes or hairstyle are not depicted in writing, and in the black and white illustrations she is wearing a nondescript long-sleeved top and a skirt, with her dark hair not styled in any way but flowing free.

The detail that is most mentioned in regard to Matilda's appearance is her size. Matilda is very

young when the events of the book take place, between the ages of four and five and a half, and we are reminded repeatedly that she is very small. When Matilda begins visiting the town library on her own, Mrs Phelps, the librarian, is surprised to see “such a tiny girl” (*M*, 6). From the point of view of Mrs Phelps Matilda is described as “the small girl” (*M*, 9) and “this tiny dark-haired person” (*M*, 10). When Matilda starts school, we see her from the perspective of her new teacher, Miss Honey: “Miss Honey looked carefully at the tiny girl with dark hair and a round serious face” (*M*, 64) and later: “small girl with bright eyes standing beside her desk so sensible and solemn” (*M*, 67). Here, Matilda is depicted as small, and her features are described in a very neutral way; she has dark hair and bright eyes. Both portrayals concentrate mostly on Matilda's size, and the mood she is in: Matilda is “sensible and solemn” (*M*, 64) and has a “round serious face” (*M*, 67). Matilda's size is noted twice more by Miss Honey, towards the end of the book. Matilda is called “this little snippet of a girl” (*M*, 202) and “the tiny child” (*M*, 220). Matilda's size is mostly mentioned so many times to emphasise the courage she has when she stands up against her parents and Miss Trunchbull, and her brilliance when she reads classic literature and when she devises the plot to help Miss Honey to regain her father's house.

One major issue behind the rarity of descriptions of Matilda's clothing and looks is likely to be the fact that Dahl uses the appearance of characters mainly to ridicule them, and as Matilda is the heroine of the story, she is not the target of such mocking. In addition, I would also argue that the lack of description of Matilda's clothing serves to create distance between Matilda and her parents in the reader's mind. Much of the book concentrates on the differences between Matilda and her parents, and the happy ending of the story is Matilda moving in with her teacher, Miss Honey, when her parents relocate to Spain to avoid prosecution. I would argue that it is essential to our understanding of the plot that we as readers think of Matilda as very different from her family, and this is partly accomplished by highlighting the differences between Matilda and her parents regarding their tastes and habitus. It would be challenging to describe Matilda's outer habitus in detail in a way that would differentiate her from her parents, whose looks are mercilessly mocked for their lack of legitimate

style, when, as a young child, she would not have been responsible for purchasing her own clothes. Since Matilda's parents would have purchased her clothing, her outer habitus would most likely mirror that of her parents' in terms of the social class it signals. However, we are led to think of Matilda as naturally belonging to a higher social class than her parents, and the lack of depictions of Matilda's appearance helps us form that image. As we have no depictions of Matilda's clothing, we assume that there is nothing to criticise or comment, which clearly sets her apart from her ridiculed parents.

Matilda's teacher, Miss Honey, who is very sympathetic to Matilda and in the end takes Matilda to live with her, is described in the same way as Matilda; her clothes and other stylistic choices are barely mentioned, and the few portrayals there are of her concentrate on her face and body. Miss Honey is first described when Matilda begins school (*M*, 60):

Their teacher was called Miss Honey, and she could not have been more than twenty-three or twenty-four. She had a lovely pale oval madonna face with blue eyes and her hair was light-brown. Her body was so slim and fragile one got the feeling that if she fell over she would smash into a thousand pieces, like a porcelain figure.

This depiction is markedly different from those of Mr and Mrs Wormwood. Firstly, of course, the account is much more positive than any we have read of the Wormwoods. Secondly, this portrait of Miss Honey focuses on traits of Miss Honey that she was born with, or are otherwise not stylistic choices, such as her age, the shape of her face and the colour of her eyes. Miss Honey is portrayed in the best possible light, almost idolised, with comments on her "lovely pale oval madonna face" and how she seems like she would break like a "porcelain figure" (*M*, 60). Miss Honey is being compared to a porcelain figure, while Mr Wormwood was compared to a "low-class bookmaker" (*M*, 44) earlier, comparisons that could hardly inspire more different images of their objects. The few references to Miss Honey's looks later in the book continue to remark almost solely on aspects of her appearance that appear to be inborn and also highlight the goodness and exquisiteness of Miss Honey. There is a reference to "Miss Honey's pale and pleasant face" (*M*, 73), and when Miss Honey visits the Wormwoods, she is seen by Mr Wormwood as "the slim frail woman who stood resolutely out on the porch" (*M*, 88). This portrayal contrasts Miss Honey's fragile appearance with the strength of her character, as she has come to defend Matilda's educational interests, and ensure that she is given the

opportunities to develop her talents.

The only time Miss Honey's clothing or style is commented on, is when Matilda first visits Miss Honey's home, and is stunned to see the primitive cottage that her teacher lives in: "Was this really where her neat and trimly dressed school teacher lived?" (*M*, 184). There are many illustrations of Miss Honey in the book, and in almost all of them she is wearing the same clothes: a knee-length skirt, a long-sleeved top and a scarf, with glasses and her hair in a ponytail. At the very end of the book, when Miss Honey has received her family's house back, she is shown having tea with Matilda in the afternoon right before the discovery that Matilda's family is moving abroad. In these illustrations, Miss Honey is wearing a long-sleeved top with what appears to be a collared shirt underneath, a scarf, and trousers. Thus, even though pictures of Miss Honey are numerous, they focus on depicting her actions and reactions, and not her looks. Bourdieu notes that preferences may be stated indirectly, by denouncing the other option, often that of the social class just below one as tasteless and displeasing (1984, 56). Thus, the focus on the appearances of Mr and Mrs Wormwood and the derision directed at them reveals us the preferred style, that of Matilda and Miss Honey, who are not disdained in such a way. I will argue that, as with Matilda's appearance, the lack of descriptions and attention to Miss Honey's clothing and stylistic choices gives the impression that Miss Honey has made the "correct" choices, and is exhibiting legitimate taste.

If the appearances of Matilda and Miss Honey are not discussed much because they are the heroines of the book and their appearances are regarded as legitimate and desired, Miss Trunchbull is situated in the opposite group of characters along with Mr and Mrs Wormwood. These three characters are described more, and in more vivid detail, than the good characters of Matilda and Miss Honey. Miss Trunchbull is the main villain in most of the story, from the beginning of Matilda's schooling, and because of this, there are many more depictions of her appearance than of the other characters.

The descriptions of Miss Trunchbull are often a mixture of her outward appearance and her terrifying behaviour and personality, as in this first depiction of her (*M*, 61):

Miss Trunchbull, the Headmistress, was something else altogether. She was a gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster who frightened the life out of pupils and teachers alike. There was an aura of menace about her even at a distance, and when she came up close you could almost feel the dangerous heat radiating from her as from a red-hot rod of metal. When she marched - Miss Trunchbull never walked, she always marched like a storm-trooper with long strides and arms aswinging – when she marched along a corridor you could actually hear her snorting as she went, and if a group of children happened to be in her path, she ploughed right on through them like a tank, with small people bouncing off her to left and right.

Miss Trunchbull's meanness is emphasised, and she is called “formidable” (*M*, 60), with a “diabolical gaze” (*M*, 142). Miss Trunchbull's face is “neither a thing of beauty nor a joy for ever. She had an obstinate chin, a cruel mouth and small arrogant eyes” (*M*, 77). In these quotes we can see the blending of the character's personality and the way her looks are described.

One attribute of the appearance of Miss Trunchbull that is highlighted often is her size. Miss Trunchbull is called “this great red-necked giant” (*M*, 83), “this mighty female giant” (*M*, 155), and “this infuriated female giant” (*M*, 162). Because of her size, Miss Trunchbull is an even more frightening adversary to all pupils of the school, and especially so for Matilda and her little friend, Lavender, who are both said to be very small children. The portrayals are often threatening, for example: “the gigantic figure of Miss Trunchbull advancing through ...with menacing strides” (*M*, 106), “[i]n two large strides the Trunchbull was behind Eric's desk, and there she stood, a pillar of doom towering over the helpless boy. Eric glanced fearfully back over his shoulder at the monster” (*M*, 146), and “like some giant of doom, the enormous Trunchbull strode into the room in her green breeches and cotton smock” (*M*, 210).

In addition to Miss Trunchbull's size, depictions of her are marked by exaggerations of her strength, and it is mentioned that she has participated in the Olympics throwing hammer (104):

She was above all a most formidable female. She had once been a famous athlete, and even now the muscles were still clearly in evidence. You could see them in the bull-neck, in the big shoulders, in the thick arms, in the sinewy wrists and in the powerful legs. Looking at her, you got the feeling that this was someone who could bend iron bars and tear telephone directories in half. (*M*, 76-77).

Miss Trunchbull is described by the narrator as “[a] formidable figure she was too, in her belted smock and green breeches. Below the knees her calf muscles stood out like grapefruits inside her

stockings” (*M*, 106), and Miss Honey talking to her pupils says of the headmistress: “[s]he’s a very strong woman. She has muscles like steel ropes.” (*M*, 209).

Miss Trunchbull’s clothes are described in detail (*M*, 77):

And as for her clothes... they were, to say the least, extremely odd. She always had on a brown cotton smock which was pinched in around the waist with a wide leather belt. The belt was fastened in front with an enormous silver buckle. The massive thighs which emerged from out of the smock were encased in a pair of extraordinary breeches, bottle-green in colour and made of coarse twill. These breeches reached to just below the knees and from there on down she sported green stockings with turn-up tops, which displayed her calf muscles to perfection. On her feet she wore flat-heeled brown brogues with leather flaps. She looked, in short, more like a rather eccentric and bloodthirsty follower of the stag-hounds than the headmistress of a nice school for children.

Miss Trunchbull wears the same outfit throughout the story, and her green breeches and smock are mentioned several times in later depictions (for example *M*, 106, 155, 210). What is striking in the above quotation and a few others are the subtle references to upper class lifestyle and pastimes. Breeches themselves are a type of trousers used for horse riding, and brogues conjure an image of classic, well-made shoes. Miss Trunchbull is said to look like “a rather eccentric and bloodthirsty follower of the stag-hounds”, a reference to hunting, a decidedly upper class hobby. Later, when Miss Trunchbull is abusing a pupil, she has for some reason a riding-crop with her, and uses it to threaten the pupil, “pointing the riding-crop at him like a rapier” (*M*, 114), an accessory to fencing, another upper class sport. Further references to horses are a mention of her “great horsy face” (*M*, 127), and, as the headmistress is berating the pupils: “[s]he paused and snorted several times. It was a curious noise. You can hear the same sort of thing if you walk through a riding-stable when the horses are being fed” (*M*, 135).

Miss Trunchbull is described in ways that stress how masculine she is; her large size and strength are emphasised, and her voice is also “deep and dangerous” (*M*, 76), and she “bellow[s]” (*M*, 83) and “boom[s]” (*M*, 76). When Miss Trunchbull throws one of her pupils by the hair as if throwing the hammer, another pupil yells “Well thrown, sir!” (*M*, 110). In addition to being depicted as masculine, Miss Trunchbull is given attributes and depicted as an animal or a monster: “[t]he Trunchbull started advancing slow and soft-footed upon Rupert in the manner of a tigress stalking a

small deer” (*M*, 142). The headmistress is occasionally literally called a “monster” (*M*, 61 and 146) and is routinely referred to as “a giant” (*M*, for example pages 83, 155, 162 and 210). The headmistress is also regularly referred to in the text as “the Trunchbull”, which further denotes her as non-human, as if she were in a species of her own (*M*, for example 146, 156, 160 and 210). Some of the allusions to the upper class hobby of horse riding also seemed to place Miss Trunchbull in the position of the animals, for example her “horsy face” (*M*, 127) and the noise that Miss Trunchbull makes while snorting, which is described as a noise resembling the noises horses make while eating (*M*, 135).

I have in this subsection analysed the way in which the main characters' appearances are portrayed in *Matilda*, and how the characters' taste in matters of dressing and style is described. These portrayals relate to the different social classes or class fractions of the characters. Mr and Mrs Wormwood can be seen as lower middle class, with a fair amount of monetary capital because of Mr Wormwood's work as a successful businessman selling used cars, but less of other types of capital, such as educational or cultural. Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull, as teachers, are in a slightly higher social class than the Wormwoods, perhaps the upper middle class, as in addition to their financial capital, they also have significant educational capital. The villains from both groups, the parents and the headmistress, are mocked and depicted as absurd, but the depictions of Miss Trunchbull focus more on qualities such as size, strength and masculinity, and includes references to an upper class lifestyle, such as horse riding. The descriptions of the Wormwoods, on the other hand, contain many more references to their clothing, hairstyles, and makeup, all of which are expressions of taste. I would argue that the Wormwoods are especially ridiculed for their aesthetic choices and seeming lack of taste, issues which are related to their class status.

The aesthetic choices of the Wormwoods are labelled undesirable, which reveals the class position from which the story is narrated. As Bourdieu states, people feel sympathy towards those who have similar tastes as they do, and are thus from the same social class or fraction, and antipathy towards those whose taste and class position is different from their own (1984, 56 and 241). The tastes

of Mr and Mrs Wormwood are very strongly rejected in the text, while those of Matilda and Miss Honey are depicted as normal and desirable. The story is then told from a perspective that considers the lower middle class, or *petit bourgeois* in Bourdieu's terms, lifestyle vulgar. As mentioned earlier, Althusser notes that ideology in a text interpellates readers as a specific type of person, and the reader accepts this offered position while reading (2003, 54). The ideology in *Matilda* interpellates the reader as someone who identifies with the character of Matilda, and shares her and the narrator's views of the Wormwoods and their tastes as inferior and vulgar. The reader is interpellated as, and becomes at least for the time of reading, a person who inhabits a specific position in the class system; a position above the Wormwoods, whose lower middle class tastes they scorn.

3.1.2 Esteemed and Undervalued Pastimes

In this second subsection I will discuss the different pastimes and hobbies that the Wormwoods have in the book. Matilda's brilliance is one of the main themes of the story, and her reading abilities and interest in literature is a large part of the plot. Matilda's love of reading is contrasted with her parents' pastimes, as they do not see the value of reading books, and prefer watching television and playing bingo in their free time. This is a source of major conflict between Matilda and her parents in the book, and can be seen as considerably deteriorating their relationship. Different pastimes and activities can also be associated with different social classes (Bourdieu 1984, 6), and some of them strongly signify a certain class membership while others are disliked and spurned by members of a class (Bourdieu 1984, 56-57).

Matilda learns to read by herself when she is three years old, by looking at the newspapers and periodicals at home. The next year "she could read fast and well and she naturally began hankering after books" (*M*, 5). Since there are no books at home, Matilda asks her father for one:

"Daddy," she said, "do you think you could buy me a book?"

"A *book*?" he said. "What d'you want a flaming book for?"

"To read, Daddy."

"What's wrong with the telly, for heaven's sake? We've got a lovely telly with a twelve-inch screen and now you come asking for a book! You're getting spoiled, my girl!" (*M*,

6).

Having received no help from her father, Matilda takes advantage of being left alone in the afternoons when her mother goes to play bingo, and begins visiting the village library. There, over the next few weeks, she reads through the whole children's section, and then asks the librarian, Mrs Phelps, for help choosing her next book, requesting "a really good one that grown-ups read. A famous one." (*M*, 9). Mrs Phelps struggles with choosing an adult book for such a small child:

"Try this," she said at last. "It's very famous and very good. If it's too long for you, just let me know and I'll find something shorter and a bit easier."

"*Great Expectations*," Matilda read, "by Charles Dickens. I'd love to try it."

I must be mad, Mrs Phelps told herself, but to Matilda she said, "Of course you may try it." (*M*, 9).

Matilda enjoys *The Great Expectations* immensely, and is soon breezing through the canon of Western literature. There are many references to famous, classic works in *Matilda*, and some of them are given small descriptions or criticisms by Matilda, who has read them. When Matilda has finished all the children's books, she tells Mrs Phelps that:

"I thought some were very poor," Matilda said, "but others were lovely. I liked *The Secret Garden* best of all. It was full of mystery. The mystery of the room behind the closed door and the mystery of the garden behind the big wall." (*M*, 7-9).

As Matilda is reading her first adult book, *The Great Expectations*:

...this tiny dark-haired person sitting there with her feet nowhere touching the floor, totally absorbed in the wonderful adventures of Pip and old Miss Havisham and her cobwebbed house and by the spell of magic that Dickens the great story-teller had woven with his words (*M*, 10).

Likewise, when Matilda is talking to Miss Honey on her first day of school (*M*, 74-75):

"I liked *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*," Matilda said. "I think Mr C. S. Lewis is a very good writer. But he has one failing. There are no funny bits in his books."

"You are right there," Miss Honey said.

"There aren't many funny bits in Mr Tolkien either," Matilda said.

The books Matilda reads are given a fair amount of attention and space in the story. In addition to these references to books, there is a list of the books that Matilda reads during the six months following her introduction to adult literature (*M*, 12):

Nicholas Nickleby by Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy
Gone with the Wind by Mary Webb
Kim by Rudyard Kipling
The Invisible Man by H. G. Wells
The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway
The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner
The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
The Good Companions by J. B. Priestley
Brighton Rock by Graham Greene
Animal Farm by George Orwell

The fact that these works are listed is significant, as most of them are not referred to again, nor are their plots or their importance openly mentioned. It is clear that the list is meant to be impressive, as it contains many books that a young child would not be able to read or understand, thus proving Matilda's extraordinary talent. In my opinion even child readers who do not know these books or their writers will be able to grasp the intention of impressing the reader. What the listing and the other references to famous works of literature accomplish is bringing these books to the attention of the reader as desirable reading, and their use also simultaneously interpellates the reader as someone who does understand the relevance and prestige of the books. What is also noteworthy about the books mentioned, is that they can all be considered classic works and very much part of the canon of Western literature. Bourdieu maintains that this is typical of the petit bourgeois, whose search for legitimacy and respect for authority leads him or her to choose "safe" options, such as works widely thought of as classics (1984, 331), instead of more unconventional or alternative choices.

The enjoyment that Matilda receives from books and reading is emphasised numerous times: "[w]ithin a week, Matilda had finished *Great Expectations* which in that edition contained four hundred and eleven pages. "I loved it," she said to Mrs Phelps." (*M*, 11), and later:

"Mr Hemingway says a lot of things I don't understand," Matilda said to her. "Especially about men and women. But I loved it all the same. The way he tells it I feel I am right there on the spot watching it all happen." (*M*, 12-13).

The descriptions of Matilda reading books have a comforting and calm style, a complete opposite to the passages that tell of her interactions with her awful parents or the horrible headmistress at school.

Reading provides a haven from the rest of Matilda's chaotic life, and lets her forget about the problems she has. When Matilda discovers that one can loan books from the library and read them at home, she begins reading at home:

From then on, Matilda would visit the library only once a week in order to take out new books and return the old ones. Her own small bedroom now became her reading-room and there she would sit and read most afternoons, often with a mug of hot chocolate beside her. ... It was pleasant to take a hot drink up to her room and have it beside her as she sat in her silent room reading in the empty house in the afternoons. The books transported her into new worlds and introduced her to amazing people who lived exciting lives. She went on olden-day sailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling. She travelled all over the world while sitting in her little room in an English village (*M*, 15).

These idyllic depictions of reading are in sharp contrast to those made of the chosen pastime of Mr and Mrs Wormwood, watching television. The television is presented in negative terms, as something noisy and disruptive: it is called “blaring” (*M*, 86 and 35), and it is said that “[Matilda] had somehow trained herself by now to block her ears to the ghastly sound of the dreaded box” (*M*, 32). While she is forced to eat her dinner in front of the television, Matilda has learned to pay no attention to it (*M*, 50). To be able to enjoy the story, the reader must relate to Matilda, and so has to, at least temporarily, absorb the values and opinions that form the basis of Matilda's behaviour, in this case her dislike of television (Hunt 1991, 84). Watching television is also presented as a poor choice by the simple act of associating it strongly with the characters of Mr and Mrs Wormwood, who are terrible, mean parents, and whom nobody wants to relate to. The message to the reader is clear: whatever the Wormwoods do, must be an inferior choice. Through them and their actions, watching television is associated to a number of undesirable features. When Matilda learns to read and asks for a book, her father's refers to their fancy television and denies her books, claiming she is becoming spoiled for even asking. This response shows that Matilda and her parents have different tastes and interests, and is one example of the parents being the ones who see watching television and reading books as competing activities that exclude one another. Another example is an incident where Matilda begins to question her family's habit of eating dinner in front of the television (*M*, 22):

“Mummy,” Matilda said, “would you mind if I ate my supper in the dining-room so I could read my book?”

The father glanced up sharply. "I would mind!" he snapped. "Supper is a family gathering and no one leaves the table till it's over!"

"But we're not at the table," Matilda said. "We never are. We're always eating off our knees and watching the telly."

"What's wrong with watching the telly, may I ask?" the father said. His voice had suddenly become soft and dangerous.

In another scene Matilda's father comes home from work in a bad mood one day, and becomes so angry when he sees Matilda reading that he tears up her library book (*M*, 32-35):

He then strode into the living-room. Matilda happened to be curled up in an armchair in the corner, totally absorbed in a book. Mr Wormwood switched on the television. The screen lit up. The programme blared. Mr Wormwood glared at Matilda. She hadn't moved. She had somehow trained herself by now to block her ears to the ghastly sound of the dreaded box. She kept right on reading, and for some reason this infuriated the father. Perhaps his anger was intensified because he saw her getting pleasure from something that was beyond his reach.

In these scenes, Matilda's father becomes furious because reading is considered a more legitimate and valued activity than watching television, and Matilda's reading is a clear sign of her distinction in comparison with the rest of the family, who prefer watching television (Bourdieu 1984, 60). That Matilda is pursuing such a practice sets her apart from, and above, her family, and is a rejection of their tastes (Bourdieu 1984, 249 and 60). Matilda is the character that the reader relates to, as she is the main protagonist, as well as a small, good, and intelligent child that is trying to defend herself against mean, stupid adults. As such, the choices Matilda makes are naturally presented to the reader as the correct choices. However, in addition to this, the behaviour of Mr and Mrs Wormwood and their disproportionate reactions to Matilda's hobby, such as being mean to her for wanting books or trying to read, or destroying her library book, further damage the reader's perception of them and their choices. The Wormwoods do not merely prefer watching television to reading, they cannot accept reading as a valuable pastime for their daughter, and actively attempt to discourage her. When Mrs Phelps, the village librarian questions Matilda about why she comes to the library on her own, Matilda explains:

"My mother goes to Aylesbury every afternoon to play bingo," Matilda said. "She doesn't know I come here."

"But that's surely not right," Mrs Phelps said. "I think you'd better ask her."

"I'd rather not," Matilda said. "She doesn't encourage reading books. Nor does my father."

“But what do they expect you to do every afternoon in an empty house?”

“Just mooch around and watch the telly.”

“I see.”

“She doesn't really care what I do,” Matilda said a little sadly (*M*, 10).

Not only does Matilda have to hide the fact that she visits the library every day to read, her parents do not seem to care what she does, and leave her alone in the afternoons, despite Matilda's very young age. When Matilda expresses disapproval of the way her father tricks his customers into buying unsound cars, her opinions are silenced, and she is told to be quiet: “Now keep your nasty mouth shut so we can all watch this programme in peace” (*M*, 20). Watching television is prioritised over Matilda's concerns.

Television is strongly tied to many of the unpleasant scenes in the book, such as Matilda being forced to watch it while she eats, and Mr Wormwood leaving the television on after destroying Matilda's library book, almost as a sign of what is the only allowed form of media in the house. Television is also associated with bad manners, as when Miss Honey comes to discuss Matilda's abilities with her parents, and is nearly not let in the house:

“We are right in the middle of watching one of our favourite programmes,” Mr Wormwood said. “This is most inconvenient. Why don't you come back some other time.”

Miss Honey began to lose patience. “Mr Wormwood,” she said, “if you think some rotten TV programme is more important than your daughter's future, then you ought not to be a parent! Why don't you switch the darn thing off and listen to me!” *M*, (88).

Miss Honey is finally invited into the house, but her mission is made more difficult because of the television that distracts the attention of Mrs Wormwood.

“Mrs Wormwood isn't going to thank you for this,” the man said as he led her into the sitting-room, where a large platinum-blond woman was gazing rapturously at the TV screen.

“Who is it?” the woman said, not looking around.

“Some school teacher,” Mr Wormwood said. “She says she's got to talk to us about Matilda.” He crossed to the TV set and turned down the sound but left the picture on the screen.

“Don't do that, Harry!” Mrs Wormwood cried out. “Willard is just about to propose to Angelica!”

“You can still watch it while we're talking,” Mr Wormwood said. (*M*, 88)

Miss Honey has taken a serious interest in Matilda because of her incredible talents, and cannot now believe that Matilda's parents do not seem in the least concerned with their daughter's future, or even

hearing what she has come to tell them. Mrs Wormwood is twice mentioned to be “ratty” during the discussion with Miss Honey, as she would have preferred to watch her programme rather than talking about her daughter (*M*, 89 and 90). The awfulness of Mr and Mrs Wormwood and the awfulness of television seem to be partly the result of circular reasoning: the Wormwoods are despised for watching television, and the idea of television is in turn blemished by its association with the Wormwoods, who are ignorant and intolerable people.

Mrs Wormwood's other pastime, bingo, is seen as a tasteless, lower-class hobby, and is described in disparaging terms:

Nearly every weekday afternoon Matilda was left alone in the house ... her mother went out playing bingo in a town eight miles away. Mrs Wormwood was hooked on bingo and played it five afternoons a week. (*M*, 6).

It is noteworthy that Mrs Wormwood is said to be “hooked” on bingo, as opposed to being depicted as having a generally harmless hobby that she enjoys. Of course, in the story Matilda is being left alone in her house every afternoon because Mrs Wormwood goes to play bingo, so it could be argued that her bingo hobby not harmless. As mentioned before, Matilda tells the librarian that her mother is not aware of her trips to the library, as she “goes to Aylesbury every afternoon to play bingo” (*M*, 10). In addition, Matilda says that her mother “doesn't really care what I do” (*M*, 10). This abandonment of her small child in favour of bingo certainly casts an unfavourable light on Mrs Wormwood. Still, this is the only time that Matilda expresses sadness at her mother not being home with her, whereas the afternoons Matilda spends at the library or alone at home reading are generally described as cosy and idyllic.

When Matilda is planning one of her tricks, she springs to action “as soon as Mrs Wormwood had departed in her car for another session of bingo” (*M*, 36). At another point, when Matilda returns from Miss Honey's cottage, she comes home to an empty house, as “her father was not yet back from work, her mother was not yet back from bingo and her brother might be anywhere” (*M*, 204). Despite these examples that show Matilda being left on her own because her mother is away playing bingo, the main issue with bingo seems to be the fact that it is seen as unsophisticated and vulgar. The reason

why bingo has been chosen as Mrs Wormwood's hobby seems to be because of the associations we have of bingo as a pastime of the lower classes, and that image is enough to warrant snide remarks referring to bingo addiction and “sessions” of bingo.

Bourdieu maintains that cultural capital is mostly received from one of two sources; either inherited from one's family, or learned at school (1984, 66). However, Matilda does not inherit hers from her family, who prefer television and bingo to reading, nor does she learn it at school. Matilda acquires her cultural capital seemingly independently, by beginning to read literature. This difference in their preferences and lifestyles suggests that Matilda belongs in a different class fraction than her family (Bourdieu 1984, 260). Mahar et al note that social class and thus habitus can change from generation to generation even within one family (1990, 11), but the differences between Matilda and her family seem rather extreme, especially considering that before meeting Miss Honey, Matilda has not received any positive encouragement that would have helped her habitus to develop in this direction (Bourdieu 1984, 105).

3.1.3 Food and Ways of Eating

The third theme related to social class that I will concentrate on in Matilda is the theme of food and eating. What and how one eats is a reflection of one's class, and in Matilda the concept of food as a sign of class is utilised to help form either the readers' sympathies or antipathies towards Matilda, her parents; Mr and Mrs Wormwood, and Miss Honey.

The eating habits of the Wormwoods are disapproved openly by the narrator, and the descriptions do not leave room for the reader to disagree, as the habits and behaviour of the Wormwoods is both vilified and strongly tied to their personalities and their function as the villains of the story. It is therefore impossible for the reader to both understand the story and sympathise or relate to the likes and dislikes of Mr and Mrs Wormwood while reading, as doing so would place him or her in the same group with the awful villains.

There are two main reasons why the Wormwoods' eating habits are deemed vulgar and inferior:

they eat dinner in the living room while watching television, and dinner is usually either a ready-made frozen meal, or takeaway food. What is condemned about the eating habits of the Wormwoods are then both what is being consumed, and the style and manner in which the food is presented and eaten.

A dinner in the Wormwood family is depicted early on in the story (*M*, 20):

They were in the living-room eating their suppers on their knees in front of the telly. The suppers were TV dinners in floppy aluminium containers with separate compartments for the stewed meat, the boiled potatoes and the peas. Mrs Wormwood sat munching her meal with her eyes glued to the American soap-opera on the screen.

The description is subtle, but it does make it clear to the reader by certain terms and phrases that this is not an ideal arrangement for a dinner. The family are “eating their suppers on their knees in front of the telly”, an image that simultaneously speaks of awkward discomfort and a lack of sophistication. The meal is ready-made, served in the same “floppy aluminium containers” that it was bought in, and the adjectives used to describe the food are unappetising; the meat is “stewed” and the potatoes “boiled”, as such, they hardly sound like foods that would excite a child reader. What is prioritised in the dining experience is ease of preparation of the meal, and the opportunity to watch television while eating. Mrs Wormwood is said to have “her eyes glued” to the television while eating, and to make matters worse, the programme that is being watched so keenly is an “American soap-opera”, a term that suggests that an American version of such a show is even more horrid than a British one.

As Matilda is uninterested in watching the television, she requests that she may be allowed to eat her dinner elsewhere, but her father becomes enraged at this request. While Matilda does not explicitly ask to eat her dinner in the dining room because it is the legitimate space for that activity, her request opens up a discussion into the matter. Mr Wormwood denies Matilda's request on the grounds that “Supper is a family gathering and no one leaves the table till it's over!” (*M*, 22), which leads to Matilda's counter argument that the way they are eating; in the living room, “off our knees and watching telly” means that such a rule about leaving the table would not apply to the family's eating style, which is already beyond the usual rules about table manners. Suggesting such a thing can only be seen as openly disparaging the family's chosen style of eating.

Unsurprisingly, Mr Wormwood does not take kindly to Matilda's complaint about watching television while eating, and she is not allowed to leave the room to eat elsewhere, where she might substitute her own favourite form of media, reading a book, in the place of watching television. Matilda's lack of interest in television separates her from the rest of the family, and her preference to reading is seen to imply that she sees watching television as an inferior activity. Because watching television is so strongly tied together with the activity of eating dinner, it cannot be criticised without also attacking the entire style and manner of dining in the Wormwood family. Eating while watching television is thus seen by Mr Wormwood as a shared activity, and rejecting it is also a rejection of a group value. Matilda is seen as rejecting the tastes and preferences of her family, and stating the superiority of her own tastes (Bourdieu 1984, 60).

The fact that Matilda dislikes the television is thus a major component behind the criticism directed at the eating habits of the Wormwoods. However, as a young child, Matilda has very little choice or say in the matter:

But the fact remained that any five-year-old girl in any family was always obliged to do as she was told, however asinine the orders might be. Thus she was always forced to eat her evening meals out of TV-dinner-trays in front of the dreaded box (*M*, 43).

The narrator here gives direct guidance to readers as to how they are to interpret the situation; the wishes of Mr Wormwood that the family eat together, are termed "asinine" when they mean that the family eat sitting on the sofa in the living room instead of at the table in the dining room. The eating habits of the family are presented as something that Matilda is forced to do, and has to endure.

The second main issue relating to the dinners in the Wormwood household is the quality of the food itself. It has been noted that the dinners often consisted of ready-made meals, which, as we have already seen, are frowned upon in the text. The Wormwoods also eat takeaway food:

...the mother came in carrying a large tray on which there were four suppers. This time it was fish and chips which Mrs Wormwood had picked up in the fish and chip shop on her way home from bingo. It seemed that bingo afternoons left her so exhausted both physically and emotionally that she never had enough energy left to cook an evening meal. So if it wasn't TV dinners it had to be fish and chips (*M*, 49).

Mrs Wormwood is not in the habit of cooking dinner herself, but rather serves either "TV dinners" or

takeaway fish and chips. This is not presented to the readers of the story as a valid choice, but mockingly explained as a consequence of Mrs Wormwood's hobby of going to play the bingo in the afternoons. Proclaiming that it is the bingo that “left [Mrs Wormwood] so exhausted both physically and emotionally” that she is not able to cook a meal for her family both ridicules bingo as a hobby and undermines Mrs Wormwood as a wife and mother, as it is implied she should be cooking. As Bourdieu mentions, practices and objects that are seen as popular or easy are often deemed vulgar and associated with lower social classes (1984, 176 and 486). Takeaway food and ready-made meals are derided in the story precisely because of this connection with the tastes of those belonging in a lower social class. However, this connection is not openly stated in the text, and other reasons, such as the food not tasting good, are given for the disgust expressed towards such foods. The unappetising description of a TV dinner has been mentioned before, and the fish and chips are not deemed any better, as it is said that Matilda “sat eating her awful fried fish and fried chips and ignoring the television (*M*, 50)”. Not only are fish and chips as fried foods unhealthy, but it seems that Matilda also dislikes their taste, which would suggest an uncommonly sophisticated palate for a young child.

In addition to dinner, the breakfast that the Wormwoods eat is also described in the scene where Matilda has applied glue to her father's hat. Before this incident is noticed, the family are about to have breakfast (*M*, 53):

Matilda sat quietly at the dining-room table eating her cornflakes. Her brother sat opposite her with his back to the door devouring hunks of bread smothered with a mixture of peanut-butter and strawberry jam. The mother was just out of sight around the corner in the kitchen making Mr Wormwood's breakfast which always had to be two fried eggs on fried bread with three pork sausages and three strips of bacon and some fried tomatoes.

Breakfast is eaten in the dining room, at the table and not watching television, so the manner of eating is more traditional and refined than the manner in which the family eats dinner. Mrs Wormwood is even preparing food herself, cooking eggs, sausages, bacon and tomatoes for her husband. The food that is enjoyed is also a more legitimate type of food for the meal at hand; the son is eating bread with peanut butter and jam, which seems normal enough for a child, and Matilda is eating cornflakes, which is rather a classic choice for a breakfast food, especially for children.

Mr Wormwood's breakfast, "two fried eggs on fried bread with three pork sausages and three strips of bacon and some fried tomatoes" (*M*, 53) is very large, and suggests that his taste is towards robust, greasy foods for breakfast. It is perhaps slightly old-fashioned to eat a full English breakfast every morning, and conjures images of a working class background. Such a full, cooked breakfast would not be the choice of a modern, educated, city dwelling man, who wishes to keep an image of sportiness and sophistication. The amount of food in Mr Wormwood's breakfast is emphasised, as it is said that "the mother came sweeping out from the kitchen carrying a huge plate piled high with eggs and sausages and bacon and tomatoes" (*M*, 54). Because the trick that Matilda has played on her father is revealed, we do not know how the breakfast would have progressed, and now the only openly unflattering comments regarding the way someone is eating are directed at Matilda's brother, who is said to be "devouring hunks of bread smothered with a mixture of peanut-butter and strawberry jam" (53) and later "stuffing himself with bread and peanut-butter and strawberry jam" (*M*, 54). Such a suggestion of eating hastily and perhaps with some lack of table manners tells of the informality of breakfast time at the Wormwoods. On the whole, the family's breakfast is not as vulgar as their dinners, as some effort is made in preparing the food, and the meal is enjoyed at the table in the dining room, both details which reveal that there is at least some emphasis on the proper form and manner of eating, which are seen by Bourdieu as marks of bourgeois taste (1984, 196).

As mentioned earlier, Matilda, because of her age and status in the family, has little influence on the way the family choose to enjoy their meals. Because of this Matilda is mostly forced to eat the same foods and participate in the same manner of eating as the rest of the family. However, there is an example of Matilda's own taste regarding food in the beginning of the story, when Matilda has discovered that she may take books home from the library. Matilda is alone at home when her mother is at bingo, and her afternoons are described in very idyllic terms:

Her own small bedroom now became her reading-room and there she would sit and read most afternoons, often with a mug of hot chocolate beside her. She was not quite tall enough to reach things around the kitchen, but she kept a small box in the outhouse which she brought in and stood on in order to get whatever she wanted. Mostly it was hot chocolate she made, warming the milk in a saucepan on the stove before mixing it. Occasionally she made Bovril or Ovaltine. It was pleasant to take a hot drink up to her

room and have it beside her as she sat in her silent room reading in the empty house in the afternoons (*M*, 15).

The drinks that Matilda prepares for herself are fairly classic warm beverages, Bovril and Ovaltine could even be considered quintessential British drinks. Matilda is said to enjoy “a mug of hot chocolate” and “a hot drink”, which means that she only prepares one drink for herself, showing restraint and not overindulging. In addition to this ability to enjoy a single good drink, the way the above quote focuses on the act of making the drinks also deems Matilda as someone for whom the manner of doing things is as important as the end result of the preparations. Matilda is said to need a box to reach things in the kitchen, and she has to fetch it all the way from the outhouse. She is also making the hot chocolate in the traditional style on the stove, instead of using a possible microwave oven, which would prioritise the speed of preparation over the manner of it. This whole account of how Matilda enjoys a hot beverage while she reads sounds restful and lovely, and is the complete opposite of the images we have regarding the family dinners, where the food is not prepared lovingly, but bought, and the manner and style of eating are compromised for the convenience of watching television. When Matilda makes herself a drink, the manner and time of preparations is highlighted, thus linking her taste with the bourgeois considerations of form and style, whereas the family’s taste is depicted as vulgar and lower class because their meals are quick, easy and practical (Bourdieu 1984, 376).

Another scene that can be contrasted with the Wormwoods' mealtimes is the tea that Miss Honey offers to Matilda when she visits her small cottage. As Miss Honey's salary has been forwarded to Miss Trunchbull, Miss Honey has only been able to rent a small cottage that is not really fit for living in. As such, the conditions in Miss Honey's cottage are very primitive. Miss Honey's kitchen is portrayed as (*M*, 180-181):

It was not much bigger than a good-sized clothes cupboard and there was one small window in the back wall with a sink under the window, but there were no taps over the sink. Against another wall there was a shelf, presumably for preparing food, and there was a single cupboard above the shelf. On the shelf itself there stood a Primus stove, a saucepan and a half-full bottle of milk.

Since Miss Honey is being abused by Miss Trunchbull, her poor living conditions are not a direct

reflection of her social status as they would otherwise be, but more of a reason for the readers to feel sorry for her and understand the injustice that is going on. The tiny, bare cottage is not even equipped with running water, and Miss Honey instructs Matilda to fetch water for the tea from a well.

As with the depiction of Matilda and her hot drinks, the process of making the tea is described at length:

The Primus was roaring away with a powerful blue flame and already the water in the saucepan was beginning to bubble. Miss Honey got a teapot from the cupboard and put some tea leaves into it. She also found half a small loaf of brown bread. She cut two thin slices and then, from a plastic container, she took some margarine and spread it on the bread (*M*, 183).

Matilda is shocked that Miss Honey uses margarine, and sees this as a sign that Miss Honey “really must be poor” (*M*, 183). The “small loaf” of bread and the fact that the slices that Miss Honey cuts are “thin” are further examples of the dire financial situation that Miss Honey is in. Miss Honey also says that she does not use sugar, and apologises that she has none in the house.

Despite these issues, the lack of sugar and butter, and the small amount of bread that Miss Honey has, she suggests that they eat the tea in the sitting-room. In Miss Honey's home, there is a stylistic importance placed on eating in the proper space, and that manner is still honoured, even though Miss Honey has no real furniture in the sitting-room, and only three upside down boxes to use as a table and stools. Even with these obstacles, propriety and politeness are valued and exhibited (*M*, 184):

Miss Honey put the tray on one of the upturned boxes. “Sit down, my dear, sit down,” she said, “and we'll have a nice hot cup of tea. Help yourself to bread. Both slices are for you. I never eat anything when I get home. I have a good old tuck-in at the school lunch and that keeps me going until the next morning.”

Miss Honey also shows no signs of discomfort, but appears to be perfectly happy drinking her tea:

Miss Honey poured the tea and added a little milk to both cups. She appeared to be not in the least ill at ease sitting on an upturned box in a bare room and drinking tea out of a mug that she balanced on her knee (*M*, 186).

The simple actions of making the tea and buttering the slices of bread, as well as later the actions of serving the tea, offering the guest bread, and drinking the tea are narrated in detail, and emphasise the ritual of having tea with its proper customs even in circumstances that prevent a lavish meal.

“Have some more tea,” [Miss Honey] said. “I think there's still a drop left.”

Matilda nodded.

Miss Honey poured tea into both mugs and added milk. Again she cupped her own mug in both hands and sat there sipping (*M*, 190).

Because the financial straits Miss Honey is in are not strictly her own fault but a result of the bullying Miss Trunchbull, the food Miss Honey serves or the circumstances in which it has to be eaten are not judged as matters entirely depending on Miss Honey's taste, and she is not judged harshly for them. Matilda, though at first taken aback by the margarine, admits after a careful tasting that she would not be able to distinguish it from butter. Although she feels sorry for Miss Honey because she does not have better things to eat, such as the “buttered toast and strawberry jam and probably a piece of sponge-cake” (*M*, 185) that Matilda herself would be having for tea at her own house, she admits that the tea Miss Honey has served her is “somehow far more fun” (*M*, 185). When Miss Honey takes Matilda back home after the visit, she apologises for serving her “such a rotten tea” (*M*, 201). Matilda denies this, and claims that she “loved it” (*M*, 201).

Near the very end of the story, when Matilda has helped Miss Honey recover her father's house and inheritance from Miss Trunchbull, Matilda and Miss Honey have tea in the kitchen of “The Red House” (*M*, 223). As Miss Honey's financial situation has been resolved, there is more expensive food available: “Miss Honey carefully buttered a slice of brown bread and put a little strawberry jam on it” (*M*, 223). It is also said that “Matilda, who was perched on a tall stool at the kitchen table, ate her bread and jam slowly”, again stressing the calm atmosphere that accompanies meals at Miss Honey's house. That Matilda enjoys having tea at Miss Honey's house regardless of whether they are at a primitive little cottage, sitting on boxes, or at a nice brick house eating bread with jam, tells us that the most important thing is not if the food served is expensive. Even with very limited funds Miss Honey offers what she has, and spends time and effort preparing it for her guest and herself. Miss Honey, like Matilda with her hot drinks, values the form of eating properly over the function of merely getting something to eat, and focuses on the customs and polite manners that elevate a humble cup of tea. No doubt Matilda also enjoys her time with Miss Honey because of the undivided attention she receives, and the talks they have while they drink tea. This is exactly what the mealtimes at her home

are missing; the family watches television while eating instead of talking to each other.

Matilda finds the way that her family eats dinner disagreeable because of the lack of focus on proper manners and the form of preparing, serving and eating a meal. The meals themselves are also depicted as unpleasant, as they are ready-made meals or take away. There is no concentration or effort on the part of Mrs Wormwood, who buys these dinners, and that is what Matilda misses; an investment of time or skill. The teas that Matilda enjoys at Miss Honey's cottage are the opposite; even when she can only offer little, and very primitive food, Miss Honey is shown to make effort and focus on the manner in which things are prepared and eaten. This shows a clear bias towards the values that Bourdieu depicted as bourgeois, where the manner or form is at least as important as the function (1984, 196 and 376).

In the last three sections I have examined the tastes and preferences of the characters from *Matilda*. The analysis of their appearances, pastimes and food preferences concludes that the characters' tastes in these areas are consistent, forming the "unitary set" of preferences that Bourdieu discusses (1984, 173 and 175). The characters of Mr and Mrs Wormwood exhibit tastes and behaviours that are somewhere between those of the petit bourgeois, such as attempting but never quite managing legitimate style, and the working class, for example the consuming of ready-made meals. Matilda's taste corresponds largely with Bourdieu's concept of the petit bourgeois class, and Miss Honey's with that of the bourgeois. The preferences of Mr and Mrs Wormwood are ridiculed and labelled as inferior in the text, while those of Matilda are implied to be better choices. Interestingly, Miss Trunchbull, who is also a villain in the book, is ridiculed as much as the Wormwoods, but mostly in connection with things that do not relate to her social class. As she is a teacher, Miss Trunchbull's social class is not seen as something to mock. At the end of the story Matilda moves in with Miss Honey, as her parents leave the country and she does not wish to go with them. This corresponds with the petit bourgeois mentality that Matilda is portrayed as having, as the petit bourgeois considers the pursuit of legitimacy and chance of social ascension worth sacrificing previous social relations (Bourdieu 1984, 337), in this case Matilda's family. In *Matilda*, the reader

is interpellated as someone who agrees with these views of the different classes and the preferences of their members, and sees the tastes exhibited by Matilda as legitimate and right, and those of the Wormwoods, who represent the lower classes, as inferior and tasteless.

3.2 *Cautionary Tales for Children and New Cautionary Tales*

As with the previous section on *Matilda*, the following sections in which I will examine the poems of Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*, are divided according to theme. These themes are objects and activities, social trajectories of characters and attitudes towards the lower classes.

3.2.1 Objects and Activities

In this section I will examine the types of objects and activities that are mentioned in Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*. Althusser states that all practices, whether actions or the purchase and consumption of goods, can be seen as material manifestations of the ideologies that prompt them (1984, 39-40). Furthermore, Bourdieu notes that a person's taste in goods and practices is determined by the social class or class fraction in which they belong (1984, 6 and 57-59). The references to objects and activities in Belloc's poems can thus reveal information about the social class that the characters belong to, and may also affect the ideological content that the readers are encouraged to adopt through the texts.

The poem "Jim, Who ran away from his Nurse, and was eaten by a Lion" (*CT*) describes the wonderful life that its main character, Jim, enjoys before he strays from his nurse and is ultimately killed by a lion:

There was a Boy whose name was Jim;
His Friends were very good to him.
They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam,
And slices of delicious Ham,
And Chocolate with pink inside,
And little Tricycles to ride,

And read him stories through and through,
 And even took him to the Zoo -
 But there it was the dreadful Fate
 Befell him, which I now relate. (*CT*, 5-6²).

Jim is given many edible treats, including cake and chocolate, and expensive toys, such as tricycles. People in Jim's life also lavish him with attention; he is read to, and taken to the zoo. In the picture that accompanies these verses, an old man reads a book to Jim, who is fast asleep in his chair. Jim is in the fortunate position of having friends who like to indulge him, and have the means to do so. The treats that Jim enjoy sound lovely even today, but when the poem was first published, in 1907, these treats would have been extravagant and out of reach for most children. Though the reader is encouraged to think of Jim as lucky to have such good friends, there is also an expectation that the reader has some knowledge of these types of treats themselves. The text interpellates the reader as someone who has experienced similar treats themselves, creating a very privileged subject position for the reader to adopt.

A luxurious house and lifestyle is also depicted in “Matilda, Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death”. Matilda has the bad habit of inventing lies, and one day calls the fire brigade and falsely claims that the house where she lives with her aunt is on fire. The firemen rush to the house to extinguish the fire, and through the descriptions of their actions we see some features of the house. It is said that

They ran their ladders through a score
 Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;
 And took Peculiar Pains to Souse
 The Pictures up and down the House (*CT*, 20)

The house is large and extravagant enough to have a “ball room floor”, whether that is a whole floor dedicated to ball rooms or simply the floor that the ball room happens to be on. The pictures that the firemen destroy by hosing them with water are not described in the text more, but a couple of them are shown in an illustration where the firemen are inside the house, spraying water everywhere. In

² I will be using page numbers instead of line numbers to refer to citations from Belloc's texts, as the poems do not have numbered lines, and sentences are divided onto lines differently depending on the edition of the book.

the illustration there are two paintings hanging on the walls of the room, one a portrait of a man, the other a landscape. These paintings have labels, on the portrait there is one that reads “Velasquez”, and on the landscape one that reads “Turner” (*CT*, 21). Both of these names are references to famous artists. The reader is meant to understand that these names suggest very valuable works of art.

Another reference to high culture is the mention of theatre in “Matilda”. The night that Matilda's house actually catches on fire, her aunt is going to the theatre, and leaves Matilda at home (*CT*, 22):

It happened that a few Weeks later
Her Aunt was off to the Theatre
To see that Interesting Play
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.
She had refused to take her Niece
To hear this Entertaining Piece:
A Deprivation Just and Wise
To Punish her for Telling Lies.

The aunt is pictured, dressed in an evening dress. There are several details in the above quote that reveal a cultured class background. Firstly, the simple fact that the aunt values theatre enough to attend a performance, and secondly, that she is going to see this particular play, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, which is a serious play that deals with social problems. Thirdly, it is mentioned that Matilda is not allowed to go to the theatre on this occasion, which tells us that she has been taken to theatre before. Theatre is not only for adults, but children, too, are used to being taken there. As mentioned earlier, Wacquant notes that it is possible to deduct a person's social class from the practices they partake in and goods they consume (2000, 117). In this poem, there are no direct references to the titles, occupations or wealth of the characters that would inform us of their social status, but we are able to conclude the correct social class, the bourgeoisie, from the fact that there are valuable paintings and a ball room in the house, and because Matilda's aunt goes to the theatre to see a play.

Expensive toys or items are also mentioned in the poems “Algernon, Who played with a Loaded Gun, and, on missing his Sister was reprimanded by his Father” and “George, Who played with a Dangerous Toy, and suffered a Catastrophe of considerable Dimensions” (*CT*). Algernon has

access to a gun, and points it at his sister while playing with it. Luckily the shot misses, but Algernon is scolded by his father. George, whose “Catastrophe of considerable Dimensions” I will examine more closely in the next section, receives a special toy as a gift from his grandmother (*CT*, 64):

When George's Grandmamma was told
That George had been as good as Gold,
She Promised in the Afternoon
To buy him an *Immense BALLOON*.

When the balloon later explodes after coming into contact with a candle, George is blamed for playing with something so unsafe, although it was his grandmother's idea to buy a balloon.

Another poem where high-priced objects are presented is “Hildebrand, Who was frightened by a Passing Motor, and was brought to Reason” (*CT*). As explained by the title of the poem, the protagonist, Hildebrand, is surprised by a car passing him quickly: “Oh, Murder! What was that, Papa!” (*CT*, 40) and his father reprimands him for being so easily scared. The father compares Hildebrand’s fright to his brave great grandfather, who fought honourably in several battles. At the end of his lecture about bravery and cars, the father exclaims (*CT*, 45-46):

But do not fret about it! Come!
We'll off to Town
And purchase some!”

The ending of the poem reveals the wealth of Hildebrand's family, as his father casually suggests that they go and “purchase some”, in other words, buy several cars at once. The suddenness of this decision means that the money required to buy these cars is insignificant to Hildebrand's father. Bourdieu maintains that in the search for distinction, items or practices that are new or rare in one’s social group are valued highly (1984, 247). In the poem, cars are enough of a novelty to still scare Hildebrand, which means that owning one would grant one profit in the form of distinction. This is why Hildebrand’s father decides to purchase cars, and by choosing to purchase more than one, he is maximizing the profit he receives.

There are two twin poems in *New Cautionary Tales* about boys and their ponies. The first one is “Jack and his Pony, Tom”, which tells the story of Jack, who spoils his pony by overfeeding it, and thus causes its death. The second poem, “Tom and his Pony, Jack”, also ends with the pony dying,

this time from overexertion. The fun Tom has with his pony is described (*NCT*, 111-113):

Tom had a little pony – Jack:
 He vaulted lightly on its back
 And galloped off for miles and miles
 A-leaping hedges, gates and stiles,
 And shouting “Yoicks!” and “Tally-ho!”
 And “Heads I win!” and “Tails below!”
 And many another sporting phrase.

All practices have connotations that link them in our minds to certain social classes or fractions (Bourdieu 1984, 233), and the connotations of horse riding connect it strongly to the upper class.

Belloc parodies upper class sportiness with Tom, who keeps expressing his enthusiasm by yelling different “sporting phrase[s]”, completely unaware that some of them do not refer to riding at all.

However, the pony cannot endure all the riding that Tom does over many days, and dies of exhaustion.

Tom's father is not pleased (*NCT*, 114-115):

His father made a fearful row.
 He said, “By Gum, you've done it now!
 Here lies – a carcass [sic] on the ground -
 No less than five and twenty pound!
 Indeed the value of the beast
 Would probably have much increased.
 His teeth were false; and all were told
 That he were only four years old.
 Oh! Curse it all! I tell you plain
 I'll never let you ride again!”

Tom's father is angry that he has lost the monetary value that the pony was worth, and the money that could have been gained by selling the pony, as it had been advertised as younger and in better condition than it actually was. Forbidding Tom to ride ponies again would be a logical consequence for causing the death of one, and as a reader, the type of moral that one would expect. However, the moral of the poem is declared at the very end (*NCT*, 115):

MORAL
 His father died when he was twenty
 And left three horses, which is plenty.

This lesson undermines everything told to us so far in the poem, and is the opposite of what cautionary stories would normally state. Instead of living to regret his cruelty and carelessness, Tom inherits three horses in just a few years when his father dies, and is able to ride again. In fact, as there are

several horses, Tom can ride much more than before, and is thus rewarded rather than punished by the ending.

The objects and practices described in this section are mostly expensive, and thus signs of a large amount of economic capital. They are also mainly things that are connected with the upper class lifestyle, especially in the early twentieth century, when the poems were written, such as horse riding or going to the theatre or the zoo. As Bourdieu notes, all activities or things are judged according to their estimated vulgarity or prestige in comparison with the other possible choices (Bourdieu 1984, 483). The activities and material things, such as toys, that are referenced in the poems are signs of wealth and high social standing. Lovell remarks that readers have to adopt the perspective offered to them to understand and enjoy a realist text (1980, 239-240). The poems include many references to objects and practices that are seen as signs of bourgeois lifestyle, and thus interpellate the reader as someone who has some experience of similar things.

3.2.2 Social Trajectories of Characters

In this section I will be examining the social trajectories that the characters have in Belloc's poems. As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu states that several different factors can influence what sort of trajectory a person's life eventually forms. Sometimes trajectories take shape based on luck, but matters such as the type and amount of capital the person has, and how he or she is able to utilise said capital, are often significant (Bourdieu 1984, 110). I will be considering those poems that are especially relevant in terms of class trajectories and that describe the cause or development of the trajectory that the character's life follows.

The first poem I will consider is “Godolphin Horne, Who was cursed with the Sin of Pride and became a Boot-Black.” (*CT*). As the title suggests, Godolphin's problem is being too proud, and this sin will eventually greatly affect his life. Godolphin is described as:

And oh! The Lad was Deathly Proud!
He never shook your Hand or Bowed,
But merely smirked and nodded thus:

How perfectly ridiculous! (*CT*, 30)

The accompanying illustration shows young Godolphin walking on the street and passing a man holding a broom. The man has stopped sweeping, and has taken his top hat off to greet Godolphin. Godolphin is not responding to the greeting, but is shown walking past with a scowling look on his face. However, Godolphin soon receives a punishment for his pride, as there is an opening at the court for a page, and the Lord High Chamberlain has to decide who will fill this prestigious position. The Lord High Chamberlain goes through his book, “*People Qualified to Be Attendant on His Majesty*”, and after considering several other boys, whom he deems unsuitable in various ways, decides on Godolphin. But upon hearing this decision, other noble and important people begin protesting (*CT*, 34):

But hardly had he said a word
 When Murmurs of Dissent were heard.
 The King of Iceland's Eldest Son
 Said, “Thank you! I am taking none!”
 The Aged Duchess of Athlone
 Remarked, in her sub-acid tone,
 “I doubt if he is what we need!”
 With which the Bishops all agreed;
 And even Lady Mary Flood
 (So Kind, and oh! So *really* good)
 Said, “No! He wouldn't do at all,
 He'd make us feel a lot too small.”

Faced with these unanimous objections, the Lord High Chamberlain “scratche[s] Godolphin out again” (*CT*, 35). The poem thus ends (*CT*, 36): “So now Godolphin is the Boy, Who blacks the Boots at the Savoy.” This is illustrated with a picture of Godolphin, still a child in the picture, dressed in rags and holding boot blacking brushes, and looking miserable. The class trajectory of Godolphin Horne has taken a steep fall from an aristocratic boy, considered for a position serving the court, to becoming a bootblack.

The second example of a character whose trajectory in life ends up falling lower than expected, is Lord Lundy in the poem “Lord Lundy; Who was too Freely Moved to Tears, and thereby ruined his Political Career” (*CT*). As is obvious from the title, Lord Lundy is seen as overly emotional, and this behaviour is not deemed acceptable to a man of his status. Lord Lundy's problem begins at

childhood, for example (*CT*, 47):

Lord Lundy from his earliest years
Was far too freely moved to Tears.
For instance if his Mother said,
”Lundy! It's time to go to Bed!”
He bellowed like a Little Turk.

Lord Lundy's crying irritates his family, and they do not react kindly to his behaviour. For example, lord Lundy's grandmother “Said “Oh! That I were Brisk and Spry, To give him that for which to cry!” (*CT*, 51). Lord Lundy's troubles mount as he grows and is “shoved ... into politics” (*CT*, 54). Lord Lundy begins his political career as any man of the upper class should: “he commanded, The income that his rank demanded”, but his crying soon starts to crumble the respect he needs (*CT*, 54-55):

But very soon his friends began
To doubt if he were quite the man:
Thus, if a member rose to say
(As members do from day to day),
“Arising out of that reply...!”
Lord Lundy would begin to cry.

Lord Lundy's behaviour means that he is demoted continually: “They let him sink from Post to Post, From fifteen hundred at the most, To eight, and barely six – and then, To be Curator of Big Ben! ..., And finally there came a Threat, To oust him from the Cabinet!” (*CT*, 56). Eventually lord Lundy's grandfather, the Duke, calls for him and tells him what he thinks (*CT*, 56):

“Sir! You have disappointed us!
We had intended you to be
The next Prime Minister but three:
The stocks were sold; the Press was squared:
The Middle Class was quite prepared.
But as it is! ... My language fails!
Go out and govern New South Wales!”

After this chastising, the grandfather dies, and Lord Lundy, of course, is left crying.

In the case of Lord Lundy, the character's “downfall” is not caused by a sin, but inappropriate behaviour that annoys the people in his social circle, first his family and later his colleagues and peers. The poem is humorous, as, because of his high birth, Lord Lundy has started his career at a point that is considered by readers, especially nowadays, as very high, and thus his demotions have little effect from our point of view. The ultimate punishment doled out by the Duke is also comical, as it is shows

how little the position of Governor of New South Wales is valued by the English characters in the story. In the cases of both Lord Lundy and Godolphin Horne the cause of their falling social trajectories is their inability to behave in a manner that their peers require. Bourdieu describes the bourgeois habitus as exhibiting “ease within restraint” (1984, 311), and neither Godolphin’s pride nor Lord Lundy’s sensitivity achieve this, as both manifest in behaviours that lack restraint.

In “Maria Who made faces and a Deplorable Marriage” (*NCT*), we have a female character, whose social trajectory also falls. Maria behaves badly, as can be deduced from the title of the poem, by making awful facial expressions, which is not appropriate behaviour for a young lady. Unfortunately, one day Maria's face sets in this horrible grimace, and does not return to normal again. With time, Maria becomes a charming young woman (*NCT*, 90-92):

With every talent, every grace
 (Save in this trifle of the face).
 She sang, recited, laughed and played
 At all that an accomplished maid
 Should play with skill to be of note -
 Golf, the Piano, and the Goat;
 She talked in French till all was blue
 And knew a little German too.
 She told the tales that soldiers tell,
 She also danced extremely well,
 Her wit was pointed, loud and raw,
 She shone at laying down the law,
 She drank liqueurs instead of tea,
 Her verse was admirable free
 And quoted in the latest books -
 But people couldn't stand her looks.

Maria's parents worry that her horrid facial expression may harm her chances of a good marriage despite all of her other virtues and charms, and they divulge the large fortune she will inherit in the hopes that this will attract suitors. Suitors do come, but they cannot stand Maria's face, and do not stay. Eventually, Maria is forced to make the only marriage she can (*NCT*, 97):

The upshot of it was Maria
 Was married to a neighbouring Squire
 Who, being blind, could never guess
 His wife's appalling ugliness.
 The man was independent, dull,
 Offensive, poor and masterful.
 It was a very dreadful thing!

According to Bourdieu, “bourgeois distinction” is strongly connected to manners of speaking, dressing or moving, as well as skills one learns at home or by associating with people from a bourgeois background, such as certain games or dances (1984, 91). Despite being “still in her delightful 'teens” (*NCT*, 93), having both money and all of the above mentioned social graces and skills expected of an upper class lady, Maria cannot overcome the problem of her face. In Maria's case, her ugly expression, what might be termed as lack of “physical capital”, is all that matters in the end. That is the capital that she would have needed to marry better, and to have a social trajectory that did not fall with a poor marriage. No amount of other types of capital, whether economic, cultural or social, can compensate for this deficiency.

Another female character whose poem is worth examining in terms of social trajectory is “Sarah Byng Who could not read and was tossed into a thorny hedge by a bull” (*NCT*). Sarah Byng, despite being twelve years old, cannot read at all. Sarah's uneducated nature is contrasted with her very cultured siblings for added emphasis (*NCT*, 99-101):

Her sister Jane, though barely nine,
 Could spout the Catechism through
 And parts of Matthew Arnold too,
 While little Bill who came between
 Was quite unnaturally keen
 On “Athalie,” by Jean Racine.

But not so Sarah! Not so Sal!
 She was a most uncultured girl
 Who didn't care a pinch of snuff
 For any literary stuff
 And gave the classics all a miss.

Sarah's accident happens when she is out walking one day, and comes to a gate that has a warning sign about an angry bull. Because of her illiteracy, Sarah does not understand the warning, and climbs over the gate into the field. The bull then attacks Sarah, but luckily “[w]as rather in the mood for play, Than goring people through and through, As bulls so very often do” (102). The bull throws Sarah into a hedge with its horns, but Sarah is spared from bodily harm. Though she escaped without injuries, Sarah learns a lesson (*NCT*, 104):

The lesson was not lost upon
 The child, who since has always gone
 A long way round to keep away
 From signs, whatever they may say,
 And leaves a padlocked gate alone.
 Moreover she has wisely grown
 Confirmed in her instinctive guess
 That literature breeds distress.

The punchline of this poem is the surprising, humorous moral at the end. While Sarah's encounter with the bull has made her wary of locked gates, it did not lead her to the conclusion that the reader is coached to expect; that she should learn to read to be able to understand signs. Instead, Sarah has determined that the presence of the sign, the "literature" in the case, was the cause of her problem, and to avoid such literature in the future. Sarah was not seriously hurt by the bull, and is able to continue her life as before. Her illiteracy has not affected her future, nor does it seem to negatively impact her future social trajectory, as Sarah is not scolded for her conclusion to avoid literature. In fact, Sarah's deduction, although funny, is offered to us as readers as a valid choice for her. It seems that Sarah's social status and future trajectory do not depend on her educational capital, and she can thus afford to ignore the whole question of literacy. This is consistent with the assertion made by Wilkes that "cultural stupidity" is not nearly as detrimental to a member of the bourgeoisie as it would be for a member of the petit bourgeoisie (1990, 121). This is because the petit bourgeois values knowledge and sees it as his or her path to possible social ascension (Wilkes 1990, 128), while the status of the bourgeois depends mainly on things other than scholarly knowledge, which is irrelevant as long as one has a bourgeois upbringing or habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 91).

There is one character whose social trajectory is shown to rise considerably in the poem. That is the poem of "Charles Augustus Fortescue, Who always Did what was Right, and so accumulated an Immense Fortune" (*CT*). Charles Augustus Fortescue is served as a good example to us as readers, amid the other characters, most of whom are used to caution the readers against various unwanted behaviours. Charles Augustus is exemplary from a young age (*CT*, 70):

He never lost his cap, or tore
 His stockings or his pinafore:
 In eating Bread he made no Crumbs,

He was extremely fond of sums,
 To which, however, he preferred
 The Parsing of a Latin Word -
 He sought, when it was in his power,
 For information twice an hour

As he grows, Charles Augustus continues to behave well and take others into account; “In Public Life he always tried, To take a judgment Broad and Wide; In private none was more than he, Renowned for quiet courtesy” (*CT*, 72). In the illustration accompanying these verses we can see Charles Augustus as a youngish man, lounging on an armchair with his leg casually thrown over one of the armrests, while a very old man with two canes stands next to him, unable to sit on the small stool that is free next to Charles Augustus. The illustration, juxtaposed with the flattering account of the virtues of Charles Augustus, creates a humorous effect and undermines the excessive praise that Charles Augustus receives.

Charles Augustus Fortescue is described as very successful, and the readers are told to learn from his example (*CT*, 72-74):

He rose at once in his Career,
 And long before his Fortieth Year
 Had wedded Fifi, Only Child
 Of Bunyan, First Lord Aberfylde.
 He thus became immensely Rich,
 And built the splendid mansion which
 Is called “The Cedars, Muswell Hill,”
 Where he resides in Affluence still,
 To show what Everybody might
 Become by

SIMPLY DOING RIGHT.

The comical effect in this poem, as in the poem about Sarah Byng, is derived largely from the moral at the end of the poem, which does not follow logically and self-evidently from the story we have been told. Though Charles Augustus is said to have been fond of mathematics and Latin as a boy, any hard work he might have done as an adult in his studies or work is not mentioned. What we are told is that “he rose at once in his career” (*CT*, 72), but if we are familiar with the earlier poem of Lord Lundy, we are aware that careers may be had even if one is unsuitable or merely has the right social capital, such as a respectable upper class background. This knowledge, together with the illustration

that proved that despite being “renowned for quiet courtesy”, Charles Augustus was not invariably polite, leads us to question the suggestion that his success is the result of “simply doing right”, as the last line of the poem tells us. If we examine the sequence of events in the poem, we notice that the actual reason that Charles Augustus became “immensely rich” and now lives in a “splendid mansion” (*CT*, 73) is that he married a rich woman, the sole heir to a fortune. The ascending social trajectory of Charles Augustus is, in fact, not the direct result of his virtues, but his advantageous marriage that provides him with a large amount of economic capital. Still, it can be argued that the excellent reputation Charles Augustus has, whether deserved or not, is a type of capital that he has been able to utilise to marry a woman with such a high amount of economic capital. Bourdieu notes that the value of types of capital is determined in different circumstances or fields, where that capital may be used (1984, 94 and 113). In the field of marriage proposals and wooing, an excellent reputation and a bourgeois background are enough for Charles Augustus to be able to marry well, whereas as we noted earlier in the poem about Maria, her lack of physical beauty rendered her many other forms of capital nearly useless in this particular field.

A person who almost had a rising social trajectory, but then did not, is introduced as a warning in the poem “About John, Who lost a fortune by Throwing Stones” (*NCT*). The protagonist, John Vavassour De Quentin Jones, is not from a wealthy family, but has an uncle, who has often told John that he will be remembered in his will. The uncle is very rich (*NCT*, 119):

He has a lot of stocks and shares
 And half a street in Buenos Aires
 A bank in Rio, and a line
 Of Streamers in the Argentine.
 And options more than I can tell,
 And bits of Canada as well;
 He even had a mortgage on
 The House inhabited by John.

Unfortunately, as well as his uncle's affection, Joh also has a penchant for throwing stones. One day, as John's uncle, now in poor health and bound to a wheelchair, is sitting outside in the sun, he is hit in the eye by a stone that “came whizzing through the trees” (*NCT*, 123). The uncle is shocked, and demands to know who threw the stone. When his nurse, Miss Charming, responds that it was John,

the uncle requests that the nurse fetch his will (*NCT*, 124);

And Uncle William ran his pen
Through “well-beloved John,” and then
Proceeded, in the place of same,
To substitute Miss Charming's name

John has thus lost his chance of inheriting his uncle's large fortune, and his social trajectory does not rise, as it would have done, had he gained such a substantial amount of economic capital. What is noteworthy in this poem is that the end result, John not inheriting his uncle's wealth and thus bettering his social status, depends on John's relationship with his uncle, in other words his social capital. John was in the will because his uncle “adored” him (*NCT*, 118), and when he fell from grace, his expected social trajectory fell, too.

There is a character in the poem who has a very sharply rising social trajectory, and that is Miss Charming, the uncle's nurse, who inherits his wealth. I will analyse Miss Charming more in the next section, when I will be looking at the attitudes depicted towards members of social classes other than the upper class.

The last poem I will consider in this section is “Peter Goole Who Ruined his Father and Mother by Extravagance” (*NCT*). Peter is described as a good boy with one problem: he cannot stop spending money (*NCT*, 127):

And money ran between his hands
Like water through the Ocean Sands.
Such conduct could not but affect
His parent's fortune, which was wrecked
Like many and many another one
By folly in a spendthrift son:
By that most tragical mischance,
An Only Child's Extravagance.

Above these verses is an illustration of Peter, purchasing two ice cream cones. This picture is the only clue we have of what Peter actually bought or spent money on. What comes next is the terrible misfortune; Peter's parents have depleted their bank accounts, and turn to Peter's money box as the last resort, but when his father breaks the box open, there is no money, only “two bone buttons and a pin” inside (*NCT*, 129). The fate of Peter's parents is lamented (*NCT*, 130-131):

They had to sell the house and grounds
 For less than twenty thousand pounds,
 And so retired, with broken hearts,
 To vegetate in foreign parts,
 And ended their declining years
 At Blidah – which is near Algiers.
 There in the course of time they died,
 And there lie buried side by side.

The poem parodies the cautionary tale convention of serious or catastrophic consequences that follow from the actions of children by presenting Peter as the person responsible for his parents' "ruin". When we observe what is actually said about the parents, it is clear that they were not at all destitute if they managed to live abroad the last years of their lives. Even if they were, it would hardly be appropriate to expect a nine-year-old to solve the family's financial problems with his pocket money.

Peter's future is also described as if it were terrible (*NCT*, 132-133):

While when we turn to Peter, he
 The cause of this catastrophe,
 There fell upon him such a fate
 As makes me shudder to relate.
 Just in his fifth and final year,
 His University Career
 Was blasted by the new and dread
 Necessity of earning bread.
 He was compelled to join a firm
 Of Brokers – in the summer term!
 And even now, at twenty-five,
 He has to
 WORK
 to keep alive!

Yes! All day long from 10 till 4!
 For half the year or even more;
 With but an hour or two to spend
 At luncheon with a city friend.

Peter's social trajectory can be seen as having fallen after his parents "ruin", as working for his living is presented as an unexpected turn of events. Nevertheless, Peter has not experienced the steep decline in terms of social trajectory that, for example, Godolphin Horne encountered, falling from aristocracy to a bootblack. Peter has, despite his misfortune, been able to attend university, and only had to begin working in his "fifth and final year" (*NCT*, 132), when he had a summer job. The narrator's outrage at the fact that Peter has to work is humorous, as with every detail we receive it becomes clearer to

us that Peter's job is not at all the hard toil that it is made out to be; Peter works from ten to four, six hours a day, and spends an hour or two of that at lunch. In addition, there is an illustration of Peter as an adult, at one of his luncheons with a friend. Peter and the friend are in a fine restaurant, and the waiter is bowing towards Peter, ready to take his order. Peter is looking at the menu, and he has a happy and excited look on his face.

Social trajectories in *Cautionary Tales* and *New Cautionary Tales* are more often falling than rising, which is to be expected when we think about the genre; the cautionary tales that are not parodies serve as warnings to children, and a considerable fall in social trajectory, such as loss of property or status, works well as a warning story. One of the poems in these works demonstrates a surprisingly even trajectory, the poem about Sarah Byng, whose illiteracy did not seem to affect her trajectory at all. Charles Augustus Fortescue was presented not as a warning but as a good example to the readers, and his life followed a rising trajectory, supposedly because of his virtuous and good behaviour. What is noteworthy about the poems is that in many of them, the crucial element that decides the social trajectory of a person is the amount of social capital he or she has. Godolphin Horne became a boot black because his arrogant reputation prevented him from becoming a page. Lord Lundy's crying grated on his family and colleagues, and his own grandfather was eventually responsible for sending him to Australia. John lost out on a fortune because his uncle began to dislike him after the stone incident. And Charles Augustus Fortescue, despite what we were seemingly being told, did not become "immensely Rich" (*CT*, 73), as a direct result of "simply doing right" (*CT*, 74), but by marrying a rich woman, though he may have been able to utilise his good reputation in making that marriage. This reveals that among these, upper class, characters, social capital is seen as vitally important to a person's status and their future social trajectory is more likely to depend on it than, for example, educational or even economic capital.

3.2.3 Attitudes towards the Lower Classes

The protagonists and their families that are described in Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* and *New*

Cautionary Tales are affluent people and members of the upper class, the bourgeoisie in Bourdieu's terms. In this subsection I will examine the way that members of other, lower classes are presented in these poems, and what this reveals about the ideological content of the poems.

First, I will look at the poem "Jim, Who ran away from his Nurse, and was eaten by a Lion" (*CT*). In this poem, Jim, the protagonist, has the bad habit of running away from his nurse. One day, while visiting the zoo with his nurse, Jim runs off once again, and is attacked by a lion. Though the zoo keeper tries to stop the lion, it manages to eat most of Jim, leaving only his head behind. Part of the absurd humour of the poem comes from the slightly illogical chain of events and the way they are explained to the readers, as no reason is given as to why there happened to be a hungry lion running around the zoo, nor is there any real reason to think that Jim would have been safer had he been holding the nurse's hand (*CT*, 7):

And on this inauspicious day
 He slipped his hand and ran away!
 He hadn't gone a yard when - Bang!
 With open Jaws, a Lion sprang,
 And hungrily began to eat
 The Boy: beginning at his feet.

The zoo keeper is depicted, as he comes to Jim's aid (*CT*, 8-9):

The Honest Keeper herd his cry,
 Though very fat he almost ran
 To help the little gentleman.
 "Ponto!" he ordered as he came
 (For Ponto was the Lion's name),
 "Ponto!" he cried, with angry Frown.
 "Let go, Sir! Down, Sir! Put it down!"

These verses are illustrated with two drawings of the keeper. In the first, the keeper, having heard Jim's cries, is walking towards the boy and the lion. He looks stern, but is clearly not hurrying too much, rather, he is walking using his cane, with one arm behind his back, and is smoking while walking. The zoo keeper is a plump man, with a large moustache and seems to be mostly bald under his hat. He appears to be in his fifties, perhaps, but not by any means too old or sickly to be actually physically incapable of running to help Jim. In the second picture the keeper is standing, presumably next to Jim and the lion, and ordering the lion to stop. He is leaning back and still smoking, and not

attempting to physically stop the attack. The wording of the zoo keeper's orders can be seen as a deliberate inversion of the usual way of calling people and animals, as the keeper calls the lion "Sir", and refers to Jim as "it". This is amusing as it suggests that the zoo keeper respects the lion more than an upper class boy.

Surprisingly, the lion seems to obey the keeper's orders and goes back to its cage, but unfortunately, by this time there is not much left of Jim (*CT*, 10):

But when he bent him over Jim,
The Honest Keeper's Eyes were dim.
The Lion having reached his Head,
The miserable Boy was dead!

The drawing on this page shows the zoo keeper poking Jim's severed head with his cane, looking shocked and tears falling from his eyes. Thus, despite the previous depictions of the keeper's behaviour, how he "almost ran" to help Jim, the calm demeanour in which he ordered the lion and calling Jim "it", seem to suggest that he does not care about Jim being eaten, the keeper is actually depicted as upset and crying when he notices that Jim has died.

The other member of the working class in the poem is the nurse whose hand Jim let go of. The nurse is not described in the beginning of the poem and it is merely said that although children should not leave their nurses, Jim had a habit of doing it. After Jim's death at the zoo, though, the nurse is mentioned as she returns home (*CT*, 11-12):

When the Nurse informed his Parents, they
Were more concerned than I can say: -
His Mother, as She dried her eyes,
Said, "Well - it gives me no surprise,
He would not do as he was told!"
His Father, who was self-controlled,
Bade all the children round attend
To James' miserable end,
And always keep a-hold of Nurse
For fear of finding something worse.

The nurse is pictured giving the news to Jim's parents. The father looks serious and mildly surprised, and the mother sad. The nurse, however, is smiling in the picture. This unexpected facial expression may indicate satisfaction, as Jim had clearly been a difficult child to care for, as he kept running off.

The attitude that the whole family had towards the nurse, in fact, may be questioned, as the moral of the story, “always keep a-hold of Nurse, For fear of finding something worse” (*CT*, 12) is seemingly being told to children by Jim's father as a warning, and clearly shows some prejudice against the nurse. In light of these matters, it might be understandable if the nurse's feelings about Jim's demise were not all negative.

In the poem “Matilda, Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death” (*CT*), the members of lower classes are firemen. Matilda's moral failing is her propensity to lying, and one day she invents the lie that her aunt's house, where Matilda also lives, is on fire, and calls the fire service (*CT*, 19):

And finding she was left alone,
Went tiptoe to the Telephone
And summoned the Immediate Aid
Of London's Noble Fire-Brigade.
Within an hour the Gallant Band
Were pouring in on every hand,
From Putney, Hackney Downs and Bow,
With Courage high and Hearts a-glow
They galloped, roaring through the Town,
“Matilda's House is Burning Down!”

The firemen begin arriving “within an hour” (*CT*, 19), which, to the modern reader, does not sound like very soon, but considering that they seem to be coming from all over London, and that, according to an illustration, they are arriving in a horse-drawn carriage, this amount of time is not totally unconvincing. The firemen are called “noble”, and described as eager to do their duty; even the fire brigades in farther parts of town are coming to help, with “Courage high and Hearts a-glow”.

Inspired by British Cheers and Loud
Proceedings from the Frenzied Crowd,
They ran their ladders through a score
Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;
And took peculiar pains to Souse
The Pictures up and down the House,
Until Matilda's Aunt succeeded
In showing them they were not needed
And even then she had to pay
To get the Men to go away! (*CT*, 19-21)

Here, the firemen's enthusiasm is heightened by the crowd which urges them on. The firemen break several windows, and spray the paintings with water. There is a picture of three firemen inside the

house; one is marching somewhere with an axe in his hand, the second is spraying water from a hose into a fireplace, with black smoke coming in to the room. The third fireman is pointing his hose straight up towards the ceiling of the room. On the walls of the room there are two paintings, which are labelled Velasquez and Turner.

At first, the firemen are portrayed as perhaps overly excited, but good-hearted men. As we hear more about their actions; how they broke an unnecessary or at least a surprising number of windows, how they then continued to hose the paintings in the house, the firemen appear as careless and not very good at their job. It also seems that, as the firemen intentionally hose the paintings and take “peculiar pains” to do so, they may take some pleasure in destroying some of the property of a rich, upper class person. The illustration, described above, can also be seen as proof of not incompetence, but of deliberate sabotage; spraying water towards a ceiling probably ruins that ceiling, and the fireman with an axe may be going to find something he can destroy with that axe.

In “Lord Lundy, Who was too Freely Moved to Tears, and thereby ruined his Political Career”, we are presented with the opinions that a few of Lord Lundy's relatives have of him. Because of his incessant crying, these opinions are very negative. After listing what Lord Lundy's aunt and grandmother thought of him, the list continues (*CT*, 52):

The Dear old Butler
thought – but there!
I really neither know nor care
For what the Dear Old Butler thought!
In my opinion, Butlers ought
To know their place, and not to play
The Old Retainer night and day

The narrator stops before it is revealed what the butler thinks, and claims that it is not of any interest what his opinion is, as he should “know [his] place”. However, this quotation does not represent a completely negative attitude towards the butler, as his opinion is almost recounted. It is only at the last minute that the narrator seems to remember that the butler is not actually part of the family and his remarks should not be accounted when the others' are. This, in my view, shows a fairly high regard for the butler.

A poem that was discussed already in the section about objects and activities, but is also very relevant here, is “George, Who played with a Dangerous Toy, and suffered a Catastrophe of considerable Dimensions” (*CT*). As mentioned earlier, George receives a balloon from his grandmother, but as it gets into contact with an open flame, it explodes. The effects of the explosion are disastrous, as the whole house collapses. The victims of this accident are listed:

When Help arrived, among the Dead
 Were Cousin Mary, Little Fred,
 The Footmen (both of them), The Groom,
 The man that cleaned the Billiard-Room,
 The Chaplain, and The Still-Room Maid.
 And I am dreadfully afraid
 That monsieur Champignon, the Chef,
 Will now be permanently deaf -
 And both his Aides
 are much the same (*CT*, 67)

As a result of George's balloon being too close to a candle, eight people have died, and three injured. Most of those listed are servants, though Cousin Mary is a relative, and Little Fred might be as well. The victims are also illustrated one or two in the same small picture, as they are listed, as if to make them more real to the reader. In cautionary stories there is generally a punishment that follows from bad behaviour or carelessness, and here, too, George, whose balloon caused the accident, is not left without consequences (*CT*, 69);

While George, who was in part to blame,
 Received, you will regret to hear,
 A nasty lump
 behind the ear.

The lines are accompanied by a picture of George, who is crying and does have a large lump on one side of his head. The contrast between George's lump behind one ear and the eight dead and three injured is intentionally humorous. The repercussions for George are laughably insignificant compared to the other characters, but they are treated as if they were of the same caliber, which implies that one lump on George is as big of a tragedy as the deaths of many servants and lesser relatives. This is, of course, the basis of the humour in the poem, and can be recognised as satire directed towards the class system, in which people of high social status are sometimes considered more important than others.

The last poem I will concentrate on in this section is “About John, Who lost a fortune by Throwing Stones” (*NCT*), which was also partly analysed above, in regards to social trajectories. As mentioned there, though the social trajectory of John declines in the poem, the trajectory of another character, the uncle's nurse, rises. The nurse is first mentioned in passing, as she takes the uncle outside:

So once, when he would take the air,
They wheeled him in his Patent Chair
(By “They,” I mean his Nurse, who came
From Dorchester upon the Thame:
Miss Charming was the Nurse's name). (*NCT*, 122-123)

At this point, there is no hint of the role the nurse will play later on, and she seems to be mentioned merely to clarify the sentence. But as the stone hits John's uncle in the eye, the nurse becomes a major character (*NCT*, 123):

He woke with an appalling cry,
And shrieked in agonizing tones:
“Oh! Lord! Whoever's throwing stones!”

Miss Charming, Who was standing near,
Said: “That was Master John, I fear!”

The poem does not actually mention whether the stone was thrown by John, as it is only said that “A stone came whizzing through the trees” (*NCT*, 123). It is possible to interpret the situation in three different ways; either Miss Charming sees John throw the stone, she assumes John's involvement because of his previous habit of throwing stones, or, possibly, Miss Charming knows John was not the culprit but claims so anyway. In any case, the statement springs Uncle William into action (*NCT*, 124):

“Go, get my Ink-pot and my Quill,
My Blotter and my Famous Will.”
Miss Charming flew as though on wings
To fetch these necessary things,
And Uncle William ran his pen
Through “well-beloved John,” and then
Proceeded, in the place of same,
To substitute Miss Charming's name:
Who now resides in Portman Square
And is accepted everywhere.

We cannot know if Miss Charming lied about John's involvement, though the fact that he was to inherit his uncle was generally known, but Miss Charming is made the beneficiary, and inherits the uncle's large fortune. These last lines are illustrated by a picture of Miss Charming after her inheritance, wearing elegant clothes and jewellery and smiling faintly. What is remarkable about the poem, is that John's loss of inheritance is not bemoaned, even though Miss Charming was a servant and not a close relative like John. The quick turn of events at the end of the poem seems to echo the speed at which fortunes are sometimes gained or lost in the real world, and there is not time for the reader or the uncle's relatives to understand what is happening until it is too late. Bourdieu states that acceptance in the bourgeoisie can depend on seniority in the class, that is, how long the person or his or her family have belonged in the social class (1984, 63). However, this is not the case in this poem, as despite her lack of a legitimate class background and the competences that come with that, Miss Charming is now "accepted everywhere" (*NCT*, 124). The economic capital that she now has is enough to gain her access to the bourgeoisie, regardless of her past status. In this way, the poem can be seen to demonstrate values that are unexpectedly democratic and accepting of people from the lower classes.

In these last three sections I have considered the poems in Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales* from three perspectives, focusing on the objects and activities, social trajectories, and attitudes towards the lower classes found in the poems. The practices and goods mentioned are predominantly ones that reference an upper class lifestyle, and thus can be seen as requiring the reader to accept a similar position while reading the poems. The examination of the social trajectories reveals that social capital is seen as the most important asset in many of the poems, and one that can greatly impact a character's trajectory. However, while the lifestyle and circumstances described are bourgeois, the poems also display attitudes and values that are subversive of the dominant, bourgeois ideology. The attitudes towards members of lower classes are surprisingly democratic, as these characters are not maligned for their status, and they are described as having their own, equally valid opinions and choices. These characters are even seen resisting the

expectations or deliberately sabotaging the property of members of the upper class, and the actions are recounted without judgement, and seen as almost understandable. The unexpected endings of the poems and consequences for the characters question our expectations and the values that those are based on. Because of their humour and satirical remarks about members of certain social classes and their actions, the poems can be seen as the type of “carnavalesque, interrogative” (Stephens 1992, 82) or “revolutionary” (Lovell 1980, 240) texts that in fact make the ideology they contain visible, and thus reduce the possibility that readers unconsciously and unintentionally adopt it.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the class ideology in Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales*, and Roald Dahl's *Matilda*. The ideology found was visible in several different ways. As discussed in the section on Pierre Bourdieu's theory, social class can be made visible through a person's taste in aesthetic matters and personal practices, such as clothing and pastimes. A reader can also be affected by the ideology in a text by the process of interpellation, by which Louis Althusser indicates the way that the text calls the reader as a specific type of subject, and the reader then unconsciously accepts that role.

Ideology in *Matilda* is visible through the choices the characters make regarding their appearance, hobbies and food habits. Matilda's parents are openly mocked and their choices and practices are declared vulgar and undesirable, whereas Matilda's choices and tastes are presented as legitimate and better than those of her parents. Matilda's taste differs drastically from her parents' tastes, which would in reality be improbable, as taste and habitus are strongly learned at home. Matilda's tastes are very middle class; she appreciates reading, the value of education, and wishes to eat her meals in more formally, at the table. Her parents' taste is more lower middle class, verging on working class. Because of the strong judgement from the narrator and Matilda, through whose eyes the story is seen, the style and clothing of Mr and Mrs Wormwood are ridiculed for being gaudy and unstylish. The chosen pastimes of the parents, watching television and playing bingo, are also

depicted as ridiculous and undesirable, and so are their dining habits, eating in the living room and opting to not cook at home. In the story these tastes are depicted as personal preferences, and their connection to social class is ignored. This corresponds with Bourdieu's concept of "natural taste", the mistaken idea that taste is a personal matter and that some people simply have more legitimate tastes "naturally" (1984, 390). The concept places members of different social classes in unequal positions, as it suggests that those who lack legitimate tastes do so because of their own personal failings, and not because taste is a matter of social class (Bourdieu 1984, 390 and Wacquant 2000, 117).

The story is focalised through Matilda, and readers cannot avoid identifying with her character. Matilda's opinions and preferences thus become the reader's, for the time of reading, at least, as Stephens notes that strong identification with a protagonist through whom the story is also focalised is likely to prevent the reader from questioning the protagonist's values and actions (1992, 4). The story interpellates the reader as a person who agrees with these value judgements made by Matilda and the narrator about the Wormwoods and their lack of taste, and has similar tastes as Matilda and Miss Honey. The values that are being passed on to the reader seem partly intentional, such as the appreciation of education and reading, but the strong distaste or even repulsion that is directed towards the parents of Matilda and more or less also towards Miss Trunchbull does lead the reader to question whether these values are entirely deliberate. The degree of hostility is severe, and is directed not just towards Mr and Mrs Wormwood, who admittedly are villains in the story, but also towards anyone who shares any of their aesthetic choices. Such condemnation is in my opinion very questionable in a children's book, and I suspect the ideology is partly passive, in other words that Dahl has not intended to condemn people with working class tastes so totally.

The ideology in Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales* is different from the kind in *Matilda*. These poems portray the lives of the upper class, and as such contain many references to titles, expensive activities or the character's wealth. The activities that the mainly child protagonists are presented doing and the toys and objects they come into contact with, are largely those which are thought of as esteemed and legitimate. These facts, and in general the

decision to portray upper class characters may be seen as a result of organic ideology, as the readers and buyers of the books in the early twentieth century, when the books were written, would have been more upper class than today, when books are readily available for most people. Because of the genre of cautionary tales, many of the poems concentrate on the social trajectories of the characters. Some of these are typical to cautionary tales in that the badly behaved child is punished for his or her deeds, and thus suffers a decline in his or her trajectory. Others, however, parody the genre by presenting characters whose trajectory do not suffer from their apparent flaws, or whose trajectory is mainly affected by a matter other than the suggested cause. Because the protagonists can all be seen as belonging to the upper or upper middle class, I was interested to examine the attitudes towards the lower classes in the books. The ideology in *Cautionary Tales for Children* and *New Cautionary Tales* is mainly active ideology that questions social mores and dominant values by subverting the expected events and consequences. The poems also depict the characters as human and imperfect, which reduces reader identification with the protagonists (Stephens 1992, 68).

As the books by Belloc and Dahl's *Matilda* are written several decades apart, the societies in which they were written were also very different, including the common perspectives on matters of social class. It was surprising to notice that the class ideology in Belloc's texts, despite their upper class protagonists, was not nearly as extreme as in *Matilda*. The depiction of the high status activities in Belloc's poems certainly legitimises and normalises those actions, but Belloc's texts lack the hostility to other class positions that was visible in *Matilda*. Despite its more modern creation, *Matilda* presents the habits and tastes belonging to the lower classes as invalid and repulsive.

I have utilised the Marxist theories of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu in examining the class ideologies in the primary texts, and have in my opinion succeeded well in applying those ideas to the texts. As there is very little academic research on either Dahl or Belloc, I feel that analysing their texts was especially worthwhile. I think the topic of ideology in children's literature is important and worthy of study, as the child readers of those texts are more vulnerable and susceptible to any ideology or values in the texts than adults would be. My examination of Roald Dahl's *Matilda*

suggests that even relatively new children's books can have very strong ideological content, and propose values that many, myself included, would find largely objectionable. On the other hand, Belloc's poetry proves that all older children's literature does not contain outmoded or offensive ideology. These findings challenge the idea that our mentalities and values have become steadily more democratic and equal, and suggest that we probably still have plenty of unexamined beliefs. The rest of Dahl's children's books would provide a good topic for further study, as many of them are extremely popular and it would be interesting to discover whether they contain ideology similar to that found in *Matilda*.

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