

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter lays out the theoretical foundation used to analyze the data in this research, built mainly around Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony and the War of Position, through which power is understood as working not just by physical force, but by building consent and moral leadership inside civil society's institutions. This foundation is supported by the sociology of literature, which treats fiction as a social product shaped by the people living within a given society, positioning literature as a tool of intellectual resistance against those in power. It is grounded further in the sociopolitical background of the Borstal system in post-World War II Britain, read here not as a place of genuine rehabilitation but as an instrument of discipline and class control, before extending into the concept of the organic intellectual, an agent of change who speaks for the working class from within its own lived experience, and finally into the narrative elements of the fictional text itself. Together, these form the analytical basis for answering the research questions set out earlier in this study.

2.1 Sociology of Literature

Literature has never been born in a vacuum sealed off from reality. Although it is often dismissed as little more than a stack of printed words, something stiff and old-fashioned, literature in fact lives and breathes as a creative witness to how society has lived across every generation. Through the reciprocal relationship between creator, audience, and literature itself as a dynamic concept, the literary work evolves into a mirror of human civilization. It intrinsically encapsulates political intrigue, social dynamics, and the very essence of humanism. Literature emerges from the overflow of human emotion, mapped through careful narrative construction, and, for all its imperfections, strives to interpret and articulate human reason and feeling within a single work.

According to Sumardjo (as cited in Solichah, 2019, p. 7), literature is a product of society, situated in its midst and shaped by its members according to

both emotional and rational impulses. Literature, together with the entire background that produces it, can therefore be examined, gently, moderately, or rigorously, through the lens of the social sciences. If we trace the term back to its roots, "sociology" derives from *socius*, meaning companion or friend, and *logos*, meaning knowledge; the discipline is thus, by definition, the study of society, human relations, and the environments that shape them.

It seeks to interpret the causal explanations behind human action and its broader contextual relationships. Much as a companion is defined by constant presence, the concept of the sociology of literature captures, in a simple way, the reciprocal connection between human beings and knowledge: humanity continually grows, learns, and replenishes its store of understanding, while that very knowledge becomes the stepping stone that naturally underwrites the advance of civilization.

The sociology of literature thus emerges as a discipline that systematically analyzes literary texts as reflections and representations of a wide range of social problems. A literary work, at its core, offers readers a "lens" through which they can empathize with and understand the true formula and socio-historical background of a narrative, rather than settling for a passive appreciation of its surface content.

Within the discourse of the sociology of literature, it is essential to understand, at a deep level, that culture is not an isolated variable or a static backdrop frozen in time. On the contrary, culture is a dynamic entity, pulsing at the heart of society, and forever present as a manifestation of the collective identity shaped by both the emotional and rational impulses of its members. Eagleton (2016) argues that culture is not simply handed down by nature; rather, it is a product of social interaction, shared communally and passed on from one generation to the next, with each generation consistently adding its own "colour" before handing it on in turn.

As an object of study within the sociology of literature, culture never stands alone; it is always present and consistently exerts a practical impact on the condition of society. Within this framework, it is crucial to grasp that culture is not

a static, isolated entity but a dynamic force that constantly pulses through the fabric of social life. As Gramsci affirms (in Faruk, 2010, p. 138), culture is one of the forces that carries a genuinely practical impact on society. This means culture is never merely a passive backdrop; it actively shapes every element of daily life, from individual behaviour to the most intricate patterns of social relation. Moreover, our understanding of this reality is itself shaped by a dialectical process encompassing the ideological, political, and cultural forms present within a given society (Faruk, 2010).

This claim elevates the sociology of literature to a far more critical position. It is not merely an attempt to link text to social context in a passive way, treating the literary work as a mere appendage of history. Nor is it simply a matter of dissecting figures of speech or formal aesthetic devices while overlooking the implicit message that remains present within the text regardless of whether a reader manages to uncover it. Instead, the sociology of literature stands as a formative, structured instrument for reading fictional texts as an arena, a battlefield, on which ideological forces collide.

2.2 Antonio Gramsci's Political Theory

In the effort to identify and read the forms and mechanisms of working-class resistance against the control and discrimination exercised by the social classes above it, Marxist criticism has evolved well beyond mere economic determinism, that is, beyond treating economic conditions as the sole foundation of society, toward a far more complex and dynamic understanding of the cultural superstructure.

Economic determinism represents a practical example of how classical Marxist critique traces the origins of a society's progress, and for many of its adherents it was long treated as a concrete standard for judging the quality of a society. Yet the difficulties that arose when this practical approach was applied to Western nations such as Italy became a major catalyst for dismantling economic determinism as the backbone of social welfare. The consistent failure of classical Marxism to address the specific, deeply entrenched situational challenges of

Western nations, where proletarian revolutions repeatedly failed to materialize, pushed Antonio Gramsci to critique this economic determinism directly.

Antonio Gramsci emerged as a thinker bold enough to deconstruct the tenets of classical Marxism, demonstrating directly that economic determinism was not always relevant when forced to serve as the sole instrument of working-class resistance in Western nations. The repeated failure of proletarian revolutions across the West pushed Gramsci to revisit this theoretical assumption, arguing instead that the sociopolitical architecture of Western societies possessed a far more intricate, balanced, and tightly interwoven relationship between the economic base and the cultural superstructure that enveloped it. It was precisely this dialectical balance that ultimately dismantled the rigid concept of economic determinism, once regarded as the absolute standard for revolutionary movement, because sociological reality demonstrated that the economy does not mechanically determine human consciousness.

From this intellectual turning point, Gramsci introduced the concept of Cultural Hegemony as a systemic force that grows out of the alignment and interlocking strength between a society's economic foundation and a superstructure that has become deeply "infected" by the propaganda, doxa, and value-control of the dominant social class. Through this hegemonic mechanism, the ruling class no longer needs to rely constantly on physical force; it is enough to infiltrate bourgeois interests into the institutions of civil society, schools, media, and literature, so that these values are accepted by the oppressed class as mere common sense.

Consequently, Western societies developed an extraordinarily resilient resistance to sudden, frontal, physical change, because their ideological fortresses had become fused with everyday life, rendering the traditional Marxist framework of economic determinism inadequate for dissecting the power dynamics at play.

It is essential to understand that this theory of hegemony is not a static artifact of thought that emerged and stopped in its own time; rather, it is an intellectual instrument that continues to breathe and adapt across the ages. Ives (2004) notes a striking trajectory in Antonio Gramsci's (1891–1937) intellectual

afterlife: a figure known only within a narrow circle of communists at the time of his death has since become one of the most celebrated political theorists and cultural critics of the twentieth century, one of the most frequently cited and translated into languages across the globe. This Gramscian influence did not spread overnight; it gathered force globally from the late 1960s into the 1970s, reaching across Europe, into the political dynamics of Latin America, and into the academic centres of North America.

This expanding influence demonstrates the extraordinary flexibility of Gramsci's analytical framework in dissecting the realities of modern society. In the more than fifty years since it first became an object of serious study, Gramscian theory has left a deep intellectual footprint across nearly every field of the humanities and social sciences. This confirms that the relevance of his thought extends well beyond the boundaries of political science proper, reaching into sociology, history, and contemporary literary criticism. This vast Gramscian bibliographic legacy stands as strong evidence of just how rich, and still how relevant, Gramsci's ideas remain for understanding the contemporary world, cementing his status as a "classic" thinker who continues to demand careful attention.

Moreover, the substance of this theoretical revival lies in the sharpness of Gramsci's argument concerning how power actually operates. Jones (2006) affirms that the core of Gramsci's entire argument is the conviction that the authority of a ruling group within society does not rest on physical aggression, military repression, or coercive suppression alone. Rather, the true strength of a dominant group rests on cultural domination, a subtle mechanism that works to shape, direct, and manipulate the beliefs and worldview of the wider society so that it voluntarily grants its consent to the existing order.

This premise, of domination achieved through the pathways of culture and ideology, bears a direct and striking relevance to the object of this research: Alan Sillitoe's novella. Through this framework, the present study seeks to expose how an institution such as Borstal operates not merely as a physical prison but as a disciplinary machine designed to implant bourgeois values into the inner lives of

working-class youth, so that they submit to the common sense constructed by those in power. Gramscian thought therefore provides the sharpest possible scalpel for laying bare how the sabotage of moral consensus can be carried out by the subaltern subject from within the very trench of their own inner defences.

Within contemporary political thought and the sociology of literature, the term hegemony must not be understood shallowly, as nothing more than crude physical oppression or brutal military control. On the contrary, hegemony is a far subtler, more complex orchestration of power, one that permeates the most fundamental of social relations. According to Gramsci, hegemony refers to the cultural and ideological leadership of a class or group that holds power over society. This concept affirms that the true strength of a ruling group lies not merely in its capacity to impose its will by force, but in its capacity to direct how society thinks, what values it believes in, and which norms it obeys, as though these were simply the natural order of things.

The supremacy of a social group in maintaining the status quo manifests in two intertwined and continuous ways: coercive domination through the apparatus of the state, and intellectual and moral leadership. Femia (1987, p. 24) reaffirms Gramsci's own formulation here: the supremacy of a class or social group is expressed in two ways, as '*dominance*' and as '*intellectual and moral leadership*.' It is crucial to underline that effective, long-lasting hegemony is built precisely through this second path, because at its core it is the supremacy of one class over another achieved through consent and voluntary compliance, rather than mere coercion that breeds instant resentment.

Tracing the historical roots of this idea takes us on a long genealogy before it was finally refined by Gramsci within the walls of a Fascist prison cell. The idea of hegemony was first applied to claims of sovereignty among the city-states of ancient Greece, where the leadership of a hegemon was distinguished from pure domination because the subjects being led retained a degree of autonomy. Gramsci, however, carried this concept to a far deeper psychological and sociological level through the notion of "*spontaneous consent*." According to Patria and Arief (2003), the development of hegemony depends heavily on

acceptance that arises of its own accord from the dominated society, regardless of whether that acceptance is born of fear, the pressure of habit, or a genuine consciousness that has already been lulled to sleep by the ideology of those in power. This consent is often passive in nature, with society accepting existing laws and rules without ever critically questioning the moral legitimacy behind them.

This subtle mechanism operates by infiltrating the ideology of the ruling class into the institutions of civil society, schools, churches, media, and literary works, so that these values are accepted by the oppressed class as mere common sense. Cultural hegemony, at its core, is a form of domination in which the dominant elite rules by convincing the whole of society that its worldview is the one true and valid understanding, one that serves the interests of everyone. In this way, the ruling class no longer needs to resort constantly to physical violence, because the cultural and ideological "trenches" of its defence have already become solid enough to absorb any tremor of resistance from below.

Yet it must be recognized that this intellectual leadership does not stand on empty ground, without any genuine material foundation. It bears emphasizing that true hegemony, according to Gramsci, can only be exercised in full by a class that is economically dominant (Gramsci, 1994). This emphasis proves highly relevant to this research in explaining why the post-World War II British bourgeoisie, as the class controlling the industrial base of production and material wealth, was able to impose its moral leadership over the working class of Nottingham.

They controlled the flow of the economy, they possessed a far greater capacity to shape the institutions of civil society, the Borstal system among them, into disciplinary machines that smoothed the path for their ideology to be accepted by the subaltern. Hegemony, then, is not merely a matter of abstract ideas floating in the air; it is a concrete material force, one that expresses itself through the collective rules and everyday techniques of life that society follows.

2.2.1 Cultural Hegemony

The concept of cultural hegemony within Gramscian discourse describes a profound sociological phenomenon in which the bourgeois class, or dominant group, within a given social order succeeds in securing and maintaining its position of leadership by manufacturing consent and obedience from the proletariat, or lower class. This mechanism operates so precisely that the ruling group no longer needs to rely constantly on raw physical force or coercive military power to subdue the masses. Instead, the success of this hegemony is achieved by infiltrating the values, ideological systems, and strategic interests of the ruling class into a range of civil-society institutions, schools, religious institutions, mass media, and literary works. It is through these seemingly neutral institutions that the ideology of the ruling class is injected gradually, until, at its peak, these values are internalized naturally by the wider society and simply accepted as common sense.

In clarifying how this mechanism operates, Barker (2004) stresses that hegemony is a dynamic sociopolitical situation in which the ruling class exercises control and leadership over other groups through a strategic combination of coercion and consent. On one hand, coercion involves the use of violent methods, legal repression, or direct state control over its subjects. On the other, consent is built far more subtly and invisibly, with the dominated group voluntarily following the rules set by those in power because it regards that order as correct, or simply normal. Effective hegemony does not crush the will of the subject by force; rather, it steers that will so that it aligns with the interests of the ruling elite.

This profound distinction between the two mechanisms of control is likewise underscored by Kamil (2018), who distinguishes between domination and hegemony as two different poles of power. Domination is understood as a mechanical, external form of control, in which authority explicitly deploys punishments and rewards to compel compliance with its rules. Hegemony, by contrast, functions as an internal form of control that permeates human consciousness, making it fundamentally different from pure domination.

Hegemony is internalized control: the individual no longer feels coerced from without, but instead acts on convictions that have, in fact, already been constructed by the interests of the dominant class.

This line of thought is rooted in Gramsci's critical observation that throughout human history there has always existed a polarization between those who rule and those who are ruled. Cultural hegemony operates precisely at the meeting point between these two groups, functioning as a kind of social glue, or ideological "cement," that binds society together within a single, shared vision of the world. Within modern Western society, Gramsci likens the state itself to nothing more than an "outer ditch," while behind it stands an exceedingly solid system of fortresses and bastions of civil society, one that safeguards the sovereignty of bourgeois ideology. For this reason, the struggle of the subaltern class cannot be waged through frontal physical assault alone; it must instead proceed through a "war of position" aimed at dismantling the moral and intellectual legitimacy of the ruling class from within those very trenches of culture.

The workings of this spontaneous consent are explained in greater detail by Strinati (1995, p. 165): the dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the spontaneous consent of subordinate groups through the negotiated construction of political and ideological consensus between the dominant group and the dominated, rather than through consensus simply imposed from above. Lears (1985) extends this explanation to a more structural level: cultural hegemony works by constructing a dominant worldview that is accepted by subordinate classes, causing them to internalize and reproduce the interests of the ruling class, often without any awareness that they are doing so (Lears, 1985). For Lears (1985), cultural hegemony is, at its core, a form of domination in which the dominant elite rules by convincing the whole of society that its worldview is correct.

To achieve this, the leaders of a historical group must be able to argue, with real authority, that their particular interests are, in fact, the interests of society at large (Lears, 1985). The values, norms, perceptions, and attitudes infiltrated in

this way do not merely influence the distribution of goods; they shape social organization and power relations throughout society as a whole (Lears, 1985). Bennet (1983, pp. 261–273) adds an important nuance here: the relationship between the ideal (ideology) and the material within Gramscian thought is complex and interactive rather than simply one-directional, meaning cultural hegemony cannot be read as economic determinism in disguise, but rather as a genuinely reciprocal process.

Within this framework, ideology occupies a central role. Ideology, according to Gramscian theory, is defined as a set of beliefs, meanings, and practices that, although claimed to be universal truths, are in fact systems of meaning that serve the authority of a particular social group (Kamil, 2018); ideology is not someone's imaginative fantasy but a material force that expresses itself through the collective rules and everyday techniques of life that society follows (Kamil, 2018). Barker (2004) adds that ideology often supplies practical rules of behaviour and moral direction that shape the actions of individuals and groups in society, precisely the mechanism this study will go on to trace within the Borstal institution in section 2.4.

2.2.2 From War of Maneuver to War of Position

Setting out from a sharp critique of the classical Marxist assumption that the *War of Maneuver*, a strategy of frontal physical assault, represents a universal path for every revolution, Antonio Gramsci offered a far more strategic and tactical alternative known as the *War of Position*. Gramsci recognized that a direct assault on the heart of state power might succeed in the East, as in the 1917 Russian Revolution, precisely because its civil society was still weak and fragile. In the modern West, however, where the architecture of society is far more established and layered, such a strategy would only end in failure, because power there does not rest on military strength alone.

If the War of Maneuver is a physical war of direct assault aimed at seizing power, then the War of Position is a manoeuvre that plays a far more vital role: consolidating the cultural and ideological foundations of civil society over the

long term, before any genuine political transformation can actually be realized. This strategy does not proceed through sudden bursts of violence; rather, it is carried out through a slow process of political education, the gradual development of molecular consciousness, and a clear-eyed understanding of one's own personal limitations, all aimed at building a solid counter-hegemonic movement from society's lowest strata upward.

The necessity of this strategy becomes especially clear once we recognize that, within the architecture of modern society, Gramsci regarded the state as merely an "outer ditch," behind which stood an exceedingly solid and near-impenetrable system of ideological fortresses belonging to civil society. These fortresses, comprising schools, media, churches, and literary works, function as a protective layer for the power of the dominant class, ensuring that society's common sense remains aligned with the interests of those who rule. Without first mounting a systematic assault on these ideological "fortresses," any attempt at frontal physical rebellion is almost certain to fail, since civil society will quickly restore the stability of the existing order.

Gramsci reinforces this technical definition of the War of Position in his prison notebooks, stating that the war of position, in reality, does not consist merely of physical battle trenches; it encompasses the entire organizational and industrial system of the territory that lies behind the fighting front. This profound military metaphor confirms that the true battlefield of this strategy is not a physical location or specific geographic coordinate, but rather the entire network of institutions and moral narratives that sustains the legitimacy of ruling power. In this context, the War of Position is closely tied to what Gramsci calls the "molecular" and "covert" advance of the subaltern classes, a subtle set of tactics that includes boycotts, counter-propaganda campaigns, and counter-cultural education aimed at nurturing alternative values.

This theoretical point is fundamental to the present research, as it justifies reading the cross-country running undertaken by Smith, the protagonist of Alan Sillitoe's novella, as a symbolic "defensive trench" of the mind. When Smith is released to run alone across the cold, silent field at dawn, he is not simply

engaging in an exhausting physical activity; he is, in fact, entering an autonomous space that liberates him, however briefly, from the panoptic surveillance of the Borstal institution. Within this inner "trench," Smith undergoes a molecular transformation of consciousness: he formulates a strategy of resistance, deconstructs the Governor's doxa of honesty, and preserves the sovereignty of his proletarian identity against co-optation by the state's disciplinary system. Smith's deliberate refusal to cross the finish line, then, is not an impulsive act of juvenile delinquency, but the mature execution of a War of Position, designed to sabotage the moral consensus of those in power in full view of the public.

This understanding of the War of Position is further enriched, substantively, by the perspective offered by Adamson (1980), who links this dynamic of resistance to the phenomenon of *passive revolution*. Within the historical context of Italian politics specifically, Adamson observes that the War of Position bears a close relationship to conditions of passive revolution, a sociopolitical situation in which a ruling class may succeed in becoming "structurally dominant but not hegemonic."

When those in power fail to secure genuine moral leadership and instead rest solely on administrative authority, the door opens wide for what Adamson calls the molecular and covert advance of more progressive subaltern classes. This molecular advance does not manifest in an outburst of physical violence, but rather through a series of tactics that are subtle yet lethal to the legitimacy of those in power, boycotts, counter-propaganda campaigns, counter-cultural education, and various forms of non-violent demonstration.

The theoretical implementation of this molecular advance finds strong relevance when we examine the non-cooperative actions undertaken by the character of Smith in Sillitoe's novella. Smith does not choose to attack the Borstal Governor through destructive physical violence; instead, he carries out an inward act of sabotage that is subversive by nature. Here, Adamson (1980) also offers a critical note that grounds the urgency of the present research: he reminds us that Gramsci himself devoted relatively shallow attention to the detailed description of the operational mechanisms of hegemonic regimes. This theoretical

limitation within Gramsci's original text is acknowledged as an intellectual gap that this research attempts to fill through a concrete case study of the Borstal system, in order to lay bare precisely how such an apparatus works to discipline, and simultaneously provoke resistance in, working-class youth.

This exploration of the War of Position is deepened further through the premises put forward in Clayton (2006), which argues that the war of position is never a straight line toward victory, but rather a process marked by fluctuation between advance and retreat, and between triumph and defeat. This strategy demands that the subaltern subject possess tactical flexibility, often requiring them to occupy a peculiar position: being both "in" and "against" the system. In other words, the subject is physically embedded within the institutional practices of the state, while remaining mentally and ideologically opposed to its hegemonic practices. This explains why Smith continues to carry out Borstal's running routine while using that very activity as an instrument to undermine the institution's authority from within.

Case studies within this body of contemporary literature further demonstrate that a civil society institution, whether a university or a prison, is never, in essence, a sealed monolithic entity without cracks. On the contrary, such an institution is regarded as an arena of contestation that serves a dual function: on one hand, it reinforces the existing hegemonic order, while on the other, it harbours "pockets," or gaps, that allow that order to be contested once again. This analogy applies with precision to the Borstal institution in this study. Although formally an intensely repressive, mechanical, and closely surveilled space, the system nevertheless leaves room for individual resistance. It is through these gaps in surveillance that Smith is able to build his inner sovereignty, proving that the hegemony of those in power is never truly totalitarian so long as the subaltern subject is able to mobilize their critical consciousness, their Good Sense, to wage molecular resistance at the very heart of the opposing power.

The perspective offered by Adamson (1980) further enriches our understanding of how hegemonic institutions, political parties, trade unions, and cultural bodies alike, actually operate within society. Adamson stresses that these

institutions do not work in a uniform or monolithic manner; rather, they vary considerably in the degree of pervasiveness and participation they foster in drawing society into their orbit. In this connection, Gramsci offers a critical note on the nature of "democracy" within a hegemonic system. For Gramsci, the democratic space between the ruling group and the ruled is, in fact, highly limited and conditional; it exists only to the extent that economic development and legislative machinery are able to open formal channels through which the ruled may rise, or enter, the circle of the ruling group.

A crucial point that deserves emphasis in this Gramscian thought is its attempt to dispel fears surrounding the potential for "totalitarianism," or absolute control over thought. According to Adamson (1980), such fears are not entirely justified, because hegemony is, at its core, not a static, frozen, and tightly sealed "empire of thought." Rather, hegemony is understood as a continuous process of creation carried out on a massive scale. Precisely because of its vast scope and the many layers of society it involves, hegemony tends to carry an uneven degree of legitimacy at any given point. It is this very unevenness that dialectically always leaves residual space, gaps through which oppositional or antagonistic cultural expressions can continue to grow and breathe.

It is precisely within these residual spaces, or empty pockets not fully reached by the control of the dominant ideology, that the strategy of the War of Position can be waged effectively by the subaltern. As emphasized in studies on hegemony, a civil society institution is never truly a solid, unbroken block; rather, it is an arena of contestation that, on one hand, reinforces the rules of those in power, while, on the other, holds gaps through which those rules can be contested once more. Through the use of these residual spaces, marginalized groups can build a foundation of counter-culture, strengthen their critical consciousness, and carry out a slow, molecular moral sabotage of the dominant narrative before any larger political transformation takes place. Adamson's understanding of the flexibility of hegemony thus provides a robust theoretical basis for viewing individual resistance, such as that carried out by Smith within the Borstal

institution, as a genuine attempt to expand this residual space into a substantial trench of resistance.

2.2.3 Organic Intellectual

Within the architecture of the War of Position, a long-term struggle waged on the terrain of culture and ideology, the presence of the Organic Intellectual becomes an absolute, crucial, and non-negotiable prerequisite. This figure is not the type of scholar who sits quietly within a sterile ivory tower, nor an individual who claims to occupy some neutral space unaligned with the interests of any particular class. On the contrary, Gramsci (1971, p. 5) offers a foundational explanation: every social group that emerges onto the stage of history will, by its very nature, produce its own stratum of intellectuals, one that grows organically from within its own social structure.

The primary function of this organic intellectual stratum is to provide the group with homogeneity and a clear consciousness of its own vital functions across every field of life, economic, social, and political. These intellectuals do not arrive from outside to teach; they are born directly from the womb of the proletariat's lived experience and collective suffering, whose rights and freedoms have been distorted by an oppressive system. As agents of change equipped with the particular skill of articulating new ways of thinking, organic intellectuals act as leaders who awaken social and class consciousness in order to challenge the singular narrative imposed by the ruling group.

It is essential to understand that the organic intellectual bears a heavy intellectual responsibility to mediate the tension between the ideological structures of the past and the aspirations of the future. They operate within the institutions of civil society to build a solid counter-hegemonic foundation from below. Their principal task is to fight tirelessly to give vocal articulation to the political aspirations of their class, in order to challenge, expose, and deconstruct every layer of dominant hegemony that society has, until now, simply accepted as a false "common sense."

Within the landscape of this research, the figure of Alan Sillitoe emerges as the perfect embodiment of an organic intellectual, one born from the factory dust and industrial poverty of Nottingham. Sillitoe did not write his work as a distant external observer; rather, he wrote as an integral part of the working class, striving to reclaim the narrative sovereignty of his own people. Through a literary text such as *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, he does not simply present a work of fiction; he is, in effect, delivering a carefully planned "political proclamation" aimed at dismantling bourgeois moral leadership from within the inner trenches of the subaltern subject. The organic intellectual is thus a kind of "conductor," ensuring that every act of molecular resistance can converge into a force capable of shattering the ideological fortress of those in power.

The understanding of the intellectual's role within the strategy of the War of Position is further strengthened by the perspective offered by Martin (1992), who examines the concept of Gramscian leadership from a highly strategic, functional angle. In this discourse, leadership must not be narrowed down to mean merely the use of physical force, military repression, or administrative authority. Rather, leadership according to Gramsci rests fundamentally on a group's capacity to secure the consent of subordinate classes through ideological persuasion. This shows that truly stable, long-lasting power is power that succeeds in convincing society that the interests of the ruling group are, in fact, everyone's interests. Herein lies the urgency of the intellectual's role, one not confined to the image of a scholar in an ivory tower, but rather that of a functional leader tasked with raising social and class consciousness within society.

The intellectual acts as an agent of change with substantial influence in shaping collective perspective. According to Gramsci, this kind of intellectual leadership is the most effective means of destabilizing the entrenched "capitalist" superstructure and ideology, because it works by eroding the moral legitimacy of those in power from within the trenches of culture itself. This intellectual responsibility includes the capacity to create, formulate, and disseminate new narratives or ideologies capable of winning voluntary support from the wider society as a counterweight to existing hegemony.

More specifically, Martin (1992) affirms that the principal function of an intellectual is to act as a mediator, a bridge connecting the structures and ideologies of the past and the present, which exist side by side. They are not trapped in nostalgia for history or complaints about the present; rather, they strive to transcend these constraints in order to construct a more just future. Within this context, the organic intellectual emerges as an interpreter of collective suffering, capable of transforming the lived experience of their class into a structured political proclamation.

This theoretical framework offers a highly precise foothold for reading Alan Sillitoe's position as both author and organic intellectual within this research. Sillitoe emerges as a figure who uniquely bridges the traditional working-class experience of Nottingham, saturated with factory dust and marginalization, with a new, more sovereign narrative of resistance. Through his works, Sillitoe does more than tell a story; he performs precisely this mediating function, taking up the "traces" of the proletariat's past oppression and transforming them into a critical consciousness, a Good Sense, capable of challenging the moral dominance of the post-war British bourgeoisie. Sillitoe's writing, then, is not merely a literary text but an instrument of intellectual leadership, one that strives to build a future in which the voice of the lower class is no longer silenced by the apparatus of the state.

The theoretical substance found in Clayton (2006) offers an additional, crucial nuance to the sharpness of the analysis in this study, particularly through its categorical distinction between the "organic" and "traditional" intellectual. Within the dynamics of social change, when a new class emerges and strives tenaciously to transform the structure of the society into which it was born, that class will naturally produce what Gramsci calls organic intellectuals, individuals skilled in articulating the new ways of thinking associated with that emerging class (Clayton, 2006).

These are individuals possessing the particular skill and intellectual capacity to articulate new ways of thinking, new value systems, and a new worldview closely tied to the strategic interests of that rising class. As a historical

example, when the capitalist class first emerged out of feudalism, it relied not only on capital but also produced its own stratum of organic intellectuals, industrial technicians, specialists in political economy, and drafters of new legal systems, to legitimize its power.

Beyond the ranks of organic intellectuals born from a rising class, however, there also exists a group of traditional intellectuals, the remnants, or "leftovers," of previous social formations. This group, priests, teachers, or old bureaucrats among them, often claims a position of neutrality, standing above all factions and tied to the interests of no particular class, even though, functionally, they tend to perpetuate the status quo. It is worth underscoring Gramsci's argument here: the success of a rising class in achieving full hegemony depends heavily on how effectively it manages to absorb, assimilate, and ideologically conquer this traditional intellectual class, bringing it over to its own side. Gramsci offers the example that one key to the dominance of the capitalist class in Italy was its success in "conquering the inner allegiance" of traditional intellectuals within the Catholic Church, aligning them with the bourgeois agenda.

Within this landscape of ideological struggle, it must be noted with great care that organic intellectuals operating within the institutions of civil society, schools, universities, or even prisons, are perpetually confronted with a real and dangerous threat of co-optation. Co-optation is a subtle mechanism by which the critical voice and spirit of resistance of the intellectual is muted, tamed, or even reabsorbed into the dominant narrative of those in power in order to preserve the stability of the system.

This is precisely the threat that must be faced with full awareness by anyone seeking to wage the strategy of the War of Position within the cultural territories where hegemony is perpetually both maintained and contested (Clayton, 2006). A civil society institution is never a monolithic entity; it is an arena of contestation that, on one hand, reinforces the existing order, while, on the other, harbours residual gaps through which moral sabotage can be carried out.

This final point regarding the risk of co-optation becomes highly relevant as a critical note for this research: both Alan Sillitoe as author and Smith as

fictional character remain in a position perpetually vulnerable to re-absorption by the dominant narrative. Sillitoe, though a vocal organic intellectual, risks being co-opted by the mainstream literary industry, while Smith remains constantly under threat of being tamed by Borstal authority through a manipulative program of moral rehabilitation. Smith's climactic symbolic victory at the finish line, therefore, must not be read as a final, absolute achievement, or as a completed revolution. Instead, it must be understood as a fragile victory, a fragment of the "advance and retreat, triumph and defeat" that characterizes the War of Position, one that must be continually fought for, day after day, from within the inner trench of the subject.

2.2.4 The Dialectic of Common Sense and Good Sense

The concept of *Common Sense* (*senso comune*) within Gramscian discourse is understood as a fragmented, contradictory, and uncritical general reasoning, a worldview absorbed wholesale by the popular masses from the ideology of the dominant class without any meaningful intellectual filtering. As extensively discussed in Clayton (2006), which directly cites Gramsci's own prison notes (1971), our understanding of common sense cannot be reduced to any single, coherent unity, whether within individual consciousness or within the collective consciousness of the wider society.

This is because common sense is not a logical, structured system of thought; rather, it is a heterogeneous, at times "bizarre," combination of ideas borrowed from various fragments of dominant ideology, one that ultimately functions to constrain the original thinking of the masses in a negative direction. Because the ideas that constitute common sense derive from values granted the status of "absolute truth" by the dominant group, common sense effectively works to sustain and perpetuate the existing relations of power. Within the mechanism of hegemony, common sense functions as a kind of "glue," binding a particular social group together and directing its moral conduct and will. Although its efficacy varies, this force is often strong enough to produce a condition of moral and political passivity, in which society comes to accept social inequality as a

natural given, or as an unchangeable fate. This phenomenon leaves the subaltern frequently bound by a state of consciousness that, in fact, runs contrary to the interests of their own class.

The theoretical relevance of common sense finds a strong parallel in the educational case study presented in Clayton (2006), which shows how hegemonic messages concerning social stratification are channelled through formal and informal curricula until they finally become integrated into students' common sense. This analogy offers a crucial foothold for this research in reading how the Borstal institution operates not merely as a physical prison, but as a "fortress" of civil society designed to manufacture consent. Through a rigorous regime of physical training and moral indoctrination, the Borstal Governor seeks to implant a common sense of obedience within Smith, compelling him to accept the bourgeois definition of "honesty" and "fair play" as the sole standard of truth.

Yet, amid the pressure of this hegemonic common sense, this research highlights the emergence of *Good Sense (buon senso)* within Smith, a core of critical thought born from his practical experience and suffering as a member of the working class. It is this Good Sense that allows Smith to recognize the systemic exploitation lying beneath the mask of Borstal rehabilitation, enabling him to undergo a molecular transformation of consciousness. Through the dialectic between the Governor's imposed common sense and the good sense Smith constructs independently, Smith ultimately chooses to sabotage the ruling authority's moral consensus in full view of the public, proving that hegemony is never truly total so long as the subject is able to preserve the sovereignty of their inner self.

In contrast to Common Sense, which is passive and uncritical, Good Sense (*buon senso*) stands as its powerful antithesis, a core of critical thought that does not emerge from abstract theory but is born organically out of the real suffering and everyday practical experience of the working class as it begins to recognize the systemic exploitation embedded within the structure of society. Within the framework of counter-hegemonic struggle, this good sense serves as the

fundamental starting capital for the formation of a higher class consciousness, one capable of dismantling the moral leadership of those in power.

Gramsci offers a profound account of this concept, describing it as "a healthy nucleus of good sense" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328), one that often lies buried, or hidden, within the heterogeneous and "bizarre" layers of common sense. Even as the popular masses continue to absorb dominant ideology wholesale through the institutions of civil society, there remains within them a residue of consciousness rooted in their own practical engagement with the material world, an intuitive sense that the existing order is not, in fact, just. Gramsci goes further, defining good sense as a form of thought that has "gone beyond common sense and become... a critical conception" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333). At this stage, critical reasoning is no longer a random fragment; it begins to form a coherent intellectual and ethical unity. This allows the subaltern subject to see reality more clearly and to begin questioning the moral legitimacy of a ruling class long regarded as the bearer of absolute truth.

It is important to underline that this critical potential is universal and inclusive by nature. Gramsci affirms that "every social stratum has its own 'common sense' and its own 'good sense'" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326). This statement dismantles the elitist assumption that the capacity for critical thought belongs exclusively to the educated or to scholars in ivory towers; on the contrary, good sense can flourish in any social stratum, including within the inner life of a proletarian subject who lacks formal education but has developed a sharp inner clarity forged by structural pressure.

This transformation of consciousness is no accident; it is an act suffused with agency. As Crehan (2016) affirms, this process involves a courageous refusal on the part of the individual to accept the shaping of their own personality by forces imposed from outside, by the state apparatus and its hegemonic institutions. The subject actively chooses to determine the direction of their own consciousness through the intense "labour of the mind," working to sift truth from the accumulated propaganda of those in power. Within the landscape of this research, the dialectic between the common sense imposed by the Borstal

Governor and the seeds of good sense beginning to take root within Smith becomes the central concern. Smith does not merely run in a physical sense; within the "trench" of his own mind, he mobilizes this good sense to deconstruct the bourgeois concepts of honesty and fair play, a process that ultimately leads him to a political proclamation in the form of a public sabotage of the ruling authority's moral consensus.

2.3 Types of Hegemony

The degree to which those in power succeed in sustaining their moral leadership is never uniform. Gramsci (in Femia, 1987) identifies three forms of hegemony that represent differing degrees of power stability within a society. Femia (1987) states explicitly that Gramsci identified these three forms: first, integral hegemony; second, decadent hegemony; and finally, minimal hegemony (Femia, 1987). Kamil (2018) similarly affirms this tripartite framework, though with more detailed emphasis on the integral and minimal forms (Kamil, 2018).

2.3.1 Integral Hegemony

The success of moral and intellectual leadership reaches its peak in what is known as Integral Hegemony. This form of hegemony is regarded as the most ideal and stable condition within the Gramscian spectrum of power, one in which there is virtually no significant conflict or meaningful antagonism between citizens and political leadership. Within this hegemonic stability, a powerful bond exists between the ruling class and the ruled, driven by a profound moral and intellectual unity.

The defining characteristic of integral hegemony is the emergence of spontaneous consent from the mass of the population. This consent flows smoothly, organically, and without systemic friction, because society offers its support to those in power voluntarily. This occurs because the majority of society's members genuinely believe that the interests, goals, and vision of the dominant group are fully aligned with the interests, or well-being, of the wider

public. In this context, the authority and influence of the ruling group are fully acknowledged and regarded as legitimate by the majority of society.

Kamil (2018) elaborates further, explaining that integral hegemony is an idealized form of hegemony in which there is no major conflict between citizens and leadership, a stable condition visible in the organizational interaction between ruler and ruled (Kamil, 2018). Interestingly, Kamil (2018) adds an important nuance: even within an integral condition, society may still negotiate additional agreements that are not entirely consistent with the prevailing leadership, showing that disagreement persists beneath the surface of mass organization even when things appear, nominally, stable (Kamil, 2018). This point matters for the present research because it shows that even within a system that appears most stable, such as post-war Britain with its Welfare State, room for micro-resistance, such as that undertaken by Smith, remains theoretically possible.

2.3.2 Decadent Hegemony

Decadent hegemony describes a transitional or declining sociological phase, in which the power and control of the ruling group begins to be openly challenged and significantly weakened. Under decadent conditions, society's obedience is neither stable, sincere, nor permanent; it is, instead, a fragile situation riddled with ideological cracks. Even as the existing system may still appear capable of achieving its administrative or economic goals, beneath the surface of mass organization the seeds of genuine disagreement begin to take root. This occurs because the mindset of the masses at the grassroots level is no longer compatible or aligned with the thinking of the dominant elite.

The inconsistency that pervades decadent hegemony creates space for subordinate classes to renegotiate existing social agreements. Society frequently begins to demand additional concessions that are, in fact, inconsistent with the direction of the ruling leadership at that time. Those in power, in order to preserve social stability or to secure additional support, are compelled to grant a portion of these demands, even though doing so only further exposes the erosion of their legitimacy.

This condition mirrors what Gramsci describes as a situation in which a class becomes "dominant but no longer hegemonic," as Adamson (1980) explains: within the Italian context specifically, the war of position is closely tied to "passive revolution"; when a class becomes "dominant but not hegemonic" through passive revolution, the path is usually opened for the molecular and covert advance of more progressive subaltern classes, through tactics such as boycotts, propaganda campaigns, counter-cultural education, and non-violent demonstration.

Within an industrial landscape such as Nottingham, the symptoms of decadent hegemony become especially visible when the post-war narrative of "New Prosperity" fails to conceal the reality of working-class alienation. When the state's promises of universal welfare no longer align with the lived, empirical experience of proletarian suffering, the inner loyalty of the working class toward the system begins to crumble. The mismatch between the elite's narrative ("Them") and the lived reality of the people ("Us") produces a sharp cultural inconsistency. As a result, the disintegration of the social order may erupt at any moment, as a reaction to social and cultural changes the ruling group is no longer able to accommodate, rendering such hegemony a structure perpetually waiting to collapse.

2.3.3 Minimal Hegemony

Minimal hegemony occupies the position of the lowest, most fragile, and structurally most vulnerable rung in the architecture of ruling power. At this stage, ruling leadership manifests in a rigid, administrative form, in which the policies and directives of those in power openly clash, or stand in direct contradiction, with the will of the wider populace. This condition is described as an exceedingly weak form of hegemony because it no longer rests on any foundation of voluntary mass consent, and can only survive through an exclusive ideological cohesion among a narrow circle of economic, political, and intellectual elites.

The defining characteristic of minimal hegemony is an absolute rejection of any democratic intervention by civil society in matters of state, rendering it a

system of power isolated from public aspiration. Kamil (2018) offers a concise definition of minimal hegemony as a type of hegemony situated at a level far lower and more unstable than either the integral or decadent forms. Owing to the ruling group's inability to align its goals and demands with the aspirations of other social classes, this form of hegemony is regarded as a dangerous mode of power for the stability of the state, given the artificial nature of its legitimacy.

Within the landscape of class struggle, this fragility positions minimal hegemony as the point at which the strategy of the War of Position theoretically holds the greatest chance of success. The mismatch between elite ambition and grassroots reality creates space for the molecular advance of the subaltern classes to erode what remains of the ruling group's authority from within the trenches of culture. The symbolic victory of an oppressed subject, as shown in the narrative of Smith's resistance, thus carries a potentially massive destructive force when unleashed against a hegemony that has already lost the roots of its mass support.

2.4 The Borstal System as an Apparatus of State Hegemony

The far-reaching effects of post-World War II class inequality in Britain were not simply eroded by rhetoric of national unity. On the contrary, they produced increasingly sharp divisions, deeply rooted discrimination, and acute class inequality beneath the surface. One of the most concrete manifestations of this sociopolitical situation was the existence of the Borstal, the youth prison, which was systematically deployed as an instrument of class control. The tensions underlying the emergence of this institution were not a sudden phenomenon of the post-war era, but rather a historical continuation of the class divisions that had long structured British society. Hoggart (1958) captures this reality in his portrait of the sharp class division between the "Them" (the rulers) and "Us" (the workers). This binary social division forms an essential structural backdrop, one against which an institution such as Borstal operated as a primary instrument for policing that imaginary boundary.

It is crucial to understand how this sociological anatomy actually worked. For the working class, the world of "Them" was never understood as a world of

fellow, equal citizens, but was instead represented as the distant, authoritative world of officials, bosses, and police, who consistently treated the poor as a class to be managed rather than heard. This inequality produced a striking paradox, especially when set alongside the historical fact that the British government of the time was vigorously promoting the sweet promises of its 'Welfare State' program. In practice, this seemingly noble initiative instead mutated into an exceedingly subtle hegemonic instrument for domesticating and silencing working-class militancy. Garland (1985) sharply exposes this illusion, stating that "the welfare state was not simply a humanitarian development; it was a sophisticated form of social control that sought to manage the problematic classes through a combination of provision and policing."

Within this operational landscape, Borstal assumed a crucial role as a direct extension of that very policing mechanism. As Bailey (1987) emphasizes, the Borstal system was not designed purely as a space of education, but was formulated specifically as a "machine of discipline." Its purpose was precisely calibrated: to transform working-class youth, unilaterally labelled 'antisocial,' into the productive, law-abiding cogs of citizenship, through the imposition of an extraordinarily rigorous regime of physical and mental training. This is reflected with striking accuracy in Alan Sillitoe's depiction of Ruxton Towers. Within its walls, the state is portrayed as employing cold, scientific methods of governance, such as the Mannheim–Wilkins Borstal Prediction Scale (1955), to mechanically discipline, measure, predict, and control the behaviour of poor youth in order to bring them fully into line with bourgeois standards of morality.

Research into the history of this carceral youth institution is deepened further by the findings of Tebbutt (2020) in the *Historical Journal*, which lay bare a sharp sociopolitical irony: the Borstal reforms carried out under Alexander Paterson's leadership in 1922 deliberately adopted the structure and ethos of the elite English public school as a template for recovery. Through the implementation of a "House System," Borstal authorities sought to inject upper-class moral values into the inner lives of working-class youth, on the

assumption that institutional discipline and loyalty could transform their 'antisocial' character into that of law-abiding citizens.

This was underpinned by a medical-psychological belief, held by Borstal authorities at the time, that the biological and cognitive maturation of working-class youth would not be fully achieved until the age of twenty-five or twenty-six. This view lent scientific legitimacy to the state's imposition of lengthy detention periods, ranging from one to three years, to ensure that "Borstal training" had truly taken root before these young people were released back into society.

In a similar vein, Dunn (1985), in a doctoral thesis titled *Breaking the Hegemony of the Prison*, conducts a deconstructive analysis of the emergence of the British youth detention system, Borstal among them, as an integral part of the state's hegemonic apparatus. Dunn argues that this institution did not operate in a vacuum, but functioned as an instrument for manufacturing consent through calibrated repression. Rather than serving purely as a site of humanist rehabilitation, the Borstal system was formulated as a "disciplinary machine" tasked with reforming the character of the subaltern to align with the Common Sense desired by the capitalist-industrial ruling class. Within a Gramscian framework, Borstal is understood as one of the "ideological fortresses" of civil society, standing firmly behind the state to silence the militant potential of the working class from an early age, through the internalization of bourgeois moral doxa, terms such as honesty and fair play, so frequently glorified by the figure of the prison Governor.

Ultimately, rather than operating purely as a rehabilitative institution grounded in humanist values, the Borstal system was constructed in such a way that it mutated into a repressive tool serving the hegemony of the state. Viewed through a Gramscian lens, this institution is not a self-standing entity; it forms an integral part of the "system of fortresses and bastions" of civil society that stands firmly behind, and sustains, the power of the capitalist state, whose true position is merely that of an "outer ditch." It is within the fortress of Borstal that doxa and propaganda are cunningly injected into the minds of its young inmates.

The goal is to reform the character of the lower class so that it submits, unconditionally, to the Common Sense, the ruler's version of reason, willed by the state. This cultural hegemony remains thoroughly coloured by a deep-seated sentiment of class discrimination, even as it is carefully wrapped and constructed through the rhetoric of morality. The use of such elevated terms as honesty and fair play by the figure of the prison Governor is, in truth, nothing more than a manipulation of language, a systematic attempt to have this structural repression accepted by the wider society as a natural, unquestionable state of affairs.

2.5 Narrative Elements and Characterization

Literature cannot stand on its own as a mere sequence of events; it requires narrative instruments capable of translating complex social reality into a text that can be read and interpreted. Before moving further into the sociological analysis of Alan Sillitoe's novella, then, it is essential first to gain a full understanding of the elements of fiction that underpin the work, from its literary form, to the characters it presents, to the setting that frames the entire story. These three elements are not merely technical devices of craft; they are the very medium in which the ideological struggle at the heart of this research actually takes place.

2.5.1 Novella

In analyzing Alan Sillitoe's work, the first step that cannot be skipped is categorizing its literary form precisely, that is, as a "novella." This categorization is not merely a technical or formal matter; it determines the very way we approach the author's entire narrative strategy. Unlike the novel, which tends to be long and accommodates multiple plots and characters, or the short story, which must resolve its conflict briefly and swiftly, the novella occupies a unique middle ground: it is a work of narrative prose fiction that sustains a highly focused intensity alongside a tight structural unity (Abrams & Harpham, 2014). It is precisely this characteristic that makes the novella such a distinctive medium, one that grants the author ample room to plumb the psychological depths of a

character without sacrificing the narrative tension that so often slackens in overly long works.

This distinctiveness is further reinforced by Leibowitz (1974), whose study has become a classic reference on the form of the novella. She argues that the novella, at its core, produces a "double effect of intensity and expansion" (Leibowitz, 1974), a dual effect that combines the emotional intensity characteristic of the short story with the broader thematic scope typically found in the novel. In other words, the novella does not choose between the two, but rather fuses the strengths of both at once. This characteristic strengthens the argument that the novella is the ideal medium for exploring the psychological depths of Smith, without sacrificing the narrative focus and sharpness that form the central strength of Sillitoe's work.

Furthermore, Swales (1977), as also discussed in a review by Teleky in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, explains that the classical German Novelle tradition, one of the historical roots of this genre, is invariably built upon a confrontation: the meeting point between an established social order and the uncompromising uniqueness of an event or character. This theoretical framework proves highly relevant when applied to Sillitoe's novella, for the work is, at its heart, precisely such a confrontation: between the bourgeois "social order" represented by the Borstal institution, and the singularity of Smith's act, his conscious refusal to compromise, at the very finish line of the race.

2.5.2 Character and Characterization

If the novella supplies the narrative vessel, character is the soul that brings that vessel to life. According to Stanton (1965), character refers to the figures within a story, whether in a novel, a play, or a film, who are directly involved in the plot and play an important role in developing its conflict and themes. Among these figures is what is known as the Major Character, the most essential figure in a story: one who occupies a central role, frequently commands the reader's attention, and holds a key position in driving the plot forward as a whole. Characterization, meanwhile, may be understood as the creative process through

which an author gradually develops and shapes a character, endowing them with distinctive attributes and traits that make them feel real and alive to the reader.

To understand more deeply how this process works, the classic framework offered by Forster (1927) in *Aspects of the Novel* proves especially useful. Forster draws a fundamental distinction between two types of character: the "flat" character, built around a single idea or quality and therefore easily recognizable but tending toward the static, and the "round" character, far more complex and capable of surprising the reader in a convincing and consistent way (Forster, 1927). This distinction offers a valuable analytical foothold for examining whether Smith, as protagonist, is constructed as a round character who develops organically toward critical consciousness over the course of the story, in marked contrast to the authority figures within Borstal, who tend to be presented as flat characters, functioning merely as representations of power without inner depth.

This reading can be further enriched through the perspective offered by Chatman (1978), who positions character as one of the "existents" within a narrative structure, an entity not handed to the reader whole and instantaneous, but instead reconstructed gradually from a collection of traits scattered throughout the text (Chatman, 1978). This principle proves highly relevant to the methodological approach adopted in Chapter III, since Smith's critical consciousness should not be read as a fact simply present from the very beginning of the story, but rather as something that accumulates slowly and gradually through a continually developing sequence of internal monologues across the narrative.

2.5.3 Setting

Just as a character needs a stage on which to move, literature depends heavily on setting to construct its narrative as a whole. Authors draw on elements of time, place, and social atmosphere as the foundation on which the story unfolds, and the social environment built from these elements encompasses the entire cultural, political, and economic context that directly shapes the actions, motivations, and forms of resistance undertaken by the characters within it, while

simultaneously reflecting far more comprehensive problems within society at large.

It bears emphasizing that setting must not be understood as a passive or merely decorative element. Chatman (1978), in keeping with his reading of character, likewise categorizes setting as a narrative "existent" whose standing is equal to that of character itself, not merely a static backdrop, but an element that interacts actively with the action and characters that inhabit it (Chatman, 1978). This view is further reinforced by an introductory source on contemporary fiction analysis, which stresses that analyzing setting essentially means treating it not as a static, passive "backdrop," but as an element that plays a dynamic role in the overall process of a work's meaning-production (*An Introduction to the Analysis of Fiction*, in Pressbooks, 2023).

This principle forms an important foundation for this thesis: Nottingham, with all its social and class density, along with the cross-country running route that serves as the primary setting for Smith's action, cannot be understood merely as a neutral physical backdrop. Both are, instead, a battlefield, the terrain on which the ideological struggle of the War of Position, the very core of this research's argument, genuinely unfolds, rather than simply a stage on which the story happens to take place.