

Empire, Englishness and Elementary School History Education, c.1880-1914

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Abstract *This article investigates representations of empire in elementary school history education and assesses the impact this was intended to have had on working class configurations of English national identity. It concentrates predominantly on the ways in which classroom history explained the rise of Britain as an imperial power and how school texts explained this as the logical continuation of the English national past. I identify attempts to promote an imperial-national sense of identity in texts used to teach literacy ('readers'). These were more likely to have been deployed in the elementary school classroom than were those expensive subject specific textbooks that have formed the bases of many previous histories of history teaching.*

Keywords National identity, National past, Education, History, History teaching, Empire

History teaching and national identity: the context

Recent researches into the relationship between the politics of history teaching and the politics of national identity have highlighted how politically contentious was and is the idea of a centrally controlled and centrally administered national curriculum for history (Phillips, 1998a, 1998b; Gardiner, 1990; McKiernan, 1993; Crawford, 1995; Jenkins and Brickley, 1991). So contested was the debate that one group of researchers described the struggle as 'nothing less than a public and vibrant debate about the national soul' (Phillips, Goalen, McCully & Wood, 1999, p.153). Debate about the nature and the content of history teaching and historical knowledge was also highlighted in the public eye by (often-misguided and ill-informed) media responses to the report of the Runnymede Trust on the Future of Multiethnic Britain (Runnymede, 2000). Borrowing from Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an 'imagined community', the Report stressed that the 'island story' was racially exclusive and that Britain, 'as an imagined community ... urgently need[ed] to reimagine itself' (Para 2.5, p.15; Anderson, 1991). Richard Littlejohn's response in the *Sun*, sadly, was not untypical: if the recommendations of the Report were to be implemented, he claimed, 'children will be told stories and lies about their history and encouraged to feel ashamed of their country' (cited in Richardson, 2000).

This article is informed by these debates about the politics of history teaching. History teaching is clearly politically contentious because it is seen as a conduit of a state prescribed national identity. Rather than concentrate specifically on the *politics* of history teaching, this article is concerned with the social and political history of history teaching. It examines the period of 1880-1914 wherein history first became a subject of mass educational consumption – that is, as a topic of instruction in elementary schools for those who would, prior to the implementation of Education Acts for compulsory and then free education, have not attended school. Between 1890 and 1903 the number of elementary school departments offering specific lessons in history rose from a meagre 414 to somewhere in the region of 23,000, largely because history had been made statutory curriculum fare in 1902 (Steele, 1974, p.187). Specific lessons in history prior to 1902 were very few and far between (Heathorn, 2000, provides some statistics, pp.7-9 and see relevant endnotes). Despite this, historical learning had been rife. The article demonstrates some of the ways in which a certain historical diet was fed to elementary school scholars in the hope that it would both help to augment a class-transcending sense of national belonging and help to deliver lessons in morality and citizenship. It is thus, within the

socio-historical context of pre-war elementary education, that the *intention* of historical learning is analysed here. It is the form and idea of an imperial national self-image, and projected place within it for the elementary school child, that concerns this article.

If the legacy of history teaching has suggested connotations of racial superiority and legitimated a racially *exclusive* telling of British national identity, then it is exactly this period wherein that legacy would have been sown that requires analysis. *

Historians and the history of history teaching

The history of history teaching in this period has been widely documented (Ahier, 1988; Chancellor, 1970; Horn, 1988; Howat, 1965; Marsden, 1995). Part of the argument below is that it has largely been documented in a false context. History lessons and historical learning were not the same. Most previous accounts have concentrated on history lessons as reconstructed by research into subject specific history textbooks. Here, I follow the recent research of Stephen Heathorn and concentrate specifically on historical learning – that is, the use and role of history in elementary school reading lessons in which subject specific textbooks did not play a part (Heathorn, 1995, 2000).

Those concerned with recent debates about the politics of the taught past and national identity have often offered brief overviews of what history was like prior to the progressivist impetus of the 1960s (Baldwin, 1996; Phillips, 1998, pp.12-15, and 1999; Aldrich and Dean, 1991; Sylvester 1994). Former History Chief Subject Inspector John Slater, for instance, parodied the ‘traditional’:

Content was largely British, or rather Southern English; Celts looked in to starve, emigrate or rebel; the North to invent looms or work in mills; abroad was of interest once it was part of the Empire; foreigners were either, sensibly, allies, or rightly, defeated (Slater, 1989, p.1).

The idea that the evolution of history teaching had produced an anglocentric narrative grounded in Protestantism, in praise of parliamentary democracy and purporting that Britain was racially superior is not necessarily misleading. Research of the previous two decades by historians concerned with assessing the downwards filtration of imperial propaganda and imperial-nationalist values have identified education in general and history teaching in particular as a key site for such inculcation. Following John MacKenzie’s highly influential, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (1984), a number of historians have demonstrated both the presence and persuasiveness of imperial ideologies in history teaching (Castle, 1996; Horn, 1988; Lieven, 2000). Indeed, this was often endorsed by texts that spoke of the civilising mission associated with the Empire project. Two examples from textbooks are illustrative:

G.T. Warner was not untypical of textbook authors in his comment that:

When we look at a map of the world, and we see how wide is the red that marks the British Empire, we may feel proud ... Our race possesses the colonial spirit which French, Spaniards and Germans do not possess: the daring that takes men into distant lands, the doggedness that keeps them steadfast in want and difficulties, the masterful spirit that gives them power of Eastern races, the sense of justice that abuses them from abusing this power. (Warner, 1899, pp.248-9).

In the words of Arthur Mee, author of *Little Treasure Island: Her Story and her Glory*, the national past was the story of how Britain was 'the Island in the Middle of World'; it told how hers was 'the central glory of the earth ... whose power had been the most precious thing'. But more than this, associated explicitly with the 'story' of the development of the nation, was the perceived existence of a bond between patriotism and a sense of national mission. To continue with Mee, the British role abroad was to crush 'the oppressor, releas[e] the captive, uplift the fallen, and bring new strength and hope to the millions of mankind' (Mee, 1920, preface).

Such accounts have been reproduced in histories of history teaching to demonstrate that children were taught simply that Britain was a force for world good. These textbooks told the story of the national past, which, fitting seamlessly with the Whig idea of historical progress so prevalent in the period, dictated that the imperial possession was the telos of the British achievement. In short – it has been said that the purpose of school history was to sow an imperial-patriotism that indicated to children that Britain's glorious Empire and her industrial strength had been ordained because of her religious and democratic traditions. National identity was to be grounded in national pride and reverence for those that undertook and succeeded in the national mission.

Textbooks as limited source

Although such jingoistic messages were endemic in the majority of textbooks, educators often castigated both the textbook and its content. Fletcher and Kipling's *A School History of England* was roundly rebuked in the *Educational Times* for being too bloodthirsty and militaristic (Chancellor, 1970, p.114). Likewise A.H. Garlick, in his teaching manual, informed future and existing teachers that historical learning in the elementary school should not encourage jingoistic sentiments, but should 'help to break away national *prejudice* by giving us some knowledge of other countries' (Garlick's emphasis). He continued: 'Bias against, and hatred and contempt for other nations, are often the results of ignorance' (Garlick, 1904, p.259).

James Welton's teaching manual underlines that in addition to being in poor taste, the history produced in textbooks was considered largely *unhistorical*.

A good textbook should be one written by an **author who is competent at once as a scholar and a teacher**. Too many of those in common use are mere pieces of hackwork, the study of which engenders prejudice and false notions even when it does not lead to disgust with the whole subject (Welton's emphasis) (Welton, 1906, p.267).

Like any historical source, the value of textbooks needs to be realised in the context of their proposed audience. Textbooks are limited in the information they can offer the researcher because they were very rarely used in elementary classrooms. Pamela Horn's chapter 'Elementary Education and the Growth of Imperial Ideal' is but one example where an historian has failed to note that the intended audience of textbooks was not the elementary school, but the Private School and the fee-paying Secondaries (Horn, 1988). Textbooks may have influenced some teachers – there is evidence to suggest that teachers may have derived subject knowledge from specific textbooks (to the admonishment of many teacher educators) – but we can be certain that they were not frequent, everyday, classroom resources.

Learning about the national past in the elementary school

Those sources that were available, historical 'readers', are much better exemplars of the messages given to the majority of the school-age populace. The content of these

– in relation to themes of gender, class, national identity and pre-war notions of citizenship and national belonging – have recently been meticulously researched by Stephen Heathorn (Heathorn, 1995, 2000).

Reading books were everywhere about elementary schools. Literacy was the educational buzzword of the times and schools dedicated large timetable portions to lessons in reading, writing and comprehension (Vincent, 1989). An adjustment to the educational Code in 1883, as the preface of one of these readers indicates, 'require[d] that in each standard above the Second, three Reading Books shall be used, and that one of these shall relate to English History' (*Royal Story Book of English History*, 1884, preface). Harry Withers, in his appraisal of history teaching in London's elementary schools, confirms that history was to feature prominently in the materials used to teach children how to read:

It has no doubt been the case in many schools, in which History has not been presented as a class subject, that nevertheless, lessons in history have been given. And in every school without exception the rule had held good that out of the three reading books in every class above the Second Standard one has been a "History reader" (Withers, 1901, p.169).

The Code further stipulated that schools should have 'sets' of readers – a 'set' denoting that there should be enough so that each child could have access to the text. Sales figures for readers far surpassed those for the subject specific textbooks, outnumbering textbooks by a ratio of 10-to-1. This reflects the demographic balance of school attendees. 90% or so of the population would have been educated in the elementary schools. Longman, for instance, sold 115,000 of its *Ship Historical Readers* between 1891 and 1902, which far surpassed Oman's renowned textbook, *The History of England*, that only sold 6,000 between 1897 and 1902 (Heathorn, 2000, p.13). With demand for these readers thus initiated by the state, and a purchasing market in place, publishing houses increasingly sought to out-do competitors by employing authors that were academically qualified. It is not surprising, given that universities were now producing graduates in history, that Heathorn finds a new middle class cadre of male authors in this period (pp.37-55). It may be more surprising, however, to discover that some authors were renowned scholars in the universities. Oscar Browning, Mandell Creighton, Samuel Rolson Gardiner, and Frederick York Powell (amongst others) earned good money by turning their pens (or what may well have been the pens of their students) to elementary school readers as well as textbooks and academic publications. The ingredients feeding this resource production were thus similar for both readers and textbooks, but the end result was quite different.

It needs noting that the textbook assumes the ability to read, which in turn leads me to reiterate that readers were pedagogically designed to assist learning *how* to read. This is more than evident in the readers themselves. The texts are written in an accessible language, most containing long lists of new words at either the end or the beginning of each chapter/story. Highlighted in the text are sentences that can be used to practice pronunciation (a highly relevant favourite appears to be Nelson's call-to-arms, 'England Expects Every Man To Do His Duty'). Most contain, for the purposes of oral discussion, brief summaries and comprehension exercises. The first history readers, for Standard III, were, by recommendation, to be Simple Stories from English History, thus combining what was presumed to be the child's love for myths and fairy-tales with 'useful' information.

The national past becomes the national story, though this is not to say that children were to interpret what they read as fictitious. Quite the opposite. By learning about

the past at the same time as learning to read, history was conferred an authenticity. As Welton explains in his teaching manual:

If the term 'reading book' be confined to those books which are used mainly for oral reading, then we see that the contents should be of value as literature rather than as information. The attempt to combine the two, like most endeavours to kill two birds with one stone, usually hinders the attainment of the result which should be sought from each. The chief exception is the history reader, which, if well chosen, is at once literature and the medium of conveying definite information (Welton, 1906, p.136).

This sense of historical authenticity was reinforced by techniques deployed to make the history both exciting and therefore interesting and a stimulant to the imagination. Frequent inclusion of historical words such as 'hewn', 'strewn', 'lest', 'thee', 'exalteth', phrases like 'the children in those days...' (Holborn Series, c.1900, p.99) and stories about the childhood antics of historical heroes all added to a feel that this history was both a lived past, and crucially, a relevant past.

Ultimately, it was intended that these readers would confer a sense of the national past to which scholars felt they belonged. Readers, to some extent, were invitations into middle class perceptions of national identity. The working classes had previously little reason to feel themselves part of the Empire project. Now – in order to promote a sense of national belonging and national pride concomitant with selling the values and legitimacy of imperialism – the common man (and to a much lesser extent woman) was to be written into national narrative. It was the intention that working class schoolchildren would, in identifying with the national past, identify with the nation in its present, and be prepared to serve the national wellbeing in the future.

This intent to promote a sense of national *imperial* belonging can be identified by analysing a number of themes. Here, I will concentrate specifically on the ideas of historical continuity and racial connotations of nation belonging.

Continuous and inclusive national history: extending the Empire and imperial history backwards

As one would expect – especially given their authorship - these readers drew on the dominant Whig idea of historical progress. Keeping with the impact of Whig thinking, the love of 'freedom' was represented as an innate quality of the English that could be traced back to Anglo-Saxon forefathers. *Chambers Historical Reading Books* (1892) explained: 'All Englishmen are *now* agreed that *we* greatly owe the freedom *we now* enjoy to *our* forefathers, who resolved to bleed and die on the battlefield rather than submit to the arbitrary will of misguided kings' (my emphasis, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.404). But as recent discussion of education for citizenship reminds us, the concept of freedom is tied inexorably to obligations and responsibilities. This is similar in the period under discussion here. The widening of the franchise, and the perception of domestic moral decay, made it essential that working class children be made aware of their duties as citizens who could enjoy this hard-won and highly cherished 'freedom'. The most consistently employed method to articulate these duties and responsibilities was by the representation of these qualities in the guise of role models. Indeed, this was requested in the Board of Education schemes of work, and later in the government's *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers and Others Involved in Elementary Education* (1905). Authors followed this through. John Finemore, for instance, informs his readers in his Standard IV reader, *Men of Renown: King Alfred to Lord Roberts* (1902) that '[t]he boys and girls

who will read this book are the children of a great and famous Empire [need to know] who laid its foundations and built up its world-wide sway' (p.1). Role models transcended the chronological confines of these texts – ranging (usually) from Boadicea through to the most recently acclaimed General or Queen Victoria herself. They tended to fall within three categories: military, explorer/missionary and statesman. Finnemore outlined specifically why children needed to know about these role models and why learning about them should be of relevance and importance:

Now it is quite true that very few people have such gifts as to become great, but everyone can strive his utmost to become a worthy member of a great people, and that is no mean thing. More, it has much to do with the making of the great man himself. Of what use is it for a great statesman to make wise laws, if the people will not obey them? Of what use is it for a great general to lay the most skilful plans, if his soldiers are faint-hearted? Of what use is it for the great sailor to turn his prow to sea, if there are cowards in the crew? We read in our history time and time again of battles such as Agincourt and Crecy, where a small band of English faced overwhelming numbers of a powerful enemy. Their case seemed utterly hopeless, but they won the day, and the name of their leader became great and famous. Yet where would be his glory but for the dauntless English hearts whose names we do not know? (pp.2-3)

Role models were the literary monument of the qualities of the English national character. They displayed qualities that all children were encouraged to emulate. Nelson, Wolfe, Gordon and many others had committed the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. In their duty, faith, and living demonstrations of what were deemed *national* qualities, they gave their lives for the good of the nation. Crucially, the texts also tied the common man into the success of the famous individuals, thus conferring the sense of historical belonging whilst informing children of those duties and behaviours they needed to try and replicate if England were to remain great.

Elizabethan explorers such as Raleigh and Drake were demonstrated to have had the same qualities and characteristics as the military heroes. Their successes were similarly indebted to the role of the common people.

It was these sailors that gave England the proud title of Mistress of the Seas. Our hearts still beat faster as we read of their exploits. No enterprise was too bold or too dangerous for them. Under such men as Drake and Hawkins, they carried the English flag into seas never seen before, fought and won against the greatest odds, and made their [captains'] names a terror through all the colonies of Spain (Chamber's *Alternative History Readers* (1898), cf. Heathorn, p.412).

The representation of history as continuous allowed a linkage to be drawn between the military and seafaring heroes. It was explained that seafaring and exploration were a characteristic of 'the race' – a positive legacy of the 'restlessness' felt by what were commonly labelled 'our' Anglo-Saxon forefathers. It was this restlessness, of course, which explained the English propensity and natural ability to colonise new territories and act as a force for good. The continuity between the Anglo-Saxons and the Navy was explicitly drawn and is illustrated by reference to the *Patriotic Historical Reader*. Having discussed Alfred's battle with the Danes, his imprisonment and his decision to construct a navy, the author notes:

The King never used his ships to attack his neighbours. He only wanted them to protect our own shores, so he stationed them round the coast, ready to drive off any enemies who might try to land.

'Since Alfred's time', the text continued, the English 'have always kept up *their* love for the sea, and many of the most famous British victories have been won by *our* navy' (Book III, 1898, pp.37-9). Bisecting the text is a photograph of a modern battleship (p.38), thus rendering this imperial continuity explicit in the child's eye and the child's mind.

The history told then was both class-inclusive and race-exclusive. The English were expected to identify with the national past and this was encouraged by consistently reiterating to children that they were of Anglo-Saxon stock. This section has emphasised the use of the words 'we', 'our', 'their' and 'they'. There is a clear sense in these texts of an historical procession – in which the scholar is expected to feel a part – of an innate genealogical relationship between those past and those present. This served the purpose, as these two lengthy extracts demonstrate, of both emphasising to children *why* they should identify with the nation, and why they should do their utmost to defend its integrity. The first is from an introduction and the second derives from a concluding chapter.

The reason why we like to read English history is because it tells the story of our own ancestors. You all know of your fathers and grandfathers, and you must remember that each of these had grandfathers and grandfathers before them, and so on backwards as far as we can go; so that forefathers of every English child who reads this book must have been living at every time in the history of the English People. English History, therefore, is the history of our families as well that of our nation (Cassell's Historical Course for Schools, 1884, p.9).

We have now read the story of the English people during their life in England. We have seen them land on our shores, a race of rude, savage warriors. We have seen them grow in strength and in knowledge until they have become a leading nation of the world. And let us remember that we, too, are English. In our hands lies the future of our great race. Let us resolve to do all we can to uphold the fame of our country, so that fresh honours may yet be added to the story of the English People (*Black's Story of the English People*, 1905, p.154).

National origins and 'English' national identity

The concept of race and racial belonging is clearly used in these texts. But what is the English race? Who are the English race? Why do they have a British Empire? The frequent use of possessives (we, our, they, etc) indicates the attempt to promote national sameness based in a shared history. This was no accident. As FJC Hearnshaw, an Oxford Historian and textbook author, noted in an address to the Historical Association in 1913, the 'race':

has no natural memory, and in order that it may not lose the vast accumulated wealth of the experiences of the past, a memory has to be created for it. **That race-memory is History** (my emphasis, Hearnshaw, 1913, p.39).

It was an attempt to construct race-memory that was predicated on the Victorian obsession with the Anglo-Saxon. Accounts of the Anglo-Saxons themselves in these readers helps one to understand a little better the message in these readers about Englishness at the turn of the twentieth century.

It has already been identified how children were informed that the English love for freedom and mastery of the seas was owing to Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is also worth noting, albeit briefly, that some authors additionally attempted to tie the concept of parliamentary democracy to the Saxons. W. Beach Thomas, for instance, claimed that the liberties and organisation of Parliament corresponded 'very nearly to the old meetings and councils that arranged local affairs a thousand years ago' (*The Citizen Books*, Book III, cf. Heathorn, 2000, p.106). Lady Katie Magnus extended this debt to the Anglo-Saxons even further: 'the seeds of our national character are sought in the lives and heroes of early England, from whom we trace the beginnings of our best habits and institutions' (cited in Barczewski, 2000, p.12). The significant indicators of what idea of Englishness children were expected to accrue are evident in the Anglo-Saxons' dealing with other 'races' – especially those other 'races' within the island territory.

Reflecting that this was an era where discussion of social Darwinism was at the fore, these readers told a story of the 'race' coming together, growing stronger together, absorbing the best and rejecting the worst of those 'races' that it came into contact with. 'The conquest of Britain was indeed partly wrought out after two centuries of bitter warfare', *The Young Student's English History Reader* (1881) informed.

At its close, Britain had become England, a land that is, not of Britons, but of Englishmen ... [t]he Britons, abandoned to themselves, were destined to be driven out, or extinguished, or absorbed, according to that apparently inevitable law of nature by which the weaker race disappears before the stronger. We are of that stronger race ... (cf. Heathorn, p.402)

In similar vein, the Norman Conquest was rationalised as a good thing. Even though the Normans were able to win the battle of Hastings, in the longer-term battle of the 'races', there was likely to only ever be one winner. Ultimately, the Normans became anglicised:

The Normans soon mixed with the English, and the two races became one nation. It was easy for them to mix, for English and Norman were really brothers in blood. The Norman was a Northman, just as Saxons and Danes were. When the races were joined, a very mighty nation was the result. The spirit and charm of the Norman, together with the solid strength of the Saxon, have formed the English speaking world of today, the people who rule so much of the earth, and whose language is spreading so widely (Black's Story of the English People, cf. Heathorn, p.405).

Josiah Turner was more explicit. 'These changes in laws and customs', he argued, 'did not make the Norman Conquest a turning point. It is true that the strict enforcement of the Feudal System made England, for the first time in its history, a united nation' (Turner, 1913, p.32).

By the Hundred Years War there was racial unity. Again the stress is placed on the role of the common man in consolidating racial greatness. The following extract from *Raleigh History Reader* is wholly indicative:

The battle of Crécy is very important in one respect. It showed that the bravest and boldest knights of France were powerless against the sturdy English yeoman, with their bows and arrows. The men, who had left their ploughs and their spades at Edward's call, put to rout the finest nobility of France. The people won the day ... (Raleigh History Reader, Book IV, 1898, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.407).

We have seen many times over then that history was able to provide an inclusive narrative of the nation's past. By stressing duties and values as core to the national character, and therefore the success of the nation's present, it was hoped that this would lead to social cohesion and would ensure a generation of citizens conscious of their national-imperial identities and willing to defend the nation.

The British Empire and English national identity

Although Empire and Industry were to remain British, and explicitly so, the historical explanation for the acquisition and safe maintenance of the Empire was predicated, in these readers, in the language of Englishness. The exalted national-imperial present was validated, infused and enthused as the logical culmination of the English past. The successful accumulation and maintenance of a **British** Empire was explained to these children as based on the historically evolved qualities of the **English** national character. It was thus that Meiklejohn, albeit in a geography textbook, was able to state decisively that 'the story of the growth of the British Empire is the story of the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon race' (cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.408). History readers mirrored this. The *Britannia History Readers* (Book I, c.1902) renders this lucidly – and makes some comment about England's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the dominions:

England is only part of the island called Great Britain, the other parts of which are Scotland and Wales. To the west of Great Britain is another island, called Ireland. The two together are known as the British Isles. From the first, Englishmen have had much to do with the inhabitants of the other parts of the British Isles, that it is impossible to write about them quite separately. And they are all now under one sovereign, and form the kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The British Isles are only a small part of the dominions of the British Sovereign, to whom new lands belong all over the world. It is said that upon the British Empire the Sun never sets ... **English history has to tell, among other things, how it is that we have come to possess such a large part of the world** (my emphasis) (pp.9-10).

A text of 1896 claimed that 'no race could have built up this Empire unless it possessed the qualities of honesty, courage and endurance' (*Warwick History Readers*, Book VII, cf. Heathorn, 1995, p.408). Another noted that it was because of Anglo-Saxon qualities that the Englishman had 'the energy and perseverance' that enabled him to 'face the difficulties of opening up a new country', as well as the 'independence of character [that] drives him to new lands' (*King Edward History Readers*, Book 5, cf. Heathorn, 1995, pp.408-9). The imperial possession was thus represented as being ordained: children were to receive the impression that Empire was the logical future for their forefathers.

As with the defeat of the Romans, and the Anglicisation of the Normans, what is implicitly suggested in these texts, is that it was part of the glory of England that it could become Britain, but retain its own version of Englishness. This may suggest why role models included the Anglo-Irish Wellington who was able to take his place amongst the pantheon of great Englishmen. This may help to explain why Presbyterian missionaries from Scotland were welcomed into Englishness, since their mission was one historically defined as English. It may explain how industrialists and entrepreneurs from and of the periphery were to take their place in a specifically English historical narrative. And so on. It helped to underline representations of Britishness as a process of what Keith Robbins has called 'blending', so long as those that wanted to 'blend', accepted the dominance of the English narrative and English ideal as centre (Robbins, 1993).

This process of absorption into Englishness is important. It is nowhere more evident than in the immortalisation of the monarch. In the mid-century, Victoria, a monarch of dubious Anglo-Saxon racial heritage, had largely been lauded for her domestic family values. In 1895, however, the Raleigh History Readers (Book IV) stated categorically that she was:

The descendant of the Saxon chiefs who settled in Wessex more than fourteen centuries ago [...] She represents the growth of our people from very small beginnings to its present world wide power: and all who know the history of our country feel a thrill of pride and joy when they think of its wonderful past and its prosperous present, with all of which our royal family has been so closely associated. When we sing "God Save the Queen", we think not only of the Queen, but of the people whose past and present life she represents. For [...] we remember that, after all, we are one nation, closely related in blood and community of interest (cf. Heathorn, 2000, p.41).

And here is the aim of this process of invention. Children were to forget their differences, were to remember they were part of one nation, to remember they were closely related in blood and, like the British Empire itself, the product of the English national past. This was to be the basis for a collective and inclusive nationhood. Although justified on the grounds of the English national character, this nationhood was to underline, in an age of Empire and an age that stressed the vitality of imperial values, the strength and ties of a Greater Britain of which all the nation's children were intended to become imperial citizens.

With this explanation of the existence of the British Empire firmly lodged in the English national past, I turned my research to those readers written for older children that were likely to be more detailed in their historical stories. It was not surprising to find a supplementary pamphlet to the Patriotic History Book VI for Standards VI-VII entitled The Patriotic History of the British Empire. Expecting this to be different from other readers, perhaps dealing in more depth with the logistics, trade and legal issues, as well as the processes of settling and colonisation, what do I find, but exactly the same formula as in other texts. In purporting to explain the growth of the British Empire by beginning its story with the Roman occupation of Britain - and denoting the starting point of the English Empire with the moment the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes decided to set sail for 'England' - this text indicates that it was common belief that the acquisition of the Empire was the rational end-result of the national story. Pride in the British Empire was a key component of this national identity - but even more crucial it would appear - is the association of this Empire with the historically evolved 'English' race.

Conclusions

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis. Most importantly, it must be seen that these reading books articulated a message about nationhood and belonging that was intended to serve a purpose. Given the history textbooks and academic histories that would have formed the historical knowledge of reader authors, it can be argued that this evident attempt to imbibe middle class values of duty and sacrifice to the working classes was akin to representations in textbooks of the mission to 'civilise' the 'native', the 'heathen' and the 'barbarian'. Indeed, in contrast to the explicit denigration of racial 'others' that so characterised textbooks (Marsden, 1990), impressions of national belonging were conferred to elementary schoolchildren via a telling of the story of the national 'self'. Why children should identify themselves with the nation was articulated in readers more thoroughly by describing to children the past and present qualities of 'us' - of national

'sameness'. This was in contrast to textbooks that highlighted Britain's racial superiority by demonstrating national 'difference' when this 'us' – it was perhaps taken for granted that the audience for textbooks knew what it was to be British because of their class positioning - interacted with 'them'.

Afterthought

Fred Clarke, in his polemic of 1929 against dry, irrelevant and pedagogically naïve history teaching, concluded (N.B. Clarke, like Callcott (1859) before him, uses the name 'Arthur' to denote the average scholar):

England and English life must form the centre and main substance of Arthur's teaching. But it is the setting that is all-important. The whole national history must be seen in its place as one field of operation, one centre of functioning, for the common effort. To that effect Arthur's country has contributed much. Sometimes it has failed and hindered. Where it has done so, Arthur must be frankly told [...] [t]hen the much-abused 'My Country Right or Wrong' may come to have its proper meaning which should be, 'My Country Most when She is Wrong', for then She needs me most (Clarke, 1929).

This sentiment – that children can be 'frankly told' about negative aspects of Britain's past whilst maintaining that sense of patriotic belonging - is one that would perhaps serve Mr Littlejohn and other supporters of outmoded and irrelevant national imaginings well.

* Further research into *how* children were likely to have negotiated and mediated their identities in the context of what they were taught and *how* they were taught is forthcoming. Current research, building likewise on the socially differentiated nature of historical learning, compares the different representations of nationhood and national belonging in history and geography textbooks and historical and cross-curricular readers.

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