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“For Home, Country and Race”: The Gendered Ideals of Citizenship in English Elementary and Evening Continuation Schools, 1885-1914

STEPHEN HEATHORN

IN 1886, THE FATHER OF THE STATE-AIDED BOARD SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM, W.E. Forster, was asked to write a preface for a new school reading textbook on the subject of “citizenship,” which had been written by his cousin, H.O. Arnold-Forster, for use in the higher classes of elementary schools. Forster noted in his remarks that the Parliamentary Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884-85 had created a new pool of potential voters who needed to be properly instructed in democratic ideals. Forster suggested that his cousin’s text would be admirably suited to this purpose, and he praised the inclusiveness and the patently uncontroversial nature of the project: “I think any unbiased reader will admit that there is little of anything in this book which will not be accepted by all men of all creeds and parties.”¹ The book, the hugely successful *The Citizen Reader*, was the first of many to appear over the next two decades that were designed to impart the basic parameters of citizenship to elementary and evening continuation school students.²

What is most interesting and significant about these books and the justifications offered for their need is that they were directed at the agencies

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1 W.E. Forster in the preface to H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader* (London, 1886), 1.

2 *The Citizen Reader* went through 24 editions and sold well over half a million copies between 1886 and 1910. See R.J.W. Selleck, *The New Education, 1870-1914* (London, 1968), 325, and Simon Nowell-Smith, *The House of Cassell, 1848-1958* (London, 1958), 73. Evening continuation schools were schools designed to teach elementary skills to adults. From the early 1880s on, the state-aided Board Schools were the largest supplier of these adult elementary education programmes. The School Board for London, for example, opened 83 such schools (43 for men and 40 for women) in 1883, and some 6,000 men and 3,000 women enrolled in elementary classes. Initially, the curriculum of these schools was identical to that of the Board’s elementary schools. After 1885, the curriculum was opened up significantly, and enrolment had climbed to a total of 14,000 per year by 1886. See W.A. Devereux, *Adult Education in Inner London, 1870-1980* (London, 1982), 25-26.

designed explicitly to school the still largely disenfranchised working class. Even after including the growth of the working-class franchise in the 1884-85 Acts, only half of the boys and none of the girls in the elementary schools were ever expected to attain the vote.³ Yet there is no evidence that these reading books or civics classes themselves were selectively directed at “well-off” or “more respectable” boys. In fact, quite the opposite was the case, as the widest distribution possible was promoted (if not actually attained), and all boys and even girls were encouraged to read these books and participate in civics classes.⁴

This development thus presents somewhat of a paradox. In late-Victorian Britain, the citizen was almost always assumed to be male, adult, financially independent and, usually, culturally English. Moreover, the citizen in mainstream political discourse was not conceived of simply as an “individual,” but as the smallest political unit. He was a respectable ratepayer with a “subordinate and supporting family which constituted his private hinterland.”⁵ It was in large part because the political and cultural landscape of the English nation was conceived of in this way prior to the end of the century that middle-class female suffragists had such a difficult time establishing political credibility for themselves, let alone displacing male political hegemony.⁶ If this was so, why then was the reading of “citizenship readers,” and the undergoing of lessons in “civics” in working-class schooling, promoted so vigorously and universally in the period 1885-1914?

A clue to the answer to this question lies in the remainder of Forster’s preface to the *Citizen Reader*. For after indicating the importance of teaching the principles of democratic participation, Forster proceeded to suggest that the purpose of instruction in “civics” was also to instruct the masses in “the principles which should actuate them as patriotic citizens.”⁷ Forster insinuated that, beyond explaining the basic mechanics of government, civics ought to be used to instil certain values, such as loyalty, duty and obedience, and thus to help shape a common, shared national identity. Indeed, even a cursory examination of Arnold-Forster’s book reveals that formal political participation (such as

3 Even after the Parliamentary Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884-85, less than 29 per cent of all adults in the United Kingdom had the vote. Given the class composition of the elementary system, and the fact that suffrage was based on property qualifications, this meant that only slightly more than 50 per cent of the male students in the elementary school system between 1885 and 1914 would have been expected to acquire the vote later in life. See C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *Longman’s Handbook of Modern British History, 1714-1980* (London, 1983), 62.

4 See Oscar Browning, *The Citizen: His Rights and Responsibilities* (London, 1894), i.

5 Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain* (London, 1978), 113.

6 For an excellent summary of the arguments deployed to prevent the changing of this vision, see Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women’s Suffrage in Britain* (London, 1978).

7 Forster, preface to Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, i.

voting and standing for office) was presented as only a small part of what it was to be a "good" citizen. The principles of "good citizenship" were explained instead in a manner that highlighted the social-cultural, as opposed to the political, relationship of the individual to the national collectivity: that is, those values, characteristics, personality traits and loyalties that *should* be part of the ideal citizen's identity, regardless of whether he or she was legally entitled to participate in the political sovereignty of the nation.

Sociocultural constructions of ideas about citizenship are every bit as important to a society as the legal-political definitions that they sometimes, but not always, mirror. And all over Europe, the political face of citizenship corresponded with the symbolic and representational nature of the nationalisms that had evolved over the course of the nineteenth century.⁸ This cultural representation of modern nationhood in Europe has invariably depended on gendered familial and domestic signifiers, such as the "mother country," the "fatherland" and having foreigners "adopt" new countries and become "naturalised" into new national families.⁹ This use of gendered symbols and representations existed no less in late-Victorian Britain, where Queen Victoria was "Mother to the Imperial Family," and a classical female icon stood watch over the *Pax Britannica*. As Anne McClintock, among others, has demonstrated, women frequently represented "the atavistic and authentic 'body' of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural)." They were the physical embodiments of a nation's continuity. As guardian, protector and mother of the nation, a symbol like Britannia evoked antiquity and quiet strength. Dressed in armour, and placed in a classical pose that removed her from real time and place, with her gaze directed vigilantly out to sea, Britannia was represented as fundamentally above domestic political or social divisions.¹⁰ As the female embodiment of the nation, she stood for the eternal forces directing its destiny. This representation was quite unlike the overtly political symbol of John Bull, who was usually pictured in affluent (distinctly middle class) contemporary dress, and who was used by a variety of competing interests in many domestic social, economic and political disputes.¹¹ Indeed, the middle class man in nationalist histories and iconography was invariably represented as "the progressive agent of national modernity." In contrast to women, such men were "forward thrusting, potent and historic."¹²

8 See Derek Heater, *Citizenship: The Civic Ideal in World History, Politics and Education* (London, 1990), 62, 182-83.

9 Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* (Summer 1993): 61-67.

10 See the introduction to George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality* (London, 1985).

11 Miles Taylor, "John Bull and the Conspiracy of Public Opinion in England, 1712-1929," *Past and Present* 134 (February 1992): 93-128.

12 McClintock, "Family Feuds," 66.

This gendered dichotomy in English national iconography reflected the socio-political status of the two sexes in late-Victorian Britain, and the dualism was typically unified in the Janus-faced configuring of "national time." In "national time," continuities between the nation's ancient past and the present were used to legitimate calls for the pulling together of the nation in the future:

Thus has Britain been changed into modern England, and the great English nation formed out of the German and British barbarians of the past by the manliness, the wisdom, and the piety of our forefathers. At every moment of our lives, in the food we eat, in the clothes we wear, in the towns and the villages we inhabit, in the books we read, in the laws we live under, in the very thoughts and principles which guide us onwards, each one of us reaps the fruit of their labours. Them we cannot repay, but we reverence them, and in return we must labour for the good of those who will come after us.¹³

This sort of passage, elucidating a distinct sense of "national time" and pointing to the historical "manliness" of the English citizen's forefathers, was a central theme in many citizenship textbooks prepared for elementary schooling at the end of the nineteenth century. The gendered dualism of the forward-looking male (progress, destiny) and the backward-looking female (continuity, tradition) evident in expressions of "national time" was unified through references to a dehistoricised notion of the family. While not limited to nationalist ideology, nor particularly new to this period, the family metaphor nevertheless offered "a 'natural' figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests."¹⁴ The ideas of home and family provided an easily tangible bond between the present and "our forefathers," implying both a sense of natural order and genealogical rootedness. The opening lines of *The Waterloo Citizen Reader* demonstrate the often-made prescriptive connection between a highly structured ideal of family and a stable overarching social order:

History seems to prove that most societies were first formed on the patriarchal model Gradually, in the course of ages, there has been a dissolution of family dependency and a constant growth of individual obligation. Still, despite this loosening of the family bond, the life of a typical home of to-day gives us an image of the State and its functions true enough to serve as a starting point. [It is the father] who regulates the family life, he it is who reconciles the clashing of interests of the members of the household, he it is who preserves peace, sees that all have their rights, and sees that all do their several duties.¹⁵

13 Cassell's *Historical Course for Schools: Simple Outline of English History* (London, 1884), 181-82.

14 McClintock, "Family Feuds," 66.

15 J.E. Parrot, *The Waterloo Citizen Reader* (London, 1893), 9-10.

The ideal of the family as a place where the collective good came before that of the individual was used as a metaphor that expanded familial duty up to the larger community of the nation itself:

Now every boy and girl in the family who cheerfully obeys the rules of the household, who acts honourably and truthfully, and shows kindness to those around, is assisting in the best possible way to promote his or her own happiness as well as the happiness of the family as a whole In order, then, that we may promote the greatest possible happiness of our fellow creatures, we must take care to do our work in the best possible way; that is, we must remember that our work, whatever it is, brings with it duties to all our fellow countrymen.¹⁶

Arnold-Forster similarly pointed to this model in his discussion of how the citizen should structure his loyalties, for when the nation was symbolised as a family, everyone had his or her own special place, roles, responsibilities and duties.¹⁷

The family metaphor, and its use in "national time," is suggested here as a two-layered framework for contextualising the cultural construction of citizenship that was presented in the civic training given to working-class students between 1885 and 1914. On the first level, the disenfranchised were certainly encouraged to think of themselves as members of the "national family." Just as in the domestic family, where all members had their own duties and responsibilities (both symbolic and real) but willingly surrendered their right to political participation to the single voice of the male head of the household, so too in the "national family" the disenfranchised men of the working class surrendered their political rights to their social betters in the "respectable" classes. Although never explicitly stated as such, the mass of the English working class was thereby constituted as a feminine or infantile component of the nation. However, cross-cutting this implicit feminisation and infantilisation was the second layer, by which the family metaphor and "national time" worked through the dictates of citizenship training. For in the content of the civics education offered in elementary and evening continuation schooling, bourgeois gender ideology also operated to construct separate but complementary citizenship roles for working men and women. By the turn of the century, this ideology tended to stress the importance of maternity for women and martial values for men. Since the development of the ideas of national and racial motherhood have received considerable attention by scholars, they will not form a significant part of the analysis here. Rather, this paper will devote itself to explaining how and why cultural constructions of masculine citizenship were applied to an implicitly feminised segment of the population.

16 *Ibid.*, 12-3.

17 Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, 18.

Good Citizenship and Working-Class Education

From the later 1880s onwards, there emerged a spate of comparative reports and recommendations from educationalists and political commentators on the importance of providing some form of in-class instruction on the “duties of citizenship” to the predominantly working-class elementary school students.¹⁸ While the term “preparation for citizenship” had been used by political commentators in the debates leading up to the passing of Forster’s Education Act in 1870,¹⁹ public debate on what this actually entailed peaked only after 1890 during a period of more general concern about national and educational efficiency. Spurred by the 1895 Bryce Report on Secondary Education and the 1896 “Made in Germany” scare that had been whipped up as a result of E.E. Williams’ book of the same name, great pressure was applied to the government by various groups over the questions of the administration and content of state-aided education. Reform was urged, as it was alleged that the rise in economic competition, especially from Germany, was due to the latter’s superior state-run education machinery.²⁰ The administrative overhaul of the Board of Education and the reconfiguring of the entire elementary school system during the years 1899-1902 was one result of these wide-ranging demands. However, not only the administration of elementary education was put into question at this time. The curriculum and the content of schooling became the foci of much discussion as well. And although changes in scientific and technical training were the most prominent demands of the national efficiency movement, such proposals were frequently accompanied by a clamour for better civic training as well. Sir Norman Lockyer, a lifelong advocate of science and technical training and a scientist himself, suggested in 1905:

[N]ow I think it is generally accepted both in this country and others, that whether the citizens of a State are educated or not is a matter of absolutely supreme importance – and when I say “educated” please understand that I mean educated morally and physically as well as intellectually. It is no longer merely the concern of the child or the child’s parent. It is acknowledged to be the only true foundation for a State’s welfare and continued progress under conditions of peace or under conditions of war.²¹

18 M.E. Sadler, *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, Vol. 9 (London, 1902), 160. See also R.E. Hughes, *The Making of Citizens* (London, 1902), *The Democratic Ideal in Education* (London, 1903) and *School Training* (London, 1905); Henry Craik, *The State in its Relation to Education* (London, 1896); Thomas Raymont, *The Principles of Education* (London, 1904).

19 See speeches by Lord Montagu in the House of Commons, 29 July 1867 and 4 June 1868. *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, Vol. 189, Col. 355, and Vol. 192, Col. 1159.

20 For an excellent account of the contours of the public debate see Linda Simpson, “Education, Imperialism and National Efficiency in England, 1895-1905,” PhD Thesis, Glasgow University, 1979, pp. 15-50, 91-136.

21 Sir Norman Lockyer, *Education and National Progress: Essays and Addresses, 1870-1905* (London, 1906), 229.

Another scientifically predisposed national efficiency advocate, Laurie Magnus, evinced similar concerns that technical and manual training should proceed hand in hand with more overt concern for elucidating the values of citizenship.²²

Meanwhile, avowed imperialist propagandists like the Earl of Meath were also prone to pointing out the past failings of the nation's schools with regard to the inculcation of citizenship and patriotism. Meath – a staunch advocate of physical education in schools, supporter of Lord Roberts in the campaign for national military service and the founder of the Lads Drill Association and the Empire Day movement – considered "good citizenship" a vital imperial virtue, since "it is not the British Isles, but the British Empire that has to be reckoned as the state."²³ Good citizenship in his view was to be the "bond of empire," as indispensable as patriotic loyalty, and a source of "untold strength" to the national well-being. By 1893, Meath was actively campaigning about the "ideal citizen" and how best to produce more of them in the nation's schools.²⁴

Joining the self-appointed advocates of the virtues of Empire and national efficiency in calls for schooling in good citizenship were representatives from many other political parties and pressure groups in the period between 1885 and 1914. Indeed, a range of politico-intellectual and socio-cultural movements converged at the end of the century: along with the so-called national efficiency movement, there rose to prominence the idealism of T.H. Green and his Oxford disciples, the organic collectivism of the new liberals, the administrative socialism promoted by the Fabians, the national corporatism, "race regeneration" and eugenics advocated by various groups, and the imperial unity and social imperialism championed by some liberal-unionists, conservatives and the Edwardian radical right.²⁵ There was, of course, much disagreement among these various groups and intellectual

22 Laurie Magnus, ed., *Essays in National Education* (London, 1901), 22.

23 Earl of Meath, *Our Empire, Past and Present* (London, 1901), 49.

24 See Meath's letters to *The Times*, 31 May 1902, and to Morant (Secretary of the Board of Education). Great Britain. Public Record Office (PRO), Ed. 24/261, 15 February 1907. See also The Earl of Meath and the Countess of Meath, *Thoughts on Imperial and Social Subjects* (London, 1906), 246. For a discussion of Meath's activities, see Robin Betts, "A Campaign for Patriotism on the Elementary School Curriculum: Lord Meath, 1892-1916," *History of Education Society Bulletin* 46 (1990): 38-45.

25 For useful discussions of these various groups, see P.F. Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978); Frans Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (New York, 1992); Michael Freedon, *The New Liberalism* (Oxford, 1978); M. Langan and B. Schwartz, eds., *Crises in the British State, 1880-1930* (London, 1985); G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Oxford, 1971); Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform* (London, 1960); Anne Summers, "Militarism in Britain before the Great War," *History Workshop Journal* 2 (1976): 104-23; A. Vincent and R. Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship* (London, 1984).

movements, both about the cause and about what should be done to remedy the “problems of the age.” Despite these competing opinions, it seems evident, however, that the confluence of these intellectual and political ideas, and the heightened nationalism that accompanied them, was a response to the wide-ranging socio-economic transformation of Britain at the end of the century and, equally important to the middle and upper classes, apprehension regarding these real and imagined changes.²⁶ It is true that these groups, their suggestions for reform and the publicity that they generated, found their audience mainly among the shapers of “public opinion” in the middle and upper classes. Nonetheless, it was a widely believed precept of much of the upper echelons of society at this time that a “filtration effect” ought eventually to occur, whereby the masses would also come to identify with the political and moral concerns of the élite.²⁷ It is within this context that new initiatives were taken within existing state-supported institutional frameworks, such as the elementary school system, to instil a sense of urgency about the perceived threats to the British Empire and to the “English way of life” among those at the lower levels of society.

The established pedagogical position regarding the proper aims of citizenship training for the late-Victorian working class is evident from assertions made by S.S. Laurie on the opening page of his 1892 treatise on education: “[E]ducation wisely directed can form men into good citizens if we begin the process of formation early; that is to say, it can guarantee in all, that amount of intelligence and virtue and that standard of social intercourse which fit them to discharge well the ordinary duties of men in all their political, industrial, and personal relationships.”²⁸ The preparation of the citizen for ordinary duties was the central point here. Laurie elucidated his position with reasoning that explicitly connected the personal development of the child with his future working life and civic duties: “The education of a child is the bringing him up in such a way as to secure that when he is a man he will fulfill his true life – not merely as an industrial worker, not merely his life as a citizen, but his own personal life through his work and his citizenship.”²⁹ Laurie’s vision was one in which the future working man was taught to appreciate his “personal

26 R. Colls and P. Dodd, eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture* (London, 1986). For more general assessments of this transformation, see Martin Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal* (Cambridge, 1990) and James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (Oxford, 1986).

27 J.M. MacKenzie, “The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype in Late Victorian and Edwardian Times,” in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. J.A. Mangan and J. Walvin, eds. (London, 1987), 189.

28 S.S. Laurie, *Institutes of Education* (London, 1892), 3.

29 *Ibid.*, 18.

life” through the experience of the work “best suited to him” and through the inculcation of the proper perception of his civic duties, which it was suggested would enliven his very existence. There was no suggestion that the male child would ever advance beyond his already assigned social station – he would remain an “industrial worker” – but this fact could be made palatable to him through the recognition of his importance to society, his place in the nation, and through the worthy exercise of his various rights and responsibilities. This was a vision that incorporated the newer pedagogical concerns with personal development within an inclusive, yet simultaneously deferential, social order. Thus, while in the middle decades of the nineteenth century the teaching of “manly self-respect and independence” to the working classes was thought to lie in the enforcing of “immediate obedience and submission to authority, deference to others, courtesy to equals, [and] respect to superiors”³⁰ through rigid discipline in the classroom, by century’s end the ideal of “good citizenship” had come to remould these aims. Now the most pressing concern was the promotion of a sense of community and personal development through the inculcation of an ethic of voluntary obligation of the individual to his or her community.³¹ Most importantly, the mid-century desire to reform the morals of the working-class individual so as to make him or her fit for salvation was replaced with a more secular concern for the formation of a more harmonious and loyal national social collectivity.

By 1905, this vision of schooling for “good citizenship” had become state policy. The Board of Education’s “Suggestions for Teachers” noted:

The purpose of the school is education in the full sense of the word: the high function of the teacher is to prepare the child for the life of the good citizen, to create and foster the aptitude for work and for the intelligent use of leisure, and to develop those features of character which are most readily influenced by school life, such as loyalty to comrades, loyalty to institutions, unselfishness and an orderly and disciplined habit of mind.³²

The state was now promoting the same sort of civic “character-building” values found in the institutions of elite education in the context of the rigidly class-specific, instrumentally instructed and vocationally based elementary

30 H.E. Oakley in an Inspector of Schools report for Manchester, quoted by J.S. Hurt, “Drill, Discipline and the Elementary School Ethos,” in *Popular Education and Socialization in the 19th Century*. P. McCann, ed. (London, 1977), 180.

31 See the notes of the Chief Inspector (North Eastern Division) W.P. Turnbull. Great Britain. Parliamentary Papers (PP). Cd. 756, Vol. XIX, xx. 1 (1901), Part 2, “Report of the Board of Education, 1900-1901,” Appendix to Report, 126.

32 PP. Cd. 2638, Vol. LX (1905), “Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools,” 5.

and evening continuation school system.³³ The underlying assumption of such successful “character building” was that the elementary schools would restrain the mass of the citizenry from radical action and socialise them into an acceptance of the “natural” norm of differential access to social status and political power. For some educationalists, this particular connotation was being promoted too effectively. The instruction of “good citizenship,” one commentator lamented, while a good thing in itself, ought to be more broadly directed than the mere “waving of national flags and the singing of national anthems,” since “the national greatness, if it exists, must be understood and appreciated, but there must be no exploitation of the people by the privileged classes, who identify their own interests with those of the state.”³⁴ Overwhelmingly, however, through the teaching of history – which was the preferred means to promote national civic ideals in the late-Victorian and Edwardian climate of heightened imperial nationalism³⁵ – either in formal lessons or informally through the use of the historical readers used to teach reading skills, “character building” and training in “good citizenship” did progress with the interests of the state very much in mind.³⁶

Despite the growing significance of history as both an academic discipline and a means of honing civic identities at the university level, formal history lessons were neither compulsory nor popular in the elementary system until 1900. Most history was taught through historical reading books, whose primary purpose was, in fact, the teaching of reading.³⁷ Such books thereby brought history and civics training into the curriculum through the back door. But many advocates of training in “good citizenship” demanded even more overt, formal teaching.³⁸ Consequently, in both elementary and evening continuation schools an attempt to expand citizenship instruction was launched through permissive legislation via the offering of formal civics courses in evening continuation

33 For “character building” in élite schools, see J.A. Mangan, “Images of Empire in the Late Victorian Public School,” *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 12 (1980): 31-39. It is instructive to compare Mangan’s conclusions with the arguments offered by F.H. Hayward, ed., *The Primary Curriculum* (London, 1909), 9, 25, 28-47, 83-4. For the universities, see Paul Deslandes, “Masculinity, Identity and Culture: Male Undergraduate Life at Oxford and Cambridge, 1850-1920,” PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1996.

34 Raymont, *The Principles of Education*, 14-5.

35 See Reba Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History and the Making of an English Elite, 1870-1930* (Stanford, 1994).

36 The use of historical reading books has been examined in this regard by Stephen Heathorn, “‘Let us remember that we, too, are English’: Constructions of Citizenship and National Identity in English Elementary School Reading Books, 1880-1914,” *Victorian Studies* 37 (Spring 1995): 395-427, and “English Elementary Education and the Construction of National Identity, 1880-1914,” PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1996, pp.194-260, 319-68.

37 See Heathorn, “English Elementary Education,” 78-120.

38 See the exchange in issues of *The School Guardian* of 5 December 1896: 47-8; 16 January 1897: 37; and 23 January, 1897: 54.

schools and through the reading of specialised civics readers in the higher standards of many elementary schools.³⁹

Masculinity, Class and Elementary School Training in Civics

There is no doubt that civics reading books were intended to give the term citizenship wider connotations than civil rights and direct political participation. Explanations of the structure and workings of government and of political participation usually took up less than a third of these books. When they did discuss such matters, the books tended to present the structure of central and local government in a mechanical, legalistic and procedural manner. This approach tended to emphasise consensus rather than conflict, for even party differences were entirely ignored. The overarching effect in these sections was to de-politicize politics, and present rights and duties, and the constitution itself, as an inert body of tradition and set of rigid rules that needed to be learnt, accepted and unquestioningly obeyed. Meanwhile, civil rights were presented as the entitlements that came with a series of obligations, responsibilities and loyalties. Indeed, it was these duties and appreciations – loyalty to the sovereign, the glories of the Empire, the welcome necessity of the armed services, the need for taxes, education and the police and, above all, the personal covenant between the individual citizen and the nation, Empire and “race” – that dominated the remainder of these books.

The prefaces and teacher introductions to these books made it abundantly clear that their intended audience was not limited to those who would attain the right to vote but, rather, included everyone who belonged to the national community.⁴⁰ The typical tautology was that this national community included all those who performed their civic duties. Opening chapters frequently stressed that the duties of the citizen were the same as those that motivated all loyal Englishmen,⁴¹ and that the word citizen was a short form for “every man who can claim nationality.”⁴² Citizenship was presented as a balance of rights and responsibilities: all had fundamental rights which could be maintained only if everyone lived by and practiced their common duties.⁴³ Voting and formal political participation were rarely mentioned as either rights or duties. Instead, it

39 For one of the first government recommendations for the teaching of “civics,” see PP, Cd. 5485, Vol. XXXVII (1888), “The Final Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Workings of the Elementary Education Acts (England and Wales),” 13. PP, Cd. 3270, Vol. XXVIII. 85 (1906), “Report of the Board of Education, 1905-1906,” 25-27, provides some indication of the state of instruction in “civics” and “morality” by that date.

40 C.H. Wyatt, *The English Citizen: His Life and Duties* (London, 1894), ii. For a further discussion see Heathorn, “Let us remember,” 399, 413.

41 See the preface to Henry Malden, *The Rights and Duties of a Citizen* (London, 1894).

42 W. Beach Thomas, *The Citizen Books*, Vol. 3 (London, 1908), 5.

43 Parrot, *The Waterloo Citizen Reader*, 26.

was how one behaved in various situations, both commonplace and exceptional, that marked out the qualities of the good citizen.⁴⁴

Much of this discourse on the values of the good citizen was based on masculinist assumptions. Just as the "citizen" in mainstream political discourse was presumed to be male, so too the values of good citizenship in these books were based on an established model or code of approved masculinity. Although both boys and girls read citizenship readers and attended civics classes, it is evident that they were expected to take away different understandings of their responsibilities and duties. The focus of the readers was, in fact, largely directed at boys. In particular, boys were instructed in how to fulfil their civic duties in a "manly," loyal, patriotic, modest and self-sacrificing manner. In some ways, this was to be accomplished largely through using the same role models and values that were used in the elite public schools.⁴⁵ Significantly, this adoption of the public school "code" intertwined projected notions of appropriate masculinity with elite and middle-class nationalist ideals. As will be argued later in this paper, this masculine code tended to highlight martial attributes, and it was presented through heroic role models taken from history and specially written fictional examples. Of course, such a vision and promotion of appropriate masculine values depended, implicitly, on a similar construction or assumption of feminine values.⁴⁶ As Robert MacDonald has shown, at the turn of the century popular history was often written as an imperial adventure tale in which the world of home was separated from the world of action. "Mother England," the image of Britannia and of Queen Victoria, came to "symbolize the maternal mistress served by the knights of the empire, who, with the feminine bracketed off to a safe, symbolic role," were free to become more assertively masculine.⁴⁷ In both popular history and citizenship readers, martial-hero figures, glorified and romanticised as heroic "forefathers," provided role models for the sort of masculine patriotism that was held to be the natural outgrowth of good citizenship, while women were represented as their necessary dependents, firmly ensconced in a domestic sphere. This ideological separation of spheres, and especially the place of women within it, has received generous attention from scholars, and it is not necessary to go over this now

44 G. Armitage-Smith, *The Citizen of England* (London, 1895), 15.

45 See the contribution of the Headmaster of Harrow Public School, the Right Reverend J.F.C. Welldon, "The Early Training of Boys in Citizenship," in *Essays on Duty and Discipline*. Earl of Meath et al., eds. (London, 1910), 4.

46 There is a danger in focusing on the role of masculinity alone as the trope by which the ideals of citizenship were transmitted – a tendency that has surfaced in some recent writing on the domestic impact of late-Victorian and Edwardian imperialism. For a critique of this sort of treatment of masculinity, see Peter Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions* (London, 1991), 8.

47 Robert MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: The Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism* (Manchester, 1994), 37.

familiar ground. However, for the purposes of elucidating the construction of the masculine model of citizenship, it is important to sketch the contours of the feminine model of citizenship already present in elementary schooling.

Working-class women were given their own special education in citizenship, usually through domestic economy and family hygiene lessons and books. This domestic training was often couched in terms of national necessity, fairness and the duty of all,⁴⁸ as was the promotion of racial motherhood among working-class mothers.⁴⁹ While the moral values and standards of domestic femininity clearly emanated from the middle class, the instruction in domesticity in the elementary school was also clearly class-specific. It was argued that all young girls should be taught the national importance of domestic tasks and how to run a household efficiently, but for the middle-class girl this meant classroom learning about the "science of cleansing," supplemented with readings on how "home life" was "the basis of our civilization"; for the working-class girl, learning the importance of the domestic arts required getting her hands wet in "laundry work."⁵⁰ Obviously, the promotion of middle-class perceptions of respectability and desire for social harmony underlay the dictates of "national efficiency" and "good citizenship" as they were presented to working-class girls. It was unrealistically believed that, with suitable training, girls might create model middle-class household environments on their husbands' working-class incomes.⁵¹ Raising the respectability of the home would presumably bring the entire family closer to the ideal of citizenship with all its attendant rights and benefits. Of course, vocational domestic training in schools also ensured that there would be a constant supply of cheap, pre-trained domestic servants.⁵² This is an indication of the contradictions inherent in the promotion of gender ideology that utilised arguments about respectability and citizenship. For in order to retain their status, the middle class actually required that many working-class women be excluded from the middle-class ideal of femininity, and hence from the projected benefits of citizenship.

48 See the article by Alice Ravenhill in *The School Government Chronicle* (16 January, 1909): 73.

49 Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978): 9-65; Carol Dyhouse, "Good Wives and Little Mothers: Social Anxieties and the Schoolgirl's Curriculum, 1890-1920," *Oxford Review of Education* 3 (1977): 21-35; Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood* (London, 1980).

50 Annmarie Turnball, "Learning her Womanly Work: The Elementary School Curriculum, 1870-1914," in *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls and Women, 1850-1959*. Felicity Hunt, ed. (London, 1987), 99.

51 *Ibid.*, 94.

52 Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Edwardian Britain* (London, 1981), 82-83. See also the complaints sent by parents to the London School Board in the Greater London Record Office (GLRO) SBL 709, "Minutes of the Sub-Committee on Domestic Subjects," July 1899, pp. 103, 398.

A similar contradiction existed in the masculine code offered to the working male to emulate. The content of the masculine code that came to be projected onto working men came largely from the service ideal that existed in the public schools and universities. James Welton, Professor of Education at the University of Leeds, alluded to this code when he noted in 1906 that promoting good citizenship in all the nation's schools entailed emulating the "noblest ideas which have been operative in the national life," and that the "true patriot is he who does his duty manfully in both public and private relations of life, not he who most persistently blows the trumpet of self-glorification or beats the drum of ostentatious advertisement."⁵³ When elucidated from the position of an avid imperialist like Meath, "manly" values and those of "good citizenship" – "love of hard work, thrift, self-denial, endurance, and indomitable pluck" – were conjoined as the "hall-marks of an imperial race."⁵⁴ Duty, discipline, reserve, obedience to superiors – important values of the élite masculine code⁵⁵ – were thus reconfigured and universalised as "good citizenship" and then projected onto the male working-class population as the common civic identity of Englishmen.

However, although the working-class lad was to be encouraged to emulate the upper-class masculine civic code of duty and discipline, he was not expected to rise above his own lowly social station. Indeed, quite the opposite was the case. For, despite the inclusive nature of much of this rhetoric, class presumptions and prescriptions still held sway. Just as Baden-Powell's conception of the Boy Scouts was one wherein lower-middle class and working-class lads would come to learn and respect the public school ethos of obedience, service, patriotism and a "manly" physical fitness, but not the corresponding capacity to command,⁵⁶ so too the working-class student was expected to realise his own special place within the nation and be content with the knowledge that practising the responsibilities and duties of citizenship were in themselves their own reward. General assertions were frequently made about the nature of citizenship that explicitly connected "worthy" masculine values with national loyalty and civic responsibilities. Malden's 1894 civics text, for instance, explained:

Truly the citizen of to-day with his many advantages in life, his possibilities of intellectual improvement, has a heavy responsibility upon him when he considers what his fathers bore and what his fathers were. He with so much to help him

53 James Welton, *Principles and Methods of Teaching* (London, 1906), 227.

54 Meath et al., eds., *Essays on Duty and Discipline*, 8.

55 Roper and Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions*, 8; MacKenzie, "The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter," 176; J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London, 1986), and *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London, 1981); and see Deslandes, *op. cit.*

56 Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto, 1993), 156-62; and generally, Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London, 1984).

has failed if he does not become wiser, better educated and more tolerant than they, and the same time as much a man, as brave, as honest, as true as they were.⁵⁷

Being a citizen, in this view, required taking on the burden of being “a man.” And the role model for the student to emulate and aspire to was the abstract heroic historical Englishman, examples of whom the student would read about in this and other school books. Through such emulation, and also through improving on their example, the student would attain both manhood and citizenship status:

It is right that we should think much of our national freedom, of our liberty as citizens of the greatest empire the world has ever seen; for this freedom has been won by much sacrifice, patience and suffering on the part of generations of Britons who have passed away. We know this from our readings in history . . . The true man must be to a great extent independent. He must learn to stand alone, to help himself rather than lean on others. You can begin very early. Learn to stand alone in things and lay the foundation of a manliness which will be independent in the truest sense.⁵⁸

In this passage, citizenship and masculinity were conjoined in the injunction against over-dependence on one’s family and the state by use of the mythic (in the sense of a vague recourse to larger-than-life past sacrifices) sense of “national time” as the backdrop. The values of the citizen were thus historically inscribed. The great men of the nation’s past had been independent, forceful, adventurous. To be a true man, and thus to be a citizen in the present, required emulating these past heroes so that the English nation would remain great in the future.

The values of masculinity and citizenship to which the elementary school lad ought to aspire were presented through both strictly fictional and “real” figures from British history. In both types of examples, a common feature was the way in which masculine virtues often had a distinctly martial component. For example, in one fictionalised didactic tale of good citizenship, *The Model Citizen* reader described how a passer-by saved some children from a house fire: “He was passing by the houses when the fire broke out, and he at once gave the alarm, which every good citizen should do; then, seeing some children at the top windows, he dashed up the stairs through the blinding smoke, and risked his own life in his efforts to rescue them.”⁵⁹ A highly significant feature of this fictional tale of heroism is that the main figure turns out to be a soldier, “whose chief duty is to fight for his country, to protect us all from

57 Malden, *The Rights and Duties of a Citizen*, 128. Italics in original.

58 *King Alfred Readers*, Vol. IV (London, 1901), 99-100.

59 H. Osman Newland, *The Model Citizen* (London, 1907), 15-16.

foreign enemies who would take away from us our liberties and our citizen rights." It is emphasised that the actions of this "brave soldier" were not part of his regular duties: "He was not paid to do it. But he was not one of those people who only do the duties they are paid to do. Such people are not worth knowing, and are not worthy of the name Britons. Good citizens do not ask or require payment for doing a duty, or serving their fellow creatures."⁶⁰

It is significant that a soldier was employed in this narrative of appropriate citizen behaviour because clearly the narrative does not necessarily require a martial figure. While the notion that good citizenship and the expectation of financial reimbursement were incompatible points to the strong strain of voluntarism that runs through many of these texts (harking back to the need for children, especially boys, to grow up "independent"), it is the sentiment that the good citizen would gladly risk "his" life for others, for the sake of duty and honour, that makes the use of the soldier figure especially notable. It points to the overwhelming prestige with which soldiers and sailors, and the values they were presumed to embody – duty, obedience, courage, honour and patriotic loyalty (the same values as those of the public school) – were held in such texts. Unquestionably, it was the soldier and sailor who were represented as the paradigmatic English heroes in school books: no other professions show up with the same frequency or were treated with the same reverence. Indeed, just as they did in books and magazines intended for lower-middle, middle- and upper-class children, military themes saturated English elementary school books of all kinds.⁶¹ By imagining the soldier and sailor as the epitome of masculinity and good citizenship, and narrating stories about their dangerous and daring exploits in times of war or adventure, the authors of civics readers, like the authors of other kinds of juvenile literature, could shroud their social prescriptions for the inculcation of order, obedience and duty in the narrative trope of romance.

Romance was a favoured means of explicating meaning in the elementary school system. In fact, it was believed that children should be exposed to patriotic and civic virtues from a young age through the telling of historical stories with a strong "romantic element in the narrative."⁶² In the romantic trope, the whole of the narrative is subordinated to the central figure of the hero and is

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁶¹ J.M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 1984), 199-226; J.A. Mangan, "Grit of our Forefathers," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. J.M. MacKenzie, ed. (Manchester, 1986), 113-39.

⁶² Sara Cone Bryant, *How to Tell Stories to Children* (Manchester, 1910), 17. See also *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools* (London, 1914), 47, and W.H. Woodward, *Essays on the Teaching of History* (London, 1901), 74.

presented exclusively from his or her perspective as a series of obstacles to be overcome in the accomplishment of a quest and the fulfilment of a search for identity.⁶³ Unhindered by fears, scruples, doubts, ambivalence, conflicting needs or loyalties, the hero triumphs by the end of the narrative or, in the tragic-romance mould, unthinkingly sacrifices him- or herself for comrades and country. This is what makes the hero worthy of emulation. Teachers' manuals of method from the period 1885-1914 stress time and again the power of historical tales in the promotion of patriotism and good citizenship, a directive clearly adhered to by the publishers of civics readers.⁶⁴ Those tales of national heroism chosen for inclusion in civics readers, whether historical or fictional, were often situated in the past and located on the exotic peripheries of the Empire. This temporal and spatial placement created a world more exciting and dangerous than the domestic present, and rendered the actions of the hero and, indeed, the hero himself superior to other people and to the environment within which he moved. And since the heroes who moved in these locales were overwhelmingly male, they functioned as figures of desirable and virtuous masculinity: worthy role models for working-class lads to emulate.

The historical hero narratives found within civics readers also often had the added authority of "history." Since the worthy man was being implicitly defined as one who was prepared to venture, fight and sacrifice for "Home, Country and Race," authentic English heroes became fused, in a potent ideological configuration, with representations of national and imperial identity. Furthermore, the Englishman, by dint of his special ethnic ancestry also enjoyed a supposed national and "racial" superiority over colonised peoples, and so the masculinity of these heroes was doubly powerful, for they were not merely virtuous men, but "Englishmen."⁶⁵ The belaboured depictions of the heroic defences of Lucknow and Cawnpore and other events during the 1857 Indian

63 See N. Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), 33-34, 136-37, 186-87, 195-96.

64 J. Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching* (Edinburgh, 1885), 113; John Landon, *The Principles and Practice of Teaching and Class Management* (London, 1894), 405; J. Gunn, *Class Teaching and Management* (London, 1895), 136-37; A.H. Garlick, *A New Manual of Method* (London, 1896), 258; David Salmon, *The Art of Teaching* (London, 1898), 213; G. Collar and C. Crook, *School Management and Methods of Instruction with Special Reference to Elementary Schools* (London, 1900), 182; Amos Henderson, *Some Notes on Teaching* (Nottingham, 1903), 73; J.W. Adamson, ed., *The Practice of Instruction: A Manual of Method* (London, 1907), 252.

65 For this conceptual framework, I am indebted to the discussion in Graham Dawson's essay, "The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English-British Masculinity," in Roper and Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions*, 119-20. For discussions of the construction of national and racial superiority in these texts, see Heathorn, "'Let us remember'" and Patrick Dunae, "Boys Literature and the Idea of Race," *Wasca Review* (Spring 1977): 84-107.

Mutiny are clear examples of this formulation in reading books.⁶⁶ The historical and imperial backdrop was not only crucial to the figuring of martial heroes as romantic adventurers; it also highlighted the degree to which the notion of the empire itself was integral to English citizenship. English citizens were encouraged to identify actively with the wider community of the Empire that their “forefathers” had gained for them. It was the citizens’ collective patriotic duty to do so.⁶⁷

While examples of the Englishmen of old who fought and died defending the nation and Empire were plentiful, one figure of immense symbolic stature in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was Lord Nelson. For many school teachers, Nelson clearly served as one of the most important role models for their students to emulate.⁶⁸ In reading books he was represented as all that was worthy in a self-improving Englishman: born to parents of modest means, and suffering from a weak constitution, he nevertheless overcame many difficulties through the strength of his character, eventually sacrificing his life for his nation in its time of need. Nelson was, in fact, consistently pointed to as an inspirational leader in all kinds of elementary school readers.⁶⁹ As the *King Alfred Readers* noted, Nelson’s “strength was in his heart and in his will, not in his body. We should not forget this. It makes Nelson greater than ever in the eyes of his countrymen. It shows each of us what great deeds may be done by those who are weak in body but strong in mind.”⁷⁰ This association of Nelson’s greatness with his will and his values rather than with his natural physical abilities offered a particularly suitable masculine identity to working-class boys. His example demonstrated the possibility of national glory, and perhaps even social mobility, which could be the reward for gallant service to the state. However, Nelson was heroic and worthy of emulation for working-class boys mainly because of his glorified “attention to duty.” Arnold-Forster’s *The Citizen Reader*, for instance, explained the importance of the average citizen’s duty through the example of Nelson:

The history of the Navy of England has been a very glorious one. . . . “Duty” had been the great watchword of the navy, and it was because he knew how

66 For examples, see Armitage-Smith, *The Citizen of England*, 184-85; Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, 26-27; M.T. Yates, *Arnold’s English Readers*, Vol. IV (London, 1893), 63-74.

67 Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, 24-25, 133; Malden, *The Rights and Duties of a Citizen*, 189-90; Browning, *The Citizen*, 10-11; Wyatt, *The English Citizen*, 212; J. St. Loe Strachey, *The Citizen and the State* (London, 1913), 123.

68 The prevalence of stories about Nelson in many of the lesson plans recorded in the logbooks of schools in London, Bristol and Manchester in this period attests to this fact. See Heathorn, “English Elementary Education,” 356-67.

69 Of the innumerable instances, see, for example, Wyatt, *The English Citizen*, 174; *Tower History Readers*, Vol. 6 (London, 1911), 101; *Raleigh History Readers*, Standard 5 (London, 1896), 166. 70 *King Alfred Readers*, Vol. III (London, 1900), 43.

great a power this simple word would have over the minds of his men that Admiral Nelson chose for his message to the fleet at the great victory of Trafalgar, the famous words – “England expects every man to do his duty.”⁷¹

This last phrase (often with illustrations of it in naval signal flags), and also Nelson’s (erroneously) reported last words – “Thank God I have done my duty” – were featured in the pages and on the covers of countless history and civics readers.

Not all of the role models presented were famous individual soldiers and sailors. The accidental sinking of *The Birkenhead*, a navy vessel steaming in the Indian Ocean, provided another suitable opportunity to elucidate the importance of a citizen’s duty, this time through the example of common soldiers:

Who was to go? The strong men who could try to save themselves, or the weak women and weaker children who were at their mercy?

To the credit of the British Army there was no hesitation. The officer commanding the soldiers gave them the order to fall in upon the deck, just as they had often done before in the barrack yard. There in order they stood, while the sailors of the ship helped the women and the children into the boats. Not a man broke from the ranks, not a man complained, the power of discipline was felt in that terrible moment, and when at last the shattered ship sank into the dark waters, the red-coated English soldiers who went down with her had won a victory, as glorious as any that has been won on the hardest fought battle-field.⁷²

The conduct of these average soldiers and their heroic discipline were clearly intended as a lesson in the values that all should aspire to. “Manly” duty and discipline were the loftiest attributes of good citizenship, and comprised “a high conception” that would “produce a noble public spirit” in all classes.⁷³

Conclusion

In a period such as 1885-1914, when fears of foreign competition, both economic and military, were increasingly found on the public agenda, it is perhaps unsurprising that calls for the nation to pull together and forget internal divisions were also becoming increasingly common. The discourse of “good citizenship” in elementary and evening continuation schools certainly set out an inclusive set of identities for their pupils to emulate, and an imagined national community for them to belong to. That the idea of the military as the guardian of the state should be expanded – that, indeed, the martial tradition itself was to become a source of spiritual and social values as well – is also explained by the deep-seated anxieties of the social élite regarding the destiny

71 Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, 96.

72 *Ibid.*, 109-10.

73 Armitage-Smith, *The Citizen of England*, 15.

of their nation. The inclusive language of citizenship promoted through citizenship readers and lessons in civics was based, fundamentally, on a sincere attempt to culturally incorporate the working class into the nation. Through suggestions that, as part of the "national family," the disenfranchised masses had nationally important duties and responsibilities, their cultural status rose, while at the very same time their social and political status was held in check. The "traditional" view of the family, voided of any history of its own, was an apt metaphor with which the political élite could counter calls for political rights to match the duties that were being asked of "citizens" of all classes and sexes.

It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that this process of cultural definition was a consciously studied exercise in "social control." The writers of citizenship books and the teachers who taught civics classes were not intentionally hypocritical propagandists. For the middle-class educationalist, the ideals of "good citizenship" simply made sense given the cultural mapping of identity that had evolved over the nineteenth century. Indeed, they taught basically the same values to their own children, albeit with slightly different aims in mind. This should not blind us to the social prescription evident in this ideology, however. Demands for good citizenship by educationalists were ultimately calls for unquestioning loyalty and obedience without the corresponding rights that the élite themselves enjoyed. That this ideological projection largely ignored the actual conditions of the lives of working men and women is suggested both by recent research into turn-of-the-century working-class culture and by the dismal failure of civics courses when they were offered on an optional basis.⁷⁴ Determining the precise reactions of working-class men and women to these ideological prescriptions is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the enthusiastic response of working and lower-middle-class men to the call to the colours in 1914 and, perhaps more significantly, the willingness of these same men to fight on and obey their officers once the true nature of the war was revealed, suggest that this model of nationalist masculine deportment and responsibility was to some degree internalised after all.

⁷⁴ For turn-of-the-century working-class culture, see Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London* (New York, 1993), and Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1977). Fewer than 100 students a year enrolled in the voluntary citizenship classes offered by the London School Board between 1893 and 1903, compared to the 3,572 who took History and the 15,286 enrolled in needlework classes in 1902-1903. See GLRO SBL 1350, "Final Report of the School Board for London, 1870-1904," Tables and Appendices. Civics readers, however, were made mandatory in many elementary schools.