

conceived as an *histoire totale*.” Depaepe and his collaborators and colleagues have opened up a vast terrain for historical exploration. It needs to be subjected to the sympathetic criticism, encouragement, and complementary research which it deserves. We conclude that in the realization of this *histoire totale*, a bridge between educational grand theory on the one hand and concrete, educational praxis on the other is needed, which Depaepe has supplied by examination of the views and concepts codified by educational periodicals. Thus, *Order In Progress* can take its place as a contribution to that project.

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Stephen Heathorn. *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Pp. xii, 300.

This book is a massively detailed and singularly perceptive analysis of the elementary school curriculum between 1880 and 1914. This was a crucial period in modern British history—the heyday of the Empire and jingoistic fervour, but also a period of burgeoning social unrest exemplified by the rise of socialism and militant trade unionism among the working class, the “condition of England” question, and the Irish troubles, paralleled by the first signs of economic decline vis-à-vis other powers. If these problems were to be addressed, the elementary schools, both state and voluntary, offered an obvious site for attempts at reform, attended, as they were, almost exclusively by children of working-class parents.

Heathorn argues that somewhere about 1880 the political and educational elite began to use the educational system to attempt to unite working-class youth in a national collectivity infused

with the consciousness of “Englishness,” and based on a curriculum centred on history, geography, and literature. The vehicle for this project was a series of well-established reading books, universally known as “readers.” Under a new generation of middle-class authors, mostly university-educated or with some connections to the educational system, the readers became a means of spreading nationalist-imperialist ideology and a sense of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. Published by large firms such as Nelson, Chambers, Cassell, and Macmillan, these books sold in their hundred of thousands. Heathorn identifies 652 readers issued in the period, in 162 sets. The basic aim of these readers was, of course, to teach children to read. But chapters on history, geography and literature (plus miscellaneous information, poetry, moral tales, etc.) were included to present “a particular view of reality” structured on the concepts of the “English” home, race, nation, and empire, and an idealization of the proud and sturdy Anglo-Saxon “forefathers.” The ideological underpinning of the project was what Heathorn terms the “liberal master narrative”—the belief that the Whig ideal of the development of England and its institutions from Saxon times, and the concomitant growth of individual freedom, would lead, within the laws of political economy, to progress and prosperity for all.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a noticeable shift among the governing classes towards the concept of race as a crucial part of the nation’s self-definition, and the idea of “Englishness” and the “English race” as a quasi-biological outcome of the Anglo-Saxon inheritance. The supposed virtues of Anglo-Saxons (famously romanticised, ironically, by a Scot in *Ivanhoe*)—courage, love of liberty, honesty, patience, reserve, and plain dealing—were lauded in the readers and formal textbooks, and came to be seen as the racial characteristics of the English and an explanation of, and justification for, the “civilizing” mission of imperialism. In fact, the image of the sturdy, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired Anglo-Saxon hovered over the texts like a ghostly role model for the working-class child.

History was presented as a pageant of major events and great men: Magna Carta, Simon de Montfort's parliamentary efforts, Edward I's "state making," Henry VIII and Rome, Elizabethan expansion (with Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins, and Grenville given starring roles), the Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, and nineteenth-century political reforms. Literature readers reflected a developing English canon from Shakespeare to Tennyson. The increasing importance of geography in the curriculum stimulated interest in the Empire and not surprisingly, whether measured by skin colour, lifestyle, or degree of civilization, the races of the Empire were judged inferior to the English. Moreover, these peoples were ordered in a hierarchy, with Indians, Maoris, and Australian Aborigines in descending order of civilization. These were the racialized "others," to be contrasted to the white Anglo-Saxons of the English national community. Heathorn, however, in his own words "moves a step beyond" the position of those historians who stress racial stereotypes as fundamental to the justification of imperial practices and who take it for granted that propaganda for Empire by the cultural-educational hegemonic elite or by particular interest groups, e.g. the Navy League, somehow trickled down to the lower classes. Keeping in view that the site of his exposition is the elementary school, Heathorn argues that this position ignores the socioeconomically divided context of the educational practice of the period, and moreover assumes what the authors of the readers were trying to achieve. The whole point of Heathorn's exposition is that the readers were an essential element in an active project of identity construction within a particular setting—the elementary school, with its own pedagogical rituals, including the mediating role of the teacher. In other words, the active consent of pupils for the key elements and basic meanings of imperialism, including the concept of "us" and "the other," and identification with an imagined community, had to be negotiated.

Inclusion in this community was sweetened by idealised visions of "family" and "home," with which the concept of gender was inextricably bound up. The origin of the English home was, inevitably, perceived to lie in Anglo-Saxon rural

settlements, and was usually visualised in a setting of rurality and English village life, complete with images of a bucolic “Merrie England”—women spinning at the cottage door, the sturdy yeoman working in the fields. In this way social and gender roles were established within a familial relationship; good citizenship in the nation-state was built on men occupying the public sphere, women the domestic.

The structure of the school and the content of the curriculum interacted to reinforce these stereotypes. In most schools there were separate entrances for boys and girls, and segregation by sex in the building. Girls learnt domestic economy, cookery and laundry, in preparation for making the home both a symbol and reality; boys were inducted into the world of manual skill, work, discipline, and duty to the family and community. “To the social and moral imperatives of gender division,” writes Heathorn, “were thus added a national, imperial and racial duty of such great importance that it would not be left for parents alone to develop.”

For Home, Country and Race is primarily a textual analysis and one of relentless persistence and unexampled subtlety. Heathorn does not allow himself much scope beyond the readers, though when he does he makes telling points about the interconnection between ritual and text. Crucial ceremonies involved reverence for the Union Jack, with which nearly all schools were equipped, and observance of Empire Day (inaugurated in 1902) which included marches, songs, saluting the flag, and patriotic speeches by teachers. The flag (though British) was presented as a symbol of the “English” values of liberty, patriotism, and loyalty to the Empire, the security of which, the children were taught, depended on the navy; pictures of warships decorated the classroom while pupils sang songs extolling their mystique. Physical activities in the curriculum were mainly for boys—drill, calisthenics, marching, parade-ground activities—and can be seen as a corollary to the above, and an additional means of constructing the identities of working-class children and supplementing the teaching of the

values of citizenship: duty, discipline and obedience as preparation for tasks the nation might command.

To what extent was the whole project successful? Heathorn wisely does not make exaggerated claims for his thesis. He states that although “the boundaries of student subjectivity were circumscribed by the vocabulary and syntax presented to them in the process of becoming reading-literate,” no absolutely definite conclusion can be made about the effects of the readers on the working-class child’s identity. After all, some became socialists or syndicalist trade unionists or took other oppositional positions. Moreover, according to his calculations, the majority of pupils would have read only nine or ten readers at the most during their school life, and these may not have been entirely representative of the total thesis. On the other hand, the author cites varying evidence from biographies and oral histories which, he claims, confirm “the power of schooling to set conceptual boundaries about the meaning of national identity,” the building of which worked in complex and subtle ways that defy the label of propagandist indoctrination. As a coda to the book the author concludes: “classroom constructions of the ideas of the nation were ultimately successful enough to induce millions of working class men and women to willingly sacrifice their lives and loved ones to the demands of the nation-state in the cataclysmic clash of rival nationalisms that erupted in 1914. This truly extraordinary fact seems to indicate that working-class schooling was a key part of a certain kind of ‘nation building’ after all.”

As a modified doctoral thesis, *For Home, Country and School* might seem hard reading, but it isn’t. Heathorn ingeniously decodes the various texts to present a fascinating and startling picture of the unabashed racism, sexism, imperialism, and ultra-nationalism which was fed to children in England a century ago. This book is an important addition to the history of education, which might well serve as a model for similar work in Canada.

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