

MAKING GOOD: BRITISH ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AND THE SOCIAL

LANDSCAPE, 1846-1902

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making Good: British Elementary Teachers and the Social Landscape, 1846-1902

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This dissertation explores how male and female, English and Scottish elementary teachers embodied and intervened in social and cultural debates which were central to the making of modern Britain. Teachers represented the largesse of the liberal state and the reach of its power, but also the limits of both. A state-funded scholarship ladder allowed working-class boys and girls move up in the world, making teaching the first form of institutionalized, meritocratic social mobility in modern Britain. The state charged teachers with gathering information about their pupils and neighborhoods – and later with enforcing mandatory attendance policies and implementing social welfare schemes. However, teachers adapted state policies to fit local circumstances and used official records to critique the way the state sought to know and govern its subjects. They offered alternative narratives about local communities, class relations, gender, and ideas about childhood. The travel narratives they wrote in the wake of their remarkable summer travels evinced a similar drive to know and to narrate conditions in the empire. Both through their actions and through the stories they told, teachers shaped how the British state came to know its subjects – and how Britons came to know their state.

“Making Good” taps a wide range of sources from policymaking documents and Parliamentary reports to the records kept by individual teachers. Most important were the

more personal sources: the poems, memoirs, travel narratives, and other sources which teachers infused with their frustration, excitement, hope, anger, and even their love.

Teachers' everyday actions and the stories they told help to humanize the history of the institutions like teacher training colleges and schools. Playful defiance and intense emotion coexisted with the serious imperatives of political economy in the project to make a modern state and society through elementary education.

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The first thanks which I have the pleasure to extend reach back to my undergraduate days at the University of Arizona. William Epstein introduced me to the pleasures of modern British literature – and gave me my first lesson on perils of flabby prose and weak arguments. Each in their own very different way, Benjamin Irvin and Julia Clancy-Smith introduced me to the intellectual joys of rigorous seminars and acted as mentors. Laura Tabili, Richard Cosgrove, and Jodie Kreider provided one of the best introductions to British history one could hope for.

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Family and friends celebrated with me in good times, helped me weather the inevitable stresses, and pushed work out of my head for days at a time during the holidays. My father gave me the greatest gift any family member can give a graduate student: loving patience and trust that I would, in fact, eventually finish. I am sad that his father, who made his career as a music teacher and had a tremendous appetite for history books, did not live to see me finish this dissertation.

My wife has been incredibly supportive throughout the researching and writing of this dissertation. She insisted on celebrating the small milestones and helped me to forget the bumps in the road. She also tolerated my absence for months as I dug in the archives – and the many months more of early alarm clocks to get in some morning writing. I am more grateful to her than she knows.

For my Mom (1955-2004) and Dad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Illustrations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Education Policy	30
Chapter 2 “A Home for Poets”: Institutionalism, Friendship, and the Curriculum in Teacher Training Colleges	104
Chapter 3 On the Move: Social and Geographic Mobility in the Interstices	190
Chapter 4 Making Self and Community	244
Chapter 5 Scandals: Professionalism, Visibility, and Childhood	313
Conclusion	382
Bibliography	388

List of Illustrations

Figure 2.1: St. Mark's Senior Class for 1888-1889 Photograph	109
Figure 2.2: Sketch of Whitelands College in 1890	132
Figure 2.3: Courtship Scene Sketch in Autograph Book of Annie Blizzard	141
Figure 4.1: Camden Church Boys' School Logbook	250
Figure 4.2: Cottenham Rd. Girls' School Logbook	250
Figure 5.1: Sketch of the Charleston School	339

Introduction

Margaret Forsyth proudly preserved a substantial cache of papers from the early days of her career in teaching. Long after they ceased to be useful, she kept the letters of recommendation that had helped her to secure a coveted spot in the Church of Scotland Training College in Glasgow. Queen's Scholarships paid almost all of the expenses for her and the majority of her fellow students, most of whom, like Forsyth, came from families who could not have otherwise afforded to send their children to college. This opportunity changed her life.

Going to college meant moving from a rural hamlet in the Scottish lowlands to the kingdom's most bustling metropolis. It also thrust her into an intellectually, culturally, and socially vibrant atmosphere that offered her a new way of seeing the world. Training colleges had literary and debating societies which took on topics like women's suffrage, the relationship between newspapers and politics, and the place of tradition in literature. These societies also poked fun at colleges' dour official ethos and endless rules. Aspiring teachers celebrated the bending and breaking of rules. They took this lesson with them as they embarked upon their careers, where they refashioned state policy even as they enacted it.

Her time at college shaped the way Margaret Forsyth saw the world – and prepared her to help her future pupils understand it in new ways too. She mixed notes from lectures and readings with personal reflections in her “Religious Instruction” college notebook. The anniversary of her mother's death became the occasion for a

heart-wrenching, yet seemingly cathartic poem that took inspiration from her current study of Biblical figures who had suffered losses. The poem expounded on the need to “calmly submit” to the will of God despite the pain of “a vacancy here that none can fill.”¹ Her science notebook contained hundreds pages of notes about theories in astronomy, magnetism, and chemistry – and practical, rather fun ways of getting her future pupils to understand those theories through observation.² Her geography notebook suggested that she learned to situate everyday objects like clothing and food in a context of global commerce, scientific discoveries, and social-economic systems. She learned, for instance, that the woolen industry in Britain dated back to “Roman times” but had been eclipsed by the quality of Flemish competition until the 1600s, when British artisans mastered “the art of dying the cloth.”³ Both in and out of the classroom, teachers in Victorian Britain helped pupils and the larger communities they served to make sense of the wider world and their place in it.

We know only a little about Forsyth’s career after college. She took her first job in the village of Drumvaich, about fifteen miles northwest of Stirling. Such movement – going from her home village to training college in a large city to a first job in a different village – was common. Teaching was a peripatetic career that circulated men and women throughout the nation and even the empire as they acquired their training and sought after better positions. Teachers also enjoyed traveling to every corner of Britain, its empire,

¹ Strathclyde University Archive (SUA): CSTC/7/9, “Religious Instruction Notebook,” (no page numbers).

² SUA: CSTC/7/9, “Science Notebook,” (no page numbers).

³ SUA: CSTC/7/9, “Geography Notebook,” (no page numbers).

and the wider world on their summer holidays. Often they traveled with old college classmates. Thousands of travel narratives survive in the pages of colleges' alumni magazines. These narratives used commonplace encounters with people to probe the nature of British class relations, cultural traditions, gender, imperialism, and ideas about race. We do not know whether Forsyth traveled on her summer holidays, but several surviving letters suggest that she did stay in touch with her college friends for many years afterward and consumed their accounts of life elsewhere.⁴

During her early years on the job, she turned around a struggling school. She secured high marks in her first two annual inspection reports, which she copied and preserved. She won the affection of her pupils and created a "very pleasant" tone in the school.⁵ Very little survives about her life after that time – or even of her everyday work these first two years on the job. To judge from the archival traces left by other teachers, she would have struggled to reconcile the competing imperatives of her local community, the regional school board, and the centralized educational bureaucracies. Teachers like Forsyth became social investigators to help understand the most inscrutable of these groups: the local communities they served.

Out of self-interest and necessity, teachers gathered information and inserted themselves into local social networks. They roamed the streets after school hours; entered their pupils' homes and developed rapports with their families; and developed relationships with policemen, clergymen, ladies benevolent, and other pillars of the local

⁴ SUA: CSTC/7/9, Photocopies of misc. letter fragments.

⁵ SUA: CSTC/7/9, "Summary of H.M. Inspector's Report: Drumvaich Public School."

community. Teachers used their knowledge and contacts to mediate between local communities and the central state. This mediation ran both ways. Teachers represented the state for many Britons. They also mapped out the values, traditions, and local peculiarities of communities in official records read by central state officials. For instance, a teacher in Glasgow gave voice to parental dissatisfaction with the new curriculum introduced in the 1860s, one which went against a long, proud Scottish tradition of offering a liberal curriculum. Through their work as mediators, teachers helped to call into existence ideas about the state and local communities.

The vivid glimpse into Margaret Forsyth's college days stands in stark contrast to the almost total lack of information about her life afterward. I went into my research looking above all else for sources that followed individual teachers over the course of their lives. I wanted to know the relationship between the milieu in which they were raised, the reasons they became teachers, what they taught, how they spent their summer holidays, the social circles they moved in while on the job, and what they saw as their duties and rights. I came away from the archives almost entirely empty handed in my search for such complete narratives of individual teachers' lives. Instead, what I discovered was that the archives are brimming with examples of teachers whose lives flash into view with stunning, but momentary brilliance. Teachers used logbooks to record minute details about their pedagogy and to pour their hearts out about the emotional ups and downs of teaching - but then, after a few years on the job, they move to another school for which the logbook has not survived. Other teachers sent in travel

narratives to their training college alumni magazines recounting their summer holidays year after year - but no record exists of these teachers' everyday work in the classroom or their social background. Still other teachers wrote articles in educational periodicals explaining their pedagogical theories, but did not leave behind a logbook offering a more textured sense of their everyday classroom experiences.

The nature of teachers' archives pushed me to tell their story through the accretion of many individuals' stories. Telling their story collectively suggests the importance of their group identity. Teaching cast a long shadow over teachers' lives. However, no two teachers are alike. As some teachers found out when they moved jobs, there was a great deal of variation between local communities, Scottish and English educational traditions, the city and the countryside. Gender also shaped the everyday experience of teachers. Male and female teachers deployed different strategies in dealing with the parents of recalcitrant pupils - and in getting hired in the first place. Ultimately, perhaps the most common trait of being a teacher was the ability to navigate the complexities of local social landscapes, the many layers of the state, and their own aspirations. Elementary education in Victorian Britain was undoubtedly part of a project to make a modern state by imposing a disciplinary order on society. However, focusing on teachers reveals the room for play that they carved out in this project.

Teachers' work and lives became important in debates about the social and cultural values of modern Britain. For seasoned school inspector Edmond Holmes,

elementary education encapsulated the struggle to define which and whose values would shape modern Britain and “the West” writ large. *What Is and What Might Be* (1912), Holmes’ study of elementary education, decried “the externalism of the West, the prevalent tendency to pay undue regard to outward and visible ‘results’ and to neglect what is inward and vital.”⁶ Many social conservatives saw state-funded elementary education as way to buttress social hierarchies and advance a rigid, denominational worldview. Social thinkers like Holmes, however, saw in it a potential to liberate: “I am not exaggerating when I say that at this moment there are [public] elementary schools in England in which the life of the children is emancipative and educative to an extent which is unsurpassed, and perhaps unequalled, in any other type or grade of school.”⁷ Under some teachers, Holmes suggested, public elementary schools were more conducive than England’s most elite boarding schools and universities for cultivating creativity and democratizing the relationship between the working and middle classes, men and women, children and adults, local and central government. Such radical pedagogy confronted a system of examinations and general cultural climate that rewarded rote learning and strict discipline. Even Joshua Fitch, a fellow school inspector sympathetic to Holmes’ views, insisted that “perfect discipline in a class or a school is an indispensable condition of successful teaching.” For Fitch, intellectual development was worthless without the

⁶ Edmond Holmes, *What is and What Might be: A Study of Education in General and Elementary Education in Particular* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1912), v.

⁷ *Ibid.*, v.

“habit of subjugating one’s own impulses, of constantly recognizing the supremacy of law.”⁸

As the site of this confrontation between the perceived emancipation and disciplining of future generations, elementary education became a flashpoint for debates about social mobility, class relations, ideas about gender, the way Britain defined itself as a nation and empire, and, ultimately, how to make Britain modern. Teachers, themselves typically the products of public elementary schools, embodied these debates in their own highly visible lives.

Compulsive storytellers, teachers publicly narrated what they did and saw both inside and, crucially, outside the classroom. They used official logbooks, records that offered space for freeform narrative, to record how they saw the local community – and how the community saw them. They linked together observations about pupils’ home lives, the local economy, and changes to official education policies with everyday stories from the classroom. Journals, pamphlets, and petitions put out by teachers’ associations and unions allowed teachers to weigh-in on education and social policies even as Parliament, central state bureaucrats, and local government officials debated them. Summer trips to remote corners of Britain or abroad to places like the West Indies or India resulted in travel narratives describing the peoples, ruins, and cultures they encountered.

⁸ Joshua G. Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching. Delivered in the University of Cambridge During the Lent Term, 1880* (New York: MacMillan, 1885), 92.

“Making Good” follows teachers as they moved through and wrote about the social landscape of Victorian Britain and, to a lesser extent, its empire. Their lives were defined by a tension between self-interest, altruism, and duty that is captured by the phrase “to make good.” Teachers did set out to “make good” in the worldly sense of the phrase - to earn money, gain social status, and achieve the gravitas and authority that went along with recognition as professionals. A teaching career offered more worldly opportunities than were normally available for the working class and lower middle class boys and girls who typically pursued it. Teaching was the first form of institutionalized, meritocratic social mobility available on a large scale in modern Britain. This opportunity was even more radical - and controversial - because it was state-sponsored and available to boys and girls alike. At the same time, many teachers seem to have genuinely desired to “make good.” They spread Christian spirit, undertook acts of kindness, coordinated charity efforts for the poorest of their pupils while shoring up the bonds of local community and identity.

Then there is the last and most complex meaning: to “make good” on a debt, duty, or obligation. Policymakers, inspectors, school managers, parents, and other social actors insisted that teachers, especially those educated in state-funded teachers’ training colleges, owed them a debt of gratitude and some measure of obedience. For instance, the head of the York training college found teachers’ constant critiques of education policies and agitation for more pay and respect inappropriate. He testified before a Parliamentary investigation that teachers “are too apt to forget that they owe the culture

they have to the public provision made for them.”⁹ Teachers, however, rejected this *quid pro quo* logic that exacted humility and obedience in exchange for training and a job. Collectively, and on an everyday level, teachers offered textured, nuanced, and realistic critiques of the Victorian state and social establishment. *That* was the duty they felt.

Focusing on teachers’ quest to make good reorients a body of scholarship that has tended to contrast public and private responses to social problems in Victorian Britain.¹⁰ The constrained passion with which the state confronted the nation’s social ills is at once admirable, tragic, and even a bit humorous. Dickens struck a chord with his sardonic literary portraits of a state obsessed with statistics but blind to real human lives, a state which proudly undertook an unprecedented intervention against poverty but strove to make that poor relief as uncomfortable and unfeeling as possible. To find a more everyday, sympathetic engagement with the poor and struggling working-class families of nineteenth-century Britain it seems that we must look beyond the Victorian state as we know it. Historians have turned to philanthropists, urban missionaries, nurses, journalists, and social investigators to produce textured, humanized stories of life among the poor and working classes. I restore elementary teachers to the story of the making of the modern British state *and* the story of private responses to social problems. Most

⁹ NC, 162.

¹⁰ This builds on the example of such work as Lynn Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Seth Koven, “Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840-1914,” in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 94-135.

teachers were simultaneously agents of the central state, local government, and religious educational societies. They often had intimate knowledge of and deep sympathy for many of their pupils' families. They reworked curricular commands and disciplinary imperatives according to their perceptions of pupils' needs – and their own. Teachers narrated the social landscape to central and local state officials through their logbooks, testimony before official investigations, and published periodical articles.

Philanthropists, journalists, and social investigators often worked through teachers, whom they believed could best identify poor families and coordinate charity. The most ubiquitous and visible agents of state policy, teachers humanized the state.

They did so through the way they handled information. Teachers were key knowledge brokers – a group of social and cultural intermediaries whose importance was growing throughout Britain and the empire.¹¹ The state and well-to-do patrons of education charged teachers with purveying not just arithmetic, reading, writing, geography, sewing but particular understandings of nation, empire, class, gender, and childhood. However, teachers produced their own understandings of these categories through their everyday work, which saw them patrolling the streets and entering pupils' homes after school hours; through summer travels to every corner of Britain and, in some cases, to the far reaches of the empire; and through their remarkably wide-ranging

¹¹ See Zoe Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815-1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester University Press, 2005); C. A. Bayly *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London, 1870-1904: A Social History* (Hull: University of Hull, 1969); R.J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

reading. Teachers spoke back to the state in narrative spaces like logbooks - official documents originally intended as mechanical records of their work. In contrast to the desiccated, wooden portraits of education and everyday life captured in the copious Parliamentary investigations of social issues, teachers' narratives brim with life. Sometimes their logbook entries were hilarious - I laughed aloud in the archives at teachers' powerful, yet playful critiques of the hodgepodge of topics in the official curriculum. In another vein, teachers mobilized incredibly poignant depictions of hungry children who conspired with their proud families to hide their poverty.

Teachers' narratives urge a certain caution when thinking about the reach of the Victorian state. Their frustrated depictions of children and parents whose apathetic or even hostile attitude towards education - and everything it stood for - paint a picture of a state whose power had distinct limits. Like imperial actors, teachers worked through rather than against existing social networks, hierarchies, and customs whenever possible.

Yet, elementary teachers were the most ubiquitous agents of discipline in Victorian Britain. The cane and the taws - the leather strap used to administer corporal punishment in Scotland - were in virtually every headteacher's desk. Teachers kept a close watch on their pupils, even to the point of patrolling the neighborhood streets after school hours. However, teachers were observed as much as they were the observers; they meted out and were subject to discipline. Parents discussed what their children told them about teachers and even went out of their way to peep in the windows of the school. In many parts of Britain - especially Scotland - it was common for pupils, parents, the

community at large to know a good deal about teachers' home lives and to engage in conversations with teachers about subjects that ranged far beyond schooling. Education reformers and policymakers also came to know about teachers' lives through teachers' extensive public writings – and the way they wrote themselves into school logbooks. To better understand teachers' lives is to begin to understand what vision of class, culture, and the state teachers presented to the communities across Britain in which they lived and worked.

The history of education is a tremendously active, but often insular area of scholarly inquiry. All too often, histories of education focus on education laws and policies, teachers' unions and their campaign to professionalize, textbooks and pedagogical manuals. There are, of course, some outstanding exceptions to this insularity: for instance, Dina Copelman's account of how London's women teachers fit imperfectly into models of feminism and separate spheres; Stephen Heathorn's work charting the relationship of school readers to ideas about nationalism, imperialism, and gender; and Anna Davin's richly textured narrative of the place of schooling within a broader history of working-class childhood and family life.¹² Inspired by such work, this dissertation locates the story of teachers within broader social, cultural, and imperial issues even as it intervenes in ongoing debates among historians of education. Indeed, it

¹² Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, class and feminism 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

is precisely by following the story of teachers beyond the confines of explicitly educational issues that it makes its intervention within the history of education.

We know a remarkable amount about what various parts of the public desired teachers to do. Religious leaders wanted teachers to instill Christian values - and to maintain and expand the ranks of their particular denomination.¹³ Many pupils and their parents generally wanted a teacher to impart knowledge and skills that either brought social cachet or were simply useful. Other children approached school hungry for something more, eager for a teacher who would help them to read Shakespeare and perhaps learn French or Latin.¹⁴ Still others hoped for a teacher who would be flexible enough to let them skip school once in a while to help earn some money or mind their younger siblings.¹⁵ Politicians, policymaking bureaucrats, and local school managers had an even messier mix of expectations for teachers. Certainly most expected teachers to spread Christianity, provide a basic grounding in British culture, and create the literate population necessary for a modern nation state - all without instilling unreasonable expectations for pupils' future lives. Some took the idea of a limited education to an extreme, calling for funding cuts and inveighing against teachers who they perceived to be threatening the social status quo. Others - school inspector Matthew Arnold not least

¹³ Neil Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); John Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), chp. 5.

¹⁵ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*; Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London*.

of all – hoped that teachers might shape their pupils into men and women who could appreciate culture and understand the world enough to become active, engaged citizens. For a sizable contingent of vocal and influential politicians and Parliamentary pressure groups, the question of what denomination of Christianity teachers would spread - if any - became a pressing, obsessive question that both drove and, at times, paralyzed the expansion of the nation's elementary schools and teaching force.¹⁶

With the exception of their struggle to win professional status, we know far less about teachers' own strivings.¹⁷ We have a number of fine histories and very compelling accounts of detailing how teachers formally laid claim to professional status: they banded together in unions and associations which lobbied school boards and Parliament; they used a masculine rhetoric of objectivity in their petitions, pamphlets, and speeches; and they jockeyed for control over the selection, training, and certification of teachers, even winning some measure of influence. Bound up in these bids for recognition as professionals were campaigns for more pay, autonomy, and prestige.¹⁸

¹⁶ Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*; Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918*; Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*; Peter Gordon, *The Victorian School Manager: A Study in the Management of Education 1800-1902* (London: Woburn Press, 1974); J.M. Goldstorm, *The Social Content of Education 1808-1870. A Study of the Working Class School Reader in England and Ireland* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972).

¹⁷ Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales From 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Greenwood Press, 1977); Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*; Peter Henry John Heather Gosden, *The Evolution of a Profession: A Study of the Contribution of Teachers' Association to the Development of School Teaching As a Professional Occupation* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1972); Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁸ Tropp, *The School Teachers*; H. C. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales, 1800-1975* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977); Marjorie Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London: University of London Press, 1970); Douglas Myers, "Scottish Schoolmasters in the Nineteenth Century," in Walter M.

I offer a social and cultural history of teachers that focuses on their vernacular professionalism. What did Victorian Britain's elementary teachers set out to do in their everyday work and in their time outside the classroom, and why? How did those strivings translate into practice? Teachers spilled huge quantities of ink laying claim to status as professionals, but what did professionalism mean to them? What did they want to use their professionalism to accomplish in their personal and working lives? I demonstrate the centrality of their work to their ongoing struggle to articulate their sense of self and social position vis-à-vis their pupils, their pupils' parents, the local clergyman, the state, and even the peoples of the empire and wider world.¹⁹ Pay, autonomy, education-level, social prestige – all those sociological criteria that have traditionally defined what it meant to be a professional – can only take us so far. It is better and more productive to look instead at teachers' travel narratives, memoirs, sketches, logbooks, and even their depositions in court cases and to ask of these sources how teachers' work influenced their worldview and how that worldview influenced their work.

For decades the history of education was dominated by a Marxist approach that stressed the importance of elementary education to middle-class aspirations of social control. Richard Johnson argued in a landmark 1970 article that “the imperative of [social] control” shaped debates about elementary education among policymakers and the middle class more broadly. This belief in the importance of social control stemmed from

Humes and Hamish M. Paterson eds., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1983), 75-92.

¹⁹ Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

anxiety about revolution, an “optimistic liberalism,” and “a rather self-conscious paternalism.”²⁰ No historian fleshed the story of this peculiar blend of motives at work in the evolution of policy than Brian Simon.²¹ More recently, historians working under the influence of Michel Foucault have mapped out a subtler form of disciplinary aspirations. The ritualized enactment of corporal punishment, the institution of timetables, and minute recordkeeping became means of bringing pupils within a web of state power and shaping their souls.²² Arguments about social control and discipline admittedly have traction in the archive of Parliamentary investigations, policymakers’ memorandums, official policies, middle-class pamphlets.

However, teachers had a much more ambiguous relationship to this almost defining impulse of the modern state. They adapted the universalizing imperatives of the central state to local culture and socio-economic realities. The logbooks in which teachers were required to record everyday progress and problems in schools became a key part of this process as teachers recorded when, how, and why they modified rigid policy dictates. Keen to have orderly pupils who did well on the annual examination, teachers in urban schools sometimes screened pupils for respectability before allowing

²⁰ Richard Johnson, "Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England," *Past & Present*, 49 (1970), 116.

²¹ Brian Simon, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1974).

²² Malcolm Vick, "What Does a Teacher Look Like?" *Paedagogica Historica* 36, 1 (2000), 247-263; Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, 88-95; Susannah Wright, "The Work of Teachers and Others in and Around a Birmingham Slum School 1891-1920," *History of Education* 38, 6 (2009), 729-746; Gretchen Galbraith, *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1870-1902* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) chps. 6-8; Sascha Auerbach, "“Some Punishment Should be Devised”: Parents, Children, and the State in Victorian London," *The Historian* 71 (2009), 757-80.

them to join the school - and in the process cast off the most burdensome and important part of their duty to discipline. Other teachers, like the staff at Edgton mixed school in Shropshire, followed the advice of school inspector and educationalist Joshua Fitch, who advocated letting all children into school. To bring order to the classroom, Fitch advocated only occasional use of the cane. Far more important was captivating children's imagination and treating school work as a playful intellectual exercise.²³

Discipline was a fluid concept, which teachers questioned, contested, and redefined. In questioning discipline, teachers shaped their personal and professional sense of self.

Teachers drew on and moved between working- and middle-class culture as they went about their work and lives. A rich body of work has emerged in recent decades showing that working-class men and women struggled for more than the vote, better pay, and improved working conditions. Large groups within the working classes participated in a thriving music hall scene, carefully policed the markers of their own respectability, pursued intense courses of reading to find intellectual fulfillment, and wrestled with the implications of evangelicalism in the inner lives and worldly actions.²⁴ We also know a great deal about the efforts of middle-class men and women to observe, describe, and improve working-class life, especially in the urban slums of Britain and the most "backward" areas of its empire.²⁵ Teachers straddled and blurred the line between the

²³ Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching*, chp. 4.

²⁴ Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ross, *Love and Toil*; Rose, *The Intellectual Life*; Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*.

²⁵ Seth Koven, *Slumming, Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Mark Freeman, *Social Investigation and Rural England, 1870-1914* (Woodbridge:

working and middle classes. Even as categories such as class, gender, race, and nation deeply informed teachers' narratives and actions, they articulated a pedagogy and a vision of everyday life that could not be so neatly contained within those concepts. However, teachers drew on - and playfully reworked - class-based understandings of work, gender, respectability, and politesse in their own self-fashioning both inside and outside the classroom. Male teachers yoked their self-fashioned professionalism to childhood in a traditionally maternal way by donning the mantle of the nurturer, helping to ensure children were well fed, washed, and clothed even as many female teachers worked to shape their boy pupils into men with sturdy bodies and strong spirits. Teachers also became cultural translators, explaining and adapting the very middle-class ideas about hygiene, history, and literature that they imposed on their pupils. This mediation was a two-way street, however, and teachers also represented the culture and harsh socio-economic realities of working-class life back to policymakers. The story of teachers brings together the history of working-class life with the public and private interventions of the middle class. Teachers bridged what Tory prime minister Disraeli – and subsequent historians – called the “two nations” of rich and poor – and suggests that they were never so divided. It shows that what historians have long portrayed as a gaping chasm between each group was often bridged by teachers.

Boydell & Brewer, 2011); Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Pamela Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

Locating teachers in the interstices of the categories that make up the social and cultural landscape as we know it pushes us to rethink what modernity meant in Victorian Britain. The very idea of modernity - an idea for which Victorian Britain is often seen as the quintessential site - depends on categories in tension with one another.²⁶ Working class and middle class, rough and respectable, colony and metropole, public and private, masculine and feminine, professional and amateur, central and local government - these oppositions structure our understanding of a modern society, culture, and state. Teachers stood both outside and in between these categories. If teachers were sometimes discontent that society did not regard them as full-fledged members of the middle class, on the whole they nonetheless embraced their interstitiality. Indeed, they cultivated an identity premised on standing at the heart of these tensions and mediating between different points on the social landscape. One teacher in the Highlands playfully “affected a workmanlike appearance by teaching in his shirt-sleeves.” This simple act of sartorial self-fashioning represents a desire to overcome the distancing effect that wearing more formal clothes would project. When they traveled to remote corners of Britain or abroad to the empire, teachers often drew attention to both differences and parallels between life among the working or indigenous people there and back in Britain. They also appropriated the travel and ethnographic narrative, working within these genres to

²⁶ Important scholarship on the idea of modernity include: Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983); Simon Gunn and James Vernon eds., *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Martin Daunt and Bernhard Rieger eds., *Meanings of Modernity: Britain From the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (New York: Berg, 2011).

establish their social and cultural credentials while adopting a close and often sympathetic position to their subjects. Echoing Allison Light's formulation of "conservative modernity" as a way to think about the tendency in interwar British culture to look simultaneously eagerly forward and nostalgically backward, Lynda Nead suggests that modernity in Victorian Britain was "a condition of compromise" that existed at the intersection of "local government and private industry, local vested interests and traditional authorities."²⁷ Victorian Britain's elementary teachers were not only emblematic of this new conception of modernity, they were key agents in forging it.

Arguably one of the defining characteristics of modern Britain was the growing entwinement of the metropole and the empire. Scholarship on the impact of imperialism on British culture at home has focused almost exclusively on the well-to-do. This has led Bernard Porter to argue that most Britons knew very little about the imperial connections which allegedly saturated British life.²⁸ The imaginative and actual interplay between colonies and metropole was quite important for teachers – even those who never set foot in the empire. The Victorian conception of the modern elementary teacher was born in large part out of the imperial practice of using native agents as pedagogues and

²⁷ Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, 5; Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature, and Conservatism Between the Wars* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

²⁸ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For some a sample of the scholarship on the impact of imperialism at home among the well-to-do, see Hall, *Civilising Subjects; Culture and Imperialism*, ed. Edward Said (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).; Susan Thorne ed., *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in 19th-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); J.A. Mangan, *Benefits Bestowed? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall eds., *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender, and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

missionaries. In forging their professionalism British teachers appropriated the idea of native agency - which had resulted in a conception of teachers in which their education, salaries, and autonomy needed to be limited - and used it to represent themselves as preternaturally aware of and sympathetic to the plight of the pupils and communities whom they served. Teaching in the empire was always a very real possibility for teachers, men and women alike, and it could offer an opportunity for more autonomy, pay, or both. Traveling abroad alone or with one or two companions was also a common practice during the long summer holiday. Teachers frequently published narratives of their travel experience which drew heavily on the bourgeois travel narrative, which laid claim to a confident mastery of the world; the humanitarian and socialist exposé; and the emerging genre of ethnography, which enshrined otherness and shored up the cultural and racial position of the observer, yet also staked a claim for the importance of the observed people.²⁹

Geography lessons allowed teachers to bring the empire home by stressing the constant flow of goods and peoples back and forth. Teachers led students on imaginary journeys to Egypt and asked them to think about the relationship between the geography

²⁹ On these narrative traditions and genres, see: Koven, *Slumming*; Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2003); Barbara Korte, "Travel Writing in the English Woman's Journal (1858-1864): An Area of Leisure in the Context of Women's Work," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45, 2 (2012), 158-174; Oz Frankel, *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Westview Press, 1992); Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

and the culture of India. Though teachers' relationship to imperialism could be self-serving and even jingoistic at times, on the whole they eschewed pre-packaged and sanitized narratives of the empire. The empire was a source, not merely the object of teachers' pedagogy. It was a space to be observed and discovered, about which some basic facts were to be mastered and then their causes and implications teased out as an exercise in pedagogy, citizenship, and personal fulfillment.

The civilizing mission was central to Britain's as a modern, imperial nation. To spread "civilization" - a capacious term that included everything from Christianity, respectability, and British culture to science, industry, and a hearty work ethic - was to affirm Britain's superiority vis-à-vis the objects of uplift and other Western nations. Elementary education was one of the key sites for carrying out the civilizing mission. As such, it was a source of anxiety to British policymakers and social commentators that France, Germany, and the United States, among other nations, had outstripped Britain's domestic provision in that area. In an open letter to Lord John Russell in 1847, the Rev. A.P. Perceval declared that foreign countries like "despotic Prussia" had been "teazing [sic] and harassing the Church and nation of Britain" for their uneducated population.³⁰ The Newcastle Commission (1858-1861) enumerated statistics confirming the depressingly low proportion of British children in school compared to their counterparts

³⁰ A.P. Perceval, "A Letter to Lord John Russell On National Education," (London: John Ollivier, 1847), 5.

in Prussia, France, and the United States, statistics, which were then re-articulated in pamphlets, speeches, and sermons.³¹

Even as Britain became a world leader in elementary education abroad, it had at home many places like the one which the Rev. Robert Buchanan called in 1850 called a “*terra incognita* ... a sore evil under the sun.” There might be the occasional ragged school catering to the absolute poorest of the children in such places, but they left “untouched and unapproached the thousands who, just because they have not reached that lowest point in the scale of youthful degradation and depravity, have nothing done for them at all.”³² This was a blight upon the good name of the British nation, then subjugating foreign lands under the banner of progress. Besides its intertwinement with Britain’s sense of its social progress, purveying civilization through elementary education was one of the ultimate manifestations of middle-class evangelicalism. Historians including Simon Gunn and Jonathan Parry have reminded us of the centrality of religion, especially denominationalism, to middle-class personal and political identity.³³ Neil Smelser argues that it was denominational fervor that drove the expansion of elementary education - but also the force that paralyzed its development at times.³⁴ Taking the

³¹ See for instance: Walter Farquhar Hook, “On the Means of Rendering More Efficient the Education of the People,” (London: John Murray, 1846), 30-31; Rev. W.R. Mirrison, “The Re-Revised Code: At Variance with the Facts Proved Before the Royal Commission on Education,” (London: J. and F.H. Rivington, 1862), 18.

³² Rev. Robert Buchanan, “The Schoolmaster in the Wynds; Or, How to Educate the Masses” (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1850), 3, 11-12.

³³ Simon Gunn, “The Ministry, the Middle Class and the ‘Civilizing Mission’ in Manchester, 1850-80,” *Social History* 21, 1 (1996), 22-36; Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

³⁴ Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*.

perspective of teachers allows us to cut through the highfalutin rhetoric of the civilizing mission and see elementary education for what it was in the view of the men and women who enacted it: a long, slow job for which quick and dramatic results were illusory. The state, teachers suggested, would need to play a leading role in that project, though teachers could help to guide the actions of the state.

This dissertation focuses primarily on the years from 1846 to 1902. The Committee of Council on Education Minutes of 1846 and the Education Act of 1902 (the “Balfour Act”) bookend this period. However, these landmark education policy developments are important not simply as indices of change. Rather, the 1846 Minutes and the Balfour Act represented shifts in social thought and British culture as much as they determined it. The 1830s and 1840s were a heyday of social reform. The electorate was expanded, slaves emancipated, sanitary and factory reforms passed, and the Poor Laws reworked - though these “reforms” and the debates surrounding them were often shot through with social conservatism as much as radicalism. The Minutes of 1846 were part of this age of moderate reform. Rather than completely reimagining elementary education, they built on an already existing system of schooling and teacher training colleges. One of the more radical measures of the Minutes was their creation of a state-funded apprenticeship and scholarship ladder. Even working-class boys and girls could climb this ladder to become teachers. This meritocratic social mobility was, however,

competitive and ultimately limited in nature - positions as inspectors or in the educational policymaking bureaucracies remained closed to elementary teachers.

By the time of the Balfour Act, the state's attitude towards elementary teachers had begun to change. Teachers had achieved fairly widespread recognition of their professional expertise not only in the realm of pedagogy, but also about childhood, poverty, and family life. The practice of a paternalistic apprenticeship under a single headteacher gave way to an education at pupil teachers' centers. Residential training colleges slowly began to give way to day colleges affiliated with universities. More importantly, perhaps, elementary education became a truly universal and increasingly accepted experience, though some measure of friction always remained between policymakers, teachers, and pupils and parents. Secondary education and secondary school teachers began to take the place that elementary education and elementary teachers had once occupied in the British imagination in conceiving of class relations, national identity, and the nature of the state.

Focusing on the years between 1846 and 1902 is a deliberate challenge to the centrality of the Forster Education Act of 1870, a year in which most educational and broader social histories tend either to begin or end. Something more than historiographical nitpicking motivates my push for this new chronology. De-centering 1870 forces us to stop using the Education Act of 1870 (and its counterpart in Scotland in 1872) as a crutch in explaining the remaking of the social order in the late-Victorian years. Though important, the 1870/2 acts did not by themselves start a chain of events

that snowballed into the welfare state. They neither opened the floodgates of meritocratic social mobility nor raised the dykes of social control. Though they did accelerate the numerical growth and the feminization of Britain's teaching force, they tweaked rather than upended the mechanisms for recruiting, training, and supervising teachers. Though dynamic in many ways, the social and cultural history of Britain between 1846 to 1902 has a remarkable degree of social and cultural coherence when seen through the eyes of teachers.

Geographically, this dissertation encompasses both English and Scottish teachers. I went into the archives believing – or at least hoping – that it would be possible to tell a British story, one that put English and Scottish teachers together. The differences in education policies and legislation to which historians have pointed as justifications for writing separate histories of these two kingdoms always seemed fairly minor to me. However, depending on what I encountered in the archives about teachers' actual experiences on the ground, I remained ready to take a more comparative approach that highlighted the contrasts between teaching in England and Scotland. Ultimately, though, neither of these extremes seemed quite right. Some aspects of being a teacher seemed very similar in each kingdom. For instance, the experience of pupil teaching and training college life closely resembled each other in England and Scotland. Other dimensions of teachers' lives, such as their relationship to local communities, differed enormously in each kingdom. Doing the history of Scottish teachers meant attending to the influence of parochial schooling as a tradition, the Presbyterian ideal of the self-regulating local

community, and the Victorian fracture within the Church of Scotland known as the Disruption. In the end, the story I tell is something more than two separate narratives told in comparative perspective, but less than a coherent “British” history. The sometimes neat, sometimes messy narrative that results from this approach ultimately speaks to an underlying truth about the nature of the union in the Victorian years. Wales I have left largely out of this narrative for reasons of feasibility. As I quickly realized, attending to the uniqueness of the on-the-ground situation there would push a messy narrative towards chaos and would make it nearly impossible to do a thorough research job.

Several terms used throughout the dissertation are worth explaining here. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, “popular education” was the most capacious term for describing the system of schooling catering primarily, though not exclusively, to agricultural laborers, the urban working classes, and sometimes also the pauper and vagrant children served by industrial, Sunday, “dame’s,” “ragged” and Poor Law schools. In the 1850s and the 1860s “elementary education” gained increasing traction as a term for describing that same system of education, though increasingly it came to mean only those schools which were inspected and aided by the state. Elementary education as a term generally carried connotations of a limited curriculum with an emphasis on independent, critical thinking - though I will argue that, in practice, an “elementary” education could be far from elementary.

The part-public, part-private institutions where teachers received a one- or two-year education to prepare them for a career in elementary teaching were known both as

“normal schools” (from the French *École normale*) and “training colleges” - particularly the latter as the century progressed. Except in cases where “normal school” was part of an institution’s name, I use the term “training colleges” as it was the more common of the two terms. Like elementary education, the term “training college” suggested a limited curriculum that provided practical preparation rather than a liberal education. More sinisterly, it also seemed to suggest that future teachers were trained to become mechanical pedagogues and disciplinarians who would in turn go on to “train” their own pupils. In practice, however, teachers-in-training pursued a wide range of subjects at college - even if it sometimes meant reading Shakespeare after lights out at night or debating philosophy in an extracurricular club. The strict disciplinary regimes at training colleges were not so much internalized as they were defied and mocked.

Most important and trickiest of all are the various terms used to refer to educators. At its most capacious, the term “teacher” encompasses elementary school headteachers, assistant teachers, ex-pupil teachers, and perhaps even current pupil teachers; all their counterparts in secondary schools; and teachers in Sunday schools, dame’s and adventure schools, evening schools, and half-time schools. It can potentially include everything from training college educated and certificated teachers earning more money than lawyers to once-a-week Bible teachers with limited literacy and no formal qualifications who worked for free. I use the term to refer to the staff in state-aided elementary day schools. This includes, then, both board schools and voluntary schools affiliated with such organizations as the National Society, the Church of England’s educational wing.

By the 1860s most of these teachers were certificated and increasingly they had also spent one or two years at a training college. However, even within this category there is significant variation. The headmaster of a large urban school might by the final decades of the century have substantial professional autonomy and earn £400 a year or more - a salary on par with much of the legal profession and surpassing many clergymen. An assistant female teacher in a rural school might, by contrast, earn just £60 a year and be subject to pressure from the headteacher and numerous local elites. While I remain alert to the vast differences between two such teachers, one of the central goals of this dissertation is to uncover their commonalities, to distill the many meanings of being a teacher.

Chapter One. Education Policy

1870 is a very popular year among historians of Britain. It marks either the beginning or the end of many works of history – and not just histories of elementary education, but also of politics, imperialism, gender, and the family.¹ As early as 1963, John Clive perceptively linked the growing tendency among historians to use 1870 to unite the “familiar quadrivium of political, social, economic, and cultural divisions.”² The landmark Education Act of 1870 and its 1872 Scottish counterpart seem to mark a break with the past in virtually all dimensions of British life. The massive expansion of elementary education brought about by the Acts was bound up with a post-Second Reform Bill (1867) expansion of the electorate. Imperial historians have suggested that the expansion of citizenship across class lines – but within racial ones – owed to a consolidation of whiteness in the wake of rebellions in the empire.³ Social and cultural historians have focused on the way the Education Acts raised literacy rates and created a reading public that was larger than ever. Although literacy is notoriously difficult to

¹ For a few prominent examples, see Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1996); David Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London, 1870-1904: A Social History* (Hull: University of Hull, 1969); Brian Simon, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974); Christina De Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

² John Clive, “British History, 1870-1914, Reconsidered: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the Period,” *The American Historical Review*, 68, 4 (1963), 987.

³ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall eds., *Defining the Victorian Nation: class, race, gender, and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

measure, basic literacy, at least, became nearly universal by 1900 where sixty years earlier only two-thirds of men and one-half of women could sign their name upon marrying.⁴ Elementary education also came to be used to inculcate a patriotic, jingoistic national identity.⁵ More hearteningly, it served as a laboratory for new practices of welfare from the state-funded provision of free hot lunches to the care of nurses.⁶ The Acts were also tied to economic concerns: this period saw growing fear that industries in America and Germany - which had robust elementary education systems - were overtaking their counterparts in Britain. These fears were particularly acute in the 1870s, a moment of economic downturn.⁷ Historians who have focused on 1870/2 in telling the story of modern Britain and elementary education are not wrong. Certainly the 1870/2 Acts were intertwined with major changes in Britain's empire, economy, politics, and culture.

However, in many ways it was other moments in the history of elementary education that captured the British imagination – which both marked sweeping social changes and helped to drive them. For instance, the Minutes of 1846 created an apprenticeship and scholarship system for aspiring teachers which provided the first

⁴ David Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England : The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 1-3, 190.

⁵ Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

⁶ Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*; Susannah Wright, "The Work of Teachers and Others in and Around a Birmingham Slum School 1891–1920," *History of Education* 38, 6 (2009), 729-746.

⁷ On these anxieties, see: A. Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France, and the USA* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990).

opportunity for institutionalized social mobility in modern Britain. The Revised Code of 1862 ushered in high-stakes examinations, payment-by-results for teachers and schools, and accountability procedures that became a flashpoint for more than forty years of debates about “discipline,” the nature of childhood, and the ethos of British society. The period from the late 1880s to 1902 saw the rise of secondary schooling for talented working-class children and university-based training college courses for aspiring teachers. These changes shaped what teachers represented to the nation. Focusing on the policy developments that affected teachers makes for an altogether less tidy story than the quasi-Whiggish march-of-progress narrative that results from a focus on 1870/2. The apprenticeship system for aspiring teachers instituted under the Minutes of 1846 revived an old, socially conservative form of training that had all but died out in Britain. On the other hand, those same Minutes did much to increase the power of the Committee of Council on Education - a burgeoning, centralized modern bureaucracy - over teachers.

This chapter explores policies that shaped the working lives of teachers in the Victorian years, from the opportunities it afforded them to the drudgery and disciplinary responsibilities it imposed on them. The shaping of these policies sparked debates about the relationship between the working and middle classes, local and central government, the duty of the state and the responsibility of individuals. The history of elementary teachers and education throughout the Victorian years - not just in 1870/2 - was bound up with social, political, cultural, and imperial history. Peter Mandler’s argument that there was no “smooth and inevitable progression towards liberalism” in early- and mid-

nineteenth century politics holds doubly true for policies on teachers.⁸ The laws and policies shaping their work were governed by this wider tendency in Victorian governance to blend paternalism and bureaucratic regulation, private initiatives and public assistance, local and central control.⁹ Much like the wider tendency in Victorian culture to look wistfully backwards for models for contemporary social issues, policies and discourses on teachers drew on older ideas such as apprenticeship and parish governance.¹⁰

This chapter also sheds light on the influence of imperial ideas on the making of the policies that shaped teachers' training and work in Britain itself. For much of the Victorian period, the idea of native agency influenced the way policymakers and educationalists conceived of teachers. Native agency emerged in the empire as a way to deal with the massive scale of the civilizing mission. Native men and women would be carefully educated under the influence of British missionaries and teachers - but not over-educated, since that would shatter their connection to the milieu into which they had been born - then sent back to the society from which they came to teach and proselytize. More than just a tactic to deal with the sheer scale of the civilizing mission, native agency also enjoyed widespread purchase in British thought because of the recognized need for intermediaries who could truly understand - sometimes literally - the bulk of the empire's

⁸ Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1.

⁹ See Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*; William C. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Towards State Intervention, 1833-1848* (London: Archon Books, 1971).

¹⁰ Martin Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

subjects. Educationalists and policymakers also pointed to the need for teachers in Britain itself to mediate between working- and middle-class culture. Joshua Fitch, chief school inspector for many years, repeatedly expressed his belief that “the one crowning qualification of a perfect teacher is sympathy - sympathy with young children, with their wants and their ways; and that without this all other qualifications fail to achieve the highest results.”¹¹ Over time, teachers and some of their supporters appropriated the idea that teachers were peculiarly attuned to poor and working-class families needs, wants, and way of life. They leveraged this understanding of their position on the social landscape - one that had helped to shape official policies - and used it to help fashion a professionalism that found some purchase in official discussions about policy.

* * *

i. Early-Victorian Developments

The state gave itself many new social responsibilities in the 1830s and 1840s. The guiding philosophy was more to limit harm rather than to institutionalize a culture of state caregiving. A new system of poor relief, for instance, prevented people from starving to death, but was designed to stop local authorities from doing much more for the poor than that. Even the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies was about ending the institution of slavery rather than doing more to improve the condition of the black population. Early advocates of elementary education in Britain often framed their case by drawing on this idea that preventing evil was the central goal of government social policies. The Rev. Robert Buchanan estimated that pauperism and crime had cost Glasgow more than

¹¹ Joshua G. Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching. Delivered in the University of Cambridge During the Lent Term, 1880* (New York: MacMillan, 1885), 35

£250,000 per year in the 1840s. That could all be prevented, he argued, by nipping “youthful degradation and depravity” in the bud through elementary education.¹² This utilitarian line of argument found traction - particularly when coupled with the argument that elementary education gave “a sound Scriptural education” and a “steady influence” to the veritable heathens who occupied Britain’s slums and remote rural reaches, as the British and Foreign School Society suggested in 1831.¹³ Beginning in 1833, the state started to fund the construction of Anglican and non-conformist elementary schools. Crucially, however, they only did so in areas where the local population had already raised money for the cause. The state hoped to cultivate self-responsibility by supporting communities’ efforts rather than simply taking on the whole burden. These principles - preventing evil, spreading Christianity, and supporting local initiatives - guided state involvement in elementary education in its earliest years in the 1830s and 1840s.

Beginning in 1846, the state became actively involved in the education, certification, and payment of teachers. The state undertook this task reluctantly, many policymakers and educationalists suggested. It was only because in many neighborhoods in the 1830s there were, in the words of the Newcastle Commission’s report, “none too old, too poor, too ignorant, too feeble, too sickly, too unqualified in any or every way, to regard themselves, and to be regarded by others, as unfit for school-keeping.”¹⁴ Taking

¹² Rev. Robert Buchanan, “The Schoolmaster in the Wynds; Or, How to Educate the Masses” (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1850), 6-12.

¹³ Quoted in Neil Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 77.

¹⁴ *Report of the Commissioners into the State of Popular Education in England and Wales*, PP1861 [2794-VI] XXI (hereafter, “Newcastle Commission”), 93.

responsibility for teachers forced the state to confront the question: what *did* make someone fit for school-keeping? How much knowledge and culture did they need? Should young male and female aspirants to teaching be treated the same, or differently? This led to even more perplexing questions: what sort of an education made the ideal teacher? Should the state sanction - even assist in - an education that raised teachers out of the working classes? And lastly, what did the state owe the teachers it made - and what did they owe the state?

Policymakers, members of Parliament, school inspectors, and educationalists working with the state expended huge amounts of energy and attention trying to answer these questions, as testified to by the avalanche of official inquiries, reports, and memorandums on the subject. The stakes were high: the nature of the Victorian state itself. Was it to be a guardian against evil, or an active agent of social good? Would it govern through an iron grid of policies or through a more flexible, organic system?

The early-Victorian years

If teaching basic literacy, a bit of writing, the core tenets of Christianity, and some arithmetic were the only of goals popular education in Britain, then the situation would have looked rather hopeful in the 1830s. Britain's children acquired these skills and knowledge in growing numbers thanks to dame and Sunday schools, which offered cheap, flexible basic instruction.¹⁵ Local landowners, clergymen, and well-to-do families

¹⁵ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*; Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy*; Thomas Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

sometimes subsidized more formal schools that were open to the children of working people. In Scotland, all rural parishes had to have at least one such formal school – a “parish school” – owing to a law dating back to 1696.¹⁶ The recently developed monitorial system of teaching, by which a single teacher could use pupil-monitors to instruct up to a thousand pupils, was giving rise to a network of monitorial schools in urban areas as well. All these developments promised better, cheaper results in basic instruction than had ever been seen before.

Yet pessimism prevailed. The task of education was changing. By the 1830s, new ideas about childhood and child-centered pedagogy had made their way from the Continent to Britain. The idea that children should be nurtured and guided to the self-discovery of knowledge began to compete with the idea that they should be strictly disciplined and taught by rote.¹⁷ Even more significantly, the electorate, while still miniscule, nearly doubled in 1832 from roughly 500,000 to just over 800,000. Many expected that a further expansion to encompass the majority of the working classes would eventually follow. To provide a basic education was no longer enough. Now British social reformers and educators aspired to nurture the development of even working-class

¹⁶ On this system of schooling see Christopher Bischof, “Schoolteachers and Professionalism in Scotland, 1696-1906,” in eds., Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman and Lindsey Patterson, *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁷ Adrian Woolridge, *Measuring the Mind: Psychological Theory and Educational Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Robert B. Downs, *Heinrich Pestalozzi: Father of Modern Pedagogy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975); Christina de Bellaigue, “The Development of Teaching as Profession for Women Before 1870,” *The Historical Journal*, 44, 4 (2001), 963-988; Bernarr Rainbow, “The Rise of Popular Music Education in Nineteenth-Century England,” *Victorian Studies*, 30, 1 (1986), 25-49.

children's imagination, emotions, and individuality. They wanted – they *needed* – to make citizens, not mere subjects.

Perceived pockets of backwardness had also become a source of embarrassment to Britain. In the words of one pamphlet written on the eve of the Victorian period by an educational society active in the Highlands, it was necessary “to enlighten the dark glens of our mountain land.”¹⁸ Dickens's early work offered a thinly fictionalized version of life among London's poor and working population that was at times comic, but always tragically backward despite its proximity to Parliament and the riches of the West End. Thomas Chalmers and James Kay's respective writings on Glasgow and Manchester disclosed large and growing neighborhoods whose denizens struggled to read or articulate the most basic facts about God and country.¹⁹ At a time when other European nations were expanding their elementary school systems and when the British empire continually justified itself by reference to its civilizing mission, the condition of Britain's educational system threatened to undermine its credibility.

A course of action to improve elementary education nonetheless remained elusive. In Scotland, reformers proposed using their almost legendary parish school system as a model for further expansion, particularly in urban areas.²⁰ In England and Wales, supporters of popular education put their hopes in the denominational religious

¹⁸ Quoted in Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 35.

¹⁹ James Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832). For a good overview of Chalmers' diverse writings, see S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

²⁰ Donald Withrington, “‘Scotland a Half-Educated Nation’ in 1834? Reliable Critique or Persuasive Polemic,” in Walter Humes and Hamish Paterson eds., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education, 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), 55-74.

educational societies founded in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was becoming clear, however, that the scale of the task was so monumental that the state would need to take a leading role in creating a system of popular education – even if it meant working through these religious educational societies. Few nations relished taking on such an enormously expensive and hotly contested issue as elementary education. As a nation in which individual responsibility and fiscal prudence were watchwords, a country divided by heated denominational conflicts, Britain was more reluctant than most to take on this burden.²¹

The state began its intervention into popular education in 1833 with a modest grant of £20,000. Even this comparatively small sum generated quite a bit of controversy. Radicals denounced it as an inadequate, piecemeal approach to social reform while William Cobbett, in his youthful conservative days, lambasted it as “a French plan - a *doctrinaire* plan.”²² Until 1870, virtually every pence of public funds went to private religious educational societies. Foremost among these were the Church of England’s National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (the National Society), the non-denominational British and Foreign School Society (BFSS), and the Free Church’s educational wing (until 1872, parochial schools in Scotland working under the auspices of the Church of Scotland received their funding by a tax on the local “heritors,” or major landowners, rather than through a Parliamentary grant). Much to the chagrin of non-conformists, the Anglican

²¹ For a comparative history of the rise of state-sponsored systems of education, see Green, *Education and State Formation*.

²² D.G. Paz, *The Politics of Working-class Education in Britain, 1830-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 12-13.

National Society made out best under this system, securing substantially more of this annual grant than the BFSS. Historians of popular education in the pre-1870/2 period have focused much of their attention on mapping out the bitter political conflict, which erupted as a result of denominational tensions inherent in the allotment of the annual grant. Many have suggested that the political fighting resulting from denominational tensions was the reason Britain was among the slowest Western nations in developing a universal, state-run system of elementary education despite being the first to industrialize.²³

The Committee of Council on Education (CCE) superintended the distribution of these grants. It was established in 1839 to provide oversight for the growing sums of money which Parliament voted for popular education, from a modest £20,000 in 1833 to £75,000 by 1845 and £125,000 by 1848.²⁴ In its earliest years the CCE did not wield much power. It enforced minimum building standards for schools, offered largely toothless feedback to teachers in annual inspections, and ensured that an area applying for a building grant (always under the auspices of an educational society) had raised a substantial sum on its own through annual “subscriptions” pledged by the community.

²³ John S Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*; Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales From 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Greenwood Press, 1977); D.G. Paz, *The Politics of Working-class Education in Britain, 1830-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

²⁴ Final Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Elementary Education Acts, England and Wales, PP1888 [7928] (Hereafter, “Cross Commission”), 11. On the formation of the CCE, see J.L. Alexander, “Lord John Russell and the Origins of the Committee of Council on Education,” *Historical Journal* 20 (1977), 395-415.

Scotland remained largely unaffected by these earliest interventions. The parish school continued to be the main form of state-sponsored schooling. Schoolmasters working in parish schools were guaranteed a reasonable salary, a modest house with a garden, and, prized above all else, tenure.²⁵ One of hallmarks of the Scottish system of popular education was the link between universities and the parish schools attended by the sons of field laborers and doctors alike in the countryside. No matter their social background, gifted boys supposedly could win access to universities and themselves become parish schoolmasters.

The Minutes of 1846

The Minutes of 1846 of the CCE were a watershed moment. They marked a new role for the CCE with their substantial and active intervention into education policy. By far the most important policies introduced in the Minutes pertained to the recruitment, training, and certification of teachers. Before the Minutes, prospective teachers who lacked independent wealth – virtually all teachers – only got formal training through the patronage of a local elite or clergyman. After the Minutes, any morally and intellectually suitable candidate, boy or girl, could apprentice as a pupil teacher at age 13. For five years they would split their time between teaching younger pupils and continuing their own education through private lessons from the teacher. In exchange, they would receive a modest stipend. At the end of their apprenticeship they were eligible to sit an exam for

²⁵ See Bischof, “Schoolteachers and Professionalism, 1696-1906;” Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*; Douglas Myers, “Scottish Schoolmasters in the Nineteenth Century: Professionalism and Politics,” in *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education*, 75-92.

a state-funded Queen's Scholarship, which covered the majority of their training college expenses. Through these scholarships and other funding mechanisms, the state began to contribute a substantial sum to the annual expenses of training colleges. By the late 1850s the government paid training college more than £50,000 annually for operational expenses and had laid out more than £100,000 in one-time building grants. The state now supplied about three-fourths of training colleges' annual budget.²⁶ "An institution which produces good teachers may be the most efficient of all aids to education," the Newcastle Commission would later argue in defense of continued government support for training colleges, "but it appeals to no sympathy, it relieves no immediate distress, and it accordingly obtains subscriptions with difficulty."²⁷ The role of the state, the educationalists and politicians who made up most of the commission suggested, was to make critical, but decidedly boring investments in public wellbeing. This also included the promise of a pension for long-serving schoolmasters – but this was a promise on which the state almost entirely reneged, to teachers' great fury.

The Minutes also instituted a system of certificates by examination. Anyone could sit the examination, though training college graduates were at a substantial advantage since the training college curriculum was designed to prepare them for the examination. This led teachers to band together to form study groups that would become the basis for associations and, ultimately, unions.²⁸ The final piece of the Minutes was its empowerment of central state inspectors. It gave them input into the selection of pupil

²⁶ Newcastle Commission 115,

²⁷ Newcastle Commission, 145.

²⁸ Tropp, *The School Teachers*, 47.

teachers and the power to determine whether a school had earned its full grant - a major factor in whether school managers allowed a teacher to keep their job. However, local school managers - usually the clergyman, small local landowners, and sometimes well-to-do shopkeepers - retained substantial authority. Kay-Shuttleworth clarified in the Minutes that “the managers and the inspectors shall act concurrently.” Inspectors would take the lead on “intellectual” issues, but “moral and religious” matters would remain primarily the purview of the managers.²⁹ This was another manifestation of the hybrid local-central, public-private power sharing with which the early- and mid-Victorian state was so enamored.³⁰

These new policies on teachers sent wide-ranging reverberations through the entire system of elementary education in Britain. Hiring a “certificated,” career teacher was now a more affordable option than before. As certificated teachers became more commonplace, dame’s schools slowly began to be edged out of the educational landscape.³¹ The newly created certificates served as a portable credential. They facilitated the rise of an impersonal job market in which increasing numbers of school managers would now hire teachers whom they only met face-to-face for the first time at the job interview. *The Educational Expositor*, a teachers’ periodical, noted in 1853 that school managers now simply advertised for a certificated teacher where once they had given a long list of intellectual, religious, and moral requirements. “But this by no means

²⁹ *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1846* [866] (hereafter “Minutes of 1846”), 13.

³⁰ See: Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform*.

³¹ This was, it should be emphasized, a slow process. See: Phil Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England: The People's Education* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

reduces the amount of the requirements, although it reduces the size of the advertisements,” the article noted.³² Certificates were designed to stand in for a wide range of moral and intellectual attainments.

Pedagogically, the Minutes of 1846 led to a system which drew on both monitorial and child-centered methods. Funding structures and the availability of pupil teachers encouraged a monitorial-style education among the younger pupils, for whom mastery of the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic was most important. Following brief instructions from the head teacher, pupil teachers would supervise younger pupils’ lessons. This enabled teachers to work more closely with older pupils on subjects like history, geography, and literature. Looking back in 1853 on the effects of the Minutes, one teacher celebrated them for freeing the profession from the work of the “Serjeant-Major [sic]” who constantly drilled their pupils on the basics.³³

Scotland too was subject to the Minutes of 1846 - an unprecedented intervention into its popular education system. Scotland had long prided itself on the direct link between its parish schools and its universities. Male teachers embodied this link. No matter if they were the sons of crofters, the most promising young boys could proceed directly from their local schools to universities on scholarships, then go on to become teachers themselves. The figure of the young man who benefited from this link became known as the “lad o’pairs” in the late-Victorian years (a retrospective coinage of a figure who, by then, no longer existed). Before the Minutes of 1846, teacher training institutions occupied only a very peripheral role in the education of teachers for

³² *The Educational Expositor* (March, 1853), 19.

³³ “The Minutes of 1846,” *The Educational Expositor* (March, 1853), 24.

Scotland's popular education system – a system they shied away from calling “elementary.” Almost overnight, however, training colleges came to occupy a central role in Scotland.³⁴ They largely replaced universities as the main site of teachers' education. This was a cutting blow to Scotland's proud educational tradition - or at least the tradition as they came to remember it in the mid- and late-Victorian years.

The Minutes of 1846 made teaching a more democratic profession in Scotland, in many ways. Because pupil teaching and training colleges were open to young women, the Minutes gave girls a clear pathway to becoming a teacher. Moreover, training colleges helped to create a pedagogical culture in Scotland that emphasized teaching all students. Previously, university-educated schoolmasters had a tendency to focus on helping older pupils with lessons in Latin, advanced mathematics, and other subjects that might help them win admission to a university.³⁵ Scottish teachers formed the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) in the wake of the Minutes of 1846. This union-like association sought to preserve the tradition of the highly educated teacher - especially the highly educated *male* teacher - by creating a credential that required passing a more rigorous examination than the state-sponsored certificate. EIS President Leonhard Schmitz announced the high aim of the new scheme in 1848: “I hold that we shall not have fulfilled our mission until the time arrives when no public or private body

³⁴ Chapter two discusses this in some detail, but for more on this see Marjorie Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London: University of London Press, 1970), 13-84.

³⁵ Robert Anderson, “In Search of the ‘lad of Parts’: The Mythical History of Scottish Education,” *History Workshop Journal* 19, 1 (1985), 82-104; Bischof, “Schoolteachers and Professionalism, 1696-1906.” For an exception, see Marjorie Cruickshank, “The Dick Bequest: The Effect of a Famous Nineteenth-Century Endowment on Parish Schools of North East Scotland,” *History of Education Quarterly* 5, 3 (1965), 153-165.

... will employ a teacher who is not sanctioned or recommended by the Educational Institute.”³⁶ However, neither the EIS credential scheme nor the association as a whole gained much popularity in Scotland. This lack of traction owed in part to the nature of the EIS: it was formed primarily by elite parish schoolmasters and teachers in private middle-class schools.³⁷ Even more so than in England, the Minutes of 1846 brought about a more democratic teaching force in Scotland, one that did not feel as attached to the older tradition of teacher education.

Native agency

James Kay-Shuttleworth, the main architect of the Minutes of 1846, began his career in Edinburgh and Manchester. His approach to social reform was indebted to these cities’ intellectual networks with their emphasis on systematic approaches to the range of issues resulting from poverty. Following his training as a doctor in Edinburgh, he moved to Manchester and began working as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. He authored numerous pamphlets on sanitary reform, pauperism, and education. He was particularly interested in rehabilitating those on the edge of society: the denizens of Britain’s squalid slums and its pauper children. He hoped elementary education might offer a way forward and in the 1830s he began to experiment with private initiatives to train teachers to undertake difficult teaching assignments. In 1839 his work became

³⁶ “Proceedings of the Educational Institute for Scotland, 1848,” (Edinburgh: Educational Institute for Scotland, 1849).

³⁷ Douglas Myers, 'Scottish Schoolmasters in the Nineteenth Century,' in Walter M. Humes and Hamish M. Paterson eds., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1983), 75-92.

official when he was appointed Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education, the most powerful educational policymaking office at the time. However, Kay-Shuttleworth's interest in elementary education was not limited to the fringes of society in Britain itself. Like many British social reformers and educationalists, he saw the civilizing mission at home and abroad as intertwined.

One of the first items in the Minutes of 1846 was a lengthy report and policy recommendation by Kay-Shuttleworth about the training of elementary teachers in the West Indies. The annual Minutes of the CCE were actually a hodgepodge of documents. They contained official policy regulations, letters and memorandum clarifying the workings of policy, the reports of school inspectors on the state of their districts, and, woven together with all these weighty documents, letters and reports of a more speculative, musing character that bore little or no official weight. Kay-Shuttleworth's report on West Indian education fell into this latter category. It evinced extraordinary familiarity with the general state of the British West Indies. He had a keen awareness of everything from the various approaches taken by missionaries to spread Christianity and educate the non-white population to the efforts of planters to bring the emancipated population within the fold of a paternalistic capitalism that mirrored the pre-emancipation social and economic order. He described the ideal facilities of a school, which were to include a garden with sufficient pumpkins, beans, and other crops to provide students' lunches all year. It would also have a residence for the teachers - a married couple, if possible - which would be respectable enough, but not too extravagant. The training and lifestyle of West Indian teachers, he cautioned, "should afford no encouragement to the

presumption and pedantry which often accompany an education.” However, he also recognized the necessity that teachers be “raised above the level of the class” from which they came and permitted free scope of action. “No form of training is less capable of establishing sound moral sentiments than that which exacts an unreasoning obedience,” he reasoned. These teachers needed to be educated to think and act for themselves – within limits.

His vision for a form of West Indian teachers’ apprenticeship and further education also called for them to continue spending a great deal of time in the homes of their friends and family, provided, of course, that they were respectable. Maintaining this connection to their roots would ensure that a teacher “would understand, from experience, the wants, the cares, and the hopes of the labouring class whose children he would have to educate. Instead of being repelled by their coarseness and poverty, and thus unfitted for daily contact with them, he would have a sympathy with their condition, which the training of the school would direct to proper objects.” In diet and dress too teachers would remain true to their roots.³⁸

Kay-Shuttleworth’s report is so remarkable because of the close parallels between its anxieties about West Indian teachers and the anxieties about British teachers evinced in the rest of the Minutes that year. The pupil teacher scheme defined in the Minutes of 1846 – based on policy documents drafted at nearly the same time Kay-Shuttleworth was drafting his report on the West Indies – closely resembled the plan he proposed for the West Indies. What united them was a shared belief in the power of native agency.

³⁸ Minutes of 1846, 36.

Native agency was the idea of taking men and women, giving them an education that took them beyond the milieu into which they had been born – but not too far beyond – and then sending back to teach and Christianize the class or the race into which they had been born. This idea had been developed and been utilized in the previous half-century by missionary and more secular educators throughout the British World from the South Sea Islands in the Pacific to broad plains of central India to the urban slums of London and the Highland glens of Scotland. The actual phrase “native agent” was only used to refer to a non-white man or woman in the empire. However, thinking about the native agent who taught imperial subjects abroad and the early- and mid-Victorian teacher of the poor and working classes at home closely resembled one another.

The education of native agents typically involved both an intellectual education in the classroom and a more abstract form of cultural uplift. The classroom education consisted of a solid grounding in reading, writing, arithmetic, and Christianity as well as a basic introduction to geography, history, and literature. The cultural uplift involved living in close proximity to fairly well-to-do British missionaries or teachers for a period of time, often in a formal training institution of some kind. This period of residence allowed for a more extensive education and, more importantly, it provided an opportunity to shape a native agent’s character. In the face of the massive scale of the civilizing mission confronting missionaries and social reformers, the idea of native agency provided a glimmer of hope about the prospect of teaching - and thus civilizing - the masses. However, the twin of that hope was an almost overwhelming anxiety that native agents would be corrupted by luxury and power. This anxiety meant that native agents were

often set to farm, required to dress simply, and encouraged to keep from becoming overly friendly with the missionaries and teachers who were uplifting them.³⁹ Moderation - uplift paired with humility, familiarity paired with distance - was the defining feature of native agency, a key technology of civilization and cultural power in the arsenal of the British state and British missionaries.

Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" of 1835 marked an important moment in the development of native agency as an idea. In it, Macaulay called for the creation of "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern."⁴⁰ The idea of using social and cultural intermediaries caught on quickly. By the 1840s the phrase "native agency" was widely being used to describe this practice in the empire, though its precise genealogy is not entirely clear. In an 1843 pamphlet on how Africa could be "Restored by Native Agency," as the title put it, the Rev. J.M. Trew could cut short his description of the virtues of native agency because he was confident that his audience was "fully acquainted with them."⁴¹ The Baptist Missionary Society praised native agency in its magazine in 1852 as "the will of God" - and as a cheap, efficient way to reach the massive population of the empire.⁴² Though missionaries and

³⁹ Patricia Rooke, "A Scramble for Souls: The Impact of the Negro Education Grant on Evangelical Missionaries in the British West Indies," *History of Education Quarterly* 21, 4 (1981), 429-447; Alison Twells, *The Civilizing Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴⁰ Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education," in H. Sharp ed., *Selections from Educational Records* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1920), 116.

⁴¹ J.M. Trew, "Africa Wasted by Britain and Restored by Native Agency, in a Letter to the Right Honourable and Right Reverend Bishop of London," (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1843), 44-45.

⁴² "Advantages of Native Agency," *The Baptist Magazine for 1852*, 4, 15 (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1852), 251.

other reformers mobilized the idea of native agency most of all in the early Victorian years, Bishop Tucker of the Church Missionary Society could still declare in 1900 that his hoped for the future of Africa “lies in the native agency” of nearly five thousand teachers at work in Uganda alone.⁴³

Reformers did not use the phrase “native agency” to refer to teachers working in Britain itself. However, teachers in Britain and native teachers abroad occupied an overlapping space in the social imaginary. Inspectors, policymakers, and politicians called on teachers working in Britain to approach their work in a missionary-like fashion, taking a broad view of their responsibilities but remaining humble. “A few years ago,” HMI the Rev. John Allen lamented in his 1846-7 report,

it was no uncommon thing to hear persons in the educated ranks of society say, ‘Our schoolmaster is a very good one, but, unhappily, he is a little given to drinking,’ or ‘We cannot in a small place like this expect him to attend very regularly to his boys.’ ... And as the school was regarded only as a place where children could learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, the qualifications of the master were measured as if he were simply an instrument for developing faculties in these exercises, and not as a moral agent.⁴⁴

Allen believed that such lackadaisical attitudes towards teachers were, happily, being replaced by a set of the expectations that teachers would be moral exemplars. Allen and other inspectors also hoped teachers would act as purveyors of religion, supplementing the work of the local minister. “The schoolmaster of the poor ought (in my judgment) to be trusted with the most important teaching of the poor - a fellow-labourer with the minister of religion. If the schoolmaster be not so trusted, many favourable opportunities for dropping here and there seed which may prove fruitful in infinite good, will, I think,

⁴³ “Notes from the Wider Field,” *The Missionary Herald*, 46 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1900), 287.

⁴⁴ Minutes of 1846, 76.

be lost.”⁴⁵ Teachers, Allen’s report implies, had a connection to the working population which the minister did not, giving them “many favourable opportunities” to instill religious and moral values which would otherwise be lost. However, in Allen’s conception of this missionary project teachers were decidedly junior partners to ministers, able to reach their full potential in a school of “humble pretensions.”

Tellingly, despite the importance they placed on the role of teachers in spreading morality and religion, inspectors had little sympathy for teachers who aspired to actually become ministers. On one year’s inspection tour alone HMI the Rev. Frederick Watkins encountered seven teachers in his district who were leaving their position as schoolmasters “for the purpose of admission into the holy orders of our Church.” Most had received a training college education and had acquired just enough experience to become capable pedagogues. “I cannot but lament that their services will be lost to the Church in that field of labor for which they were specially exercised, and in which it is not unreasonable to suppose they might have done her better service than in any other though higher office.”⁴⁶ The implication was that these teachers cared more about making good for themselves than making good for others. Inspectors and clergyman writing about teachers in Scotland believed the problem of teachers aspiring to ministerial positions was yet more pronounced in the parish school system there owing to the time most schoolmasters spent at university. They even had a common saying to describe socially grasping schoolmasters: that they “could not see the school for the steeple.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Minutes of 1846, 212.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland*, 18.

Teachers found the conception of their work that accompanied their framing as native agents frustrating, at first. They were given – and expected to give – a “training” rather than a more liberal education. They also complained that clergymen, inspectors, and society at large generally denied them the status of professionals, including the pay and autonomy that went along with it. It was common in educational periodicals to see teachers lament their “ill-paid, despised, and subservient condition” in society, as one teacher put it in an 1853 article.⁴⁸ Over time, however, teachers appropriated the idea of native agency. They used it to fashion a professional identity that emphasized their ability to understand their pupils and pupils’ families – their way of speaking, the tricks they might try to play, the best way to excite their interest, and the reasons why parents might resist sending their pupils to school.

Native agency was closely connected to anxieties about gender and social mobility. The native agent - the person who remained humble despite moving up a bit in the world - was almost always a masculinized trope. Part of this owed to the imperial origins of the idea: in the empire it was very difficult to convince women to leave their homes, live in an institution, and then go on to do work of a somewhat public character. But gendered assumptions about social mobility and professionalism played a role too. The socially grasping lower-middle-class man became a stock figure in Victorian culture at the same moment that the figure of Macaulay’s “interpreter” gave way to the trope of the “mimic man” whose obsequious imitation of British culture unmanned him and

⁴⁸ “The Social Condition of the Schoolmaster,” *The Educational Expositor* 1, 4 (June, 1853), 159.

stopped him from ever becoming fully British.⁴⁹ In Britain itself, the public agitation of male teachers stoked the fuel of social conservatives' call for humility. Virtually every article in educational periodicals of the day which complained about the "social position" of teachers were written by and about male teachers. Male teachers were particularly loud in their public agitation for professional status because of the important connection between professionalism, masculinity, and middle-class status.⁵⁰

By contrast, amateurism was – in theory, at least – often represented as a defining feature of middle-class femininity.⁵¹ Angela Burdett-Coutts, the Victorian period's wealthiest heiress and a patron of teacher training colleges, publicly encouraged that "large and respectable portion of the middle class" whose finances were nonetheless precarious to turn their daughters to teaching. Louisa Hubbard, another well-to-do patron of education, attempted to open a training college entirely for solidly middle-class young women. She suggested that such young women would make ideal teachers in rural schools. Hubbard claimed that not only would the daughters of the middle class exert a civilizing influence by their mere presence in rural neighborhoods, they would also find it

⁴⁹ A. James Hammerton, "Pooterism or Paternership? Marriage and Masculine Identity in the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1920," *The Journal of British Studies*, 38, 3 (1999), 291-321; David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958); Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ See T. Tate and J. Tilleard eds., *The Educational Expositor*, 1, 1-4 (1853), 12-22, 141-142, 157-159.

⁵¹ For this idea and challenges to it, see Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), chps. 2, 6, 7; Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Historians, Antiquarians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

fulfilling and enjoyable. Such women could live “suitably to her tastes and condition” while enjoying “recreation and a few pleasant visits to the parents of her scholars, or the her richer neighbours in the cool summer afternoons.”⁵² However, this idea never translated well into practice - though there was never a shortage of praise for it. Few women from well-to-do families desired to become elementary teachers. Those who did often left teaching after a short time because of their frustration with the lack of status accorded them and the struggle they faced to manage the classroom and teach elementary subjects. Hubbard and her supporters reported widespread disdain for “lady” teachers among other teachers and village elites. This stemmed in part from the idealized expectations they had about teaching and what their social position would be as a village teacher, but also from a lack of pedagogical training which could bring down the school’s share of the government grant through poor results on the annual examination.⁵³

The male teacher as native agent and the female teacher as a well-to-do amateur were mirror images of each other. In some ways, the well-to-do woman turned teacher embodied an ideal to which many educationalists thought male teachers should aspire: they were out to do good rather than make good, they embraced devoted amateurism rather than self-serving professionalism. On the other hand, the masculinized figure of the native agent possessed a professional training, an awareness of their real social position (if not a contentedness about it), and a sympathetic, intimate connection to working-class communities that the well-to-do woman teacher lacked. Of these two

⁵² Quoted in Francis Widdowson, *Going Up Into the Next Class: Women and Elementary Teacher Training 1840-1914* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), 30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17-19, 30-39.

figures, that of the native agent was more widespread owing to the greater anxiety provoked by men's upward social mobility. Over time, both male *and* female teachers came to selectively appropriate the idea of native agency. They presented themselves as professional pedagogues with a diverse range of intellectual interests which they indulged as amateurs; they claimed that humbly seeking to do good for their communities was compatible with seeking to make good for themselves.

The pupil teacher system

The pupil teacher system created by the Minutes of 1846 was a mash-up of old and new. On the one hand, it drew on old pedagogical roles and social institutions. On the other, the system was massive and bureaucratic - it exemplified the logic of a modern state. Pupil teachers were quite literally apprentices - that is, they signed articles of indenture, much like medieval apprentices. Often they had a close, paternalistic relationship with their head teacher - one that could be both nurturing and overbearing. Their work and the entire system also owed much the older monitorial system popular in the very early nineteenth century, when older pupils were used to teach younger ones. However, pupil teachers were also part of a modern bureaucracy: they answered to many levels of local and central authorities and had to meet the impersonal standards of examinations.

Pupil teaching was also indebted to the idea of native agency. Pupil teachers tended to come from the same social milieu of the students whom they taught, albeit often the upper reaches of that milieu. One inspector's survey of 192 pupil teachers in

the southeast of England in 1848 found that most were the children of “small tradesmen, yeomen, or the upper servants in gentleman’s families.”⁵⁴ Like the native agents who assisted in preaching and teaching in the empire, pupil teachers who could move up in the world while retaining a sympathetic understanding of and close connection to their old social network were ideal; they could make good in both senses of the phrase. The creation of the pupil teaching system institutionalized native agency, making the opportunity to move up possible across the nation and clearly spelling out its requirements.

Pupil teaching provided a ladder by which British boys and girls of all social ranks could gain access to training colleges.⁵⁵ The position of pupil teacher bridged the gap between the age of quitting school at 13 and the age of entry to a training college at 18. In the early 1840s, many students admitted to training college came directly from working-class jobs. The earliest students at St. Mark’s and St. John’s training colleges had been field laborers, domestic servants, and shoemakers before they arrived at college. That changed in the 1850s, when almost all training college students began to come directly from pupil teaching.⁵⁶ Pupil teachers who scored well on the national Queen’s Scholarship Exam could win a scholarship to cover the vast majority of their expenses at college. This made a training college education attainable for a large segment of the working classes. The new route to training college also standardized the age of entry to

⁵⁴ Quoted in Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 302; on the social origins of pupil teachers, see also Widdowson, *Going up into the Next Class*, 21-28.

⁵⁵ For a fuller study of pupil teachers, though one primarily emphasizing the post-1870 period, see Wendy Robinson, *Pupil teachers and their professional training in pupil-teacher centres in England and Wales, 1870-1914* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2003).

⁵⁶ Marjon University Archive: “Register,” (c. 1844-1860), 1-15.

training colleges at around seventeen to eighteen and gave students the shared experience of pupil teaching. This meant that few teachers-in-training and teachers themselves had any work experience outside an elementary school and no longer relied on well-to-do men and women to paternalistically sponsor their education. Instead, it was teachers themselves who paternalistically oversaw the education of pupil teachers. Within two decades, even before the 1870/2 Education Acts, former pupil-teachers who had attended a training college were the norm for new hires at public elementary schools in all but the most remote part of Britain – and even there and in the empire trained teachers were becoming increasingly common.

To become a pupil teacher was to make an individual and familial sacrifice. In practice, most pupil teachers came from the upper-working class. Prospective pupil teachers had to have attended and excelled in an elementary school until age 13, and then be prepared to do it again for a further five years. Foregoing a child's earnings for this time entailed a substantial economic opportunity cost for working families. Pupil teachers not only had to be at the top of their class intellectually, but also of upstanding moral and even physical character in the eyes of school managers and state inspectors. This meant being well fed, washed, and clothed. "I am sure your Lordships cannot be too strict in guarding against the admission to apprenticeship of sickly children, boys as well as girls," inspector of schools Matthew Arnold cautioned in 1852.⁵⁷

Many school managers followed this advice. One smart young man in Dorset was disqualified from apprenticing as a pupil teacher because he was "very small, sickly-

⁵⁷ Matthew Arnold, *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882* (London, 1910), 15.

looking, and deficient in bodily strength.”⁵⁸ The Newcastle Commission later stereotyped untrained teachers at private schools as physically weakened, disabled, or disfigured – everything that public school teachers should not be. “Mr. Winder says that hardly any one is brought up to the business [of private teaching] unless he suffers from some bodily infirmity. He called, without design, on five masters successively, all of whom were more or less deformed; one, who taught in a cellar, being paralytic and horribly distorted.”⁵⁹ In screening prospective pupil teachers for physical defects, managers and inspectors sought to ensure that that not only were candidates up to the physical demands of teaching, but had the bodily appearance of being up to them.

Bureaucrats and school officials were intensely concerned with pupil teachers’ life outside school and scrutinized it carefully, before and during the apprenticeship. If the moral character of a pupil teacher’s family did not satisfy the school managers and local clergyman the Minutes of 1846 required that the apprentice “board in some approved household,” if they were to be allowed to undertake the apprenticeship at all. Once satisfied with a prospective pupil teachers’ intellectual attainments, character, and familial respectability, the school managers or School Board indentured them as apprentices to a teacher for five years.⁶⁰ Every year they had to pass an examination by an inspector and in return they received a modest salary and their teacher received a small supplement to their salary. From 1846 to 1862 pupil teachers’ salary ranged from £10 in

⁵⁸ Quoted in Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 59.

⁵⁹ Newcastle Commission, 94.

⁶⁰ This changed in 1862, when pupil teachers became apprentices to school managers and then later school boards. However, the head teacher remained responsible for the pupil teachers at their school.

the first year to £20 in the final year while head teachers received £5 a year for their first pupil teacher and a smaller supplement for each additional one. This pay level was roughly equal to what many teenage boys and girls could hope to earn in the labor market, and it was guaranteed even in times of economic downturn, provided that they passed the annual exam.

Pupil teaching had roots in the monitorial system of the early nineteenth century. Like monitors, pupil teachers took some of the burden off the teacher by working with younger children on basic subjects. However, policymakers and educationalists represented pupil teachers as much more qualified - as more modern. The Newcastle Commission summed up this sentiment: “monitors, from their extreme youth, were of little use. They were fit only for the discharge of routine duties, and even these they discharged without interest, without weight, and without authority. They were frequently untrustworthy, and almost always ignorant.”⁶¹ By contrast, the state ensured that pupil teachers were at least age 13, met basic academic standards, and were respectable.

Teachers were expected to help their apprentices grow intellectually and accordingly received £5 a year for their first pupil teacher and a smaller supplement for each additional one - in addition to the labor pupil teachers provided in the classroom. Like industrialists, shop owners, and lawyers, teachers benefited from having apprentices. With a bit of experience, pupil teachers could handle much of the routine teaching in the younger standards. Freed from the humdrum duty of teaching basic literacy and arithmetic, teachers worked with older students on more advanced and interesting

⁶¹ Newcastle Commission, 98.

subjects – something teachers also got to do with pupil teachers themselves, for which teachers received payment from 1846 to 1862 and again from the early 1870s onward in most places.

Pupil teachers were, to run the risk of stating the obvious, both pupils and teachers. During regular school hours they helped the younger scholars with their lessons and maintained discipline. Teachers had high expectations from the very beginning. “The report regarding Alison Beck is not favourable. She is inclined to take [disciplinary] matters very easy,” the teacher at Crookston St. Public School in Glasgow recorded less than a year after Beck entered her apprenticeship. Despite helping to keep discipline and instruct pupils throughout the school day, pupil teachers also had to keep up with their own substantial load of school work. A week later Beck found herself chastised for not preparing enough at home: “Some complaints made regarding the want of preparation on the part of Miss Beck. Head Master has spoken to her as to the need of improvement.”⁶² It was difficult to find time in which to prepare homework and teaching though: pupil teachers received private instruction from the head teacher outside of schools hours, often coming to school an hour early a couple days a week and staying an hour and a half late a couple days a week. Tacked on top of their already large workload, this exhausted both teacher and pupil teacher. Six young women who had not been pupil teachers gained the top admission to the Church of Scotland Normal School in Edinburgh owing to their high scores on the entrance exam, which did not test teaching ability. This was “very unfair to pupil teachers,” complained one young woman to *The Pupil Teacher*

⁶² Glasgow City Archives: D-ED7/54/1/1, “Crookston St Public School Logbook,” 20.

since pupil teachers had the added burden of teaching, which took up a tremendous amount of time and energy. Though privately educated, middle-class boys or girls never competed in large numbers for admission to training colleges, they remained a perceived threat that compelled pupil teachers to work even harder. The pages of *The Pupil Teacher* were replete with paeans to hard work and warnings that a life of teaching “is *hard* work, and you must, if you look for pleasure, find it in work.”⁶³ The entirety of another article on “Thought and Labour” explained “It is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy.”⁶⁴ An example of notes for giving a lesson on “idleness” had pupil teachers tell their students that “rest is oftener found in change of occupation than in cessation from employment; - Lord Brougham, a great worker, said, 'When a horse is tired of going up hill, rest him by letting him go down hill.'”⁶⁵ Perhaps eager to prove that they were the force behind their own upward social mobility, pupil teachers and full teachers positioned the successful pupil teacher squarely within the Victorian cult of work.

Rather than using pupil teachers to lighten their workload, most teachers spent a good deal of time helping their young charges to develop lessons and then giving them feedback. This was particularly true in Scotland where the ideal of the dominie, the learned male teacher, led many male teachers to work closely with male pupil teachers.⁶⁶

⁶³ “Advice to young teachers, concluded,” *The Pupil Teacher* 1, 12 (London, 1876), 358.

⁶⁴ “Thought and Labour,” *The Pupil Teacher*, 1, 2 (February 1876), 38.

⁶⁵ “Writes Notes of Lessons on Idleness,” *The Pupil Teacher*, 1, 3 (March, 1876), 70.

⁶⁶ Helen Corr, “Dominies and Domination: Schoolteachers, Masculinity and Women in 19th Century Scotland,” *History Workshop Journal*, 40 (1995), 150-164; Robert Anderson, “In Search of the ‘Lad of Parts’: The Mythical History of Scottish Education,” *History Workshop Journal*, 19 (1985), 82-104.

In the village of Newtonmore in Inverness-shire, John MacDonald worked one-on-one with pupil teacher Alexander Rose in a variety of subjects as well as the preparation of lessons. He recorded the feedback he gave Rose after a lesson on the Bible: “Introduction a little too long. ... Told too much, no training [of the mind]. Notes full and pretty good. Manner of teaching [a] little less stiff.”⁶⁷ His next object lesson on a sheep farm took these suggestions into account and was more successful. Just one week after a report from the school inspector that Rose passed his annual examination, MacDonald subjected Rose to another, even more rigorous examination. The results were decidedly not satisfactory to MacDonald’s mind: “Euclid poor. Algebra good. Arithmetic moderate. Latin fair. Geography very fair. Division and writing fair. Reading poor.” He reexamined Rose several times over the next few weeks while also expecting Rose to prepare and give new lessons to the pupils.⁶⁸ Nearly a decade later, another pupil teacher under MacDonald, Duncan Cattnach, had to re-teach several object lessons in a row because they were merely “fair.”⁶⁹ Teachers expected a great deal of their apprentices, but in return many teachers worked hard to coach them.

The creation of the pupil teaching system occurred at a moment when apprenticeship was in dramatic flux. From its medieval origins through to the early nineteenth century, apprenticeship had involved cheap or free labor in exchange for the knowledge and right to become a skilled manual worker in a protected trade. In the classic apprentice-master relationship, the apprentice became partially integrated into the

⁶⁷ Highland Archive and Registration Centre: CI/5/3/209A, “Newtonmore Public (Formerly Free Church) School Logbook,” (12 July 1878).

⁶⁸ Ibid., (1 November to 22 November 1878).

⁶⁹ Ibid., (June and July 1887).

master's family with all the duties, but also many of the rights and much of the emotional sustenance that that entailed. Apprenticeship for semi-skilled and skilled workers persisted throughout the nineteenth century, but increasingly transformed into a legally-protected means of exacting free or cheap labor with little paternal bond and few protections for the line of work.⁷⁰ As David Lockwood and Gregory Anderson have shown of apprenticed clerical workers of the lower-middle class, at the mid-century clerks worked hard for their masters and showed them great loyalty in return for which they were given job security and opportunities for promotion. However, new work patterns and the rise of management science contributed to the fairly rapid deterioration of this paternalist apprenticeship as the century progressed. Insofar as it survived into the new employer-employee relationship, paternalist apprenticeship was transformed into a tool which many employers used to supervise and discipline their employees.⁷¹ This was most apparent of all in the apprenticeship of shop assistants. The façade of assistants' gentility projected by their dress and manners masked the low wages and all-encompassing control made possible by the living-in system. In contrast to working- and lower-middle-class apprenticeships, "apprenticeship" as a reality and an idea flourished among well-to-do young adults. Many young men in medicine, law, and business continued to serve apprenticeships at the beginning of their careers while both men and

⁷⁰ Carolyn Tuttle, *Hard At Work in the Factories and Mines: The Economics of Child Labor During the British Industrial Revolution* (Boulder, 1999); Marc Steinberg, "Unfree Labor, Apprenticeship and the Rise of the Victorian Hull Fishing Industry: An Example of the Importance of Law and the Local State in British Economic Change," *International Review of Social History*, 51 (2006), 243-276.

⁷¹ Gregory Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1976); Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*.

women such as Sidney Webb, who titled her account of her work as a social investigator and reformer *My Apprenticeship*, came to believe that a period of self-sacrifice and hard work early in adulthood was a means of paying their social and moral dues as well as gaining a better knowledge of the world.⁷² Paternalism remained important in elite apprenticeships, though ironically it was the “apprentices” like Webb who were the paternal figures.

John Faunthorpe, who eventually became the principal of Whitelands training college, fondly recalled his days as an apprenticed pupil teacher in the 1850s. Born and raised in a small village in Lincolnshire, he attended first a dame’s school and then the local parish school affiliated with the National Society. He shone there and, his mother later told him, from his earlier days he liked to play at being teacher. His teacher was most impressed by him, but for an unstated reason – possibly because he was unqualified to take a pupil teacher, possibly because he already had the maximum number allowed – he could not take Faunthorpe as his apprentice. After discussing the matter with Faunthorpe and his parents, the teacher arranged for him to apprentice under a friend and fellow teacher in Raumsgate. He traveled there by way of London, where he lodged with his former teacher’s brother in Camden Town for a night. After some harrowing experiences, including waiting alone in King’s Cross for his name to be called and then missing the steamer to Raumsgate, Faunthorpe eventually reached his destination. “I was apprenticed to Mr John Mead to learn the art and craft of a schoolmaster,” he recalled,

⁷² For more on the idea of a period of apprenticeship for well-to-do men and women, see Deborah Epstein Nord, *The Apprenticeship of Beatrice Webb* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985) and Seth Koven, *Slumming, Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

“and I served him and the school well. I taught twice a day every day Sundays included, Holidays excepted. I had one hour's private teaching every day; and a paper examination on the week's work every Saturday, after which I went for a long walk.” He worked under Mead and lived in his home for five years, for which he turned over his stipend and his father paid a small supplement to Mead. A half-century later, he still remembered his old master well, a kindly man who had taught him much and treated him fairly even if he had worked long and hard.

The toil of pupil teaching led some pupil teachers to discontinue their apprenticeship or not to proceed to college. The Newcastle Commission found that in the 1850s 12.68% of pupil teachers did not complete their apprenticeship, “either by death, failure of health, failure in attainments, misconduct, or other causes, including the adoption of other pursuits in life.” A further 11.3% opted not to seek admission to a training college. Some of these former pupil teachers used the skills and aura of respectability gained from pupil teaching to become clerks, telegraph operators, paymasters, nurses, or other such lower-middle-class workers.⁷³ A substantial minority of the pupil teachers who sought, but did not win admission to college also pursued such occupations. Despite some leakage at each stage, more than half of the boys and girls who apprenticed as pupil teachers at age thirteen eventually entered training colleges as scholarship students. Many of the rest seem to have gone on to white collar work. Pupil teaching was, then, a remarkably effective way for working-class families to secure the upward mobility of a child and for lower-middle-class families to secure against the

⁷³ Newcastle Commission, 106-7.

downward mobility of a child, particularly a girl, while also gaining for her a free education and a modest salary. The fact that this was a state-subsidized institution made it relatively radical. The Newcastle Commission recorded the concern of at least one witness that pupil teachers were “very apt to become conceited and overbearing” thanks to their education and the authority they had over younger children.⁷⁴

For most pupil teachers, five years of apprenticeship culminated with the Queen’s Scholarship Examination. One teacher wrote up his experience taking the exam in an essay for the *Pupil Teacher*. He found himself surrounded by his competitors on a train to the college where he would be taking the exam and immediately they began bonding, but also sizing each other up. When they disembarked they were met by a bus conductor whose “stentorian voice” led the group to admire and covet it, a booming voice being a necessary quality for teachers in large schools.⁷⁵ When they finally arrived at the college, they saw “a neat classical looking building, with a quiet sort of grandeur about it that impressed one with feelings of reverence at first sight.” The exam was a multi-day affair and they were given accommodation in the dormitories. “Each dormitory was about 12 feet by 10 feet, and contained a bed, chest of drawers, chair, &c.; and it was separated from the corridor and the adjacent dormitory by a partition of wood 8 feet high.” These partitions allowed them “to carry on a conversation with each other after retiring to rest” and in the morning while washing up and getting dressed. A few current college students had stayed behind to help superintend the exam and to provide some evening entertainment for the examinees. The officially sanctioned evening pastimes consisted of

⁷⁴ Newcastle Commission, 103.

⁷⁵ “My Scholarship Examination,” in *The Pupil Teacher*, 2, 4 (April 1877), 115.

musical concerts and readings of Dickens, which led the author to ask one of the current students in hopeful awe “if such cultured evenings were common.” In response the student in charge of putting it on “gave me a knowing wink, and replied, ‘We make our own amusements.’”⁷⁶ In the end the author recounted that he had done quite well on the exam, gone to college, and become a teacher. He also noted the poor showing made by a fellow examinee who had tried to game the system by looking at previous exams to try to predict and then memorize what would be on the exam that year. The implication was that a teacher’s training was in the tradition of a liberal education, demanding general knowledge and culture more than a narrow body of vocational knowledge that could be easily memorized. His narrative of the exam experience also hinted at the social life which existed beneath the surface at training colleges, the conversations among students in the dormitories and the “amusements” which they made for themselves.

Pupil teaching provided schools with cheap labor and socialized aspiring teachers into the profession. As future teachers, pupil teachers were subject to scrutiny from teachers, state inspectors, school managers, and friends of elementary education. However, pupil teachers’ closest bonds were with each other and the teacher under whom they served. They arrived at college at the end of an experience that had been largely similar, which facilitated their social cohesion there. They had also already suffered through some of teaching’s greatest trials: teaching the “3 Rs” to young children day after day and having to answer to many authorities ranging from their teacher to school inspectors. Though college did not offer an escape from discipline or concentration on

⁷⁶ Ibid., 116-7.

basic pedagogy, pupil teachers' would well have known that their time there offered the longest and greatest chance for peer socialization and intellectual development that they were likely to come by in the whole of their careers.

* * *

ii. Mid- and Late-Victorian Developments

By the late 1850s it had become widely apparent that the state's relationship to elementary education had changed. It now spent more than half a million pounds each year on education - a sum that had grown wildly since 1846 - and dedicated substantial bureaucratic resources to crafting education policies, inspecting schools, and administering teachers' certification exam. Even if it was true in theory, the idea that Britain's elementary schools were part of a private system that simply received a bit of help from the state now seemed self-deluding. In 1858 Parliament launched a major investigation into elementary education in England and Wales, the first of several such investigations in the decades that would follow. A major policy shift followed this investigation as the CCE scaled back funding, increased state supervision of teachers' work, and emphasized a thorough grounding in the 3 R's. This trend towards more active state involvement in elementary education culminated with the Education Acts of 1870 and 1872. These acts created a large and robust system of state schools run by locally elected school boards that came to coexist with private, religious schools - and ultimately to overshadow them with their large, distinctive buildings and comparatively well-paid teachers.

Growing state involvement in elementary education led to as much confusion as clarity, as many chaotic and contradictory policies as coherent ones. The state slashed funding for elementary education from £813,441 in 1861 to £636,806 in 1865 even as it became more involved and as the average attendance increased by nearly twenty percent.⁷⁷ It created an administrative system in which teachers effectively answered to - and depended on money from - local school managers, local school boards, district inspectors, central state bureaucrats, and even, to some extent, their pupils' parents. Policymakers and private educationalists called on teachers to "cultivate" children's minds, to help them to grow through play and nurture - and to prepare them for their rigid annual exams. It is precisely these countervailing imperatives that suggest how important teachers were to mid-Victorian debates about the nature of the state, childhood, and social relations.

The Newcastle Commission and Revised Code

Between 1846 and 1858 the Parliamentary grant for elementary education had increased more than six-fold.⁷⁸ However, there was a growing concern that this money - state money - was being used to raise pupils and teachers alike above their station in life.⁷⁹ To investigate the costs and current condition of elementary education, Parliament authorized a major inquiry "into the present state of popular education in England." It

⁷⁷ Cross Commission, 18.

⁷⁸ Cross Commission, 11.

⁷⁹ Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 122-123; H. C. G. Matthew, "Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Politics of Mid-Victorian Budgets," *Historical Journal* 22, 3 (1979), 615-43.

charged the commissioners “to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary education to all Classes of the People.”⁸⁰

The resulting report by the Newcastle Commission in 1861 was a mass of statistics and testimony often at odds with itself. Still, several clear themes emerged. First, the training and certification of teachers made them better pedagogues and disciplinarians. Second, despite providing progressively more funding and making more policy decisions with each passing year, the state lacked a clear sense of the greater purpose of elementary education. Was elementary education a form of charity and spreading Christianity, or a state-making project that created independently thinking citizens? Was state-funded schooling only for poor children whose families could not otherwise afford it, or was it open to all working- and lower-middle-class children? Should it teach anything more advanced than the 3 R’s and the basics of Christianity? Lastly, and related to the perception that education was directionless, it seemed to many commissioners and witnesses that state-funded elementary education was in danger of over-educating working men and women, giving them airs that were ridiculous, wasteful, and even dangerous. Teachers – themselves often the sons and daughters of the working classes – exemplified the overreach of elementary education. The Newcastle Commission noted the widespread concern that state-education tended to make teachers “conceited and showy,” though the majority of the commissioners – most of them educationalists sympathetic to teachers – did not agree with this.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Newcastle Commission, 1.

⁸¹ Newcastle Commission, 130.

The state responded to the Newcastle Commission's report with the introduction of the Revised Code in 1862. It was implemented immediately in England and Wales and rolled out incrementally in Scotland in the years that followed. It marked a major – but largely temporary – rupture in education policy. Infamously, the Revised Code instituted a system of “payment-by-results” in elementary schools. The results of an annual examination now determined schools' grants, and often teachers' salaries. Pupils' exam results in the 3 R's mattered more than anything else in this system. Funding for “higher subjects” such as French, Latin, and advanced mathematics was reduced. If the ideal level of education under the previous system had been unclear, it seemed quite apparent now: imparting basic, useful knowledge was to be rewarded. Robert Lowe, an independent liberal who remained skeptical over state overreach in social policies, described the code's purpose in utilitarian terms in a speech to Parliament: “Those for whom this system is designed are the children of persons who are not able to pay for the teaching. We do not profess to give these children an education that will raise them above their station and business in life - that is not our object - but to give them an education that may fit them for that business.”⁸²

Under the Revised Code the annual grant declined from £813,441 in 1861 to £636,806 in 1865 even as the number of pupils and teachers in Britain increased steadily.⁸³ Instead of being paid directly to teachers and pupil teachers, the grant a school earned now went to managers. Managers now had more power to “negotiate” with teachers and pupil teachers. Salaries for pupil teachers dropped precipitously throughout

⁸² Quoted in the Cross Commission Report, 17.

⁸³ Cross Commission, 18.

Britain. It became particularly difficult to recruit promising candidates in London and other urban areas where better-paying work was often readily available for teenagers.

Girl pupil teachers suffered most of all under the new formula as their salaries - which had been equal to boy pupil teachers under the Minutes of 1846 - were generally reduced even more than boys. The theory behind this reduction was that girls had fewer future career opportunities than boys outside teaching and consequently were taking up pupil teaching and teaching in alarmingly high numbers; it was also part of the larger push of the Revised Code towards saving money. Able to command higher wages in the labor market than girls and more likely than female pupil teachers to come from working-class families that needed all the money they could get, the number of boys apprenticing as pupil teachers remained stagnant as the number of girls surged. The feminization of pupil teaching contributed to the feminization of training colleges and eventually the teaching profession itself, though it was far from the sole cause.⁸⁴

Writing even as the Revised Code was being drafted, Matthew Arnold had both high praise for pupil teachers and serious concerns about them. He described pupil teachers as “the sinews of English primary instruction; whose institution is the grand merit of our English State-system and its chief title to public respect.”⁸⁵ Pupil teachers and full-fledged teachers working in tandem set Britain’s elementary school system apart from that of other European nations by allowing for individualized attention and pupil

⁸⁴ Jane McDermid, *Victoria’s Daughters: The Schooling of Girls in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1900* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 116-120.

⁸⁵ Matthew Arnold, *The Popular Education of France With Notices of that of Holland and Switzerland* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 108-9.

teachers' sympathetic, intimate understanding of young pupils' struggles. However, Arnold was troubled by pupil teachers' lack of "mental culture":

I have been much struck in examining [pupil teachers] towards the close of their apprenticeship ... with the utter disproportion between the great amount of positive information and the low degree of mental culture and intelligence which they exhibit. Young men, whose knowledge of grammar, of the minutest details of geographical and historical facts, and above all of mathematics, is surprising, often cannot paraphrase a plain passage of prose or poetry without totally misapprehending it, or write half a page of composition on any subject without falling into gross blunders of taste and expression. I cannot but think that, with a body of young men so highly instructed, too little attention has hitherto been paid to this side of education.⁸⁶

This culture which pupil teachers lacked was "taste and expression," the ability to recognize and grasp the essence of literature. Without this they lacked the means of recognizing and profiting from "culture" in Arnold's better-known definition of it: "the best which has been thought and said." The problem of "low mental culture" became particularly acute in the face of the forthcoming Revised Code which, among other things, restricted free time between pupil teachers and what had been their main source of culture: teachers. This threat led Arnold to call for well-heeled patrons to befriend teachers, providing encouragement for these hard, valuable workers – and perhaps some measure of culture: "In naming [pupil teachers]," he went on after praising the importance of the work they did, "I pause to implore all friends of education to use their best efforts to preserve this institution to us unimpaired."⁸⁷ This defense of pupil teaching was at once radical in its call for more culture and deeply conservative in the means it identified for giving pupil teachers that culture: benevolent patronage of the well-to-do. This mild contradiction was characteristic of the larger institution of pupil teaching itself.

⁸⁶ Arnold, *Reports*, 16-17.

⁸⁷ Arnold, *The Popular Education of France*, 108-9.

The policies and attitudes of the Revised Code were mostly reversed in a gradual and piecemeal fashion in the years that followed.⁸⁸ Two significant, but little remarked upon changes came in 1866 when official policy acknowledged that state-funded education was to serve not just the working class but also the lower middle class, and in 1867, when examinations were once more broadened to include “higher subjects.”⁸⁹ In one form or another, however, payment-by-results survived into the 1890s before it was finally completely abolished.

For more than a half-century after it came into effect, the Revised Code of 1862 inspired heated debates about everything from statecraft to the nature of childhood. A decade after it went into effect, the National Union of Teachers declared that “the Revised Code is what any clever man might have sketched, but what no true educationalist would have suggested.”⁹⁰ Teachers complained in the pages of the *Schoolmaster*, the union’s weekly magazine, that, “cramped by red tape [and] official routine,” they were unable to treat their pupils as individual children with their own inclinations, strengths, and weaknesses.⁹¹ Instead, they regressed to something approaching the rote teaching of monitorialism. The president of Darlington training college spoke out against the Code on behalf of the hundreds of students who had trained at his institution: “I will venture to say that Mr. Lowe is probably the only English

⁸⁸ On the Revised Code and its reversal, see H .C. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales, 1800-1975* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), 23-28; Cruickshank, *The Training of Teachers in Scotland*, chp. 3; Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 98-143, 314-318.

⁸⁹ Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 331.

⁹⁰ Modern Record Centre: MSS.179/1/9/15, “National Union of Elementary Teachers. Fourth Annual Report, 1873-4,” (London: Yates and Alexander, 1874), 13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

statesman who has ever dared or who will ever dare to ask Parliament deliberately to break its plighted faith, even in the interests of ‘economy, simplicity, and efficiency.’”⁹²

One teacher sketched the story of a pupil teacher - presumably himself - who had apprenticed on the eve of the Revised Code only to find that when the Code implemented and he became a teacher:

The Committee of Council had thrown him entirely into the hands of his managers, with no power of redress for wrong ... no prospect of increase of salary but by seeking a better place, and moving, perhaps, a long way at a great expense. [He was] abused by the parents of his scholars, found fault with by managers who could neither sympathise with him nor understand the irksomeness of his work.⁹³

For teachers, the Revised Code represented betrayal of the teaching profession and of modern ideas about childhood by a perfidious, uncaring state.

Retired school inspector Edmond Holmes used even less temperate language when he attacked the Revised Code’s long legacy in 1912. He wrote of a “Code despotism” that constituted a “malign influence” on everyone who came into contact with the education system. “Blind, passive, literal, unintelligent obedience” formed the basis for the whole educational system under it. “The child must distrust himself absolutely” – and teachers must distrust children equally.⁹⁴ Learning under the Revised Code occurred “through mechanical obedience” to a system created by the state. The triumph of a mechanical approach to education over an organic one stemmed from more than just the Revised Code, Holmes suggested. The Code itself was just a product of a value system in Western culture that stressed uniformity and external “results.” In such a world, “to

⁹² Modern Record Centre: MSS.179/1/9/14, J. Langston, “President’s Address,” *National Union of Elementary Teachers: Report, 1872* (London: Yates and Alexander, 1872).

⁹³ Timon, “A Dream and its Fulfilment,” *The Schoolmaster*, 13 (30 March 1872), 139.

⁹⁴ Edmond Holmes, *What is and What Might be: A Study of Education in General and Elementary Education in Particular* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1912), vi, 50

say that the function of education is to foster the growth of the soul, is to issue a challenge to Western civilisation.”⁹⁵ Holmes sympathized with the teachers forced to work in this system, calling them “victims of a vicious conception of education.”

However, he also suggested that they were out to squeeze children for every pence they were worth and even that they wanted to recreate their own misery by making pupils the same “helpless creatures of habit and routine which he himself [sic] is tending to become.”⁹⁶

The Revised Code elicited a particularly strong outcry north of the Tweed. One of the first issues which teachers raised was the fact that the Newcastle Commission’s investigation - which has been the basis of the Revised Code - only looked at England and Wales. A few years later Scotland would get its own investigation, the Argyll Commission. Its commissioners also pointed out that in emphasizing the 3 Rs, the Code went against a longstanding tradition in Scotland of giving even working-class children an introduction to the subjects taught at universities. Scottish critics, protesting the fact that the Code did not recognize higher subjects such as Latin and advanced mathematics, feared it would sever the direct connection between parish schools and universities. This change seemed poised to push the children of middle-class parents entirely out of parish schools, where a good number had continued to educate their sons and daughters alongside the children of working families - at least in the countryside. The Code, then, seemed to threaten the tradition of social mixing in Scottish schools. Indeed, its declared intent was to provide grants only “to promote the education of children belonging to the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁹⁶ Ibid., vi, 68.

classes who support themselves by manual labour.”⁹⁷ This provision, it was feared, would lead to separate systems of working-class and middle-class schooling. Though initially introduced in full in Scotland, the Revised Code was quickly rescinded and introduced only partially, haltingly over the next decade.⁹⁸ Scotland succeeded in negotiating the terms of the policies imposed on it from Westminster.

The Newcastle Commission and Revised Code continued to frame the training and work of teachers in Britain in terms similar to that of native agents. There was no doubt that teachers needed to be uplifted and that that uplift was valuable. “It is proved beyond all doubt,” the commissioners wrote of trained teachers, “that they are greatly superior to the untrained teachers.” It was not just or even primarily intellectual and pedagogical ability that set trained teachers apart. “As a class,” one Assistant Commissioner was approvingly quoted as saying in the main body of the report, “they are marked, both men and women, by a quickness of eye and ear, a quiet energy, [and] a facility of command.” But this commissioner also praised training colleges for instilling in teachers “a patient self-control, which, with rare exceptions, are not observed in the private instructors of the poor.”⁹⁹ Other educationalists and officials similarly enjoined teachers to remain humble and self-controlled – to overcome the “grinding” nature of working with children on basics subjects that many teachers who felt “fitted for higher work” because of their own education found to be “repulsive,” in the words of

⁹⁷ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 58.

⁹⁸ For a fuller history of the Revised Code’s implementation and reception in Scotland, see Thomas Wilson, “A Reinterpretation of ‘Payment by Results’ in Scotland, 1861-1872,” in *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education*, 93-114.

⁹⁹ Newcastle Commission, 151.

Commissioner George Coode.¹⁰⁰ Uplift had its limits and needed to be paired with injunctions to humility. They drew heavily on the trope of missionary to understand teachers' work, a direct reference to the imperial civilizing mission - a mission that had now come home to Britain. The report took pains to remind teachers repeatedly that they came from "a very humble social position" and encouraged them to "look upon Popular Education in a missionary spirit, and be trained to a life of humility and self-denial." Officials encouraged teachers to draw on religion inspiration as a motive for their work and to consider spreading religion and morality to be their foremost task. The Newcastle Commission's report declared that: "Though the public day schools have contributed more than any other cause to the diffusion of secular knowledge amongst the poor, this has seldom been the sole or even the leading object of those who were chiefly instrumental in founding and supporting them. Their leading object has been the improvement of the poorer classes in a moral, and, above all, in a religious point of view."¹⁰¹ Framing teachers as missionaries signaled the extent to which Britain's poor and even working population continued to be considered within the same frame used to think about the empire.

The Education Acts of 1870 and 1872

The Education Act of 1870 and its Scottish counterpart, the Education Act (Scotland) of 1872, made elementary education available to virtually all children. It ensured, at least in theory, that every child would have access to schooling. But the state

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 155.

¹⁰¹ Newcastle Commission, 33, 139, 147, 151 162.

did not simply create a universal, uniform system of elementary schools. Even after the 1870/2 Acts, Britain's elementary education system remained bewilderingly convoluted - indeed, it became even more so with the introduction of school boards. Teachers now had to navigate an even murkier mix of public and private authorities who controlled their apprenticeship, education, hiring and firing, and salary.

The 1870/2 Education Acts intensified many trends in education already underway. Scholars including Richard Altick, Robert Anderson, and David Mitch suggest that the Acts worked primarily to smooth out gaps in educational provision and opportunities between rural and urban areas, parish and non-parish schools, boys and girls. This included what was one of the greatest opportunities of all: to become a teacher. Though scholars like Jane McDermid have pointed out the continuing importance of locality, religion, and gender to nature of the educational opportunities, this characterization of the Acts has mostly held good.¹⁰²

How did the Acts impact teachers? First and foremost, it increased their ranks – dramatically. The sheer number of new spots in school was perhaps the single biggest impact of the Acts. Those new spots were filled by pupils who needed teachers. All told, the number of teachers increased from 12,027 adult teachers in elementary schools in England and Wales in 1869 to 45,361 in 1886. Scotland went from 5,713 teachers in

¹⁰² Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957); Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*; Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England*; McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-class Girls in Victorian Scotland*; David James Limond, *The Female Experience of Schooling in Scotland, 1872-1945: Lassies O' Pairs or Lassies Apart?* (unpub. diss., University of Glasgow, 1996).

1870 to 10,536 in 1880 and 12,747 in 1899.¹⁰³ A substantial majority of the new teachers were assistant teachers and women - often both.

It is an over-simplification to say that the teaching profession “feminized” after 1870/2 and leave it at that. The number of male teachers actually increased in absolute terms. Men also retained a disproportionate number of headteacher positions – roughly two-thirds of them, in Scotland.¹⁰⁴ Boys even continued to apprentice as pupil teachers in fairly high numbers - though increasingly they opted not to go on to training colleges and become teachers themselves.¹⁰⁵ More than anything else, women took up the new openings as assistant teachers and infant teachers. In urban areas new schools were often huge, accommodating as many as five, six, even seven hundred students or more. It was not unusual for a school to have eight or more assistant teachers working under a single headteacher – though in very large schools the boys, girls, and infants’ departments usually had their own headmaster or headmistress. The Acts also saw the rise of infant schools in which, as Philip Gardner has pointed out, teachers ended up doing much the same work with much the same children as had the women who had run Britain’s dames’ schools.¹⁰⁶

The Acts also brought teachers more fully under state oversight. Both the novelty and extent of this state oversight are easy to exaggerate, however. Teachers in grant-

¹⁰³ R.D. Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 177.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ I speculate about the reason for this in Christopher Bischof, "Masculinity, Social Mobility, and the Plan to End Pauperism in Mid-Victorian England: Kneller Hall Teacher's Training College," *Journal of Social History* 46, 4 (2013), 1039-1059.

¹⁰⁶ Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England*.

earning schools had been subject to oversight by state inspectors since the earliest years of grants. Little about inspection changed in the wake of the Acts. Before the Acts, teachers' most immediate supervisors were the school managers, the group of local notables usually headed by the clergyman. The managers got a say in the hiring and firing of teachers, the resolution of major incidents, and the everyday work that went on in the school. Some managers took a very active hand in the management of school affairs while others concerned themselves only with major decisions; most struck a middle ground.¹⁰⁷ School managers continued to exist after the Acts, but now there was a new set of players: school boards.

The Acts brought thousands of schools boards into existence across Britain, a number which continued to grow annually until it reached more than five thousand in England and Wales alone on the eve of their disbandment in 1902. Elected by local ratepayers (including, significantly, women), school board members often came from the same milieu as school managers. The nature of school board elections, which gave each elector one vote for every vacant spot on the board, allowed for vote stacking. This made it easier for minority religious groups, social classes, or unions to get one of their members elected if they launched a coordinated campaign. It also resulted in boards which were fiercely divided among themselves. Famously, the School Board of London's first meeting devolved into a lengthy and heated debate about when, where, and how they would hold their opening prayer - an incident that set the tone for debates about the curriculum, attendance requirements, and welfare policies for decades to come.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Gordon, *The Victorian School Manager: A Study in the Management of Education 1800-1902* (London: Woburn, 1974).

Teachers had to contend with these internally divided boards - and with policies liable to change every few years with school board elections.

The creation of school boards had a greater effect on teachers' work in urban areas than rural areas. In many rural areas little changed: rural boards typically covered only a single parish and school managers simply became board members. Rural teachers campaigned for school boards that covered much larger areas so that they would be less subject to the whims of local politics and the local elites. This campaign became the signature issue of the National Union of Teachers in the 1890s. An 1896 article in the *Schoolmaster* explained the problems that persisted long after school boards had been established: "We hear of some village tyranny which dispossess a schoolmaster from his office because he has dared to stand for the Parish Council; because he has resented the illegal employment of his pupils during school hours by some member of his village School Board."¹⁰⁸ These were the sorts of issues which teachers had been forced to navigate for decades before the 1870/2 Acts. The arrival of school boards changed things more in urban areas. Urban school boards covered the whole of cities, which could bring dozens, even hundreds of schools with thousands of teachers under their bailiwick. Hiring, firing, and supervising so many teachers necessarily made urban school boards' management style largely impersonal and bureaucratic. Where possible, however, boards continued to rely on school managers to guide their actions. This was especially true in London, where the school board tried to develop a close partnership with school

¹⁰⁸ "A Stand for the Rurals, *Schoolmaster* (14 November 1896), 794-5. On the larger campaign, see Robin Betts, "Dr Macnamara at the Schoolmaster 1892-1907," *History of Education* 31, 1 (2002), 39-57.

managers. However, in most urban areas school management committees were beginning to disengage and disband.¹⁰⁹ Urban school boards typically had an impersonal relationship with their teachers, but this could be a welcome change from the nosiness of school managers.

In Scotland, the 1872 Act was a major step towards the restoration of a “national” system of schooling. In theory, a 1696 law mandating a school in every parish funded by local landowners had created a universal school system central to Scotland’s national identity. In practice, however, urbanization and the fracturing of the Church of Scotland had long since eliminated the national reach of parish schools.¹¹⁰ In rural areas, Scotland’s children were scattered across parish, Free Church, and dame’s schools. The remote reaches of many large rural parishes were simply too far for children to attend the parish schools. Many children in urban areas lacked any local school at all. The 1872 Act brought all parish and burgh schools under the control of the newly constituted school boards. It also made it easy and desirable for the managers of other types of schools to transfer their establishments to the boards. The 1872 Act further contributed towards a national system of schooling by creating school boards and introducing compulsory attendance for children between 5 and 13 everywhere, unlike in England and Wales where both were, for the time being, voluntary measures.¹¹¹

The transformation of Scotland’s parish schools into board schools as a result of the 1872 Act was the final death blow for the tradition of the “lad o’pairts,” which had

¹⁰⁹ See Gordon, *School Managers*.

¹¹⁰ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 50-72.

¹¹¹ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 65.

been in decline since the Minutes of 1846. The best and brightest male parish school students no longer went directly to university, received an education, and then went on to become parish schoolmasters themselves. This made headteaching positions in former parish schools more open and accessible to women. However, in Scotland - even more than in England - headteaching remained disproportionately male. Part of this owed to male teachers' continued access to universities in Scotland. The 1870s saw the development of programs which allowed training college students and recent training college graduates to attend university classes part time. Some, particularly those working in or near Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, even went on to complete an M.A. Helen Corr has found that Scottish women had fewer opportunities to take university classes. Even women who completed a full course at university sometimes downplayed their accomplishments because they feared that school board members would not consider it quite proper.¹¹² Women found more opportunities in Scotland's schools after 1872, just as they had in its teacher training system after 1846. However, in this - and most other areas - the 1872 Act brought conservative changes.

Late-Victorian developments

The pace of change to Victorian Britain's elementary education system accelerated in the 1880s and 1890s. As a result of school boards, cities began to build modern, two- or three-story brick structures to replace the older, more haphazard school buildings constructed from the 1830s to the 1860s. These schools constantly updated to

¹¹² Corr, "Dominies and Domination: Schoolteachers, Masculinity and Women in 19th Century Scotland", 150-164..

conform to a dizzying array of modern theories about hygiene.¹¹³ Within their walls teachers offered a growing number of advanced “specific subjects” such as Latin, French, electricity and magnetism, and chemistry. Drill, gymnastics classes, free lunches for the needy, and health screenings by teachers and nurses became more common during the 1890s. Schools became key sites in the promotion of health and the provision of comfort for students facing poverty at home.

Attendance became compulsory across Britain in 1880. Until then, the issue of compulsion had been left to local school boards and nearly one-third of the nation’s population remained untouched by compulsion - mostly in rural areas. However, free schooling for all did not come until 1891. This meant that for more than a decade - more than two decades in places like London and Manchester - attendance was compulsory, but in many cases unfree (for the very poorest children, Poor Law authorities were supposed to pay the school fees on a graduated scale based on family resources). Along with attendance officers, teachers were the on-the-ground agents of a liberal state that valued self-sufficiency enough to force it on working-class families. Everyday friction between teachers and struggling families eased in the 1890s with the arrival of free education. It also helped that the parents of their pupils had now themselves grown up in an age of compulsory attendance. Elementary schooling at last began to approach the

¹¹³ Malcolm Seaborne and Roy Lowe, *The English School: Its Architecture and Organization*, Vol. II, 1870-1970 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

universal status among the working-classes to which it had long aspired - though friction never entirely disappeared.¹¹⁴

Strikingly, children were staying longer in school too - past even the age of 13, which had long been commonly accepted as the endpoint for elementary education. Pupil teachers not included, in 1890-1 there were 146,000 children age 13-14 on the books in public elementary schools while four years later the number had risen to nearly 200,000. Tens of thousand of children were now staying on each year until age fourteen or even fifteen. Around age twelve or thirteen many transferred to the “higher grade schools” that major urban school boards had begun to open. Numbering 67 and serving 25,000 pupils in England alone by 1895, these schools often explicitly, if unofficially, styled themselves secondary schools. Dr. Forsyth of the Leeds Higher Grade School proudly testified to the 1895 Bryce Commission on Secondary Education that “[T]he organisation which was originally devised for the elementary education of the country, passing with great strides across the realms of Secondary Education, may soon be battering at the doors of the ancient universities themselves.”¹¹⁵ In Scotland secondary schools were gradually forming a bridge between elementary schools and universities, though, as in England, they struggled with the problem of attracting enough working-class pupils despite elaborate scholarship system they offered.¹¹⁶ This class of schools grew rapidly:

¹¹⁴ See Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London*; Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 179.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 243-257.

not counting pupil teachers, by 1900-1 English higher grade schools alone had 42,069 pupils, an increase of more than 60% in just five years.¹¹⁷

In the 1870s and 1880s many urban areas opted to replace teachers' instruction of individual or small groups of pupil teachers with larger classes at pupil-teacher centers. The goal was to raise the quality of instruction and to make it more efficient. Pamela Horn points out that pupil-teacher centers "undoubtedly raised the academic standards of those students able to attend them," giving them an advantage over rural pupil teachers in the competitive Queen's Scholarship exam upon which training college admission hinged.¹¹⁸ With just a few such centers per city, they required pupil teachers to walk through the streets, often after dark. Such walks could be bonding experiences – pupil teachers often made the walk with their peers, laughing, joking, and reveling in the freedom of the streets.¹¹⁹ Minnie Blair recalled that by the end of her apprenticeship as a pupil teacher in Glasgow in 1884, "headmasters no longer taught [pupil teachers] in the morning" and instead they attended centrally conducted classes four nights a week for which "car fares were allowed. Occasionally girls even took the bus alone at night."¹²⁰

Some teachers were concerned that pupil-teaching centers would "weaken the authority of the head teacher over his pupil teachers" – and the more personal bond they had. Moreover, critics of the centers believed that pupil teachers saw private instruction as a reward – almost as the only important form of payment for their work in the schools.

¹¹⁷ Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 176-179.

¹¹⁸ Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England*, 78.

¹¹⁹ See Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, chp. 6.

¹²⁰ SUA: FCTC/8/8/1, Minnie Blair, "Some recollections and reflections of David Street School, Glasgow, 1870-1884 [and] 1885-1886: Glasgow Free Church Training College."

But the author of the article in *The Pupil Teacher* denied this, arguing instead that respect and gratitude derived from instruction was not the source of teachers' authority. Rather it was simply the fact that teachers had control over their apprentices' salaries. "Look at the position of other young persons in shops, offices, and the like, who get no instruction as part of their reward. They obey and submit to their employers for the money which they receive as wages; and we never hear of merchants or others complaining that they cannot control their apprentices."¹²¹ This question of the nature of the relationship between teacher and pupil teacher was part of a larger question about how teachers should relate to and command respect from their pupils in general. Should teachers coerce their students into obedience through using corporal punishment on insubordinate students, prosecuting truants, and keeping in at lunchtime those students who did not do their homework, or should the instruction received or not received be its own reward and punishment?

Some private reformers sought to preserve the paternalism at the core of pupil teaching amidst anxieties it was turning into an impersonal, transactional relationship. This was part of a wider social movement amidst the anxieties of industrialization and urbanization to look to the social relations of the past as a model for the present.¹²² In Edinburgh, John Hope, a local businessman, took up this call and invited all the pupil teachers in the city to a tea party at his house on 25 February 1862. All but a few accepted the offer, but the stilted formality of their responses betrayed the foreignness of

¹²¹ "The Education of Pupil Teachers at Centres," in H. Major, ed., *The Pupil Teacher*, 1, 6, (June, 1876), 176.

¹²² See, for instance, Marcus Waithe, *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (New York: D.S. Brewer, 2006).

cross-class socialization. “Dear Sir,” David Bain replied, “It would be with feelings of regret that I should be required to give a negative reply to your extremely kind invitation, of which I feel most happy to accept. Heartily thanking you for your very great kindness, and hoping (D.V.) to be present at the appointed hour.”¹²³ James Currie thanked Mr Hope “for his unheard of kindness” and declared that he would “feel the greatest pleasure in doing his utmost to be present at his Tea party on the 25th.”¹²⁴ Such an awkward and almost self-parodying performance of imagined politesse was worthy of Dickens. In the 1880s Henrietta and Samuel Barnett, founders of Toynbee Hall settlement house in Whitechapel, undertook to systematically befriend pupil teachers. Kindly intentioned, they offered opportunities for rational leisure and cross-class socialization. However, these events were often on a large scale; Samuel once led upwards of eighty pupil teachers on an outing to Cambridge while Henrietta organized events for Pupil Teacher Centres with over a hundred students.¹²⁵ Like John Hope in Edinburgh, the Barnetts also hosted huge tea parties at Toynbee Hall, though Henrietta found pupil teachers to be a socially grasping bunch who compared unfavorably with “the British working man” as an object of sympathy and target for uplift.¹²⁶ There was also something forced in nature and almost industrial in scale to these attempts at befriending pupil teachers – if that was indeed what they were attempting. Even in urban areas where philanthropically-minded

¹²³ National Archives of Scotland: GD/253/60/19, Letter, David Bain to John Hope.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA): F/BAR/143, Letter, Samuel Barnett to Francis Barnett (1896); LMA: LCC/EO/WOO1/LB/1, Woolwich Mixed PT Centre Logbook 1887-1891.

¹²⁶ Seth Koven, “Henrietta Barnett: The (Auto)biography of a late Victorian marriage,” in eds. Susan Pedersen and Peter Mandler, *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London, 1994), 31-56.

men and women attempted to broaden pupil teachers' social horizons, pupil teaching remained a relatively insular experience. The closest relationship pupil teachers had was with their teacher and fellow pupil teachers; they were socialized to be teachers, not members of the middle class.

The bond of apprenticeship between pupil teacher and teacher seemed increasingly imperiled in wake of late-Victorian changes in education policy. Many teachers expressed a desire to continue to look after the welfare of their pupil teachers and to have a paternalistic relationship with them. This attitude is also evidenced in teachers' regulation of their apprentices' conduct. Alexander Sargent of Sidbury, Devon recorded in his logbook in 1880 with dismay that

Pupil Teachers attended last evening a dancing class at the Red Lion public house. I've done my best to keep the girls from evil, and by so doing have brought no end of ill-will upon myself and had numberless unpleasantness with E. Sansom whose impudence and daring has been beyond measure. It does not matter how good the girl may be when she enters Sidbury – she is not here long before she is corrupted and set against the school and upheld by those who ought to know better. *Query*: How is [sic] E. Sansom and L. Cocks going to do their work and attend a dancing class?¹²⁷

The final “*Query*” belies the real issue here. What so exasperated Sargent was not that his pupil teachers might have difficulty reconciling leisure with their workload, but rather that, despite his best efforts, he had failed to create a paternal bond with his apprentices. Instead of respecting and obeying him, they were “impuden[t] and daring.” Incapable of shielding them “from evil,” he had allowed them become “corrupted.” If they let him down, he also seems to have felt that he failed them.

¹²⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 61.

In the winter months of early 1892 Mary T. Berggen failed her annual examination at the hands of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) of schools. Concerned and considering terminating her apprenticeship, the school managers wrote to the principal of the pupil teacher center in Woolwich where she spent several hours each day pursuing her own. The principal wrote back that Mary Berggen "is an industrious, well behaved, but rather dull girl." However, she was worth keeping: "the fact that her journal is one unbroken record of very good marks is strong evidence of her persistent industry. Speaking generally, I do not think she is the sort of PT who ought to be dismissed. Her unsatisfactory examination is probably the result of two factors - her own lack of ability and the extraordinarily high standard of marking adopted without notice by H.M.I."¹²⁸ She was permitted to stay on and likely would have gone on the holiday outings that students at the center took in the coming months. Though she struggled with her work, the instruction at the center was top notch: more than half the pupil teachers at her center scored a first-class pass on the 1892 Queen's Scholarship exam and only one unnamed student did not pass at all. Staying on at the center offered her the opportunity to continue her studies in advanced subjects such as French, English literature, physics, and chemistry while preparing her to eventually compete for a Queen's scholarship to training college. Through all this she received a respectable stipend from the state.

Mary Berggen's story makes visible the tangled web of discipline and opportunities, of impersonal bureaucracy and personal bonds which together had come to define pupil teaching. As a pupil teacher her character and performance was evaluated

¹²⁸ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV06/WOO1/LB/002, Woolwich Mixed PT Centre Logbook 1892-99, 26-27.

and discussed by an inspector, her home school's managers, the school's headteacher, and the pupil teacher center staff. That she was "dull" did not much matter: her industriousness and respect for authorities made compelling reasons to keep her as a pupil teacher. By contrast, two years later the principal recommended dismissing two pupils who had done poorly on exams because they lacked both a work ethic and a sense of their place in the educational hierarchy. The cost of admission to pupil teaching was a substantial workload and minute supervision at the hands of many authorities. The reward was a salary, an education on par with what secondary school students received, and the opportunity to win a scholarship to training college, and, through that, a job increasingly regarded as a "profession" which would secure, at a minimum, a lower-middle-class lifestyle.

From specific subjects and free lunches to the growing provision of what was effectively secondary schooling, this expansion of the scope of "elementary" education generated a conservative backlash. Associations of headmasters in officially-recognized, middle-class secondary schools expressed disapproval that elementary schools had turned their backs on their primary purpose: to give an education "of a definitely practical character, as intended for handworkers rather than headworkers."¹²⁹ A Parliamentary investigation into elementary education expressed a similar wariness about the new direction in which elementary education appeared to be heading in its 1888 report.

The greatest pressure of all came from the Church of England, which had schools serving two million of the two-and-a-half million children in 1895. As the rates paying

¹²⁹ Quoted in Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 185.

for board schools continued to expand, the Church protested that its members were supporting a system of schooling of which they did not approve and which they did not use - and this on top of paying for their own schools. The Church and its supporters also renewed with vigor a campaign that had been dormant since 1870: to make religious instruction in state-schools mandatory, even if it was only non-denominational.

This agitation culminated in the “Balfour” Education Act of 1902, passed by a Parliament with a substantial Conservative majority. The 1902 Act and the related policy developments in the two years that followed had several major effects. First, voluntary schools were now to receive a portion of the local rates. In exchange, teachers in these schools would not be subject to more stringent certification requirements. Second, Britain’s school boards were dissolved, their duties and rights handed over to newly constituted local education authorities under the authority of the county or borough councils. Finally, secondary education was clearly distinguished from elementary education. State funding for secondary schools rose and by 1907 about 25% of the spaces in those schools became free for deserving, qualified students. The immediate reaction to the Act was massive agitation by non-conformists, who were furious that their rates now paid for Anglican schooling. Trade unions and the wider Labour movement were also initially hostile to local education authorities, which they felt would not be as democratic as school boards. The separation of elementary and secondary education also proved controversial. Though the creation of a distinct secondary school sector ultimately helped contribute to a clearer, more widely available educational ladder, it was initially seen as a move to limit the scope of working-class education. So fierce and

widespread was the backlash that Conservatives lost 246 seats in the 1906 general election.¹³⁰ It should be stressed, however, that teachers actually supported the general thrust of the Act, if not many of its details. They had long lobbied to replace small rural school boards with much larger authorities to put a stop to the petty tyranny and nepotism to which small school boards seemed prone. Teachers also favored state funding for certificated teachers working in voluntary schools.¹³¹

The Education Act of 1902 tipped the balance of a process that had been in the making for at least ten years: secondary education and secondary school teachers began to take the place which elementary education and elementary teachers had once occupied in the national imagination. As attending elementary school became more-or-less a given, secondary schooling became the subject of debates about the role of the state in education. Spurred on by the growth of an adult education movement, evening schools and their teachers usurped the position elementary schools had once occupied as a community crossroad in many working-class neighborhoods. The way to become a teacher also changed. The 1902 Act set in motion a change that culminated in a new path to teaching a few years later. Boys and girls interested in teaching now went directly to secondary school secondary school, then acted as a student teacher for a short time, then attended either a training college or, increasingly, an education program affiliated with a university.¹³² Pupil teaching was no longer part of their training. The form of teacher

¹³⁰ Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, 208-246.

¹³¹ Tropp, *The School Teachers*, 160-182.

¹³² Richard Aldrich, "The Training of Teachers and Educational Studies: The London Day Training College, 1902-1932," *Paedagogica Historica*, 40, 5-6 (2004), 617-631; Philip Gardner and Peter Cunningham, *Becoming Teachers: Texts and Testimonies 1907-1950* (Woburn Press, 2004)

training - and teaching - which had been such a defining feature of the Victorian social landscape ceased to exist.

Missionaries to professionals

From roughly the late 1860s teachers were able to articulate a stronger, clearer claim to professional status. This claim found growing purchase among educationalists and the larger public. The creation of the National Union of (Elementary) Teachers in 1870, which catered mainly to English and Welsh teachers, and the continued growth of the Educational Institute of Scotland, the teachers' union north of the Tweed, gave teachers a voice with which to weigh in on educational debates. Parliamentary investigations, school boards, and newspapers increasingly consulted these unions for their investigations and articles. In 1874 an editorial on the "Progress of the Profession" in *The Schoolmaster*, the official weekly newspaper of the NU(E)T, declared

The time for another Annual Conference has come, and it is important that teachers should survey their present position and review their history, as a body, in order to ascertain what progress, if any, has been made towards the fulfillment of their cherished desires and hopes. We make no apology for giving prominence to what, at first sight, seem to be only class interests; for it is now acknowledged that the independence of the teacher and the due recognition of his claim to enjoy all the privileges, preferments and emoluments within the sphere of his own calling are inseparably connected with the success of the great national enterprise of universal education.¹³³

Though the insecurities at the heart of this editorial underscore the tenuous purchase of teachers' claim to professionalism, it also suggests the tenacity of teachers' campaign to win recognition as professionals. Hundreds of such articles appeared in the 1870s. Part of that campaign was to increase their pedagogical skills, regulate entry into the

¹³³ "Progress of the Profession," *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 118 (4 April 1874), 201.

profession, and to lobby for more professional autonomy. However, teachers also worked to shore up the reputation of their profession in society more broadly, to achieve “due recognition” of their claim to “the privileges, preferments and emoluments” to which professions were entitled. 1872 saw the publication of the first *Teachers’ List*, a massive publication, which used 142 large pages filled with small print to attempt to list all of Britain’s certificated teachers and where they had attended training college. The avowed purpose of the *List* was “to afford to all who are engaged in the profession of teaching an opportunity of registering their titles to this position.” The preface went on: “Within the last few years education has grown into a most important science, and the increased attention that is bestowed upon it by all classes of society, proves the necessity that a teacher should be able to show his credentials, and that the days of irresponsible masters and mistresses are fast being numbered.” This was one striking manifestation of teachers policing and promoting their own reputation.¹³⁴

At the same time that teachers asserted their professional interests, a growing coterie of reformers concerned with education publicly described teachers’ work in generally glowing terms while expounding its importance to the nation. Robert Spence Watson, a leading reformer and Liberal Party activist in Newcastle, declared in an 1884 speech to the Literary and Philosophical Society that “Theirs is a noble profession -

¹³⁴ Phillips Began ed., *The Teachers’ List: Containing A Calendar of All Executive and Examinign Bodies; Universities, General and Special Colleges; Public, Proprietary, and Middle-Class Schools; Denominational Colleges and Schools; Principal Private Schools; Education of Women, Training Colleges, &c., Together with a Complete Alphabetical Dictionary of Qualified and Certificated Teachers, and a List of School Boards throughout the Kingdom* (London: Edward Stanford, 1872), i. In practice this list contained very few names other than those working in elementary schools, whether under school boards or one of the two major educational societies.

nobler none can be.”¹³⁵ He had framed teaching in this way in several speeches and pamphlets already and would continue to do so in the future. Several papers and discussants at the 1884 meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science championed the right of teachers to take a much greater role in regulating their own profession.¹³⁶ Even rural working clergyman, who snubbed teachers, reluctantly recognized a growing professionalism among teachers. Though Henry Bellairs’ 1868 *The Church and the School; Or, Hints on Clerical Life* left no doubt that a clergyman was on another level of prestige, culture, and local authority than the schoolmaster, it nonetheless implicitly acknowledged that many teachers were now professionals with training and the ability to act independently. “In engaging a teacher,” Bellairs cautioned, “make a Government certificate a sine qua non; request the candidate to send along with other testimonials the entries of Her Majesty’s Inspector on the parchment, and in the Log for the last three years. ... If you employ an ‘ex-pupil teacher,’ your responsibilities of supervision will be greatly increased.”¹³⁷

Late-Victorian official reports on education were more generous in their treatment of teachers than their counterparts from earlier in the century. The 1888 report of the Cross Commission – the last of the major Victorian Parliamentary investigations into elementary education – gave a quite favorable impression of the qualifications of

¹³⁵ Robert Spence Watson, "Education in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Two Lectures Given at the Literary and Philosophical Society, in that City, on the 20th and 23rd February, 1884" (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: J. Forster, 1884), 46.

¹³⁶ Charles Wager Ryalls ed., *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science: Liverpool Meeting, 1876* (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1877), 388-391, 413-415.

¹³⁷ Henry Walford Bellairs, *The Church and the School; Or, Hints on Clerical Life* (Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1868), 119-120.

training college educated teachers. The commissioners even recommended a broad reinstatement of the short-lived, limited pension scheme initially introduced in the Minutes of 1846.¹³⁸ That recommendation to reinstate a pension scheme, a long sought-after goal for teachers, became a reality in 1897 when Parliament approved a superannuation scheme and a fund for teachers rendered “permanently incapable” of teaching before age sixty-five. The language the CCE used to describe the reasoning for their decision is telling: “We hope that the operations of this Act may do much to abate the anxieties and to relieve the needs of those who render the nation long and devoted service as teachers in public elementary schools.”¹³⁹ If professional status is, as Harold Perkin suggests, recognizing and rewarding a group’s claim to offer an indispensable and valuable service to society, then here was an official acknowledgment of teachers’ professionalism backed by a truly *rara avis* in Victorian Britain: a Parliamentary vote of money, and money for a pension scheme at that.¹⁴⁰

Even as the frame in which teachers were seen gave way from that of missionary-like native agent to professional, vestiges of native agency remained. Both educationalists and state officials continued to ascribe the highest importance to teachers’ work cultivating morality in the population and enjoined teachers to remain humble. In the same speech in which he praised teaching as the noblest of all professions, Robert Spence Watson asked teachers to purvey “not only lessons of high worldly wisdom, but

¹³⁸ Cross Commission, 78-102.

¹³⁹ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1898-99* [9400], iv.

¹⁴⁰ Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

still more those of loyalty to duty, of patient self-sacrifice, and of personal purity.”¹⁴¹ The Instructors to Inspectors in 1878 were common in asking inspectors to “lose no suitable opportunity of impressing upon both managers and teachers the great responsibility which rests upon them, over and above their intellectual teaching, in regard to the moral training of the children committed to their charge.”¹⁴² The Cross Commission reporting ten years later worked from the assumption that schools were places “in which the character is to be formed, as well as the intelligence cultivated,” a purpose that demanded teachers exercise an “active sympathy with, and kindly influence over, individual scholars ... and help to make them good and useful members of society.”¹⁴³ The Commission went even further in the section of its report on “Religious and Moral Training,” declaring itself to be “unanimously of opinion [sic] that [the Education Act’s] Religious and Moral Training is a matter of still higher importance alike [than secular instruction] to the children, the parents, and the nation.”¹⁴⁴ The commissioners’ call for teachers who could understand and achieve an “active sympathy” with students to help influence them echoed the logic of native agency articulated earlier in the century.

By the late nineteenth century teachers gained increasingly widespread recognition as professionals. The idea of native agency was arguably at the apex of its cultural prominence and popularity in the opening years of the Victorian period. As a frame for understanding the recruitment, training, and work of teachers, native agency never disappeared entirely. Its influence on official and unofficial discourses about

¹⁴¹ Watson, “Education in Newcastle-upon-Tyne,” 46.

¹⁴² Quoted in the Cross Commission, 42.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

teachers, and as a means teachers used to understand and write about their work, persisted through the end of the nineteenth century. Arguably the teacher as native agent remains one of the two dominant tropes by which teachers are conceived of today, the other being the elite, well-educated teacher who undertakes teaching for a few years as a form of passionate social service.

Seen from the perspective of teachers, mid- and late-Victorian education debates and policy developments appeared a bit bewildering. The Revised Code of 1862 coupled with official injunctions to remained humble seemed to be an attack on teachers – on the value of their work and the opportunities for uplift established by the Minutes of 1846. But within a decade of the Revised Code things had changed so much that J.F. Adams, a teacher in Finchley, could declare perceived state hostility towards teachers to be an “imaginary grievance.”¹⁴⁵ By the 1880s and 1890s public respect for teachers seemed to be mounting. Pupil teaching centres began to offer aspiring teachers the opportunity to explore subjects with more depth than before – but at the cost, teachers claimed, of imperiling the bond between teacher and apprentice. Compulsory attendance, the end of fees for board schools, and other social policies proved exciting for teachers, but sometimes also made new demands on them.

* * *

The growing involvement of the British state in elementary education took place in the context of a larger expansion of the state’s role at home and abroad. This

¹⁴⁵ J.F. Adams, “Our New Paper,” *Schoolmaster*, 1, 11, (16 March 1872), 118.

expansion generated enormous anxiety and controversy, particularly in its early years. Critics of such measures as the New Poor Law, the Public Health Act, workhouse education schemes, and even emancipation complained that the state was interfering with traditional liberties and insidiously dismantling the social and political structure which made Britain such a prosperous, peaceful nation.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the greatest tension resulting from the expanding role of the state was between local and central government. Where was all this newfound authority to reside: with local agents who knew and took account of community traditions and circumstances, or with London-dwelling bureaucrats and peripatetic inspectors?

In the case of elementary education, as in so many other area of state involvement, a hybrid system emerged. School managers and school boards retained tremendous influence over the schools in their communities right through the end of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, bureaucrats working in the CCE and later the English and Scotch Departments of Education set the framework within which schools had to work and inspectors enforced those standards. But where did teachers fit into system? On the one hand they spent many long hours each day working in a particular neighborhood, getting to know pupils and parents alike. Many also lived in these neighborhoods. On the other hand, the creation of training colleges, nationally-standardized certificates, and the rise of a career ladder within the teaching force also contributed to a tendency for teachers to move jobs every few years, particularly at the

¹⁴⁶ Nicholas Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834-44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971); William C. Lubenow, *The Politics of Government Growth: Early Victorian Attitudes Toward State Intervention, 1833-1848* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971).

beginning of their career. The reports of inspectors employed by the central played an important role in determining teachers' salaries and employment prospects, which gave teachers a strong incentive to conform to the expectations set by central policymakers.

Ultimately teachers' relationship to the state in Victorian Britain confounds any easy categorization within our existing understanding of the Victorian state. The compromises between local authorities and the central state gave rise to a new set of actors who were part of neither camp. Foremost among this group, teachers led personal and professional lives which were deeply shaped by changing education policies. However, they were also able to leverage the opportunities made available by these changes to carve out fulfilling lives. Though ostensibly agents of the state, they were also able to shape state policies by increasingly acting as the eyes of the state on educational and wider social issues. A hybrid state system – part central, part local – required mediators to negotiate the tensions and gaps that arose. In Victorian Britain, teachers came to take on that role.

Chapter Two. “A Home for Poets”: Institutionalism, Friendship, and the Curriculum in Teacher Training Colleges

The history of timetables and flowers in Victorian Britain have rarely overlapped. The former were the defining feature of institutions like workhouses, hospitals, lunatic asylums, prisons, and elementary schools. As spaces in which the state along with well-to-do patrons and professionals strove to remake the poor, sick, criminal, insane, and even portions of the working classes, institutions revolved around timetables. Minutely mapped out schedules facilitated a legible temporal economy which could be discussed and debated to ensure a regimen which society deemed appropriate – and against which institutionalized individuals’ activities could be measured to gauge their docility. Flowers had no place in Victorian institutions. They served no productive purpose in the process of remaking individuals; indeed, they threatened to distract the mind and breed dissatisfaction with the bland and basic walls, furniture, clothes, food, and work of institutions. If they were present at all, they were an artifact of the outside world, a gift from a visiting relative which would be short-lived, if they were allowed to remain at all. Flowers were the definition of the extraneous and extravagant outside influence which Victorian institutions tirelessly sought to exclude.¹

On Monday May 2, 1881 the staff of Whitelands teacher training college for women gave students leave to ignore the profusion of timetables which detailed what

¹ The most pertinent theoretical works on institutions remain Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage, 1995); Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor, 1961). Even recent scholarship has tended to view teacher training colleges through the lens of the total institution; see for instance Marianne Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

every student should be doing at any given moment depending on whether they were a junior or a senior; whether it was winter or spring or summer or fall; whether it was their week to do chores; whether they were struggling or doing well in any given subject. Students instead adorned much of the college, from its chapel to its lecture rooms, in flowers. They were taking up the suggestion of John Ruskin, a patron of the college, that they celebrate May Day (it was celebrated a day late as it had fallen on a Sunday). The drab dress code discarded, students appeared before the college staff and members of the neighborhood in “mostly light dresses garlanded with cowslips and other spring blossoms [which] struck everybody as touchingly beautiful and unique.” Among the first orders of business for the day was the young women’s election of a May Queen from among the most beautiful and intelligent of their ranks. Ellen Osborne, the elected queen, in turn appointed several other young ladies to make up her court. There was poetry reading, dancing, and other delights throughout the day culminating in the proclamation of “Her Majesty” that there would be a holiday for the rest of the day. With only a few interruptions, Whitelands has celebrated May Day every year since right up to the present.²

May Day was unique to Whitelands, but what it represented was not.

Circumventing the timetable and embracing aestheticism as well as other ideologies and practices at odds with the official mission of training colleges was part of the fabric of all of Victorian Britain’s teacher training colleges – and it was not done just once a year.

² “Mr Ruskin’s May Day Festival at Whitelands College,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 1, 2 (1881), 15-17. On the history of May Day at Whitelands, see Whitelands Archive (“WA”): Malcolm Cole, “May Day,” (n.d.), a manuscript history of May Day at Whitelands.

Teachers-in-training regularly stayed up in their dormitories after lights out smoking, discussing Shakespeare with their peers, and writing poems about illicit flirtations with the opposite sex. In the process they forged friendships that lasted a lifetime and served as the foundation for a shared personal and professional identity, as later chapters will make apparent. Supposedly the Victorian era's most ubiquitous disciples of discipline, teachers imbibed an institutional ethos which was to a large degree of their own making.

Historians of institutions have been particularly reluctant to draw on the insights of the cultural turn. They have relied on a framework of disciplinary aspirations on the one hand and resistance on the other. Institutions and institutionalism have ossified and become monolithic in the historiography of Victorian Britain. Acknowledging the multiplicity of strivings and the varieties of institutionalism, particularly when viewed in practice rather than theory, reorients our map of the social landscape in Victorian Britain. Aestheticism and asceticism, socio-cultural uplift and calls for humility, strict rules and lax enforcement, rote memorization and critical thinking, making friends and competing with classmates, denominationalism and secularism – all these goals, ideologies, and pedagogic practices coexisted in training colleges. From the perspective of students, college life was not so much the product of compromises as it was a bewildering medley of experiences which could be – and were – made sense of and responded to in myriad ways. Training college was a time in life and an institutional space in which teachers probed the disciplinary regimen for meanings and for holes. They discovered many of both.

Can institutions be liberating even as they mold their subjects? Despite the totalizing aspirations of training colleges, many students found their time there to be among the freest, happiest, most fulfilling and exciting chapters in their lives. This was especially the case in their retrospective reminiscences about college life, but it was also true of the poems, sketches, and narratives they wrote while still at college. Student life could be cast under the explanatory heading of “resistance,” but as a category of analysis “resistance” is both stale and, I think, misleading in this instance. Students reveled in the gaps of colleges’ supervisory mechanisms and occasionally agitated directly against rules and their enforcement, but for the most part they directed their mental and emotional energies towards other ends. Rules simply were not taken that seriously. If students sought autonomy, it was not “freedom” in an abstract sense, but freedom to do or not do something specific. In this they differed from both the working and middle classes, for whom the notion of the “free-born Englishmen” continued to carry substantial weight through the Victorian period. By emphasizing teachers-in-training’s pursuit of friendship, romance, and liberal learning, this chapter participates in a body of scholarship that seeks to reorient the history of institutions and institutionalism.³

This chapter also begins to rework the history of teachers’ professionalism. Teachers’ struggle to professionalize by creating a union and agitating through it to

³ Other scholarship in this vein includes Lynn Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, And Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006); Seth Koven, “Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840 to 1914,” in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

secure better pay, influence policy, and achieve more autonomy has been the dominant historical narrative up to this point.⁴ I emphasize instead a vernacular teachers' professionalism that coexisted alongside their the more formal, organized professionalism of their union. It favored sustenance through friendships and solidarity over formal organization; circumventing rules rather than directly challenging and protesting against them; quietly supplementing an inadequate, boring curriculum rather than protesting for formal changes. Training colleges provided the foundation for this vernacular professionalism, not least of all through students' forging of social networks, breaking rules, and supplementing their curriculum.

This chapter begins by sketching a picture of several training colleges, including their location and architecture, the sources of their funding, and the stories of a few of their faculty members. Through this accumulation of background details, it explores the often heated debates about the purpose of teacher training. The next section tells the story of rules and rule breaking, the aspirations of colleges and those of students when it came to crafting their character. It traces the contours of the student sociability that developed at college with its emphasis on solidarity, lifelong friendships, romantic fantasies, and mocking college staff. The last section maps out the intellectual life at

⁴ Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Heinemann, 1957); John Hurt, *Education in Evolution: Church, State, Society, and Popular Education, 1800-1870* (London: Hart Davis, 1971); Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class, and Feminism, 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Gillian Sutherland, *Policy-making in elementary education, 1870-1895* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); Brian Simon, *The two nations and the educational structure 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960); Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965).

college - what students learned in the official and unofficial curriculum, as well as the relationship between the two. It suggests that training colleges offered a space for - and to a degree demanded - the development of critical thinking skills and understanding the scientific, political, and economic principles in tension with the quotidian operations of life.

* * *

i. The Colleges and their Faculty



Image 2.1: St. Mark's College Senior Class for 1888-1889.⁵

⁵ Marjon University Archives (MJU): "Photographs" Box, St. John's Senior Class for 1888-1889

The embodiment of formality, the young man at the left end of the fourth row stood stiffly erect with his shoulders pulled back, hands folded carefully in front of him, and cap taken off for the St. John's training college class portrait for the 1888-1889 cohort. His classmate two places over, however, stood at much greater ease with his arm propped up on the shoulders of his neighbor and his hat on - perhaps a deliberate slight, along with a few other boys, to the Reverend Head, the only staff member to wear his hat. At least in the moment this photograph was taken, these two young men embodied the hope and the fear of educationalists who debated how to design training college life. They hoped that young men could be educated and elevated while remaining humble and respectful; they feared that the project to educate and elevate would lead to pride, insolence, and dilettantism.

But the most intriguing and important part of this photograph for me, the point to which my eye is drawn even though it is on the photograph's edge, is the group of women looking out at the young men from the window above. They are, presumably, some of the small number of women whom the college employed as cooks and general maids. What Roland Barthes would call the *punctum*, this detail captivates and fascinates me in part because of the break it marks with the college's past. St. John's college began its life as Battersea training college, created to train schoolmasters for pauper and criminal boys. Its founder and principal, the Poor Law, sanitary, and education reformer James Kay, insisted that there be no servants at the college so as to inculcate the virtues

of humility and hard work.⁶ In the forty years that ensued Battersea underwent many changes, including, like most training colleges, the hiring of several servants. Students still did much of the work in the college, including cleaning their sleeping area, gardening and farming on the college grounds, and helping to carry food from the kitchen to the tables. However, servants scrubbed and cleaned the classrooms and common areas, carried coal and lit fires, prepared food, and took out the trash. Having a servant do anything was a new experience for most of the young men at college. Although they increasingly came from lower-middle-class backgrounds by the 1880s, most still had not grown up with even a “slavey,” the much abused day maid of all work. Many students continued to come from working-class families, propelled upward by the state-funded pupil-teaching and training college bursary system. Given their backgrounds, how did teachers-in-training feel about servants? What tone did their interactions with the servants take? Most of all, how did the women looking down at the young men in this photograph feel about them? Were they proud that these men, some of them born to working women like them, were becoming teachers? Were they sad to see them go after two years? Did the young men’s pretensions and aspirations appear ridiculous?

The archives answer none of these particular questions, but educationalists’ debates about the purpose of training colleges and the buildings, everyday regimens, and curriculum necessary to achieve it have survived in exquisite detail. Weaving together the history of four training colleges and educationalists’ writings about them, this section

⁶ James Kay-Shuttleworth, “Second Report on Battersea, 15 December 1843,” in James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862* (1862; reprint in Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1973), 400-405.

explores those debates to trace the ideological influences that shaped training college life. The debate over teacher training was embedded within a larger ongoing discussion about social mobility, religion, and the role of the state in social relations. No single strain of thought achieved clear dominance: the curriculum, rules, and general tone at training colleges remained contradictory in some instances, the result of a compromise in others. Ultimately these ideological tensions gave teachers-in-training the opportunity to create their own identity and craft their own curriculum. It also socialized them into an interstitial position on the social landscape: distinct from the working class and even the rest of the lower-middle class on the one hand, yet not quite part of the middle class on the other hand.

By 1853 there were thirty-four training colleges in England and Wales and four in Scotland, training nearly two thousand men and women at any given time.⁷ Thirty years later in 1883, 73.9% of male teachers and 73.6% of female teachers in Scotland had attended a training college, most having graduated.⁸ Only about half of English and Welsh teachers had training college experience by this time, but untrained teachers were largely to be found in rural parts of Britain and even there they often worked as an assistant under a trained headteacher.⁹ Attending college offered a leg up in the job market; it was also fun. Looking back years later, many teachers wrote that they had

⁷ Barnard, *National Education*, 754.

⁸ James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education, Volume Two: From 1872 to the Present Day* (London: University of London Press, 1969), 97.

⁹ For a more detailed breakdown of where untrained teachers worked and their position in the teaching hierarchy, see Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 111-112.

enjoyed their college experience and felt their two years there to be the single most formative experience in their lives.

Training colleges stood in the murky borderland between the authority of the public state and private religious educational societies. Despite the growing state control in elementary schools themselves after 1870/2, training colleges remained in this borderland through the end of the century. The majority of the money to build and renovate the colleges came from private subscriptions raised by the religious educational societies, particularly the Church of England's National Society and the non-conformists' British and Foreign School Society. However, the majority of annual operating expenses – roughly 75% of costs – came from government grants paid for each student who passed the examination. The state used the leverage it gained by providing operational funding to exert a great deal of control over colleges' admission procedures, curriculum, and rules. This resulted in enough similarity that the Newcastle Commission could comment on the “considerable degree of resemblance” between colleges.¹⁰ This state influence affected a sort of ideological leveling, balancing out the tendency of individual colleges to be too ascetic or too comfortable in their facilities and daily regimen, too liberal or too narrowly vocational in their curriculum.

Drawn as they were from dramatically different backgrounds, colleges' managers and faculty contributed to ideological tensions in training colleges. Virtually all members of colleges' management committees came from very privileged backgrounds, even the upper reaches of the aristocracy in a few cases (the Duke of Buckingham was on

¹⁰ Newcastle Commission, 115.

Whitelands' management committee), and often advocated for strict discipline, a basic curriculum, and minimal creature comforts. The management committees chose their college's principal, almost always an ordained Oxbridge graduate from a well-to-do background himself. Even those few principals who came from humble origins had affected their own upward mobility to a significant degree, growing distant from the social milieu of most college students. Faculty members, by contrast, were drawn from the ranks of training college graduates who had taught in an elementary school for a time. Subject to supervision by the management committee and principal, poorly paid, yet also responsible for the overseeing the discipline of students, faculty members proved reluctant disciplinarians and purveyors of the gospel of humility in their interactions with students.

This chapter draws on material pertaining to more than a dozen colleges, but it focuses on four in particular: Battersea College, St. Mark's College, Whitelands College, and Glasgow Free Church College. Though not quite representative – they were widely regarded as among the best training colleges and several have atypical origins – the stories of this group of colleges nonetheless exemplify many themes and tensions that hold good for teacher training more broadly.

Battersea and S. Mark's

Battersea, arguably the first teacher's training college in Britain, opened in 1840 under the direction of the medical doctor turned reformer and educationalist, James Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth). Personal ambition and a humanitarian desire to

ameliorate the condition of the poor led him to enter public life in the 1830s, first as an advocate of paternalist capitalism, then later as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. He firmly believed in the moral potential of capitalism, but in his account of the slums of Manchester he cautioned against bringing the working class within the fold of capitalism as producers while keeping them outside the fold of civilization. Bringing them within the fold of civilization meant improving their material condition, but also educating them into citizens capable of understanding and appreciating capitalism and the hierarchical social order. He wrote in the same breath about the twin imperatives of capitalists forging a paternalistic relationship with the working class and of supporting a solid system of education for them: “A general and effective system of education must be devised – a more intimate and cordial association must be cultivated between the capitalist and those in his employ.”¹¹ Following his critique of impersonal capitalism and campaign for sanitary reform in Manchester, Kay spent four years as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner. In his final year as an Assistant Commissioner, he coauthored a pamphlet detailing a scheme for the education of pauper children. As part of his interest in educating slum and pauper children, Kay became interested in teacher training.

In the late 1830s he travelled to the Continent and Scotland where he sought out and observed new pedagogical practices, particularly those of David Stow in Glasgow, which emphasized pupils’ understanding, not rote mastery; their respect and love for teachers, not their fear of them.¹² Stow’s progressive pedagogy reflected the culture of

¹¹ James Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London, 1832), 60-1.

¹² R.J.W. Selleck, *James Kay-Shuttleworth: The Journey of an Outsider* (London: Routledge, 1995), chp. 3-4.

education writ large in Scotland with its commitment to meritocracy, willingness to jettison traditions that no longer made sense, and attention to children's individuality. Kay borrowed from Scotland's culture of education in establishing Battersea, but he also kept in mind the slums of Manchester and workhouses of England in which he wanted Battersea's graduates to live and work. Kay combined this mix of goals and models with what he learned at Battersea when he wrote the Committee of Council on Education Minutes of 1846, which defined the many of the standards training colleges had to meet to secure government aid. To an extent, Kay borrowed from Scotland's system of teacher's training, adapted it in light of his own reform interests, and then exported the resulting system to back to Scotland.

Kay and his fellow Poor Law Assistant Commissioner E.C. Tufnell founded Battersea as a private venture, which they hoped would serve as a model for future state-funded colleges – as indeed it did. They financed it through a combination of their own money and donations from elite Whigs and their families. For the site they chose a manor house in Battersea, south London near the Thames with several acres attached. They initially intended that most of their graduates would go on to teach in workhouse, industrial, or other such schools that served paupers and the poor, but without any mechanism for compulsion in place they found that many graduates taught in public or private schools for the working classes. These schools offered better salaries and a far nicer home in which to live. By 1844 donations for Battersea began to dry up as the novelty of the experiment wore off and the image of the self-sacrificing Battersea-trained

teacher began to mingle with that of the self-interested teacher.¹³ Kay and Tufnell were compelled to transfer the college to the Anglican National Society, which renamed the school St. John's and began to change some of the regulations and overall tone of the college to bring it more in line with other training colleges. In its influential early years, Battersea provided the paradigmatic example of training students in humility and self-denial – a side of teacher training which never went away in the Victorian period even as it came to coexist more fully with a desire to uplift students socially, culturally, and intellectually.

In the annual reports on the college Kay stressed the ascetic daily regimen. Students did almost all the domestic work themselves, farming and gardening took up several hours each day, and dress had to be simple “lest it should degenerate into foppery.” The food was very basic, resembling the workhouse diet with its reliance on coarse, stale bread and gruel for staples.¹⁴ He invoked monastic fraternalism as the model for teachers of the poor, explicitly encouraging them to imitate the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine in France while remaining Protestants. “The path of the teacher is strewn with disappointments, if he commence with a mercenary spirit,” Kay wrote, warning teachers-in-training of focusing primarily on the social status and economic rewards that might be had from teaching. “It is full of encouragement, if he be inspired with the spirit of Christian charity.” This “spirit of Christian charity” might even lead to a life of celibacy. Kay justified the ascetic regime at Battersea because “it was desirable

¹³ Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 182-92.

¹⁴ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education*, 312-14, 404.

that the pupils should be prepared for a life of self-denial ... A schoolmaster might settle in a situation in which a school-house only was provided. Prudence might dictate that he should not marry, and then his domestic comfort would depend on himself.”¹⁵ This rhetoric may also have been a way to keep costs down by providing a logic for the lack of comforts and privacy at the college. Prospective Protestant teachers seem not to have found such a life very appealing since so few of them went on to become workhouse teachers.

Eight years after Battersea was founded, Kay-Shuttleworth tried to create another training college at Kneller Hall along the same principles as Battersea, though this time it was entirely state funded – Victorian Britain’s only experiment with an entirely state-funded college. But unable to attract enough students despite offering a completely free education and despite a shortage of training college spaces compared to demand in general, Kneller Hall had to close its doors after only being opened a few years.¹⁶

St. Mark’s College under the Derwent Coleridge exemplified a more balanced approach to teacher’s training, blending asceticism and aestheticism, intellectual and manual labor. One of three children of Samuel Taylor Coleridge to survive to adulthood, Derwent Coleridge experimented with following in his father’s footsteps as a man of letters before opting to become a clergyman by returning to Cambridge to take an MA in divinity. Throughout life, his intellectual interests ranged broadly. He was a noted

¹⁵ Ibid., 312.

¹⁶ For some of the reasons, see Henry Moseley, “Report on the Training College at Kneller Hall,” in *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education* (London, 1852), 284-300. See also Christopher Bischof, “Masculinity, Social Mobility, and the Plan to End Pauperism: Kneller Hall Teachers’ Training College,” *Journal of Social History*, 46, 4 (2013), 1039-1059.

linguist, exhibiting some fluency in Zulu, Arabic, Hawaiian, Hungarian, and Welsh among other languages. He published literary criticism in the quarterly magazines, edited anthologies, and moved in an intellectual circle that included the historian Thomas Macaulay, the poet Sidney Walker, and vicar of Rugby John Moultrie. He also taught in a private middle-class school for a short time and in the 1830s participated in the management of an elementary school attached to his living as a clergyman in Cornwall. In 1841 he was appointed the first principal of St. Mark's College, where he would remain for more than twenty years.

St. Mark's took for its premises a manor house with eleven acres of land attached on Fulham Road in Chelsea, about two and a half miles southwest of Hyde Park Corner. The land attached to the college included an herb and potato garden, farmland, meadowland, and a two and a half acre pleasure ground. It had formerly been the estate of the cosmopolitan antiquarian and diplomat William Richard Hamilton, who had elaborately renovated the century-old house in Greco-Roman style, inside and out, including the construction of a full-scale replica of the Elgin marbles in the dining room. After the purchasing the estate, the National Society further renovated the college and also added several buildings in the Italianate style to form a quadrangle. The National Society also had a ornate chapel constructed where Coleridge led the college in High Church services and in which students spent just over seven hours a week singing, both as preparation for teaching choral music later and owing to a sense of the intrinsic moral good that the "superior beauty" of music would do.¹⁷

¹⁷ Barnard, *National Education*, 812; Thomas Croker and Thomas Croker Junior, *A Walk From London to Fulham* (London: William Tegg, 1860), 131-4.

In his 1862 pamphlet, “The Teachers of the People,” Coleridge expounded the vision of teacher training that he had implemented at St. Mark’s. Published in the immediate aftermath of the infamous Revised Code, an attempt to emphasize the absolute basics in elementary education and do away with supposedly superfluous education, “The Teachers” defended a wide-ranging education with a sizable portion of high culture for teachers and their future pupils. “Is the elementary schoolmaster too highly trained?” he began the pamphlet by asking.¹⁸ He utterly denied it: “the art of elementary tuition demands, on the part of the teacher, all the mental culture which you can bestow on him, and the more the better.” The instruction should be “appropriate,” he clarified, “but be it ever borne in mind that we are educating men, not forming machines ... Our business is to educate a class, not a caste of elementary schoolmasters.”¹⁹ In distinguishing between class and caste, Coleridge drew an implicit comparison between the work of education at home and the working of the civilizing mission abroad, particularly in India. A class was a secular, modern social grouping that, though mostly closed, was ultimately permeable in a way that caste, associated with Hinduism and backwardness, was not. Gesturing to this distinction was a means of appropriating the widely-accepted imperial discourse against closed hierarchies created by religious beliefs and applying that to social relations at home; the great irony was that Coleridge saw the supposedly paradigmatically modern educational system in Britain as threatening to create a caste.²⁰

¹⁸ Derwent Coleridge, “The Teachers of the People,” (London, 1862), 6.

¹⁹ Ibid., 15-16.

²⁰ Missionaries in India wrote about education as a means of breaking down the caste system. See Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 27.

The work of well-trained teachers was not confined to reforming and making useful “the ‘Arabs of the street’ or the ‘crow-scarers’ of the village,” but to inculcating in all the children of the poor, the working classes, and even the lower-middle classes “that *solidarity* ... which I hold to be involved in the true idea of national education.”²¹ In practice, this vision included training teachers in gorgeous buildings with comfortable furnishings, a generously supplied library, a fully-equipped scientific laboratory, some liberty when it came to clothing, relatively varied and generous food offerings for the main meal of the day, and servants to do some of the cooking and cleaning.²² Coleridge countered critics who called for a regimen akin to that of Battersea by stressing the need for uplift: “this ascetic discipline ... seemed proper rather to bring down the lofty looks of the proud, than to raise the low estate of the humble.”²³ The men who would become teachers “must be raised before they [can] stoop,” he argued, justifying the wide-ranging education and some of the college’s comforts.²⁴

Neither “The Teachers” nor the actual regime at St. Mark’s bespoke a desire to do away with social hierarchy or to raise teachers dramatically above their social origins out of benevolence. Buried deep within the pamphlet were appeals to the self-interest of elites who would preserve the traditional social order: “The most highly educated youths are ... the best conducted; the most sensible of the obligations which they have incurred and the least disposed to be discontented with the wages which their services are likely to

²¹ Ibid., 6-7.

²² Derwent Coleridge, “Chapters in College Life I. 1841,” in *St. Mark’s Magazine* 1, 1 (January and February, 1891), 31-35. Marjon University Archive (MUA). Letters from Coleridge and reports by HMI Moseley quoted in Barnard, *National Education*, 805-821.

²³ Coleridge, “The Teachers of the People,” 29.

²⁴ Ibid., 32.

command,” Coleridge noted. In other words, well-trained teachers would be obedient to their social superiors and perpetuate the status quo. “Ill indeed do the upper classes understand their own interests if they see in this movement [to educate teachers well] any danger to their prerogative. Its real tendency is to preserve the existing map of society, while it softens its demarcations.” What the critics of colleges like St. Mark’s really feared, Coleridge believed, was that they would lead to remaking the social order – that as teachers crossed class lines on account of their training, they would pave the way for the masses to follow. He assured them that softening the edges of class boundaries would reduce friction and conflict.

Even his attitude towards teachers-in-training was contradictory. Though the pamphlet was addressed primarily to the makers of teacher training policy, he declared he would “be well content” if he was able to warn one teacher-in-training “against high thoughts and impatient words, as inconsistent with the true dignity of his mission; cheering him on his way, and reconciling him to a life of lowly duty.”²⁵ And students had to literally lower their heads at St. Mark’s as they grew their own potatoes, looked after pigs, farmed crops, and contributed on a rotating basis to the cooking and cleaning. An applicant to St. Mark’s had to answer the following question “in his own words, and in his own handwriting” in the presence of a clergyman: “Are you prepared to lead in the College a simple and laborious life; working with your hands as well as acquiring book-knowledge, and rendering an exact obedience to the discipline of the place?”²⁶ In the end

²⁵ Ibid., 10, 21, 41.

²⁶ Quoted in Barnard, *National Education*, 810.

teachers-in-training at St. Mark's had to stoop even as they were being raised – and raising themselves.

Whitelands and the Glasgow Free Church Training College

Whitelands was the sister college of St. Mark's, also run by the National Society and located down the road in Chelsea on bustling King's Road. It was so-named because it was located in Whitelands House, a Georgian villa taken on a 99 year lease beginning in 1841 (at the expiration of which it moved to Putney, eventually merging into what is today Roehampton University). The building featured in the guidebooks of the day for its beauty and historical character, though the young women complained that it was cold, drafty, and damp. Whitelands was staffed mostly by women, including governesses, a head governess, and, above them all, a Lady Superintendent. It also had occasional male lecturers and a Principal, always a clergyman, in charge of the entire college.

For thirty-three years the Reverend John Faunthorpe served as Principal. A graduate of Battersea training college who went on to earn a BA and MA from the University of London while working full-time as a faculty member at another training college, Faunthorpe sympathized more with the students than the two previous principals, both Cambridge graduates who had worked only as parish clergymen.²⁷ He was also perpetually insecure in his intellectual and cultural learning, reading and writing as much to prove himself educated as to learn. Inspired by the work of John Ruskin, Faunthorpe struck up a correspondence with him in the 1870s. Initially letters of mutual admiration –

²⁷ Cole, *Whitelands*, 14.

Faunthorpe of Ruskin's vision of an ideal society, Ruskin of Faunthorpe's work as an educator – Faunthorpe quickly began referring to Ruskin as “master” and asking his opinion on his intellectual development.²⁸ Given that in his own life Ruskin oscillated between teaching at Oxford and the Working Men's College, addressing himself to the “upper, or undistressed middle classes” in works like *Sesame and Lilies* and the working classes in *Fors Clavigera*, training colleges no doubt held an appeal as institutions that drew on and bridged both social and cultural milieus.²⁹

The son of “a small (very small) Farmer” educated first at a dame's school then at two National Society schools before going on to Battersea, Faunthorpe was something of an anomaly among college principals. Of the 85 applicants for the principal position at Whitelands he was the only one with any background in elementary teaching or teacher training. He recalled in his 1909 manuscript autobiography that as he and the five other finalists waited to be interviewed by Whitelands' Managing Council, “Mrs. Newton the Lady Superintendant, who had been one of Miss Nightingale's nurses in the hospital at Scutari, gave us tea; and expressed her wish that the Council would appoint a Principal over them who knew something about the work.” She got her wish, but only by a one-vote majority after an initial tie between Faunthorpe and a clergyman who had never before set foot in a training college until that day. Already by the 1870s training college graduates filled most of the faculty positions in colleges across Britain and in the empire,

²⁸ Thomas J. Wise ed., *Letters from John Ruskin to Rev. J.P. Faunthorpe, M.A.* (London, 1895).

²⁹ John Ruskin, *The Sesame and the Lilies* (Sunnyside, Kent: George Allen, 1882), x.

but principal positions largely remained the prerogative of Oxbridge graduates until very end of the century.

Faculty members at Whitelands were so delighted by a principal with experience that they gave him a handsomely bound Latin dictionary as a welcoming present. Probably meant kindly and straightforwardly, this gift to celebrate a principal who was in touch with the spirit and mission of a training college underscored the distance that remained between Faunthorpe's experiences and those of the students and staff at the college. Unlike at male training colleges, at women's colleges like Whitelands Latin was excluded from the curriculum to clear space for needlework and domestic economy. Faunthorpe had gone on to study Latin in even greater depth after graduating from Battersea by taking a bachelor's and then master's degree from the University of London, an opportunity that remained closed to women until 1878. Still, he seems to have treated his staff well and listened to their advice.³⁰ Though it went through periodic hardships owing to troubled finances, under Faunthorpe Whitelands became one of the leading women's training colleges in Britain – indeed, in 1878 Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Tinling called it “*the best in England*.”³¹

The Glasgow Free Church Training College was located on the other side of the Tweed and came out of a quite different religious and educational tradition. The Free Church was formed in 1843 when the evangelical wing of the Church of Scotland broke away out of anger over state and landlord interference in what they felt to be spiritual

³⁰ WA: John Faunthorpe, Ilicet: *Being Life and Work in Three Training Colleges, Battersea, Chelsea, and Whitelands 1874-1907* (1909), 1-4.

³¹ Quoted in Cole, *Whitelands*, 15.

matters. About a quarter of the ministers in the Church of Scotland followed Thomas Chalmers to the Free Church, abandoning their livings, churches, and schools in the process. However, the Free Church declared its commitment from the beginning that “the cause of education and evangelization at home [and] the spiritual interests of the colonies ... should not suffer by [the Free Church’s] separation from the State, and all her consequent difficulties.”³² So closely linked were the projects of education and evangelization at home and abroad that they initially fell under the purview of the same body within the Free Church, the Board of Missions and Education.³³ Thomas Chalmers did not believe education and evangelization could be separated at all. The climatic final chapter of his *On Political Economy* was dedicated to the subject of Christian education for the poor and working people of Britain. He cautioned all those admirers of Scottish education that the mechanics of the system could not simply be copied and replicated as “it is mainly to the presence and power of the religious ingredient that the moral greatness of our peasantry is owing.”³⁴ The moderate evangelicalism subscribed to by Chalmers and later the Free Church emphasized moral over material paternalism, assuming that improved material conditions would follow in the wake of foresight, self-denial, hard work, and spiritual belief – qualities to be cultivated by ministers and teachers working harmoniously together.³⁵ The education of teachers to play the role of

³² James Dodds, *A Century of Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1846), 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁴ Thomas Chalmers, *On Political Economy; In Connexion With the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1834), 434.

³⁵ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 81-89.

moral paternalists affecting the improvement of their pupils' character and spiritual life was to be an end not just to evangelizing society, but improving economic and social relations.

The Glasgow Free Church Training College opened on August 11, 1845 following a rapid construction. Opening day was a community affair. Seven hundred children, their parents, the staff, and many members of the Free Church packed into the college to admire it and listen to a speech by the Rev. McLormier, who delivered a Calvinistic lecture to children "on [the subject of] their duties."³⁶ The high turnout reflected the commitment of the Free Church community to education. By 1849 the Free Church had raised £40,000 to build schools and pay teachers, £12,500 to build two training colleges (the other was in Edinburgh), and hundreds of pounds more each year for a scholarship and library book fund for the colleges.

Unlike so many other training colleges, which took over and renovated manor houses or villas, the Free Church Training College was almost completely new, meaning that Church elders got to decide what their training college should look like. Located just north of the Glasgow city center in Cowcaddens, the college faintly resembled a cathedral with a front made up of three towers, the middle one tallest at four stories, flanked by a long structure reminiscent of a nave, and ending in a back face made up of another three towers. Crenellations along the top and small decorative turrets on top of the towers evince the influence of the Scotch Baronial style then becoming popular in Glasgow as an architectural gesture to the Scottish past. Despite the external ornamentation, the interior

³⁶ Strathclyde University Archive (SUA): FCTC/1/1, Minute Book 1845-1860 (no pages).

was wanting: “two of the lecture rooms are comparatively small, and their ventilation, from the lowness of the ceiling, is rather defective,” HMI Charles Wilson reported in 1858.³⁷ Nor was Cowcaddens the most fashionable or elegant district in Glasgow, though it was scarcely as bad as the editor of the college magazine at the rival Church of Scotland Training College made it out to be when he replied to a letter asking what to bring to the Free Church College (the letter was either sent to the wrong college magazine, or outright invented as part of the ongoing rivalry between the two Glaswegian training colleges):

We can scarcely describe the climate of the Cowcaddens. The air is redolent with the perfumes of fish-supper shops, and chemical works, not to speak of a police station and an F.C.T.C. Regarding your outfit, we should advise you to provide yourself with a medicine chest, two bottles of smelling salts, a respectable handbag, and a return ticket.³⁸

On the whole, though the college was surprisingly nice given the financial situation and evangelicalism of the Free Church. The overall effect combined gravitas and religiosity, a reflection of the Free Church’s evangelicalism and a statement that it took education very seriously and was here to stay.

Unlike English, Welsh, and imperial training colleges, Scottish colleges were coeducational and mostly nonresidential – the latter owing to the influence of Scottish universities, which also tended to be nonresidential. From the beginning, they accepted more women than men each year, about four women for every three men in the early years and increasing gradually over time. Part of the reason it was so difficult to attract men was their cultural aversion to the idea of a training college. There persisted the ideal

³⁷ SUA: FCTC/10/1-2, “Report on the Free Church Training College, at Glasgow,” 407.

³⁸ “Answers to Correspondents,” *The Dundas Vale Monthly*, 1 (Glasgow, 1899-1900), 15.

of the “lad o’ pairts,” whereby the son of a crofter or tradesman who was recognized as highly intelligent by a parochial school teacher was then given a university education paid for by the Church or a local notable, in return for which he usually became a minister or parochial schoolmaster himself. Despite scholarship funds to training colleges being easier to get for men due to lack of competition and some special male-only scholarships, the lad o’ pairts tradition made an education at a teacher’s training college too bitter a pill to swallow for many men. The looming specter of the university-educated parochial schoolmaster also influenced the intellectual tone at Scottish training colleges, leading college authorities to emphasize the liberal arts, especially for men, and to hire faculty that would be equally at home in a university. The coeducational nature of Scottish colleges was a concession to practicality as it allowed the construction and maintenance of fewer buildings and the employment at each college of just one faculty member in many subjects to teach both the men and the women, though each sex in its own class. Despite being coeducational, colleges cultivated a strict separation of the sexes. Invoking a classic Victorian trope used to describe women, John Adams recalled of his days at the college in the 1870s that “those 72 women were much more mysterious to us than [any] majestic array.”³⁹ There was even a rumor “that the government regulation forbade any student to speak to another of the opposite sex within two hundred yards of the College gates.”⁴⁰

³⁹ SUA:FCTC/12/6, John Adams, “’Tis Fifty Years Since,’ Recollections by Sir John Adams,” *The New Dominie*, 6 (March, 1928), 41.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Scottish colleges also played a key role in projecting the image of the denomination to which they belonged, especially in the case of the Free Church. Even more so than their English and Welsh counterparts, Scottish colleges prepared graduates to shore up and expand the flock of the faithful abroad and at home, where Presbyterianism had just fractured spectacularly and where Roman Catholic Irish immigrants had begun to arrive in significant numbers following the famine in the 1840s. The Free Church was also active overseas in the Empire, especially India, where they competed, but more often cooperated with other denominations to establish churches and schools for the local populations.

Emerging in the early 1840s, training colleges could hardly avoid imbibing some of the asceticism, harsh paternalism, secularism, and utilitarian attitudes towards social mobility that resulted both in and from the New Poor Law of 1834. Indeed, James Kay, who played the leading role in establishing the first of the new generation of training colleges at Battersea, came to teacher training directly following his role as an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner and hoped that trained teachers would work in the Poor Law system. However, the harsh, secular modernity of the New Poor Law was far from the only influence on Victorian training colleges.

An older paternalism and a persistent emphasis on religion were also present. Embodied by the manor houses, villas, and plantation- and cathedral-style buildings in which they were built, this gentler, more personal paternalism stressed the importance of uplifting students to bring about a better educated and more harmonious society. This

uplift was to be achieved through daily contact between the principal and students, the aesthetics of the college, and a pervasive Christian spirit. Institutions located largely in manor houses, designed to produce teachers who would control and limit social mobility by uplifting those teachers, training colleges were symptomatic and constitutive of a modernity that looked nostalgically backward and eagerly, fumblingly forward.⁴¹

* * *

ii. Discipline and Student Sociability

Training colleges aspired to be total institutions. This is a familiar story: everything about training colleges from the layout to the rules to the curriculum was carefully planned so that students could be observed and disciplined such that in time they would come to discipline themselves. Every minute of almost every day was accounted for in detailed timetables.⁴² At Whitelands the rotating assignments of small numbers of students to cleaning, kitchen, and laundry were accounted for in a sub-timetable describing work “performed by the students of Whitelands, but not mentioned in the Time-Table.”⁴³ The timetable even specified variations with a series of asterisks, crosses, and double crosses. For instance, first year students at Whitelands forewent their normal schedule of a walk or household work on Mondays to get an early start on their history lessons, which lasted from 10:30am to 11:30am.⁴⁴

⁴¹ This description of modernity is influenced by Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 5-6.

⁴² WA: “Report for 1852-53,” 10-11.

⁴³ WA: “Report for 1853-54,” 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



Image 2.2: Sketch of Whitelands College in 1890, facing the side and back.⁴⁵

Whitelands' architecture reflected the same concern with controlling students' lives as the timetables. The original Georgian villa in the front left of the college in the above sketch was given to the principal as housing for himself and his family. The villa was the only part of the college facing the street to have windows at the ground level. The managers' concern to impede the young women's ability to gaze out into the street trumped the Victorian obsession with ventilation. In the student areas of the college the best lit and ventilated rooms were those that faculty members also had to occupy, such as the classrooms, dining hall, chapel, general assembly room, and the dormitories. This arrangement left awkward, ill-suited spaces at the garden level on the courtyard side of

⁴⁵ WA: *Jubilee Report of Whitelands College* (London, 1891), i.

the building with small windows that did not let in much light for the students' library, recreation room, and art room. By convention, these rooms were restricted to students with only student monitors to supervise their peers. In the dormitory, students' "rooms" were in fact mere curtained-off areas of a single long room in which governesses, the lowest ranking staff members, slept at either end or even in between the cubicles so as to supervise the girls. Conversation after lights out was strictly forbidden.⁴⁶ Bishop Otter College, founded in 1872 by Louisa Hubbard and intended for ladies from well-to-do families was, as it liked to advertise, a unique exception in that it provided full walls and doors in students' rooms – Whitelands' style curtained areas were the norm.⁴⁷ Darlington College, for instance, allowed students only curtains for privacy and interspersed the governesses' bedrooms between these curtained cubicles.⁴⁸ The St. Albans Diocesan Training College at Hockerhill had curtained off cubicles too, with one exception: "The senior student (top girl) of the college sleeps always in a separate bedroom in the North [dormitory]."⁴⁹ In making a private room a reward for the top girl, the college managers inspired intellectual competition which might raise the overall reputation of the college, showed that they knew privacy was desirable, and indicated their belief that the vast majority of students at college needed supervision both day and night.

⁴⁶ *Jubilee Report of Whitelands College* i-v; Cole, "Whitelands College." On the architectural expressions of institutional aspirations, see Carla Yanni, *The Architecture of Madness: Insane Asylums in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Widdowson, *Going up into the Next Class*, 51.

⁴⁸ Howarth Barnes, *Training Colleges for Schoolmistresses* (London: Howarth Barnes, 1891), 72.

⁴⁹ Barnes, *Training Colleges for Schoolmistresses*, 28.

Male training colleges had similar timetables, regulations, and architecture, which one St. Mark's alumnus described as creating a “feeling of strangeness” and consequently a sense of “homelessness.”⁵⁰ College life involved new surroundings, new restrictions, new faces and most of all “a seemingly unfriendly, and certainly unhomelike place,” revealing both something of the atmosphere at college and his expectations that it would be more domestic than institutional.⁵¹ The alumnus admitted that this feeling eased up over time and he even noted that the Matron and Principal encouraged students to call them “Mom” and “Dad,” though the paternalistic posturing of college authorities established them as disciplinarians and authority figures as much as purveyors of emotional support and domestic intimacy.

Not even the Scottish colleges were exempt from paternalistic regulation. Though they were non-residential, Scottish colleges kept a list of carefully vetted homes in which students could rent a room. As an additional measure, these homes were “visited from time to time by the Rector, usually in the evening, and unexpectedly, such visits being repeated probably six or eight times in the session of six months.”⁵² The Free Church authorities explained that “We prefer the good old Scottish plan [used at the universities], which has nothing of the monastic, or hospital character, crowding the persons under discipline into one artificial household, and subjecting them to one uniform martinet domiciliary routine.”⁵³ Yet Scottish colleges still believed that membership in a smaller,

⁵⁰ *St Mark's Magazine*, 1, 7 (1891), 172.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 172.

⁵² *Committee of Council of Education Report for 1851-2* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1852), 128.

⁵³ Quoted in Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London: University of London Press, 1970), 69.

more personal household and the performance of domestic routines served as a bulwark against immorality. Therefore they required their students to become active members of their lodging household by eating meals with the families and even leading the nightly prayers.⁵⁴ There may have been nothing “uniform” and comparatively little institutional about the discipline imposed by the Free Church College, but its disciplinary aspirations equaled that of the residential colleges.

There were also rules governing everyday behavior, like the dress code established by Mrs. Field, Whitelands’ Lady Superintendent from 1846-72, which specified that:

The utmost simplicity of dress and modesty of demeanour are to be observed, and strict attention must be paid to the rules of this Institution. Dresses are to be of one colour, or of a very neat pattern. Silk ones are not to be worn ... No coloured bonnets are to be worn unless of a very dark colour ... No bows are to be worn on the hair nor coloured nets, nor ornaments of any kind except a brooch ... None of the rules are to be broken without permission on Saturdays or in the holidays occurring between the long vacation.⁵⁵

Male training colleges also had rules on the books requiring plain, simple dress to prevent “foppery.”⁵⁶ Specific rules as well as a general code requiring respectable and proper behavior were sometimes enforced, as Emma Moss of Whitelands found out on April 28, 1842 when she was expelled for attempting to accept clandestinely a note from a guardsman who resided in the nearby barracks.⁵⁷ Thomas Hardy’s depiction of Melchester training college in *Jude the Obscure* with its oppressive rules and oversight captures nicely the stereotype of the Victorian training college derived from all their

⁵⁴ Ibid., 70.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Cole, *Whitelands College*, 7.

⁵⁶ James Kay-Shuttleworth, “Second Report on Battersea,” *Four Periods in Public Education*, 404.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

regulations. The lady superintendent at Melchester punished Sue Brideshead with a week's solitary confinement for not returning in time from one of her few permitted evenings of leave from the college.⁵⁸ During a single meeting of the managing committee of the Free Church Training College in Glasgow in January of 1861, two students were expelled for cheating in an exam and a third for "direct and persistent disobedience to orders," which created "a spirit subversive of all discipline."⁵⁹ A year after that Robert Shedding was expelled for "insubordination;" the year after that, John Dickie "Left [the] profession in disgust," presumably disgust at the strict discipline, after repeated reprimands for flouting the rules.⁶⁰ When viewed from this perspective, training college life does seem exceptionally regulated and unforgiving.

Rules, romance, and friendships

However, the records created by college authorities give only one side of the story. The records produced by students reveal a consensus that rules were meant to be broken and bent, ignored and protested. Rules and their enforcement changed over time too, for the most part becoming more lenient as the century progressed. "We were sad dogs in those days," recalled F.A.T of his experience at St. Mark's. "Rules there were galore, rules reasonable, rules we considered unreasonable then, though we recognize their necessity now, and rules without either rhyme or reason." Yet, he and his companions broke such rules easily and often, he confessed: "Why! We couldn't live

⁵⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896), 164-167

⁵⁹ SUA: FCTC/1/2, Minute Book of the Glasgow Free Church Training College (1860-1891), January 7, 1861.

⁶⁰ SUA: FCTC/2/1, Register of Students 1845-1881, (no pages).

together in such close companionship without somebody being always urging one or other of us to break something – a rule, a pane of glass, a promise, a cucumber frame in the West Garden, or somebody else's head in the skittle alley. And a rule was the most readily broken of all.”⁶¹ The particular focus of F.A.T's article was smoking. He recalled “Smoking in *any* street [near the college] being forbidden, many felt bound to smoke in *every* street.” He and his friends even smoked in the bedrooms on occasion. “I smoked in College because it was forbidden,” he wrote, half in defense of youthful rebelliousness and half disapproving of his former self, “and now never smoke at all.”⁶²

Often the very alumni who lamented the harsh rules of colleges in their early days in one breath deflated their own draconian portrait in the next. “Incredible as it may seem to the present generation we were expected to take our letters to a Tutor for him to initial the envelope before they were placed in the college post-box at the office,” wrote one alumnus who had attended St. Mark's in 1854-56. “Of course,” he went on, “this passport system was an utter sham, and I had hardly made arrangements for evading its impertinence when I found that the Tutors treated their part of the system with manifest contempt.”⁶³ John Faunthorpe was among those staff members who was neither fond of nor adept at enforcing discipline. These failings featured prominently in a list of his faults as a disciplinarian which he drew up in his manuscript autobiography, a moment of moral self-accounting worthy of Benjamin Franklin. “Second fault, I could not always keep my class of lively lads in order. Third fault, I could not keep the students quiet

⁶¹ F.A.T., “History of Smoking at S. Mark's,” *St. Mark's Magazine*, 5 (1895), 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶³ MUA, “Chapters in College Life III, 1854-56,” in *St Mark's Magazine*, 1, 7 (July, 1891) 174-5.

when they went to bed. Fourth fault. I did not like superintending the workshop an hour a day. Fifth fault, I hated seeing after the pedolavoment [foot washing, presumably] of the boys on a Saturday night.”⁶⁴ Faunthorpe’s aspirations to disciplinarian perfection seem to have been a product of retrospective self-fashioning more than of the moment. While college faculty members could be reluctant to enforce discipline, some students actually enjoyed the discipline. Clara Grant found the rules and everyday routine of Salisbury Diocesan Training College in the 1880s fairly strict since she did not seem inclined to break them, but that, it turns out, was what she wanted: “I entered college accustomed to a well-ordered routine and with certain conventual leanings (had I been a Roman Catholic and caught young I might have been a nun), so rules to me were never irksome. They rarely are until we begin to talk about them.”⁶⁵ In a way, it was the act of articulating restrictions that bothered students, a fact which we must bear in mind when writing the history of Victorian disciplinary regimes.

Defying, circumventing, or even just mocking the rules was the basis of many friendships and a collective identity which stretched across time and space. This collective identity could be considered corporatist, particularly in Emile Durkheim’s sense of it, but I avoid using that term because in many varieties of corporatism the institution plays a leading role in defining the community ethos whereas in training colleges it was students who defined it.⁶⁶ Autograph albums were used to record and to forge these friendships and sense of collective identity. These albums were initially

⁶⁴ WA: John Faunthorpe, *Ilicet: My Autobiography*, 20.

⁶⁵ Clara E. Grant, *Farthing Bundles* (London: published by the author, 1929), 31.

⁶⁶ Emile Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, Bryan Turner ed. and trans, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

blank books loaned out by their owners to friends who wrote poems or drew sketches celebrating friendships, lamenting dull routines, mocking the staff, and, particularly among the young women, celebrating or fantasizing about illicit courtships. The process by which these albums were made evinces trust and friendship among students as well as a desire to make college a shared experience. Graduates could and did take these portable albums with them from school to school as their career progressed, a tangible reminder of their enduring friendships from their college days. Many of the albums in archives today were donated by the children and grandchildren of alumni and their survival, as well as the fact that they were not donated until after the owner's death, stands as a testament to the value placed on them. Historians have very largely ignored these albums or, if they have noted their existence, have not analyzed their content.⁶⁷

One anonymous Whitelands autograph book contains a poem on its inside cover which captures the importance of these objects to their owners:

Comes a stranger takes this book
O'er its leaves doth lightly look
Light-laughing turns them o'er
'Just an album nothing more'

Comes another one who knows
Every name this Album shows
One who knows them each all
Names & faces doth recall

Thirty-Forty years are gone
Covers wilded & pages torn
Once again this book is read
Moistened eyes & downcast head.

Spoken words forgotten die
Written words remembered lie

⁶⁷ Dina Copelman notes that the existence of these autograph books shows that students made friendships, but does not go into an analysis of their content. *London's Women Teachers*, chp. 6

These I crave, nor gold nor fame
The Loved, Remembered, be the Name.⁶⁸

Though maudlin, to be sure, this paean to friendship across space and time in lieu of riches or fame has a ring of truth to it. This cover poem also alludes to another characteristic of autograph books: their dual nature as both private and public. Each was the property of an individual and her friends wrote to her intimate messages celebrating their loving, enduring friendship. Yet autograph books were circulated among an entire year's cohort – perhaps even more widely, given the poem's reference to “a stranger” looking at the book. They made private friendships publicly legible. Men too had similar attitudes towards their autograph books. We can see this in the concluding stanza of a poem in the 1890 autograph album of Clarence Flower, a Battersea student: “So perhaps in future years of life, / When you this page will see, / Why, then you'll think of college days, / And so, with them, of me.”⁶⁹ College friendships and experiences cast a long shadow over teachers' lives.

Annie Blizzard's autograph book from her time at Whitelands in 1883-4 is among the best preserved and most complete surviving specimens of this form of literary socialization. It offers a spectacular glimpse into the everyday realities and fantasies of her cohort. It is difficult at times to know where fact ends and fiction begins, especially regarding entries on romance. One friend used her time in possession of the book to draw a greenhouse scene of a mustachioed gentleman kissing the hand of a scandalously dressed young lady with a naked ankle and exposed arms while a matronly lady – presumably her chaperone – spies on them from behind a plant (figure two). Another

⁶⁸ WA: Anonymous Autograph Book, c. 1879, in “Students Albums and Memories C”.

⁶⁹ MUA: Autograph book of Clarence Flower.

sketched two more respectably attired lovers holding hands in a secluded woods. These images also reflect students' skill at drawing, critical in teaching as a subject unto itself and as an adjunct for the teaching of other subjects such as geography.



Image 2.3: Courtship Scene Sketch in Autograph Book of Annie Blizzard.⁷⁰

Even respectable courtships were forbidden for fear that students would marry and give up teaching less than two years following graduation. Giving up teaching so soon meant that the training college would not receive a government grant for that student since after 1868 the grant given to the college for each student was contingent upon their obtaining their “parchment” (their full certificate rather than just the provisional one gained from passing the examination), a feat they could only accomplish after passing the certification exam *and* successfully completing two years of teaching in an inspected school.⁷¹ Colleges in Scotland opted to track down female teachers who married in an attempt to regain the cost of their education. As the Secretary of Church of Scotland Education Committee explained, “You could not really interfere with an event of that sort without a very good reason, and I have had some curious correspondence on that subject with the intending bridegrooms. Once or twice ... I have made the man pay for his wife, and he has sent me a sum to satisfy the authorities.”⁷² At Whitelands, Faunthorpe had students sign a quasi-legal document declaring that they would not marry until they had obtained their certificate. The young women’s interest in the opposite sex would seem to have survived this ban. A poem on “The Whitelands’ Students at St. Luke’s Church, Trinity Sunday 1884” celebrated clandestine flirting while poking fun at prim governesses and crusty clerics:

We walk to church by two and two

⁷⁰ WA: Autograph Book of Annie Blizzard

⁷¹ Cole, *Whitelands College*, 21-22. Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland*, 74.

⁷² Quoted in Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland*, 75.

As Noah's beasts were wont to do
 And close behind us comes Miss Pratt
 Who dares a lover to raise his hat.

St Luke's is gained we enter in
 And take our seats with stifled grin
 Sit bolt upright, arrange our books
 And put on sanctimonious looks.

...

But hark what is that shuffling near
 There's something wrong it's very clear
 A Gent is in the Whitelands' Pew
 Oh what a treat! That's something new.

How we all hope he will stay
 It will help to pass the time away
 But drat that Verger – cross old stick –
 Out she has marched him – double quick.

...

The choir and Parsons now arrive
 And of the latter there are five
 Who are so 'cut up,' dried' and 'yellow'
 That all would scarce make one good fellow.⁷³

This poem operates in two registers at once. Most obviously it is a humorous narrative that contrasts the relaxed attitude of the girls with the uptightness of the governesses – and Miss Pratt was the actual name of a Whitelands governess, a name which gave students fun without end. However it also borders on sacrilegious in the first stanza, deflates clerical gravitas in the last stanza – and the principal of the college was always a cleric while several others sat on the college management committee – and challenges the authority of the governesses throughout. Even parsons' manhood is called into question. The poem concludes with a defiant couplet: "Ah though our heads they supervise / They can't control our wicked eyes." These last lines suggest that the more closely students'

⁷³ WA: Autograph Book of Annie Blizzard.

sexuality was supervised in the hope of creating upright self-disciplining women, the more defiant they became – even as they “put on sanctimonious looks.”

Not all women were welcomed into the fold of a cohort’s friendship, however. Unlike men, who overwhelmingly came from the working or lower-middle class, a small but significant number of ladies from well-to-do families pursued teacher’s training. While becoming a governess would have preserved more social status and allowed a lady to forego residence in a training college with all its chafing restrictions, life as a governess often involved a great deal of subordination. The fictional Lucy Balfour expressed a very plausible sense of exasperation with her situation as governess and all the “petty tyranny” she endured. Tired of how common it was “to have her own pursuits, wishes, and hours of rest interfered with, and broken into,” she resolved to leave her position.⁷⁴ “It had occurred to her that the situation of trained schoolmistress offered the prospect of a better salary, more independence, and certainly less arduous duties than that of a governess,” so she decided to pursue elementary teaching.⁷⁵ But ladies who pursued teacher’s training found acceptance elusive.

Born into the Salopian squireocracy, Eglantyne Jebb decided after a youthful period of charity work, followed by attendance at Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford, that she would become an elementary teacher. Teaching appealed to her desire to come into contact with and improve the lives of the working class and poor. Deeply committed to expanding women’s opportunities to move in the public sphere, Jebb may also have seen

⁷⁴ *The Schoolmistress of Herondale*, 20.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

the decision to become a teacher as helping to legitimate women's work.⁷⁶ Oxford educated, she could have studied for and taken the certification exam directly, but she opted to enter Stockwell training college in 1898. There, she explained in a letter to her mother, "I might hope to cultivate the necessary qualities for the post, which are lacking in me."⁷⁷ Perhaps distrustful of Jebb's motives or upset that she had been admitted as an upperclassman, her fellow students gave her a harsh brush off whenever she attempted to socialize with them. She recorded her surprise: "My first shock of absolute astonishment that any one could venture to snub me, has already given way, by frequent repetition of the experience."⁷⁸ That the students at Stockwell turned away from Jebb rather than befriending and rallying around her is telling. They were comfortable, even proud of their social position, the tone of friendships and general spirit of solidarity at the college. Though reformers may have wished for more "lady" recruits to training colleges, there is little evidence that college students themselves did.⁷⁹

Like autograph albums, college magazines offered a space for the cultivation of student sociability. The earliest surviving magazines tend to be from the 1880s and early 1890s, though they refer to magazines produced as early as the 1860s. These early magazines were single-copy manuscripts editions and often contained some cutting remarks about the faculty and allusions to raunchy student behavior. James Rodger framed the mentality with which such magazines were written in a letter he attached to

⁷⁶ Linda Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action: Eglantyne Jebb and Save the Children, 1876-1928* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 73-75.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Mahood, *Feminism and Voluntary Action*, 76.

⁷⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 81.

⁷⁹ Frances Widdowson, *Going Up to the Next Class: Women and elementary teacher training 1840-1914* (London: Hutchinson Educational, 1980), 17-18.

the 1891 manuscript magazine of the Glasgow Free Church Training College when he donated it to the college archive forty years after its composition: “Remember this magazine was to be read and not printed and that accordingly there was little to suppress opinion.”⁸⁰ These manuscript magazines offer candid insights into student life, but by the same token students were reluctant to hand them over to the college even many years after graduation, which probably accounts for the survival of only a few specimens. Manuscript magazines gave way to print magazines with a circulation in the high hundreds in the 1880s. Contributors and readers included everyone from alumni from the 1840s to current students.

The manuscript Glasgow Free Church Training College Literary Society Magazine of 1891 is not just a source for the history of the cohort that produced it, but, like an autograph album, was itself an instrument for their collective self-fashioning. In its pages student contributors recounted how rules made behaving badly delectable, critically evaluated and found wanting their instructors, and described – or perhaps merely fantasized or speculated about – how some of their romances flourished to a point well past sweet words. But they also took seriously the pursuit of knowledge and culture. Many of the contributions to this and other magazines took the form of verse rather than prose, a self-conscious demonstration of literariness. There was also a subtle irony in the choice of verse with all its rules and constraints as the form of choice for describing rule breaking.

⁸⁰ SUA: FCTC/9/1/1, James Rodger, “Forward,” letter inserted into the front of *The Glasgow Free Church Training College Literary Society Magazine* (1891).

The biannual picnic particularly excited the imaginations of the students, whose accounts of these student-only, mixed-sex outings combined fact and fiction.

“Alphaneus” recounted a tale of romantic rivalry at the first year cohort’s picnic, which culminated in a wooden-sword fight between the rival suitors of the same female student. They eventually realized their foolishness and physical combat gave way to a friendly academic rivalry centered on the Christmastide examination: "One moment more my tale attend / To hear the quarrel's happy end. / The rivals once again have vowed; / The vow to tell you I'm allowed - / 'Who figures first at Christmastide, / The same shall claim her for his bride.'" ⁸¹ It is not clear here whether romantic pursuits are sublimated into academic pursuits or vice versa; love and schooling reinforce one another. Though the poem was probably at least a semi-fictional account, a few years after it was written two teachers who had met as students at the college did get married. ⁸²

The prose account of the second years’ picnic featured romance of a less chivalrous, but perhaps more realistic nature. Students had traveled by rail to a field near Inverkip, but it began to rain and they sought shelter in a barn. Several students went up in the hayloft and soon "The place which had once been all laughter and song was not now disturbed with a sound. Some of the most curious in the barn below went up to see what was the matter, but, singular to relate, they never returned; so it was only left for the innocent below to have their suspicions." The anonymous author concluded by noting that “if you ever hear in the future of blissful unions between members of our second year

⁸¹ Alphaneus, “The Picnic,” *Literary Society Magazine*, 83-92.

⁸² SUA: FCTC/8/4, Notice of Marriage.

you may be sure that that picnic was the first cause.”⁸³ Many other poems on love also appeared in the magazine that year. These poems covered the whole spectrum from the literary criticism of “the Jilted Tattie-Shifters” - who in the aftermath of a broken heart described all love poetry as “vile, raving rhapsodies” – to a first-year student's description of love as “a power which thrills to beauteous music the grand chords of his nature, and raises that divine echo in his soul which is reflected from crag to crag, from hill and grove, till it finds some fitting and noble object round which to twine and set in a golden halo of divine love.”⁸⁴ Love here becomes both Romantic and religious, something elusive to quest after “till” a “fitting and noble object” be found. As Martha Vicinus and Pauline Phipps have postulated about passion and love among the pioneers of women’s higher education, such questing after an idealized and even divinely sacred vision of love may have been source of sustenance for aspiring teachers since it transcended the trials and tedium of their everyday pursuits.⁸⁵

Charles Dickens, who evaluated an annual essay contest for Whitelands students, mocked teachers’ obsession with romance and love and their obsession with writing about it. He believed their understanding of love to be formulaic and their turn to teaching merely a means of finding a husband. Dickens declared of Miss Peecher, a schoolmistress in *Our Mutual Friend* probably modeled off the young women at Whitelands, that “If Mr Bradley Headstone had addressed a written proposal of marriage

⁸³ “The Second Year Picnic,” *Literary Society Magazine*, 174.

⁸⁴ *Literary Society Magazine*, 41-7, 55-7, 63-5, 79-83, 83-92, 171-4, 230-4.

⁸⁵ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), chp. four. Pauline Phipps, “Faith, Desire, and Sexual Identity: Constance Maynard’s Atonement for Passion,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18, 2 (May, 2009), 265-86.

to her, she would probably have replied in a complete essay on the theme exactly a slate long, but would certainly have replied yes.”⁸⁶ In their fiction, both Dickens and Thomas Hardy portrayed elementary teachers as prone to take love to such an extreme that it transforms into something creepy and self-destructive. Blind to the affections of Miss Peecher, a fellow teacher who would make a pragmatic match, Bradley Headstone of *Our Mutual Friend* idealizes and vainly pursues Lizzie Hexam, a beautiful lady born to a higher social station than he, despite receiving repeated rejections. Consumed by his passion, he becomes progressively wilder, even delusional, coming to believe Lizzie Hexam to be in love with, or at least loved by, another man, whom he attempts to murder. In Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, one teacher’s idealization of love as an idea and ideal proved her undoing. Sue Brideshead spent the night away from her training college with her love, the titular Jude. Punished for a transgression that she did not believe should be considered a transgression and swept up in a moment of passionate love, she ran away from the college to be with Jude. Beset by horrible misfortune after horrible misfortune, the novel ends with her children murdered by their step-brother and Sue trapped in an utterly loveless marriage to another man. Though *Jude* may be a critique of a society in which the pursuit of idealized love by non-elites like teachers is punished rather than rewarded, it nonetheless portrays such a pursuit as deeply misguided, even foolish.

Sympathetic though both Dickens and Hardy were to the working and lower-middle class experience in other matters, when it came to the love lives of teachers and teachers-in-training they missed the key point. In working-class culture romantic and

⁸⁶ Cole, “Whitelands,” 10; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 94; Philip Collins, *Dickens and Education* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 130-1.

familial love was something deeply felt but rarely spoken of. By contrast, to articulate a love of “love,” to romanticize and idealize it, to participate either in reality or through fantasy in courtship and marriage, was one of the defining features of middle-class culture.⁸⁷ Whatever the socioeconomic situation of a lover of love, even if they were born to working-class parents and still in training college, they had arrived into the middle class, at least culturally. For a fair number of the men in David Vincent’s study of working-class autobiographers, the pursuit of knowledge and culture above their social station led them to reject the primacy a “mercenary feeling” towards courtship and instead embrace the “emotions of Love.”⁸⁸ I would suggest we see a similar, even more pronounced version of this phenomenon among training college students. The marital relationship itself was another issue altogether, but romanticizing and idealizing courtship stood at the heart of college culture even for those students who did not marry in or straight out of college.

Despite their totalizing aspirations, in practice training colleges afforded students a space to forge their own sociability. Rules and regulations constrained students’ self-fashioning, but oftentimes students articulated their group identity against those very constraints, using them as a touchstone of what they were not rather than internalizing them. superb. Students cultivated a culture that lionized romantic attachments and smoking precisely because college authorities forbid them. They left college with

⁸⁷ On working-class love, see Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁸⁸ David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Europa, 1981), 50-1.

lifelong friends, memories of shared experiences inside and outside of the classroom, and a mentality that authorities and regulations need not always be obeyed. In short, training colleges created a teaching class that was closely bound together and had their own sensibilities. These qualities provided a culture and practical foundation for the professionalization movement that began to pick up steam in the 1870s as well as teachers' individual quests to find social fulfillment and freedom from overbearing authorities and rules once on the job.

* * *

iii. A Liberal Curriculum?

In the 1850s at St. Mark's training college in Chelsea, London ten students regularly violated the "lights out" rule in the evening at the end of long, exhausting days. Eager to increase their culture and general knowledge, they gave over half an hour every evening before sleep to what they styled, after the working-class clubs of the same name, "a mutual improvement society" in which they took turns giving lectures on a wide range of topics.⁸⁹ They were not alone: throughout the second half of the nineteenth century teachers-in-training across Britain supplemented their already daunting workload by writing poetry, reading novels, discussing Shakespeare, and holding debates about pressing social and political questions. From the perspective of many Victorian observers and historians today this anecdote is an anomaly, an aberration that carries little weight in telling the story about most teachers' training colleges. For them, training colleges were the sites of rote memorization and an introduction to the science of

⁸⁹ "Chapters in College Life III. 1854-56," *St. Mark Magazine* 1, 7 (1891), 175.

pedagogy. Though some educationalists called for a more liberal curriculum for teachers, according to this view teachers' education only began to emphasize expansive reading, original thinking, the cultivation of the individual, and general curiosity beginning in the 1890s with the rise of day training colleges affiliated with universities.⁹⁰

However, exploring student culture beyond the classroom suggests that there existed an informal liberal curriculum which embraced a general spirit of intellectualism and the pursuit of a wide range of knowledge dealing with the human condition and the state of society. Even the formal curriculum at training colleges can be seen as liberal in some ways when viewed through student accounts of their experiences of it, student responses to assignments, commonly used textbooks, and progressive educationalists' discourses about teacher training. While acknowledging that the formal curriculum emphasized rote memorization and was narrow, I argue that there was also a liberal side to it which students picked up on and which some educationalists emphasized in their work as inspectors, training college staff, and textbook authors.

Liberal and useful knowledge

⁹⁰ B.K. Hyams, "'Culture' for Elementary School Teachers: An Issue in the History of English Education," *Paedagogica Historica*, 11, 1 (1981), 111-120; Marianne Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher: A Comparative New Cultural History* (New York, 2011), chp. 7-8; Tropp, *The School Teachers*; H.C. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales* (London, 1977), 10-16, 23-28, 38-43, 57-87; Marjorie Cruikshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London, 1970), 64-125. On the importance of the pedagogy acquired at training colleges to teachers' professionalization, see Christina De Bellaigue, "The Development of Teaching as a Profession for Women Before 1870," *The Historical Journal*, 44, 4 (2001), 963-988.

What constituted a liberal curriculum changed over time. One way to define it that accounts for this change is as the set of subjects and practices which were believed at a particular time to make good citizens, give a solid grounding in the cultural touchstones, and hone critical thinking skills. The idea of the liberal curriculum emerged out of the humanist goal to make morally upright and dutiful citizens who did not merely acquire knowledge, but learned how to think, discern connections between ideas, and draw analytic conclusions. Classical languages and literature, mathematics, natural history, and a healthy helping of history and theology were the primary instruments by which the liberally educated subject was traditionally made in Britain.⁹¹ Though the core goals of a liberal education remained much the same as in centuries past, the curriculum used to achieve it changed in the Victorian period as English literature, athletics, and more modern science became important parts of the formal curriculum at Oxbridge and the elite public schools, torchbearers for the liberal ideal, while history's role in making good citizens was called into question.⁹² For teachers, a liberal curriculum was those

⁹¹ On the emergence of the liberal curriculum in Britain, see: Helen M. Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *The Growth of English Education, 1348-1648: A Social and Cultural History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Ronceverte, WV: Hambledon Press, 1989).

⁹² J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008); Paul Deslandes, *Oxbridge Men: Masculinity and the British Undergraduate Experience, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); J.R. de Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Public Schools in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Quadrangle, 1977); Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Joseph A. Diorio, "The Decline of History as a Tool of Moral Training," *History of Education Quarterly*, 25, 1-2 (1985), 71-101.

subjects and modes of learning that emphasized the development of knowledge, ways of thinking, and character attributes which were not typically seen as directly relevant for teaching Victorian Britain's working- and lower-middle-class children. This working definition also includes goals which policymakers and educationalists did not yet believe to be necessary for elementary teachers, but which some progressive educationalists believed *should* be. Among the more important of these goals were the ability to understand and explain intellectually the scientific processes at work in the operations of everyday life, the cultivation of imagination, and a capacity to reflect critically on broad social, cultural, and political developments.

The curriculum in Victorian Britain's teacher training college was not exclusively liberal. However there was strong liberal side to it. As historians of education have shown, formal curricula often result from compromises between different interest groups and general currents of thought, and thus served social and pedagogic purposes in tension with one another.⁹³ The contradictory elements of the curriculum in training colleges – part liberal, part useful – reflected a wider tension within Victorian Britain between a social conservatism which emphasized deference and limited upward mobility on the one hand, and a more radically meritocratic and democratic vision of society.⁹⁴ Training

⁹³ David Labaree, *The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939*, (New Haven, 1992); Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York, 2004); Thomas S. Popkewitz, "Curriculum History, Schooling and the History of the Present," *History of Education*, 40, 1 (January, 2011), 1-19.

⁹⁴ Harold Perkin has identified 1880 as a key date in the transition from a "respectable" to a "professional" society. In Perkins' view, the hallmark of the former social culture was limited social mobility and deference based on long-standing traditions of status while the "professional" society of late-Victorian and twentieth-century Britain allowed for meritocratic social mobility and deferred to professional expertise. Harold Perkin, *The*

college students tended to come from upper-working and lower-middle-class families, particularly the latter as the century wore on.⁹⁵ The majority of the pupils in the schools at which teachers-in-training would go on to work were the children of the poor and working class. The compromise between a liberal and useful formal curriculum reflected the limits, but also the possibilities of education as a means of transcending class. The informal curriculum, students' pursuit of liberal learning in their spare time, stemmed in part from dissatisfaction with the limited nature of the formal curriculum. The focus on useful information in the formal curriculum shaped the more liberal informal curriculum, which in turn may have contributed to the rise of a more liberal formal curriculum in the 1890s and beyond. This argument contributes to scholarship which challenges the binary understanding of a useful/liberal curriculum, particularly through a focus on praxis – on how teachers-in-training navigated their everyday lives and studies.⁹⁶

One of the most pressing questions facing Victorian educationalists was how to educate the aspiring teachers who attended these colleges. Should they be educated

Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880 (London, 1969); idem, *The Rise of Professional Society, England Since 1880* (London, 1989). On the compromise, the classic is W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London, 1964); Peter Mandler's more recent work on early- and mid-Victorian England also maps out how popular pressure led aristocratic Whigs to enact an agenda of reform that had some room for meritocracy, see his *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford, 1990).

⁹⁵ See especially David A. Coppel, "Respectability as a prerequisite of moral character: the social and occupational mobility of pupil teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *History of Education*, 26, 2 (1997), 165-186; Neil Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1991), 300-312. See also Widdowson, *Going Up into the Next Class*; Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, 34, chp. 6.

⁹⁶ Jane McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-class Girls in Victorian Scotland: Gender, Education and Identity* (London: Woburn, 2005); Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*; Kliebard, *The Struggle for an American Curriculum*; De Bellaigue, *Educating Women*.

liberally by giving them knowledge and thinking skills beyond what appeared to be immediately necessary to teach their future pupils, or should they be confined to learning knowledge and skills that would be “useful” for their working- and lower-middle-class pupils? The Newcastle Commission, which was appointed by Parliament to investigate the state of popular education in Britain, distinguished between these two types of education in its 1861 report by describing a liberal education as preparing teachers-in-training for their future work “indirectly” through a study of subjects that “enlarg[ed]” and “strengthen[ed]” the mind, providing for its “general cultivation.” A “useful” education, on the other hand, prepared them “directly” because it was a study of precisely what they would be teaching as well as how to teach it.⁹⁷ Proponents of a liberal education saw teachers as far more than purveyors of skill sets like reading, writing and arithmetic. Many educationalists expressed sentiments similar to Matthew Arnold, school inspector by day and poet by night, who believed in giving teachers a liberal education since the character of a teacher “cannot fail in the end to tell powerfully upon the civilization of the neighbourhood.”⁹⁸ In other words, liberally educated teachers were needed to uplift the poor and working-class children who were increasingly being compared to Britain’s imperial subjects and cast as uncivilized.⁹⁹ The managers of Borough Road College similarly declared their belief in the importance of culture to the

⁹⁷ Newcastle Commission, 114.

⁹⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1910), 52.

⁹⁹ Susan Thorne, “‘The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable’: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 238-262.

training of elementary teachers: “[i]t is a leading object in the management of this institution to train up a race of teachers who shall not only elevate the office by the respectability of their attainments, but adorn it by the fervor of their poetry.”¹⁰⁰

For some educationalists and thinkers, a liberal and useful curriculum were complementary rather than antithetical. The ideas of Henry Moseley, inspector of teachers training colleges in the 1840s and 1850s, were particularly influential. He designed the “Government syllabus” which training colleges had to follow for most of the second half of the century. As the Cross Commission summarized his syllabus – which they believed “must be preserved” – it divided subjects into two classes, “one intended to form the minds of the students, the other intended to give practical skill in the discharge of their duties as teachers.”¹⁰¹ He held that the main role of teachers was to educate pupils in reading, writing, and other useful knowledge. However, he also believed in the importance of a liberal curriculum, arguing that teachers should not only give their students knowledge and useful skills, but change the way they looked at their everyday work. Moseley believed that teachers should explain to pupils the moral, economic, and scientific principles behind the “common operations of domestic life” such that as grown men and women they would “take pleasure in studying, criticising, and improving” those everyday activities, be it draining a field, fixing a machine, or

¹⁰⁰ Henry Barnard, *National Education in Europe; Being an Account of the Organization, Administration, Instruction, and Statistics of Public Schools of Different Grades in the Principal States* (Hartford, CT: Frederick Perkins, 1854), 784.

¹⁰¹ *Final Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Elementary Education Acts*, 118.

running a shop.¹⁰² This call to intellectualize the quotidian drew on the tradition of Plato as it had been revived by the art critic and cultural thinker John Ruskin, himself a patron of Whitelands training college.¹⁰³ In the wake of the Revised Code of 1862, which created a system of penalties and incentives designed to get teachers to focus on teaching their pupil the “3 Rs,” Derwent Coleridge, principal of the Anglican St. Mark’s College, published his pamphlet “The Teachers of the People.” In it he defended the practice of giving teachers the most culture possible during their time at college.¹⁰⁴ The Rev. Robinson, principal of a training college in Yorkshire, was more ambivalent about imparting culture to teachers-in-training. In testimony to the Newcastle Commission, Robinson criticized trained teachers for being “too apt to forget that they owe the culture they have to the public provision made for them.”¹⁰⁵ However, even this much quoted criticism was directed at students’ supposed conceit and seems to implicitly concede that teachers do need to be provided with “culture” during their education.

The formal curriculum

The formal curriculum at training colleges often combined liberal and “useful” knowledge, critical thinking about the way in which peoples and places throughout the world were connected and rote memorization. Geography as a subject exemplifies this

¹⁰² *Report into the State of Popular Education*, 117. On Ruskin, see Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 117.

¹⁰³ On Ruskin’s ideas about education, see Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Derwent Coleridge, “The Teachers of the People; A Tract for the Time,” (London: Rivingtons, 1862).

¹⁰⁵ Newcastle Commission, 162.

intertwinement. It demanded memorization of the names, location, and many specific details about topological features while also encouraging students to reflect on global economic connections, the reasons for racial differences, and conditions in the empire. At the colleges whose records I have examined, geography often vied for the top spot in the timetable for an academic subject, surpassing history, literature and language, and pedagogy – “methods and school management,” as it was known. The annual lists of required texts at Whitelands also consistently listed more books for geography than for any other subject.¹⁰⁶

Charles Dickens mocked the mechanistic memorization he felt geography lessons to demand when he described the knowledge of the teacher M’Choakumchild in *Hard Times*: “He knew all about all the Water Sheds of all the world (whatever they are) ... and all the names of all the rivers and mountains, and all the productions, manners, and customs of all the countries, and all their boundaries and bearings on the two-and-thirty points of the compass.”¹⁰⁷ Admittedly geography as a training college and elementary school subject did require students to memorize topography, county and country names, trivia about rivers, and the like, just as stereotypes about Victorian education would have it. However, it also demanded that students think critically and consider far more than physical features – indeed, even Dickens’s M’Choakumchild learned “all the productions, manners, and customs of all the countries” in addition to his memorization of topography. At Borough Road the managers reported that, “A good deal of attention has been given to geography. It is attempted to make this an *inductive study*; certain conditions are given,

¹⁰⁶ WA: “List of Text Books,” Subject Examination Papers 1854-1974.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 19.

from which certain consequences are to be inferred.”¹⁰⁸ An 1853 examination at Whitelands in “physical geography,” asked students to “Compare the physical geography of Africa with that of India, shewing the points of resemblance and of contrast, with the consequences as regards the inhabitants.”¹⁰⁹ Lectures on “Mathematical and Physical Geography” used trigonometry to teach students about how and why globes and maps distorted images and also included discussions on such matters as the “effects of indented coasts on inhabitants,” as the lecture outline put it.

This exploration of the effect of the landscape on the population that lived there was a key feature of Victorian geography lessons. It also tested students’ knowledge of the northern bias of maps by asking “What is meant by the ‘projection’ of a map? Shew the faults of Mercator’s, with the equidistant ‘projections.’”¹¹⁰ Such an inductive approach to geography purveyed ethnographic knowledge and may even have given students a foundation from which they could puncture self-satisfied world views. Perhaps Britain, far smaller compared to its colonies than maps indicated, owed its greatness to its climate and natural resources, which in turn made great its economy and national culture.

Textbooks used at Whitelands and other colleges extolled the importance of geography as a subject that would allow both teachers-in-training and their future pupils to imagine and grasp in their minds the world and its many connections, to move mentally between the known and the great unknown. W. Taylor’s popular *How to*

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Barnard, *National Education*, 772.

¹⁰⁹ WA: “Physical Geography,” Subject Examination Papers 1854-1974.

¹¹⁰ WA: “Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on Mathematical and Physical Geography,” Misc. Subject Examination Papers, 2.

Prepare Notes of Lessons: A Manual of Instruction and Models for Pupil Teachers and Students in Training Colleges reminded students that geography was important for working-class children: “There is no school subject which demands, or will repay, more careful teaching than geography ... The child whose knowledge of the world is confined to his own village, and the fields around it, has to be instructed in the varied features of the land and water, and in the varied phenomena of the earth and sea and sky.” According to Taylor, knowledge of the world in all its diversity was the end goal – teaching about the immediate area was a mere step along the path to the true task: learning how to conceptualize and imagine distant places. He recommended that “The teacher should begin with the well-known features of the child’s own neighbourhood. If these are observed and understood, they will serve as the best means of aiding the formation of clear and accurate conceptions of features which the pupil cannot visit.”¹¹¹ Students at Whitelands were encouraged to teach this way when they gave practice lessons observed by the college staff. The instructor who observed Frances Jordan when she gave a lesson on the Suez Canal recorded some initial praise in Jordan’s practice lesson log: “B.B. [blackboard] fairly well used – good pictures.” However, she chastised Jordan for not drawing a regional map on the board showing the Isthmus of Suez in a wider context, the same way a local river might be shown in the context of the county. It was further suggested that she “might have taken an imaginary journey” to the Suez Canal rather than

¹¹¹ W. Taylor, *How to Prepare Notes of Lessons: A Manual of Instruction and Models for Pupil Teachers and Students in Training Colleges* (London: The National Society, n.d.), 73.

merely listing off facts.¹¹² The pedagogy underlying this method of teaching geography seems designed to cultivate pupils' imagination, to enable and encourage them as British citizens literally to picture their nation and its empire and thereby forge a connection between its distant reaches and those places at home that they knew and loved so well.

There was also another, more practical dimension to this education in citizenship. It was important for teachers to enable their pupils to understand Britain's colonies and trade partners throughout the world. "It is to the immense population of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain," another training college school textbook published in 1860 emphasized, that "a considerable share of her commerce and wealth, and no mean portion of her power and prosperity are due." Thus all Britons must know the "men of every hue – black, brown, yellow, and copper-coloured, as well as white" professing "almost every form of religion – Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Hindoo, and Pagan" who made up Britain's "hundreds of millions of motley subjects."¹¹³ On the one hand, this geographic knowledge can be understood as a straightforward and almost propagandistic celebration of the greatness of the British empire. On the other hand, it emphasized the acquisition and future purveyance of a worldview that highlighted the interdependence of and connections between Britain and its colonies as well as the necessity of learning about the peoples of the British empire.

¹¹² WA: Frances Jordan, "Criticizing Note Book for Model Lessons," Student Memorabilia "J."

¹¹³ *Geography of the British Colonies and Dependencies: Physical, Political, Commercial, and Historical. No. I. Europe and Asia* (London: The National Society, 1860), 14, 15.

Though a subject in its own right which included the study of places, people, and customs, geography also served in Victorian training colleges as a sort of curricular catch-all, an umbrella which encompassed other subjects not explicitly part of the formal curriculum. For instance, it included the study of economics, particularly the way in which local economies or even the manufacturing of a specific product depended upon trade relations with places far away. In a geography essay on the history of the Huntley and Palmers Biscuit Factory, Whitelands student E.C. Boyles located biscuit production simultaneously in the local, imperial, and global economies, noting that “as soon as the firm assumed a world-wide character” it expanded its factory and “the employing of more work people was needed” in Reading, Berkshire while more raw materials were needed from the Empire. Boyles went on to describe the opening of a second factory on the outskirts of Paris not as a means of siphoning jobs to France, but as a complement to the Reading factory that helped it to maintain its reputation by ensuring the biscuits sold on the Continent were the freshest possible. She noted that a variety of grades of sugar from different parts of the Empire were used while “cocoanuts [sic] are bought in large quantities from Ceylon” and “fruit and butter come from Australia.” The only non-imperial product, she noted with a slight hint of pride that the Empire supplied almost everything required for biscuit baking, was “a special American flour used for certain dry biscuits” that made up 7% of the total flour mixture.¹¹⁴

Bernard Porter has recently challenged the idea that the Victorian working classes were aware of everyday objects’ imperial connections, pointing specifically to

¹¹⁴ WA: E.C. Boyles, “The History of Huntley and Palmers Biscuit Factory,” in Misc. Subject Examination Papers.

elementary schools as devoid of any lessons on the matter.¹¹⁵ However, by the time Victoria came to the throne “object lessons” – originally a Pestalozzian pedagogic technique – were in common use in Britain, particularly in tandem with geography lessons.¹¹⁶ Object lessons took an everyday item like “biscuits” and got students to describe it, classify it, and discuss its production. Edibles were popular since students often had first hand experience with them and they were indeed thoroughly enmeshed in imperial and global economic and cultural networks. According to Katherine Mayo, author of many sample object lessons and a contemporary champion of them, their point was:

to exercise the children in arranging and classifying objects; thus developing a higher faculty than that of simply observing their qualities. The complex operation of connecting things by their points of resemblance, and at the same time of distinguishing them individually by their points of dissimilarity, is one of the higher exercises of our reason.¹¹⁷

As Parna Sengupta argues, in practice object lessons taught students “that they belonged to a larger imperial world, connected through circuits of production and consumption.”¹¹⁸ This emphasis on the imperial origin of commodities was paramount in Britain, supplanting Pestalozzi’s original focus on the link between objects and nature.¹¹⁹ Boyles’ essay suggests that mastery of this British world view with its emphasis on commodities and empire began in training colleges and later provided the basis of object lessons.

¹¹⁵ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁶ Parna Sengupta, “An Object Lesson in Colonial Pedagogy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, 1 (January, 2003), 96.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Geography lessons made it possible for teachers-in-training, and very likely their future students, to see the food they ate and factories which employed so many Britons in a new, contextualized and connected way.

From the outset, science featured centrally in the curriculum at both men's and women's colleges as a means of promoting a new, more inquisitive way of viewing the world. The scientific education in most colleges did not so much impart technical skills or prepare teachers to train up factory workers as to teach them how to think. J. Wooder, who attended St. Mark's in the 1840s, found that science classes there stimulated the imagination. The goal was for students to work out for themselves the natural laws and mechanical inventions by which machines operated. Though he spent hours upon hours each week in the laboratory, Wooder recalled that St. Mark's "was more like a home for poets than a chemical workshop."¹²⁰ Even the scientific curriculum was designed to stimulate the imagination and promote independent discovery of the processes at work rather than their mere memorization.

Insofar as the scientific education was designed to enable teachers-in-training to equip their future students for the industrial workforce, the goal was to make thinking tinkerers rather than machine-minding drones. Battersea's founder James Kay, connected the prosperity and progress of the nation to training teachers to make tinkerers in an early report on Battersea:

The steam-engines which drain our coal-fields and mineral veins and beds, which whirl along every railroad, which toil on the surface of every river, and issue from

¹²⁰ J. Wooder, "Early Impressions," in *St. Mark's Magazine* 1, 3 (1891), 57. The only surviving collection of *St. Mark's Magazine* of which I am aware is in the Marjon University Archive.

every estuary, are committed to the charge of men of some practical skill, but of mean education. ... Our supremacy at sea, and our manufacturing and commercial prosperity (inseparable elements) depend on the successful progress of those arts by which our present position has been attained. ... On this account we have deemed inseparable from the education of a schoolmaster a knowledge of the *elements of mechanics* and of the laws of heat, sufficient to enable him to explain the structure of the various kinds of steam-engines in use in this country. ... Knowledge and national prosperity are here in strict alliance.¹²¹

“Practical skill” is not enough – laborers (and thus their teachers) must also have something better than a “mean education” so that they might understand how machinery works. Their task is not merely to operate it, but to contribute to its “successful progress.” This remained a concern throughout the century – indeed, as Germany and America industrialized, the need for tinkers increased. Margaret Forsyth, who attended the Church of Scotland Training College in Glasgow in the 1890s, recorded in her science notebook that “we are losing ground partly because countries that were later than we in developing their resources are now pushing ahead partly because of our lack of attention to technical education.”¹²² Such a conclusion, probably suggested or stated by a staff member in a lecture but chosen by Forsyth as important enough to record, linked technical education, economic development, and the nation.

Scientific learning was considered as a source of pleasure for workers themselves as well as an economic benefit for the nation. In a speech given at the opening of Edgehill Training College for women in 1885, J.H. Fitch, the Chief Inspector of Schools, advocated giving teachers a scientific education so that they could educate their future pupils in the concepts behind the work they did:

¹²¹ James Kay-Shuttleworth, “The First Report on Battersea College,” in ed. Trygve K. Tholfson, *Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth on Popular Education* (New York: Teacher’s College Press, 1974), 119-120.

¹²² SUA: CSTC/7/9, Science and Geography Notebook (no page numbers).

it is a shame for a workman to be handling every day substances of whose character and composition he knows nothing, and to be using in his business natural forces the laws and operation of which he has never taken the trouble to investigate. There is a form of science and philosophy underlying every trade, and the understanding of it makes all the difference between the skilled and unskilled workman. ... You have to consider the worker as well as the work. You want the artisan to have some joy and delight in his labour ... And if this is true of the artisan, it is true in a yet higher degree of the teacher.¹²³

Reminiscent of Ruskin's ideas, Fitch's justification of scientific education considers not just the efficiency of workers, but their happiness.¹²⁴ Moreover, Fitch seems to be subtly advocating that teachers-in-training imbibe and then spread a general spirit of inquisitiveness, a desire to look beneath the surface, beyond the outcome to see the process itself.

The students at Glasgow Free Church Training College were passionate about science on their own account, as the pride they took in the research of John Kerr demonstrates. Kerr, hired by the college in 1857, became a living legend during his more than forty years at the college. Kerr had trained under Lord Kelvin at the University of Glasgow and upon arrival at the college turned a large part of the basement into a laboratory where he both gave students a chance to learn through experimentation and pursued his own aggressive research agenda. In 1890, while still a full-time staff member at the college, he was named a Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1892 Lord Kelvin declared Kerr "one of the most distinguished scientific investigators in the whole

¹²³ National Archives of Scotland (NAS): ED7/8/18, J.H. Fitch, "Inaugural Proceedings. The Edgehill Training College. Address on the Office and Work of a Training College," (Liverpool, 1885), 10-11.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. 1-3 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851-3), especially the introduction and Vol. 2.

world.”¹²⁵ Nearly 70 by then and rather oblivious to what happened in his classroom, an anonymous student evaluated him in the manuscript student magazine. This student did not believe Kerr to be good at commanding attention in the classroom: “no one knows better how to make a difficult point perfectly clear, but his classes do not attend to him, so his pearls are cast, so to speak, before – well, perhaps it is better to leave the metaphor incomplete.” Yet, he remained a heroic figure for his scientific passion and accomplishments. “His heart is in the pursuit of science,” the evaluation went on approvingly, even proudly, “and his spare hours have already been fruitful in results of the very highest value.”¹²⁶ Kerr embodied the spirit of the science taught at training colleges, a science that was passionate and innovative.

The science and geography curriculum at Whitelands cultivated familiarity with factories as well. A section of E.C. Boyles’ essay on biscuit production subtitled “The Question of the Factory” demonstrates her knowledge of the ideal factory, noting as she does that “every room in the factory is large and well-ventilated” while “rows and rows of windows prevent the factory from being dark and gloomy.” “The spaciousness of the factory allows the workpeople ample room in which to work,” she reiterated. “Not only do these conditions add to the comfort of the employees, but they also ensure that there is nothing unhygienic in the manufacture of the biscuits.” Boyles takes typical Victorian criticisms against factories as an implicit point of reference. She demonstrates at a bare minimum her understanding of them, if not her general agreement with them since the

¹²⁵ Quoted in Cruikshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland*, 63.

¹²⁶ SUA: FCTC/9/1/1, “The Glasgow Free Church Training College Literary Society Magazine 1891,” 124.

Huntley and Palmers' Factory is positioned – for the purposes of the essay – as an exception. Whitelands even organized occasional field trips to factories to observe science-in-action. One young woman at Whitelands recorded such an outing in a poem titled “Science – After the newest fashion.” Following a walk to the railroad station, a short train journey, and another walk – all, of course, filled with illicit socializing with each other and young gentlemen passersby while the staff members’ backs were turned – the students arrived at a factory which the author curiously describes as a “palace.” She sarcastically recorded their anxiety when they saw the complex machinery whose workings they would need to master: “For our weak minds are crowded up / With Joshua & with Luke / We thought of all we had to learn / And the[n] Oh!!! there we shook.” But they were confident in their abilities to grasp the underlying workings of the machine: “We did not shake because we feared / We could not understand / But all those great machines did buuuup [sic] / When working close at hand.” As the young women wandered the factory floor, they found themselves observed by the workers: “We wandered up, we wandered down / We looked at every sight / And all the men were watching us / To see our great delight.”¹²⁷ Both the pedagogy – induction and observation, not rote memorization – as well as the social license – working men seemingly mixing with, or at least observing the young women – suggest that colleges, including women’s colleges, sometimes cultivated useful knowledge using liberal pedagogical methods. Moreover, though colleges sought to isolate their students from the world for the sake of moral training, the curricular imperative of cultivating

¹²⁷ WA: “Science – After the newest fashion,” Autograph Book (1890-1), “Student Memories and Albums C.”

familiarity with the real world seems here to trump the moral ideal of sequestered isolation.¹²⁸

As part of the formal curriculum outside of the classroom and study hall, colleges targeted the bodies of their students for training to encourage morality, physical fitness, and humility. For the men, this typically meant farming and gardening for several hours a week; women typically gardened, but did not farm. St. Mark's sat on eleven acres of enclosed land, most of which was given over to food gardens, farmland, and pleasure gardens. In the college's early years, students engaged in "industrial occupations" for upwards of four hours a day, the majority of which was planting, harvesting, plowing, pruning, fertilizing, watering, and anything else the crops and plants needed. This work was usually undertaken with very basic tools to make it as laborious as possible. Though the amount of time given over to horticulture decreased later in the century, it nonetheless continued to be the most important "industrial occupation," as it and other forms of work students performed with their hands were commonly termed, and an important part of the overall curriculum.¹²⁹

Derwent Coleridge, principal of St. Mark's, called the money saved through growing food "the least consideration" in estimating the value of horticulture. Rather, he

¹²⁸ On training colleges as disciplinary institutions, see Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*; Marianne A. Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher: A Comparative New Culture History* (New York: 2011), chp. 7; Cruickshank, *The Training of Teachers in Scotland*, 99-104.

¹²⁹ Henry Barnard, *National Education in Europe; Being an Account of the Organization, Administration, Instruction, and Statistics of Public Schools of Different Grades in the Principal States* (Hartford, CT: Frederick Perkins, 1854), 812; Thomas Croker and Thomas Croker Junior, *A Walk From London to Fulham* (London: William Tegg, 1860), 131-4.

believed that “[i]t is almost the only mode in which the hours not occupied in study could be profitably and innocently passed by a promiscuous assemblage of youths.”¹³⁰ In the wake of Romanticism, field labor had shed much of its earlier association with sexual promiscuity and acquired an association with sexual purity.¹³¹ Coleridge and other training college principals may have been attempting to evoke this association.

Moreover, working the field exhausted the young men’s bodies and kept them out in the open where they could be easily observed. HMI of training colleges Henry Moseley supported field labor at male colleges for similar reasons. Of Chester Diocesan Training College, he approvingly noted that “inactivity being banished from the Institution, a thousand evils engendered by it are held in abeyance. When first admitted, [students] do not understand why bodily labour is required of them, and are desirous of devoting all their time to reading; they soon, however, acquiesce, and take a pleasure in it.” The triumph of students’ acquiescence was twofold: first, they replaced the personally and economically sapping pleasure afforded by “a thousand evils” with the productive pleasure of bodily labor in the fields; second, they rendered docile their bodies, and through their bodies their souls, indicating a readiness to be re-formed according to the values set forth by the college authorities. Seemingly field labor was only about social and sexual control.

¹³⁰ Annual Reports of St. Mark’s in Barnard, *National Education*, 805.

¹³¹ On Georgian ideas about field work and sexuality including a brief discussion of how they began to change at the end of the eighteenth century, see Robin Ganev, “Milkmaids, Ploughman, and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 16, 1 (January, 2007), 40-67. The gardening movement in American schools in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had a similar goal, see Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, “‘A Better Crop of Boys and Girls’: The School Gardening Movement, 1890-1920,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 48, 1 (February, 2008), 58-93.

However, Coleridge had one further justification for the regimen of field labor at St. Mark's: "it will make [the teacher] practically acquainted with the occupations of those whom he has to instruct, and thus procure him an additional title to their confidence when he comes to act among them, not merely as their teacher, but as their adviser and friend." Working within the framework set forth by Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Coleridge advocated giving teachers-in-training a bodily acquaintance with field labor to facilitate teachers' sympathetic understanding of laborers' work and thus their worldview. HMI Moseley, in his report on Chester College, agreed, noting with approval that on account of field work's inclusion in the curriculum "The scene of [the laborer's] daily toil is to be familiar to [the teacher]," which would in turn allow the teacher "to reawaken in the bosom of the laboring man those natural sympathies which seem – under the influence of the manufacturing system – to be fast dying away."¹³² The bodily understanding of labor which teachers-in-training acquired through their own field work was to help bridge the gap between high and low culture, intellectual and physical labor. That it was believed necessary is a testament to the degree to which contemporaries thought the training college curriculum cultivated intellectualism and culture and thus had to be balanced out.

The informal curriculum

Alongside the formal curriculum existed an equally important informal curriculum created at the intersection of student interest and the opportunities provided

¹³² Quoted in Barnard, *National Education*, 814, 868.

by college managers and patrons. Libraries and small “museums” provided for by college authorities allowed students to pursue in their spare time a scheme of self-improvement or simply a form of leisure that kept them out of trouble. The library catalogue for the Church of Scotland Training College in Glasgow from about 1880 survives, offering a window into the works that students could consult for study or pleasure. Totalling several hundred volumes in all, the library had a wide assortment of fiction, religious and educational books, and travel narratives and guides. The travel literature represented most of the world, from Baedeker’s *Switzerland* and Catlow, Agnes, and Maria’s *Sketching Rambles in the Alps and Apennines* to Chaillee’s *Adventures in Equatorial Africa* and *The Times’ Special Correspondence from China for the year 1858*.¹³³ “Museums,” cabinets of curiosities in the Enlightenment tradition, were also common. The Glasgow Free Church Training College, for instance, had a small museum filled with scientific specimens while Whitelands’ museum was made up of several cabinets, including one filled with curiosities from Jamaica sent back by a graduate who had gone on to work there.¹³⁴

Late-Victorian training college graduates felt a sense of intellectual liberation upon arrival at college, according to Frances Widdowson’s interviews with them.¹³⁵ Certainly that was the case for John Faunthorpe, who as a pupil teacher had acquired non-textbook reading on loan from a local school manager one book at a time. In short order he blazed through those few books the manager had deemed acceptable for an easily-

¹³³ Library Catalogue, CSTC/6/1, SUA.

¹³⁴ Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers*, 52. F.M.S., “A Letter From Jamaica,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 9 (1888), 35-40

¹³⁵ Widdowson, *Going Up to the Next Class*, chp. 3.

influenced young man and had to await college for more reading, reading that included fiction and travel narratives which the overbearing school manager would probably have forbidden (Faunthorpe never names the books the manager lent him).¹³⁶ Perhaps the sense of liberation that Widdowson found among training college graduates owes in part, as it did with Faunthorpe, to the presence of a library and college museum which students could peruse during their leisure time. These simple features, taken for granted at elite educational institutions, would indeed have been liberating, almost radical for the majority of students, who came from homes with few books.

Many students also joined extracurricular intellectual societies, which they used to supplement the formal curriculum with more of the liberal subjects that they craved. Literary associations were particularly widespread and usually centered around reading and discussing classic works of drama and fiction – Shakespeare, more than anything else. College magazines featuring articles by alumni and current students contained accounts of literary discussions and discourses by individual authors on literary subjects. These magazines seem to have begun in manuscript form in the 1860s. By the 1870s many colleges published magazines once a month. They featured accounts of training college sporting competitions, but also original poetry and such articles as “Punning,” which explored how this literary art was cultivated in the pages of the *Tatler*, and another article on how Dryden’s political and religious sensibilities influenced his literary output.¹³⁷ Literary organizations also commonly featured philosophical debates. For

¹³⁶ WA: John Faunthorpe, “Ilicet,” 5-20.

¹³⁷ “Punning,” *St. Mark’s Magazine*, 1 (1891), 53-56; “Dryden,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 1, 1, (1880), 3-9.

instance, the Literary Association at the Church of Scotland College in Glasgow had “Hat Night” debates during which they drew topics from a hat and spoke on them. Topics for one Hat Night included “love,” “Socialism,” “the cause of the Boer War,” and “Is the present great output of literature an advantage from a literary point of view?”¹³⁸

Graduates who went on to staff colonial training colleges instituted literary associations there as well. One alumnus of St. Mark’s wrote in 1891 to his alma mater’s alumni magazine to inform them that the association he had helped to form in Madras was celebrating its thirteenth anniversary.¹³⁹

There were also even less formal intellectual societies, like the “mutual improvement society” formed by ten students at St. Mark’s in the 1850s who took turns giving lectures on topics they knew well.¹⁴⁰ Philosophical debates broke out and revelations occurred more or less spontaneously at times. Surreptitiously learning the score achieved by a woman student at the coeducational Free Church College on an exam startled John Adams out of his masculine complacency: “I shall never forget my indignant surprise in finding after the session had been three weeks begun that in a physiological test-paper a certain Miss Gray obtained higher marks than I did. On that day occurred my conversion to the doctrine of Women’s Suffrage, to which (with a brief wobbly period during the ‘Suffragist’ follies) I have remained steadfast ever since.”¹⁴¹

Less seriously, “Alphaeus” recounted in lyrical format how, desperate to avoid studying

¹³⁸ *The Dundas Vale Monthly*, Vol. 1, (no year given), 47.

¹³⁹ *St. Mark’s Magazine* 1, 5 (1891), 132.

¹⁴⁰ “Chapters in College Life III. 1854-56,” *St. Mark Magazine* 1, 7 (1891), 175.

¹⁴¹ SUA: FCTC/12/6, John Adams, “’Tis Fifty Years Since,” *The New Dominie*, 6 (March, 1928), 41.

for an exam, “Thomas junior shows fight / And starts discussing ‘Women’s Right!’ / He took their side, you may be sure - / Aught other thing they’d scarce endure - / And gallantly decides that they / Should have a vote – as well they may, / But only while they still retain, / As Tommy said, their maiden name.” This lyrical rendering of a debate was itself an example of students’ use of their spare time to engage in creative, self-reflective pursuits. Another group squared off in a debate between Liberals and Conservatives which, though the Free Church College was a Liberal stronghold, the Conservatives won.

Ideological debates were evidently so commonplace that a student-authored parody of the end-of-year exam contained the question “State your qualifications for criticising Herbert Spencer, and proceed to criticise him. If you have nothing to put in answer to the first part of the question, be all the more voluminous and severe in the second part.”¹⁴² This joke would only have worked if the student culture held up having social knowledge and making judgments about society as a virtue. Even quite recent studies of training colleges have portrayed them as disciplinary institutions that inculcated conformist values and kept the outside world at arms length.¹⁴³ While this might have been the goal in theory, in practice students chafed against the disciplinary tendencies of college and constructed an informal curriculum that satisfied their needs and desires in much the same way that throughout the early- and mid-Victorian period the working class patronized dames’ schools which catered to their needs and wants.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² “The Glasgow Free Church Training College Literary Society Magazine 1891,” 214-15, 216-219, 224

¹⁴³ See for instance Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher*, chp. 7.

¹⁴⁴ Phil Gardner, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian Britain* (London, 1984).

College libraries were stocked with newspapers, which students treated both as a source of information and as a subject unto themselves in the pages of “The Glasgow Free Church Training College Literary Society Magazine,” a manuscript periodical circulated privately among students. “When the historian of the future comes to look with dispassionate eye on the forces at work on society during the present century,” a lengthy student article on “Daily Journalism in Scotland” in the magazine began, “he [sic] must attribute to the daily newspaper a vast power of influencing the history of the country and the world.” Recognizing that newspapers did not merely report, but influenced, students moved beyond passive consumption of the news to critically assess the merits, problems, and biases of each paper. The authors praised *The Glasgow Herald* for having its own correspondents in America and the Continent, but believed it was to some extent the mouthpiece of the industrial interests of western Scotland. It did, however, have “a contemptuous reference to the city of Edinburgh” in most issues, which was a plus. They faulted *The Scotsman* for its prejudice against the Free Church and its editorials on temperance, religion, and the Irish question, which the students believed to be “anything but representative of the political opinions of the people amongst whom they circulate.”¹⁴⁵ Far from sequestered, politically innocent, and prone to merely memorize information, college students scrutinized the lenses by which they saw the wider world.

Many colleges had well-heeled patrons whose personal interests and ideological beliefs led them to try to influence the general ethos through gift giving, prize

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 191-3.

competitions, and the introduction of customs. Such patronage constituted an important and heretofore essentially unstudied part of the informal curriculum at Victorian teacher training colleges. At Whitelands a dense network of educationalists, cultural thinkers, and ladies of the *noblesse oblige* tradition connected themselves to the college in an effort to mold the teachers of Britain's next generation.

Foremost among these was John Ruskin, whose connection to the college stemmed from a public mission to promote social reform through aestheticism and the revival of older forms of social relations. According to Ruskin's wildly popular tract on gender ideology, *The Sesames and the Lilies*, young women should be raised up in a sheltered garden before going out into the world to cultivate morality of the sort in which they had been raised.¹⁴⁶ In Ruskin's work, personal and societal morality depended on the physical beauty of one's environment, the literature one read, the things one made, and indeed one's clothing and person. In that spirit, he had a cabinet specially made for the college and filled with copies and engravings of forty-eight paintings by J.M.W. Turner; the young women could sketch or paint their own copies for personal fulfillment or work on their "drawing," a government-examined elective subject. He also seems to have encouraged the student and staff campaign to beautify the college building, which began in the early 1880s with the installation in the Chapel of a dozen stained-glass

¹⁴⁶ Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*. On the varied reception of *Sesame and Lilies*, see Seth Koven, "How the Victorians Read Sesame and Lilies," in Deborah Nord, ed., *John Ruskin's Sesame and Lilies, Rethinking the Western Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 165-204.

windows filled with medieval scenes made by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the noted Pre-Raphaelite artist.¹⁴⁷

Ruskin also first suggested to Faunthorpe that the college might put on a May Day festival every year, to which the staff and students eagerly agreed. When Faunthorpe wrote Ruskin to tell him that they would hold a May Day, Ruskin declared himself “delighted by your concession to my romantic fancies.”¹⁴⁸ May Day at Whitelands was, in line with the wider tradition, a celebration of aestheticism that Ruskin believed had, lamentably, “pretty well passed away from the earth.”¹⁴⁹ The young women decorated the college, particularly with flowers, and dressed up themselves. Each year they donned white gowns, adorned their hair with garlands, and paraded about in front of an audience. They elected the most beautiful among themselves – morally and physically – May Queen. The May Queen then handed out a host of prizes, including the complete works of Ruskin, most of which Ruskin himself donated for purpose each year. May Day and other revived holidays, such as the Harvest Festival held each Fall, also featured a “beautiful service” in the flower-filled chapel, for which the women sang such hymns as “All things bright and beautiful.”¹⁵⁰

The rediscovery and recasting of Mayday into something pure, organic, and pre-industrial occurred at the end of a more than century-long assault on popular leisure and customs which were cast as immoral, unproductive, and irreligious. May Day was recast

¹⁴⁷ The cabinet and windows are still at Whitelands College, which is today located in Putney. For more information these see Cole, “Whiteland College.”

¹⁴⁸ Letter 28 January 1881, John Ruskin to John Faunthorpe, in Faunthorpe ed., *Letters from John Ruskin to John Faunthorpe* (London, n.d.), 45.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Cook, *Studies in Ruskin* (London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1890), 129.

¹⁵⁰ *The Whitelands Annual*, 14 (1895), 31-38.

at Whitelands as something pure and socially cohesive, but even there it never shed its renown as the most sexually active day of the year nor its association with social role reversal.¹⁵¹ Late in the day Whitelanders changed from simple white gowns into costumes, often cross dressing in the process. In the very early twentieth century, and probably in the nineteenth century as well, these costumes included: kings and court jesters, pirates, Robin Hood and his band, nuns, nurses, pistol-wielding Georgian gentlemen, and medieval pilgrims and warriors.¹⁵²

In handing out the works of Ruskin they also transgressed the limits he had set for them. Ruskin donated all his numerous works except *Seven Lamps* and *Fors Clavigera* for distribution on May Day. The former work he did not donate because “the supply is limited,” but the latter he declared was “not meant for girls.”¹⁵³ However, Faunthorpe and the young women made it a point to acquire both works and to distribute them every May Day. *Fors Clavigera*, three volumes of letters to working men, was a bold work that encouraged readers to reimagine society for themselves while demanding that they follow Ruskin’s dense web of learned allusions and leaps of logic. In it, Ruskin harshly condemned society as it existed now, castigating its politics, morality, and economic relations.¹⁵⁴ A work unbefitting his May Queens, Ruskin thought, they tried it on for size and found it to their liking. As part of the informal curriculum, May Day was partly what

¹⁵¹ Robert Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973).

¹⁵² WA: Student Photograph Albums, “Student Albums and Memorabilia, N-P.”

¹⁵³ WA: *The Whitelands Annual*, 14 (1895), 31-38.

¹⁵⁴ John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* (London, 1887); Malcolm Cole, “May Day,” (n.d.), manuscript history of May Day at Whitelands (on deposit at WA), 14-18.

Ruskin intended it to be – the literal enactment of his ideal of femininity, a celebration of aestheticism, and a link to an older form of social relations – but the students at Whitelands also reclaimed the day by imagining themselves into the role of a wide cast of characters and acquiring *Fors Clavigera* for themselves.

Whitelands patrons included the era's most famous heiress, Angela Burdett-Coutts, who had inherited the Coutts banking fortune worth about three million pounds. Close friends with Charles Dickens, the pair collaborated on numerous philanthropic works in the 1850s. They particularly concerned themselves with the linked problems of poverty, immorality, and household mismanagement – dirty houses and bodies, gaudy and impractical clothes, and uneconomical cooking. They invested huge amounts of time, energy, and money into projects such as building four blocks of model housing at Columbia Square, literally inventing a prototype coal-powered clothes dryer for Florence Nightingale's hospitals in the Crimea, and designing the regimen at Urania Cottage for the rehabilitation of fallen women. Proud of what she accomplished but quick to recognize that she had hardly made a dent in Britain's social problems, Burdett-Coutts became increasingly convinced that social problems had to be addressed early in the lives of the poor through elementary education. This realization led her to become involved in teacher training at Whitelands.¹⁵⁵

At Whitelands she worked to promote attention to "*Common Things*," as she titled the short book in which she summarized her project (Dickens had suggested the more

¹⁵⁵ Edna Healey, *Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts* (New York: Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan, Inc, 1978), chp 4.

informative title “Good Housekeeping”).¹⁵⁶ She gave addresses to the students on hygiene, cookery, laundry, dress, and, above all, needlework, an important way to save money and pass time innocently. Dickens expressed his approval when she reported to him her advocacy of needlework both by preaching its virtues among the students and in lobbying educationalists to impress upon them its importance:

I thoroughly agree in that interesting part of your note which refers to the immense uses, direct and indirect, of needlework. Also as to the great difficulty of getting many men to understand them. And I think [James Kay-]Shuttleworth and the like would have gone on to the crack of doom, melting down all the thimbles in Great Britain and Ireland, and making medals of them to be given for a knowledge of Watersheds and Pre-Adamite vegetation (both immensely comfortable to a labouring man with a large family and small income) if it hadn't been for you.¹⁵⁷

When it came to cleaning, cooking, and laundering, she stressed simplicity and thoroughness. In this she was joined by Marianne Thornton, mother of E.M. Forster, who also took an active role promoting the teaching of domestic economy at the college. This emphasis on domestically useful skills was part of a wider campaign to educate female teachers-in-training, one that included several hours of needlework time each week in the formal curriculum as well. As Jane McDermid has shown, female teachers and their pupils, once on the job, often resented this distraction from what they regarded as the real learning.¹⁵⁸ However, at Whitelands, at least, the teachers-in-training seem to have performed their domesticity, at least for Dickens and Burdett-Coutts.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, July 11, 1856, in ed. Charles Osborne, *Letters of Charles Dickens to the Baroness Burdett-Coutts* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1932), 166.

¹⁵⁸ McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Victorian Scotland*, 60.

The issue of dress was complicated. Burdett-Coutts advocated plain, practical dress for the young women at Whitelands and their future pupils. In addition to lecturing students, she sponsored an essay competition in which they discoursed on the benefits of simple clothing. Dickens, whom she consulted about the project and whose help she enlisted to judge the essay competition, challenged her demonization of color and small flourishes in a letter, advocating judiciously giving into fashion as a means of innocent enjoyment for women:

I constantly notice a love of color and brightness, to be a portion of a generous and fine nature. I feel sure that it is often an innocent part of a capacity for enjoyment and appreciation, and general adornment of everything, which makes a buoyant, hopeful, genial character. I say most gravely that I do NOT know what I may take away from the good influences of a poor man's home, if I strike this natural common thing out of the girl's heart who is going to be his wife. ... It is like the use of strong drinks of the use of strong anything. The evil is in the abuse, and not in the use.

Dickens further believed that Whitelands students were disingenuous in their essays. "I can't help saying that I don't agree with you in your approval of the little essays about Dress. I think them not natural – overdone – full of a conventional sort of surface morality – disagreeably like one another – and, in short, just as affected as they claim to be unaffected." Under mild pressure from Dickens, Burdett-Coutts admitted that she was something of a hypocrite when it came to dress, reveling as she did both in "womanly vanity" and her ability to charm others through colorful and fine clothing.¹⁵⁹

Seemingly a strong proponent of scrupulously simple clothing and housekeeping, Burdett-Coutts' advocacy, like students' reception, was partly genuine, partly performance. And yet when Dickens pointed this out, it gave him and Burdett-Coutts

¹⁵⁹ Letters, Dickens to Burdett-Coutts, March 5 and April 9, 1857, in *ibid.*, 180-2.

only the briefest moment's pause; they continued their work at the college just as before. The Whitelands girls, for their part, continued to go through the motions of their performance in the essay competition, perhaps eager for the small prizes or the help which winning such a competition might be in securing a better first job. At least in part, training colleges can be understood as spaces of mutual performance. As with all performances, this one required the student-performers to think carefully about their audience and then craft a show suited to them. Even praising modest clothing and simple, wholesome cooking became something more than merely imbibing then reproducing useful knowledge.

Largely indicted by contemporaries and historians for its emphasis on memorization and mechanistic learning, the training college curriculum takes on a different appearance when viewed in practice rather than in theory and when the informal curriculum is considered alongside the formal curriculum.¹⁶⁰ Useful knowledge about things like factories, geography, and basic science was sometimes presented to students in a way that emphasized a deep and complex understanding of the underlying scientific, economic, political, and moral principles. Even the several hours a day which college students spent gardening and farming contained moral and social lessons designed to allow teachers-in-training to understand the worldview of agricultural laborers. Liberal and useful knowledge were, then, deeply intertwined. Similarly, colleges offered many

¹⁶⁰ On Dickens' (in)famous indictments of trained teachers, see Collins, *Dickens and Education*, especially chapter seven; Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 19; Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873), 12.

opportunities for self-study in the form of extracurricular intellectual societies, reading clubs, or even breaks to read in the college library. The very act of providing space for autodidacticism and its tacit encouragement – for instance, providing well-stocked libraries and the use of a room for intellectual society meetings – reflected training colleges’ valorization of rational leisure and independent thinking.¹⁶¹ College authorities and patrons also sought to purvey relatively traditional and conservative ideas about gender and the social order through donations to the college, the encouragement of festivities like May Day, and the sponsorship of contests such as the “Common Things” essays. Yet, here too students took advantage of the opportunities and space afforded them to play with and subvert the explicitly sanctioned values.

The liberal side of the curriculum in training colleges gained more widespread and explicit acceptance and traction over time, just as it did for the working and lower-middle classes more generally.¹⁶² In the 1890s it became common for teachers to attend secondary school rather than work as pupil teachers. Around that time training colleges more actively and explicitly embraced sports, debate clubs, reading groups, and other extracurricular activities. Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, university-based education departments began to replace training colleges and the pupil-

¹⁶¹ The mid-Victorian period was the heyday of rational leisure. See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian Britain: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (New York: Routledge, 1987).

¹⁶² On autodidacts who eagerly pursued a wide range of knowledge, see Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). On institutionalized liberal arts education for the working and lower-middle classes, see Andrea Geddes Poole, “The Citizens of Morley College,” *The Journal of British Studies*, 50, 4 (October, 2011), 842-46.

teaching system was phased out in favor of mandatory secondary schooling followed by a one year trial as a “student teacher” before going on to university-based teachers’ education programs.¹⁶³ This transition to an even more liberal curriculum marked the culmination of a decades-long trend that had begun in training colleges. The liberal curriculum was not foreign to teacher training, it was not something suddenly imposed from outside by university-educated college managers who decided the time was right. Rather, it was something that had been present in teacher training for many decades.

* * *

Born in 1874 to an English mother and a middle-class German father who had emigrated to England when he was young, perhaps in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, Therese La Chard (*née* Meier) survived into her eighties. She lived through the Boer War and both World Wars; grew up in the reign of Victoria and saw three more monarchs crowned; traveled Europe, even living for a short time in Germany; came to speak fluent German, good French, and became capable of reading Horace and Virgil in the original Latin; and made a living translating poetry and fiction while being a “greedy but desultory reader” in her free time.¹⁶⁴ When she came to write her autobiography in the 1960s, she titled it *A Sailor’s Hat in the House of the Lord: The Autobiography of a Rebellious Victorian*. Of all the events in her full and rich life, she seized upon an incident from her two years at Whitelands for her title.

¹⁶³ On this new system of teacher’s training, see: Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, *Becoming Teachers: Texts and Testimonies, 1907-1950* (London: Woburn Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁴ Therese La Chard, *A Sailor Hat in the House of the Lord: The Autobiography of a Rebellious Victorian* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), 21.

Upon arriving at college Meier had been compelled to buy a toque, “a slightly more fashionable survival of the old-time bonnet,” as she described it.¹⁶⁵ She had liberty to attend a church service at St Barnabas in Pimlico on Sundays, but one Sunday while walking back to the college a sudden and fierce downpour rendered her toque unwearable. As she recounted,

A week later I wore my only other headgear, a sailor hat. ... I was summoned to the Lady Principal. When it was possible to interrupt her flow of fury I explained that I had no money to buy a new toque. Finally she dismissed me with: ‘I wish I ‘ad you in my scripture class. I’d teach you more of the beauty of ‘oliness than to wear a sailor ‘at in the ‘ouse of the Lord.’¹⁶⁶

The toque incident was only the most representative instance of the “spirit of petty tyranny [which] ran through the place.” Not longer after it, Meier led the students on a strike against an egregious abuse of power on the part of the “Reverend Head” of the college, John Faunthorpe:

A gentle, timid little student let her bath water overflow. It flooded the Reverend Head’s study and did much papyral and other damage. He decreed that she should take no further baths in college but should report herself clean to the Lady Principal each week. I headed a general strike of my year against the preposterous command. We refused to attend any classes and just stood about sullenly while members of the staff in turn appealed to our better natures. They were powerless: they could not send down the whole senior year.¹⁶⁷

In the end, the culprit begged her fellow students to end the strike – at the urging, Meier believed, of the staff. With the culprit calling for its end and exams looming, the strike collapsed. The problem of the girl’s right to bathe “was settled by her parents’ paying for

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 103-4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 104.

the damage” while Meier’s “reputation with the college authorities was once again badly tarnished.”¹⁶⁸

La Chard’s retrospective critique of Victorian society, especially its institutions, participated in a well-established genre. Edmund Gosse’s *Father and Son* (1907) and Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* (1918) were among the most famous works to puncture the moral hubris of not only Victorians themselves, but Victorianism as a cultural construction. Gosse recounts early in his memoir how one day as a child he “knelt down on the carpet in front of the table and looking up I said my daily prayer in a loud voice, only substituting the address 'Oh Chair!' for the habitual one.” Assured by his father and the evangelical church that he would be struck down for this, he discovered instead that although he had “committed idolatry, flagrantly and deliberately,” that “God did not care.” Yet, Gosse immediately assured his readers that he had continued to believe fervently in God and to obey, respect, and learn from the father whose fallibility he had proven. This window into Victorian religious belief and the Victorian father-son relationship conforms to and confirms certain stereotypes – the obedient son, the pious Christian man – even as it calls into question how deep that obedience and piety ran. Similarly, Strachey confirms the achievements of Florence Nightingale, but claims that she achieved it not by being a “saintly, self-sacrificing woman,” but rather by being a “dominating woman” who had “tasted the joys of power” and found much to like.¹⁶⁹

In the wake of Gosse and Strachey, Foucault and Goffman, and the many historians who have been influenced by their theories of Victorianism and

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶⁹ Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Hartcourt, Brace, & Co., 1918), 185.

institutionalism, we are inclined to look at training colleges through the lens adopted by La Chard, that “Rebellious Victorian” who saw college as an oppressive experience designed to subordinate students. These institutions seem emblematic of the Victorian era as a whole in many ways. La Chard’s critique certainly has its place since there does appear to be something of a “spirit of petty tyranny” at many colleges when brought to life through timetables and rules. However, for the vast majority of teachers-in-training – including, possibly, La Chard sixty-eight years before she wrote her autobiography while she was still a teacher-in-training – college was not a veritable prison. It was an important space for their self-development and socialization, something which they cherished and of which were proud.

Chapter Three. On the Move: Social and Geographic Mobility in the Interstices

In 1900 a female teacher and graduate of Whitelands teacher training college identifying herself only as F.M.S. published an account of her 3,360 mile journey from Kingston, Jamaica to Valparaiso, Chili in her college's alumni magazine. She had worked as a teacher in Jamaica for at least a decade. During that time she had published several other articles in her alumni magazine – mainly vignettes depicting the everyday customs and rhythms of life among both whites and non-whites on the island. During her trip to Chili she collected botanical specimens, ventured inside shops kept by Chinese immigrants, and observed a Catholic mass. When she reached the Isthmus of Panama she traveled across by railway in a first-class carriage, paying £2 for a journey of just 47 miles, “the dearest railway journey I have ever taken.” Though traveling in second or third class would have been far cheaper, she recoiled from the thought of mixing in close quarters with “the off-scourings of the West Indies [and] other parts,” noting that “nothing less than First Class carriages are tolerable to an English traveler” in that part of the world. Yet later on the journey she aggressively sought out the indigent local population. As she walked through the poor district of a local town she found herself shocked by “babies [who] were absolutely naked” and older children and adults who wore only “one garment, a shirt or a chemise,” including women washing clothes who “were bare down to their waists.” There were, however, “some very respectably attired [women] in the time-honoured cotton blouse and skirt.” In Lima she visited the Cathedral and the grounds of the 1891 world exhibition, then met with some “Peruvian ladies” and discussed mourning customs and child mortality rates. She found their elaborate

mourning rituals excessive and their unwillingness to combat child mortality troubling.

The article ends with her arrival in Valparaíso and a description of the view from her new hilltop home which is much indebted to the tradition of the picturesque.¹

Making good was a journey for Victorian teachers like F.M.S. Attending training college and finding a desirable job led teachers to crisscross Britain – and sometimes even the empire and wider world. Training college staff carefully collected statistics that emphasized the mobility of their graduates. Teachers, for their part, discussed the peripatetic nature of their careers at length in their periodicals and autobiographies. Some teachers moved schools in hopes of moving up socially, a process they represented as frustratingly incremental in Britain but relatively easy abroad. Summer afforded teachers the opportunity for a different sort of movement as they took holidays for pleasure. However, pleasure and pedagogy elided in the thousands of narratives that teachers carefully crafted of their travels and then published in their training college alumni magazines. Reflecting on the peoples, cultures, and landscapes they encountered became a source of pleasure, an intellectual exercise, and an avenue for exploring – and performing – their own identity. Teachers emphasized the efforts they made to seek out local customs and people, the close proximity into which it brought them with the lower parts of the social order, and the interest that held for them. They leveraged their own position on the edge of the middle class proper to claim a unique position as social and cultural observers.

¹ F.M.S. “A Whitelander’s Journey in the New World,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 2, 18 (1900), 13-18.

For the most part, men and women like teachers who stood on the cusp of the middle class in Victorian Britain have been neglected and seemingly deemed unimportant, particularly when compared to scholarship on their counterparts in France, Germany, and the United States.² That scholarship which does exist tends to buy too much into the Victorian stereotype that they lacked a culture of their own, instead imperfectly, even comically appropriating middle-class modes of dressing and speaking, aping the middle-class predilection for suburban life without the income to do it well, and reading cheap periodicals and railway novels to mimic bourgeois reading habits. I suggest that teachers, at least, appropriated cultural forms in an original and confident manner as they actively engaged with ideas about class relations, gender, and imperialism through their almost compulsive mobility, observation, and narration.

* * *

i. Career Paths

By the 1860s a distinctive career path had emerged for teachers. Increasingly, new teachers began their career either as the headteacher in a very small school (usually in the countryside), or as an assistant teacher in a large school. They then worked their way up the hierarchy towards a headteaching position at a large school, a faculty position

² On the Continent, see Philip Nord, *The Politics of Resentment: Shopkeeper Protest in Nineteenth-century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Politics After Bismarck* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Geoff Eley, *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Arno Mayer, "The Lower Middle Class As Historical Problem," *The Journal of Modern History* (1975), 409-436; Jürgen Kocka, "German History Before Hitler: The Debate About the German Sonderweg," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, 1 (1988), 3-16. On America see Brian Luskey, "Jumping Counters in White Collars: Manliness, Respectability, and Work in the Antebellum City," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, 2 (2006), 173-219; Ilene DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh* (Ithaca, NY, 1990).

in a training college, or, for men, an assistant inspectorship. Promotions tended to follow a bureaucratic logic based primarily on experience, which resulted in incremental advancements. It was a process repeated many times over the course of decades in the hope of eventually securing a top position which all too often never came, especially for women. An important byproduct of this quest for upward mobility was constant geographic movement. Over the course of their careers teachers came to experience life and work in many communities within a city – and sometimes across Britain and its empire.

Moving schools, moving classes

On November 18, 1882 James Miller, headmaster of Maryhill Public School, died following a fall from a tramway car at the age of thirty seven. As in so many urban areas in Britain, Glasgow's horse-drawn trams connected the city proper with the rapidly expanding suburbs which encircled it. Glasgow's tramway system had opened in 1872, the same year the Education Act (Scotland) had been passed, and was subsidized by the municipality. It offered cheap, reliable transportation, though these virtues led to overcrowding and accidents. Miller's daily commute was arduous. Originally from the small Highlands village of Evanton, he now lived with his wife, an Englishwoman, in Cambuslang, a predominately lower-middle-class suburb about fifteen miles southeast of Glasgow. He had originally come to Glasgow to attend the Free Church Training College and stayed in the area after graduating with a second-class certificate. He worked his way up the hierarchy in the small district of Maryhill, eventually becoming

headmaster in the village's namesake school, located about a mile and a quarter directly north of the city center, just outside the official city limits of Glasgow at the time of Miller's death. Every working day for at least the past five years, possibly longer, he would likely have journeyed first by train to Glasgow Central Station, then by tramway car to Maryhill.

As headmaster Miller's job consisted less of classroom teaching than supervising three assistant teachers and four pupil teachers, dealing with parents, enforcing discipline, and promoting regular attendance. Schools had gotten much larger in the twenty years before Miller's death, particularly following the Education Act of 1872. One consequence of this was a huge expansion in the number of pupil teachers and assistant teachers. Assistants were in charge of their classroom, but hoped for a headteacher job with its increased salary, authority, and prestige. In urban areas promotions largely followed a bureaucratic logic based on years of satisfactory service and the class of a teacher's certificate – though men still remained more likely than similarly experienced women to be appointed headteachers. Although dwarfed by the schools in Glasgow proper, Maryhill Public School was the pride of suburban district of Maryhill, its namesake and largest school. Thus Miller's death set in motion a flurry of transfers as Mr. Finchley of Passil Public School, the second largest under the Maryhill School Board, was appointed headmaster of Maryhill, Mr. Vincent of Church Street Public School, the third largest school, was appointed to Passil Street Public School, and so on. Miller had himself once endured a similar series of incremental promotions, first as an

assistant teacher and then as a head teacher, before winning his appointment at Maryhill Public School.

The quest for upward social and professional mobility gave rise to geographic mobility as teachers moved from community to community, county to county, and sometimes from metropole to colony over the course of their training and careers. Miller had earned a base salary of more than £160 per annum as headmaster of Maryhill and about another £80 as his share of the grant, in a good year. It was enough to keep his wife from working – and it was far more than he could have earned had he stayed in Evanton and followed in his father’s footsteps to become a crofter. But his parents had sacrificed his labor and much of his earning potential to apprentice him as a pupil teacher, securing his social advancement. His wife was able to stay in the family’s suburban home following his death, though until her children were older she had to take on two lodgers and work for the Post Office. She had given birth to a boy and a girl before his death and was pregnant with another boy when her husband was killed. Their daughter, Mabel, went on to become a teacher herself, as children of teachers increasingly did. The boys, Louis and Frank, both entered into lower-middle-class work, one helping to manage a large warehouse and the other doing clerical work for an engineering firm.³ Becoming a teacher had brought Miller to Glasgow, allowed him to gain a free two-year college education, brought him into contact with an English woman who became his wife, and elevated his own social position and that of his wife and three children to the

³ Glasgow City Archive: D-ED7/139/1/1, “Maryhill Public School Logbook,” 292.

lower middle class. Though cut short, Miller's life was the dream that kept many teachers constantly on the move – yet even when realized, that dream was precarious.

Miller was one of tens of thousands of teachers who affected their own upward social mobility in the nineteenth century. In 1858, 81% of students in training colleges had a Queen's scholarship from the state, which paid the majority of expenses. These scholarships allowed the children of crofters, like Miller, and others of a similar background to attend training college. At college, however, Miller would have mixed with the nearly one in five students who did not have a scholarship. Some had their education paid for by a local elite and were expected to come back to teach in the local school; many came from families that could and did foot a £20 or more annual bill for two years to improve the aspiring teacher's career prospect. Many of these students, the majority of whom were women, used their training college education to put themselves at an advantage in the private teaching market.⁴ Frances Widdowson's study of Whitelands reveals that from the 1840s to the mid 1870s, a majority of young women had fathers who worked in "manual" professions, primarily as skilled artisans, but also as policemen, foremen, domestic servants, and laborers. From the mid-1870s onward children of the lower-middle class, especially the children of teachers, came to make up a majority of training college admits. A small percentage of students had fathers who were professionals (clergyman, army officers, doctors, lawyers) or manufacturers, but many of these students were either orphans or "half-orphans," meaning their father had died.

⁴ *Report of the Commissioners into the State of Popular Education in England and Wales*, PP1861 [2794-VI] XXI, 115; Christina De Bellaigue, "Teaching as a Profession for Women Before 1870," *The Historical Journal*, 44, 4 (2001), 963-988.

While teaching still provided opportunities for working-class children to affect their own upward mobility and for the children of a well-to-do family fallen upon hard times to provide for themselves, by the 1870s its recruits increasingly came from a lower-middle-class background.

This period also saw an increase in teachers' autonomy, salaries, and leisure time. Much of this was the product of the Education Acts of 1870/2, but it was also the result of secularization, unionization, credentialization, and, perhaps, a culture of independence among trained teachers. Prior to 1870/2, all elementary schools were voluntary - that is to say, they were private institutions, usually affiliated with the educational wing of the Established Church or with the British and Foreign School Society (a non-denominational Christian educational association). Though their affiliations were national, the chairman of the school's managers - sometimes its *only* manager - was usually the local clergyman. As such, he could and did demand that teachers take on all sorts of extra responsibilities. These included teaching Sunday School, promoting Church attendance, policing the congregation's behavior during services, and leading the choir (including recruiting members and holding practices).⁵ In his study of job ads in the *Monthly Paper* of the National Society (the Anglican educational association), John Smith found that it was commonplace in the 1840s, 50s, and 60s to state explicitly that teachers would be required to undertake extraneous duties if hired. Fully one-half of the ads posted in January 1855 explicitly required additional work of one kind or another

⁵ John Smith, 'A Victorian Class Conflict?' *Schoolteaching and the Parson, Priest, and Minister, 1837-1902* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), chp. three.

while 10 of 27 ads in the following month did.⁶ Even if teachers could afford to go on vacation, it was difficult to find time given all these extra duties. One graduate of Whitelands found herself given a low mark for “moral influence” by the local clergyman who chaired the school management committee. He complained that she “absents herself for months together from week-day services in the church at hours not interfering with her school duties, takes no part or interest in the Sunday schools, where many of the daily pupils attend.”⁷ Though this situation persisted for many teachers in the countryside, on the whole it improved with the growth of schools under the charge of school boards and within the context of a society that was attending church less. Teachers’ salaries also improved at this time and they grew more confident as they became better educated and teachers’ periodicals helped to foster a spirit of independence.⁸ Unions further promoted the rejection of extra duties by encouraging teachers not to take jobs which demanded them. They also defended the rights of teachers who were fired or harassed for not taking on extra work. The portability of teachers’ credentials also allowed them to seek out new posts when faced with an overbearing clergyman. These developments made possible the culture of holiday traveling examined in the next section.

Beginning in the 1860s and 70s, teaching increasingly came to have an internal hierarchy. The quest for efficiency and economy led school boards and managers of religious schools alike to build larger schools whenever feasible. Headteachers presided

⁶ Ibid., 57

⁷ Whitelands Archive (“WA”): “Whitelands Register I, 1-700, from May 1843,” Testimonial 439.

⁸ See Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales from 1800 to the Present Day* (London: Heinemann, 1957).

over each of the three departments in these schools (boys, girls, and infants), or in some cases the entire school. Though headteachers sometimes had teaching responsibilities themselves, most of their job was to supervise the assistant teachers who taught at the standard-level and to deal with parents and education officials. The largest schools also had an assistant master/mistress position. Beyond a headteacher job, teachers of both sexes could aspire to positions at teachers' training colleges and pupil teaching centers while men could become sub- or assistant inspectors. Full inspectorships and work in the Education Department remained closed even to those who had a University of London or Glasgow degree; only an Oxbridge degree would do.

This system frustrated teachers because of the firm cap on promotion prospects and the backlog of assistant teachers qualified for promotion. Even though men fared better than women with more prospects for promotion, they complained bitterly that being stuck at the rank of assistant left them unable to start a family.⁹ An 1892 article in the *Board Teacher* complained that the backlog of assistant teachers was "painful to the man who has acted on the half-inhuman and wholly sordid advice of the worldly to put off cultivation of the highest affections, to delay marriage, to postpone comfort and happiness because he is an assistant [teacher] only."¹⁰ This discourse echoes that of the tramping journeymen eager to become a master and throw himself into settled domestic life, a discourse mobilized by working-class Chartists earlier in the century.¹¹

⁹ Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class, and Feminism, 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 45-53.

¹⁰ Quoted in Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, 49.

¹¹ Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

However, salaries were not quite so bad as teachers made out: in the 1880s male assistant teachers in London earned an average of about £120 a year while headmasters made nearly £200. In Glasgow, male assistant teachers were guaranteed at least £80 a year from 1879 onward with many earning in excess of £100. Headmasters' salaries varied enormously from year to year based on the grant, but were guaranteed to be at least £200. Female teachers earned two-thirds the salary of their male counterpart in London and roughly three-quarters in Glasgow, but a smaller percentage in many rural areas – sometimes as little as half of what male teachers in similar schools earned.¹² For urban teachers of both sexes and male teachers in the countryside, this was enough to live on comfortably and have some left over to travel. It was certainly a dramatic improvement over the salaries of the 1850s.

Scholarship on shopkeepers, commercial travelers, minor civil servants, and clerks emphasizes that they tolerated a subservient position at work, poor working conditions, low wages, and much lampooning in popular culture because of the elusive, but still real possibility of significant upward mobility. Some scholars suggest that this substantially tempered the development of a collective viewpoint or identity, since so many members of the lower middle class considered - or hoped - their social position to be transient.¹³ This was not the case with teachers. Though it frustrated them, teachers' recognized the limited nature of opportunities for career advancement. This was the

¹² James Roxburgh, *The School Board of Glasgow, 1873-1919* (London: University of London Press, 1971), 33-45; Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, 75-76.

¹³ Hugh McLeod, "White Collar Values and the Role of Religion," in *The Lower Middle Class in Britain*, 66; David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958); Gregory Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).

foundation for the developing a more stable and permanent social and professional identity thanks shopkeepers and others working on the cusp of the middle class.

If teachers' social mobility was halting and limited, their geographical mobility was often much more dramatic. This mobility began with admission to and graduation from training colleges. The records kept by teacher training colleges about their graduates' careers offer a unique source to explore the extent to which trained teachers were geographically mobile. The very existence of these records also suggests that college authorities had an interest in their graduates' career patterns - perhaps to prove and brag about the mobility enabled by their college education or the impact their college had across Britain.

Training colleges acted as contact zones for students from different geographic, social, and sometimes even racial backgrounds for the first three decades of their existence. For instance, in 1851 Battersea College in London admitted students from Devonshire in the far southwest of England, Nottingham in the midlands, Essex in the southeast, Yorkshire in north, the Isle of Man off the western coast, and the Orkney Isles off Scotland's northern coast, to name only a few of the diverse places. Only nine of the sixty-two men came from London. Of a sample of 508 men and women admitted to the Free Church and Church of Scotland Training Colleges in Glasgow between 1849 and 1872, just 139 came from the greater Glasgow area.¹⁴ Only one county in Scotland, Angus, did not send any students to one of the colleges. Furthermore, several students

¹⁴ Peter Hill, "The Church Period, 1843-1904," in eds. Margaret Harrison and Willis Market, *The History of Jordanhill College of Education 1828-1993* (John Donald Publishers: Edinburgh, 1996), 18-21.

came from England, Ireland, Wales, “East India,” and the United States. British training colleges also occasionally admitted young men from the West Indies, Sierra Leone, Russia, and Japan.¹⁵ The Russian and Japanese governments sought literally to capitalize on the idea of native agency by sending a few students to teacher training colleges in Britain and other industrialized countries in the 1870s in the hopes that they could help direct a campaign to modernize teacher training - and indirectly modernize the economy - back home.¹⁶

Born to poor, mixed-race parents in Bermuda in approximately 1826, Robinson Tucker was one such student who affected his own upward social mobility and trans-Atlantic geographic movement by becoming an elementary school teacher. To accomplish this he leveraged socio-cultural attitudes towards social mobility, race, and native agency as well as structural opportunities provided by the British state, colonial policymakers, and religious organizations. Through a combination of self-study and missionary schooling he mastered the writings of Ovid, Caesar, and Euclid as well as the Bible. He opened an evening school in the early 1840s, and soon received an £80 scholarship approved by the Governor and Legislature of Bermuda as well as officials in Britain to enable him to attend Battersea teacher’s training college in London for two years. As a condition of this scholarship, Tucker returned to the Bermuda to teach the children of recently emancipated slaves for another two years.¹⁷

¹⁵ British and Foreign School Society Archive (BFSSA): “Borough Road Training College. Male Students, 1810-1877.”

¹⁶ Atsuko Betchaku, “Japanese education and social welfare policies and Scottish Evangelicals, 1870s to the 1920s,” at the “Scottish Education in Historical Perspectives Conference,” Edinburgh, October 21, 2011.

¹⁷ National Archives (NA): CO 37/112, “Bermuda Correspondence, Volume II, 1845.”

The archival record is silent about the time which Tucker and other non-white students spent in Britain's training colleges. This silence is worth speculating about, insofar as it is possible to do so. We know about the presence of non-white students because of barebones entries in colleges' registers noting students' place of origin, the non-white figures in several surviving photographs of college classes, and occasional mentions in Colonial Office correspondence. However, non-white students have not left much more of a trace insofar as I have found. A lack of mention in the college minutes indicates that they probably did not discontinue their studies early, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and that there was probably not a serious disciplinary problem. Whether non-white students fit in socially with their white peers is a matter of speculation. Unfortunately no autograph books or manuscript magazines of the sort examined in the last chapter have survived at colleges for the years when I know non-whites to have been in attendance.

Training colleges geographically redistributed students within Britain upon graduation. In 1851-2 only four of the more than seventy graduates of Battersea college took their first job in the area from which they had come to the college. Several took jobs very far from the areas from which they had arrived at college: from Orkney off the northern coast of Scotland to the Scilly Isles off the southern coast of England, from London to Perth, and from Cambridge to the Isle of Man. At Whitelands, the 54 graduates of the class of 1860 secured positions in 24 different counties within England ranging from Anne Boyle, Rachel Hitchen, and Mary Shutt's appointments to Yorkshire's three ridings to Sarah Wilson's appointment to the Isle of Wight. Only a few

of these young women's first jobs were in the area from which they had come to the college. Two decades after opening Whitelands could boast of its graduates teaching in all but two counties in England.¹⁸ Of a class of about ninety at the Free Church Training College in Glasgow in 1872, only eleven students, mostly men, took their first job in the county of their birth (which is what was recorded in that register rather than the county in which they had last lived, as in most other registers). Crossing the kingdom borders within Britain was less common, but far from rare. Seventeen of Whitelands' early graduates went on to teach in Wales and although none went to Scotland, the first and second lady superintendents of the college were a Scottish and Welsh widow, respectively.¹⁹ Thirteen Free Church Training College graduates from the classes of 1852 and 1872 took their first jobs in England, as did eight from the 1864-5 classes of the nearby Church of Scotland College in Glasgow.²⁰

By 1880-1, 25.9% of Battersea graduates returned to their old county, particularly Middlesex County – London – from which many of them had come. This reflected the larger number of training colleges across Britain, which enabled more students to attend local colleges. Nevertheless, the majority of students at Battersea continued to come from and go on to work outside of London. By 1880 the Battersea register began to record one other fact for graduates who returned to the same county from which they had come: whether or not they returned to the same school they had served as a pupil teacher.

¹⁸ British Library (BL): 1570.2228, "Training School Statistics; Or An Exact Account of the Results of One of the Largest and Oldest Training Schools. Being an Appendix to the Annual Report of the Whitelands Training School, 1860-61," 10, 20.

¹⁹ Whitelands Archive (WA): *Whitelands* (nd; manuscript history of the college), 12.

²⁰ Hill, "The Church Period," 20.

In only one instance did a graduate return to his old school. This seeming eagerness to document the circulatory effect of the college may have stemmed from a desire to prove the portability of the credential it offered. In sharp contrast to the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century job market for elementary teachers, which was intensely local and based on direct knowledge of the teacher or someone who knew the teacher well, by the mid-nineteenth-century the job market was markedly more impersonal and credential-driven. Lengthy lists of all the certificated teachers in Britain were occasionally published from the 1870s onward and one such list was advertised in *The Schoolmaster*, the National Union of (Elementary) Teachers' weekly periodical. Each edition of *The Schoolmaster* also had advertisements for dozens, sometimes over one hundred positions scattered across Britain. Teachers posted their own advertisements too and while a few specified they wanted a school "in or near London" or a "small village school" somewhere warm and quiet, most teachers said nothing at all about location or indicated that they would take a job anywhere.²¹ Though job seekers and those doing the hiring sometimes worked at a relatively local level, much of the teaching job market was national in scale.

Imperial Opportunities

Teachers could also work in the empire if they chose. Colonial governments aggressively recruited training college educated teachers, signaling the perceived prestige and effectiveness of metropolitan teacher training and teachers. In 1855 the government

²¹ See for instance: *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 109 (31 January 1874), 53-4; *The Schoolmaster*, 26, 583 (5 July 1884), 6-10; *The Schoolmaster*, 38, 968 (19 July 1890), 66-68.

of Victoria, Australia wrote to the British Committee of Council on Education requesting two trained teachers to run a model infant school in Melbourne and a third to serve as headmistress of a nearby school. Despite offering £450 per annum plus passage money to be split between the two teachers of the model school and £250 per annum plus passage money for the third position, finding willing teachers in England proved difficult. E.C. Tufnell, the educationalist appointed to find the teachers, could not locate willing teachers in England and had to turn to Glasgow's training college, where Mr. and Mrs. Menzies quickly agreed to run the model school and Miss Alan the other school. The comparative eagerness of the Scottish to make their fortune in the empire was part of a broader trend by which the Celtic peripheries disproportionately supplied the agents of a British empire.²²

Australian authorities were at work throughout the Victorian period to make direct contact with training college graduates and lure them with similarly high wages. Colonial authorities in the West Indies also recruited college graduates, as they did Thomas Owen. Born in Llanders along the Anglo-Welsh border, Owen's first job after graduating Battersea in 1852 was at a school in Preston, Staffordshire at £60 per annum. Two years later he accepted a job as an assistant master at a newly opened training college in Antigua, nearly tripling his salary in the process. Just three years after that in 1857 he was appointed Inspector of Schools in Antigua, bringing his salary to £200 and no doubt securing a measure of prestige in colonial society, probably securing invitations to dine and stay over at planters' houses as he made his journeys about the island.

²² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), chp. 3.

Women teachers also sometimes set their sights on imperial careers and by the 1870s Whitelands alumni staffed elementary schools and training colleges in New Zealand, India, Rangoon, Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, Malta, South Africa, and Italy.²³ Rev. Faunthorpe, Whitelands' Principal, noted in the college magazine for students and alumni that he received notice of many appointments in foreign countries and that "Students who would like to go abroad should write and tell me."²⁴ In 1888 the British and Foreign School Society received a letter from the Government of Trinidad offering positions to trained and certificated teachers at the base salary of between £150 and £250 for men, and £130 to £200 for women. In addition to the base salary, they would receive free passage from Britain, free lodging, and all of the school's annual grant money. This was more than most head teachers in Britain got, let alone assistant teachers, yet it was a fairly standard offer from West Indian colonial governments.²⁵

The British educational bureaucracy resisted what it saw as a drain of trained teachers from Britain. Following the 1855 request for trained teachers for Australia, R.R.W. Lingen, the Secretary of the Committee of Council on Education, wrote to the Secretary of State that "while it gives [the CCE] much pleasure to assist the Colonial Authorities in obtaining the services of certificated teachers," sending abroad trained teachers "is both irregular and inconvenient" and he indicated that in the future the CCE would not assist colonies in recruiting teachers.²⁶ Colonial authorities' recruitment of

²³ Cole, *Whitelands College*, 16. WA: "Whitelands Register I, 1-700."

²⁴ Letter, November 1895, *The Whitelands Annual*, 2, 14 (1895), 4.

²⁵ BFSS: FC/West Indies/Trinidad/5, Letter, R.J. Lechmere Guppy to the Education Officer, (20 November 1888); See also the other letters in BFSS/FC/West Indies.

²⁶ Strathclyde University Archive ("SUA"): FCTC/8/1, Letter, R.R.W. Lingen to the Secretary of State (7 August 1855).

British trained teachers and British bureaucrats' resistance to this recruitment reflects the similarity between the civilizing mission at home and abroad, but also the prioritization of the mission at home.

This prioritization of domestic educational work was also reflected in the funding situation; since the Negro Education Grant had been discontinued in 1845 the British state itself provided almost no funding for the education of imperial subjects (though individual colonial governments did, usually irregularly, with massive boosts or cuts from year to year).²⁷ In Britain trained teachers very largely worked in schools whereas in the colonies they worked as training college instructors, mentors and exemplar teachers in model schools, and inspectors. Training college and model schools positions were difficult to get in Britain, often requiring both a personal connection and many years of teaching experience, while full inspectorships required an Oxbridge degree right through the end of the nineteenth century, a source of much frustration for British teachers. In many cases an imperial career offered not only higher pay, but the opportunity for positions of authority and independence. Still, however, it proved difficult to lure teachers from Britain.

Not all teachers who did go abroad were satisfied with their imperial careers. In 1874 *The Schoolmaster*, the weekly paper of the National Union of Elementary Teachers, published an article painting teaching opportunities in Australia through rose-tinted spectacles. This sparked a debate in the correspondence section about the reality of a

²⁷ On funding for West Indian education, see M. Kazim Bacchus, *Education As and For Legitimacy: Developments in West Indian Education Between 1846 and 1895* (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1994).

teaching career in Australia. In a series of letters which indicated the imperial reach of teachers' periodicals, British-born teachers working in various parts of Australia wrote to praise the high pay (about £200 plus *gratis* housing was the average) in relatively low cost of living areas for teaching eighty pupils.²⁸ "A Queensland Schoolmaster" disagreed with this salutary assessment based on his experience and the general state of education in his locality. "I am a schoolmaster who emigrated on the strength of the representations made in your paper; and, in order to spare some disappointment to any enterprising teacher who has a desire to emigrate, I will ... state a few facts in connection with this matter which has come within my own experience so that applicants for the post of teacher in this colony may hear both sides of the case ere they enter into any engagement with the Agent General." He goes on to explain his frustration that though he had a first class certificate in Britain, that counted for nothing in Queensland and he got no advantage from it in the hiring process. Though he was eventually hired, it took a while and his salary was significantly less than he had been led to expect. His lower salary was in large part a consequence of the recent creation of a system of free universal schooling (passed there almost twenty years before in Britain), which necessitated some economies with expenditure. "There is not one teacher in the colony [of Queensland] who receives a salary of £200, only three who get £180, and nineteen who have £150."²⁹ This teacher seemed to be disenchanted with the personal effect of the retrenchment necessitated by the adoption of free schooling, itself part of the civilizing mission. Self interest trumped

²⁸ "Correspondence," *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 110, (7 February 1874), 89-90

²⁹ "A Queensland Schoolmaster," "Teachers in Queensland," *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 110, (7 February 1874), 92.

the extension of lightness and sweetness to impoverished colonial children in the eyes of this bitter emigrant-teacher.

Accounts of a career in the empire could be quite egregious in terms of what they glossed over. One Whitelands graduate's account of her trip to take a job at a school in Townsville, Queensland and her early years there gives the impression of racial harmony. Despite a sense of "dread" just before beginning the journey, she found Queensland idyllic. "The children dress in white, therefore the school has a very cleanly [sic] appearance," she noted. "I was never happier in my life. The schoolchildren are tolerably bright and all seem in a fair position. There seems no poverty to contend with here." Nor did there appear to be racial tensions: "I have one black scholar who has from babyhood been brought up with an English family and consequently can speak English." He was remarkably well behaved. This one black student symbolized the community's racial harmony in her narrative: "I very often meet twenty or thirty blacks but they are all very nice to the white people and will do anything for them." To make matters even better, the children at her new school were quite advanced. "They learn everything we do in our higher National Schools back home," she wrote.³⁰

This narrative makes no allusion to the fact that Queensland had been the province in Australia most populated by aboriginals and consequently had a history of intense violence. Nor is any mention made of the origin of the black child raised by the English family. What happened to their parents and how did English rather than aboriginal parents come to raise them? This narrative, like most narratives of teachers

³⁰ "An Account of the Journey of an Old Whitelander to Queensland," *Whitelands Annual*, 1 (1880), 11-16.

working abroad, seems most concerned with demonstrating teachers' mastery of the situation.

Teachers understood their career prospects at home in part through the lens of their perceptions of how teachers fared in other countries. Presumably at the invitation of *The Schoolmaster*, Professor Calderwood of the University of Edinburgh authored a series of articles in 1874 on the "educational arrangements" of many English speaking countries around the world. He found much to praise about the career prospects of teachers in, among other places, Canada, where teachers had a variety of promotions generally unavailable in Britain, including to secondary school teaching and inspectorships. He also found teaching to be a more attractive and respected career within the United States than in Britain. "The profession of teacher is one which commands respect in America. The standard of training required, the emoluments attached to the office, and the amount of public money spent on the educational establishments all tend to secure this."³¹ An anonymous article on "Education in Japan: School Life in Yido" painted a similar portrait of the social regard for teachers in Japan. "In Japan, the schoolmaster is among the most honoured of the citizens, while in Europe it is different. In the same way that a wealthy Englishman may aspire to a seat in Parliament, may the Japanese gentleman desire to serve the state as a teacher, or become the patron of teachers."³²

³¹ Professor Calderwood, "Educational Arrangements in Canada," *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 111 (14 February 1874), 99; Professor Calderwood, "Educational Arrangements in the United States," 5, 115 (7 March 1874), 151.

³² "Education in Japan: School Life in Yido," *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 108 (24 January 1874), 48.

While criticizing British policymakers and society at large for not holding elementary teaching in higher regard, these articles and others like them also hint that the reason for that comparative lack of regard lies in teachers' social background and behavior. The teacher in America "commands" respect, a verb which places the impetus for attaining social status on the teacher. The article on Japan describes the teacher as "among the most honoured of the citizens," and one sentence later we learn further that Japanese gentlemen often become or patronize teachers, which begs the question: is that the cause or the result of the honor accorded to teachers? Articles such as these that looked longingly at educational systems in other parts of the world yet which implicitly found something lacking in teachers in Britain were common in *The Schoolmaster* throughout the 1870s, 80s, and 90s even though it was the official organ of the National Union of (Elementary) Teachers. Though often authored either anonymously or by university professors, the fact that the editors either commissioned or accepted these articles (many of them in series format) suggests an anxiety about social values and the state of teaching in Britain compared to the rest of the world.

A career in elementary teaching during the Victorian period often led to significant geographic movement, creating a teaching force that had experience in many parts of Britain and its empire, as well as in many different parts within the city or area covered by a school board. While the promotion process could be frustrating, opportunities for excellent pay and positions of status and authority were available in the empire. Even at home elementary teaching increasingly paid well - particularly in the

context of the depression years of the 1870s - and provided teachers with time off each summer. These conditions provided the foundation from which teachers crafted a social and professional identity through narratives about the body and holiday travels.

* * *

ii. Travel Narratives

“The summer vacation is welcome to most of us,” begins an article titled “A Summer Holiday 1886” in the *Whitelands Annual*, the college’s student and alumni magazine. Exhausted by a year’s work, most teachers began their summer with “a week of entire fallow,” but this soon gave way to “a revival of vigour and life, and a desire for more active enjoyment. Where circumstances permit, it is well to be up and going.”³³ With improvements to teachers’ salaries and their increasing freedom from clerical demands for year-round Sunday work in the church, circumstances increasingly did permit teachers to spend their summers traveling around throughout Britain, its empire, and the world during the last few decades of the century. The rise of mass tourism also helped to make the world accessible to teachers with its guidebooks, cheap hotel, and discounted railway fares.

Training colleges’ student and alumni magazines published huge quantities of teachers’ accounts of these travels and other narratives of how teachers spent their holidays. Their topic and style of their narratives ranges widely, including proto-ethnographic vignettes of peoples from around Britain and the world, pastoral descriptions of the wilderness, musings on the bicycle, and general reflections on

³³ “A Summer Holiday 1886,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 7 (1886), 24.

holidays. I draw primarily on the magazines of three colleges, St. Mark's and St. John's (Battersea) for men and Whitelands for women. The selection of these three college magazines stems primarily from opportunism: unlike so many other college magazines from the late nineteenth century, these ones have survived and are mostly complete. Although I could not locate any surviving magazines of a similar nature from a Scottish training college, there are several indications that such magazines did exist. Certainly many of the attitudes evinced in teachers' leisure literature had strong, deep roots in Scottish intellectual culture.³⁴ The articles discussed below are just a small portion of the many hundreds of similar articles in the three magazines.

Teaching, traveling, and narratives

St. Mark's Magazine arrived late on the scene when it published its first issue in January of 1891. "It is a common thing now for colleges and schools to edit a Journal of their own," the editor declared,

and there is more than one ground on which it can be shewn that the desire to do so is a very healthy sign. For, in the first place, such a desire indicates, perhaps more surely than anything else, the growth in a community of the idea of a corporate life; and it is the merest commonplace to say that communities are strong in proportion as in them the feeling for the whole body absorbs and masters the selfish feeling of each individual for himself.³⁵

However, the editorial vision of this and other college magazines meant little since they relied on articles voluntarily sent in by current and former students. Editors constantly complained about a shortage of articles, occasionally having to skip a month for lack of

³⁴ See also Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2002), 58-61.

³⁵ "Editorial," in *St. Mark's Magazine*, 1, 1 (January and February, 1891), 1.

material, so they typically published whatever they were sent. The sense of “corporate life” which gave birth to and emerged from teachers’ periodicals was, then, less a product of editorial vision than what teachers chose to send. It was also more individualistic than the author of this editorial wished.

Teachers’ travel narratives straddled the line between public and private, individual and collective. Though it was most common for authors to sign only their initials to their articles, or nothing at all, many authors did choose to sign their full names and many others would have been readily identifiable within the small, closed world of training college alumni. Teachers’ use of pronouns and perspective further reflected the tension between corporatist conventions and individualist impulses. Some pieces of leisure literature were about solo travel experiences written in the first person, seemingly celebrating or submitting for praise the individualistic nature of the pursuit of knowledge and worldliness. Even those pieces which adopted the first person plural because they featured two or more people (usually teachers) tended towards individualism. Typically, articles were the work of only one individual and many of the judgments and experiences described are written from the perspective of “I” rather than “we.” In this way, college magazines operated within the liberal and Christian traditions of corporatism with their emphases on both the individual and the group rather than the subsuming of the individual within the collective, corporate identity.

Teachers situated their travel narratives within the Victorian cult of rational recreation, a largely working- and lower-middle-class phenomenon.³⁶ In addition to the

³⁶ Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working*

intellectualization of leisure inherent in a published travel narrative, teachers explicitly evoked the “profit and pleasure” of observing the vistas and social life of an English town and the “active enjoyment” afforded by visits to museums, art galleries, and famous buildings in the Netherlands and Germany.³⁷ They emphasized the intellectual work behind their social observations and cultural consumption by quoting or referring to travel guides, novels, and literary and artistic traditions. Unlike the often collectivist working-class approach to rational leisure, however, teachers’ travel was a good deal more individualistic. Teachers often traveled alone or with just one friend. Teachers’ participation in the group expeditions arranged by The Travelers’ Club – until now the only example of teachers’ travels examined by scholars – was an unusual exception in its group dynamic rather than the rule.³⁸

Teacher training college magazines were part of a small, but growing genre of late-Victorian periodicals produced by and catering to relatively narrow audiences. There are many parallels between college magazines and the *Indian Magazine and Review*, to which many elite Indians living in Britain in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century submitted articles detailing both their everyday experience of living there and accounts of their holiday travels. As Antoinette Burton has suggested, the *Indian Magazine and Review* was a means by which a select coterie of Indians could claim status as full

Classes; Philip Gardner, "The 'Life-long Draught': From Learning to Teaching and Back," *History of Education* 36, 4-5 (2007), 465-482; Michele Strong, "Class Trips and the Meaning of British Citizenship: Travel, Educational Reform, and the Regent Street Polytechnic at Home and Abroad, 1871-1903," *Journal of British Studies* 51, 1 (2012), 102-131.

³⁷ "A Visit to Chester, *Whitelands Annual*, 3 (1882), 19; "A Summer Holiday 1886," *Whitelands Annual*, 7 (1886), 24.

³⁸ Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*, 174-6.

members of British society, not merely imperial subjects but subjects of the British crown the same as everyone they encountered on the streets.³⁹ Similarly, the *Queen*, a weekly magazine in which “educated women” could discuss “whatever interests or amuses them,” provided middle-class women a space to reflect on society from the perspective of an elite femininity which was relatively progressive, but not exclusively so.⁴⁰ These periodicals and others in the same vein allowed groups on the margins of society to consume, critique, and refashion Britishness. Their significance – and that of training college magazines – resides less in the reach of their readership than in individual and collective worldviews which they documented and to which they gave birth.

Teaching as a shared work experience, career, and an emergent profession hung ineluctably over teachers’ travel narratives. The release from and return to work, either over the course of the weekend or the whole summer, often framed an article’s narrative. Each article, in turn, was literally situated within covers that made apparent the shared working identity of its author and reader. Teachers’ shared working identity was the foundation on which their individual and collective narratives stood. Sometimes that foundation was visible: teachers’ travel narratives occasionally dealt explicitly with pedagogy and became a tool teachers used to reflect on their professionalism. All the travel narratives that appeared in training college magazines also articulated an implicit claim that teaching as a profession demanded and helped to give rise to a mastery of Britain, its empire, and any other space through which a Briton, be they a man or a

³⁹ Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 61-3.

⁴⁰ Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), chp. 4, see esp. 111-115.

woman, decided to travel. As it did in the world of pre-industrial Britain described by Robert Malcolmson, for late-Victorian teachers' work and leisure sometimes bled into one another.⁴¹ However, now it was more the case that work bled into leisure. This was not necessarily a case of "play discipline" imposed from above, but rather represented the use of leisure literature to find personal fulfillment and forge a professional identity.⁴²

The Pastoral and picturesque

Many teachers chose to travel to the countryside or small villages on their holidays and construct narratives of their experiences, which drew on the largely bourgeois literary traditions of the pastoral and the picturesque. Indeed, comparatively few teachers' travel narratives focus on Britain's major metropolises despite – perhaps because of – their ready association with urbanity, cosmopolitanism, and high culture. In this, teachers' travel narratives were similar to those of Indians who journeyed to Britain in the late-Victorian period. These Indians also wrote about the countryside to signal that they did not consider their trip and their time in London, Oxford, and Cambridge as "the chief markers of their urbanity, modernity, or identity."⁴³ By focusing on the countryside and particularly by working within the pastoral genre, teachers situated their project of individual and professional self-fashioning within a tradition that had been born out of the tension between the life of the well-to-do and the "peasants," urban high culture and

⁴¹ Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴² On play discipline, see Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 5.

⁴³ Burton, *Heart of Empire*, 11.

the everyday rhythms of life in the countryside, work and leisure. These were the very same tensions that many teachers faced in their lives and work as they transitioned between city and country for their training and first few jobs; attempted to enact in farm country a curriculum designed in London; and confronted a parental and pupil understanding of only a murky boundary between school and work.

Most straightforwardly, those many travel narratives that worked within the traditions of the pastoral and the picturesque allowed teachers to demonstrate their cultural learning. “Manus,” a graduate of Whitelands, described the Isle of Man as “exceedingly pretty ... Douglas Bay is a perfect picture in itself. Under the influence of moonlight with the lights of the town in the background, the hills behind, the boats and shipping dotted here and there, and the beacon ray from the lighthouse at its southern extremity, the Bay is simply lovely.”⁴⁴ E. Cranham similarly invoked the conventions of the pastoral and the picturesque in a narrative of her trip to Chester, describing with particular enthusiasm a scene near the river when she came across “pretty cottages, inhabited chiefly by boatmen, who in summer months carry on a brisk trade in letting out boats on hire, and in this way generally earn sufficient to maintain themselves and families during the winter months.” She entreated any who followed in her footsteps to pause there “to enjoy the pretty scenery on either side [of] the river as it winds along, between verdant meadows on one side, and houses, whose gardens slope down to the water’s edge on the other.”⁴⁵ So common were such descriptions in the pastoral and picturesque tradition that another article satirized them:

⁴⁴ “Manus,” “Midsummer Holidays,” *Whitelands Annual*, 2 (1881), 14.

⁴⁵ E. Cranham, “A Visit to Chester,” *Whitelands Annual*, 3 (1882), 17-18.

If my readers will take the nouns - lane, hill, dell, rivulet, bank, wood, hedgerow, cot - and the adjectives - gushing, sparkling, beautiful, sylvan, flowery, picturesque, charming - and will supply a few appropriate verbs and all the necessary connections, and will arrange them in the proper order, they will have a glowing a life-like picture of H—. ⁴⁶

Such satire served as a reminder to fellow teachers that cliché emulation of existing cultural forms did not mark teachers as cultured observers and writers. Instead, selectively appropriating and deftly reworking existing conventions – or even mocking them – signaled meaningful cultural engagement.

Teachers also evoked pastoral conventions when observing the social landscape by heroicizing the working men and women of the countryside. “Women and children ‘bob’ to every decent hat and jacket they meet” and “[t]he men are farm-labourers and shepherds, fine specimens of English peasantry.” These working men and women contrasted with the three big farmers, who were

fat, swaggering, rollicking men, mustering five sons between them. These last named ... are self-conscious and dandified. Their one object in life is to marry girls with money, and any girl who likes fun can have the name of this village in full on application. She will, should she take lodgings there in the summer, experience the felicity of having the bard of five hovering and buzzing round her like flies round a sugar-basin. ⁴⁷

The parson of this village similarly cuts a poor figure, having only one eye, preaching by shouting until his congregation begins to perspire profusely, and running a general store on the side. Written during what Harold Perkin sees as the transition from a class-based to a profession-based society, this narrative critiques the false professionalism of the parson and the unmanly, uncultured raw entrepreneurialism of agrarian capitalists. ⁴⁸ Less

⁴⁶ C. Mallett, “A Staffordshire Village,” *Whitlands Annual*, 3 (1882), 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (Routledge: London, 1989), chp. 2.

concerned with claiming status as “professionals” than they had been earlier in the century, teachers now sought to situate themselves within the hierarchy of a society that considered professionalism as part of a spectrum rather than a binary, either/or proposition. It was delicate work that was as much part of the cultural domain as it was workplace politics and union negotiations.

An article on Carlisle in a running series on “Our English Towns” played with the categories of the pastoral and the picturesque as well as Britain’s sense of itself by juxtaposing descriptions of the bucolic and the industrial, remnants of a paternal society and artifacts of a capitalist society. The article praises Carlisle’s “picturesque surroundings, its great antiquity, and its many historical associations,” including the medieval city wall and Cathedral, Henry VIII’s “ancient citadel,” and its green town squares abutted by Tudor and Stuart era buildings. Interwoven with this historical urban pastoralism, however, is evidence of industrial capitalist modernity: a railway station through which “over a hundred trains” pass daily, the presence of “great hotels and banks, reminding us rather of London,” and an ineffable but keenly felt “strong radical spirit [which] has manifested itself against the oldest-established institutions.”⁴⁹ This descriptive style of Carlisle is reminiscent of the work of Ruskin and Carlyle. It uses juxtaposition of specific objects as a way of suggesting ideological tensions and reflecting on the question of social progress and the national character. Where was the true Britain, in the banks and busy railway station or in the ancient buildings and pastoral landscape that surrounded the town?

⁴⁹ “Our English Towns. II - ‘Ye Merrie Citie,’” *St. Mark’s Magazine*, 1 (1889), 31-34.

A short account one woman teacher wrote for *The Whitelands Annual* about her trip to Snowdon blends a pastoral focus on the landscape with a concern to demonstrate her knowledge, inquisitiveness, and taste. “The coach starts at nine o’clock in the morning, and the road along which it passes is bordered for some distance by green slopes on the left hand, and a river with beautiful waterfalls on the right, while a little farther back rise the mountains covered with patches of heath, which give them a dull reddish hue.” As the coach continues on its journey it comes to a point at which on one side there are “two beautiful lakes, on the opposite side of which rise some high coloured rocks, variously tinged, with here and there the mouth of some slate quarry.” The rest of the body of the article unfolds in a similar pastoral style, filled with descriptions of colorful rocky uprisings, gaping chasms, and peaceful meadows. The author seizes on seemingly insignificant places and views and chooses to render them in an elaborate pastoral style. The summit itself merits only the statement, “The view is delightful.” In privileging original, overlooked scenes while still working within a pastoral tradition in her narrative of Snowdon, this teacher demonstrates her awareness of that tradition while confidently reworking it. Though the body of the article is about the landscape, it is framed by mentions of Bettws-y-Coed, a village near the foot of Snowdon, and its inhabitants. She hints in her narrative that she not only used Bettws-y-Coed as her base for going up the mountain and visiting the area, but chatted with fellow tourists and villagers there. The article concludes by noting that “Any extensive view [of Snowdon’s peak from its base] is as a rule impossible, indeed people who live near the mountain say that it is only on a very few days in spring and again in autumn that such a view as one

reads of in the guide books can be seen.”⁵⁰ Again she signals that she has participated in a middle-class cultural form - this time tourism informed through the use of guidebooks - but suggests the flaws of that tradition and offers up the simple, but powerful alternative epistemology based on talking to local villagers.

Participating in the traditions of the pastoral and picturesque allowed teachers to display their cultural knowledge, something cultivated in reading groups and other articles in college magazines on art and poetry, but it also opened them up to the critique that they aped their social superiors’ taste and sensibilities. Teachers faced a double bind in that they risked being perceived as unlearned if they did not demonstrate their hard-won knowledge to their peers and others, but faced a potential critique of imitation if they did. The opening satire of the article on the Staffordshire Village demonstrated teachers’ self consciousness about this double bind as it and the rest of the article participated in and mocked the pastoral tradition in teachers’ travel narratives. With their limited readership, college magazines afforded teachers a safe space to experiment collectively with cultural forms.

For all the work they did, however, teachers’ pastoral descriptions presented a sanitized portrait of the countryside. Douglas Bay might have been perfectly picturesque, but the shipping industry there was in dire straits. It also seems highly unlikely that life inside the “pretty cottages” in Chester was quite so pretty, or that the boatmen’s summer earnings really were “sufficient” to support their families during the winter. These narratives portray the “peasantry,” the very name of which masked the ascendancy of

⁵⁰ “A View of Snowdon,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 4 (1883), 24-25.

agrarian capitalism, as respectable, strong, and noble, thus establishing teachers' respect for the class from which many within their own ranks and still more of their students had come either directly or a generation removed. These narratives also masked the dire economic situation the countryside faced in the depression of the 1870s, left little room for values which did not perfectly correspond with those of teachers, and bordered on condescension at times. Though teachers presented themselves as more attuned to the social landscape of the countryside, their narratives suggest that sympathetic understanding had its limits.

Imperial and global journeys

Teachers also crafted travel narratives about their journeys around the empire and the world. These narratives of travel abroad tended to focus on trips to remote locations and encounters with non-Europeans rather than journeys around the Continent in the tradition of the "Grand Tour." Teachers often adopted the perspective and style of amateur anthropologists, offering proto-ethnographic vignettes of peoples they encountered on their travels. Ethnography was never just an interpretive mode focused on the people being described and analyzed. It also invited, almost demanded the observer to articulate their own value system, the categories by which they understood their own social landscape and the one they were observing, and the position of their body in time and space vis-à-vis the observed.⁵¹ Foreign travel and proto-ethnographic narratives afforded teachers the opportunity to confidently lay claim to a middle-class

⁵¹ Sherry Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Studies in Comparative Society and History*, 37, 1 (January, 1995), 173-93.

social identity and to uphold the often concomitant orthodoxies of Britishness and stereotypes of various racial groups. While teachers did seize this opportunity, they also used their narratives to rethink and play with these orthodoxies.

An account of the trip of four Whitelands graduates to the North Cape, Norway one summer works in the narrative modes of pastoralism and proto-ethnography. It also reads at times like the diary entry of an individual deeply committed to the cult of rational leisure. Writing in the first person, this anonymous teacher described in laborious detail the work that went into planning the journey, from finding companions to arranging the railway and ferry passage to Norway, to booking hotels and ship journeys over there. She also studied up on Norway: “I read in my leisure moments all I could find about Norway, consulted maps, picked up a few Norwegian words and wrote them, with other particulars, in my pocket book for reference. I then made myself acquainted with the Norwegian coinage.” Her dive into Norwegian culture, geography, coinage, and words may have been somewhat superficial, but then again it represented a serious interest in engaging with another culture. Indeed, her own preparation parallels or surpasses the preparation many travelers take today before heading abroad, the mere act of which is often deemed an interest in foreign culture worthy of praise merely by virtue of its existence. The cheerful tone with which she recorded this preparatory work was a twist on a growing discourse of discontent about the planning side of leisure. As *The Times* complained, traveling for leisure “is work, and it is tiring work ... it involves a perpetual

attention to time, and all the anxieties and irritations of that responsibility.”⁵² Though it might be tedious, this teacher nonetheless represents it as exciting.

In her account of Norway, she mobilizes pastoral expectations to levy critiques at a wide variety of targets, from British culture to European tourist culture. One churchyard the group came across was filled with marble tombstones, iron crosses, and

on nearly every grave was a black vase, I think of wood, on the outside of which was painted in white letters, the initials or name of the owner. ... Being Monday, the flowers with which they were filled were fresh. Many of the graves were enclosed by low iron railings, forming ‘grave gardens,’ and in each of these, and by the sides of most the groups of graves, whether enclosed by rails or not, was a small seat of wood, painted white, long enough to hold two or three persons. We were told afterwards, that it is to usual for the relatives of the deceased to sit here, at their leisure, to think of their dear ones. We saw several women, watering and carefully tending these ‘grave gardens.’ Surely, if a nation shows its civilization and Christianity by care for the dead, these people ought to be in one of the first ranks.⁵³

This gothic pastoral implicitly finds lacking British respect for the dead, a subject of much anxiety in the period.

As they traveled further to the north they passed through beautiful woods with “an abundance of wild flowers” and went alongside “high rocky mountains, covered with patches of snow, heaps of boulders, or scanty herbage.” After many miles hiking through such wild, but beautiful landscape they came to a Lapp camp. On first inspection the Lapps seemed to fit perfectly into the pastoral sublime narrative sketch of this remote part of Norway. The Lapps are described as “short in stature, having dark complexions, bright brown eyes, and dark hair.” They raise reindeer and make full use of all the parts from any they kill. However, this romantic description of the Lapps, very much in the style of the “noble savage,” quickly gives way to a portrait of them as having received all

⁵² Quoted in Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 63-4.

⁵³ “A Journey to the North Cape,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 9 (1888), 10-11.

of the corrupting influences of European civilization and none of its benefits. She describes them as “very dirty,” wearing their clothes “until they drop off” and having hair which “looked as if a comb or brush had never been put to it.” Moreover,

The Lapps were cunning in making their bargains, so that those who bought their wares found it necessary to insist on a reduction of the prices asked. Some of them could speak a little English. Their merchandise consisted of reindeer skins and shoes, made of the skins in a Lapp fashion, toes pointing upwards. But they are not properly cured and consequently smell disagreeably. ... One object of interest in the camp, was a Lapp baby, it was carried by its mother in a peculiar kind of cradle afterwards put on the ground, and rocked violently by a child, the sister we supposed. A kindly disposed lady showed the little girl how to rock it gently, but the baby, having been used to the more violent usage, showed, by crying, its disapproval. It was not particularly clean, and a gentleman who was by remarked that its mother would not recognise it if washed.⁵⁴

After that the group of teachers sat for photographs with several of the Lapps at the request of “some photographers, amateur and professional,” who wanted to capture the Lapps with some Europeans. Then they went inside one of the Lapp’s huts. “It was absolutely bare of furniture, the floor consisted of stones and chips of woods.” The transition from romanticization of the Lapps as noble savages to casting them as mere savages draws on the established tropes of dirt, the disordered family, and failed domesticity. However, narratively and causally this transition is intertwined with the introduction of tourists. A description of their dirtiness is followed immediately by the observation that their wares are overpriced and shoddy - and that some of them speak “a little English.” The spontaneous intervention of “a kindly disposed lady” to show how to rock a crying baby gently cannot reverse the baby’s habituation to a “more violent usage” and it continues to cry.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14-15.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

When the author and her companions enter the Lapp hut they observe the faults of the domestic scene upon which they intrude, but as day trippers what could they do to improve matters? This is a moment of what Mary Louise Pratt has dubbed “anti-conquest,” whereby “European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony,” to justify European intervention even as they position themselves as neutral, passive observers.⁵⁶ Tourism has not only failed to civilize the Lapps, it has, according to the teacher’s narrative, corrupted them. Though the teachers are tourists in the narrative, their foremost identity is as teachers, a career founded on the premise that sustained uplift is the only kind that is effective. While perhaps giving off a sense of self-guilt, this ethnographic vignette serves most of all to reinforce teachers’ positions as arbiters of bourgeois European values and education as a means of uplift.

The body and bodily sensations occupied a central place in many teachers’ proto-ethnographic narratives. Observations about black Jamaicans’ bodies was just about the only theme that held together one Whitelands graduate’s narrative *mélange* about life on the island. Her story begins with an account of meals - when they were taken, what is typically eaten, and how formal or informal they are. It moves on to describe the arrangements of houses, the rhythms of work, typical clothing for those of different social ranks, church services, and the education system (which is treated in a very brief, cursory fashion). The servants “go about barefooted, except on Sunday, when all who can afford it wear boots, or shoes, and stockings. They wear rather short skirts which they often

⁵⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

make still shorter, when about to walk, by tying [sic] a piece of braid round the body just below the thighs, and pulling up their skirts through the band thus formed.” Servants also wear jewelry “as much as any one. Silver rings are seen on the fingers, even at work, while bracelets, long earrings and necklaces of two or three rows of blue, red, pink, yellow, or silver beads are donned, to wear at Church.” A postscript attached to the article by the editor notes that alumnus “will be glad to know that a beautiful selection of fruits and curicles of various kinds has been sent to the College Museum” and that they should ask to see the collection of “Jamaica curiosities” when they visit the college.

The article concludes with an observation about the nature of black Jamaicans which both reproduces and challenges racial stereotypes.

The idleness of the Jamaicans, about which one reads, consists of not so much in not doing work at all, as in being, as Goldsmith puts it in speaking of France, ‘idly busy,’ and in a lack of thoroughness in what *is* done. From what I have seen, but my experience is very limited, the faults of unpunctuality, untidiness, carelessness of property, forgetfulness or making promises which they never remember, or intend to fulfill; these, perhaps the outcome of idleness, are more evident. And when one considers the ease with which a living can be earned, the fertility of the soil, the plenteousness of fruit, and vegetable starch goods (their chief aliments), which they can for lack of their own take from their neighbour’s trees with little fear of prosecution, together with the warm climate which *they* seem to feel as much as Europeans, it becomes a question whether the last named people might not earn a similar character under like circumstances.⁵⁷

In finding their work ethic lacking, this teacher picks up on the trope of the lazy, “pumpkin eater” black Jamaican that went back many decades.⁵⁸ Though she reproduces a racial stereotype, she also challenges the commonplace assertion that black Jamaicans feel the heat and humidity less than Europeans and interrogates the cause of the reputed

⁵⁷ F.M.S., “A Letter From Jamaica,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 9 (1888), 35-40.

⁵⁸ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Thomas Carlyle, “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question,” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, 40 (February, 1849).

“idleness” of black Jamaicans. Her narrative as a whole also challenges her own suggestion that many black Jamaicans were beset by “faults of unpunctuality” in noting that coffee is served at 5:30 and “delivered up to the bedroom of those who are not up,” and that the “noise made by the servants in using these cocoanut ‘brushes’ [to scrub the floor] is sufficient to make ‘lie-a-beds’ get up, and as the process is generally gone through about 6.am. it is impossible to sleep after that hour.” At a time when racial essentialism was ascendant, she portrays black Jamaicans as hardworking and places the cause of their “lack of thoroughness” in their work and “carelessness of property” at the door of the climate, local economic conditions, and the failings of the legal system put in place by the British.

A rare account of everyday life in India from one graduate of Whitelands who was no longer a teacher took a strikingly different tone from other holiday and ethnographic vignettes by current teachers. “You, who lead such busy live, will, I fear, be shocked when I tell you most ladies lead very idle ones [in India], unless engaged in Mission or Zenana work, which, of course, are comparatively few.” The author goes on to detail her daily routine, beginning with an early morning “ride or drive,” followed by tea and a bath, attending to household management, paying and receiving visits, and perhaps a dinner party in the evening.⁵⁹ It is not clear who this old Whitelander was. She may have been a well-to-do woman who sought to use a Whitelands education to secure her credentials as a governess and went on to marry a middle-class man, or she may have been an elementary teacher who married above her social class. I suspect the former.

⁵⁹ “A Letter from India,” *The Whitelands Annual*, 12 (1892), 11-13.

Whatever her background, she depicts the impoverished natives as dishonest children and the wealthy elites as morally suspect and distasteful, working entirely within the racial tropes of the day without pushing against them at all. “We generally have a theatrical company and a circus. Natives are very fond of the latter and never tire of going,” implying also that they did not go to the theatre, a form of leisure which had a long association with bourgeois taste in Britain. “Two old servants of ours had heard a great deal about the circus, but would not pay a rupee to go, so my boys paid for them. They were highly delighted and said, ‘We have lived to be old, but never before seen such grand things.’ Native men are selfish and never take their women folk to see anything, but they like to see them decked with jewelry and are lavish in their expenditure in such things.” In paying for the servants (and possibly their families), her children are more manly than the grown men who work as the family’s servants. “One unpleasant part of Indian life,” she notes later, “is that we must submit to being cheated to a certain extent, as those servants who have the purchasing of anything keep back about two annas in the rupee (3d. out of 2s.), and even the food for our horses, after it has been weighed out.” Even the behavior of the native elites is in bad taste.

The Maharanee of Searsole, near Burdwan, was staying near us, and I sometimes used to call and see her. Her first questions were, ‘How old were you when you married? How many children have you? What pay does your husband receive? How many horses have you? ... What jewelry have you?’ and this last question led the way to her asking her daughter and granddaughter to fetch their jewels to show me. I may mention the granddaughter was sixteen, and mother of three pretty children.⁶⁰

This critical portrayal of the Maharanee of Searsole’s gaudy display of and focus on wealth and shamelessness about child marriage with its haughty, judgmental tone forms

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the heart of the ethnographic vignette. The tone as well as the overall perspective of the article stands in striking contrast to those taken by working teachers in pieces treating similar themes.

In its first year *St. Mark's Magazine* carried a series of seven articles by William Lawson describing his journey "From London to Cairo" and back. In this series Lawson notes that the white traveler is "pestered at every corner with cries of *backsheesh*, even children in arms are taught to put out their little hands and beg." Though he "was sorely tempted on some occasions to yield to their importunity," his son reminded him "that 'Baedeker' warns tourists on no account to give the smallest gratuity except for work done."⁶¹ This passage is an affirmation of his middle-class Britishness, the impulse to relieve the poverty checked by the warning from Baedeker, the traveler's guide which here stands in for bourgeois conventions about work and charity. Though this passage is from the sixth installment of the series, it is the first mention of his son. Not only was his son conspicuously absent from the earlier installments, he had actively cultivated the illusion that he was a solo traveler by mentioning how glad he was for the chance company of a fellow St. Mark's man on the voyage out. Was it only his son with whom he traveled, or was his wife with him too? Clearly he wished to be seen not as a *paterfamilias* likely to be absorbed in conversation with his family, but a sharply observant traveler operating in the tradition of the solitary *flaneur*. However, he could not resist demonstrating his own and his son's middle-class quality as an intelligent and self-disciplined traveler, aware of and resistant to the calls of begging children.

⁶¹ W. Lawson, "From London to Cairo," *St. Mark's Magazine*, 1 (c. 1880), 121.

The passing mention of the Baedeker's traveler's guide also briefly breaks the illusion of teachers' knowledgeability and the mode of knowledge production. Like many other articles in college magazines, this one contains a litany of historical, architectural, and infrastructural details. "The distance from Alexandria to Cairo is about 130 miles ... This was the first railway constructed in Egypt and was made under the rule of Said Pasha in 1855 ... The line ... crosses the Mahmudiyeh Canal and skirts its banks for about thirty miles ... Seventeen miles from Alexandria we pass Kafr-ed-Dawar where Arabi Pasha established his strongest fortifications in 1822."⁶² Though they make for clunky prose, the endless details are impressive, after a fashion, so long as the illusion is maintained of painstaking acquisition through conversations with locals, careful attention during the journey, and the perusal of atlases and histories. The mention of Baedeker in this article makes apparent the solitary, rather more prosaic source of much, if not all of the knowledge arrayed within. Yet it also highlights the broader issue of teachers' collective fantasy of lifelong autodidacticism and wide-ranging intellectual interests and knowledge. The late nineteenth century saw the decline of haphazard, lifelong autodidacticism in the wake of increasingly formalized schooling, including the relegation of learning to a phase of life and the pressure of examinations.⁶³ Philip Gardner has suggested that for elementary teachers the ideal of the lifelong learner necessarily, if ironically, gave way in the late-Victorian period to that of the lifelong teacher committed

⁶² Ibid., 73

⁶³ This tradition emphatically did not disappear, however. On the tradition's origins, see David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Europa, 1981). On its continuation into the twentieth century, see Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*.

to pedagogy rather than autodidacticism, with this new breed of teachers clinging to that older, working-class tradition as best they could. Though the pressures of work - especially the proliferation of examinations and record keeping requirements - prevented teachers from fully realizing the fantasy of intellectual and methodologically catholic autodidacticism, they sustained that fantasy in the pages of college magazines.⁶⁴ In this way teachers had one foot in an older, working-class intellectual tradition and their other in an emergent, middle-class intellectual tradition that emphasized professional knowledge.

In his account of the return journey on the P. and O. steamer *Great Britain*, Lawson affirms his commitment to rational leisure and disdain for socially and economically grasping men.

The smoking room was generally thronged with young men from Australia, whose talk was for the most part about mines and speculation. A rich silver mine, the name of which I forget, was a favourite topic and endless stories were told about people who had realised fortunes in a few weeks by lucky investments. One result of this fever of speculation was that card-playing was very popular, and very often the stakes were high ... So obscene indeed did it become, that some of the passengers resented the recurrence of Sunday when card playing was not allowed, and threatened to report the captain for interfering with their amusements. But he was not the man to be bullied by a few hot-headed young gamblers, and the restriction remained in force.⁶⁵

The train which took him from the dock back to Liverpool Street station led him through the impoverished East End, facilitating the concluding remark for the series: "how pleasant and green even the East End looks after you have spent a few weeks in Egypt." This affirmation of Britishness superficially seems to transcend class, but that "even" resoundingly reaffirms the claim to social superiority - over the Egyptians, the enriched

⁶⁴ Gardner, "The 'Life-long Draught.'"

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 193.

men returning from Australia, and now the poor East Enders - which Lawson cultivates throughout the series.

Teachers were fascinated by different cultures and customs, not merely ruins. “I will remember the sound advice given to us by our good Principal on the eve of our departure from the old college to fight the battle of life,” Edmund Tydeman (St. Mark’s class of 1889) recalled in a letter written to the college magazine from Lahore, India in 1895. “I can almost hear his words now, - nearly six years afterwards, - ‘Do not isolate yourselves, nor allow your minds and ambitions to narrow themselves down to the limits of your own small sphere. Keep in touch with the world about you, and especially with everything which concerns the welfare of S. Mark’s College and her sons.’”⁶⁶ Tydeman took both these pieces of advice to heart. He was traveling in India to broaden his horizons when he came across another old St. Mark’s man. They decided to travel together, preferring to meet local peoples, read newspapers, and observe customs and religious practices rather to go from one ruin to the next. One day they learned of the death of W.A. Robinson, an old alumnus of St. Mark’s and the principal of Aitchison College in Lahore, a secondary school for “native” boys modeled off England’s great public schools. They had not known Robinson personally for he had graduated decades before their time, but they immediately changed their plans and went to Lahore for his funeral. While there they sought out information on Robinson and reported back to *St. Mark’s Magazine*. He had arrived in India in 1860, they found, and immediately set to work teaching in a succession of elementary and secondary schools by day. By night he

⁶⁶ Edmund Tydeman, “A Letter from India,” *St. Mark’s Magazine*, Vol. 5 (1895), 129.

had pursued “a special study of Oriental language and of the customs and manners of the people among whom he lived.”⁶⁷ He came to the attention of government for his pedagogical and cultural expertise and someone in the Lieutenant Governor’s Office tapped him to take charge of Aitchison College.

In setting out to India for a holiday as amateur ethnographers, Tydeman and his companion were following in Robinson’s footsteps without even knowing it at first. Though he had not planned to stay, nor is there any mention of a decision to stay in the article, Tydeman did stay in the India. He made his career there, eventually entering into the Indian Educational Service, becoming the Inspector of Teacher’s Training Institutions for the Punjab, and ultimately receiving a knighthood for his services to imperial education.⁶⁸ We cannot know for certain why he chose to stay, but we can speculate that the twin lures of continuing cultural exploration combined with the desire to take up the work of his fallen fellow St. Mark’s alumnus proved too powerful to resist.

For some teachers travel was first and foremost an adventure. One student of St. Mark’s recounted a 98 day trip around the world he took two years after graduation, just after receiving his certificate:

Whether it was that the arrival of my parchment had produced in me a feeling of freedom, or that a large class of 150 boys in a school of special difficulty had somewhat impaired my health, or that a remark of [St. Mark’s Principal] Canon Benham’s in an after-dinner speech one S[t]. Mark’s Day, to the effect that schoolmasters should travel, had exercised an influence over me anyhow about a month before Easter 1894, I found myself in the East India Dock asking for a ‘sight’ (i.e. berth).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Supplement to the London Gazette* (1 January 1924), 6.

⁶⁹ “Round the World in a Wind-jammer,” *St Mark’s Magazine*, Vol. 5, 42 (1895), 108.

Few details of the people and place encountered made their way into this tale. What mattered most to this teacher was the epic scale of the journey – and the relief it brought after a long, debilitating school year. Later that summer another group of three St. Mark’s men traveled through the bush of Queensland in temperatures purportedly reaching 135 degrees. They navigated their way through a thicket of “acacia horrida” that ensnared passersby in “sharp, turned-back thorns,” up a treacherous mountain, and past the bones of a “convict fugitive” who had died some rocky cliffs on the mountain’s far side.⁷⁰ Teachers borrowed from adventure novels in framing travel as an adventure. Like Fogg, the English protagonist in Jules Vernes’ *Around the World in 80 Days*, teachers emphasized their mastery over both the landscape and the complexities of modern travel, like ships and railroads’ schedules. Central as observations of cultures, people, and landscape were to most teachers’ accounts of their travel, the frame of the adventure remained important for male teachers in particular. Summertime adventures seemingly offered male teachers a way to discover or reinvigorate their manliness.

Seeing Britain

Teachers sometimes turned their eyes to Britain itself for their proto-ethnographic vignettes. In 1895 two Battersea/St. John’s graduates took a one month posting at a London Poor-Law school in Essex during their summer holiday and wrote an account of their experience for the college magazine. They were attracted by the opportunity to earn a little extra pay (board plus one guinea a week), the “beauty of the scenery surrounding

⁷⁰ “An Afternoon in the Queensland Bush,” *St Mark’s Magazine*, 4, 33 (1894), 162-164.

the Institution,” a sense of curiosity, and the desire to do some good. Soon after arriving they “were as much at home as Sinjuns know how to make themselves anywhere,” a reference to the constant movement of many teachers. Though the guardians were relatively welcoming, they expected a great deal from these temporary teachers. Much of the teachers’ account centers on the bodily nature of the work: they felt they were selected for the position because of their “size and strength,” each day began with the Drill master lining up the boys at attention and the teachers inspecting their hands and clothes, the boys spent an inordinate amount of time scrubbing the workhouse and farming the attached field, and by the guardians’ orders punishments included sending children to bed “with nothing on save a shirt” including on a night which “was anything but a warm one.” The food and other aspects of the regime left the boys “[t]hin, pale-faced, half-starved looking mortals.” Only these temporary teachers seem to care at all for the children’s minds and souls; even the clergyman merely used the children to practice a sermon targeted at adults in the nearby village, in the process preaching “over their heads” such that “not a single [child] listened to him.” “In conclusion,” the article ends, “I should never advise any friend of mine to accept a situation under the Poor Law Union. One always seemed to be on duty. The holidays are very short; for if the children are out of school someone has to look after them, and the guardians think that as the teachers have such an easy time, they as well be in school as out.” As for the children, he dubs them “the most untruthful set of boys it has been my misfortune to deal with; and

the worst of it is that everyone except those of have close dealings with them think they are nothing short of angels.”⁷¹

This article was firmly situated within a tradition of investigative journalism and fiction which blended altruism and self-interest, curiosity and repulsion.⁷² It was also rather late to the scene, echoing as it did more than half a century of critiques of Poor Law education.⁷³ Notably, however, the article creates a contrast between the pedagogical project which should be central to schooling and the disciplinary project which takes the foreground. The author writes about the disciplinary project with palpable discomfort and assumes that discomfort will be shared by his fellow teachers. For his friend and him, the summer holiday became an occasion to engage in some quasi-charitable work which also positioned them as embedded observers in one of society’s most controversial institutions: the workhouse.

Male and female teachers alike were avid cyclers and wrote narratives of their journeys which drew on the trope of the liberated, slightly radical and bohemian man or woman. For teachers bicycles offered a means of exploring corners of Britain where

⁷¹ “A Sinjun’s Experience in a Workhouse,” *S. John’s Magazine*, 3, 5 and 6 (1896), 84-86, 88-91.

⁷² Seth Koven, *Slumming, Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

⁷³ For a few examples, see James Kay and E.C. Tufnell, *The Training of Pauper Children* (London, 1839); Ner Gardiner, “On the Moral and Industrial Workhouse School About to be Erected by the Guardians of the Poor of the Manchester Union,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 5, 3 (1842), 280-2; Walter R. Browne, “Facts and Fallacies of Pauper Education,” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, 18, 104 (1878), 197-207; Florence Davenport-Hill, “The System of Boarding-Out Pauper Children,” *The Economic Journal*, 3, 9 (March 1893), 62-73. See also Christopher Bischof, “Masculinity, Social Mobility, and the Plan to End Pauperism in Mid-Victorian England: Kneller Hall Teacher’s Training College,” *Journal of Social History* 46, 4 (2013), 1039-1059.

trains did not reach – which was the very reason for exploring them. One teacher wrote up an account of his cycling journey from Land’s End in Cornwall to Caithness on Scotland’s northern coast while another rhapsodized about how the night before a ride was spent “flying through the most fairy-like scenes, skimming enchanted dales, and reveling in the rich beauties of a glorious and free country.”⁷⁴ Upon acquiring a bicycle, “Artie” wrote of the “unlimited range” it gave to his newly “stimulated imagination.” The evening before his first ride was filled “flying through the most fairly-like scenes, skimming enchanted dales, and reveling in the rich beauties of a glorious and free country.”⁷⁵ J.J.’s account of his eight week, 2,067 bicycle journey from London to Wick, Scotland and back similarly emphasized the opportunities it offered him for imaginative flights of fancy. An Englishman, he was particularly fascinated by Scotland and devoted much of his article to descriptions of his pilgrimages to Ayrshire (“the land of Burns”), the Clydeside in Glasgow and Loch Katrine to the north, Glencoe, the Caledonian Canal, and the coast of Caithness.⁷⁶ In rendering their cycling journeys into written accounts, teachers cultivated a self-image as physically fit, Romantic, and curious about the nooks and crannies of Britain. However, the very act of recording their excitement and its reasons as well as their journeys tempered the suspicious side of cycling, its potential for bohemian sociability - the ability for a man or woman, especially the later, to just up and visit someone. Instead cycling became a more conventional act of rational leisure.

⁷⁴ “The Pleasures of a Bicycle,” *St. Mark’s Magazine* 1, 3 (1891), 113. “Two Thousand Miles Over the Land,” *St. Mark’s Magazine* 1, 7 (1891), 177.

⁷⁵ Artie, “The Pleasures of a Bicycle,” *St. Mark’s Magazine* (n.d.; loose), 113.

⁷⁶ J.J., “Two Thousand Miles over the Land,” *St. Mark’s Magazine*, 177-180.

By the 1880s *The Schoolmaster* had created a special section in its advertisements section for holiday house swaps. Teachers posted ads looking to swap a accommodation in London for some in the country, Birmingham for the Devonshire seaside, a mountainous Welsh village for a more gentle landscape in England. Seaside houses were in particularly high demand. The late-Victorian seaside had become very attractive as a holiday destination for those members of the lower-middle and working classes eager to partake in healthful, respectable leisure of the tradition established by the Georgian middling sort. However, the increasing accessibility and affordability of a holiday in major towns, such as Bristol and Blackpool, also attracted a louder, less temperate segment of the working class and pushed much of the middle class and well-to-do to small, exclusive new resort colonies along the coast. On seaside holidays teachers socialized with other members of the lower-middle class as well as working-class families, but they also occasionally brushed shoulders with remaining members of the middle class and participated in a tradition of leisure with a distinctly middle- and upper-class origin, as they would well have known from Georgian novels.⁷⁷

Teachers' leisure literature contains ample room for several additional readings, including a feminist interpretation. Probably because the readership of the college magazines which I have been able to look at were single-sex, they did not contain the sort of explicit feminist agitation for equal pay and the unquestioned right to continue working after marriage as *The Schoolmaster*.⁷⁸ However, in their leisure literature female

⁷⁷ John K. Walton, "The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays in Victorian England," *The Economic History Review*, 34, 2 (1981), 249-265.

⁷⁸ On this, see Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*.

teachers lay claim to all corners of Britain and much of the empire and world as spaces through which they have the resources and right to move. Similarly, it is possible to read teachers' leisure literature as acts of defiance and protest against the epistemology at the heart of the state policy on elementary education. Their training and professional lives consisted of mastering and passing on knowledge of the world crystallized into maps, reader books, and reference guides.⁷⁹ Holiday travels were an opportunity to make knowledge for oneself, to claim experience as the main source for the narratives they crafted about places around Britain and the world.

Through their travel narratives teachers brought together leisure and work, the personal and the pedagogical, performance and introspection, colony and metropole. What emerges from these narratives is a sense of teachers as highly mobile observers of the social landscape at home and abroad. They seem to have understood and portrayed themselves as modern figures, constantly on the move and eager to capitalize on their autonomy. Particularly for women – but also for men, given most teachers' ambiguous, marginal social position – holiday travels and their narratives about it represented the promise of liberation which this new age seemed to offer. They were flâneurs, consuming the social and literal landscapes of Britain and the world, then producing narratives that documented and were part of their quest for autonomy, pleasure, and creative expression. On the other hand, those same travel narratives depicted a rigid,

⁷⁹ On the reductionist nature of some of this material, see Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

carefully-ordered landscapes of people and places over which teachers implicitly claimed mastery. To create that order, they used antiquated tropes such as that of “peasants” and the “picturesque,” or they invoked the traditions of deference. Their encounters across racial lines similarly reflected both new ideas of innate racial difference and an older understanding of race as shaped by culture and social relations. They helped to fashion a modernity which was backward as well as forward looking.

* * *

Teachers saw Britain. They saw it as they moved from home to training college, from training college to their first job, and then from job to job in a quest for a good position. Sometimes their careers led them to the empire and back. Trying to make good – or simply to find employment of any kind, in some cases – made teachers into peripatetic figures. With the creation of certificates in 1846 and an increasingly bureaucratic logic of promotion, teaching became a modern career. And yet, as the next chapter shows, teachers often strove to get to know the communities in which they worked both to keep order and to do good. Summer holidays also offered teachers the opportunity to move across Britain and the wider world. Far from passive cultural consumers, they scrutinized and reworked conventions and tropes of racial hierarchy, the gaze, and traveling in the narratives they crafted of their summer holidays.

Chapter Four. Making Self and Community

From 1862 onward, every few days - once a week at a minimum - teachers took their logbooks out of their desks and began to write. They wrote about pedagogical and disciplinary incidents as the Revised Code instructed them to, but they also frequently and flagrantly defied a rule against making “reflections of a general nature” to record their thoughts about pupils, parents, and the local ethos in general. Such entries could be sympathetic or overflowing with frustration, indicative of what teachers perceived to be true or a sly strategy to portray the local circumstances as more difficult than they really were. Throughout the 1870s, Mrs. Flint of the Girls Department at Angler’s Garden School in Islington, London made entries in the logbook in neat, precise handwriting detailing the distance between the school managers and the community. Like most school managers, those at Angler’s Garden were relatively well-off tradesmen. Their authority over school fees, the enforcement of attendance policies, and ongoing expenditures remained strong even after they came under the jurisdiction of the London School Board. Major school boards continued to grant substantial authority to school managers despite the bureaucratic tangle created by the ensuing diversity of policies. They did this because managers supposedly represented local interests. Relying on them was a way, so many educationalists and school board members believed, to preserve the influence of the locality and the paternalistic nature of elementary education.¹ Mrs. Flint used her logbook, which the managers would have read, to insist that she understood the attitudes of the community in a way that they did not. When the managers chastised her

¹ See Peter Gordon, *The Victorian School Manager: A Study in the Management of Education 1800-1902* (London: Woburn Press, 1974), chps. 3-4.

for not directing the caretaker to do a better job looking after the school grounds since he was her “servant,” she wrote that he was “unwilling and disobliging.” In entry after entry she drew parallels between his surly, resentful attitude towards what he saw as an infringement upon his independence to work as he saw fit and the attitudes of pupils and parents who felt the same way about the imposition of schooling in general. In another vein, she noted dryly that in their “wisdom” the managers decided – without consulting her – to raise the fee for the school despite local economic hardship, causing a drop off in attendance. Despite the close acquaintance she claimed with parents and the local ethos, Flint rarely seemed to fully agree with them, as her regular entries about confrontations with irate parents and the caretaker make clear.² However, Flint - like many other teachers across Britain - did narrate herself into existence as a uniquely positioned social observer embedded within the community she served, if not quite a part of it.

This chapter explores how teachers forged an everyday professional identity which made central their work as mediators between the central state, local notables, and the working- and lower-middle-class families whose children attended their schools. Victorian teachers mediated between a local sensibility and identity on the one hand, and the often homogenous expectations and policies of a state eager to forge a national identity on the other. Their mediation ran both ways. They enforced the state’s policies about attendance, the curriculum, and hygiene, albeit in a selective manner which took account of local circumstances. However, they also represented to policymakers the flaws that they saw in the state’s educational policies, the difficulties they faced in their

² London Metropolitan Archives (LMA): LCC/EO/DIV3/ANG/LB/2, “Angler’s Garden Girls’ Log Book 1875-1893,” 5-17, 38-39.

everyday work, and the general attitudes of parents and pupils towards elementary education. Teachers moved back and forth between acting as servants of the state and local advocates, sometimes occupying both roles at once. Though they sought to affect significant changes to communities, they also preserved many dimensions of local communities and tended to work through rather than against preexisting social networks and sensibilities.

In both its Victorian context and as used by scholars today, “community” is a slippery concept. Victorian educationalists used it to refer to everything from the national community to specific social classes or religious denominations to the parish, village, or local neighborhood. Derwent Coleridge, principal of St. Mark’s College, referred to that thing “which we call the British community” as a complex and all-encompassing set of widely held ideas about “social respectability” and the opportunities for “social advancement.”³ James Kay believed that teachers should develop a “community of interest, and maintain among themselves an *esprit de corps*” even though they were scattered in schools across Britain.⁴ In the words of school inspector and prolific educationalist Joshua Fitch, each individual school was “an artificial community which has a life and needs of its own” - needs which had to be reconciled with those of parents, local elites, and the national state.⁵ Though teachers themselves rarely used the

³ Derwent Coleridge, “The Teachers of the People; A Tract for the Time” (London: Rivingtons, 1862), 30-31.

⁴ James Kay-Shuttleworth, “Second Report on Battersea, 15 December 1843,” in James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862* (1862; reprint in Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1973), 399.

⁵ Joshua Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching. Delivered in the University of Cambridge During the Lent Term, 1880* (New York: MacMillan, 1885), 98.

word “community,” they constantly gestured towards some larger social and cultural ethos in their logbook entries.

What exactly this ethos was varied from place to place, even entry to entry. Sometimes it referred to a highly localized set of customs. At other times it gestured towards a broad sense of working-class ideas about childhood. Typically the community became the object of teachers’ narration because it had both explanatory power and meaning. It was the source of teachers’ everyday challenges and the thing which they wanted to change.

Scholars have often presented elementary education as a modern state-building project. Certainly that is one way to see it. After all, state involvement in elementary education did lead to the imposition of heavy-handed mandatory attendance policies, a fairly standardized national curriculum, bourgeois standards of dress and cleanliness. Elementary schools forced resentful families to send potential workers to school, accelerated the decline of local dialects and languages, and made children citizens of their nation, not their local community. With a few notable exceptions, teachers have tended to be represented as specialized, professional participants in elementary education’s top-down project of modernization.⁶ Although there is much truth to this story, this often oversimplified story of conflict and resistance has become stale and unfruitful. This chapter explores efforts to reconcile customary, locally-oriented ideas of community with the rapid pace of change and the growing role assumed by the state.

⁶ On teachers and modernization, see Neil Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon eds., *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c. 1870-1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

The first section in this chapter explores the history and nature of logbooks. By exploring logbooks' official purpose, physicality, the emotional registers of teachers' entries, and the interplay between authors and readers, I ask how teachers appropriated this quintessential technology of the modern surveillance state. The second and third sections compare the relationship teachers had with their communities in urban and rural areas. How did investigating truancy, pupils' hunger and ragged clothing, and the attitudes of the pupils and parents differ in the countryside and in cities? What influence did the tropes of the slum and the rural village exert on the way teachers narrated community?

* * *

i. Logbook Narratives

Every day in archives across Britain, family historians pour over logbooks with eager eyes, hoping that their ancestors got into fights on the playground, lied to the teacher, passed an exam with top marks – anything that merited mentioning. Professional historians also mine them, typically to write histories of education, but also to explore the history of childhood, the family, or working-class attitudes towards middle-class values.⁷ In short, family and professional historians alike use logbooks to gain access to the lives of historical actors.

⁷ See for instance Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1995); Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, class, and feminism, 1870-1930* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Jane McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-Class Girls in Victorian Scotland: Gender, Education, Identity* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005); Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England, 1800-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978).

There were complex ideological, emotional, and practical forces at play in the creation of logbooks. Teachers used logbooks not just to record the facts from their perspective, but to narrate themselves and their communities into an official record that had little room for the stories they wanted to tell. Logbooks literally had pasted onto the inside of their covers an excerpt from an elaborate set of rules forbidding - among many things - reflexive or emotional entries. Teachers widely ignored these rules. When exceptionally trying events occurred, long emotional entries became means of achieving catharsis and forcing school managers and the state to acknowledge the affective labor of teaching. They also used logbooks to craft a narrative about the difficulties posed by the attitudes of local parents and pupils towards education, thus encouraging the school inspector to treat them with some leniency. Logbooks demand to be considered as spaces where teachers negotiated narratives about self, schooling, and community.

Logbooks and legibility

The Revised Code of 1861 mandated that the headteacher of any publicly funded elementary school keep a “stoutly bound” logbook containing “not less than 500 ruled pages.” This new policy made universal a practice that seems to have been fairly common even before 1861, though few of these earlier logbooks have survived.⁸ A Victorian logbook is a few inches longer, a few inches wider, much thicker, and far more sturdy than a typical diary from the same period. But it is shorter than the books used to

⁸ On the history of logbooks, see Pamela Horn, “School Log Books,” in K.M. Thompson ed., *Short Guides to Records, Second Series* (London: Historical Association, 1997), 104-108.

record the correspondence or minutes of meetings of government bodies, like School Boards, Poor Law Unions, and the Colonial Office. The oversized rectangular form of those books lends them a gravitas and aura of importance with which the simple, almost square shape of a school logbook cannot compete. The inside of a logbook's covers are typically marbled, reminiscent of the inside covers of thickly bound, multivolume Victorian legal books or dictionaries. The inside of the cover usually has pasted onto it extracts from the official regulations on what must and must not be recorded. Some have lock-and-key mechanisms built into them, a feature necessitated by the lack of a private office in many schools. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of all, however, are the 500 ruled pages themselves. These pages contain ruled lines and, usually, page numbers - that is all. Teachers had total freedom to write a one-line entry or a three-page entry, to narrate in urgent staccato fragments or stiff, long-winded sentences.⁹

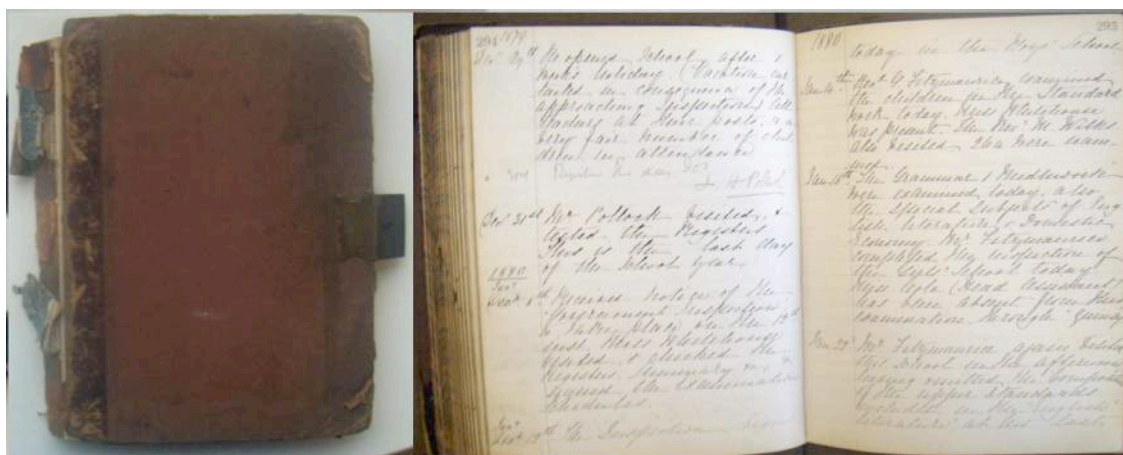


Image 4.1: Camden Church Boys' School Logbook (left) and Image 4.2: Cottenham Rd. Girls' School Logbook (right).¹⁰

⁹ This is based on an examination of nearly three dozen logbooks, primarily at the London Metropolitan Archive, the Shropshire Archive, the Glasgow City Archive, and the Highland Archive and Registration centre.

¹⁰ LMA: P73/CAM/172, Camden Church Boys' School Logbook 1863-1892; LMA: EO/DIV3/COT/LB/1, Cottenham Road Girls' School Logbook 1872-1885.

The exact regulations regarding what must be, should be, and could not be recorded changed over time in response to teachers' practices. For instance, teachers' tendency to write harsh, often damning entries about their pupils' parents, the character of their staff, and so on, is presumably what led to one of the earliest and broadest rules: that “no reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered.” Logbook manufacturers included extracts from Code regulations on the inside cover, though logbooks often lasted several decades while regulations changed every few years, leaving many logbooks out-of-date. Most logbooks also included inspector-approved samples of good and unacceptable entries. The Code and sample entries encouraged teachers to record things like outbreaks of disease in the neighborhood, local holidays, and bad weather – anything that interfered with the “ordinary progress.” These guidelines for logbook entries implicitly articulated an expectation that teachers' work should be mostly mechanical, that it was only disease and holidays and bad weather with which teachers had to contend, not pupil and parental attitudes, local customs, and the local economy.

Logbooks were part of a larger project to make British society legible to state bureaucrats, Parliament, local government, and private social reformers. The growing obsession with Parliamentary investigations, maps, statistics, and investigative journalism were all manifestations of this project.¹¹ The Revised Code which required teachers to keep logbooks for the first time also infamously introduced the “payment-by-results” system whereby schools' annual grant and thus teachers' salaries depended largely on the

¹¹ On maps and statistics see Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (New York: Verso, 2003), chp. one. On the centrality of legibility to the making of modern states, see James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

annual examination result. The argument for payment-by-result was that it made knowable teachers' everyday work and held them financially accountable.¹² Unable to escape what they frequently referred to as the "tyranny" of payment-by-results, teachers nonetheless did subvert the intended purpose of logbooks. They turned the table on school managers, inspectors, and Education Department bureaucrats by using logbooks to redirect responsibility for difficulties in the classroom.

"Hitherto, the facts accumulated by teachers have been almost ignored," complained an 1853 article in *The Educational Expositor*, a magazine largely for and by elementary teachers.

An inspector enters a school with a stern determination of observing everything for himself, without calling in the aid of the teacher; after spending a few hours in that school, he leaves it with the belief that he has collected all the facts of its last year's history. Lamentable error! That teacher, if worthy of his office, could have given him the history of the growth and development of every boy's mind and character, with a true account of the influences which had been brought to bear upon them. We look to the hearty co-operation of inspectors and teachers for the accumulation of facts.¹³

Many teachers treated logbooks as the longed-for opportunity to articulate the state of the community and all the ways in which it had impeded educational progress in the school. Moreover, in an age when reformers, bureaucrats, and managers wanted problems clinically identified and even vilified so they could take decisive action, many teachers presented a complex and sympathetic portrait of the cultural and socio-economic obstacles to more widespread working-class support for elementary education.¹⁴

¹² Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 122-128.

¹³ "On Method as Applied to Education," in T. Tate and J. Tilleard eds., *The Educational Expositor*, 1 (London, March, 1853), 11.

¹⁴ Of course, many working-class parents and pupils eagerly embraced elementary education. Indeed, this is probably what led so many teachers to view the plight of others

Probably for that reason, quotations or even references to information from logbooks are almost entirely absent in the Cross and Argyll Commissions, two of the landmark investigations into Victorian elementary education. Yet school managers (many of whom were also the local clergyman), school inspectors, and school board members regularly read logbook entries to gather information about the state of elementary education. Not a few inspectors who started their careers as staunch defenders of the Education Department in the annual reports they authored on the state of education in their district - reports which circulated widely among educationalists, MPs, and teachers - began to criticize the Department and its policies at precisely the moment when logbooks were first introduced. Of 75 total reports submitted between 1861 and 1864, seven reports were entirely suppressed and a further ten subject to forced redactions and alterations.¹⁵ Whether logbooks played a role in the defiant volte-face of these inspectors, certainly many of the logbooks which inspectors had to read contained critiques of Department policies.

Logbooks were the most local of educational narratives and though they did not directly inform social and educational debates in Britain, they were the building blocks by which many clergyman, state officials, and educationalists constructed their pamphlets and reports about the state of Britain. Unlike the abstract representations of space and people captured in maps, statistics, and reports of Parliamentary investigations, logbooks offered a portrait of the society rooted in a lived-in locality with specific, individual

unsympathetically. See Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), esp. chp 6.

¹⁵ Gillian Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870-1895* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 68-69.

subjects. They were a technology by which the liberal state both regulated and came to know its subjects.

Self, Community, and Critiques

Teachers used logbooks entries about educational policies to present a carefully curated representation of community opinion. Logbooks across Glasgow recorded the frustration of girls' parents about the allegedly excessive amount time given over to sewing, a complaint which women teachers also expressed.¹⁶ James Wylie of the Free St. George's School in north Glasgow used his logbook entries to give voice to parental concerns about the Revised Code. On November 1, 1864, shortly after the Revised Code had come into effect, Wylie recorded: "Several notes today from parents complaining of the children being put too early to learn arithmetic. The master replied it was the arrangement of the Privy Council and he had no alternative." Over the next few years he made several more entries in that same vein, noting on August 2, 1865 that "Some parents objected to the Revised Code and I think justly" and a few months later that "A woman called to-day to complain of her child being put too soon to work accounts," to which he recorded that he replied "the teacher had no alternative but to work the school according to the provisions of the Revised Code. The same complaint has often been made before."¹⁷ The Revised Code was unpopular with teachers and the working classes

¹⁶ McDermid, *The Teaching*, 60.

¹⁷ Glasgow City Archives (GCA): D-ED7/157/1/1, Free St. George's School Logbook, (no pages, see dates).

across Britain, but particularly in Scotland with its proud educational tradition.¹⁸

Teachers like Wylie turned logbooks into evidence of the community's dissatisfaction, acting as mediators between the recipients of education and those within the educational hierarchy who were in direct contact with policymakers.

It was perhaps such expressions of dissatisfaction not only from teachers (who were equally vocal south of the Tweed), but also from working- and lower-middle-class communities (who seem to have been more vocal in Scotland) that led to a staggered, and ultimately only partial implementation of the Revised Code in Scotland.¹⁹ In recounting the opinion of parents about the Revised Code, Wylie also subtly narrated his professional self into being. He positioned himself as an instrument of the state whose hands were too tightly bound, thus forcing him to follow unwise policies. The emphasis, however, is so firmly on the opinion of parents that Wylie even refers to himself in the third person on several occasions. Though his own personal opinions inform these entries, Wylie de-emphasizes them and instead presents himself as reluctantly ventriloquizing the opinions of the community when in reality he was probably using their complaints to ventriloquize his own opinions.

Teachers utilized a variety of tones and styles in their logbook entries to signal their opinion about an educational policy as well as the behavior and attitudes of local

¹⁸ Christopher Bischof, "Schoolteachers and Professionalism, 1696-1906," in eds., Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman and Lindsey Patterson, *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming); Thomas Wilson, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results' in Scotland, 1861-1872," in Walter M. Humes and Hamish M. Paterson eds., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education, 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1983), 94-114.

¹⁹ See Wilson, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results'" and Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 58-59.

parents and children. Susannah Wright's close study of the Floodgate Street slum in Birmingham found that broader discourses about slums influenced teachers' logbook entries, leading them to both condemn and pity slum children.²⁰ In her study of female slum travelers, Ellen Ross notes that in depicting the inhabitants of slums, "the writer displays herself as subject: her own fear, disgust, affection, excitement, anger, and impatience."²¹ Whether written by men or women, many logbooks, like slum narratives, were marbled through with a potent mixture of pathos designed to elicit sympathy (for both the teacher and the pupils) and more objective language designed to project an aura of factuality; love for pupils and repulsion at their habits and physical dirtiness; serious discussion of educational policies and satiric potshots at the way policies played out in practice.²² Good but marble these sentences with short examples from logbooks.

The daily entries of Donald MacGregor of Lochluichart Public School in the Scottish Highlands between 1874 to 1880 humorously highlighted the absurdity of the state-imposed curriculum, pedagogic theories of the day, and the almost random topics in textbooks and readers. One of his favorite tactics seems to have been juxtaposing the radically disparate subject matters which he covered in a single day. On April 12, 1875 he taught lessons on "Cromwell & domestic utensils," then a couple weeks later covered "History of the manners of the 17th century and lessons on laziness, truth, and rain." On January 22, 1879 he taught "Lessons on Eastern Dress, Poverty, the Cardinal Points, and

²⁰ Susannah Wright, "The work of teachers and others in and around a Birmingham slum school 1891-1920," *History of Education*, 38, 6, 729-46.

²¹ Ellen Ross, *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 6.

²² *Ibid.*, 11-14.

the Whale.” On other occasions he gave lessons on “the Philosophy of a Candle and the Elephant” and “gas, sloth, and the soldier.”²³ It is not certain that MacGregor intended to create satiric juxtapositions; he may simply have been exhausted at the end of the day and listed some of the subjects as they came to mind. However, MacGregor had more than twelve years’ experience and a quite respectable second class certificate when he arrived at Lochluichart. Established enough to have a strong opinion about the education system and to know how to give it subtle expression in logbook entries, MacGregor may well have written these juxtapositions as part of the more general critique of the hodgepodge of the curriculum laid down in the ever-shifting Education Department Codes.²⁴

Sometimes humor was a coping mechanism, a signal of resignation that some things were out of a teacher’s hands and simply had to be endured. When James Wylie arrived at his Glaswegian school on the morning of November 4, 1876, he discovered the windows had been broken during the night yet again. “Two panes of glass broken during the night. Less ventilation very desirable.”²⁵ If he had any ideas about who might have done it - and chances are good that he did - he did not record them. Absent any suggestion about the perpetrators, this entry implies a widespread culture of hostility towards schooling against which Wylie brought to bear all the good spirit he could muster. The use of satire and humor could also be more bitter and directly cutting: “It is perhaps well that teachers are not permitted to enter ‘reflections or opinions of a general

²³ Highland Archive and Registration Centre (“HARC”): CRC/5/3/27/a, “Lochluichart Public School Logbook, 1873-1888,” 24, 35, 42, 46, 288, 290.

²⁴ Gillian Sutherland, *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870-1895* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 191-260; Copelman, *London’s Women Teachers*, 102-111; Anderson, *Education and Opportunity*, 103-161.

²⁵ Glasgow City Archives (GCA): D-ED7/157/1/1 “Free St George’s School Oakbank Logbook,” (no pages, see date).

character' in the logbook," wrote William Grant of Invermoriston board school, "as one could hardly do so concerning the present state of educational affairs in this district and keep his temper."²⁶ That restriction had not stopped him from explicitly decrying the "lamentable state" of attendance, the "carelessness of parents," and the generally "disheartening" culture of opposition to education in the community.²⁷ Grant also used sarcasm to deflect blame for poor attendance, noting that low attendance owed to "the dutiful affection shown by many of the children towards their parental roofs."²⁸

Perhaps frustration was the most pervasive tone in logbook entries which leveled criticism at communities or critiqued the state's policies. "It is not a pleasant prospect having to traverse the same ground an indefinite number of times as each 'stray lamb' comes dropping in at his own sweet will," William Grant complained,²⁹ At least those pupils could understand him; he also complained of some new pupils who spoke only Gaelic. They "might be spoken to in Low Dutch as well as in English for all they know of it," he wrote.³⁰ Mrs. K. Cooper complained of her pupils at Angler's Garden School in central Islington, London that it was "A poor attendance again; ... very disheartening to teachers. Parents seem to take little interest in their children's education, at times it is very discouraging to us all."³¹ "The School Board Visitors do nothing whatever for this school as regards looking up absentees," wrote Edward Knapp of St. James' Boys'

²⁶ Highland Archives and Registration Centre (HARC): CI/5/3/123/a, "Invermoriston Public School Logbook," 280.

²⁷ Ibid., 109, 110, 138

²⁸ Ibid., 266

²⁹ Ibid., 304.

³⁰ Ibid., 166.

³¹ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV3/ANG/LB/3, "Angler's Garden Boys' Logbook, 1875-1899," 332.

School in north Islington on May 17, 1878.³² “To-day a girls’ Scottish History [textbook] was fearfully destroyed. Could not find out who did it. Disgrace on the whole school, to keep all in every day & g[ive] no [break] in the forenoon, until a boy or girl is told to me who did it,” John Millar of Beaulieu Free Church school wrote on March 5, 1868 in an entry that blended frustration and anger.

Frustration was a prevalent tone in logbook entries because it was so potently multivalent. Frustration signaled that teachers were aware of the seriousness of a particular problem, but also staked the claim that there was very little they could do as individuals. It subtly shifted responsibility from the teacher onto educational policy, the local ethos, and socio-economic forces. Frustration might also be read (and sometimes perhaps intended) as a subtle request for sympathy from the school inspector because of both the factors that were out of the teacher’s control and the emotional toll which teaching took.

Frustration with the slow pace of change in parental and pupil attitudes towards schooling stood at the heart of Mr. Tomilson’s 1879 entry in the logbook for his large, relatively new school:

A little boy, James Monday, 8 years old, was brought into the school yard crying but refused to go into the ranks, had to be carried into the classroom. He then screamed, kicked, and so tried to run out, that his master sent for me, but nothing would make him move but the cane. He got four or five strokes on his back, but continuing to scream, I removed him to my private-room, when his mother rushed in, and cursed and swore and threatened to a fearful degree. With much difficulty I got her out of the school, but a mob assembled in the yard and street, which was only dispersed by the arrival of the police. This is the first annoyance of the kind

³² LMA: LCC/EO/DIV3/STJAM/LB/1, “St. James’ School Boys’ Logbook,” 435.

which has occurred in the new buildings. Such interruptions were common enough in the old school three years ago; let us hope they are fast dying out.³³

The final sentence is the key to this entry. The shift from “I” to “let *us*” signals a move from factual narration to wistful reflection. Tomilson situates himself within a progressive movement into which he also invites the inspectors, managers, and school board members who read his logbook. This first-person-plural progressivism contrasts with attitude of the distraught child and his indignant mother, whose attitudes towards schooling and the authority of teachers he associates with the literal and metaphorical “old school.” The speed and ease with which the mother walked into the school itself while a “mob” formed in the school yard suggested the extent to which parents observed and could exert pressure on the teachers. Tomilson brings his work and identity into being through the tension he narrates between himself and the attitudes of the community embodied in the child, his mother, and the “mob.”

Logbooks could also represent a fracturing of the community of teachers within a school. Headteachers used the logbook to blame assistant teachers for problems of discipline, poor attendance, and slow academic progress, thus signaling the absence of close ties within the school itself. The problem was so acute for a time at Beaulieu Free Church School that the inspectors’ report for 1884 (which had to be copied in full into the logbook) noted that “local circumstances seem to render it desirable to state separately and explicitly that the work done by assistant George G. Hastings is ... of unusually good quality.”³⁴ Hastings left Beaulieu for a “similar appointment” in Aberdeen before much

³³ Quoted in David Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London, 1870-1904: A Social History* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 40-41.

³⁴ HARC: “Beaulieu Free Church/Board School Logbook,” CI/5/3/127B, 153.

longer. In Glasgow the school board passed a resolution in 1894 requiring “That when an entry is made in the log-book regarding a certificated teacher a copy of the same be submitted to the person concerned.”³⁵ Though the power of logbooks’ narratives could be challenged, the very need for an inspector to defend an assistant teacher and school boards to mandate assistant teachers’ right to see what was written about them suggests the credibility and power of logbooks in general.

In teachers’ hands logbooks became a key technology of the self and the community. Through the use of humor, satire, frustration, and anger, teachers wrote themselves into the narrative of their everyday work. These narratives insisted that the personal - even the forbidden “reflections of a personal nature” - could not be disentangled from the professional. For scholars like Lionel Trilling and Richard Sennett one of the hallmarks of the nineteenth century was, as Sennett puts it, a “confusion... between public and intimate life.” What was felt privately could and often should be expressed publicly, a “narcissistic” form of subjectivity that was increasingly celebrated for its authenticity.³⁶ Yet while teachers left an intimate record of their own feelings in them, logbooks also became a way for teachers to give an impression of local culture and opinions.

Filled with five hundred blank pages, it often took the tenure of several headteachers to fill a logbook. During that time - and sometimes afterward - they stayed

³⁵ GCA: D-ED7/117/1/1, “Keppochhill Public School Logbook,” 314.

³⁶ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 5; Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

with the school, providing a narrative of the community from which teachers could draw wisdom, inspiration, and solace. In 1984 the teachers at Maryhill Primary School in Glasgow celebrated the centenary of their school's opening by reading the old logbook and giving lessons about Victorian elementary education.³⁷ In 1947 during his first week on the job as headmaster of Northam Junior School near Southampton, E.W. Gadd found the logbooks for the school going back to 1863. He read them with great interest and following his retirement, he published an annotated version of the early logbooks that cross-referenced events they mentioned with the local newspaper. Though reticent in his preface, the sense comes across that these logbooks were a source of inspiration and emotional sustenance. "[D]espite all the problems which beset us in our time, not one of today's teachers would willingly change places with these pioneers of a hundred years ago," he wrote with more than a hint of admiration.³⁸ There was also a personal connection: the logbooks from the 1890s recorded the progress of two pupil teachers, apprentices who would themselves go onto become headmasters at that school. Gadd served as a teacher-trainee under those two headmasters before completing his training and going on to become headmaster. The logbooks gave an even greater depth to his connection to the school and his project to annotate and publish them in retirement allowed him to retain that connection.

While working in local archives across Britain, I witnessed several donations of Victorian-era logbooks – apparently a fairly common occurrence. In each case, they were donated by family members who had found the logbooks in the home of a relative

³⁷ GCA: D-ED7/139/9/2, "Centenary Magazine, 1884-1984. Maryhill Primary School."

³⁸ E.W. Gadd ed., *Victorian Logs* (Studley, Warwickshire: Brewin Books, 1979), xi.

that had taught at the school in the mid-twentieth century. These former teachers clearly cherished these artifacts of their former schools' past, perhaps finding in their pages teachers with whom they could both identify and claim some distance from in terms of their training, state support, and parental attitudes. It is easy to imagine a Victorian teacher freshly arrived to the job and the community opening up the school's logbook to see the trials that awaited them and how the previous occupants in their chair had dealt with them. Logbooks were not only a means by which teachers could assert themselves, but an artifact which contributed to teachers' sense of shared identity as professionals and located them within a community.

* * *

ii. Urban Teachers

Teachers' logbook entries in schools across Britain reflected shared challenges and deployed similar narrative strategies in articulating self and community. The encounters between teachers and community in urban areas, however, gave rise to its own set of challenges, rhetorical conventions, and narrative categories. How did teachers determine who among their pupils were trustworthy when faced with a dense, constantly shifting social landscape? To whom did they turn as allies in acquiring this knowledge? Once they acquired this knowledge, how did they deploy it? Slums, the myriad opportunities for paid employment for children, and the seeming unknowability of neighborhoods all loomed large in narratives about urban teaching. Teachers playfully invoked and refashioned these tropes as they narrated and navigated the urban social landscape.

Reflecting in 1909 on changes to society in the past decades, C.F.G. Masterman lamented “the crumbling and decay of English rural life” and along with it “the vanishing of that ‘yeoman class’” which had so invigorated society. However, he took hope in

the new type of elementary teacher - a figure practically unknown forty years ago ... [who] are not only doing their own work efficiently, but are everywhere taking the lead in public and quasi-public activities. ... They are taking up the position in the urban districts which for many generations was occupied by the country clergy in the rural districts; providing centres with other standards than those of monetary success, and raising families who exhibit sometimes vigour of character.³⁹

Teachers, he concluded, embodied that tradition of “social service” which had been gaining ground in Britain for some time. He joined a long line of thinkers north and south of the Tweed who looked to elementary teachers to calm the social upheavals, flight from religion, and decay of community which urbanization seemed to bring with it.⁴⁰ Though keenly accurate in many ways, Masterman’s comment that urban teachers were taking on the role that rural clergymen had once played was also misleading: school was not church. Schooldays were not the Sabbath, schools were not places children attended for an hour a week in their best clothes under the supervision of their parents, and teachers lacked the religious and spiritual authority that clergymen still wielded to some degree. Urban schools had porous boundaries and teachers in them had to negotiate the sustained encounter with the influences of the streets, the local economy, and hostility towards the usurpation of parental rights that schooling was often perceived to represent.

³⁹ C.F.G. Masterman, *The Conditions of England*, (London: Methuen, 1909), 67-8.

⁴⁰ Donald Withrington, “‘Scotland a Half Educated Nation’ in 1834? Reliable Critique or Persuasive Polemic,” in *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education*, 55-74; McDermid, *The Schooling*, 4. On the wider project of forging an urban community, see Joyce, *Rule of Freedom*, chp. 3. Major social thinkers concerned with this question include: James Kay, Edwin Chadwick, E.C. Tufnell, Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Carlyle, and J.S. Mill.

City streets and attendance

The everyday sight of empty desks in urban schools starkly underscored popular ambivalence towards education, the tug of the family economy, and the ability to evade heavy-handed attempts to enforce compulsory attendance. School attendance officers (more commonly called “Visitors”) loom large as agents charged with enforcing compulsory attendance in urban areas, particularly London. Visitors went to absent pupils’ homes and could issue a series of warnings and notices to appear before the School Board culminating in a court-ordered fine or even a brief imprisonment for the parents of truant children. However, even the comparatively well-funded, cutting-edge School Board of London employed only one Visitor for roughly every three thousand pupils.⁴¹ Visitors stood out in the neighborhoods they visited. Their appearance often triggered a warning alert to parents and children alike. Parents manipulated the acceptability of sickness as a legitimate excuse for absence to satisfy Visitors. Even when Visitors caught parents and children in a lie, it could take months to get the children back in school when going through official channels. Magistrates often acted leniently when cases finally reached court. During a three month period in 1873-74 the Bow Street magistrate in London convicted only one parent out of thirty-three cases, including several repeat offenders. In 1887 the magistrate responsible for attendance summons in Lambeth granted only 60 summons per month despite an average of 13,000 absences per day in the district.⁴² As late as the School Attendance Officers’ Conference of 1900,

⁴¹ Auerbach, “Compulsion,” 690.

⁴² Rubinstein, *School Attendance*, 98-102, 105.

Visitors complained that “magistrates don’t do their duty.”⁴³ The London School Board even declined to exercise its right to seize goods when a fine levied by a magistrate went unpaid, fearing that assaults on the Visitors who went to collect it.⁴⁴ Though teachers widely believed that the threat of prosecutions for truancy had a good effect on attendance, relying on Visitors to promote everyday attendance was not a reliable strategy.

As the headteacher of the Anglican St. James’ School in Deptford, Edward Burnet did not have to teach; that was a task that could be left to his sizable stable of assistant teachers. However, he noted in his logbook that “As regards my own work I think it is better to combine teaching with superintendence.” For Burnet, teaching allowed him keep in touch with his pupils and to promote attendance. His visits to the homes of frequent truants and pupils who had changed schools led him to conclude that parents carefully monitored the quality and difficulty of the instruction and made strategic decisions about their children’s attendance. On the one hand, Burnet noted, “The father of Thomas Harris came to complain of his son having his home lessons too hard,” a common complaint. On the other hand, Burnet found that some parents had sent their children to another school because they felt their children had made “very little progress.” Leading a school that balanced these competing extremes in the eyes of the community - work that was too easy or too hard - required time in the classroom.

Burnet also made an effort to stay in touch with the state of local trade in the community. “The attendance this week has much decreased,” he recorded on September

⁴³ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 86-87.

⁴⁴ Rubinstein, *School Attendance*, 103.

20, 1866. “This may be owing to the want of employment for men in Deptford, and the great inducement for the employment of boys.” Several months later he noted that “The scarcity of work for shipwrights is effecting the attendance, the parents being unable to afford the school money.” Notably absent in entries from around this time are mentions of sending pupils home for the school fee, a common event in entries made at other times. Years later when the school managers were considering raising the weekly fee, Burnet sent the parents a circular letter “asking if they were willing to pay for a slight increase for their children’s education. The answers were - 81, yes; 34, no.” Clearly Burnet realized how important it was to stay in touch with the local economic situation and to bring parents’ wishes into the decision making progress and he secured a provision in the school’s policy when they raised the fees “that consideration is to be shown to parents who plead poverty, number in the family, etc.”⁴⁵ This gave him leeway to let the nonpayment of fees slide in the case of students whose families had fallen upon hard times. Burnet worked hard at his board school to respond to rather than fight against the attitudes and economic condition of the community in crafting the instruction, attendance policy, and fees. His sensitivity and responsiveness to parents suggests that SBL schools, like their older predecessors, dame’s schools, could be sensitive to the needs of their working class communities.

In reacting to absences teachers had to contend with a range of competing ideas about childhood. The headteacher at Queen’s Garden mixed school in London noted with exasperation that parents just came and plucked children from his school as if they

⁴⁵ St James’ School Boys’ Logbook, 173, 174, 187, 353, 390.

had every right to do so. These absences he allowed, albeit with frustration he recorded in his logbook. Other children, particularly a group of three older boys, absented themselves: “They seem to come regularly for a time [and] then [they declare that] ‘mother keeps me home to mind the baby’ and the regular habit is broken and truanting once more commences.”⁴⁶ In this instance he chose not to take action because the absent pupils had what he considered a legitimate excuse: the care of a sibling. However, when he discovered a week later that these boys had lied to him – their parents had no idea about these truancies – he made known his that he was going to ceremonially cane the boys. They got word of this and switched schools. Changing schools also meant the possibility of a clean slate regarding their attendance records. The teacher was able to find out that Albert Woodcock had “joined St Saviour’s School of his own accord being admitted there without any responsible person being present with him!”⁴⁷ Going well beyond what he was required to do, he had used his time outside school hours to investigate what happened to the boys. He became a progressively more active investigator of the streets. Eventually he found and recorded one of the primary causes of truancy at his school:

I find that a Mr Evans of North Street has been regularly enticing several of the boys - the worst of the Truants amongst the number - to go with him in his cart. They are: Joe Brunt to whom he has given 2p & 3p at a time. James Paley 3p / Robert Huntingford to whom 2/6 & 2/- for a weeks truanting has been given. ... Have reported this to Mr Hunt and have also written to Mr Evans asking him not to employ them again and that he must know they ought to be at School, also to [the Visitor,] Mr Cook.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ “Queen’s Garden Logbook,” (25 April 1879).

⁴⁷ Ibid., (2 May 1879).

⁴⁸ Ibid., (19 February 1880).

Significantly, this information did not come from the Visitor, but had to be reported to him. This teacher seems to have actually walked the streets to observe and question local residents, shopkeepers, and others to find the cause of his truants. While Visitors were important in the campaign against irregular attendance, teachers remained on the front lines of social knowledge production and policy enforcement. The Queen's Garden teacher who formally reported the boys for working for Mr. Evans had decided *not* to report another group of boys when he believed them to be caring for their younger siblings. In practice he had the discretionary power to decide that working for money was not acceptable. Children's participation in labor both within the household and outside of it contributed resources to the family economy, the former merely did so indirectly by freeing up the mother to work. However, teachers treated directly remunerated labor with particular hostility. They constructed a vision of working-class childhood in which irregular and uncompensated labor at home was a realistic expectation, to be frowned upon but not forbidden. Paid labor outside the home required their intervention. This differed from the attitudes of urban Visitors and school boards, which were more sympathetic to many forms of part-time waged labor and less inclined to view children's household assistance as a legitimate reason for consistent absences.⁴⁹

Bribery in one form or another was another tool to encourage attendance. The teacher at Queen's Garden recorded his promise of some pocket pence to several truants if they attended well for a month. Teachers also sometimes knowingly accepted infants who were far too young into their schools to secure the attendance of the child's older

⁴⁹ Auerbach, "Compulsion."

siblings.⁵⁰ For pupils nearing the end of their schooling years teachers could hold out the possibility of a testimonial to potential employers. When one Lambeth youth applied for a job as a signal boy he secured a letter from his Head Teacher describing him as a “well-behaved lad” who had been “regular and punctual in attendance.” The teacher wrote this letter despite the boy being only eleven years old, technically not old enough to leave school.⁵¹

Though Visitors played a role in negotiations over attendance in urban settings, teachers were truly on the front lines and worked with a delicacy and range of tools not available to Visitors. In Britain’s towns and cities, many pupils and parents dissembled, shared knowledge with one another about how to game the system, outright lied, or simply disappeared. Investigating and combating irregular attendance required finesse, constant investigation, and the cooperation of other social actors to navigate the dense, constantly shifting urban social landscape. Even in the time of compulsory attendance with state-backed mechanisms for enforcement teachers did not so much discipline the social landscape as carefully negotiate it.

On the edge of slums

Teachers working on the edge of a slum adopted a particularly wide and playful range of strategies to carry out and to narrate their everyday work. For most middle-class social reformers and educationalists, slums represented the antithesis of a healthy community. If getting pupils to attend regularly posed a challenge for teachers in solidly

⁵⁰ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 95.

⁵¹ Auerbach, 698.

working-class neighborhoods, then it appeared to be almost unimaginably harder in slum schools. The Rev. Andrew Mearns described the enforcement of compulsory attendance as a “cruel weight” on the families of “outcast London.”⁵² Many educationalists and social reformers presented slums as dangerously inscrutable spaces which fostered anonymity, criminality, and general immorality. Teachers knew the reputation slums had and they played with it. Even when they worked merely *near* and not actually *in* a slum, teachers crafted narratives that drew on the tropes of the corrupting influence of the slum, their own missionary-like self-sacrifice, and the civilizing mission. They used these narratives to make sense of their work, find fulfillment, and perhaps to gain some leniency from inspectors.

Teachers in slum schools often fared better than settlement house missionaries in the Victorian imagination. “The effects of a University Settlement are here gratefully acknowledged,” begins Arthur Benson’s introduction to the autobiography of George Acorn, who grew up in the East End in the late nineteenth century.

But though one must not say a grudging word against the unselfish and high-spirited labours of such workers in the field, I cannot help feeling that the value of their work is primarily, so to speak, scientific; that it lies rather in the study and the presentment of such problems ... At present the one practical hope seems to lie in education; in bringing children at an impressionable age in touch with orderly systems and interesting ideas and finer purposes - and in touch, too, with kindly and self-restrained and honest teachers.⁵³

This sentiment appears in many places, from Conan Doyle famous description of the Board schools in London’s dreariest areas as “Lighthouses. Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser,

⁵² Andrew Mearns, “The Bitter Cry of Outcast London,” (London, 1883), 11.

⁵³ George Acorn, *One of the Multitude* (New York, 1912), xvii.

better England of the future” to Arthur Morrison’s portrait in *A Child of the Jago* of young Dicky’s stern, but dedicated and knowing teacher contrasted with the completely out of touch, self-congratulatory, and ineffective settlement house workers.⁵⁴

But *A Child of the Jago* also provides a point of departure from the conventional understanding of teachers’ relationship to slums. The limits of education are described spatially: “The Elementary Education Act ran in the Jago no more than any other act of Parliament.” The school that serves the Jago occupies a geographically as well as socially and culturally liminal space “in Honey Lane ... between Dove Lane and the Jago,” at once distinct from and a part of both the Jago, the worst of slums, and the slightly better-off Dove Lane, a place the narrator describes “no very reputable place, but ... not like the Jago.” It was to Dove Lane that the Roper family fled as soon as their finances allowed, their attempts at respectability having earned them the hostility of their neighbors in the Jago. The Roper family’s child, “the hunchback,” goes to the same school as Dicky and becomes “a favourite with [the] teachers,” always attending, working hard, and telling on Dicky when he causes trouble.⁵⁵

It was a remarkably common phenomenon to build real schools like the fictional Honey Lane Board School on the border between a slum and a slightly better-off neighborhood, filled with both respectable and rough children. In 1890, according to Charles Booth, 106 of the London School Board’s 388 schools contained a diverse mix of pupils from “poor” and “comfortably off” families.⁵⁶ These schools were especially

⁵⁴ Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Sterling, Publishing, 2004), 524; Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (Chicago: Herbert Stone, 1896).

⁵⁵ Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, 184.

⁵⁶ Rubinstein, *School Attendance*, 113.

attractive to teachers, often resulting in professional rewards - most especially, high salaries because of the number of pupils attending - and the ability to claim the identity of a social observer and missionary without suffering the privations or difficulties of actually living and working in the heart of a slum.

School located in the heart of a slum district seem to have been fairly rare and were regarded by teachers, managers, and schools boards with a sense of hopelessness. “If anyone wishes to see a school which is carried on under the most difficult conditions, let him [sic] turn his footsteps in the direction of Shoreditch,” began an 1884 article in *The Schoolmaster*. “Let the visitor ask his way to Old Nichol Street,” the slum neighborhood that inspired *A Child of the Jago*, “and, when he has arrived there, let him not by any means be faint-hearted. About the time of my own visitation a curate was attacked in broad daylight ... and was not merely robbed, but subjected to considerable personal violence by a gang of roughs, who are more plentiful in this part of the world than policemen.” The inhabitants are described as a “teeming population [which] seemed to have taken itself to the streets” at the time of the author’s visit. Such true slum schools were emphatically to be observed only, not to be worked in. Teaching there had broken the body and spirit of the last teacher, leaving him with almost “total loss of sight.” Working at the school on Old Nichol Street, the article claimed, “will deaden the spirit of missionary enterprise in the heart of the enthusiastic teacher.”⁵⁷

The logbook headmaster John Laidlaw kept at Crookston Street School in Glasgow gives the impression that the school was filled with slum children and

⁵⁷ “School Attendance, Part V. Round the Hackney Downs,” *The Schoolmaster*, 663 (13 September 1884), 363.

constantly on the verge of becoming as disciplinarily debauched as Old Nichol Street school. Located between the notorious Gorbals to the east and comparatively prosperous Govan to the west, Crookston was huge, with more than one thousand pupils on the books. The parents of Gorbals pupils included day laborers, laundry women, dock workers, factory hands, women doing home work, and large numbers of the unemployed; pupils from Govan had parents working as skilled artisans - particularly those involved in ship building trades - and even a few white-collar clerical and low-level government workers, such as post office employees. Crookston Street School had, then, a mix of families from the very poor to members of the upper-working and lower-middle classes. Though there were many large schools in Britain's most densely populated areas, it was schools like Crookston, which were on the edge of a slum rather than in a slum, that the headmaster seem to have been paid the highest. And Laidlaw was very well paid indeed, earning £730 in 1878 before the Glasgow School Board imposed a pay cap, limiting his salary to the still enormous sum of around £500 a year.⁵⁸

Laidlaw and other headteachers of schools on the borders of slums could earn so much because they were able to secure good attendance and high pass rates on the annual examination compared to schools located in and entirely serving slums. Over nine hundred pupils were eligible to take the exam many years at Crookston Street School and their pass rate was upwards of 97% throughout much of the 1880s, which was an incredible achievement.⁵⁹ The secret to Laidlaw's success, his logbook entries suggest,

⁵⁸ James Roxburgh, *The School Board of Glasgow 1873-1919* (London: University of London Press, 1971), 38.

⁵⁹ GCA: D-ED7/54/1/1, "Crookston Street Public School Logbook, 1875-1892," 32-34, 41, 67, 105, 138, 229.

was a somewhat selective intake of students combined with a carefully-crafted narrative in the school logbook, read by the inspector, which emphasized the travails of dealing with the student population who came from the slum.

Though he was not allowed to outright reject a pupil if he had space, when a pupil applied for admission to the school Laidlaw gave them a set of regulations “to be strictly attended to by the pupils in Crookston Street Public School” which had to be agreed to by the pupil and their parents. To judge from a sample from the admission register in 1880-1885, this measure – unusual for a school at the time – resulted in a disproportionate number of pupils from the area to the west, despite lower population density and two other schools serving that area. Laidlaw’s regulations noted that “every pupil [is] required to spend one to two hours at least every evening preparing lessons for the following day,” a substantial investment of time for pupils whose help was needed with the family economy and far more than was normally required (fifteen minutes or less was a more common expectation, even under the progressive School Board for London). If a pupil did not do this one evening, a parent had to prepare an explanatory note. This need to send a note may have scared away parents who were unable to write well – just as the need to agree to written regulations may have scared away parents who were unable to read well. Laidlaw also required parents of new pupils to meet with him at the time of admission and the parents of children who “are not making satisfactory progress in all the branches of their education” to “communicate at once, and, if possible, personally” with him – a difficulty for two parents that worked full time.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ibid., *in passim*

Schools on the edge of slums had the advantage of a large number of respectable pupils to trust and deploy as investigators. Children were particularly effective at obtaining information about their peers because collective child minding practices led many children from poor and working-class neighborhoods to become knowledgeable about their neighborhoods. Children's presence also did not set off alarm bells like the appearance of a Visitor did.⁶¹ Sometimes less respectable, more street-wise children were necessary to help navigate the social landscape of the slum. This was the case for George Acorn, who recollected in his autobiography the varying degrees of poverty at his East End school, his family being "particularly poor." The headmaster at his school came to know him well as he was "frequently caned and in disgrace" for his poor attendance, weak performance, and unruly behavior. However, Acorn's headmaster treated him in an unusually friendly manner, which perplexed him until one day the headmaster summoned him - for a caning, Acorn thought, until he began to question him about second-hand hat-boxes for sale in local pawnshops. The headmaster wanted to purchase one on the cheap, and once he had decided on one he had Acorn lead him through the slum to the pawnshop, literally with his hand on the boy's shoulder as if to signal that, although he worked in a school on the edge of a slum, this was foreign territory.⁶² Acorn was both his guide and his passport to the slum whose children filled much of his school, yet which remained unknown. He crossed into the slum only to purchase an un-reclaimed article most likely pawned by a downwardly mobile family.

⁶¹ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 57.

⁶² Acorn, *One of the Multitude*, 26-27.

If having a mixture of slum and more respectable children provided a practical advantage, it also provided fodder for the narratives of poverty and immorality which head teachers crafted in their logbook entries. In addition to the possibility of obtaining informal leniency in annual inspections, teachers directly benefited from having their schools classified as “special difficulty schools,” which, in schools under the London School Board, came with a salary bonus and formal leniency with attendance and exam requirements for the annual grant. This category was, however, the result of subjective judgments about the school as much as any objective criteria. Special difficulty schools had to perform their status to defend it.⁶³ Though the formal category of “special difficulty schools” was limited to London, in practice schools all over Britain could obtain some leniency if the inspector and school board members perceived the school to be in a particularly challenging area. Thus Laidlaw referred in his logbook entries to “parents ... [who] hurt the influence of the [school’s] wholesome discipline,” and complained of irregularly attending pupils from the poor slum to the east who, despite his best efforts, “are sure to fail [the inspector’s exam] and cause the school to suffer in reputation and purse.” He also made judgmental entries about the number of children who came to school filthy and the loss every year in June, when many leases in Govan expired, of “a number of very respectable and promising children” whose families had improved their situation enough that they could afford to move further west.

⁶³ On special difficulty schools, see Imogen Claire Lee, “Creating Childhoods: Ideas of Child and School in London, 1870-1914,” unpub. PhD dissertation at Goldsmiths College, University of London (2013), 149-162.

Teachers assisted social reformers and journalists eager for sensationalist accounts of poverty in schools. In “Light and Shade,” the sequel to “The Bitter Cry of Outcast London,” the Rev. Andrew Mearns visited several large London schools with accommodation for more than two thousand pupils each. Guided by the headteacher at one school which he describes as representative, he is taken first to a classroom with hungry, half-clothed, and mentally backward children - a class which, against the rules of the Code, was “below the lowest.” Mearns made much of the poverty and poignant stories of the children in this and other classrooms. Yet we later learn that only about two hundred of the children at this school are from families that need assistance with boots and food. Mearns presents this as a startlingly high figure, but it is fewer than ten percent of the school’s children. His guided tour with the teacher seems to have concentrated on the poorest children of the school. The *Pall Mall Gazette* also found teachers willing to direct the gaze of their anonymous investigator - who had assistance from Mearns - to the poorest children at a large Board school in London for a Christmas Eve special article on “The Children’s Cry.” “By the courtesy of the head master and mistress, we are able to gain some insight into the surroundings of the little people,” the article declared before going on to catalogue the ravages of slum life on the poor bodies and minds of the children. In the case of logbook narratives, teachers played with representations of poverty and slums to make good for themselves. Playing into stereotypes about slums and poverty for Mearns and the *Pall Mall Gazette* allowed them to make good for their

pupils: hundreds of pounds worth of boots and free meals flowed to the schools described in these narratives.⁶⁴

For Therese Meier, teaching in a slum while living elsewhere offered a compromise between her commitment to doing good and her desire for comfort. “In July 1900 I left [Whitelands training college] a fully certificated, matriculated teacher and a candidate for future headships, worth £80 a year,” she recorded in her autobiography. She came from a middle-class Anglo-German background, attended Bromley Public High School and traveled several times to Germany during her youth to visit cousins from her father’s side of the family. Her father’s financial situation was just precarious enough to compel Meier to earn a living for herself and they paid for her to attend training college to make herself more marketable as a governess or secondary school teacher. But upon graduation she went to work at Highway Girls’ School on the edge of Shadwell in Tower Hamlets. Meier’s decision to work in this school was a form of slumming motivated by a mixture of a desire to personally do good where it was most needed while also earning a much-needed salary. She considered the extra ten pounds a year of “‘difficulty’ money” for working in her school to be both much needed and “well earned.”

In her autobiography, in which she fittingly describes herself in the subtitle as “A Rebellious Victorian,” Meier interrogates the extent of her commitment to the slum and its children as evidenced by her lack of capacity for self-sacrifice. She describes her school as

⁶⁴ The Rev. Andrew Mearns, “Light and Shade: Pictures of London Life,” (London: W. Speaight & Sons, 1885), 98-115.

grim and high and built of smoke-stained once-red brick. Its endeavours to soften its gauntness with ridiculous gables and turrets were belied by the dreary interior, the dark-prison-like stone staircases leading to a succession of drab class-rooms painted half putty colour, half the inevitable maroon. Not a leaf, not a blade of grass was to be seen from any window.

Though she believed that living near this dreary school would have made her “more valuable as a teacher,” she found that “the sights and sounds and smells in those alleys and mean streets were unbearable. They conquered me.” Thus she abandoned what she called “the idea of ‘complete dedication’” and went back to live in her old stomping grounds of Bromley, “where fourteen precious hours of quiet and clean air were mine each day.” Yet she confessed “I felt a damning sense of guilt when at the end of the afternoon I changed, waved a breezy good-bye to the children I passed and left them to their wretched background and such poor games as they could snatch in the crowded streets. It seemed like desertion.”⁶⁵ After a few years, she did actually desert the school and elementary teaching altogether to take up an easy and well remunerated situation as a governess in Forest Hill. No mention of her time working with slum children on the edge of Shadwell occurs in the rest of her autobiography.

Meier refused to portray herself as a self-sacrificing Victorian do-gooder in the slums. She balanced care for her pupils with her own need for physical comfort and emotional distance from them and their troubles. The candid and relatively unapologetic tone of her memoir - there is only a single fleeting mention of “guilt” at her “desertion,” forgotten by the next sentence - is made possible by the cultural distance gained over time. Meier captured a nearly universal geographic and psychological phenomenon

⁶⁵ Therese La Chard (nee Meier), *A Sailor Hat in the House of the Lord: The Autobiography of a Rebellious Victorian* (London, 1967), 108-110.

among teachers working in an impoverished school. Rather than becoming a part of her students' slum neighborhood, she lived in another more salubrious nearby district.

Teachers like Meier played important roles in slum communities by coordinating charity efforts, helping pupils get jobs, and giving pupils and their families some access to knowledge and culture. But most, like Meier, never confused teaching for philanthropy. Distance and detachment from the slums were part of how she managed her working life and relationship to Shadwell.

Connections and disconnects

Teachers acted as key intermediaries between the philanthropic public and poor children. They often found themselves deciding which among their students deserved benevolent assistance based on their assessment of their pupils' needs, the conditions of their family life, and the ability of their parents to provide for them. Though never part of their official job description, teachers became arbiters of poverty and worthiness in an urban social landscape that made it difficult for those who wanted to give to connect directly with those in need. Miss Williams of Cottenham Road Girls' School in Waltham Forest, north London was repeatedly called upon to determine which children were "necessitous" and worthy in bestowing charity and other benefits. On March 1, 1886 she provided "a list of 54 children, whose parents are in great distress through want of employment" to "a gentleman" who wished to know which children were suffering from hunger so that his organization might provide some relief. Then on May 18 she sent the Children's Country Holiday Fund the names of a dozen worthy children "to whom a

change of air would be beneficial and whose parents are unable through poverty to pay for it.” In August of that year she received a book of certificates for reduced rail fare and entry tickets to be distributed not just to her pupils and their family, but also at her discretion to “the artisans and working class and their families in the neighbourhood.” A couple months later a local lady bountiful gave her a sovereign to buy boots for those children who most deserved and needed them.⁶⁶

Nor was Miss Williams’s experience unusual. At another London school a lady bountiful who visited had her attention “drawn to a little girl by the teacher,” who then proceeded to give the lady an account of exactly what the girl had eaten in the last twenty-four hours as well as her home life.⁶⁷ The teacher requested a free dinner ticket for the girl, though we do not know if she received one. Williams and other teachers like her literally directed the gaze of local philanthropists and brought to bear their intimate knowledge of children and their families to provide assurance that charity was bestowed justly.

Urban teachers similarly acted as gatekeepers for opportunities that might lead to social advancement for their pupils. George Acorn recalled that his teacher gave the names and addresses of several of his most promising pupils - Acorn himself included - to a “City Gent” seeking cashiers at a starting salary of eight shillings per week. The “City Gent” came to Acorn’s house and “whispered confidentially to my father: ‘Matter of two thousand a year passing through his hands, so, owing to the high recommendations

⁶⁶ LMA: LCC/EO/DIV3/COT/LB/2, “Logbook for Cottenham Road Girls’ School,” 11, 26, 34, 50.

⁶⁷ Mearns, “Light and Shade,” 18.

of the head master, I can offer him the job.”⁶⁸ Another of Acorn’s teachers invited him back to Toynbee Hall, a settlement house with which he had a connection, and there they conversed over tea. “I can hardly estimate the value of the influence these visits had over me,” Acorn recorded. Selection for such patronage carried some direct benefits such as tea, snacks, the opportunity to have a “steaming wash,” and some opportunity to develop more refined speech. More importantly, however, it helped to establish respectability, which might lead to better job opportunities.

Teachers took their role as judges of children’s character quite seriously as a thing unto itself even when nothing meaningful was at stake. John Lyne of St. Lawrence School in the London suburb of Brentford was furious when he discovered that Thomas Howey, one of his pupils, had been nominated for a Sunday School prize for good attendance and general conduct. In July 1868 Lyne wrote a lengthy letter to the Sunday School teacher detailing Howey’s propensity for swearing, lying, truanting, fighting, and breaking the Sabbath by playing football. When the Sunday School teacher wrote that Howey’s mother was confined and could not be questioned, Lyne even arranged to find witnesses to testify about Howey’s indiscretions. However, the Sunday School teacher did not pursue an investigation and gave Howey the prize. Incensed, Lyne recorded in his logbook that Howey

is going about making statements tantamount to accusing me of falsehood in making the charges against him: stating that the thing has been settled and that he has got his prize in spite of the charges against him, the inference being that the charges have been shown to be false or of course he could not have got his prize. There is something morally very wrong here. The mother has nothing whatever to do with the

⁶⁸ Acorn, *One of the Multitude*, 118-123.

truth or falsehood of these charges, and I fear the whole matter is to be allowed to drop, and a shameless sabbath-breaker carry off [the prize].⁶⁹

This clearly bothered Lyne a great deal and was more than simply a moral issue: his credibility as an arbiter of local children's character was at stake. The outstanding character symbolized by the Sunday School prize was something which was performed, but it could also be falsely performed. Impugning the Sunday School teacher's local knowledge, Lyne positioned himself as the true judge of his pupil's character. Lyne claimed the ability to see past his pupil's false performance not only on the basis of his school conduct, but also his behavior before and after school and on the Sabbath. Though Lyne did not explain the source of his knowledge, he seems to have had a network of informants. These may have included pupils (themselves perhaps eager to establish their character and trustworthiness by informing) and other figures within the community who kept an eye on the streets such as policemen, shopkeepers, charity workers, delivery boys, or even beggars. The entire incident demonstrates the importance which George Howey and John Lyne attached to the public perception of character in local social networks as well as its contested nature.

Urban teachers worked with police, ladies benevolent, the clergy, and other social actors to tame the rougher and more disruptive influences of the street. On January 31, 1865 James Wylie complained in his logbook that "a penny show which has caused considerable annoyance to the school" had been set up in the vacant lot across from his Free Church school in north Glasgow. "Should it not be soon removed, the Head Master intends to report it as a nuisance." A week later it had been removed "much to the

⁶⁹ LMA: DRO/058/190/1, "St Lawrence School Boys' Logbook," July 23-30, 1868 (no page numbers, see dates).

satisfaction of the teacher.” This vacant lot continued to attract street entertainments, which vexed the teacher. However, he seems to have proceeded cautiously, often giving them a chance to move on before reporting them to the police. When some particularly disruptive entertainers set up in the lot in late January 1869, Wylie reported them to the police as a disturbance not only to the school, but “a nuisance to the district.” Possibly he organized some members of the community to complain with him. In any case, the police listened and forced the entertainers to move on. When “ill behaved boys on the street” made enough noise to cause some disruption in the school, he sent a policeman after them.

Wylie had a keenly calibrated understanding of how and when he could seek police intervention with affairs unfolding outside his classroom. He did not dare call for a policeman when class was “interrupted by the singing of two sailors upon the street.” Perhaps he feared provoking a fight or incurring retribution. The police also relied on Wylie and his staff, which served as witnesses in at least one court case involving disorderly and disturbing conduct in the streets near the school. Wylie further coordinated with the local clergy to keep children whose conduct was too rough out of school. As he informed one lady bountiful who called to inquire about finding a place for some street children in his school, he required that they be recommended by a local deacon. Wylie also policed the behavior of his pupils outside of school. When he heard about a fight between two boys on the streets after school one day, an “Investigation [was] made as to the cause of the quarrel - guilty parties punished.” Like John Lyne fighting his pupil’s supposedly undeserved Sunday school prize, Wylie presumably

tapped trustworthy pupils and possibly other community figures in his “investigation” of behaviors far beyond his purview, but for which he felt some sense of responsibility.⁷⁰

Gender shaped how teachers negotiated the rougher parts of the urban landscape. Male teachers like James Wylie had to be careful not to provoke fights and often worked through the police, the clergy, or even pupils’ parents. Though teachers were naturally reluctant to record impulses to violence in their logbooks, the need to check one’s temper was captured in a short story by James Runciman. London teacher Edward Palliser had to walk a very fine line between being firm and being polite in turning down the request of a criminal prizefighter turned urban missionary to preach in his school. As this “missionary” could not neither preach in the school nor provoke Palliser into a fight that would get him fired, he filed a false claim with the school managers that Palliser had violated the regulations regarding religious tolerance. The matter is only brought to a final rest when, at the urging of his wife, the father of one of his pupils beats up the missionary in a street fight. As Dina Copelman and Anna Davin have noted, women teachers proudly used their mere presence in the streets to help stop lewd behavior and “vile” language. Mrs. Burgwin, headmistress of an impoverished school in South London, testified in 1887 to the Cross Commission that her school acted as “a centre of humanizing influence.” It was not just the children she was changing, but the parents too: “Now ... provided the people are sober, whatever quarrel may be going on, and they will be using bad language, if they see a teacher coming up the street they stop [sic].” She also noted that women “will borrow a neighbour’s apron to come and speak to me so

⁷⁰ Free St George’s/Oakbank Logbook, January 31, 1865; December 1, 1869; February 2, 1869; October 18, 1871; November 17, 1871; January 22, 1873; 17 December, 1875.

that she may come up looking clean.” For her part, Burgwin also gave the whole neighborhood curtains one Christmas, since to her shock none of the houses had them. She even felt that it was her duty “if one [woman] came up to me dirty, to tell her that she should have enough self-respect to wash her face before she came to speak to me.” Given such behavior it is perhaps not surprising that women teachers were also prone to direct confrontations with mothers, female educational authorities, and even other teachers. “The most persistent theme in all accounts of tensions between women,” Copelman notes, “was resistance to authority.” Female teachers sometimes raised their voices and used cutting tone in written complaints when they felt disrespected or subjected to rules they felt to be wrong and overly intrusive. Though outside the normal boundaries of respectability, female teachers packaged this behavior within the professional project to forge respectable pupils and thus avoided much of the criticism they might have incurred for behavior which itself bordered on the rough.

Teachers promoted their ability to quell rough and disruptive behavior as part of their campaign to establish their “economic value.” “It is only as education, yes, and even the bare knowledge of the three R.’s. exerts its civilising influence upon bodies of men,” claimed H. Major in an article for *The Schoolmaster*, “that we can hope to see Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration Courts spread through the length and breadth of the land.” The implication was that without the salutary influence of elementary education, industrial conflicts would be resolved through violence. He went on: “Precisely as a community in any manufacturing town or district has become comparatively educated, precisely in proportion has it been the first to avail itself of co-

operation and cooperative societies.” Amidst fears about social and economic conflict in Britain’s urban centers - particularly in the context of the major global depression during which this article was written - teachers like Major, himself working Nottingham, claimed that they influenced the ethos of the community for the better, replacing a tendency for violence with a desire to learn. Educational theorists, inspectors, and women teachers themselves also claimed that teaching girls about domestic economy could improve both the local and national economies. They argued that household skills - and in particular the ability to cook a good meal - would create an environment that would win men away from economically wasteful, morally corrupting, and physically debilitating pub. This relocation of leisure from pub to home would in turn render rough streets respectable and would reverse the degeneration of the literal and metaphoric national body.

Headteachers in urban schools learned that to be effective they had to familiarize themselves with the local community, to maintain a constant awareness of the state of local trade, to understand the particular inflection “respectability” took in their neighborhood, and to learn the reputations of local families and institutions. This local knowledge allowed them to navigate and even harness the social micropolitics of the community as they went about their work. Much like agents of the empire, whenever possible they worked through rather than against existing social structures and local cultures to affect the change which they - and sometimes the state - wanted to see. In urban settings, teachers also came to rely on some of their children as local guides,

assistants, and informants, a concession to their limited integration into the communities in which they taught. Teachers also explicitly emphasized their position on the fringe of urban communities, particularly the slums and other poor communities. Like so many other urban investigators and do-gooders, teachers approached their work with a mixture of fascination and revulsion, self-interest and altruism.⁷¹ Yet perhaps more than most settlement house workers and ladies bountiful, teachers were fixed members of a real and specific local community. They were unable to escape the rhythms of its everyday life and its culture, but so too to a remarkable extent was the community unable to escape their perceptive eyes.

* * *

iii. Rural Teachers

Rural teachers perhaps had an easier time understanding the local culture and economy than their urban counterparts, but navigating and narrating the forces of rural community presented a unique and equally daunting set of challenges. Teachers grappled, for instance, with the question of how to deal with longstanding local customs that regularly devastated their attendance rolls. Should they honor local customs surrounding monthly markets and the “old” holiday calendar or aggressively push against them? What was to be done about the rhythms of the planting and harvest season when they interfered with the progress of pupils? And how did they narrate themselves and the local community when they framed these tensions in their logbook entries? Did they understand themselves as agents of modernity? Rural teachers also had to work within

⁷¹ See Ross, *Slum Travelers*; Koven, *Slumming*.

the context of an active, paternalistic involvement of the part of many local elites - especially major landowners - in the hiring of teachers and the everyday management of schools. If the question facing urban teachers in Victorian Britain was how they would narrate and navigate seemingly new urban social landscape, then the question facing rural teachers was how they would deal with the older forms of community which persisted in the countryside - albeit in the context of economic and social upheavals.

This section is based mostly off evidence from a rural area perceived to be both a bastion of traditional forms of community and the site where the modernizing impulse was making some of the greatest changes: the historic county of Inverness-shire (which in the Victorian period encompassed the Hebrides in addition to its present land). Parish schools were at the heart of Scotland's rural school system up to 1872, at which point they were mandatorily transferred to newly created school boards.⁷² This process occurred at the same time as the Highland Clearances and the fracturing of the Established Church of Scotland known as the Disruption, an event which set the laborers and small landowners who largely joined the Free Church against the major landowners who remained staunch members of the Established Church. Teachers in the Highlands - and elsewhere in rural Britain - had to navigate the tension between established customs and paternalistic social relations on the one hand and the modernizing aspirations of the central state and increasing social divisions on the other.

Rural schooling and attendance

⁷² On this, see Anderson, *Education and Opportunities*, chp. 4.

Few rural areas had compulsory attendance before it was implemented at the national level in 1881. Still, many teachers considered it a moral duty to encourage attendance and also had a financial stake in filling the classroom with regularly attending pupils. They worked hard to achieve this goal. Visitors supported their efforts, but rural Visitors tended to either work only part time or, if employed full-time, were responsible for such a large geographic area that they often stopped by only occasionally. Rural teachers were every bit as much on their own as urban teachers when it came to negotiating attendance - often more so, given that school managers and school board members themselves employed children as part time agricultural laborers.⁷³

Teachers in rural schools tended to see local customs, special events, and their participation in the local agrarian economy as unavoidable, if not quite legitimate reasons for the absence of their pupils. When Peter and Agnes Bain took over the Tain Free Church Congressional School in the Highlands in the 1860s, they quickly learned to accommodate rather than fight against the many local traditions. They regularly ignored absences on the town's annual holiday, granted half holidays for the "immemorial custom" of Fall market days, and adjourned school in December and January for a full two weeks to accommodate both the old calendar and the "new" calendar (the calendar officially in use since 1752) even as they recorded their wish that "the people were united in resolving to observe one of the styles, and not as at present observing both."⁷⁴ The Scottish celebration of New Years - or "Hogmanay" - was a particularly important custom with many local variations that stood as a marker of local and Scottish identity -

⁷³ Horn, *Education in Rural England*, 136-139.

⁷⁴ HARC: CRC/5/3/49a, "Tain Free Church Congressional School Logbook," 13, 24, 34.

the sort of custom which the Bains seemed to give a wide berth. Similarly, they either granted holidays or seemed to sanction absences for events such as the opening of a new railway line, the review of soldiers in a nearby village, local and national elections, and even, on one occasion, when some students went to the local court “to witness the trial of a few political rioters.”⁷⁵ Such formally or informally sanctioned absences for special events continued right through the end of the century, particularly in rural areas ranging from Tain in the Scottish Highlands to Southampton in the south of England.⁷⁶ In addition to representing these sanctioned absences as concessions to the popular feelings of the community, teachers’ logbook entries often framed them in language of “custom” and “tradition” that positioned modern schooling as simultaneously backward and forward-looking. Representing themselves as engines of change and the protectors of cherished custom, teachers framed their concessions about attendance with a mixture of frustration and allusions to their own knowledge about local culture and goings on.

By the 1890s the Union and its weekly periodical the *Schoolmaster*, with T.J. Macnamara as editor, began to draw attention to the problem of attendance in rural areas. Their investigations found that very weak attendance around planting and harvest time remained common despite the creation of policies instituting mandatory attendance, restricting young children’s work, and empowering local authorities to enforce these policies even for children attending voluntary schools.⁷⁷ Faced with the almost irresistible lure of agricultural work and the widespread indifference of local authorities,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 10, 204, 213, 366.

⁷⁶ Ed. E.W. Gadd, *Victorian Logs* (Studley Warwickshire, 1979), 132, 165.

⁷⁷ Horn, *Education in Rural England*, 139-140; Robin Betts, *Dr Macnamara 1861-1931* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), chps. 3, 5.

rural teachers perceived the problem of attendance at harvest time as a force beyond their control. Sarah Vincent's entry for September 5, 1873 at Edgton Mixed school in the West Midlands simply read "Today 5 of the children had to leave to go home to glean corn."⁷⁸ Such a short entry suggested that there was simply nothing to be done about it. Gleaning continued to devastate Vincent's attendance roster; one week later she noted: "Only an Average this week of 14. As many of the children are gleaning corn."⁷⁹ Her successor, K.E. Peel, dealt with the attendance problems created by gleaning as well as the harvest which preceded it by re-arranging the school calendar. In practice, this was largely within her control in practice, as it was for many rural teachers. She granted a six week holiday each year starting around August 10.

The inspectors who covered rural areas were keenly aware of the attendance problem and sympathized with teachers' difficulties and parents' needs. "[I]n addition to the regular harvest, children are employed in potato-digging, pea-picking, hopping, blackberrying and nutting, and fruit and daffodil gathering," wrote HMI de Sausmarez in 1898, "and where, as in a case brought to my notice, a boy can earn ten shillings in one week in picking blackberries, it is not surprising if his parents consider him more profitably employed than in struggling with the analyses of sentences."⁸⁰ Since other rural inspectors echoed this attitude, teachers' tendency to write about agricultural work as a virtually insurmountable problem seems to have been an effective narrative strategy -

⁷⁸ Shropshire Archives ("SA"): P103/R/1/1, "Edgton Mixed School logbook," (5 September 1873).

⁷⁹ Ibid., (12 September 1873).

⁸⁰ Quoted in Horn, *Education in Rural England*, 138.

indeed, it may have informed inspectors' understanding of the situation.⁸¹ Teachers' narrative strategy also helped to create a vision of rural communities as tied to the natural rhythms of the land in a way that frustrated the impulse of the modern state and its agents.

Teachers' logbooks testify to their concern for the welfare of their pupils – even irregularly attending ones – in the face of their own best interest. Teachers had a financial motive to focus on those pupils who would have enough attendances to be eligible for examination. Yet many teachers in Britain's countryside lavished attention on pupils who they knew to be or strongly suspected would be ineligible for the examination and thus for grant money because they had not made the 200 annual “attendances” required between 1861 and 1872, or the 250 required thereafter (the morning and afternoon sessions each counted as one “attendance). “Every attention is given to those who are only in school for the winter months,” noted Angus MacQuarrie in January of 1876 at Invermoriston Public School in Inverness-shire.⁸² These were the children needed by their families for farm work, and like many pupils in rural Britain would be needed once again when the land began to thaw and thus would not be eligible for a grant. Teachers like MacQuarrie presented cyclical attendance as frustratingly inevitable, but suggested that their commitment was to the wellbeing of all the children in the area who came into their school for a time.

Hiring rural teachers

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² HARC: CI/5/3/123/a, “Invermoriston Public School 1874-1900 Logbook,” 90.

Hiring practices for teachers in rural areas reflected the persistence of paternalism in the provision of schooling even after it had largely died out in other parts of local and even national government.⁸³ The School Board of Urquhart was formed in 1873 to provide non-denominational education for the 475 children in this Scottish Highlands parish. Elected by men and women who owned or occupied property with a £4 or higher annual rental value, the Urquhart School Board consisted of a Free Church Minister, an Established Church minister, a solicitor, and two middling landowners. All were men; indeed, there were only 17 women elected to school boards in Scotland's first election in 1873 compared to more than 5,000 men. Three teaching positions in schools under the Urquhart school board soon became open. The board's decisions regarding these replacement hires reflected the persistence of paternalism in the rural hiring process. Two positions were advertised in newspapers, the local *Inverness Courier* as well as three with a national reach: *The Scotsman*, *the Daily Review*, and *The Glasgow Herald*. Each position received more than a dozen applications from certificated teachers from all over Scotland, but both positions were filled by candidates originally born in the parish. The third position, to replace the deceased Kenneth Mackintosh, was not even advertised. Instead the Board wrote to his son, himself a certificated teacher working in another county, to offer him the job at the pay of £80 a year, half the fees, half the inspection grant, and the use of a house and garden for free. These were extremely generous terms given the size of the school and the salaries of other teachers working for the Board, perhaps reflecting a desire to reward his father's years of service, or to ensure his

⁸³ On the persistence of paternalism longer than historians once believed, however, see Peter Mandler, *The Age of Aristocracy*.

acceptance of the position and thus win for the community some measure of continuity in a time of rapid turnover among local teachers.

The process of hiring teachers often mobilized – and reinforced -- existing social relations within a local community. Lord Lovat of Beaully, Inverness-shire had no official relationship to the Kilmorack School Board but nonetheless regularly intervened in its affairs. In the winter of 1876-77 he urged them to stop their search for a female teacher for the infants and young children. Though it was the critical winter season, when attendance rolls swelled with children who worked in the fields the rest of the year, Lord Lovat declared that “I don’t think we should be in a hurry fixing a female teacher for Beaully School till it is decided who is to [be] the male teacher. I think that should be settled first.” The minutes of the Board suggest they were interested in hiring a female teacher, but they followed Lord Lovat’s suggestion - a suggestion given force by the nominal rent he charged for the school’s land - and waited to hire a new male headteacher, who then had a say in hiring a female assistant teacher. Not long after she was hired, however, the female teacher began to attract complaints from the community for using corporal punishment on infants and young children. The board eventually dismissed her and the community campaigned to hire another male teacher at the school because of the perceived prestige it would bring to the neighborhood. It fizzled out and the school board hired another female assistant teacher for reasons of economy and because much of the work in that position was dealing with infants.

When the male teacher at the small school of Cannich, also under the Kilmorack Board, began to receive lukewarm inspectors’ reports and became lax about enforcing the

collection of school fees the board moved to replace him with a less costly woman teacher. They found a Miss Fraser, who “expressed herself willing to take a salary of £25, the whole fees, & the government grant with the whole dwelling house, for the charge of Cannich School, on the footing that one sister would stay with her.” However, despite being a widely scattered collection of crofts, the community quickly organized and submitted a collective letter to the board which urged them to keep the current teacher on or at least to replace him with another man. The board acquiesced and agreed to keep the current teacher on - but at a lower salary.⁸⁴

Local pressure also influenced the school board in Wester Ross on the opposite coast of Scotland. Following the departure of a “gentle young woman who taught in a small school on the shore of a loch, “the parents of the community sent a deputation to the board to argue “that better discipline would be maintained, and consequently better results secured, were a man appointed to fill the vacancy. They also alleged that the dignity of their township would be enhanced through such an appointment.” This link between the dignity of the township and the sex of the teacher, discipline of the school, and quality of the education had a long tradition in Scottish history. Economy trumped dignity: the Board refused the community’s request on the grounds that women teachers were much cheaper. However, this Board balanced the need for economy with the desires of the community:

it happened that they had at that time in their employ in another similar school a female who stood six feet high, with shoulders half as broad. At the suggestion of the district Inspector, they transferred this well-proportioned Venus to the school

⁸⁴ Kilmorack School Board Meeting Minutes 1873-1891, HARC CI/5/4/5/1 (September 20th, 1876; December 8th, 1876; March 9th, 1877; May 2nd, 1881; August 1st, 1881.

by the loch, and they were greatly surprised when no complaints followed. The silence was explained one day when a native from the township happened to meet a friend, who put the usual question as to how they were getting on with their new teacher. With a shrug of his shoulders the former replied, 'We wanted a man, but I will be thinking we have got one.' It turned out that discipline *had* improved, with every prospect of an increased grant at next inspection.⁸⁵

Despite the surface appearance of hard and fast attitudes – the community wanted a male teacher, the Board wanted a female teacher – what is most notable about this incident is the flexibility of all the parties involved. The Board did not hire a male teacher, but did take into account what the community seemed to want: a teacher with an imposing presence who could keep discipline and teach creditably. However, the unnamed man who seemed to speak for the community had to not only unsex the female teacher, but to suggest that she was in fact a man – physically or temperamentally – to accept her. The community sanctioned her gender non-conformity because her masculine appearance produced the pedagogical results and status they desired.

School inspectors helped to decide who could and could not acceptably work in remote areas in Scotland. John Wilson, school inspector in the Highlands and Islands during the late nineteenth century, noted in his autobiography that it was common for “a young girl fresh from the Training College” to take a job “in charge of a small school far removed from the civilization to which she had been accustomed.” He portrayed such decisions in terms of the desire for independence winning out over what he cast as the universally undesirable lifestyle associated with such jobs: “Sometimes failing to get a situation nearer home, and disinclined to eat the bread of idleness, she had to accept an

⁸⁵ John Wilson, *Tales and Travels of a School Inspector* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie, & Co., 1928), 96-7.

opening where the hermit life was apt to tell upon both the nerves and constitution.”⁸⁶

Wilson framed rural women teachers as particularly mercenary in their approach to teaching and constitutionally in need of a more populated area - a curious reversal of the association of urban areas with anxieties about women and diseases of civilization.⁸⁷

This conception of rural women teachers led him to intervene in the case of one young woman teacher working “in an outlandish corner of a large island.” Despite appearing and declaring herself to be “quite happy and contented” and doing work that “merited praise,” Wilson took it upon himself to pressure her into applying for a job “in a more populous area” as a means of “saving her from herself.” What exactly he was “saving her” from becomes apparent when he notes in a self-satisfied tone that “shortly afterwards, she was appointed to a good assistantship, which she filled till, like many more prepossessing females, she entered into the bonds of matrimony.”⁸⁸

Such paternalistic interventions were common throughout Britain. The Rev. Bellairs even warned in a guide for clergymen on how to manage their local schools that “If you take for [a] mistress an unmarried young woman,” as he conceded was very popular because of its cost effectiveness, “make arrangements before engaging that she shall not live alone. Many managers are very careless in this, and unfortunate scandals occur.”⁸⁹ HMI Wilson’s interventions occurred in Scotland where - unlike in England

⁸⁶ Ibid., 108

⁸⁷ See Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*; Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (New York: Viking, 1990).

⁸⁸ Wilson, *Tales and Travels*, 109.

⁸⁹ Henry W. Bellairs, *The Church and the School; Or, Hints on Clerical Life* (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1868). See also Pamela Horn, *Rural Schooling*; Gordon, *Victorian School Managers*.

and Wales - the Code theoretically protected teachers from any investigation into or interference with their personal lives. An article in *The Schoolmaster* called for the adoption of such a protective clause in the English and Welsh educational code, noting that it would “relieve some teachers from the extra paternal interest exhibited by inspectors in their welfare, and officious interference with the disposal of their spare hours.”⁹⁰ The clause in the Scotch Code was the product of a longstanding tradition of teachers’ independence, just as English and Welsh teachers’ admiration for the codification of those protections in modern educational codes and laws was part of a growing tendency to look northwards with admiration and inspiration. In practice, however, nosy interference occurred in Scotland just as it did in the rest of Britain.

Teachers in rural areas could be a source of local prestige. Pressure from below influenced decisions about the new hires as well as continuing or terminating a teacher’s employment. So too did pressure from above on the part of local notables and inspectors. They exercised a paternalism that operated in tandem with community concern about finances and local prestige to shape the context in which teachers were hired in the countryside.

Local identity

Much as the hiring of a teacher led local notables, inspectors, and working families to negotiate about what mattered most in a pedagogue, the everyday work of rural teachers played an important part in the making of that identity. For instance, under

⁹⁰ “Adaptation of the Scotch Code to English Schools,” *The Schoolmaster*, 5, 108 (24 January 1874), 45.

the superintendence of first Donald Campbell and later John Pollock, the small school in the hamlet of Beaully operated as a library, sponsored group trips, had special events and ceremonies promoting “Celtic” culture, and offered a Gaelic evening classes. It served these functions both as a Free Church School, and then later as a Board school. Some funding for these activities came from the local elites who also served as managers and School Board members and some also came from organizations like the London, Nairn, and Inverness-shire Celtic Association. All this was organized by Campbell and Pollock. However, a surprising amount of the funding came from pupils’ parents in response to a subscription campaign the teachers organized. Though made possible by a donation of books, dictionaries, and grammar guides from the Gaelic Society of London, Gaelic was taught largely as a labor of love by the assistant teacher, Mr. Cameron. Some meetings were dedicated to the study of the language itself, some to Gaelic literature, and some were described as a “Gaelic Class Social Meeting” which brought adults from quite a distance. The headteacher also opened an evening class of his own on “human physiology” after he was “selected” to attend a course on that subject over the summer in London (perhaps receiving a scholarship to do so).

When the Boer War broke out, Pollock, by then in charge of the school, took his pupils to see off the volunteers from the area as they marched out of town. When several of them died, the teacher organized a collection on behalf of their widows and children. Around this same time he also began recording in his logbook information about the upcoming School Board election, seemingly also taking it upon himself to inform the community about the candidates. The school itself served as the polling station. A year

later he experimented for a few months with providing a hot lunch for students during the winter months with the help of small donations. In 1902 he was responsible for organizing the local celebration for the coronation of King Edward VII, just as he had been responsible for celebrations of the Diamond Jubilee and the end of the Boer War.⁹¹

Pollock and his staff went well beyond their official job descriptions and turned their school into a neighborhood center where local and national identity intersected. Indeed, they actively helped to call that identity into existence. By starting adult classes in Gaelic and physiology, for instance, they made possible the shared, formalized enactment of the ideal of the lifelong learner; reinforced a Gaelic identity that was under threat in the Highlands; and allowed the villagers to participate in their own pursuit of physiological knowledge, a pursuit for which Scotland as a whole was renowned.⁹² The collections they gathered to provide free hot lunches for needy children and the families who lost members in the Boer War tapped into, but also helped to create a sense of local solidarity.

The remarkable diary of William Campbell, the sole teacher in the scattered crofting village of Rogart beginning in the 1890s, recorded the way he leveraged his connection to past and present members of the local area to pursue a mostly solitary course of self-study while also doing good for the community. Campbell was born out of wedlock to a domestic servant mother and an unknown father in a rural village in a remote part of Caithness. He grew up speaking Gaelic and, like many other teachers in

⁹¹ Beaully School Logbook, HARC CI/5/3/127B, 207, 251, 267, 323, 338, 339, 343, 347, 361, 408, 410, 417, 420, 444, 451, 452, 461, 465-9, 481-6, 490.

⁹² See Robert Anderson, *Education and Opportunity*, chps. 2, 8; idem, *Education and the Scottish People*, chp. 6.

the Highlands, he eventually went to great lengths to acquire Gaelic dictionaries, grammars, and works of literature so that he could teach the language outside of normal school hours. One of Campbell's descendants, who wrote a preface to the diary in the 1990s and deposited it in the Highland Archive and Registration Centre, situated Campbell's early education within the context of the "lad o' pairts" mythology whereby a smart, hard-working boy could become a teacher no matter his birth thanks to a uniquely Scottish sense of social justice and openness.⁹³ "A local Schoolmaster befriended him," Campbell's descendant wrote, "and recognized his powerful intelligence and winning character. As a result, William Campbell found himself rescued from rejection and some obscure living, and made his way to professional life." After attending a training college in Edinburgh, Campbell first went on to work in Nethybridge for a few years in the early 1890s. There he married the miller's daughter Nellie Mackintosh. Then he went on to Rogart, where he spent the rest of his life. Though at first he applied for positions in larger schools in more populated areas, after several years he stopped - perhaps not coincidentally, around the time he became more integrated into local social networks.

Even as his ties to the local area grew stronger, Campbell remained deeply interested in the wider world. He spent much of his time outside of school hours at the local railway stop, where he daily picked up a newspaper from one of the crofters returning from a trip to Inverness or one of the nearby villages. His diary chronicles the Boer war in great detail based on those newspapers and he seems to have occasionally discussed the war with some local crofters, though he does not seem to have had

⁹³ See Robert Anderson, "In Search of the 'Lad of Parts': the Mythical History of Scottish Education," *History Workshop Journal*, 0, 19 (1985), 82-104

extended conversations with many of them. Seemingly whenever a foreigner passed through the area, however, Campbell had them over for tea - or perhaps local residents suggested foreigners go to see Campbell. During the Boer War alone he had conversations with an Austrian Pole, a German Jew, and a Russian Jew. Curious about life in Russia, Campbell questioned the Russian Jew for hours about his everyday life and his opinions about the political situation there. He recorded in great detail everything from this man's opinion on the corruption of the conscription system to the average diet for a working family ("Tea without bread, eggs, bread, butter, etc. Herrings taken raw; skinned, vinegar put on, cut in small pieces, taken with onions..."). Perhaps he used this information in his teaching to give some flavor to the dry statistics about foreign countries often found in geography textbooks. He also pressed his visitor to help him with his Russian pronunciation. Campbell was a dedicated autodidact, studying French, German, Russian, and Hebrew in his spare time.

During Campbell's tenure as teacher, Rogart's schoolhouse operated as a community center. The area lacked a full range of artisans, so at times Campbell worked there as a barber, joiner, and boot mender. He also cultivated an extensive garden, planting seventy cabbages alone each year. In the first decade of the twentieth century, he opened up a "soup kitchen" to serve free hot lunches to his pupils, most of whom came from deeply impoverished crofter families. Campbell funded his scheme through donations from the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland as well as people born in Rogart who had left for London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, America, Australia, and South Africa and made good. He also tapped this network of Rogartians living abroad to send him

curiosities for the local museum, which he kept in the schoolhouse. On May 28th, 1900 he acquired from William Murray, a Rogartian just returned from work as a carpenter in South Africa, “2 assegais, one a Wanganui - a very fierce tribe - the other an Argoni assegai; [also] some photos, etc.” These and other artifacts were on display at the schoolhouse, presumably available for viewing by anyone who came by.⁹⁴ The community which the teachers in rural schools helped to constitute was one in which the local, regional, national, and even the global coexisted; it was not just major urban centers and port towns in which these networks of people and cultures intersected.⁹⁵

When James Shaw died in 1897, dozens of former pupils, friends, and acquaintances on whom he had made an impression combined their recollections of him with his own writings and speeches to form a massive book celebrating Shaw’s adeptness at bringing together local, national, and even global topics of interest. Following a peripatetic early career, Shaw eventually settled in Tynron, Dumfriesshire as the parish schoolmaster in 1862 at the age of 38. He was a voracious reader, a prolific writer and speaker, and a frequent traveler. Mr. Broom, who apprenticed under him in his youth, recalled that Shaw went on “a Continental tour” on several of his summer holidays so as to gain “a knowledge of the scenery of at least France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany.” Most of his other holidays were spent traveling the region around Dumfries to study local botany, ruins, scenery, and people. Shaw spoke in various villages on his findings, published several series on his findings in local and regional newspaper, and wrote books

⁹⁴ HARC: HCA/D423/2/1, “Diary of a Highland School Master, 1899-1930,” 1-41.

⁹⁵ For an excellent recent work on the interplay between the local and the global, see Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

which brought together these diverse topics. One friend and fellow teacher described how Shaw walked home with his pupils, pointing out local flora, fauna, and geographical features along the way and then sometimes quoting famous verse about them or comparing them to things found elsewhere in Scotland or Europe. He was an active member of the county Natural History and Antiquarian Society and the Botanical Society of Edinburgh - and he purveyed the knowledge he gained there to anyone in his village who was interested. He also performed and wrote commentaries on classic Scottish authors and poets like Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns while attempting to make his own contribution to that corpus of literature with “locality sketches ... replete with valuable historical allusions and accurate and vivid imagery of local surroundings” which were rooted in both fact and “delightful flights of imagination to all the ends of the earth, to the realms of classic and historic prose literature and of poetic fancy.”⁹⁶ Shaw helped to produce as well as purvey a sense of local and Scottish identity.

Though in helping to create local social ties and identity teachers became important, even trusted members of their community, they could also continue to feel a strong sense of difference and apartness. On the edge of one island in the Hebrides in cold months of early 1887, the local teacher worked to prevent a violent confrontation between police and local crofters. The police were preparing to evict for nonpayment of rent the Deforcer family from the small patch of land they had occupied for years. However, the local population discovered the. Fellow crofters, fishermen, masons, and others were preparing to “turn out against the police if they attempt to arrest the

⁹⁶ Robert Wallace ed., *A Country Schoolmaster: James Shaw, Tynron, Dumfriesshire* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1899), xix-xxxiii, xlvi, xlix-l, lxiv.

Deforcers,” according to a report by the Chief Constable of Inverness-shire. The police received this information about the likelihood of a crowd defense if they proceeded with the eviction from Donald Urquart, the local teacher. In testimony given quietly to the local police to prevent bloodshed, he declared that he had “heard from several persons,” including one John McKay, that the crofters knew about the upcoming eviction. At the request of the Chief Constable, the local police held off on their plan to arrest the Deforcers and questioned Urquart about several different arrest scenarios. Did he think the crofters would be more likely to interfere if the eviction happened in daylight or at night, if it involved local police or police from elsewhere in the county? The best scenario, the local policeman reported, was if the action were undertaken during daylight by police from nearby, but not the local police.⁹⁷

Though the outcome of this event has slipped through the archival cracks, the role played by Urquart in this social drama is remarkable for the extent to which both the police and local population trusted him. Not just one, but “several” people mentioned to Urquart the plan to resist the police, only one of whose names Urquart gave away to the police, probably in an attempt to secure credibility without betraying too much of the confidence of the community. For their part the police seem to have had no qualms about the credibility of Urquart or the information he gave them. Indeed, they believed him so reliable that they altered their arrest plans based on his evidence and sought him out again for help in shaping a new plan. Urquart seems to have been deeply embedded in local social networks, while dissenting from his neighbors desire to violently resist the police.

⁹⁷ HARC: HH1/206, “Reports,” 29 January and 6 February 1887.

In fiction too rural teachers struggled to understand where they fit into the social landscape. Three of Thomas Hardy's novels explore this dilemma as manifested in teachers' love lives. Together these novels' depictions of teachers constitute a meditation on the place where teachers fit best in rural social life. In *Jude the Obscure*, Mr. Phillston isolates himself from virtually everyone in his leisure hours to engage in the solitary study of the Roman history of his county. He focuses his romantic interest on his pupil teacher Sue, but their marriage ends disastrously, at least in part on account of his narrow, stuffy cultural and social horizons. *Under the Greenwood Tree* traces the reverberations following the arrival of Fancy Day, the new village schoolmistress. She faces the choice of social ascent or descent after she is proposed to first by the vicar - who is keenly aware he is Fancy Day's social superior - and then by Dick Dewy, a working man and member of the local choir who is cognizant of his inferiority. She marries Dewy in the end, but it is not clear that either of her suitors were an ideal match for her. In *An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress*, the schoolmaster and the squire's daughter struggle to repress a love they both feel, but which they recognize cannot be realized owing to the "vast gulf" that separated their positions in the world. Even after he moves to London and makes his name and some fortune by publishing a well-received book, they still must elope in secret. When she returns to reconcile herself with her father three days after the elopement, she suffers a ruptured blood vessel and dies. These three variations on the theme of teachers' rocky path to romantic fulfillment suggest that teachers had no natural peers to socialize with or marry in the countryside.

The troubled romantic lives of rural teachers was no mere fictional dilemma. Advice books for clergyman like HMI Bellairs' 1868 *The Church and the School* warned that unmarried women teachers in particular were prone to entering into improper, even scandalous relationships and should not live alone. Bellairs also recommended that clergymen "make the life of the teacher, especially in unmarried, as cheerful and happy as you can" on account of the "solitariness to which so many elementary teachers, especially in remote rural districts, are subjected."⁹⁸ Teachers complained, however, that the condescending, superficial social gestures made by the clergy offered no meaningful companionship and contributed to a growing distance between teachers and the working families of the area. Both contemporaries and later historians described the chief problem faced by Victorian Britain's rural teachers as "social isolation," an issue that the teachers' periodicals and their unions decried from 1840s onwards.⁹⁹ By the 1890s the National Union of Teachers and its periodical, *the Schoolmaster*, took as a leading issue the plight of rural teachers who were treated without respect by local elites and who lacked any real social opportunities.¹⁰⁰ However, almost all the protests about rural teachers' situation came from Union leaders rather than rural teachers themselves. Certainly there were rural teachers who felt beset upon or socially isolated, but many teachers were able to integrate themselves into local social networks, at least partially. One way was marriage: Pamela Horn has found that a number of women teaching in rural

⁹⁸ Henry Walford Bellairs, *The Church and the School; Or, Hints of Clerical Life* (Oxford, 1868), 120.

⁹⁹ See Tropp, *The School Teachers*, 26-43.

¹⁰⁰ Robin Betts, *Dr Macnamara 1861-1931* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), chps. 3, 5.

schools married local artisans and laborers including carpenters, sawyers, blacksmiths, and shoemakers.¹⁰¹ Rural teachers also had many opportunities to get to know and perhaps even befriend working families in the area by offering evening classes to young adults, doing side work such as shoe repairs, superintending the use of the school for things like elections, using the school as a local museum, and maintaining a connection to former pupils.

Rural teachers had to contend with customary ideas about local identity, social relations, and gender in everything from their job seeking and annual inspections to their everyday work policing attendance and teaching evening classes. Though the entire population of an area contributed to the making of local customs and identity, teachers also influenced their development. In narrating and going about their work teachers made visible a momentarily crystallized vision of the local ethos - one which they often suggested they were working to change or to build upon.

* * *

It took a while to get my bearings any time I opened a new logbook in the archives. What sort of work was common in the area and how did that affect the school? Did any local elites take a particular interest in the school and, if so, what sparked their interest and what were they trying to accomplish? Were local parents particularly assertive when it came to their “rights” over their children? Tellingly, I usually got a sense of the answers to these questions within a couple dozen pages. I fell into a rhythm

¹⁰¹ Horn, *Education in Rural England*, 159-160.

reading and taking notes as I began to get a feel for the local culture and people, the school, and the teacher. Once a year this rhythm was broken when, as required by the Code, the school managers entered the inspector's report on the school into the logbook. This stiffly formal, distant assessment of the pupils, teacher, and even the local culture (if it was deemed to have an influence on the operations of the school) stood in stark contrast to the intimate, lively, sometimes emotionally-charged daily entries made by teachers. The other break in the rhythm of my reading were those occasions when the headteacher changed. Suddenly I had to decipher a new handwriting to read how the newly arrived teacher was attempting to decipher the local economy and culture. This moment shortly after arrival was when teachers were most likely express frustration and to come into conflict with children and parents. Before long, however, they began to understand the local ethos and tended to fall into a rhythm of their own.

For teachers in both rural and urban schools, local knowledge was key to doing their job effectively. Indeed, many teachers seem to have taken the production of knowledge about their communities as a vital to their job. As their logbooks reveal, they familiarized themselves with the local ethos and economy, the character of individual pupils and families, and the full cast of local people of note from the parson to shopkeepers to policemen. To win some grudging respect - or at least tolerance - from local parents and pupils meant knowing when it was wise to agitate against poor attendance and when to let a truancy pass or even to grant the whole school a holiday. Being an effective teacher meant working with the grain of local culture, though their entries in logbooks suggest that teachers rarely seem to have let go of the frustration that

the communities in which they worked did not fully share their values. In the process of gathering knowledge and working with the grain of the community, teachers also became members of the community - albeit it peripheral members - and key participants in its continuous remaking and in its articulation.

Chapter Five. Scandals: Professionalism, Visibility, and Childhood

Court officials took 166 pages of testimony from 24 people as part of the “precognition” (deposition) for the trial of John and Anne Russell at the Glasgow Winter Circuit Court of 1848. The accused couple resided lived in the small coastal town of Dumbarton about twelve miles northeast of Glasgow where John was a Free Church teacher. This married pair stood accused of horrifically “mistreating a child,” Anne’s approximately eleven-year-old nephew Duncan, whom they had taken in as their own. Witnesses said that they starved him while stuffing themselves, beat him if he ate food acquired elsewhere, forced him to sleep on the floor naked, and literally shoved his face in his own feces. “Russell and his wife used to take for breakfast London Porter ale, for tea, bread and butter, sometimes cold ham and some preserves, and at supper a bite of fried ham or steak with bread and a little porter with a glass of todday” while Duncan was made to watch and became “altogether like a skeleton.” His skin “shriveled over his cheeks,” testified Anne Glass, the Russells’ landlady. In the end John Russell was sentenced to one year in prison and Anne Russell to six months. The child was taken away by the sheriff and probably sent to live with another living relative. Shortly before the trial John Russell’s “cautioner” (bond guarantor) submitted to the crown agent overseeing the case a petition to bring Russell and his wife to trial “with as little delay as possible” since, with all the rumors circulating about them, they would “be obliged to go elsewhere to seek a livelihood.”¹ Presumably that is what they did upon their release.

¹ National Archives of Scotland (NAS): AD14/48/450, “Precognition of John Russell and Annie Dickson or Russell (Cruel treatment of a child).”

John Russell is obviously in no way a representative teacher. Nonetheless, the trial documents tell us much about community expectations for teachers, teachers' social networks, those who saw into and attempted to regulate teachers' personal and professional lives, and the range of responses that the state and local residents could bring to bear against teachers accused of inappropriate or criminal activity.² A surprising number of adult witnesses with no formal connection to the school claimed to have glanced into it as they went about their daily business and testified about John Russell's treatment – and mistreatment – of the boy at school. Many women and a few children who had been invited into the Russell's lodgings testified about Ann Russell's manner of keeping house, including the way she treated her nephew.

Accusations of scandalous conduct and court cases clarify the distribution of power between teachers, children, neighborhoods, local government, and the central state in a particular context. Such moments of monstrous abuse of power and dereliction of duty also reveal the ideals and expectations which pupils' parents, local elites, and the state actually had for teachers. Ann Glass was shocked to find on John Russell's arrival that he had a wife and child. The town's previous teacher had lived in the same small set of rooms, but he had been a bachelor. Ann Glass' shock and disconcertment perhaps

² Other scholars have demonstrated just how useful accusations of serious misconduct can be in illuminating everyday behavior and the real expectations of a community. See for instance George Robb and Nancy Erber eds., *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Kali Israel, *Names and Stories: Emilia Dilke and Victorian Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

reflected an expectation that a married teacher would have lodgings that were a bit more spacious and less crowded - more befitting a teacher - than a small set of rooms in someone else's home. Similarly, the inclination to assume the teacher was respectable and to ascribe to him social status that gave him some measure of impunity may have been why it took more than a year for the accusations to be brought despite the widespread knowledge of their alleged horrific treatment of their boy. Perhaps the idea that the private lives of families should not be subject to community policing also played a role in the blind eye that the community seemed to turn to the Russell's behavior for quite some time.

Most cases of scandalous conduct involving teachers provoke a desire to know the exact details of what allegedly happened and what ultimately became of the accused persons. This is what scandals – and stories about them – do. I can't satisfy this curiosity; nor would the answers to these questions advance my argument. What matters is how the scandals play out, regardless of the truth of the accusations. Following the story of investigations and actions taken – or not taken – reveals its own set of truths about conceptions of childhood, the ideal of the self-regulating local community, popular (dis)trust of the state, and the purchase of teachers' claim to professional status. At the heart of the story is teachers' remarkable visibility. If teachers cast their gaze on the peoples of Britain and the empire, they were themselves also carefully watched figures. As children became ever more important as subjects of societal interventions – both to nurture and to discipline them – teachers, key agents in those interventions, became

subject to growing scrutiny themselves. Teachers found their professionalism yoked ever more tightly to emergent ideas about childhood.

* * *

i. Scottish Scandals

Compared to their English counterparts, Scotland's archives are brimming with detailed records of male teachers who were accused of serious misconduct. This does not mean, however, that male Scottish teachers had a monopoly on scandalous behavior. Rather, it may stem from the strong tradition of the self-regulating local community in Scotland. Scottish communities may subjected themselves to scrutiny and held more debate about what to do with a misbehaving teacher. These debates could be agonized: in Scotch Presbyterian tradition, the local teacher's reputation stood in for the reputation of the community as a whole, to some degree. To expose him – and teachers were, on the whole, much more often a *him* than in England – was to endanger the community's respectability. In England, authorities might have taken swifter action, thus leaving fewer records of prolonged debate. The politics of archival formation may also have played a role. Scottish culture may have prized the confrontation of checkered chapters of the kingdom's past in a way that English culture did not. Perhaps this sensibility even influenced the way archival files were organized and named: searches of Scottish archives quickly turned up instances of serious misconduct in a way that English archives did not. Deeper structural and cultural peculiarities of Scottish history have, I believe, subsidized the creation of a rich archive of supposedly scandalous teachers in Victorian Scotland.

This section teases out some common themes from three very different accusations of misconduct in three very different parts of Scotland from three parts of the Victorian period. These cases suggest a local desire to handle potentially scandalous misconduct locally and quietly if at all possible. The desire to handle misconduct locally, however, did not stem entirely, or perhaps even primarily, from the desire to affect a cover up. It was also the byproduct of a worldview which continued to aspire to the creation of moral, self-regulating local communities with minimal state involvement. This worldview had particularly strong roots in Victorian Scotland. In the 1820s and 1830s Thomas Chalmers – and the wider evangelical movement – had reinvigorated the old ideal of the parish as the answer to what ailed an industrializing, secularizing society whose state was getting more and more involved in the daily lives of its citizens – and not necessarily for the better.³

James Banks' struggles

Filled only with sporadic entries, James Banks' private journal from 1839 to 1873 served primarily as a record and outlet for his intertwined religious, pedagogical, and familial struggles. Like so many Calvinists before him, autobiographical writing and spiritual introspection went hand in hand. He began with an entry chronicling the five

³ Donald J. Withrington, "'Scotland a Half-Education Nation' in 1834? Reliable Critique or Persuasive Polemic?" in Walter M. Humes and Hamish M. Paterson eds., *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education, 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1983), 55-74; S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). On the growing involvement of the state in the regulation of sexuality morality in Western Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, see Nancy Erber and George Robb eds., *Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

weeks since he left his father's house in Caithness, the northernmost county in Scotland, in August of 1839 to travel by steamer to Edinburgh, where he attended a teacher training program. He does not record specifically what made him interested in becoming a teacher, but the centrality of religion to his worldview suggests that his decision may have been influenced by the lay-missionary movement prominent in Scotland in the 1840s and 1850s. Peter Hillis suggests that lay members of virtually all Protestant denominations undertook missionary-style outreach and work to spread the Gospel and find fulfillment.⁴ Teaching would give Banks the formally structured opportunity to impart religious instruction while receiving a salary.

Banks' journal opens with a sense of dislocation and uncertainty. Though he was "met with much more kindness than I could have anticipated" by the ministers and staff affiliated with the training college, Edinburgh itself proved jarring. The ministers at the college chastised him for not yet having taken communion, but he felt that that the sacrament was taken too lightly in Edinburgh. He interpreted a series of parishioner deaths in his new church as God's way of "speaking to the congregation" about the problem of "unworthy communicating." Banks resolved not to take communion in Edinburgh in part from concerns about his own unworthiness, but also because he needed advice on the matter from "a pious neighbour" back in Caithness. He feared that "my own conscience or the adversary might afterwards accuse me of intending to make a gain of Godliness."⁵ He resolved not to let the advice of new Edinburgh ministers trump

⁴ Peter Hillis, "Education and Evangelisation, Presbyterian Missions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Glasgow," *The Scottish Historical Review* 66, 181 (1987), 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, 4.

guidance from a trusted neighbor back home; he would keep pure his motives regarding communion from the taint of the worldly good it would do by helping him to get a job as a teacher.

If Edinburgh theological disquieted him, its streets also threatened sexual disorder and temptation. “Coming home to my lodgings last night with another of the Normal Lads, we were interrupted by two lewd women. It is perhaps the best to take that advice, ‘Answer them not,’ which I almost invariably do. But last night I summoned up the courage to ask of her, ‘Are you one of the lewd women? Do you believe that there is a God? Remember for all these things, God will bring thee judgment!’” This woman “had no lack for answers” to his pronouncement, though he recorded none. All Banks could do was to walk on.⁶

By February of 1840 Banks was preparing to leave the training college. He had received “several letters from Caithness of late” in which it was “hinted to me that the people of Freswick have been requesting Mr. Johns,” presumably a local notable or Church elder, “to apply for an endowment to the School in order that I might return to it.” Patronage remained the primary means of attaining a posting at this time. Banks arrived in Freswick, on the tip of the northeast coast of Caithness, on April the 29th. He immediately began teaching in a private school he himself set up while the community continued to agitate for Church funding for an assembly school. Though they might receive some funding from the state, assembly schools funded and managed largely by the educational wing of the Church of Scotland. Funding came through and on May 14th,

⁶ Ibid., 3.

1841, just after a year after his arrival, the Assembly School at Freswick opened its doors with Banks as teacher.

Apparently, Banks had also put his theological troubles behind him. At some point that summer he took communion for the first time. That winter, he married; the following autumn (sounds better in this sentence), he and his wife had their first child. Banks' professional happiness came to an abrupt end on August 20th, 1843. The minister dismissed him "for adhering to the Free Protestant Church of Scotland."⁷

Remarkably neglected in all but specifically Scottish histories, the Disruption, as the schism of the Church was known, did more than almost any other event to reorder politics, culture, social relations, and everyday life in Victorian Scotland. This dispute over the balance of power between the Church's General Assembly, the state, local communities, and local notables in many ways mirrored the situation in which Banks, like so many other teachers, found himself. Central to the Disruption was the question of who got to appoint ministers. The evangelical wing of the Church, including Thomas Chalmers and fully one-quarter of its other ministers, founded the Free Church to protest the state-mandated right of local landowners to appoint ministers even over the unanimous opposition of the presbytery and the local community. Many teachers and other members of the population followed suit, particularly in the Highlands. Though they found themselves without churches, schools, or funds at first, they quickly raised money to build first the former, then the latter. By 1851 a total of 719 schools claimed Free Church affiliation. This number was still dwarfed by the just over two thousand

⁷ Ibid., 7-8, 11.

schools affiliated with the Church of Scotland, but the Free Church had momentum and continued to expand its education wing in the 1850s.⁸

Historians of the Disruption have emphasized the confidence with which the youthful Free Church assumed wide-ranging responsibilities in Scottish communities. At the heart of the Free Church worldview was an aspiration to realize Thomas Chalmers' ideal of a society centered on local communities, which took care of their own by providing for their education, spiritual growth, and economic wellbeing. Free Church ministers and elders – usually local tradesmen or farmers – believed that the state and major landowners should play a supporting rather than a leading role in local affairs. Where the Established Church had allied itself with landlords and the state at the price of greater intrusion from both, the Free Church fashioned itself more as a self-regulating church of the people, for the people. As Michael Fry has suggested, however, the Disruption led Westminster to take over Scottish social affairs – including elementary education – which it had previously left largely to the Church of Scotland when it was a unified, “national” body. Scotland now moved more fully into its union with England and Wales. Over time, this chipped away at the ideal of the self-regulating parochial community – though it was a long process in Scotland, where the ideal had strong roots.

For Banks the immediate aftermath of the Disruption was dislocation and reversion to dependent status. He moved back into his father's house in Barrock and set

⁸ Donald Withrington, “Adrift among the Reefs of Conflicting Ideas? Education and the Free Church, 1843-55,” in Stewart Brown and Michael Fry eds., *Scotland in the Age of Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1993), 79-81.

up a school there, though it attracted only a few children. He began to wonder if the minister was correct in saying

that I had acted rashly in seceding from what is still called the Church of Scotland. One thing must be observed. It cost me many anxious thoughts ere I came to the resolution of doing so and I believe a good many more than it would have done had not the leaving of my school, my dear scholars and perhaps dearer salary stared me in the very face and last though not least the loss of his favour who has constantly been the principal means of getting the same for me (Mr. Jolly). ... [T]he thoughts of parting with house and home pierced to the very heart.⁹

“Making good” in all the meanings of the phrase no longer seemed compatible. He faced a decision: either he could continue to teach his “dear scholars” and collect his “perhaps dearer salary,” or he could “make good” on the duty he owed his conscience and God. The fact that this tension existed at all deeply disturbed Banks.

Banks’ spiritual life and his work as a teacher were closely intertwined. It was a vocation, a calling – but tied up with a religious calling, not separate from it. Reflecting on his decision to join the Free Church led Banks to articulate the social position that teaching helped him to carve out. It made him an independent man with not only a salary and a house, but a “home” - a sense of belonging and community. Moreover, he seems to have derived a sense of fulfillment from work that straddled the divide between secular and spiritual. While still on the fence about whether to become a communicant, he had spent a day fasting and praying for guidance. However, “Being amongst the children during school hours I cannot say I got a direct answer to my requests.” Though he “felt warmness on my spirit for some time,” he so enjoyed teaching that he could not decide whether that “warmness” was an answer to his prayers or a sense of personal fulfillment;

⁹ Banks MS, 8-9.

indeed, he seemed unsure of the extent to which those were separate things.¹⁰ Joining the Free Church cost Banks the teaching position that was his means of independence and an opportunity to experience personal and spiritual fulfillment.

In the Fall of 1846 Banks' fortune appeared to tick upward. David Campbell, a Free Church minister and friend of Banks, secured him a suitable teaching position in the small village of Ham, Caithness. By the next spring, disaster had struck. One of his new pupils accused Banks of groping him on the following Spring, on April 12, 1847.

Though Banks prefaced his account of the incident with the caution that "Neither time nor inclination permits us into a full detail," this entry is by far the longest in his entire journal. Why he made this entry fully a half year later on October 21, 1847 is not entirely clear. Perhaps Banks sought the catharsis or insight that narrating an event in writing could bring. It is also possible that it served as a rough draft of the account that it was increasingly likely he would need to supply to the Free Church General Assembly as well as to the minister and managers at any school that might employ him in the future.

Banks frames his narrative as an attempt to understand what is going on inside the head of his accuser, Donald Smith. Smith had been raised mostly by his mother, since his sailor father was often away at sea for days or weeks at a time. Banks believed that Smith's mother had "gratified his propensities fully, more than we presume will one day be found to his advantage." In criticizing Smith's indulgent upbringing, Banks drew attention to the importance of a father; a teacher alone was insufficient for the task of shaping the character a child. The mother even harbored ill will towards him for trying to

¹⁰ Ibid., 8-9, 12.

compensate for the absent father by being stern with her son: “Mrs. Smith cherished rather unfriendly feelings towards me which she evinced by speaking publicly of my professional character in a very detractive manner.” Such a lamentation of the limitations of the teacher without parental support was commonplace in pamphlets and, later, logbook entries on elementary education.¹¹ Indeed, it underwrote the entire education funding policy until 1870/2: the state would only match roughly one-third of what was raised through voluntary subscriptions. Until 1891 schools charged fees for all but the poorest of pupils - even after the introduction of mandatory attendance. The goal was to ensure precisely the parental interest and support that Banks felt he lacked in the case of Donald Smith.¹² In Smith’s case, the recent graduation of his friends from school to work compounded his dissatisfaction. “He much rather preferred amusement” to studying and began to play “as soon as the teacher had finished giving him both assistance and I believe encouragement to proceed.” Banks reported that he felt “most anxious for [Smith’s] improvement and the more so that he seemed careless himself.”¹³

The alleged grope occurred when Smith began to whittle “some small piece of wood into the form of a boat or some such kind of vessel” right after being set to work on some algebra problems. Algebra was one of the higher branches of mathematics taught in a Free Church elementary school, which were modeled off the legendary parochial schools of Scotland. For the son of a sailor in a remote rural village to be able to learn

¹¹ See for example: British Library (BL): 4175.e.16, “Brief Notices on the Educational Wants of the Parish of Kirriemuir, Read 10th March, 1835, to the Sabbath School Society of that Parish, by the Parochial Minister,” (Dundee, 1835); BL: RB.23.a.31794, “An Appeal in Behalf of the Instructors of Youth,” (London: Whittaker & Co., c. 1860).

¹² Smeler, *Social Paralysis*, 287-289.

¹³ Banks, *The Journal*, 20.

algebra was widely perceived as an almost a uniquely Scottish opportunity at this time. And yet, Banks suggested, Smith squandered it. Banks demanded the toy from Smith, but Smith refused to give it up. “As [Smith] continued obstinate and the teacher deeming it imprudent after having [it seen] publicly before all present that the boy might now hold out ... it occurred that as it was the usual play hour that the children might be allowed to withdraw as usual.” All the other children now absent, Banks attempted to talk Smith into giving up the toy. Smith refused.

Seeing persuasion unavailable, no other alternative appeared than to take it, which was simply done by taking out of the boy’s trouser pocket the wretched toy, which Smith imagined he could triumphantly keep there. The boy without longer detention and without so much as knowingly or intentionally doing injury to so much as a single hair of his head was allowed immediately to withdraw. He detained a short time behind the door before going out seemingly doing something to his trousers but what I dare not positively say as his back was turned to me at the time and I sat at the chimney. His sister called at the door and came in a very little thereafter he opened it. When she came in and charged me with using her brother badly.

To “prevent as I imagined any misunderstanding,” Banks went to talk with Mrs. Smith straight away, but she told him that she needed more time to talk to her son about what happened. “Soon thereafter she sent me a note stating that I had been in too much passion as the boy was cut and his trousers torn and that she meant to lay the matter before the Reverend David Campbell.”¹⁴

In the months that followed the Smiths rallied much of the community against Banks.

Time would fail to recount their subsequent threats and vexatious reports, every influence has been used to stir the Minister, the people and even the very children against me. I have been threatened to be brought before the courts both civil and

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.

ecclesiastical, neither of which seemed to answer the end intended. A committee of local school trustees and managers have been appointed for bringing me to own myself in error.¹⁵

Clearly this was about more than taking away a boat or even the overuse of corporal punishment. Though he never outright states that he was accused of molesting Smith, the circumstances, his reticence about the precise offense, and his statement that “The criminal charges against me are as false as the charge brought against Joseph in Egypt” - a reference to the Biblical story about the slave falsely accused of raping his mistress - all strongly suggest that the accusation against him was groping the boy, or worse.

Banks finishes his initial, very lengthy entry on the incident by returning to the much safer self-exculpating frame: an analysis of the boy’s character. “The vagabond boy is not yet off the stage.” The poor child turned stage performer had widespread cultural purchase by this time as a symbol of an innocent made to suffer at the hands of a corrupt and corrupting adult.¹⁶ Banks flipped that trope, portraying this child as a corrupt and willing performer who had made him suffer. He also drew on melodramatic conventions in recording his version of the story. Melodrama provided a narrative structure throughout the nineteenth century for articulating and understanding scandalous behavior at all social levels.¹⁷ Though Banks’ journal entry played with the expectations

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*.

¹⁷ See Anna Clark, “Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820,” *Representations*, 31 (1990), 47-68; Tom Laqueur, “The Queen Caroline Affair: Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV,” *Journal of Modern History* (1982), 417-466; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Kali Israel, “French Vice and British Liberties: Gender, Class and Narrative Competition in a Late Victorian Sex Scandal,” *Social History*, 22, 1 (1997), 1-26.

of the genre, it still worked within the narrative tradition of melodrama with its polarized depictions of guilt and innocence, villain and victim.

For nearly a year and a half after this entry, Banks unsuccessfully sought a teaching position elsewhere while continuing to work at the school. Meanwhile, pressure mounted from parents to leave. His only saving grace was the mixture of friendship and patronage supplied by David Campbell, the minister who had gotten him the position in the first place. By May of 1849 even that shield could no longer protect him from growing community pressure. One evening, Banks recorded,

I had an audience of the Minister and was given to understand that the people of Brough had written him a letter requesting a change of a teacher, he said I might not be anxious for a perusal of the letter. I might judge something of the contents by the following hints. 1st. They had only called him ‘Sir’ and also made use of the words ‘we are determined.’

The person who brought the letter also waited half a day in front of Campbell’s house demanding a written reply - a reply which never came. Banks investigated, and found that the letter had been written by David Manson, a Free Church Elder “who affirms that he has nothing to lay to my charge himself but because mine enemies wished him to write he wrote all they had to say against me rather than displease the people.” Banks

investigated further and found that George Smith, Donald’s sailor father,

who is said to have been with Mr. David and Hugh Ross going between them and a few others assembled in James Simpson’s or Dr Johnstone’s house, knew well that these foul aspersions could be pitched with more force against me through D. Manson than had George Smith and his confederates sent up their own signatures. David Manson gave me the principal part of this information himself and he did not implicate George Smith but this I had from other sources equally trustworthy.

Clearly Banks had established a social network in his community that included not only the minister, but also villagers who heard things. In response to the letter, Banks “took

the precaution of getting a few lines written by a young friend which it was supposed none of those who were really friendly to me would refuse to sign.” In fact, he hoped to use this letter of support as a litmus test, a means of telling who his friends were and who his hidden enemies were: “enemies indeed were not expected to sign this.” He was pleased to find that “scarcely any who were called upon refused” to sign the letter of support. Banks made further visits to gather support and keep informed about what was going on, and also enlisted his wife to do the same.

This was not enough. Banks recorded “I am no longer [the] teacher” - presumably dismissed by Campbell. Banks decided that his erstwhile protector had “acted a somewhat dubious part.” This intimation of a conspiracy was another characteristic of melodrama, one which confirmed Banks in his position of innocence and allocated agency for both the outcome of this incident and the corrupt moral development of the child Donald Smith in hidden forces outside of his control as a teacher.¹⁸

Banks’ record of this intrigue makes visible the power relations and social networks in his small community. Ideally, as Andrew Bain has shown, both the minister and the teacher were essential in “the achievement and maintenance of a Godly Commonwealth.”¹⁹ When Banks and the minister stood united, they were able to hold at bay substantial community pressure agitating for Banks’ dismissal. Part of their ability to withstand this pressure stemmed from Banks’ remarkable information network. He was adept at acquiring general gossip, finding out who was responsible for writing the letter

Social History, 22, 1 (1997), 1-26.

¹⁸ Israel, “French Vice and British Liberties,” 4.

¹⁹ Andrew Bain, *Patterns of Error: The Teacher and External Authority in Central Scotland, 1581-1861*. (Edinburgh: Moubray House Publishing, 1989), 14.

against him, and determining who would sign his letter. Many people seem to have trusted and supported Banks enough to sign his letter and feed him information.

However, even more people seem to have believed the charges against him or otherwise supported George Smith in his attempt to have Banks dismissed. As Banks' reputation and consequently his moral authority waned, he lost the protection of the minister.

Despite holding out for two years, in the end the community sent Banks packing. In a social and cultural system in which a teacher was supposed to be a moral guide as much as a pedagogue, even the perception that his moral authority was undermined undercut his ability to do his job. Tellingly, however, neither the court nor the Free Church General Assembly seems to have gotten involved. This was resolved locally, within the community.

Eventually - it is not clear how - Banks received a teaching appointment in Tain, another small village in Caithness. There was no school or house for him and his family, however, and he began teaching and living in "an old barn" while villagers built him a school with a house attached. Several months after arrival two of his three children died and his wife and their remaining child fell sick. The doctor "blames our new house, cold and damp," Banks recorded. But Banks found that this tragedy prompted him to reflect on his own behavior to find the cause:

I am thereby called to self examination and self abasement ... and to be more importunate than heretofore in seeking preparation for that day when the secrets of men's hearts will be made known by Christ Jesus. A mistake for Eternity cannot be corrected after death.

What was this "mistake for Eternity" - was it taking communion before he was ready?

Joining the Free Church? Groping Donald Smith? We never find out.

From this nadir, Banks' family life, religious development, and career improved steadily. He made only a few fairly brief entries in the years that followed. This suggests that his journal might have been a tool to deal with personal and professional hardships, including the theological conundrums that cut across and connected all the dimensions of his life. In Tain, Banks earned the friendship and patronage of the regional Free Church officials who occasionally came to the village. These men ultimately assisted him in securing first a salary supplement from the Free Church's Committee on Education, then in securing a teaching job in Keiss. There Banks seemed to find theological peace (to judge from his absence of tormented entries), familial happiness (his wife gave birth to four sons), and professional stability (Banks remained in Keiss until 1873, when he received a retiring allowance of two-thirds of his usual salary).

For the final decades of his career, then, he was able to put the scandal behind him without even moving very far away. Perhaps Banks' effort to portray his accuser as a deceptive, evil actor created substantial doubts in villagers' minds. Certainly there was doubt enough that he was allowed to stay on as teacher for many months after the accusations, and allowed to live and work with children in a nearby community. This suggests once more the extent to which the scandal was an intra-community struggle over the power of the villagers vis-à-vis the minister and the local moral authority of the village teacher.

The Forsyth Precognition

In 1882 Andrew Forsyth of the school in Charleston, Forfar came before the Dundee Autumn Circuit Court accused of “using lewd, indecent, and libidinous practices and behavior, towards a girl under the age of puberty.” On account of the girl’s youth and the fact that the girl, Helen Findlay, was “a scholar entrusted to his care,” the court declared these to be “crimes of a heinous nature.” He stood accused of fondling Helen, inserting a finger into her vagina, attempting (but failing) to have full sexual intercourse with her, and ejaculating on her and her clothing. It came out during the course of the investigation that at least two other girls claimed he had attempted to do the same to them.

Forsyth’s precognition is remarkable in the first instance for its length and breadth. It totals nearly one hundred large pages and includes detailed testimony from nearly a dozen witnesses ranging from pupils to residents of the town, as well as additional testimony from more than two dozen other witnesses. The reports of the doctors, constables, and other officials involved are included as well. This massive precognition was necessary in part because the word of children alone was not enough for a conviction. Even in cases involving sexual abuse against a child, statute law required that confirmation of the victim’s testimony by another witness or forensic or circumstantial evidence. Cases brought by working-class families against middle-class men were particularly difficult to make.²⁰ The thoroughness of the precognition may also have owed to the discovery of a possible ulterior motive: the families of the accusers had

²⁰ Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 8, 71.

backed another candidate for the position of teacher and fiercely opposed Forsyth's appointment.

Janet Brodie, the assistant teacher, testified first with a painstakingly neutral account. Perhaps this is not surprising given that she was just twenty-three years old, single, had her salary entirely set and paid by Forsyth, and had taken up her post only a little over a year before the events in question. Probably aware of the conflict over Forsyth's appointment, she declined to take sides. She testified that Forsyth had always seemed to behave properly and that no rumors of misconduct reached her until the formal investigation began. Her short, careful testimony probably stemmed from the deeply insecure position of an assistant teacher. As the head teacher, Forsyth was her immediate employer and supervisor – but ultimately villagers and school managers could also have her dismissed.

Helen Findlay testified next. She spoke in minute detail about the numerous occasions on which Forsyth “meddled” with her. He allegedly kept her in after school for history and arithmetic lessons, drew the blinds on the front window, shut the door connecting that room to the other room in the school building, and after a few minutes of academic work began to grope and assault her. The testimony of her mother and older sister came next, reiterating the accusations and mapping out their actions once they learned what had happened to Helen Findlay.

The Findlay family's accusations were called into question, however, by behavior in the aftermath of the incidents, which seemed bizarre from a middle-class perspective. Following the incident of “meddling” in which he ejaculated on Helen's “shift and

drawers,” Mrs. Findlay testified that she cleaned them “along with my ordinary washing” instead of preserving them as evidence. Mrs. Findlay also did not go to the local constable for more than a week after the family found out what had happened. She only went when it became apparent that nothing had come of her complaint to the school managers. The school managers seemed to be the highest authorities for the school: it was not under a school board nor does it seem to have been affiliated with a particular religious denomination. Though the managers held a lengthy meeting in the school in which both accused and accusers testified, nothing further came of Mrs. Findlay’s complaint. Indeed, rumors had been circulating which indicated Forsyth “was threatening to bring me up for defamation of character.” Lastly, Helen continued to attend school for most of this time. Though the family did withdraw her for a couple days, because they had paid five pence in advance they decided to let her continue to attend on the condition that Helen was not kept in after school hours. The questions posed in precognitions are, unfortunately, not recorded, but the answers given suggest that the questioner was confused about the Findlay family’s behavior and pressed for clarification. One possible explanation - and one which it became clear the investigators and court were taking seriously - was that the accusations were fabricated.

However, this behavior also conformed to a working-class logic of thrifty domestic economy and a locally oriented, communal worldview. It made no sense from that perspective to hold a piece of laundry back on laundry day when the tub was full and preserve it as a piece of “evidence,” a concept which was probably fairly foreign. Similarly, five pence was a substantial outlay for a family headed by a shepherd father

and it made sense from the perspective of thrift to recoup that investment in their child's education. The decision to hold off going to the local constable suggests the extent to which the state and the criminal justice system remained distant last resorts for families like the Findlays. Louise Jackson has found in her study of child sex abuse in Victorian England that it was not at all unusual for working-class families to treat recourse to the police as a last resort.²¹ This tendency might well have been especially pronounced in Scotland with its long tradition of handling even relatively serious sexual offenses through the local Elders and, if necessary, the Presbytery.²²

The testimony of the two constables charged with gathering information for the case seemed to cast doubt on the accusations against Forsyth. As the local constable with a permanent station in the village of Charleston itself, William Milne took the lead gathering information. His report declared the villagers were "at sixes and sevens regarding the present charges against the accused." Many had been "displeased at the appointment" of Andrew Forsyth as teacher, having favored another candidate for the post. Villagers who had supported Forsyth's appointment were now "alleging that the stories have been got up by those who were displeased at the appointment and that the witness Mrs Findlay had been bribed in the matter." Mrs. Findlay's credibility was further called into question by a "moral character" which "does not stand very high" owing to several past incidents where "she was over-intimate with men." The constable noted, however, that her husband, a shepherd, "is a very respectable man." Reputation operated within a gendered framework. Women's reputations were closely policed by

²¹ Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 28-29, 107-108.

²² On this tradition, see Bain, *Patterns of Error*.

neighbors and easily impugned. Men, however, often received the benefit of the doubt – or silence, as in the case of Forsyth’s assistant teacher.

A second constable also tracked down witnesses who had known Forsyth at his previous job in a small village school in Aberdeenshire. Everything checked out: “so far as I can learn, nothing was ever seen or heard to him [sic] outside or inside the School of indecency or immorality. The people generally speak respectfully regarding him.” He had been dismissed following two annual inspections, which reported unsatisfactory pupil progress in the core subjects despite the low cost of his salary and the prestige that having a male teacher brought the village. There had been some friction in the community there resulting from his weak teaching abilities and the decision first to appoint him then to keep him for two years, but no inappropriate behavior.²³

Were the Findlays part of – or the pawns of – a Charleston faction which had been disappointed, even angry at the hire of a lackluster teacher like Forsyth? Were these accusations a form of revenge? Because the Charleston school was private, not a public school board school, there was no elected school board members who could be voted out of office because of their hiring decision. Some Victorian legal theorists and social commentators believed that accusations of sexually abusing a child more often than not were brought, in the words of Lawson Tait in 1894, by “vile conspirators and blackmailers” out to tarnish the reputation of the accused for their own insidious purpose.²⁴ The Findlays may have been out to ruin Forsyth because they were bitter that

²³ National Archives of Scotland (NAS): AD14/82/305, “Precognition of Andrew Forsyth,” Dundee Autumn Circuit (1882), 83-84, 89-90.

²⁴ Quoted in Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 83.

he had been appointed teacher over their favored candidate – or not. But, crucially, the constables investigating the case clearly considered it possible that the accusations were fabricated because of bitterness over the hiring of a teacher. The position of teacher in rural Scotland seems to have been a symbol of community prestige and focal point for tensions between thrift and investment in the education of the community's children, between one community faction and another.

The precognition made clear just how subject the teacher, pupils, and area around the school were to the gaze of the community. Many witnesses testified only briefly. Christina Simmie, the Findlays' 51 year old neighbor, observed that Helen Findlay "was often kept in after school was over and that she frequently returned in the grey of the evening. On these occasions she was always crying." She decided to speak with Mrs. Findlay about it because she believed a teacher "ought rather to whip [Helen Findlay] if she was backward in her lessons" - but she had "no suspicion of anything being wrong." When the Helen Findlay finally told her mother what allegedly happened in those after school sessions, Mrs. Findlay in turn told Christina Simmie who recounted in her testimony that "I merely remarked that it was a terrible thing." Apathy here perhaps masked either disbelief, or a desire to avoid being dragged into the clash that was sure to follow. Several witnesses from the village testified that rumors about the incidents reached them more indirectly - though usually swiftly - through their children or neighbors. John Ogilvy heard rumors about the allegations from his two young boys. He quickly "ordered his boys not to talk about such a matter and said that the schoolmaster knew best how to treat his scholars." Though he "was not satisfied in my own mind that

things were right,” he took no action and mentioned it to nobody else “in case it might injure the school.” Jessie Milne testified that she had “heard rumours about the accused interfering improperly” with girls, and made it a point to ask her daughter about Forsyth’s conduct and to go down to the schoolhouse in person to check on things when her daughter was kept after school hours. She seems to have circled around the school on at least one occasion, observing “that while the whole of the front blinds of the school room were drawn down, and there was no lamp or candle lit in the latter room,” that the “door of the schoolroom was shut.”²⁵ She immediately pulled her daughter out and refused to let Forsyth keep her daughter after school in the future. Despite the allegations against Forsyth, she would seem to have had enough trust in the village’s watchfulness that she would have allowed Forsyth to keep her daughter in after school if the blinds were kept up.

Jessie Milne was not alone in thinking that villagers would constantly look in the school to observe the teacher. Collective child-minding was, after all, a tradition among poor and working-class families throughout Britain.²⁶ The constables considered the question of the teacher’s visibility so integral to the investigation that they engaged an architect to sketch the school and its grounds (image 5.1). The school building had an unusual layout. It was divided into two rooms: the large “school” in which students - especially the younger students - spent the majority of their time under the supervision of

²⁵ “Precognition of Andrew Forsyth,” 31-32, 34-42

²⁶ Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse*, 35; Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London, 1870-1914* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1995); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the assistant teacher Janet Brodie, and the small “classroom” where Forsyth took standards and individual students for lessons in a specific subject, practice examinations, and anything else that required a bit more quiet. The classroom contained a doorway to the larger room and two windows, making this small room subject to observation from two points and intrusion from one point at any moment - unless Forsyth locked the door and pulled the shades on the window. Rendering the classroom a private, unobservable space alerted numerous witnesses to the precognition that something was amiss. It may also have been what tipped the opinion of the magistrate against Forsyth, leading him to believe the charges against him were genuine rather than concoctions arising out of a struggle between two local factions. School was a public, not a private space. In this instance, at least, and probably in many other places across Britain, the prevailing belief was that the teacher was both observer and the observed, the agent of discipline for the community’s children and subject to the community’s disciplining.

The magistrate of the Dundee Autumn Circuit Court found Andrew Forsyth guilty, though the sentence handed down has not survived. But much of what makes this case fascinating and historically important is outside the scope of the ultimately unanswerable question of whether Forsyth actually committed these crimes. The remarkable quantity of testimony from a diverse range of villagers highlights not only the visibility of school and teacher, but suggests that the village’s vision was, indeed, actively fixed on school and teacher. But that visibility produced its own forms of invisibility and protection. Scrutiny perversely generated conspiracy theories. The investigation of alleged sexual abuse became a study in the community politics surrounding the

appointment of a teacher. Teachers were emphatically not employees who came and went at will, or at the at the behest of a small group of people. The entire community felt a sense of ownership in their teacher – a connection that subjected them to scrutiny and shielded them.

That numerous villagers and two constables seriously entertained the belief the accusations against Forsyth to have been fabrications arising from a bitter struggle over his hiring makes evident the interest and investment which members of the community had in their teacher.

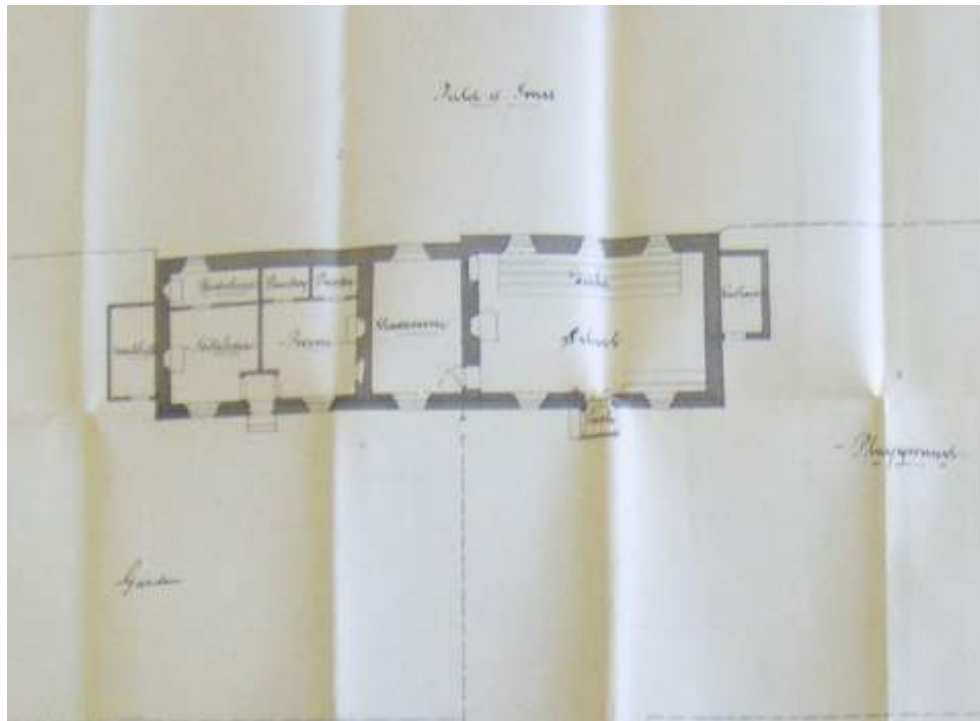


Image 5.1: Sketch of the Charleston School.²⁷

Alexander Lamont's Debt

²⁷ "Precognition of Andrew Forsyth," loose.

Alexander Lamont first came to the active attention of the Glasgow School Board (GSB) when he refused a routine transfer. In theory, the transfer was a small promotion. The GSB made hundreds of such transfers each year. When a teacher retired, left the area, or died, it set in motion a flurry of transfers as the most deserving teacher in a position one tiny grade below the vacated slot was promoted into it, then another teacher was promoted into that now-vacant slot, and so on. A single teacher's departure could set in motion half a dozen such transfers. For the teachers who experienced these frequent transfers the minuscule promotion often did not compensate for the dislocation. Their new school might be on the other side of Glasgow, creating a longer commute since moving home could be quite difficult and burdensome, financially and otherwise, on short notice. More seriously, moving to another school meant working with an unfamiliar group of fellow teachers in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Attempts to refuse these transfer - some successful, some not - litter the surviving records of the GSB Subcommittee on Teachers and Teachers. Lamont attempted to refuse the transfer, but the subcommittee recorded that "it was agreed that should Mr Lamont not accept the appointment in Dobbie's Loan School," named for the street on which it was located, "his position would be brought before the Board for reconsideration." On February 1, 1882 he accepted the transfer.²⁸

Lamont's resistance to his transfer to Dobbie's Loan seems to have reflected a broader concern with prestige and his career path. Before the transfer, he had been the second master of City Boys' School, a secondary school, albeit one of the weakest of the

²⁸ Glasgow City Archives (GCA) C-ED1/1/2/5, "Glasgow School Board Minutes for the Sub-Committee on Teachers and Teaching, 1880-1885," 114-116, 130.

seven state-funded secondary schools in Glasgow.²⁹ Though his transfer to Dobbie's Loan - an elementary school - made him a headmaster, moderately improved his salary, and substantially increased his authority, it probably meant that he was being taken out of the secondary school system for good - transfers from the elementary teaching system to secondary schools were very rare. Thus his earning potential had more or less peaked in his new position at the salary of around £300-£350 (depending on attendance and examination results). This was a sizable salary that would have allowed him to live a quite comfortably middle-class lifestyle in a suburb with a servant, but was as much as a couple hundred pounds less than what he could have aspired to as a secondary school headmaster.³⁰ Working at an elementary school was also less prestigious than working at a secondary school.

Whether he was already living beyond his means in expectation of becoming a secondary school headmaster or whether he began to posture at a more affluent lifestyle after his transfer is not clear, but a few years after that transfer it came out that he owed more money to creditors than he earned in a typical year. On February 12, 1885 the Board summoned him before them to account for the arrestments - a form of wage garnishing - that had been made against him. He admitted he had "liabilities amounting to £449," including nearly £22 in school fees which he had not handed over to the Board.³¹ When other teachers were summoned before the Board for misconduct of some kind, they often begged the Board to consider their wife and children and tried to give an

²⁹ James Roxburgh, *The School Board of Glasgow 1873-1919* (London: University of London Press, 1971), 145-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-40.

³¹ "Glasgow Minutes of Sub-Committee on Teachers," 450, 456.

account of reasons behind their actions which resonated with the somewhat stiff middle-class sensibilities of the Board. The Board recorded such reasons and seems to have considered them. In the case of Lamont, no such reasons appear to have been offered. His debt may have been less the product of caring for a large number of dependents on the relatively small middle class salary of an assistant teacher than a failed attempt to maintain the facade of a lifestyle beyond his means.

The resolution of Lamont's case reflected the potent power which school boards wielded quietly, even covertly, but firmly across Britain. The Board expressed its grave concern that Lamont's debt and default on it impugned his "character and usefulness." They valued a headteacher for the example they set as a moral paragon for their pupils and the neighborhood. It would seem the Board believed it likely that neighborhood surrounding Dobbie's Loan would find out about Lamont's fiscal indiscretions if they had not already done so. However, Lamont made the case to the Board that they should keep him on since he had "made a satisfactory arrangement with his Creditors" that would keep them from making future arrestments. He further pointed out "that attendance had increased [at Dobbie's Loan] by more than 100 since he took over." The Board decided to give him "another chance" by transferring him to Campbellfield Half Time school as the new headmaster, a less prestigious and more challenging appointment given that the pupils were also usually engaging in part-time paid labor. His salary formula was kept the same, but with the smaller school size combined with the challenges of securing good attendance and a high pass rate at the new school, his total

pay was probably significantly less than what it had been at Dobbie's Loan.³² Most important of all, however, was the fact that this transfer allowed Lamont to shed his checkered reputation.

The GSB frequently utilized transfers from one end of Glasgow to the other to defuse incendiary situations in which teachers were accused of misconduct that threatened to turn into a scandal, particularly in situations where those accusations came from parents. On their meeting of January 16, 1882 the GSB "read [a] letter from a parent addressed to one of the teachers in this school complaining of ill-treatment of one of her children." Following a discussion with the headmaster at the school, the teacher in question, Miss Comrie, was transferred to another school. One week later at their next meeting, the Board resolved to transfer the headmaster of Camlachie School to another position following a poor performance on the annual inspection. In August of 1882 Mr Stewart of Bishop's St. School was called to account for unspecified, but very serious accusations against him. He begged for sympathy on the basis of having to provide for a family and in the end he was transferred to another school and put on probation for six months. Being a male breadwinner counted for a lot.

Such transfers occurred in other parts of Britain too. Mr. Locke, an assistant teacher in Tooting Graveney, London, found himself called before a sub-committee of the SBL in July 1888 for conduct which "had been very indiscreet with reference to a certain young lady with whom he was acquainted." Although "he denied that there had been any immorality" and the sub-committee believed him, they nonetheless concluded

³² Ibid., 459, 464, 469.

that he had “undoubtedly caused serious scandal in Tooting Graveney,” again using the word “indiscreet” to describe his actions. The sub-committee ultimately “recommended that Mr Locke be reprimanded for his grave indiscretion, and be transferred to some other school.”³³ At stake was not Locke’s morality, but the community’s perception of his morality. Alexander Lamont’s transfer was one of many such cases in which a school board shuffled around teachers to preserve the reputation of the school, the teacher, and perhaps the Board as well. The eyes of the state in many ways, teachers had little shield against the eyes of the community. They were as much observed as observers. And yet, precisely because of they were so observed, they were also protected.

On the surface James Banks, Andrew Forsyth, Alexander Lamont could hardly be more different while still being members of the same profession in the same kingdom. Banks lived literally and figuratively on the edge, teaching in small villages on the coast of Britain’s northernmost county from the 1840s onward. His decision to join the Free Church forced him to move back in with his father and then to move into a barn, which was so cold and wet that the doctor blamed it for the death of one of his children. For years he was so impoverished that providing food for his family was a daunting task. Working in a time before school boards, Banks faced only the minister, and villagers. Andrew Forsyth came to court for allegedly also molesting pupils in his fairly small community in southeast Scotland, but only after an attempt to resolve the issue at a local

³³ London Metropolitan Archive (LMA): SBL/792 “Minutes of a Meeting of a Special Sub-Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Conduct of an Assistant, Tooting Graveney,” 349-50.

level. The precognition records for his case reveal just how subject to the gaze of the community he was - and just how disconcerting it was when he hid himself from that gaze. Lamont, by contrast, lived and worked in the heart of Scotland's largest city, a booming center of industry, finance, and increasingly civic culture as well. Though disappointed at his transfer out of the secondary school system, his appointment as headmaster of Dobbie's Loan gave him charge of one of the biggest elementary schools in Britain at the time and made him one of its best paid teachers. When he was accused of scandalous personal and professional financial misconduct, he dealt directly - and quietly - with the school board only.

The stories of these men suggest the power of the local community to intervene in the hiring of teachers, to observe and regulate their everyday conduct, and to influence how officials dealt with teachers accused of scandalous behavior. For all three teachers, those officials with the most immediate formal authority over them - the minister in Banks' case, the school managers in Forsyth's, the GSB in Lamont's - did not themselves seem particularly perturbed by the accusations against the men. Indeed, they protected these male heads of households. What led to action was the community: pressure from it and the loss of the teacher's moral authority in the case of Banks, fear of those things should the community find out about his actions in the case of Lamont, and a formal accusation in the case of Forsyth. Prescriptive pamphlets from the period emphasized the incredible visibility of teachers and suggested, as did an 1885 Scottish pamphlet on "The Teacher's Ideal," that "the first object of care to the teacher should be himself. He should never forget that all he does leaves its impress upon the youths entrusted to his care, and

that therefore every word he utters should come pure from the mint of truth, and every act he performs should bear the stamp of honesty."³⁴

The expectations which Scottish communities had for teachers like Banks, Forsyth, and Lamont were deeply intertwined with ideas about masculinity. Throughout Britain – but especially in Scotland – men were not expected nurturers. While motherhood had come to signify an almost impossibly loving and nurturing relationship to children, modern ideas about fatherhood developed only tentatively during the Victorian years. For the most part, the ideal father was seen as a disciplinarian and a provider – even if in reality men often sought out a more emotionally intimate relationship with children.³⁵ The figure of the rugged Highlander who perhaps misbehaved, but ultimately did his job flawlessly also had particularly strong cultural purchase in the Victorian years.³⁶ Integral to broader constructions of masculinity, these ideals may have helped to push the focus of the scandals away from the details of the alleged misconduct and towards questions of professional competency and public reputation.

One last (and related) thread connects these three cases: the importance of the local. All three of these instances of misconduct were or threatened to become *local* scandals. In each case there seems to have been a concern on the part of some or all of parties involved with containing the scandal at the local level. As the Glasgow School

³⁴ J. Macleod, "The Teacher's Ideal," (Inverness: R. Carruthers & Sons, 1885), 2.

³⁵ Lynn Abrams, "'There Was Nobody Like My Daddy': Fathers, the Family and the Marginalisation of Men in Modern Scotland," *The Scottish Historical Review*, 78, 206 (1999), 219-242.

³⁶ Maureen Martin, *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).

Board realized, teachers' visibility within the community made it virtually inevitable that knowledge of misconduct would quickly spread in the local community but hoped a transfer across Glasgow might do the trick. Perhaps the shared preference for containment owed to a desire to maintain respectability. Perhaps it owed to the strong Scottish tradition of a self-regulating community into which the state, the press, and the judicial system did not figure prominently. In any case, these three instances of misconduct can be added to a rich and recently reinvigorated set of scholarship that emphasizes the persistence of the local right through the end of the nineteenth century, and even into the twentieth.³⁷

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ii. Capitalism, Childhood, and Professionalism in the Over-Pressure Scandal

Dr. Crichton-Browne's shocking report on "over-pressure" in 1884 led many Britons to believe that the system of elementary education created to uplift, civilize, nurture, and protect poor and working-class children was invisibly and silently maiming them for life, even killing them. Children suffered from "a thrill of anxiety" as examination time crept nearer, giving rise to a "rich crop of nervousness" in the nation's children that had myriad emotional, intellectual, and physical effects. No matter if they were starving, dirty, ill-clothed, and mentally "backward," children were pushed and prodded to prepare for the examination. This was all done, Crichton-Browne wrote with

³⁷ S.A. Caunce, "The Hiring Fairs of Northern England, 1890-1930: A Regional Analysis of Commercial and Social Networking in Agriculture," *Past & Present*, 217, 1 (2012), 213-246; Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841-1939* (New York, 2011); Atsuko Betchaku, "Thomas Chalmers, David Stow and the St John's Experiment: A Study in Educational Influence in Scotland and Beyond, c. 1819-1850," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 27, 2 (2007), 170-190; Bain, *Patterns of Error*.

his customary flair, so “that the great modern giant Examination may have a huge meal.”³⁸ As Crichton-Browne framed it, there were many players in this scandal: the Education Code had created a set of incentives that encouraged these atrocities, career politicians were trying covering it all up, doctors were trying to expose it, the educational bureaucracy and school managers were oblivious to it, and teachers were the ones applying the pressure on a daily basis.

Typically relegated by to a small chapter in the history of childhood and elementary education, the over-pressure controversy has a larger social and cultural significance than has been recognized.³⁹ This section anatomizes the report and anxious debates to which it gave rise to reveal the tensions between and instabilities within late-Victorian ideas about capitalism, childhood, and professionalism. The over-pressure controversy erupted amidst a scramble for authority over a burgeoning system of elementary education. Government bureaucrats, clergymen, career politicians, inspectors, doctors, philanthropists, and teachers all claimed to have ideas and knowledge about how best to go about educating the nation’s children - a task that was capturing huge and still growing quantities of the nation’s attention and money since 1870. This proliferation of claims to professionalism and professional authority sometimes led to

³⁸ Dr. Crichton-Browne, “Copy of the Report Upon the Alleged Overpressure of Work in Public Elementary Schools in London,” Volume 69, [HC 293] (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1884), 7-8.

³⁹ Copelman, *London’s Women Teachers*, 96, 109-11; A.B. Robertson, “Children, Teachers, and Society: The Over-Pressure Controversy, 1880-1886,” *British Journal of Education*, 20, 3 (1972), 315-323; Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers*, 127-8; J.S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes*, 106-8, 221. For two works that do take the over-pressure controversy seriously, see: Gretchen R. Galbraith, *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1870-1920* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), chp. 7; Imogen Claire Lee, “Creating Childhoods: Ideas of Child and School in London, 1870-1914,” unpub. PhD dissertation at Goldsmiths College, University of London (2013), chp. 4.

spectacular clashes as each group articulated their own claims and rebuffed those of other groups.

The controversy exposed the gap between the professional ideal of objective, independent, deeply altruistic service and an everyday reality shaped by self-interest, emotion, and pressure from both above and below. For teachers, I will suggest, the over-pressure controversy offered an opportunity to publicly articulate their claims to two distinct positions. First, their position as everyday mediators between the state and working-class families empowered them to chart out the effects of capitalism on-the-ground. Second, a position as professionals motivated by both money and altruism, a duty to the state and a duty to children, independent in some ways but ultimately subject to a huge array of policies and authorities which helped to shape their everyday work. In articulating these positions, teachers fashioned a vernacular professionalism that was neither all powerful nor disinterested.

Crichton-Browne's narrative

The Crichton-Browne report operated within two well-established narrative traditions: the journalistic category of the exposé and the increasingly social-scientific category of the critique of capitalism. The 1880s saw an intensification of the Victorian critique of capitalism. Building on the spirit of earlier critiques by the likes of Chalmers, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Marx, the 1880s saw the publication of Andrew Mearns' *Outcast London* (just one year before the over-pressure controversy broke), growing numbers of men and women were going "slumming" to observe abject poverty first hand, a rise in

journalistic exposés of those slums, and the compilation of more social-scientific accounts of poverty's causes and effects.⁴⁰ For some, the over-pressure controversy confirmed the utter failure of an institutional, state-based response to poverty. For others, it meant the state needed to double-down its efforts, making education free, providing food in schools, and giving children medical care, shoes, and glasses.⁴¹ Crichton-Browne described and justified the methods he used to gather his information in great detail and also included more than two dozen charts and tables. In one sense, then, the report worked in the emerging tradition of the social-scientific investigation. This was a tradition which was about to reach a new crescendo with the publication of Charles Booth's study of London poverty beginning in 1889.⁴²

The report was also an exposé. As such, it followed the lead of investigative journalists such as James Greenwood and W.T. Stead in selecting a topic which was already the subject of both popular interest and the focus of social-scientifically minded reformers. His exposé of over-pressure in elementary education - like exposés of conditions in workhouses, the effects of alcohol consumption on families, and child trafficking - worked to gain legitimacy by masquerading as objective and scientific while achieving emotional salience by framing the issue melodramatically - in this instance, in

⁴⁰ See Gareth Steedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Koven, *Slumming*; Ross, *Love and Toil*; Eileen Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science in Britain: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Virago Press, 1995).

⁴¹ On this debate see Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers*, 231-309.

⁴² On this tradition see Mark Freeman, "'Journeys into Poverty Kingdom': Complete Participation and the British Vagrant, 1866-1914," *History Workshop Journal*, 52 (2001), 99-121; Lawrence Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David Englander and Rosemary O'Day, *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in Britain, 1840-1914* (Aldershot, England: Scholar Press, 1995).

terms of callous adults and innocent children who suffered at their hands.⁴³ Crichton-Browne populated the landscape of the report with an almost Dickensian cast of innocent, quietly suffering children. There are hungry children, tired children, and backward children; children who “disturb the family by talking of their lessons in their sleep,” whose parents send letters to teachers “begging that the lessons might be made a little less severe,” but to no avail; children with headaches in the morning, headaches in the afternoon, and headaches in the evening; children with headaches in the frontal lobe, in the vertical lobe, and in the occipital lobe; a list of children who have committed suicide which “is swelling annually.”⁴⁴ The report surpassed even Henry Mayhew’s fondness for memorable anecdotes and characters in his 1851 *London Labour and the London Poor*.

Crichton-Browne’s flamboyant prose caught the attention of the press. *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* characterized the report as “far too rhetorical” for something addressed solely to politicians, policymakers, and serious reformers, suggesting that when writing it Crichton-Browne must have had one eye on them, but his other “upon the British public.” The pages of the report “abound in figures of speech, and in description which seem better adapted to a popular work for the railway-stalls than for the grave interior of a blue-book.”⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the *Review* found there to enough truth beneath the surface of the report that it was worthy of serious consideration. *The Journal of Education* was less sure, noting that the report “reads more like a communiqué to the Pall Mall Gazette,” a paper renowned for its over-the-top

⁴³ Koven, *Slumming*, chp. 1, Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, chp. 3-4, Ross, *Slum Travelers*, intro, 40-51, 148-160.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, 25-26, 28.

⁴⁵ *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, 123 (January 1885), 7.

exposés, “than an official document. He has founded a sweeping generalization on very little evidence and laid himself open to a charge of rhetorical exaggeration.” Yet even this journal could not deny the influence of the report, nor that it had stirred up a controversy that was dredging up real issues in elementary education and society more broadly.⁴⁶

The report tapped into a burgeoning interest in the question of cruelty to children. The early 1880s saw a surge in philanthropic and journalistic attention to child cruelty and the moral, intellectual, and physical development of poor and working-class children.⁴⁷ Physiological discourses about childhood emphasized more than ever the malleability of children and their vulnerability to a wide range of factors that could arrest or corrupt their “growth.” The child acrobat forced by adults to contort their limbs for hours in a performance for adults symbolized this vulnerability and exploitation, as Ellen Barlee reminded readers with her 1884 *Pantomime Waifs*. W.T. Stead’s “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” a series of articles describing the purchase of a child sold by her parents into sex slavery, appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1884 the very same month that the over-pressure scandal broke (the investigations into over-pressure had taken place in the previous months).⁴⁸ At this same moment reformers began to found formal organizations dedicated to protecting children’s wellbeing. This trend culminated with the 1884 formation of the famous London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (LSPCC) by Lord Shaftesbury and Benjamin Waugh.

⁴⁶ “Occasional Notes,” *The Journal of Education*, 183 (October, 1884), 391.

⁴⁷ Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform*, 56-7.

⁴⁸ Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*, 99; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, chp. 3-4; Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

A new definition of “cruelty to children” emerged in this context. The older definition - which never went away - was embodied in the LSPCC’s monthly journal, *The Child’s Guardian*. Under the editorship of Waugh, who had close ties to W.T. Stead of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, the journal almost reveled in the salacious details of outrageous cases of physical abuse, starvation, and other heinous examples of child abuse. In an 1886 piece co-authored with Cardinal Manning, Waugh wrote of the “peculiarity of the spirit of the adult abuser of the child,” suggesting that “Men become addicted to cruelty as they become addicted to drink and gambling. It is a vile pleasure in which they indulge, some occasionally, some persistently.”⁴⁹ But these salacious and often melodramatic narratives were only one of the meanings of “cruelty to children” which had purchase in the 1880s - and one of the less common, more extreme meanings at that. Increasingly “cruelty” came to include neglecting a child, providing them an unwholesome environment, or even adopting a mercenary attitude toward them. The emergence of new discourses of “cruelty to children” primed late-Victorian society to take seriously the Crichton-Browne report, and the report in turn further entrenched this new conception of cruelty.⁵⁰

Crucial to understanding the report is the fact that its author, like so many other exposé authors, was a man on the make. Son of a prominent Scottish psychologist and a graduate of the medical school at Edinburgh University, Dr. James Crichton-Browne had made a name for himself by aggressively publishing and speaking on the management of

⁴⁹ Quoted in Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty*, 23.

⁵⁰ Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty*; Steedman, *Strange Dislocations and Childhood, Culture, and Class in Britain*; Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform*.

lunatic asylums, the emergent field of neurology, and sanitary reforms. Presiding over the West Riding Asylum early in his career, he pushed the doctors working under him to publish their research - a quite rare thing for asylum doctors at the time.⁵¹ Six years before the report on over-pressure he moved from Yorkshire to London to take up an appointment as the Lord Chancellor's Visitor in Lunacy. One year before the report he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. That same year he made a pilgrimage to Bran Well, a small village renowned for the healing qualities of its water and the place where Robert Burns had spent the last fortnight of his life on medical advice. On a supposedly spontaneous impulse, Crichton-Browne took a sample of the water and had it tested by Professor Dewar of the Royal Institution. He found that the water was tainted with sewage - probably from the heavily manured surrounding land.⁵² The "mystery" of Burns' death - never really a mystery, for he was in very poor health before arriving at Bran Well - was solved. Indeed, not only was it solved, it somehow found its way to the press, where it contributed to Crichton-Browne's growing reputation as a medical man doing service for the nation, not just his patients. A few years later in 1886 - two years after the over-pressure report - he was knighted.

Crichton-Browne also seems to have had a genuine interest in the development of vulnerable children. In 1860 as a 19-year-old medical student he gave a paper on "The Psychical Diseases of Early Life" which historian of psychology Christopher Wardle sees as a path-breaking attempt to draw attention to the psychological and emotional

⁵¹ John Todd and Lawrence Asworth, "The West Riding asylum and James Crichton-Browne, 1818-76," in German E. Berrios and Hugh Freeman eds., *150 Years of British Psychiatry, 1841-1991* (London, 1991), 389-418.

⁵² "A Polluted Mineral Spring," *The Medical News*, 43, 14 (October 6, 1883), 392.

vulnerability of disturbed children and those at-risk for developing mental illnesses.

However, it fell flat. Wardle speculates that psychology as a field was not yet ready to identify and act on “disturbed” and “at-risk” as categories for children, preferring instead to maintain as much as possible the binary of normal and insane.⁵³ In intervening in elementary education a little over two decades after his 1860 paper, Crichton-Browne revived a long-standing interest in a new context and brought to bear his now substantial professional reputation.

Authoring a prominent report on elementary education expanded the realm of Crichton-Browne’s putative expertise and public service. This man on the make claimed a privileged position as a reforming doctor who in one fell swoop could identify and propose solutions for sanitary, physiological, and neurological problems in elementary education. In many ways he retraced the footsteps of James Kay-Shuttleworth, who likewise parlayed medicine into a career in sanitary, Poor Law, and education reform. Throughout the report he simultaneously occupies two positions: he sees problems that teachers cannot and claims that he is giving medical credence to problems about which teachers have been complaining loudly to no avail. He purports to be teachers’ benevolent patron - appreciative of their work, but confident that he can affect reforms which they cannot.

My visits to schools have brought vividly before me the civilising influence and beneficent effects of the training and instruction that are now brought within the reach of the children of the poorest in the land, and it is because I value so highly the services which it is in the power of education to render, not only to national

⁵³ Christopher J. Wardle, “Historical influences on services for children and adolescents before 1900,” in *150 Years of British Psychiatry*, 279-284.

prosperity and order, but to national health, that I am eager to see education itself educated, trained, and instructed.⁵⁴

He even declares on the second page of the report that “I shall yield to no one in my admiration of the achievements of those who have been engaged in carrying out the Elementary Education Act of 1870.” Despite these words of respect for elementary education and teachers, Crichton-Browne reaffirms the professional hierarchy in which medicine and medical men have more power and prestige than elementary education and teachers. In this vision of the professional and wider social landscape, doctors have an ethical and professional duty to monitor elementary education and paternalistically supervise teachers’ work.

Much of the information in the report comes from Crichton-Browne’s conversations “with upwards of 60 teachers.” The report leaves the impression that these men and women had a remarkable knowledge of their pupils’ home lives. Though the girls at one school all insisted to Crichton-Browne that they were not hungry, “the head-mistress assured me that to her certain knowledge as many as 8 per cent of the girls came to school without breakfast in the depth of winter” while many other girls were undernourished. Teachers also knew that many of their children were what Crichton-Browne called “backwards,” that many others struggled in school from lack of sleep, and that virtually all lived in conditions such that finding time and a place to do homework was a great difficulty. The children “of artizans, not rarely by a sudden failure of intellect or langour of manner, intimate to the discerning teacher, without any words, that their fathers are out of work, or prostrated by illness.”⁵⁵ So knowledgeable are teachers and so

⁵⁴ Crichton-Browne, “Report,” 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-7, 9

strong their connection to their pupils that they can grasp what is going on without words being spoken.

Yet for all that the report acknowledges teachers' familiarity and sympathy with the plight of their pupils, the overall implication is nonetheless that teachers knowingly do great harm to them on a daily basis. Only two of Crichton-Browne's informants denied the existence of over-pressure. The rest, by his account, admitted to overpressuring children who were "backward," starved, and burdened with work and emotional anxiety at home. "A great physiological truth underlay the words of a teacher when he said to me, 'Not only do these dull children break down in health under our manipulations, but they grow more stupid, seeming to lose in general intelligence what they gain in mere technical knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Their last state is worse than their first.'"⁵⁶ As for starving and undernourished children, "They are listless and drowsy, as all teachers know, and their drowsiness is a protective measure taken by the conservative instinct" to help protect their bodies. "To rouse them out of their conservative drowsiness, and insist on their using their brains, is to enhance their wretchedness ... to inflict pain, and run risks, to little or no purpose; for the starved brain is incapable of doing truly fruitful work."⁵⁷ And yet rouse them teachers did. Despite a provision in the Education Code allowing teachers to have "backward" and "delicate" pupils excused from the annual examination, "teachers have continued to push on and present [them] just as if the clause in the Code for their protection had no existence."

When Crichton-Browne asked the head mistress of one school how many pupils she was

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

considering withholding from the upcoming examination, she pointed out 14. When he asked her to look at the matter “not from the teacher’s but from the parents’ point of view, this list extended till it included the names of 47 girls, all of whom she said she would withhold were she to allow her own judgment of what was humane and salutary to decide the matter.”⁵⁸ By implication, then, teachers’ point of view - a point of view they regularly acted upon - was inhumane and unhealthy for the children in their charge. His anecdote suggests that they retained the capacity to act *in loco parentis* in matters of children’s wellbeing, but no longer did so in practice. Crichton-Browne portrayed teachers as professionals whose hearts were mostly in the right place, who gave in and harmed children when confronted with an educational system that demands it.

Crichton-Browne explicitly compared over-pressure to children’s work in factories before the protective legislation of the 1830s and 1840s, a moment often understood by reformers and in popular memory as the beginning of modern notions of childhood.⁵⁹

In former times, in England, half-starved children were taken out of the sunlight and sent into factories, where heavy loads of physical labour were laid on them, and the results were a frightful mortality, arrested growth, and physical deformities ... We have changed all that; but we must beware lest our zeal for better things should hurry us to an opposite extreme, and lead us to impose on children who are still half-starved, mental burdens, nearly as grievous as those physical ones from which they have been relieved.⁶⁰

According to the rest of the report, such an unfortunate state has already been reached in many places. Schools had become a space of deforming, devolutionary modernity, a

⁵⁸ Ibid., 51

⁵⁹ Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty*, 75-80; Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC Books, 2006), 139-176.

⁶⁰ Crichton-Browne, “Report,” 10.

reverse mirror image of what they should be. The report placed the greatest blame on educational policies that lacked flexibility and inadequate state provision for hungry and “backward” children.

Teachers put making good for themselves before making good for children according to the report. Indeed, teachers make good at the expense of children’s mental development and health. Under the current system, the report deems it possible and perhaps even likely that “a cruel tyrant” of a teacher “might receive the merit grant and be classed excellent, while a humane and wise master ... might be condemned by faint praise, and deprived of all hope of promotion.” Good teachers do exist who “temper the Code” which does such harm and rewards over-pressure, but “they are in the midst of a current which is sweeping them on, and which it seems vain to resist.”⁶¹ This rhetoric closely mirrored that of reformers who called for legislation to protect children in factories at the beginning of the Victorian period with its claims that a benevolent capitalist - and now a benevolent teacher - would suffer for acting according to their conscience while others acted without such scruples.

Teachers were not only the agents of over-pressure, according to Crichton-Browne, but also suffered from over-pressure themselves at every stage of their career. The intense physical and mental demands of pupil teaching, coming as it did at a key moment in young men and women’s development, led to lifelong disorders of the nervous system and all the physical infirmities that accompanied them. Pressure from school managers, school boards, and parents to obtain top examination marks for the

⁶¹ Ibid., 12

school only exacerbated things. Teachers' marriage habits made the matter even worse. Since they were lifted "by the superior education above the small shopkeeping class with whom their means put them on a level, and yet excluded from social intercourse on equal terms with the more affluent and cultivated section of the community, they form circles of their own" and often marry other members of those circles - other teachers. The children of such marriages often themselves undertook teaching, leading teachers to become "a special caste" who reproduced their own "[i]rritability and feebleness" as well as the nervous disorders underlying those qualities. Teachers stood in danger of becoming a caste with major physical and moral shortcomings, a breed of over-pressured over-pressurers, "a race of neurotic teachers" if things did not change immediately.⁶²

Contesting Crichton-Browne

Concerns that the report would create huge waves led the Education Department to delay the report's release and discredit Crichton-Browne. The opening salvo fired against Crichton-Browne attacked his method of gathering information. It came in the form of a memorandum from J.G. Fitch, a Chief Inspector of Schools who had taken Crichton-Browne with him on his inspections at the request of the Education Department. Fitch accused Crichton-Browne of misrepresenting his purpose as an informal attempt to begin to gain some first hand knowledge of elementary education. Fitch believed that if Crichton-Browne intended to conduct serious studies of elementary education from a

⁶² Ibid., 47-8

medical perspective, then it was a distant ambition and would not be based on these initial inspections.

With this understanding, Fitch claimed, he invited Crichton-Browne to accompany him on his normal inspection rounds for March and April. These rounds took him to schools only in Walworth, “the district between the Camberwell and the Old Kent-roads, one of the poorest and most crowded in London.” But for Crichton-Browne this was the fact-gathering portion of what he went on to represent as a serious, scientific study of over-pressure. “Had I ... understood that he was in any sense an accredited representative of the medical profession, or that he was charged with the duty or preparing an official report,” Fitch wrote in his memorandum, “I should have thought it necessary to select for the purpose of his inquiry typical schools in different parts of London; and to invite his attention to many facts and considerations which appear to me to be important, and indeed indispensable.”⁶³ The source of these other “indispensable” facts and considerations were meetings with local medical practitioners, school managers, and pupils’ parents, as well as an extended conversation with Fitch himself, a school inspector of many years. As it was, Fitch found Crichton-Browne’s method of investigation “neither judicious nor trustworthy.” By relying too much on testimony from pupils and teachers - both groups with a stake in creating an over-pressure scandal, Fitch implies - Crichton-Browne came to a misleading conclusion. Fitch’s memo suggests that teachers and pupils misrepresented the state of the education system to Crichton-Browne in the hope that it would make their work easier.

⁶³ J.G. Fitch, “Memorandum relating to Dr. Crichton-Browne’s Report,” 55-56.

Fitch's memo itself became the subject of controversy in a scandal that threatened to engulf the Education Department. According to speculations that quickly achieved widespread acceptance as reality, A.J. Mundella, Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, had requested Crichton-Browne to carry out the investigation and write the report on the assumption that elementary education would get a clean bill of health from a medical perspective. Though there had not yet been an organized and concerted campaign to convince the public that over-pressure existed and was harmful, there were nonetheless a disturbing number of court cases, pamphlets, and petitions from the National Union of Teachers which pointed to the harmful effects of education policy on the minds and bodies of teachers and pupils. If Mundella wanted Crichton-Browne to put an end to it all, he had chosen the wrong man for the job.

When Crichton-Browne found that over-pressure did exist and wrote a report to that effect, Mundella commissioned Fitch "to pour contempt on Dr. Crichton-Browne and his report," *The Lancet* posited.⁶⁴ Newspapers and journals little and small, medical and educational, popular and more learned across Britain agreed with this account. "Just fancy suppressing Dr. Crichton-Browne ... Can you prevent the sun rising?" asked the *Midland Medical Miscellany*. *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* located the attempted suppression of Crichton-Browne within "the traditional policy of certain despotic and encroaching governments to accredit agents for a time, to accept responsibility for their acts if they are successful, but to discredit them when it becomes convenient to repudiate conduct which seems unlikely to result in political success."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *The Lancet* (20 September, 1884), 497-8.

⁶⁵ *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, 3.

The over-pressure scandal become a flashpoint for the already heated debate about the relationship between the state bureaucracy and the professions, the power of the British state and its accountability.⁶⁶

Teachers did not feature prominently in the initial controversy surrounding the report, which the press framed as a clash between reformers led by medical professionals like Crichton-Browne and an uncaring, inept educational bureaucracy embodied in Mundella. *The Journal of Education* observed “the Press has taken its cue from one or [the] other of the combatants, and ranged itself under the rival banners of the [Education] Department and the doctors. The *Times* contrasted Dr. Browne’s wild and whirling words with Mr. Fitch’s sobriety and common-sense. According to the *Daily News*, “Dr. Browne has conjured up a Frankenstein of over-pressure, and brooded on it till he has persuaded himself that it is real ... On the other side, the *Daily Telegraph* is not surprised that the Report has been kept back so long, for it is a terrible indictment of the Department ... The professional papers, both education and medical, take, without exception, Dr. Browne’s side.”⁶⁷ *The Journal of Science* criticized *The Spectator* for valorizing Mundella and the bureaucrats under him while denigrating the medical profession in its coverage of the controversy.⁶⁸ The *Midland Medical Miscellany*’s coverage was mostly dedicated to the defense of Crichton-Browne and mentioned

⁶⁶ Copelman, *London's Women Teachers*; John S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Jane McDermid, *The Schooling of Working-class Girls in Victorian Scotland: Gender, Education and Identity*, (London, 2005); Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*; Asher Tropp, *The School Teachers: The Growth of the Teaching Profession in England and Wales From 1800 to the Present Day* (London, 1977).

⁶⁷ “Occasional Notes,” *The Journal of Education*, 391.

⁶⁸ “Madmen and Madness at Rome,” *The Journal of Science*, 22 (October 1865), 593.

teachers only to note that the National Union of Teachers had come out in support of the doctor.⁶⁹ The *Times* and *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* suggested that teachers only backed Crichton-Browne because they naturally inclined towards listlessness. In the event that payment-by-results was eliminated, *The Review* claimed that “we shall to a certainty have underpressure of school teachers.”⁷⁰ If teachers were by implication somewhat villainous figures in the report itself, in the public controversy that followed they were virtual non-players. They seemed merely to work according to the structures of policy which educational bureaucrats made – or fell into line behind the vigorous, paternalistic professionalism of Crichton-Browne.

Teachers quickly set out to make felt their views and to establish a claim of precedence in lobbying on the issue of over-pressure. Within months the National Union of Teachers published a lengthy six-pence pamphlet. The first of the four sections proved teachers’ long-standing concern about over-pressure by mapping out the history of their campaign against it from their very first conference in 1870 all the way through the present. No year was without some substantial protest to the Education department or public appeal. The second section of the pamphlet worked to expose the root cause of the Education Department’s inaction on over-pressure: its tendency to blame teachers for everything. This section reproduced the most recent correspondence between the union and the Education Department on over-pressure, beginning in June of 1883. The Department blamed pupils’ poor attendance, a major cause of over-pressure since missed work had to be made-up, on teachers’ unwillingness to co-operate with “the local

⁶⁹ *Midland Medical Miscellany* (1 November 1884), 342.

⁷⁰ *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, 123 (1885), 12-13.

authorities” - attendance officers and magistrates. A letter from the Department also claimed that “since the introduction of compulsion, [teachers’] duty to their children under their charge begins and ends with the hours of the time-table.” Another major cause of over-pressure, according to the Department, included teachers’ failure “to distribute the work fairly over the whole period of the scholar’s attendance, or to teach diligently throughout the school year,” thus resulting in a period of intense cramming right before the inspection. In other words, the reason for over-pressure was teachers’ laziness. The deeper, underlying cause of over-pressure was equally damning to teachers: greed. The Department insisted that “a sufficient grant” could be earned through a fair pass rate in reading, writing, and arithmetic alone. Teachers’ grasping nature, their desire to make good for themselves, led them to squeeze their pupils for every pence that they were worth, no matter the harm it did them.

By the time of the Report, discourses about teachers as cruel and socially grasping had become deeply entrenched in popular thinking about teachers.⁷¹ In reproducing in full their correspondence with the Education Department, the NUT risked reinforcing these damning stereotypes. The upside, however, was that it furnished evidence that they had been aggressively investigating the causes of over-pressure and attempting to put a stop to them before Crichton-Browne came along. Reproducing the correspondence in full - and not just favorable selections - also allowed teachers to stake a claim to their commitment to making legible the educational bureaucracy in the face of the Department’s purported cover-up.

⁷¹ Tropp, *The School Teachers*, 5-57, 78-159; Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change*, 321-332. See chapter one for more on discourses about teachers.

The NUT pamphlet relied heavily on the knowledge and testimony of doctors, but its construction worked to subordinate medical professionalism to teachers' professionalism. Buried in the middle of the pamphlet are a series of extracts from papers on over-pressure delivered by doctors and scientists at the 1883 Social Sciences Congress at Huddersfield and the Congress of the Educational Institute of Scotland. These extracts are presented as huge blocks of small text that go on for pages with no paragraphs, a stark contrast to the rest of the pamphlet - particularly the following section containing extracts from teachers' letters to the NUT on over-pressure. Such a layout suggests that these papers were included to lend gravitas to the pamphlet and authority to teachers' claims. Insofar as the content of these extracts matters, they generally point to structural faults in the educational bureaucracy. A summary of the discussion that took place when the papers were originally delivered followed the extracts. In one discussion T.E. Heller, the Secretary of the NUT, a former teacher, and a current SBL member, declared that he "had watched this question of over-pressure from the points of view of the school manager and the practical school teacher, and could speak of actual facts."⁷² He went on to largely, though not completely agree with the doctors' testimony. Like the pamphlet as a whole, it shored up its claim that over-pressure existed with medical expertise, but relegated doctors' knowledge to the realm of the abstract and claimed that teachers spoke about "actual facts."

The home stretch of the pamphlet, its final section before the brief concluding recommendations for policy changes, contained extracts from forty letters written by

⁷² *The New Code and Over-Pressure in Elementary Schools* (London: The National Union of Elementary Teachers, 1884), 30.

teachers to the NUT. Using pithy prose and heart-rending anecdotes, they mapped out the effects of over-pressure on the nation's children and educators. "My opinion is [that] the system is doing positive and permanent injury to both teachers and scholars. ... Now that everything is reckoned by the *shilling* Standard, the mental condition of children and teachers is very far from what it ought to be - children have no time to play," wrote a Northumberland teacher. "Two little children have died of low fever, or something of that kind, within the last few months, and nearly their last words were concerning their lessons. '*I cannot do my sums, father,*' said a little boy of seven the last evening of his death," reported a teacher in Carlisle. He noted that when children begin speaking out in their sleep about lessons parents often choose to keep them at home despite the pressures he and the attendance officer had to exert on them. "[S]peaking as a father, not as a teacher, I cannot blame them." In Birkenhead "A boy, *in his sleep*, walked out of the house, knocked at a neighbour's door, and asked what the home lessons were for that night." The entire extract from a teacher in Louth consisted of just one sentence: "We have had to stifle all feelings of humanity in our endeavours to obtain good results."⁷³ In both this pamphlet and the testimony which they gave to the SBL investigation into over-pressure, teachers admitted complicity in the creation of over-pressure, but stressed the larger structural forces at work.

The SBL weighed in on the over-pressure controversy with its own investigation culminating in a published report. The report itself is relatively short and directs blame

⁷³ Ibid., 37-45.

all around: at the Code, at the SBL and school managers, at inspectors, at parents, at the NUT, and at individual teachers. It is, in the final count, bland and obfuscating.

Far more revealing is the beefy first appendix attached to the report, the minutes of evidence from witnesses. In their testimony head teachers brazenly resisted the often leading questions of committee members. They admitted that over-pressure existed and even admitted their own complicity in it, though they situated it within the context of the broader problems of hunger, poverty, and overly rigid education policies. Most of all - and most shockingly for the board members if their follow-up questions are any indication - teachers mapped out the real, rather than theoretical distribution of power in London's school system.

The report of the SBL committee on over-pressure with its appendix recording all of teachers' testimony was one manifestation of the growing educational bureaucracy in the late-Victorian period, a growth that encompassed school boards as well as the Education Department. As scholars such as John Markoff, Robert Gidney, and Douglas Lawr have suggested in different contexts, the growth of bureaucracy may owe much to its popularity with society at large and those it regulates as a means of getting a fair hearing about contested issues and problems.⁷⁴ The eagerness of teachers to testify at length certainly suggests they saw this investigation and the recording of their testimony as an opportunity to make known their situation and thus affect change.

⁷⁴ John Markoff, "Governmental Bureacratization: General Processes and an Anomalous Case," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17 (October 1975); Robert Gidney, and Douglas Lawr, "Bureaucracy Vs. Community? The Origins of Bureaucratic Procedure in the Upper Canadian School System," *Journal of Social History* 13, 3 (1980), 438-457.

In their testimony teachers staked a claim to authority by demonstrating intimate knowledge of their pupils' home lives. Bennett Williams of the Gifford Street School in Islington testified that the parents of many of his pupils worked as "bricklayers' labourers, painters' labourers, or cabmen. Others are employed on the Great Northern Railway, chiefly as shunters or cleaners." The mothers mostly worked at "charring, washing, laundry work, and the like." When asked if he knew any of the parents personally, he replied "Yes! I have visited them in their homes." Most had only one room. He knew too that after school hours "a good number of boys ... go errands [sic] for tradesmen, chop wood at the wood-yard, and do other little jobs, for which they receive some small payment." He knew what they did for recreation and where they did it. He knew who could get credit at local shops and who could not. By winning the confidence of his pupils - at least to a degree - and through his close everyday contact with them, he overcame the "certain pride" among them whereby "they don't like to admit their poverty." When asked, "Do you hold the opinion that you know more of the circumstances of the parents than the Visitor," he answered, "In some cases I do."⁷⁵

If teachers claimed a detailed, personal knowledge of children's home lives, they also positioned themselves within the tradition of the social-scientific investigator. Dressed in tattered clothing and their visage marked by sunken cheeks, some children's poverty was immediately obvious to any observer. Most poverty was virtually invisible, however, and teachers implied that they were uniquely positioned to discern it. Elizabeth Green, headmistress of Gifford Street Infant' School, told the committee of her work

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2-3, 15.

administering the free meal program at her school. Each day she “decide[d] absolutely whether a child shall have a free dinner or a free breakfast,” provided for by the London Congregational Union. Parents applied for free meals for their children and then Green gathered information from the Visitor, the testimony of children and parents, and her own investigations. The end result were lists which together constituted virtual case histories of the children: “I have a list of children who have no father, and of children whose father are out of work and ill,” and so on, each child’s poverty accounted for in much the same way as the case histories of the Charity Organization Society.⁷⁶ Richard Greenwood, headmaster of Southwark Park School and President of the NUT brought before the committee over a dozen extracts from his logbook which similarly built up case histories for pupils who either through hunger, “delicacy,” or “backwardness” were vulnerable to over-pressure. Teachers used their time before the SBL committee to painstakingly detail the acquaintance they had with their pupils and their families. Their testimony mingled paternalism with social science.

Teachers’ testimony also reflected a tendency to resist general theories of over-pressure and childhood. When asked by the committee what she understood by the term “over-pressure,” Elizabeth Green answered that it was “Children being forced to do more than their brains are capable of doing well.”⁷⁷ Most of the teachers testifying gave a similar answer. The emphasis they placed on the “capability” of children suggested that if over-pressure was to be avoided, it was necessary to give more discretion to the teachers who knew each child’s capability. As things stood now, they complained that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 39-40

⁷⁷ Ibid., 39.

they had too little choice about the standard in which children were placed, the things they learned, and how they learned them. Emma Talbot, headmistress of Portobello Road Infants School, disliked using formal kindergarten techniques and tools in her school. When asked by the committee if she “prefer[ed] falling back upon your own resources,” she replied that she did. She avoided rules and guidelines about the classification of students, adopting a much more fluid classification system based on continuous observation and informal assessment of children’s abilities.⁷⁸ Almost all the teachers who testified explicitly indicated that they similarly believed that over-pressure stemmed from rigid classification rules. More discretionary power in the hands of the teachers who knew pupils so well, they suggested, might effectively put an end to over-pressure.

Teachers also pointed to the family economy as a root cause of over-pressure. James Williams, headmaster of Henry-street School in St. Pancras, believed working-class families were eager to have their children pass standard IV so they could leave school and begin to work. Williams described this cause of over-pressure as “the anxiety which the boys have - a very natural and praiseworthy anxiety, I think sir - to be earning a little money.”⁷⁹ In his experience, “They seem to have a dream of getting a little money in their pockets and being little men and women” - a dream which, as Ellen Ross has shown, many did indeed harbor out of a sense of obligation to their parents, particularly their mothers, for years of providing for them.⁸⁰ Williams recognized that poor and working-class children understood childhood as a relatively short period in their life; to

⁷⁸ Ibid., 79-80.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 24

⁸⁰ Ross, *Love and Toil*, 148-155.

prolong it was often not a kind act. He believed that in these cases teachers and managers had a duty to counsel parents and pupils, but no more; the ultimate responsibility rested with them and their idea of childhood. Teachers understood childhood as a concept which varied across the social landscape, and indeed from family to family on the same street. Over-pressure resulted in part from their inability to adapt to those variations. Sometimes it was best to give in to the tug of the family economy.

Though teachers understood over-pressure differently and often diversely, they all admitted its existence and their own complicity in it. “(*Sir E. Hay Currie.*) I am only going to ask one question - whether you say that you have over-pressed [sic] children?” Miss Crouch, headmistress of the girls’ department at Giffard-street school, answered: “I am afraid I have.”⁸¹ Other teachers got the same question in one form or another and, with the exception of the headmistress of a fairly well-to-do infants school, all answered that over-pressure existed in their schools.

To justify themselves, they mapped out the way in which, from their perspective, power was distributed and wielded in London’s elementary school system. Theoretically a change to the Code two years earlier had allowed teachers much greater liberty to withdraw pupils from annual examinations in cases where the preparation and examination itself would be harmful or not within their innate capability. However, Bennett Williams and others claimed that they would not wield this power in practice. When pressed as to why he felt that way, Williams testified that it owed to “so much importance being attached to the percentage of passes - they figure out in the Report, and

⁸¹ Ibid., 68.

the schools which get the high percentages are most highly praised - this is, I think, indirect but strong influence of the kind.” He was concerned with his own and the school’s “reputation” - reputations which were inseparably linked and measured through exam results. The committee pressed Williams further on the issue: “Mr. Mundella has said that he does not wish to limit you in any way. Are you aware that there is the fullest power given you?” He replied: “I am aware the power is in the Code, and I am also aware that it would not do for me to use it.” The line of questioning abruptly ended here.⁸² The committee declined to follow his responses down a path that would lead to an exposure of the gap between policy and practice.

The expectations of inspectors led teachers to play loose with policy guidelines. Richard Greenwood, headmaster of Southwark Park Board School, referred to home lessons - a significant cause of over-pressure - as “nominally voluntary.” Though a recent court ruling meant that home lessons could not be assigned against a parent’s will, Greenwood and his staff admitted to cajoling and coercing students and parents into almost universally accepting them because they felt them to be absolutely necessary for passing the annual examinations. He also felt it necessary to “over-pressure” students who were “physically or intellectually unfit” because he was “very doubtful” that the inspector was “a reasonable man” who would make appropriate allowances.⁸³ Despite some attempts by the SBL, Code, and inspectors to give teachers more discretion and to make allowances for varied local and individual circumstances, teachers still felt themselves to be up against a state which fostered a monolithic set of expectations.

⁸² Ibid., 7

⁸³ Ibid., 85, 88.

Perhaps the most remarkable moment in the committee's investigation came when Richard Greenwood admitted to cowardice. "Do you consider that you stand in a position of responsibility to the children who are under your care?" "Certainly," came the reply. "Then do you not think it right to take the responsibility of guarding their interests even although [sic] it might have the effect of injuring your report?" "Well - (after a long pause) I am sorry to say that I was such a coward; that is, it is a lack of courage. I failed to do what I thought was right for fear of the consequences to myself; but I do not accept the whole responsibility of that. I have felt driven to it."⁸⁴

Greenwood's admission of cowardice is all the more striking since he was a middle-aged man who had taught his whole life, whose daughters were teachers under the SBL, who served as the current President of the NUT, and whose school was in a fairly well-off area. If Greenwood lacked the courage to resist the drive to over-pressure, then what hope did lesser men and women in poorer schools have? Greenwood's privileged position also rendered him essentially immune to any repercussions from the SBL, which made possible his startlingly frank answer. Probably calculated to some degree during the "long pause," the admission deflected attention away from teachers' role in creating over-pressure to the circumstances that required teachers to be superhuman defenders of children. All the teachers who testified to the special committee, and Greenwood most of all, positioned themselves instead as advocates of on-the-ground, everyday children's rights. They sought to draw attention to and change the power structures that put pressure on those rights, not to single-handedly resist them.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 91

The anxious initial debates about over-pressure played out quickly, and heatedly. MP Sydney Buxton cooled the tone of the debate and cut to the heart of the real issues at play with his 1885 *'Over-pressure' and Elementary Education*. Buxton was busy in 1884-5. He not only represented the interests of his constituents in Peterborough, but served as under-secretary at the Colonial Office and a special advisor on the weighty and controversial Death Duties Bill then being drawn up. However, he made time to write and publish a short book on the over-pressure controversy during that time, part of an interest in elementary education that stemmed back to the time he had served on the SBL (1876-1882) and would continue with his participation in the Cross Commission (1886-1888).⁸⁵

Moderate in tone and measured in conclusion, *'Over-pressure' and Elementary Education* admits that some cases of over-pressure did exist, but asserts that claims about it have been “much exaggerated.” Education policy needed some changes, but Buxton stressed the need “not to relax the stringency of the Code too far, lest, while we are trying to avoid the Scylla of over-pressure, we fall into to the Charybdis of inefficiency.”⁸⁶ He positioned himself as one of the few level-headed figures to take up the question. “The question [of over-pressure], then, resolves itself into this: Do the children lose more than they gain by compulsory education?”⁸⁷ A simple question with a simple answer: “children, even if under-fed, were better from every point of view in a well-warmed, well-lit, and well-ventilated school, their minds exercised with work, their bodies

⁸⁵ ODNB

⁸⁶ Sydney Buxton, *'Over-pressure' and Elementary Education* (London, 1885), 100, 103.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

disciplined with drill, singing, and play, and their characters improved by habits of punctuality and obedience.”⁸⁸ In Buxton’s vision, elementary education’s purpose was to promote the wholesome development and growth of children - although his vision of wholesomeness was shot through with social discipline.⁸⁹

Buxton’s investigation into over-pressure traced the genealogy of the debate even as it weighed in on the question. How and why had the over-pressure question generated such controversy? What was *really* at stake for teachers, the Education Department, doctors, and others? “We are obliged to start with the assumption,” he claimed, “that whatever system of education be adopted, and however judiciously it be administered, it cannot provide against all the ills to which child-flesh is unfortunately heir.”⁹⁰ “Child-flesh” - the phrase captures the sense of children’s vulnerability, the ease with which they might be mistreated in a way that would permanently scar their delicate bodies and perhaps their psyches too, as was increasingly being recognized.⁹¹ Buxton used the phrase with more than a hint of sarcasm. Here and throughout his book he draws attention to the irony at the heart of the over-pressure controversy: adults rhetorically manipulated and exploited the vulnerability of children with the ostensible goal of gaining power to protect them from manipulation and exploitation. In many ways Buxton’s book is less yet another foray into the over-pressure controversy than an anatomization of the way in which the trope of the child had been deployed in it.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18

⁸⁹ On the rise of “growth” as a way of understanding children’s development, see Steedman, *Strange Dislocations*.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁹¹ Steedman

In the final count of Buxton's book, teachers come across as more genuinely interested in children's wellbeing and better positioned to know how the current system imperiled that wellbeing than any other group. The state acted primarily to secure "efficiency" for its vast expenditures and "to insure that all the children receive fair play."⁹² Doctors "see only one side of the question," those pupils who are ill. They have little understanding of "the interiors of the homes of the poor, where there is very little light, ventilation is unknown, and where brain pressure is freely supplied by a scolding mother and a screaming baby." Lacking any serious understanding "of the interior working of the school, or any special information which entitled him to generalize and dogmatise on matters of education," it is the case that "the opinion of a layman, practically conversant with the subject of education, is at least as good as that of a doctor."⁹³ In theory, school managers were ideally positioned to gain an "intimacy" with teachers, pupils, inspectors, and doctors alike that would enable them to protect truly delicate children from over zealous teachers or inspectors. But managers, Buxton believed, had a tendency towards either "indifference" or "eagerness to earn a large grant."⁹⁴ Teachers, by contrast, dealt with more than the efficiency question which concerned the state, "are in a position to speak with more authority" about the condition of average children than doctors, and were rarely indifferent as so many managers were.

⁹² Buxton, *'Over-pressure,'* 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80-1. In reality school managers' powers, social position, and motivations during this period were incredibly varied; see Peter Gordon, *The Victorian School Manager: A Study in the Management of Education 1800-1902* (London: Woburn Press, 1974), 136-172.

Yet even if teachers do come across better than any other group in Buxton's account, by no means do they escape criticism. In taking advantage of the over-pressure controversy to push their campaign against the system of payment-by-results, teachers evinced a "desire to be judged by faith, and not by works." They believed that ending that system would "produce an educational millennium," ushering in an era in which "every child [will] receive exactly the education suited to its capacity."⁹⁵ Buxton layered sarcasm over skepticism: this was wildly idealistic nonsense. "The State has interfered in national education, on the ground that ignorance is a national danger, and education a national good; and therefore, on behalf of the parent as well as of itself, it must take care that no children are neglected." Some system of examination was necessary "lest backward, dull, and weakly children be defrauded of the education which the State has declared to be their birthright."⁹⁶ If that created more work for teachers who had to contort themselves every which way to figure out how to make those backward and dull children learn, then so be it: "After all, the teachers are made for the children, not the children for the teachers."⁹⁷

Though Buxton reiterated in his conclusion his belief that complaints about over-pressure were "much exaggerated," he nonetheless "rejoice[d] at the outcry which has been raised. It has been of use in drawing public attention to the condition of the elementary schools."⁹⁸ As he recognized, that attention was in service of children, but also self-serving.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 100.

The over-pressure controversy makes visible the multiplicity of professional strivings in the late-Victorian period and the relationship of those strivings to ideas about childhood. Unlike most exposés and scandals, the over-pressure controversy lacked specificity. No single person or school represented the larger issue. The once and possibly future victim was not *a* child, but *the* child. The purported perpetrators were myriad: teachers, parents, school managers, school board members, Education Department bureaucrats, and HMI of schools; the only thing tying them together was their status as adults. How could children be protected from adults and who would do the protecting? Teachers and doctors both vied with each other and cooperated as they endeavored to articulate a professionalism based on the defense of children. The rise of this empathetic, protectionist professionalism marked a departure from the unrepentant authoritarianism which was fast fading as a viable model for maintaining social prestige and power. This new empathetic professionalism took service to society and the protection of children as its creed.⁹⁹

In an important sense, the over-pressure controversy stemmed from a concern bound up with professional tensions: policing the boundaries of narrative genres. Was the Crichton-Browne report an exposé, a social-scientific investigation, a medical report by an independent expert, or an internal memorandum? What about the Fitch memorandum, NUT pamphlet, LSB report, and Buxton's book - what were they? And who was to be believed? Each work sought to undermine its rivals by deconstructing their

⁹⁹ Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989).

narrative *mélange* and grasping at social-scientific objectivity and the idea of shared blame to legitimize itself. Yet ultimately each work was also an *exposé*. For instance, Fitch's memorandum attempted to use social-scientific language to expose Crichton-Browne's report as a self-aggrandizing deception based on shoddy data collection practices while the NUT pamphlet wove together claims it presented as objective with an *exposé* of the Education Department's longstanding indifference to the union's concerns about over-pressure. Buxton claims his very objectivity by exposing other writings on over-pressure as participating too much in the style of the *exposé*. One modest narrative claim survived these fierce debates intact: that individual teachers' observations had a privileged place in any understanding of childhood and elementary education. Everyone from Crichton-Browne to Fitch to the London School Board to Buxton humbled themselves before the testimony and insights of a teacher. That is not to say that they trusted teachers as a group - indeed, they were deeply skeptical of what they believed to be the corrupting influence of the NUT which led teachers as a group to make self-serving policy recommendations. But the voice and motive of the individual teacher emerged from the over-pressure controversy perhaps more empowered than ever.

* * *

For all the power it had amassed by the end of the Victorian period, the British state remained blind and impotent in some key areas. The community remained perhaps the most important observer and regulator of teachers' behavior. Particularly in Scotland, the ideal of the self-regulating community continued to exert a strong cultural influence which shaped everyday responses to allegations of teachers' misconduct. As the

controversy surrounding accusations of “over-pressure” demonstrate, teachers’ own gaze caught many things the state did not and their voices carried significant weight.

Increasingly teachers found traction in their plea for more power to sort children into the categories of innocent and corrupt, delicate and hardy, “backwards” and normal.

However, this delegation of authority, this trust in teachers, was never absolute.

Communities held teachers constantly in their gaze, involving the state when necessary but mostly managing teachers’ behavior through the micro-politics of the community.

Conclusion

Victorian elementary teachers led rich lives. They found loved, they laughed, they traveled, they read widely, they taught, they served soup, they created miniature museums, and they roamed the streets after school hours. Even the official records they kept in logbooks were fraught with meaning and purpose as they sought to critique educational policies, draw the attention to social problems, and map out the culture and tradition of neighborhoods. Though the richness of their many strivings were often only partially realized in the nineteenth century, the world they helped to create served as a foundation for many of the major social developments that defined that twentieth century.

After half-a-century of relentlessly mapping out and fighting the effects of poverty on children, teachers could celebrate a series of small, but significant victories in the first decade of the twentieth century. New programs provided needy pupils with free lunches and basic medical care from school nurses. These new programs nurtured pupils' bodies even as they subjected them to new forms of surveillance and discipline. Teachers and canteen workers were supposed to supervise lunch hour to ensure "habits of orderliness and decorous behavior."¹ Many simply shrugged off this disciplinary imperative. Like their Victorian counterparts, twentieth-century teachers acted flexibly and defiantly even as they participated in a state-making project shot through with disciplinary aspirations. Lunches and school nurses were, of course, only the first faint

¹ James Vernon, "The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain," *The American Historical Review*, 110, 3 (2005), 712.

echoes of the robust welfare state that emerged in postwar Britain. Yet these early schemes had their own foundation, one painstakingly laid by Victorian teachers.

These new social welfare programs also brought teachers into partnerships with new sorts of experts, from nutritionists to social workers to school nurses. These agents of the state worked with teachers – and on their own – to identify and respond to social problems like hunger, sickness, juvenile crime, and, later, racial tensions.² Such coordination built on a nineteenth-century tradition of cooperation. Victorian teachers had relied on partners such as benevolent local elites, charitable societies, and private social investigators in their quest to do good. What was new was the extent to which it was other agents of the state with whom they partnered. The increasingly systematic, state-sponsored nature of social welfare programs marked a break with the past, but one that many Victorian teachers had hoped would eventually come to pass.

Even as they strove to do good for the communities they served, teachers continued to search for personal fulfillment. Victorian teachers had nourished inquisitiveness and a lifelong thirst for liberal learning in themselves, their pupils, and even the larger communities they served. At training college, they banded together into societies to study and discuss great literature, controversial philosophers, and contemporary politics. Once on the job, they pursued the study of languages, literature, science, and history on their own time. Many created small museums in their schools with local artifacts – and sometimes also goods from the empire. When they journeyed

² Carolyn Steedman, *Childhood, Culture, and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), chp. 7-9; Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels: Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

around Britain, its empire, and the wider world on their summer holidays, teachers almost compulsively narrated their travels. In their travel narratives they grappled with ideas about race, imperialism, capitalism, class relations, and gender. Personal fulfillment and self-fashioning intersected with the desire to do good critiquing state, society, and empire in teachers' travel narratives. This desire to learn, to observe, and to question found more opportunities than ever for expression in twentieth-century Britain. In addition to the foundation of the well known Workers' Educational Association in 1903, the state and private sector provided growing number of chances to learn into the teenage years and adulthood from the expansion of evening schools, libraries, public museums, secondary schools, and affordable travel programs to see cultural sites.³

Changes to teacher training gave teachers themselves more opportunities to formally pursue liberal learning. Beginning in 1908, pupil teaching was phased out in favor of sending aspiring teachers directly to secondary school on scholarships. The state had created hundreds of new secondary schools with tens of thousands of new spots in the wake of the Education Act of 1902. However, for most working- and lower-middle-class Britons access to a solid secondary school education remained difficult until well after the Second World War. Becoming an elementary teacher remained one of the most important opportunities for upward social mobility – and one far more accessible to the

³ Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, chp. 9; Mark Freeman, ““An advanced type of democracy’? Governance and politics in adult education c. 1918-1930,” *History of Education*, 42, 1 (2013), 45-69; Mark Freeman, “The magic lantern and the cinema: adult schools, educational settlements and secularisation in Britain, c. 1900-1950,” *Quaker Studies*, 11 (2007), 192-203; M. P. Sutcliffe, “The Toynbee Travellers' Club and the Transnational Education of Citizens, 1888-90,” *History Workshop Journal* 76, 1 (2013), 137-159; Andrea Geddes Poole, “The Citizens of Morley College,” *The Journal of British Studies*, 50, 4 (2011), 840-862.

working classes than becoming a secondary school teacher. Still, not everything had changed. The Victorian institution of pupil teaching – itself a revived form of medieval apprenticeship – influenced the twentieth-century practice of student teaching. After secondary school, aspiring teachers spent a year as a student teacher at a primary school, as elementary schools were coming to be known. Though they relished their time at secondary school and training college, teachers recalled their student teaching days with “fondness and appreciation” because of the practical experience and sense of accomplishment it brought.⁴

Welcome though more opportunities for liberal learning were, the new path to becoming a teacher led to fears that teaching was now a career for the sons and daughters of the solidly middle class. One newspaper article suggested that teaching was becoming “a Stolen Profession” while the *Schoolmaster* similarly asked: “Is the working-class child penalized [in seeking to becoming a teacher]?” The answer was a resounding yes. It was becoming more difficult for their children to become teachers. The scholarships and stipends that the state offered to aspiring teachers were no longer enough. Now working-class families had to take out loans to help see their children through secondary schooling, student teaching, and their teacher training program. Though it became more difficult for working-class children to become teachers, it remained very much possible – and desirable. Working-class families considered teaching “an important and well-respected career.” Oral histories reveal the immense satisfaction that teaching continued to offer

⁴ ⁴ Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, *Becoming Teachers: Texts and Testimonies, 1907-1950* (London: Woburn Press, 2004), 52.

working-class young men and women. Even teachers from a lower-middle-class background found teaching to be more fulfilling than other career options, both intellectually and in terms of the good that they could do for their communities.⁵

Part of what remained so satisfying about becoming a teacher was sustained, meaningful contact with local communities. Teachers in twentieth-century Britain continued to work at the intersection of the local and the national. The creation of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in 1902 brought a swift end to school boards. In most areas, LEAs covered a larger area than school boards had. Many rural teachers welcomed the relief that LEAs brought from petty local politics and paternalistic hiring and supervision practices. However, school boards had been more “local” than LEAs. The relatively small areas that boards had served – at least outside of big cities (and even there they broke cities down into much smaller groupings for many administrative purposes) – had meant that board members were often in touch with the needs and wishes of a community. Building on the work that Victorian teachers had performed mediating between local communities and the central state, twentieth-century teachers continued to adapt policies to fit the local ethos and needs – and to critique the way the central state saw its subjects.⁶

The processes of adapting policies and critiquing the state meant that teachers continued to play a key role in defining local communities. Kitty and Tom Higdon, the school teachers in Burston, Norfolk, were famously fired because of their work as leaders

⁵ Ibid., 102.

⁶ See Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, class and feminism 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996), chps. 4-5; Martin Lawn, *Servants of the State: The Contested Control of Teaching 1900-1930* (London: The Falmer Press, 1987).

in the local community's political scene. They were fired on invented charges because of their work, an incident which sparked off a boycott of the local state school that lasted from 1914 until 1939.⁷ So many other teachers considered themselves to be in the service of their local communities in one form or another that in the 1920s the National Union of Teachers launched a campaign to encourage teachers "to conceive their work nationally and not merely in local terms."⁸ Twentieth-century teachers remained as enmeshed as ever - perhaps more than ever - in vocal, visible struggles over professional autonomy and the role of the state in the lives of local communities and individual families.⁹

I do not want to overstate the continuities between Victorian elementary teachers and their twentieth-century counterparts. Secondary school and university teachers increasingly became the purveyors of social mobility. Teachers confronted social problems in partnership with school nurses, nutritionists, doctors, social investigators, and a wide range of academics, but teachers' influence in public discussions was diluted by the growing chorus of voices and the valorization of "expert" knowledge. As knowledge came in more forms than ever – the radio, television, mobile libraries, adult education programs, and so on – the idea of formalized learning in a school came to seem passé in some ways. Though these developments made teachers' social and cultural work less visible and singular, they were also organic outgrowths of the world that Victorian teachers had done so much to create.

⁷ Bertram Edwards, *The Burstons School strike*, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1974).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹ See Lawn, *Servants of the State*.

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