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ABSTRACT

Recent curriculum policies in Australia have been developed according to a thesis that a child is a flexible and plastic figure able to be almost infinitely responsive to changes. One of the central dispositions required of young people in coping with such change is the development of critical literacy--an ability to manage, analyze, and use knowledge and texts in ways that are seen to contribute to an ethical future. This placement of child and literacy at the center of curriculum policy teleologies that manage the uncertainties promised by new times is a process that has a long history. A genealogical review that considers the way that the child has been able to represent social futurity in curriculum reforms raises critical questions that can be applied to present curriculum work. A case study describes the way that a new kind of older child subject position was developed within the English subjects in the first decade of the 20th century. (Contains 2 figures and 21 references.) (PM)

English/literacy and anxiety about the future: A case-study from the turn of the 20th century

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Phil Cormack

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This paper, which focusses on a period of the early twentieth century, may seem strangely placed in a conference strand which is about 'twenty-first' century literacies'. However, I contend that the 'problem' of understanding twenty-first century literacies and thinking about how they might be incorporated into the curriculum and teaching is one better tackled with an historical imagination. In this paper I take a genealogical approach to examining ways that the literacy/English curriculum has been put together with the problem of shaping the child for the future and consider implications for curriculum policy.

One of the most striking features of curriculum policy work in Australia in recent times is the way that the 'new times' (Luke, 1992) thesis has been taken up and used as a policy lever for remaking curriculum and pedagogy. The insertion of Information and Communication Technologies into nearly all aspects of people's lives in post-industrial societies leading to rapid changes in and across work, community, home and leisure environments is being seen as a revolution on a similar scale to that of the industrial changes of the nineteenth century, and probably requiring changes to education just as big as those involving the invention of the modern school in that era. Literacy has been identified as a site where significant changes have occurred, as a curriculum field that should be central in responding to new times, and as a set of practices that we all need to be able to cope with change.

To sift through the maze of ways with words of new technologies and new cultural forms, to decide how to best situate and position our teaching, our curricula, and our learners in relation to these new worlds—these tasks indeed will require new kinds of critical literacy of us all. (Luke & Elkins, 1998)

This perhaps is well enough known to be almost taken for granted in English teaching circles, albeit not without some difficulties in aligning this new focus on literacy with a history of the English subjects (Green & Beavis, 1996). For some (for example, Morgan, 1993) it follows that the subject itself needs reinvention to provide a site for students to develop new ways of working with the many new (and old) texts and literate practices with which young people must deal.

What is most interesting about the new curriculum policy materials that have been developed in response to, or at least in reference to, the new times thesis is the way that the figure of the child has been constituted as a flexible and plastic figure able to be almost infinitely responsive to the vast changes that are seen to be an enduring feature of new times. A few examples from a contemporary curriculum policy document in my own state illustrate how this process works. Typically the line of argument highlights the unknowability of the future and situates the appropriate response as arming the student with the means to adapt to, and manage that uncertainty as in this example from the introduction to the *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA)* document.

As educators, our challenge is to construct a curriculum response which meets the emerging and rapidly changing and future demands of a knowledge economy and society. This certainly has implications for the kinds of knowledge and skills that children and students need to be able to engage productively with change. It also has implications for the values and dispositions we want to foster, that is those tendencies to think and act in positive ways and to monitor and reflect on one's own thinking and actions. (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2001 *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework: General Introduction*, p.6)

One of the central dispositions required of young people in coping with such change is the development of a critical literacy—an ability to manage, analyse and use knowledge and texts in ways that are seen to contribute to an ethical future. For example, the *SACSA Framework* highlights the way that, in the future, knowledge will not be available from a few, institutionally regulated sites, but from many unregulated sites, and (with an unstated implication that such knowledge will be less

trustworthy) calls for the development of students' abilities to manage and critically and ethically analyse the knowledge they obtain.

Formal educational institutions no longer have the dominant role of knowledge generation and transmission in our society. As knowledge is 'democratised' through being generated and dispersed in multiple and increasingly accessible ways, so children and students acquire a range of knowledge, skills and dispositions from varied sources. Such change means that it is no longer sufficient to acquire new knowledge. It is just as important to have the capability to manage it, including the capability to bring critical understandings to bear on the selection and analysis of information and to understand the power of knowledge, the potential for both its positive and negative use, and the importance of ethical inquiry and action. (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2001 *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework: General Introduction*, p.5)

Here the problem of the 'democratisation' of knowledge implies a need to develop a new kind of citizen-subject who is more ethically and critically self-managing in the face of the breakdown of institutional controls over knowledge. This is by no means an isolated example. The *SACSA Framework*, like others, seeks to shape children as moral citizens who will be able to live and work with others in a borderless world, and act on their social and physical environments. The child is to be made an ethical citizen largely through new literate capacities.

Changes in the nature of work and social life and recognition of the cultural plurality of society have contributed to different forms and modes of communication. The development of digital and electronic communications has also changed communication modes. Learners need multiple literacies in order to function critically and creatively as they become agents for change in our society. (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2001 *South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework: Middle Years Band*, p.62, <http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au>)

This placement of the child and literacy at the centre of curriculum policy teleologies that manage the uncertainties promised by new times is a process that, I argue, has a long history. Such curriculum policy work needs to be considered historically and in a way which may help to cast as 'strange' those very processes which currently seem so obvious and irrepressible. In this paper I consider the way that the child has been able to represent social futurity in curriculum reforms that have been a response to times of uncertainty. In engaging in such a genealogical review, I hope to raise critical questions that can be applied to curriculum policy work in the present. One of the acknowledged dangers of 'new times' rhetorics is that they can become the basis for casting the past as irrelevant. However, as I hope to show, work in curriculum involves many persistent (and even uncomfortable) continuities that must be accounted for.

One of the first questions to be asked genealogically is how the child came to be able to be imagined as embodying the future and as a site for work on the future? It is with this question that I begin. I then go on to consider one case-study from the turn of the twentieth century in which such a view of the child was put into place in the English subjects.

The child/adolescent as embodying the future

Prior to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, childhood had been marked, if at all, as a category of dependence which reflected its bodily weakness and relative lack of power compared to adults (Ariès, 1962). However, over the nineteenth century, childhood and its concomitant stage of 'adolescence' became fixed as time-spans with certain kinds of experience connected with age (Steedman, 1994, p.7). In establishing the importance of childhood and adolescence, the crisis of confidence brought about by scientific ways of thinking was central. Foucault (1994) argues that humankind was 'dehistoricised' by the way that the enlightenment gave every domain of existence its

own history and place in the light. In other words, humankind was untied from a place above history and found itself bound into the history of the world alongside other creatures and objects. Darwin's theory of evolution was an obvious case in the nineteenth century. Through this theory and the discovery of whole species which had died out and become extinct, even the very survival of humankind was called into question. Darwin's theories threatened and even required extinction and Steedman (1994, p.82) notes that 'death was extended from the individual organism to the whole species'.

In responding to such a crisis, pre-Darwinian ideas, especially from physiology, were predominantly used to examine and explain these processes¹. An important idea that was put to use in the process of establishing and linking the histories of the various orders of living creatures, was that of the 'morphotype'. This was a concept suggested by Kant, for whom physical principles were not enough to explain development and change, instead, 'in order to investigate the organic realm, the idea of some kind of purposive plan had to be assumed' (Steedman, 1994, p.47). The morphotype was the representation of this plan. It was a kind of blueprint for the make-up of living things, suggesting that they grew according to a plan that was revealed in their very structure based on a common ancestor or an ideal-type. Not only could a morphotype be used to explain similarities in the growth patterns of different creatures, it could be seen to unfold within the growth patterns of each kind of creature. Thus change in creatures was inherent in their very structure and each creature in its growth (a plant, or a human embryo for example) represented the unfolding of that plan toward the ideal—it could be said that each creature contained within its structure, the (hi)story of its own growth. Importantly for the crisis of the history of 'man', this growth model, 'allowed those who used it to comprehend evolution as purposeful, orderly and goal directed and, perhaps, as divinely planned or ordained. (Steedman, 1994, p.52)

The idea of recapitulation—that 'ontogeny repeats phylogeny', or that the growth of an individual organism repeated the development (racial history or evolution) of a species—allowed the transplanting of the idea of growth (progress) according to a plan from individual organisms to the entire species or race and even to the progress of nations. Thus humankind, according to Steedman, was able to find its place in the (divine) plan of life *within the child* whose growth represented the future of the adult, the race, the nation. One of the key preoccupations to arise from this understanding was the study of growth, for in order to understand the adult, grown form, one had to study the growing processes to see the underlying pattern and structure of the being. Children became the object of the gaze – 'living evidence'—in order to better explain the history of Man/race and, possibly, to provide an inkling of His ideal form.

Significantly, being attached to racial ideas of progress, adolescence became a particular site of concern and promise in terms of the future of the race. If the race was to achieve progress, to become even more advanced and civilised, then the period of adolescence was the place for the race to pull itself up by its own evolutionary bootstraps. As Hall said in his two volume book on adolescence:

... for those prophetic souls interested in the future of our race and desirous of advancing it, the field of adolescence is the quarry in which they must seek to find both goal and means. If such a higher stage is ever added to our race, it will not be by increments at any later plateau of adult life, but it will come by increased development of the adolescent stage, which is the bud and the promise for the race. (Hall, 1904, p.50)

¹ Steedman argues that 'biological' views of evolution based on Darwin's theories of adaptation and the shaping of evolution of accidental events weren't accepted until the early twentieth century (see Steedman, 1994, p.51).

This idea of adolescence being a kind of 'last best chance' to improve the race would heighten the stage as a site of anxiety and the object of a variety of projects for the improvement of the nation².

The dominance of such ideas at the turn of the twentieth century coincided with tense competition between western nations for commercial and industrial supremacy and in the building of colonial empires. Adolescence was linked to national imaginaries that worked with and across notions of race and progress. Lesko (2001) tracks the formation of ideas of nation and nationality in both the USA and England at this time as connected to forms of economic and imperialist expansion and control. In England and, by extension, Australia the Boer War (1899-1902) provided a challenge to assumptions about the stability of the empire and about the superiority of British troops. The drive for imperial expansion on the one hand, and anxiety about the control of that expansion on the other, were elements that highlighted concerns about the fitness of the nation, as represented by the boys who were its citizens-to-be, to respond to these challenges. Because notions of empire and nation were so connected with the problems of dealing with and managing native/inferior peoples, these also could be related to the concept of adolescence via theories of recapitulation. If the idea of a nation is an 'imagined community' then, according to Lesko, much of the work on adolescent boys was aimed at helping them to imagine and desire a particular place for the nation.

Adolescence became significant to nation-making through the linking of affect with a political order, that is, adolescence became viewed as a time when emotional connections with gangs, scout troops, crime rings, or football teams could be established, with good or evil results. In my view, adolescence was strategized as the right age to get boys to imagine and *desire* particular national and international order. In *desiring* a particular nationalism, boys would likely become willing to struggle and sacrifice for this national identity. (Lesko, 2001, p.41)

Interestingly, in the name of vigorously expanding and building new nations, the savagery inherent in the young could be seen as a resource to be mined as well as a problem to be controlled, for it indicated a spirit of risk and energy that could be the building blocks of future evolutionary development. As Baker (2001, p.542) put it, at this time 'projects of nation-building and raising boys are therefore cut from the same cloth'. Adolescence was a time of necessary storm and stress; a time when progress or degeneration came together as possibilities that needed appropriate monitoring and guidance toward adulthood via pedagogies specifically designed for this stage.

The stages of development normalized through Child-study can be read as one instance of how planning everyday life around expectations for development and the future became articulated to how people were to govern themselves and the young. The fear of not developing, of not having a future, or not meeting it in a normalized form, anchored a rescue mentality to the very production of childhood as a primitive stage of life and adolescence as its flashpoint. (Baker, 2001, p.534)

Developmentalism, as a form of thinking which cast childhood and adolescence as stages in an evolutionary path towards an ideal, became naturalised over the twentieth century. That none of its tenets could be talked about, nor its prescriptions for practice considered at the turn of the century without an appeal to ideas of race and the progress of Man, has undergone a process of forgetting since that time. This raises questions of how such ideas came to be articulated and applied in the South Australian context in this period; and in what ways such forgettings might have taken place since that time. It also raises the issue of how notions of race may or may not have been attached to the idea of nation in a newly federating Australia at the turn of the century and written onto adolescence and schooling.

² A process that continues in the present. This wording of 'last best chance' is used in the first paragraph of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development report, *Turning Points* (1989, p.8)

I have been able to consider such questions as a part of my own PhD research on which this paper is based. Specifically, I have focussed on the way in which the English subjects³ were involved in the constitution of the older child subject⁴ in the first three decades of the twentieth century. I have been struck in my discursive analysis of curriculum and co-curricular materials by the way that a dominant form of English in the Classical-Liberal tradition in the late nineteenth century came to be contested in the early twentieth century, especially in relation to the way that the older child subject was to be formed through schooling. At this time, just as today, the English subjects came to be seen as the most important in the school for the way that the language was the basis learning in all subjects, and for their role in moralising future citizens.

In what follows I propose to briefly track some changes in the way that the older child subject was imagined in the English subjects between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—changes that were connected with new understandings of childhood and adolescence as representing the future of the nation or race.

Classical-liberal education for an older child of taste and character

It has not always been the case that curriculum policy has assumed that the figure of the child was endlessly malleable, or that it could be made into something that could (critically and ethically) reinvent itself in an unknown future. The dominant approach to curriculum and teaching in the period of formation of mass schooling in the nineteenth century was based on ‘faculty psychology’ (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p.73) or ‘mental discipline’ (Kliebard, 1995, p.4) which conceived of the brain as a kind of muscle which would be developed via repetitious drill with increasingly ‘weighty’ content derived from the most valued scholars. This pedagogy was part of a curriculum based on classical texts where students were taught to read by rote and memory work and where the meaning of the text was accessed through grammatical analysis or the discussion of approved commentaries. *Individual* meaning making was not conceivable in this process. Older children were prepared for their future (as gentlemen or clerics) by learning to reproduce a text accurately in oral form, and by being introduced to time-proven truths.

Such an approach to curriculum, in contrast to present approaches, sought to bring children into a culture of ‘taste’ and character which was perceived as eternal because of its links to the classics and the literary canon. Its value lay in the fact that it didn’t engage with the future, with the everyday, and especially not the popular, but with its focus on time-honoured and time-proven texts.

A really educated man is a man who possesses the master principle which enables him to grapple successfully with any subject that he chooses - the trained instinct that seizes the essential point, the underlying truth. Education has given him the power of distinguishing the important from the unimportant, of sifting the relevant from the irrelevant, of extracting principles from details. It has given him quickness of apprehension, width of comprehension, clear-sightedness, grasp of things

³ Over the period of my study there was no unitary ‘English’ subject to be found in primary or post-primary curriculum documents. For example, in the primary school curriculum it was only in 1907 that English was first used as an encompassing term for a set of component subjects. Prior to this the English subjects (reading, writing, spelling, grammar, composition etc.) were listed separately. Even in 1907, English remained a superordinate term for a collection of such subjects.

⁴ I deliberately use the label ‘older child’ here instead of ‘adolescent’ as a way of unsettling any assumptions of the naturalness of adolescence as a stage of life. It also reflects the way that the extension of schooling into its post-primary forms in South Australia began in the late nineteenth century around the problem of the ‘older boy’ and the construct of adolescence only came to be attached to this sector of schooling over the first three decades of the twentieth century. My study has not assumed that either childhood, or adolescence are ideas that exist outside of discourse.

as they are. It enables him to reach the truth because it enables him to judge things on their true grounds, stripped of those casual associations, those prejudices, those accidents and conventionalities on which the decisions of half-educated men are often founded. (Prothero 1910 *Education Gazette*⁵, p.85)

This quotation provides a useful guide to the attributes of a generally educated man as someone who was able to work across a range of fields, but who had an 'instinct' that allowed him to find the core of 'truth' in any matter. This instinct allowed a constancy of judgement that was also above the day to day, and the popular ('casual associations', 'prejudices', 'accidents', 'conventionalities'). This focus on constancy and access to 'truth' can be seen as an example of a search for certainty in the nineteenth century in response to the crisis of confidence produced by scientific rationality and theories such as those of Darwin, discussed above.

The ideal held for the generally educated child was built on the foundation of a canon of great works which would provide the wisdom of the ages needed for appropriate taste and discrimination. Professor Perkins, Principal of the Roseworthy Agricultural College, speaking on the 'general education of the rural classes' (1905 *Education Gazette*, p.134), argued that technical (vocational) approaches to education 'should never encroach upon early adolescence' (p.135). Instead, what was needed was time and space for connection to literature. He claimed that:

in our literature we have the most sacred relics of our race, that it holds embalmed the thoughts of the world's teachers, that the love of it idealises and humanises life, that in general, unless a taste for literature be acquired in early life, it but rarely lightens our ways in the after times. (Perkins 1905 *Education Gazette*, p.137)

Literature (and note this was not 'English' literature but literature in general) acted as a relay or conduit for passing the most tried and trusted of lessons about how to live a proper life on to the next generation. Such views were consistently provided in the *Education Gazette*, especially in the first decade of the century. Reading literature involved 'communication with the greatest and wisest men whoever lived' (1902 Insp. Whillas *Education Gazette*, p.123); it allowed the reader to 'cherish great and noble thoughts' (Hodge 1906 *Education Gazette*, p.143); and through it 'great men talk to us, pour their souls into ours, share with us their loftiest aspirations, their highest thoughts, their purest ideals' (Prothero 1910 *Education Gazette*, p.86)

What this Classical-Liberal Education discourse offered was a stance to the world that was tied to the past via reading texts as conduits for time-tested truths. Interestingly, this provided a 'general education' which was not related to any particular nation or state, but to a classical culture. In the English Arnoldian era of the nineteenth century this was transformed into a romantic vision of a literary culture that provided the basis of a 'general education' and an alternative to religion as a way of moralising the population.

This was the dominant perspective on the education of the older child (boy) in late nineteenth century Australia, where post-primary schooling was offered only to a tiny proportion of the population through a private system designed for the training of future gentlemen (and some ladies). However, in the early twentieth century in Australia things began to change. State-sponsored post-primary schooling began to be offered in the first decade in all states and the English curriculum was changed in ways that were central to new visions of Australia and discourses of the older child.

⁵ The *Education Gazette* was published monthly by the Education Department of South Australia. It provided official circulars and records, curriculum materials, and commentary for teachers and school leaders across the state. Every teacher in the state was required to initial the school copy to show they had read it.

Key to this was a conception of childhood and adolescence as representing a future for the race and the nation. I found that three (competing/overlapping/complementary) subject positions for the older child were developed in the English curriculum materials I analysed which, in contrast to the child of habit and character, could be seen to be as malleable figures tied to particular teleologies of the State. I propose to explore one of those figures here—the child as an English citizen-subject which was evident especially in the materials related to the Reading subject⁶.

'An initiation into the corporate life of man'—the older child as an English citizen-subject

The quotation in the heading above was from the Newbolt Report which was announced to teachers in the June 1922 *Education Gazette*. The full quotation was that 'the teaching of English is not a lesson but an initiation into the corporate life of man' (Newbolt Report, quoted in 1922 *Education Gazette*, p.139). The Newbolt Report made English more than a school subject—it situated it in a central place in the state school for enlisting the child into a shared imperial/national and essentially *English* culture (the corporate life of man). In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the focus on English literary culture moved away from the concept of a general education towards one which was more determined by issues of race, empire and nation. In this view, English emphasised the 'corporate' (ie imperial/ national) culture over the individual cultured life which might draw its inspiration from the classics and literature in many cultures. What remained consistent was an emphasis on the literary and the canonical, although in this version the literary canon was determined through a lens of race and nation.

A colonial citizen-subject

From early in the twentieth century, an alternative to the Classical view of literature was evident. This was related to the *Englishness* of the literature that should be used in the classroom. In this view, literature could be put to work in building and inspiring the older child as a particularly English or British citizen-subject. This became a dominant theme around the period of World War I when issues of patriotism and a defence against German 'militarism' were foregrounded. English literature was brought into the centre of the curriculum as a site where the progress of the nation and race could be affirmed and its future assured through the training of the young. In Australia that theme was complicated by its role as a colony and, after 1901, as a dominion of the British Empire. In this conception of English, the older-child in a State school in South Australia was, first and foremost, a member of the British race and empire and, at the same time, a citizen of a newly formed Australian nation. According to Pennycook (1998) this complex relationship between centre and margins has always been at the centre of use of English for colonial purposes. He notes that the use of English as a means of developing a subject of empire was first developed in the colonies and then imported back into England.

One of the strong points of continuity between the tradition of literary study in Classical-Liberal education and English as a site for the development of a particularly English citizen-subject, was the emphasis on literature as the basis of a moral education. In this later version of English, though, the morality conveyed by literature was turned to the production of a member of the British Empire rather than a generally educated man of the world.

What higher aim can the schools have than to implant in the minds of boys and girls those principles that will lead them to become worthy citizens of a great Empire! (Chief Insp. Strong 1922 *Education Gazette*, p.109)

⁶ The other two are the older child as 'expressive and meaningful', and the older child as 'desiring and free' (see Cormack, 2003, in draft).

Strong was Chief Inspector in New Zealand at the time he wrote on 'The inculcation of patriotism', which he noted, citing G.S. Hall, was best developed in the emotional period of youth. For Strong, stories and songs were the chief means of developing an emotional commitment to empire and nation through appealing to 'the moral law which is our heritage from thousands of generations bygone men' that would be 'implanted in the youth'.

This was an extreme example of the ways that the cultural heritage of the empire was seen as a means to 'implant' patriotism in the new generation in order to maintain the vitality of the race. Prior to World War I, literature was promoted as a way of being proud of the achievements of the British Empire. Stories could provide 'moral teaching of the right kind' through access to 'the lives of the men whose names star the pages of British history' (Dir. Williams 1906 *Education Gazette*, p.101). Williams cited Newbolt's *The Island Race* as an example of a text that a teacher could use to inspire a belief in the British as a race apart, quoting at length from the poem 'Seringapatam'⁷ to show the kind of literature a boy could 'get into his blood'. Such themes of blood, inheritance and virility can be seen as a way in which anxieties about the progress of the race, discussed above, found their way into reassuring tales of the supremacy of the British.

English for a citizen-subject not only utilised stories and poems, it also made use of historical and biographical texts, and stories of adventure and travel. Such texts were useful in establishing a particularly English citizen-subject through the way it helped to mark out the 'other' as different, exotic and, ultimately, in need of the civilisation brought by the empire. These texts were called by Inspector-General Stanton the 'literature of knowledge' which contained 'historical stories, descriptions of the life and customs of *other* people, descriptions of *other* lands, stories about plants and animals that *tell the truth*, either in the form of fact or fiction' (1903 *Education Gazette*, p.102, emphasis added). Such texts were particularly suitable for boys, noted Stanton, for they wanted books 'with stuff in them'. These texts provided 'stuff' in the form of knowledge where nature and newly 'discovered' cultures and places were produced as strange and exotic but ultimately knowable to a

⁷ Seringapatam was battle in 1799 which won southern India for Britain and opened the way to its complete dominance of the sub-continent—a true tale of the empire.

Men of England

An emphasis in curriculum in the first decade was that of 'correlation' between subjects. This was one of three poems suggested for correlation between Poetry and History in the 1907 Education Gazette (p.116). It provides a taste of the way in which literature was tied to history and employed in the shaping of a colonial English subject.

Men of England! who inherit
Rights that cost your sires their blood!
Men whose undegenerate spirit
Has been proved on field and flood—

By the foes you've fought uncounted,
By the glorious deeds ye've done,
Trophies captured—breaches mounted,
Navies conquer'd—kingdoms won!

Yet remember, England gathers
Hence but fruitless wreaths of fame,
If the freedom of your fathers
Glow not in your hearts the same.

What are monuments of bravery
Where no public virtues bloom?
What avail in lands of slavery
Trophied temples, arch and tomb?

Pageants! Let the world revere us
For our peoples rights and laws,
And the breasts of civic heroes
Bared in Freedom's holy cause.

Yours are Hampden's, Russell's glory,
Sidney's matchless shade is yours—
Martyrs in heroic story,
Worth a hundred Agincourts!

We're the sons of sires that baffled
Crown'd and mitred tyranny;
They defied the field and scaffold
For their birthrights—so will we!

Thomas Campbell

rational eye; and where the narrative of their discovery and conquest could be produced as an 'adventure'. In this way, processes of imperialism and colonialism were brought inside the texts of English and produced as facts (stuff) or as tales of adventure particularly suitable for the older-boy as future citizen of the empire.

The texts that were used as readers in the primary school Reading Course of Instruction for older children in Classes IV and V (later Grades VI and VII) provided evidence of the use of reading and literature in building a citizen-subject. Prior to 1907 the texts used in English were based on the largely classical-liberal inspired public examination syllabus. From 1907, as the Education Department took over the curriculum for the older child, reading material which drew explicitly from English history and the development of the empire featured prominently, especially in the growing number of 'supplementary readers' students were asked to read in a year—for example, *Deeds that Won an Empire*, which was recommended from 1911 to 1923, and *Gateways to History*. By 1929 Australian material was becoming more common, as was material from the USA which featured frontier themes, but these supplemented rather than supplanted English topics. By the late 1920s, themes of history and progress were built into series of texts which had titles that ranged from ancient times—'The cave boy'—through early history—'Heroes of Old Britain—to the contemporary—'Boyhood Stories of Famous Men' and 'The Girlhood of Famous Women'—these last two titles demonstrating the way that the stories of empire and nation could be equated to, and folded into, narratives of childhood and development.

As well as the inspiration of history, geography played its part. The topography and the landscape of England were brought to the Australian student via the literature and poetry valued by the Inspectors and Directors. In terms of place, it was England that was seen as 'home' and which stood as the centre of the Empire. In his 1915 Empire Day message to school students, the State Governor explained that the concepts of England and British Empire were synonymous, noting that 'England, which is the old word meaning British Empire, and the men she has sent out into the world ... has proved herself able to produce men capable above all others to rule over every type of race' (State Governor 1915 *Education Gazette*, p.116). Thus every child was a representative of England and worthy of sharing in the pride of its achievements, as well as calling it 'home'—a place to which its sons and daughters returned, at least through reading.

A literary and cultural heritage

What is clear from this analysis of the way that this new version of English took up notions of heritage was that the subject was able also to tap into the concept available from Classical-Liberal Education of the value of a canon of time-proven texts. In this regard, Shakespeare was an obvious example, being both very English and very old—'It is not only the crowning glory of England, it is the crowning glory of mankind, that such a man should ever have been born as William Shakespeare' (Swinburne 1925 *Education Gazette*, p.202). Building a curriculum on the 'classics' of English literature beyond Shakespeare and a few other authors, such as Scott, took some time and was dependent on such texts being available. There is some indication that the ideal of a canon of English literature as the basis for the study of English in schools arose alongside the availability of such texts. As the Board of Education noted in its 1924 'Suggestions for the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools in England':

The teacher of the classics traditionally bases his work on a recognised canon of great books in Greek and Latin, ranging over poetry, drama, history, oratory, and philosophy; moreover, for school purposes there is no great difficulty in finding a satisfactory series. The choice in English is much less easy, particularly in the matter of prose texts; the enterprise of publishers has brought many texts, until recently inaccessible, within the reach of schools, and the number of books from

which a selection may be made is now very large. (Board of Education 1924, in 1925 *Education Gazette*, p.118)

This is an indication that the large increase in the production of English literary texts for children that appeared to occur in the 1920s, allowed the possibility of a canon of time-proven English literature to be claimed as the basis of the English curriculum—a direct borrowing from the Classical-Liberal discourse. There was a similar increase in the range of texts available in South Australia where there was a rise in the number of supplementary readers recommended over the 1920s.

Towards the end of the 1920s there were some indications in the data that the concept of English as a site for the transmission of a racial and imperial history was being subsumed by a more general concept of ‘a literary heritage’ which it was the teacher’s duty to pass on to the older child. The ‘literary heritage’ of the curriculum could be seen as a kind of shorthand for colonial and imperial values. In some ways this was a process of forgetting whereby explicit values became implicit and what was an overt process of colonial development became internalised as a process of appreciation.

English became the central site in which an appropriate cultural stance for the new citizen was learned, as is indicated by this summary of English education by the British Ambassador to the USA.

In short, the aim of education in Britain cannot be vocational—it must be nothing less than a preparation for the whole of life. If you followed my brief summary of the machinery of education you will have noticed the stress laid both in primary and secondary schools upon the English language, English literature, geography and history, with, in the later stages, some science and some knowledge of at least one other country. You will have noticed, too, the drawing, the music, singing at all events, and games—games for character, organised games for teamwork. All directed towards the making of the citizen. (Geddes 1921 *Education Gazette*, p.138)

The English subjects were the pre-eminent (but not the only) site for the formation of a (male) citizen-subject built on values of empire, race and place which situated England as physically and morally central, and its values as worthy of export to the whole world.

An Australian colonial citizen-subject?

Alongside the concern to produce a child who was an inheritor of the values and achievements of the empire and the English race, there was also a concern to use the English subjects to produce an Australian citizen. This was not an aspiration that was seen to be contradictory to the focus on an imperial English subject-citizen discussed above, rather, it was a complementary subject position which situated Australia as both an outpost of empire, and a site for its vigorous growth.

In 1907 Director Williams commented that the *Children’s Hour*, produced and published monthly by the Education Department, had recently begun to include a series on Australian explorers. This, he claimed ‘should remove from us the reproach that we do not teach our Australian children anything of their own land’ (*Education Gazette*, p.187), indicating that the Department had been criticised for its dependence on English sources for reading material. In 1900 Inspector Smyth (*Education Gazette*, p.47) had called for ‘a set of Australian’ readers to be compiled by the Department because the treatment of subject matter ‘from the Australian standpoint’ would be more interesting to pupils and it would provide contact with the ‘best Australian authors’.

This reading material situated Australia as a colonial outpost by emphasising themes of exploration, discovery, conquest (of a hostile land) and settlement. For example, one Australian book celebrated for its suitability for ‘boys of a certain age’ (12 to 14 years old) was *The Captain General* in which the author, W.J. Gordon, was praised for showing ‘what a glamour of romance may be thrown around the attempt to colonize the north-west coast of Australia by the Dutch in the seventeenth century’ (Roach

1907 *Education Gazette*, p.79). This comment was made by Roach in a conference paper entitled the 'Literature of Children' in which he argued that such local and uplifting tales of Australian life, and other 'dramatic tales of history', were needed to reclaim the spirit of adventure required to explore and settle Australia's vast interior.

We may now examine the role played, in an educational sense, by such books as those mentioned. Our race has been pre-eminently an adventurous one, and the Australian branch of such a race should be a daring one. The early settlement of this continent, the wild days of the gold diggings, were undertaken by people who were not afraid to leave a settled land and wrestle with the problems of a new country. We must keep in mind that much of Australia is virtually unknown, and that on that area there must be mineral and other wealth which needs the daring spirit of the past to develop. Is it not the tendency to-day for the people to live the more comfortable and less adventurous life of the large cities on the sea-board? Will not the reading of such books tend to revive the old spirit of our fathers? Will not such literature fire the youthful mind to leave the enervating life of the crowded city and face the strenuous life of the undeveloped interior? This, then, educationally speaking, the reason why the reading of books of adventure should be encouraged. (Roach 1907, p.79)

Here, then, was the use of literature for the development of an (adventurous and hardy) Australian citizen-subject; a development which continued the colonial process of exploration and the claiming of new resources in undiscovered places. 'National poetry' was encouraged as suitable for Empire Day celebrations (1908 *Education Gazette*, p.71) and the teaching of the 'national literature' was cast as a 'grave ... problem' for the teacher because such an issue could no longer be left to the vagaries of the development of individual 'taste' (1908 *Education Gazette*, p.277). In one remarkable speech on 'Some Principles of Education Reform', Professor Findlay (1914 *Education Gazette*, pp.319-322) summarised the changes in English education based on the principles of developmental stages arising from child-study, including the important stage of adolescence. In giving advice to his colonial audience he wondered aloud how the colonial educators would maintain in their children the emotional links to England held by the present generation of leaders.

To the present generation of New Zealanders and Australians, the story of England counts for much; you are exiles, and with tenderness you look back to the fortunes of the dear land you have forsaken: its poetry, its heroes, its perils, all are yours. At this moment you are giving every proof of your attachment to the old home. But how will it be with your children? They may not have these previous memories, except through hearsay—all will be at second hand. Are you sure you can maintain the fervent spirit of loyalty merely by the celebration of Empire Day, eking out a formal course of history lessons? (Findlay 1914 *Education Gazette*, p.321)

Findlay had two main prescriptions for maintaining long-term emotional links to the mother-land. Firstly, he called for using the 'peculiar force of the national story' by allowing children to 'play' at history.

The pageant, the child drama are coming to their own through the direct performance, a story to the level of his own impression. A child can take into his inner life the sentiments and ideals which will make him a patriot.

He then went on to say that this inner-life of the sentiments and ideals might be transferred to the local:

But secondly, he must find a basis for these virtues in a sphere which is nearer to him than London ... If the boys and girls of South Australia are to grow up to be Imperialists in adult life, then in childhood and youth, they must be taught to love their city, their township, their State. Local history, local memorials, the story of the pioneers who made a way through the wilderness and a path through the desert, these are the foundations; here in the modest records of local service and

devotion which imperialists so often tend to despise, will be found the source from which the children can first learn to love and serve his fellow men. (Findlay 1914 *Education Gazette*, p.321)

Helping children to 'grow up imperialists' according to Findlay involved using the power of story and participation in performance to maintain an emotional link to Englishness. As laid out in the quotation, his second strategy involved shifting children's attachment to the local as an outpost of the principles of the 'service and devotion' which made up the empire. In this way, the focus on Australianness and the use of national stories could be complementary to the construction of empire and the development of Australian children as colonial citizen-subjects.

The 'mother-tongue'

While literature was the primary focus for the English subjects (especially the Reading subject) in constituting the English citizen-subject, the issue of the English language—marked as the 'mother-tongue'—was also implicated. Speaking and writing correctly in the mother-tongue were often cited as important in the context of the spread and success of the British Empire.

The English language was one of the features of our heritage for it was now by far the most important living speech in the world. He asked them to think of the vast span of its influence and then to reflect upon our great responsibilities of the British teacher in regard to the preservation of good English throughout the world? No small part of the great duty of preserving our heritage of English speech, and of handing it on pure and intact to the rising generation, devolved upon those who were called upon to teach in the schools. (Fisher 1923 *Education Gazette*, p.227)

The success of the English language as a world language, through empire and commerce, and its superiority to other languages was a theme in discussions of the mother-tongue. English had not only given the world its finest literature, but it also was 'the richest by far in number of words' according to a count of published dictionaries (1924 *Education Gazette*, p.202), and had a vast vocabulary which brought with it a 'nightmare' of a spelling system (1916 *Education Gazette*, March supplement). This combination of richness, complexity and associated difficulties was seen to be a constant challenge to the teacher to convey and correct. The concept of 'purity' raised by Fisher in the quotation above could be used to argue for the mother-tongue as a heritage and as a storehouse of riches to be handed down to later generations. It could also be seen as a kind of cultural 'glue' that would keep together the empire and a newly-forming nation such as Australia. This was a theme taken by the Mayor of Adelaide in his speech to open the 1914 Teachers' Union Conference near the outset of World War I. He worried aloud about the 'progress of the Oriental countries' and the consequent need to encourage immigration to Australians of (non-English speaking) Europeans for the purpose of population growth, especially given contemporary concerns about Australia's falling birth-rate. In the face of such challenges, the English language had a central role in building a united Australia.

To fuse and weld together all such elements of the nation and of the future there could be only one instrument, and that was the language our people spoke and the teachers taught. ...Patriotism and duty demanded that the teachers should so endeavour to teach the children of to-day that they might become the dominating factor in the great Commonwealth that was building for to-morrow, and that those children might impress the hallmark of the teaching they received on the immigrants that must come. (Mayor Simpson 1914 *Education Gazette*, p.260)

The mayor established here an articulation between the strength of the language, the unity of the nation, and the purity of the race, a connection which was strongly propounded around the war years. South Australia had a particularly awkward problem in this regard, owing to the presence of a long-established and successful German population in some areas of the state. These centres had schools run by the Lutheran religion in which most instruction was conducted in German. During 1915 there was a debate about use of English for teaching in these schools at the annual Public School Teachers'

Union conference. In a debate on a (successful) motion to urge the closure of the state's Lutheran schools, the argument centred around the importance of Australian children being taught in English. Teaching in German was regarded as a sign of the presence of a 'nation within a nation', demonstrating the link between concepts of the English language and English citizenship/nationhood. The mover of the motion complained that children in Lutheran schools 'were being deprived of their fair share of English language and English literature' and:

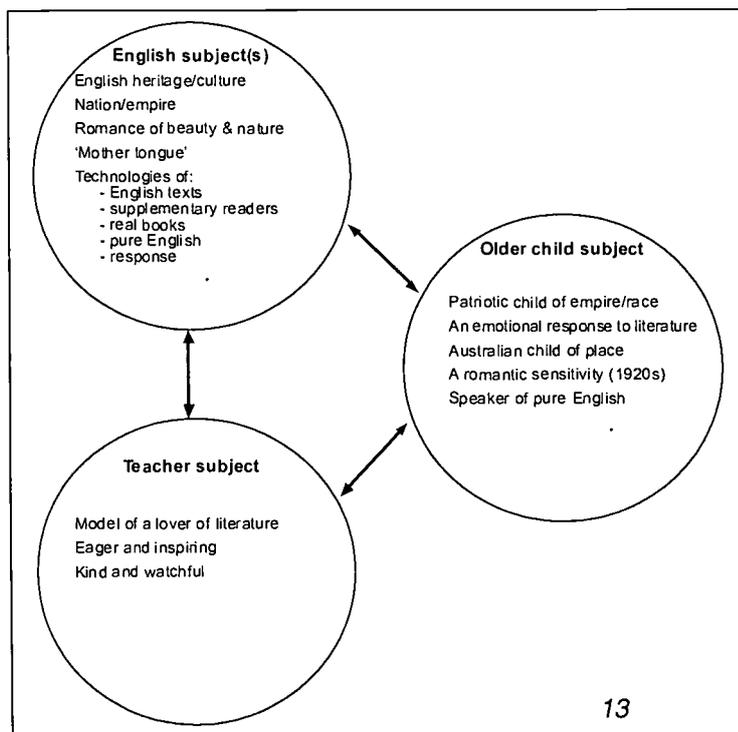
The girls and boys [in Lutheran schools] were Australians, and had the right to demand that they should be taught to speak English, and able to enjoy English literature. The bond of a common language was one of the strongest bonds of nationality. (A Voice—It is the strongest of all). (1915 *Education Gazette*, p.148)

The English language then, could be equated with both nationhood and empire as the 'right' of a proper citizen-subject. In the main, it was a 'pure' form of English that was being sought; a form of English that maintained a bond with 'home' and not an Australian dialect. The elimination of the Australian 'twang' was an important goal of the curriculum, and can be understood as an attempt to maintain the purity of English and to enable the proper-speaking child to become the appropriate English (as opposed to Australian) citizen-subject.

Relational subjects: English, the teacher and the older child as English citizen-subject

In this vision of the English subjects the older child was produced as an ideal subject of empire, race and nation. This 'English' child was connected to England via its literature which provided a strong sense of place. As Australians they saw the local as an extension of empire and as an example of its deserved expansion across the globe. This commitment to place and race was developed through an entry into a literary culture inspired by stories of adventure, conquest and the triumph of the rational. As has been discussed, there are many continuities between this child and the child of habit and taste. This child read quality texts to some depth, but now such text were an entry point to the shared English culture (the corporate life of man) rather than the basis of a general education. This training for a particularly English culture was conducted primarily via engagement with an English literary canon. As is shown in the figure, this child can be seen as developed in relation to the English curriculum subjects that particularly highlighted Reading or Literature, but which also made use of Language and Speech.

The English citizen-subject as a relational subject



Also implied in discussion of the teacher's role in relation to the older child was a sense of watchfulness, patience and, where necessary, intervention to guide the student to a more sensitive and thoughtful response. This following advice was from Ruskin who, like Matthew Arnold, was a key authority in promoting this approach to English. It was reproduced in the 1928 *Education Gazette*, but originally was from Ruskin's 1906 publication, *The Crown of Wild Olives*.

Educate, or govern, they are one and the same word. Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It

means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. And the true 'compulsory education' the people now ask of you is not catechism but drill. It is not teaching the youth of England the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers; and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery, and their literature to lust. It is, on the contrary, training them in the perfect exercise and kingly continence of their bodies and souls. It is a painful, continual and difficult work; to be done by kindness, by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise—but above all, by example. (Ruskin 1906, quoted in 1928 *Education Gazette*, p.131)

This advice to teachers is an example of a text that worked across two discourses: those of Classical-Liberal, and Literary-Cultural education. For the former there was the notion of drill, and of pain and difficulty in learning in-depth. For the latter, there was a new role for the teacher as someone who engaged with the student, observing and intervening with kindness and through the inspiration of his own actions. The South Australian Inspectors were aware of the need for a new kind of teacher in the move to establish post-primary education, commenting explicitly on the work teachers had to do to make '[l]iterature a thoughtful and attractive subject' (Insp. Miethke 1929 *Education Gazette*, p.76). As the Ruskin quotation indicates, this involved moving into a new kind of discursive space which required related, but different, ways of being in the classroom for the teacher. This was work that was by no means accomplished by the end of the 1920s but which was one of the dominant approaches. It involved a construction of English as engaging a particular English cultural sensitivity, defined through response to literature, and was available to be taken up and used in shaping the role of the teacher and the student. Interestingly this move in the 1920s to 'literature' and response, was made possible by an earlier explicit program to establish the child as a colonial subject with a particular relation to race and place. By the end of the third decade of the century, however, this program had become internalised into a project of promoting English literature as a means of access to culture and sensitivity.

Conclusion

What can be made of this description of the way that a new kind of older child subject position was developed within the English subjects in the first decades of the twentieth century? It should first be pointed out that this was not the only subject position on offer—as has been indicated, other complementary and competing positions were developed but were not discussed here (for a full description, see Cormack, 2003, in draft). Also there is no claim being made that this subjectivity (or, relationally, that of the teacher) was realised in South Australian classrooms, for this was a discursive analysis of curriculum materials. However, some interesting lines can be drawn between the conceptions of English discussed here and work around literacy in the present.

First, English for an English citizen-subject was *an attempt to yolk together the subjectivity of the child and the fate of the nation and empire via the curriculum*. This was made possible by a view of childhood and adolescence as embodying the future of the race which at that time could be equated with notions of empire and nation. Rather than simply appealing to time-proven verities for the development of individual 'taste' and 'character', as had been the case with Classical-Liberal approaches, this approach to English sought to shape a particular subjectivity that might be adaptable to a (far-flung) place within the empire as a way of ensuring its security and enduring appeal. In doing this it extended racially based constructions of exploration and the rational dominance/management of the unknown (peoples and places).

Second, *English was seen as a technology for emotionally attaching the older child to a subjectivity involving membership of an empire/nation/race*. This was to be done through the appeal of literary texts which connected to England as a place and as a set of ideals. The 'mother-tongue' itself also could be seen as source of pride and an emblem of the superiority of all things English. Identification as an English citizen subject could be accomplished through transplanting English literary and

language forms into the local and their reinvention as particularly Australian literature or into other textual forms such as 'local histories' or 'memorials'. It also involved a move which recast the domination of the unknown (lands, continental interior, savages) through rationality as an adventure which would particularly appeal to boys as future agents of the empire and race.

Third, while this new subjectivity was to be accomplished by a recasting of the teaching of English, *it also involved a number of important continuities with Classical-Liberal traditions of English teaching*. A particularly English canon, represented by time-tested texts such as those of Shakespeare, was a touchstone of the kinds of literary material suitable for such work. This canon could act as evidence of the enduring superiority of the English race and as a guide to the actions of the 'men she sent out into the world'. Thus English remained an important site for the production of 'taste and character' but brought these attributes into the national realm as the 'corporate life of man' rather than as a set of individual and private dispositions. Other elements of an earlier version of the subject, which have not been discussed here, remained in place, such as the need for a certain kind of mental discipline through drill and exercise in the grammar and language aspects of English. These continuities matched well with drives in the early part of the century to require all older boys to engage in military training, and to anxieties around national fitness, the birthrate and public health which were seen to require a strengthening of the character of the race (Davison, 1983; Irving, Maunders, & Sherington, 1995; Kociumbas, 1997). These continuities remained through the way that old ideas and practices were able to be folded into the discursive spaces created in 'new times' and because they were available to be hitched to new problems.

This paper has sought to provide one historical case-study of the way that the English subjects were involved in responding to anxieties about the future of the nation. There are some uncomfortable continuities between then and now. How much are current anxieties about the future linked to conceptions of decline and decay that have continuities with constructions of racial and national decline of a century ago? Assertions about 'border protection' (one of our national research priorities) and a desire in some quarters for an emphasis on a homogenous Australian culture can be seen as an awkward continuity and an attempt to forge a particular kind of corporate culture. Anxieties today are also being centred on the older child. For example, Luke and Luke (2001) have argued convincingly that the current policy emphasis on the basics can be seen as a response to anxieties about a new kind of dangerous, hybrid and borderless adolescent figure being forged in new literate practices. Such anxieties are being displaced, they claim, by inoculating our pre-adolescent children with a modernist version of print-based literacy through early intervention. Such anxieties seem strongly connected to notions of borders being crossed and to the opening up of unknown (cyber/hybrid) spaces which are not within the control of authoritative institutions.

If the case-study I have presented is any guide, responses to these new times will involve the development of new approaches and curriculum forms centred on shaping children as the future of the nation. This is to be expected as the historical genesis of conceptions of childhood and adolescence almost require that anxieties about the future in times of great change will find their way into calls for new kinds of curriculum and schooling to ensure the future of the nation. However, such changes will also involve the re-use and the re-invention of past practices and ideals. Morgan (1990) reminds us that subject practices don't experience radical breaks. At any time there are likely to be 'dominant', 'subordinate', 'residual' and 'emergent' forms of curriculum working in complementary and contradictory ways. This has certainly been reflected in my own study where I found that during the first three decades of the twentieth century, traditional forms of English built on Classical-Liberal ideals worked alongside alternative conceptions of English that aimed at building radically different subject positions for students. The concept of English as building an English citizen-subject described in this paper was dominant in South Australia for a time around the First World War and itself was residualised during the 1920s as the subject engaged with alternative conceptions of the ideal student,

especially one who would be able to manage freedom. However, at no time in the first three decades of the century did the practices and ideals discussed here disappear altogether. Lloyd's (2002, p.239) comment on the history of the Australian economy—that 'contemporary policy arguments often show little understanding of the long-run strengths, coherence, and legitimacy of previous regimes'—seems to be a concept worth exploring more fully in the field of curriculum policy, especially in times of high anxiety.

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