ENGINEERING MEN:
MASCULINITY, THE ROYAL NAVY, AND THE SELBORNE SCHEME

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity to critically examine the "Selborne Scheme" of 1902, specifically the changes made to naval engineers in relation to the executive officers of the late-Victorian and Edwardian Royal Navy. Unlike the few historians who have studied the scheme, my research attends to the role of masculinity, and the closely-related social structures of class and race, in the decisions made by Lord Selborne and Admiral John Fisher. I suggest that the reform scheme was heavily influenced by a "cultural imaginary of British masculinity" created in novels, newspapers, and Parliamentary discourse, especially by discontented naval engineers who wanted greater authority and respect within the Royal Navy. The goal of the scheme was to ensure that men commanding the navy were considered to have legitimate authority first and foremost because they were the "best" of British manhood. This goal required the navy to come to terms with rapidly changing naval technology, a renewed emphasis on the importance of the role of the navy in Britain's empire, and the increasing numbers of non-white seamen in the British merchant marine.

Key Words: Masculinity, Royal Navy, Edwardian, Victorian, Naval Engineers, Selborne Scheme, cultural imaginary, British Empire.

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Introduction

To many Members of this House the sea is a horror, the Navy a mystery, and the naval officer an enigma, and to attempt to solve that enigma, to explain the functions of the naval officer, how he is produced, and how dangerous it is to tamper with the provisions whereby he is brought to a perfect state, is a task which might appall even a seaman, and which is doubly difficult to me, who am, after all, but a landsman.[1]

"In the old days it sufficed if a Naval Officer were a seaman", declared an Admiralty memorandum reproduced in the 1902 Christmas Day edition of *The Times*, a generally conservative-leaning newspaper. "Now, he must be a seaman, a gunner, a soldier, an engineer, and a man of science as well."[2] The memorandum, named the "Selborne Memorandum" for First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne, was an announcement of an ambitious plan to reform the Royal Navy's system of recruitment and education. A prominent aim was to ensure that the "unmistakeable naval character" of every officer in the navy was protected and nurtured.[3] The memorandum, although officially published as an Admiralty memorandum with no author credited, was written by John Fisher who claimed it was approved by Selborne "without the alteration of a comma".[4] The "unmistakeable naval character" of Fisher's terminology was formed by

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[1] Thomas Gibson Bowles, MP, *Debates*, House of Commons, Fourth series, Vol. CXIX (1903), col 882.
[2] "Naval Training. New Admiralty Scheme. Memorandum by the First Lord", *The Times*, 25 December 1902, 4.
[3] Admiral John Fisher, commonly known as "Jacky" Fisher by naval historians, was a prolific naval officer at the end of the nineteenth century who presided over a time of enormous change in the Royal Navy for which he is often given sole credit. While most naval history refers to him as Jacky, I choose to refer to him as "John Fisher" in order to establish some distance between myself and Fisher. Use of "Jacky" seems to imply a masculine camaraderie between historians and Fisher which I find uncomfortable and counter-productive in a study dedicated to critically examining masculinity in the Royal Navy of which Fisher was a part.
[4] John Fisher, *Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 245. Naval officer and historian Geoffrey Penn, the most widely-cited historian on naval engineering, wrote in 1955 that the language used in the Selborne Memorandum, including "the turn[s] of phrase … the liberal use of capital letters, [and] the

"early training in responsibility, the powers of self-reliance thereby engendered, and the essential unity of the Service". It was imperative to maintain and build naval character, the memorandum continued, because "character is of more value [to the Royal Navy] than knowledge."[5]

The reforms that the memorandum outlined are known in naval history as the "Selborne Scheme" and were, to contemporaries, "embodied in the Selborne Memorandum." [6] The scheme, which touched on nearly every aspect of recruiting and training naval men and how those men would be organized hierarchically in the navy, directly addressed the concerns of discontented naval engineers, who were demanding greater authority and respect within the Royal Navy. This focus is evident in the amount of attention the Selborne Memorandum paid to the status of engineers. While the scheme changed the organization and education of all personnel in the navy, the greatest changes were made to the role of naval engineers. First, all executive officers and engineers were to be recruited and trained together in the same school, a break from training executive officers at Greenwich College and engineers at Keyham College. All recruits were to join the navy between the ages of twelve and thirteen, and they were to be trained together until they were nineteen, at which point they would be divided into executive officers, engineers, and marine officers to specialize in one of the three major branches of the navy. Through this new scheme, Fisher hoped to create a unified service in which disputes between executives and engineers were unthinkable since the two branches

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forthright statement of … indisputable facts" were clear examples of Fisher's writing style. See Geoffrey Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw! The Story of the Naval Engineer*, (London: Hollis & Carter, 1955), 140.
[5] "Naval Training", *The Times*, 25 December 1902, 4.
[6] Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw!*, 137.

would have developed a brotherly camaraderie from training together at an early age.[7] However, the scheme stopped short of merging engineers and executive officers into one group of officers. This decision ensured that naval engineers were not granted any executive powers, could not discipline the men of their department, were not allowed to sit on courts martial, had no representation on the Board of the Admiralty, and could not advance to command Royal Naval ships.[8] These reforms, as we will see, did very little to address the most substantial grievances that were forwarded by naval engineers at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, grievances which were based on changing understandings of naval masculinity.

The Selborne Memorandum used the phrase "unmistakeable naval character" in a way which today invokes considerations of masculinity. It raises the question whether this was an attempt by the Admiralty to address the relationship between masculinity and the military authority of admirals and other commanders: that is, to give orders and expect obedience from their subordinates. As the Royal Navy was the service most closely connected to imperialism and the maintenance of British political hegemony around the world, this relationship was considered important not just within the navy, but throughout many segments of British society including the press, Parliament, and the public. This thesis focuses on what became the most divisive aspect of the Selborne Scheme: the changes to the recruitment, training, and hierarchical status of naval engineers in relation to the executive officer branch made up of captains and admirals. I

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[7] Ibid., 140.
[8] The National Archives (TNA), *Admiralty, Board Minute: Scheme for Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers, Men, and Boys for the Royal Navy*, 21 November 1902, 18-20, ADM 7/941.

argue that discourses of masculinity, race, and class at the turn of the twentieth century shaped the ways in which naval policy was formed because these social structures were a key part of creating and maintaining the legitimacy of command structures. Whenever male-dominated gender hierarchies are discussed in history, R.W. Connell's classic articulation of "hegemonic masculinities" in her book *Masculinities* becomes relevant.[9] By paying careful attention to masculinity, race, and class using Connell's theory, historians can challenge naval history's tendency to attribute change exclusively to the transcendent genius of a few "admirable admirals"; John Fisher being a prominent example of this tendency. Historians can mark admirals not as objective historical actors but as gendered men whose authority rested on embodying a specific version of manliness positioned as the best and most capable men. Officers' position as men in relation to the men they commanded was created through interactions between all types of men in the navy who embodied their own masculine positions. And importantly, the boundaries of these positions were constantly in flux.

This thesis began as an attempt to reimagine the ways in which naval history is conducted by tracing the role of masculinity in strategic decisions made by members of the Royal Navy. I hoped to reveal how many strategic and policy-making decisions were influenced by the gender of the naval men who made them, specifically how masculinity as a social structure informed their motives and guided their decisions. This goal is especially important in a segment of historical inquiry, naval history, which has long ignored the implications of male gender. The result has been history that portrays white,

[9] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

wealthy commanding men of the Royal Navy as "transcendent geniuses" who did not exist on the plane of "mere mortals" and who have seemed to have unlimited agency. Their subordinates, conversely, were looked on as problems to be overcome rather than historical actors themselves.[10] It would also address the tendency for historians to only see gender in mixed-gender settings or female-dominated settings such as the home or suffrage groups where an interplay between men and women could be examined more readily.[11] In my analysis of masculinity in the Royal Navy, as originally conceived, I planned to address a huge naval historical gap and demonstrate that even the most male-dominated institutions were not beyond the influence of gender. However, this project was too large for a master's thesis, so instead I defined a more realistic goal for the work in hand: to consider the complexity of masculinity, race, and class in the context of personnel reform during a time of intense technological change at the end of the nineteenth century. My discussion of the Selborne Scheme considers the interaction between naval engineers and executive officers and what the scheme contributed to the

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[10] See specifically Andrew Lambert's preface to *Admirals: the Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008). Isaac Land outlines the tendency of naval historians to view non-admirals as problems rather than people in his article "Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History", *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (Spring, 2007), 731-743.

[11] There is much historical work conducted on domesticity and masculinity, notably by John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, (London: Yale University Press, 2007); and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (London: Routledge, 2002). The idea of domesticity has been adopted outside the home and applied to all-male environments such as gentlemen's clubs, most notably by Amy Milne-Smith in her articles "Club Talk: Gossip, Masculinity, and Oral Communities in Late Nineteenth-Century London", *Gender & History* 21, no. 1 (April, 2009), 86-106; and "A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Clubs of London, 1880-1914", *Journal of British Studies* 45, no. 4 (October, 2006), 796-818. Domesticity and masculinity has also been applied in the Royal Navy by Quinton Colville, "Corporate Domesticity and Idealised Masculinity: Royal Naval Officers and their Shipboard Homes, 1918-1939", *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (November, 2009), 499-519. While these approaches have produced some interesting insights, they also cling to domesticity as a means of understanding masculinity, something which seems rather unnecessary and liable to hinder historical inquiry into other forms of masculinity which do not involve reproducing the traditional heterosexual gender roles of the home.

creation and re-forming of an institutional hierarchy of masculinity. This is how I hope to show the way toward understanding that decision-making in the Royal Navy was significantly influenced by concerns about masculinity.

The late-Victorian and early-Edwardian period was an important one for British naval masculinity, as it was during this time that the full effects of the new navy powered by steam and electricity were being felt most acutely. While the navy had operated steamships to an increasing degree for over a century by the time of the Selborne Scheme, the pace of technological innovation in steamships accelerated in the last half of the nineteenth century.[12] The wooden, sail-driven ships of Horatio Nelson's navy upon which the *Pax Britannica* had been secured were replaced by ships with iron and steel hulls and steam engines in place of sails – and even those inventions were being improved upon year to year. In propulsion alone, the engine rooms of the Royal Navy had seen the innovation of the compound-expansion engine and the turbine engine, the latter developed by engineer Sir Charles Parsons. Parsons's turbine-driven ship, the *Turbinia*, was demonstrated unannounced at the Naval Review at Spithead during Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Steaming at thirty-four knots, Parson's vessel easily outpaced the best of the British navy which could only steam at twenty-seven knots with their triple-expansion engines. The *Turbinia* was the perfect demonstration of the rapid pace of technological innovation that the navy was forced to account for and the danger of

[12] *Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training, and Employment of officers and men of the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 1. [Cd. 1386].

becoming obsolete that dogged the Royal Navy throughout the turn of the twentieth century.[13]

The fears of technological obsolescence and the mastery of the seas which technological innovation allowed led to fears that the old-style executive officer was rapidly becoming obsolete as his experience under sail became increasingly removed from the realities of operating a ship. Fisher expressed these concerns in the introduction to the Selborne Memorandum, noting that the technological development of the navy, which had been "steady and comparatively slow for the greater part of the last century" was now "proceed[ing] with startling rapidity."[14] His solution, as Second Sea Lord, was to improve the men of the navy by changing their training to instill in them a greater fighting spirit. In a letter to Lord Esher, a prominent advisor to King Edward VII who was serving on Lord Elgin's South African War Commission while Fisher was carrying out the Selborne reforms as Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth, Fisher emphasized that his "humble idea is that "*men are everything and material nothing*"", a bold statement of his belief in the importance of manliness in an effective navy over the technicalities of engineering.[15]

Of course, the appropriate man for Fisher had at least some engineering capabilities, as his scheme sought to give executive officers a basic engineering education. Fisher's sentiment that manliness included engineering capability is

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[13] Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), xxix.
[14] *Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 2. [Cd. 1386].
[15] Fisher, *Memories*, 166. Emphasis in the original.

demonstrated in multiple places, including an Admiralty board minute from 21 November 1902, in the presentation to Parliament on 19 December 1902, and in the scheme's publication in *The Times* on Christmas Day, 1902. In each of these instances he stated that it sufficed if the old-style officer were a seaman but that the new naval officer must also be a man of engineering and science.[16]

At the same time as the technology of the navy was changing rapidly, the importance of the Royal Navy in the maintenance of Britain as a sovereign nation and as an empire was being pressed home politically. Alfred Thayer Mahan's book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, argued that Britain's power came from its control of sea lanes – a fact he claimed was a universal law of history.[17] His influential book and the naval histories produced by Philip Howard Colomb and John Knox Laughton were part of the wider political movement that claimed the Royal Navy was the key to British imperial power.[18] While Mahan was making the case for a strong navy by arguing that Britain's current wealth came from control of the seas there was a simultaneous "campaign of fear" waged in the press, notably in the conservative and imperialist *Pall Mall Gazette*, over the size of the British navy.[19] The Navy League,

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[16] TNA, *Admiralty Board Minute*, 21 November 1902, 1. ADM 7/941; *Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 3. [Cd. 1386]; "Naval Training", *The Times*, 25 December 1902, 4.
[17] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890), 1-3. This is also an allusion to the British desire to control the environment around them through science. For further context, see John M. Mackenzie, *Empires of Nature and the Nature of Empires: Imperialism, Scotland, and the Environment*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997), 36-42.
[18] Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 4-5.
[19] Ibid., 89-91. The *Pall Mall Gazette* published a sensational series of articles in 1894 which dealt with the capability of the Royal Navy to maintain the empire as it was constituted and found that it was too small and underfunded for its critical imperial task. See Royal Naval Museum Library, "The Navy League: Promoting and Advocating for a Strong British Fleet", 2002, available http://www.royalnavalmuseum.org/%5C/info_sheets_navy_league.htm. [Accessed May 2015]

dedicated to trumpeting the expansion of the Royal Navy with little regard for any implications aside from the number of battleships, was founded in 1894 and grew to over 14,000 members by 1901. Concerns about "overstretch" – or loss of control due to the supposedly small size of the navy spread out over the vast territory of the empire – became more common as well at the end of the nineteenth century and the Royal Navy was seen as increasingly beset by challenges externally.[20] These challenges led to a serious examination of internal policies, such as was done with the Selborne Scheme, to consider how best the British navy could meet the new naval world.

The imperial mission of the Royal Navy is where masculinity as a historical concern comes most sharply into focus. The Royal Navy was the means by which British power was projected around the world; it was a tool for protecting the trade upon which Britain relied as well as a transport for the British military when called on to defend the far reaches of the empire. As Sir Edward Grey observed, "The British Army should be a projectile to be fired by the Royal Navy" – a sentiment hailed by Admiral John Fisher in his memoirs.[21] The Royal Navy played such a critical role in the maintenance and expansion of the British Empire and in safeguarding the British Isles that the governing elite looked to it to be a fine example of British manhood. Anything less could potentially spell disaster for the Royal Navy and Britain. As Fisher succinctly put it, in overtly-gendered terms, the Royal Navy needed to be commanded by men who could "allay the fears of the 'old women of both sexes' in regard to the invasion of England or the

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[20] Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, 22. See also Phillips Payson O'Brien, "The Titan Refreshed: Imperial Overstretch and the British Navy before the First World War", *Past & Present* no. 172 (August, 2001), 146-169.
[21] Fisher, *Memories*, 18.

invasion of her Colonies."[22] The men who commanded the navy needed to strive to be the best example of British manhood if the British nation was to be reassured of its safety and prosperity. A demonstration of the appropriate type of manhood would grant a man access to authority in the navy reserved only for specific men.

With the shift from sail to steam and the resulting increase in the importance of naval engineers in the propulsion of vessels, direct knowledge of sailing was seen by some naval engineers and engineering advocates as less important than mechanical knowledge of steam engines. Believing that having knowledge of the new propulsion systems was an aspect of masculinity which conferred authority, naval engineers and engineer advocates, claimed that engineers should have better standing in relations with the executive officer branch. Engineers were becoming celebrated heroes of British imperial dominance in industry and colonialism. The popular author and political reformer Samuel Smiles wrote *The Lives of Engineers* some forty years past but this celebration of the accomplishments of notable engineers had continued to grow in popularity. Historians of science, Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith, have recognized the role that engineers played in imperialism in their study *Engineering Empires*, stating very clearly that "Engineers are empire-builders".[23] However, the advent of engineers in the Royal Navy was not a cause for Admiralty celebration. It presented a problem for the existing military social hierarchy which did not have a way to appropriately integrate men whose attachment to naval tradition was in doubt. At the level of the regular seamen of

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[22] Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy*, 18.
[23] Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith, *Engineering Empires: A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 1.

the engine room, or "artificers" in naval terminology, the shift to steam brought new kinds of working men to sea. Engine room artificers and stokers not only presented their own problem for the naval hierarchy but also compounded the question of the status of engineering officers. Could there be a direct line of command, or did authority have to be seen to stem from the pre-existing officer core? Industrial workers on land organized in greater numbers each year at the turn of the twentieth century, and during the Edwardian period a general strike was mooted several times by unions that included transport workers. That the navy could potentially be crippled by labour unrest was unthinkable to executive officers. And so, the engineers and their engine room subordinates were always considered with some suspicion.

Engineers themselves may have encouraged this suspicion as they were not always discreet about the grievances they had with the navy and its executive officers. There was a long history of engineering discontent in the Royal Navy. Throughout the 1890s, naval engineers wrote to *Engineering* with their grievances. Prominent among these grievances was the demand that engineers should be granted executive titles.[24] In 1900, naval engineers published a pamphlet entitled *The Engineering Branch of the Royal Navy*, which further set out their frustration with the Admiralty. These grievances again included a demand for executive power, but also included the demand that they could sit on courts martial when an engineer was tried and that they should have power to punish the men in the engineering department. They also suggested that the navy's Engineer-in-

[24] See, for example, "Snifting Valve", "The Engineering Staff of the Royal Navy", *Engineering*, 23 November 1894, 681.

Chief should have a seat on the Board of the Admiralty and that engineers throughout the navy should have their pay increased.[25]

Engineers also had the support of Members of Parliament such as naval engineer Sir Fortescue Flannery and engineering institutions like the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders.[26] In 1901, Flannery submitted a memorandum outlining the grievances of naval engineers and solutions the Admiralty could take to address them to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Selborne. When this memorandum was not well-received by Selborne, Flannery took it to the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders led by D.B. Morison. Morison presented it before a meeting of the institution, after which it was adopted unanimously as a recommendation of the Institution to the Admiralty.[27]

To defend against the potential threats of industrialized workers, more conservative admirals who saw benefits to the old system tried to make sailing experience a skill that set men apart and made them more fit for command, rather than acknowledging the skills that "rude mechanicals" might have. This also involved downplaying the importance of naval engineering by associating it with the marginalized men that steam brought to sea. Working-class men at sea were not trusted. Another group

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[25] Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw!*, 132.
[26] Sir James Fortescue Flannery was a well-known marine engineer and naval architect, beginning his career when Sir Edward Reed recognized his ability at a Derby Prize ceremony. He started his own company, Flannery, Baggallay and Johnson which became the consulting engineers and naval architects to the Crown Agents for the Colonies. He was elected as a Member of Parliament from 1895 and served until 1922 during which time he was a strong advocate of "the construction and maintenance of a strong Navy." See "Obituary: Sir J. Fortescue Flannery", *The Engineer*, 15 October 1943, 307.
[27] Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw!*, 132-133.

of men brought to sea by steam were Lascar seamen from Southeast Asia.[28] These men were regarded with racist attitudes which held that they were less capable at sea than Englishmen. While the Royal Navy did not employ these men very often if it could be helped, they were increasingly employed in the merchant marine as stokers and artificers doing mechanical and engine-driving work. There was some concern in the navy that Lascar seamen were taking the place of British seamen. Naval commentators expressed concern that in the case of war the navy would not be able to count on the merchant marine to supply emergency stokers to man naval engine rooms if all the stokers of the merchant marine were replaced with Lascar seamen.[29]

The questions of status that the Selborne Scheme dealt with were not trivial or petty distinctions within the navy, but a question over what type of man could successfully lead the Royal Navy to the dominance of the oceans on which the fate of the British Empire rested. Could the naval engineers – so closely associated with the working-class industrial stokers and non-British foreigners which steam also brought to sea – be trusted to man the Royal Navy? Were they fit enough as men to have authority, and were the skills they had which the executive officer class generally lacked truly that

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[28] Lascar seamen were men who originated from British India, often coming from the Muslim populations of the Indian subcontinent. They were British subjects, but they were often treated as less important or capable than English men. They made up large numbers of stokers in the merchant marine, and many settled in port areas of England.

[29] See, for example, V.C. Burton, "Counting Seafarers: The Published Records of the Registry of Merchant Seamen 1849-1913", *The Mariner's Mirror* 71, no. 3 (August, 1985), 305-320. During the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, prominent naval commentators such as Lord Thomas Brassey gave speaking tours, wrote books, and gave their opinions to Parliament on the implications of the increase in Lascar seamen in the merchant marine, which was often suggested by commentators as a reserve of stokers and other men for the Royal Navy in times of war. See "Lord Brassey on the Manning of the Navy", *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 15 March 1901, 2; and the *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade to Inquire into Certain Questions Affecting the Mercantile Marine, I – Report*, 1903, (London: Wyman & Sons, 1903), [Cd. 1607].

important for the British fleet? Or was the old character of naval executive officers still the most important? Was there a way that naval officers could combine character and engineering skill? It was not just a question of the vanity of naval engineers or executive officer intransigence, but a situation which reveals the debate within the navy and within British society over which men were best to safeguard the British nation and empire.

The Selborne Scheme aimed to answer these questions by changing Royal Naval recruitment policies with the ultimate goal of minimizing the differences between the three officer branches of the Royal Navy. At the end of the nineteenth century, officers in the Royal Navy were divided into three distinct branches with different responsibilities: marine officers, executive officers, and engineer officers. The marine officers were responsible for commanding marines when they were landed. As such, they had few responsibilities aboard ships when they were at sea but held a military rank which matched with military ranks in the British army.[30] The executive officers were men who were recruited and trained to command ships – initially starting as sub-lieutenants but eventually having the opportunity to rise to positions as commanders, captains, or admirals if they proved themselves capable of exercising "seamanship skills" developed under sail or if they had family connections. These men were labelled as military personnel and as such were able to hold authority over ships and their crews, discipline their crews, and rise to positions with more prestige and power or even to the Board of the Admiralty.[31] The third branch, naval engineers, were recruited and trained as engineers,

[30] TNA, *Admiralty Board Minute*, 21 November 1902, 8-10. ADM 7/941.
[31] Oliver Johnson, "Class Warfare and the Selborne Scheme: The Royal navy's battle over technology and social hierarchy", *The Mariner's Mirror* 100, no. 4 (November, 2014), 428-430.

joining ships not as military officers, but as civil officers. Their ranks were unique to their profession, so instead of lieutenants, captains, and admirals they were assistant engineers, engineers, chief engineers, or inspectors of machinery. Their rank as civil officers placed them not in line with the executive military officers but with other non-combatant civil officers such as surgeons, chaplains, and accountants.[32]

While the distinction between civil and military officers might seem like a minor distinction, it carried with it serious implications for the status of naval engineers in the Royal Navy. As civil officers and not military officers, engineer officers had no authority to punish the men they commanded – the engine room artificers and stokers – and relied on the authority of the captain of the ship to do so. They also could not sit as members of courts martial even if the court martial was directly related to engineering. Finally, they were also never able to rise to executive rank and thus had no hope of ever being the captain of a ship or an admiral making broader decisions about the fleet.[33] While it was possible that the members of the Admiralty could call on engineers when making decisions about engineering, the executive officers' lack of technical engineering knowledge was considered an insult by many naval engineers. The Admiralty's dismissal of engineers was seen as even more insulting considering that in many quarters the importance of naval engineers to the defence of Britain and the empire by its new steam navy was well recognized. Naval engineers were caught between their importance to empire and their lack of military standing. It is for us to recognize however that masculine

[32] Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1, footnote 2.
[33] Ibid., 122-126.

constructs such as "naval character" played into this situation. Which was to triumph in a contest that was ultimately about British naval supremacy: were naval engineering skills rather than navigational skills the most critical element of British naval manhood?[34]

The authors of the Selborne Scheme sought to bridge the divide between engineers and executive officers by recruiting all officers of the navy in the same way and training them together for the first several years they were cadets. While officers would still be divided into a military executive branch and a civil engineering branch later in their training in order to specialize in each area, the Admiralty hoped that giving executive officers engineering experience they could make naval engineers respect the executive officers' authority and end the engineers' demands for greater authority and status. However, the scheme did not result in the desired harmony between the branches. It received backlash from opponents on both sides of the debate, including conservative admirals, who said it went too far in giving engineers more status in the navy and degraded the position of executive officers. For engineer advocates, mostly engineers and more radical admirals, the scheme did not go far enough in recognizing naval engineers.[35] At the heart of this backlash were the British conceptions of naval masculinity which

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[34] Naval engineers were consistently praised in Parliament by both Tories and Liberals as crucial for the defence of Britain. Conservative Sir Edward Harland declared in 1894 that "the next war [will] be an engineers' war more than a naval officers' war." His Liberal opponent, Mr. William Allan, agreed with Harland's statement. The question of the influence of engineers on Britain's ability to make war was important enough to warrant an essay presented before the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders by Donald Barns Morison in 1900 entitled "The British Naval Engineer: His present position and influence on our sea power" which concluded that naval engineers were critical to maintaining British naval supremacy. See: Commons Sitting of Tuesday, 20 March 1894, House of Commons Hansard, Fourth Series, Vol. 22, 713, 725; and D.B. Morison, "The British Naval Engineer: His Present Position and Influence on our Sea Power", in *Transactions of the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders*, Vol. XVI, (London: Andrew Reid & Company, 1900), 185.

[35] Johnson, "Class Warfare and the Selborne Scheme"; and Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw!* 142-145.

provided a reference point for the Admiralty as they considered which men should be granted authority in the navy.

Chapter 1: Character, Manliness, and Masculinity in the Royal Navy

1.1 Historiography

The topic of masculinity and naval policy straddles several historiographies: naval history, gender history, maritime history, and imperial history. These historiographies overlap, of course, but there is very little written about masculinity, authority, and Royal Naval policy together. Where studies of naval policy have been undertaken, such as Oliver Johnson's recent article in *The Mariner's Mirror* on the Selborne Scheme, historians have tended to overlook gender as a category of analysis altogether.[1] The work has also tended to focus heavily on the contributions of a few key naval men – important admirals and their "sublime genius" – instead of on the interactions between admirals and their men which resulted in the development of policy. For example, N.A.M. Rodger's near-universally praised book *The Command of the Oceans* explains the move away from ubiquitous flogging in the Royal Navy not as a new understanding between the ratings and the officers that abuse of flogging would be met with loss of respect for their authority, but by officers becoming more humane toward their subordinates by some unknown means.[2] Rodger's explanation falls very short, especially considering that he

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[1] Oliver Johnson, "Class Warfare and the Selborne Scheme: The Royal Navy's battle over technology and social hierarchy", *The Mariner's Mirror* 100, no. 4 (November, 2014), 428-430. See also, Oliver Walton, "Officers or engineers? The integration and status of engineers in the Royal Navy, 1847-60," *Historical Research* 77, no. 196 (May, 2004), 178-201; Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); and Denis Griffiths, *Steam at Sea: Two Centuries of Steam-Powered Ships*, (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1997).

[2] N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Oceans: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*, (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004). For praise of Rodger's books, see Henrik Bering, "Thumpers! A Review of Rodger's Command of the Ocean", *Maritime Studies* no. 142 (May/June 2005), 20-25; Jeremy Black, "Reviewed Work: *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain* by N.A.M. Rodger", *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 139 (May, 2007), 421-422; Ruddock Mackay, "*The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*", *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 499, (Dec, 2007), 1421-1422; and H.W. Dickinson, "*The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* by

admits common sailors often condemned the practice in their memoirs when they left the navy, suggesting that their disdain for flogging may have played a role in its slow demise.[3] Another well-respected and popular naval historian, Andrew Lambert, goes further in his belief in the importance of individual men in his book *Admirals: the Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*. Not only are admirals influential and intelligent, he also argues they are the sole driving force behind changes in the Royal Navy – "sublime geniuses" that transcend the earthly plane on which "mere mortals" toil.[4] These examples fall into the trap of much naval history that Lewis Fischer identifies in an article in *The Mariner's Mirror*. They are particularly reliant on strategy-and-tactics studies and uncontextualized biography – both areas in which analysis of gender is not particularly welcome as it complicates seemingly-straightforward explanations of facts and celebrations of heroes and the nation.[5]

Part of the aversion of some historians to using masculinity comes from the difficulty of properly addressing masculinity as a tool of analysis when much of masculinity is considered "common sense". Too often, historians ignore it because masculine assumptions about agency are considered "natural" or simply the way history has always been. Indeed, it is difficult for my own project to grasp at something solid,

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N.A.M. Rodger", *The Scottish Historical Review* 87, no. 2 (Oct, 2008), 350-351. For criticism of Rodger's methods and theoretical underpinnings, see Isaac Land, "Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History", *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (Spring, 2007), 731-743.

[3] Rodger, *The Command of the Oceans*, 445.

[4] Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: the Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), xvi.

[5] Lewis R. Fischer, "Are We in Danger of Being Left with Our Journals and Not Much Else: The future of maritime history?", *The Mariner's Mirror* 97, no. 1 (2011), 370. N.A.M. Rodger proudly declares that his work is a return to celebrating the nation in his conclusion to *The Command of the Ocean*, and Andrew Lambert characterizes admirals as heroic transcendent geniuses in *Admirals*.

because masculinity is so often conflated with common sense approaches to policy planning and natural assumptions about male decision making or hidden behind supposedly-genderless institutions. Masculinity is so ubiquitous that it is easy to treat it as invisible without sustained consideration.[6] This problem is part of a difficulty with coming to terms with masculinity in history. In 2002, Judith Allen noted that "As the dominant sex in patriarchal culture, and historically the dominant practitioners of history, men as a group have not proved especially curious about men as a sex."[7] In a world in which men are dominant and women have historically been subordinated, practicing history without attention to gender leaves men "unmarked, transparent, [and] unscrutinised."[8] Historians, Allen alleges, do not examine men as subjects of history, but rather as objective actors who make decisions in history based on neutral assumptions that need no deep examination because they are natural and obvious. While history has focused on men overwhelmingly, especially before the advent of women's history in the 1970s and 1980s, men have rarely been considered *as men*.[9]

Bonnie G. Smith makes a similar point in her 1998 historiographical study *The Gender of History*. Smith likens the long-established understanding of historical practice to holding a mirror to history to find historical "truth". The problem Smith identifies with the metaphor is that often the only mirrors that are considered to reflect historical truth

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[6] For the dangers of considering social structures as natural or timeless, see Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004), 1-3. She argues ""Natural," "tradition," "always": each has served as a cultural pillar to prop up familial, community, national, and international power structures, imbuing them with legitimacy, with timelessness, with inevitability. Any power arrangement that is imagined to be legitimate, timeless, and inevitable is pretty well fortified."
[7] Judith A. Allen, "Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians and Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood", *Radical History Review* no. 82 (Winter, 2002), 192.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

are those held by male historians studying stereotypically male activities or institutions such as Parliament or the Royal Navy. Meanwhile, women historians with historical concerns that focus on women's activities are considered to be holding mirrors that distort history rather than reflect it. Women's histories, or anything related to gender, are labelled "hot", "fashionable", or "sexy" and thus trivial and dismissible by serious academics.[10] Of course, the assumption that male historians focused on male institutions such as the navy are holding non-distorting mirrors while gender historians are holding mirrors that distort reality is backwards. It is the historians who claim they can reflect historical truth who are distorting history because the only way they can make their unambiguous claims is by ignoring many factors which existed such as race, class, or gender. Their mirrors can only reflect a "historical reality" by being unable to reflect elements of the past that are not associated with a very narrow topic.

This is true of the naval history of Rodger and Lambert which has become popular, although there have recently been efforts to bring an understanding of masculinity to naval history. Mary A. Conley's *From Jack Tar to Union Jack* is perhaps the most extensive example from the Victorian and Edwardian period, but she has difficulty integrating her observations about depictions of naval men and the reforms the Royal Navy undertook. Her argument often uses mentions of masculinity to add 'colour' to the book before it disappears below the surface of her fairly innocuous analysis of reforms.[11] This shortcoming has been recognized by other naval and gender historians.

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[10] Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 2-3.
[11] Mary A. Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire, 1870-1918*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

From Jack Tar to Union Jack is an attempt to begin to come to terms with masculinity in naval history, but it must be expanded on more fully.[12]

Lewis Fischer argues maritime history has not fared much better than naval history with regard to gender. Reflecting on the number of submissions rejected by the *International Journal of Maritime History* and *Research in Maritime History* because of their authors' failure to contextualize their subjects in relevant historical debates, Fischer suggests that maritime history has lagged behind other branches of history. It is particularly revealing that maritime historians have failed to position themselves within historical debates about gender. Fischer notes that when maritime historians consider gender they too often do so in ways which does not expand historical knowledge. Instead, maritime historians "trivialize" gender by repeatedly returning to the same topics of captain's wives or women who disguised themselves as men to go to sea. These topics, while touching on gender, ignore the large number of women who worked openly at sea while simultaneously disregarding how men at sea understood themselves as gendered subjects.[13]

This criticism is not entirely fair, as maritime history plays host to some excellent examples of nuanced gender analysis involving men. Valerie Burton has considered

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[12] Jan Rüger's review in *Gender & History* 23, no. 1 (March, 2011), 199-201) notes that considering the major position occupied by 'manliness' in Conley's study, "a stronger engagement with the recent literature on masculinity and gender would have been desirable." As well, he notes that Conley tends to conflate 'manhood' with attributes like 'masculine' and 'manliness' and that 'naval manhood' was like an empty vessel into which ideas about empire, nation, and domesticity could be poured. Rosalind Carr argues in her review in *War In History* 17, no. 3 (July, 2010), 358-359 that Conley's exclusive focus on representations of naval men weakens her argument, as the experiences of naval men are largely ignored and Conley does very little to interact with masculinity as a concept.

[13] Fischer, "Are We in Danger of Being Left with Our Journals and Not Much Else", *The Mariner's Mirror* 97, no. 1 (2011), 372.

masculinity and merchant seafaring in contextualized ways, showing the interplay between class and masculinity in the lives of merchant seafarers. Burton examines the labour aspect of British masculinities and seafaring at the end of the nineteenth century in her chapter in *Working out gender*. Burton analyzes the representation of seafaring maleness in the figure of "Jack Tar", the stereotypical "whoring, drinking sailor", and points out that Jack Tar was an exaggerated figure in narratives which aimed to encourage men to accept a masculine ideal which placed family and conventional morality first. However, she finds other masculinities by observing "regular work habits, family breadwinning, and sexual restraint defined only one way of being a man in nineteenth-century Britain."[14] For some men, the figure of Jack Tar became a means of demonstrating their solidarity with other working class men. By placing the whoring, drinking sailor in opposition to the ideal modern man who was a responsible family breadwinner, Jack Tar came to be seen as a more natural way of being a man as modernity brought on by industrial capitalism forced men to forgo their libidinal urges and other pleasures in order to take care of a family.[15] Jack Tar, Burton concludes, was formed as a rejection of the new economic and social structures of capitalist industrialism. By articulating this oppositional relationship between the Jack Tar image and the idealized masculinity of the male breadwinner, Burton affirms that masculinities are relationally constituted with narrative components and often interact with other social structures such as class.

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[14] Valerie Burton, "'Whoring, Drinking Sailors': Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-century British Shipping", in *Working out gender: perspectives from labour history*, ed. Margaret Walsh, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 85
[15] Ibid., 90-91.

Lucy Delap, although not identifying primarily as a maritime historian, has brought insights from her studies of Edwardian feminists to both maritime history generally in "Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things" and to naval history specifically in her chapter in *The* Dreadnought *and the Edwardian Age*. Delap's article explores the idea that narratives have the power to instantiate certain kinds of men in positions of authority. Paying attention to shipwreck narratives, she shows that how British men were thought to behave during shipwrecks served to bolster masculine authority at a time in in Edwardian Britain when feminists were agitating for women's rights. Appropriate masculine behaviour by middle- and upper-class British men depicted in shipwreck narratives could make a compelling case for the "fitness" of certain men to be the master of women and politics in the Victorian and Edwardian nation.[16] Her chapter on the *Dreadnought* discusses how the iconic battleship was a symbol in Edwardian gender discourse and makes much the same argument as her article, suggesting that some feminists used the *Dreadnought* as a symbol of masculine excess and devotion to war over domestic problems which women were allegedly more interested in solving. Other feminists, however, used the *Dreadnought* as a means to demonstrate that women were dedicated to imperial issues to the same degree as men. Conservative feminists cited the commitment of Australia to building a dreadnought, where women had the vote, as proof that women's suffrage would not infringe upon the security of the empire. In all cases,

[16] Lucy Delap, "'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things': Shipwrecks, Chivalry and Masculinities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain", *Cultural and Social History* 3, no. 1 (2006), 45-74.

gendered responses to the *Dreadnought* were used to make the case for either granting or denying women political power.[17]

The insights that attention to gender garner in maritime history are also related to imperial history. Imperial history provides perhaps the best way forward in naval history for meaningfully integrating masculinity to historical analysis. Catherine Hall, for example, uses masculinity to examine British debates on race and class. Her example is the debate between John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle over the race riots in Jamaica in 1865. Both men displayed their vision of race, masculinity, and class while garnering masculine prestige themselves through the very act of engaging publically in intellectual debate. Hall's integrated use of masculinity, race, and class is underpinned by intersectional feminist theory and provides a coherent and fruitful method of practicing history that is attentive to marginalized communities while decentring histories of powerful men who are usually examined as ungendered individuals.[18] Hall also addresses the uncontextualized biography aspect of some history of which much naval history is a part with her dual biography of Zachary Macaulay and his son, the English historian Thomas Macaulay. In examining the inner psychic life of these two men through an examination of their letters and writing, Hall is able to bring masculinity, race, and class together to deconstruct the powerful historical narratives written by Thomas Macaulay

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[17] Lucy Delap, "*The Women's Dreadnought*: Maritime Symbolism in Edwardian Gender Politics", 95-108 in *The* Dreadnought *and the Edwardian Age*. Blyth, Robert J., Jan Rüger, and Andrew Lambert, eds., (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

[18] Catherine Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and the Case of Governor Eyre", *Cultural Critique* 12 (Spring, 1989), 167-196.

and decentre history from the straightforward story of progress and the genius of great men.[19]

Reflection on Hall's method of close, personal studies of "great men" and Bonnie Smith's insight that male historians studying male institutions fail to see gender provide some interesting difficulties for naval historians interested in revealing the gendered nature of the navy. If naval historians choose to follow Hall's method and do careful biographies of influential admirals, they run the risk of simply adding to the already extensive list of naval biographies which form a major part of naval history as pointed out by Lewis Fischer. A greater number of biographies might only amplify the tendency of naval historians to view admirals as heroes and further reify executive officers as geniuses as Andrew Lambert's work does.[20] However, if they attempt to downplay the role of admirals in order to avoid contributing to further hero-worship, they run the risk of treating naval institutions as non-gendered entities and hides the fact that they were made up exclusively of men. This is a problem that Bonnie Smith has pointed out, and which is present in the writing of Oliver Johnson who treats the Admiralty and the Selborne Scheme without carefully acknowledging that it was men who wrote the Selborne Memorandum and implemented the scheme.[21] I have struggled with this paradox, and as a result Admiral John Fisher appears throughout this thesis as reminder that the Admiralty was run by men, and the Selborne Scheme was hatched mostly by Fisher. However, I also try to focus more on general social forces which shaped Fisher's decision and which

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[19] Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain*, (London: Yale University Press, 2012), xiii-xviii.
[20] Lambert, *Admirals*.
[21] Oliver Johnson, "Class Warfare and the Selborne Scheme", 422-433.

acknowledge the agency in the decision making process of men who did not directly write the Selborne Memorandum but who influenced its content through their influence on the masculine hierarchy of the Royal Navy.

Finally, postcolonial imperial history is useful to naval history as well because it opens up avenues of inquiry that may not have been available before – specifically examinations of objects such as books and narratives in a historical light. Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr's recently edited collection of essays on books that shaped the British Empire integrates gender, race, and class into an analysis of imperialism itself and how imperial ideas and influence were spread not simply through force but through books, newspapers, and other printed material. The written material makes up what they call an "imperial commons" which effectively became an intellectual foundation for British imperial subjects when discussing empire. Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr's collection opens the door for discussion of how introducing primary sources not previously considered in naval history may disrupt quotidian narratives. Their points become particularly pertinent to this study when they consider novels and what they reveal of the intellectual atmosphere of empire. Novels, as one author cited approvingly by Burton and Hofmeyr suggests, "functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state" thus establishing a case that the impacts of novels on gender, race, and class within an imperial context were immense.[22]

[22] Gauri Viswanathan, quoted in Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr, *Ten books that shaped the British Empire: creating an imperial commons*, (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 1.

1.2 Methods

A gender analysis of the Royal Navy which integrates the best insights of historians from naval, maritime, gender, and imperial history can be informed by R.W. Connell's theory of "hegemonic masculinity". Using hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework for understanding masculine relations within the navy provides the context to explore relations between cultural constructions such as narrative novels and the perpetuation of masculine authority in the Royal Navy. Connell's theory provides an underpinning for analyzing the changing patterns of legitimating authority in the Royal Navy and can explain how and why the Selborne Scheme was produced and implemented the way it was. It can also help identify important groups of men within the navy and demonstrate that conceptions of naval masculinity were numerous and constantly in flux.

In *Masculinities*, Connell outlines a framework for the different positions men occupy within a masculine hierarchy as well as ways in which hegemonic masculinity is maintained in the promotion of exemplary men over marginalizing others, the latter defined as not meeting the standards set by a hegemonic group. Connell identifies four positions men can loosely occupy with the masculine hierarchy – hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized.[23] Within the Royal Navy, the military officers aboard ships and in the naval administration at the Admiralty occupied a hegemonic masculine position because they held the keys to authority from longstanding naval traditions and their "unmistakeable naval character" – code for a specific, white, upper- and middle-class type of manliness. Their perceived legitimacy in commanding authority

[23] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 76-81.

in the navy was derived from their perceived manliness and their 'character'; in other words, from their ability to meet the culturally- and institutionally-determined masculine exemplar set forth in naval documents such as the Naval Discipline Act and from novels, images, and other narratives from the press or other publications that depicted naval men.

Naval engineers, entering the naval hierarchy in the early nineteenth century and then challenging the basis on which naval hierarchy was founded, occupied complicit and marginalized positions – gaining benefits culturally from their ability to serve in the navy as men but also associated by the Admiralty with men of improper class and race such as stokers and Lascar seamen.[24] Arguments against allowing them to join a hegemonic group often relied on associating engineers with marginalized men, a category into which Connell puts men of races and classes different from the naval hegemonic group. Connell outlines how hegemonic positions are maintained through placing them in relation to "marginalized masculinities", a term which I borrow to discuss men marginalized by their perceived race and class, and through the upholding of masculine exemplars within culture, a process I term "exemplary masculinity".[25]

Connell is clear, however, that hegemonic positions are not stable nor are they simply a list of manly attributes that can be acquired in order to become a member of a hegemonic group. Instead, they are ever-shifting configurations of the entire gender order,

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[24] See specifically Admiral Anthony Hoskins being questioned by Sir Edward Reed in 1888 regarding the numbers of engineers in the Royal Navy. *First Report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix*, (London: Henry Hansard and Son, 1888), 82-83. See also "Far East", who wrote to *Engineering* in 1899 that the middle-class engineers were agitating for no good reason, and that all their claims to authority ranking with executive officers were based on self-aggrandizement of their duties controlling working-class "tiffies", or Engine Room Artificers, who carried out fairly simply duties that did not require the oversight of an engineer with a full military titles. See "Far East", *Engineering* 68 (1 December 1899), 687-688.
[25] Connell, *Masculinities*, 214-215.

including women, which function to uphold the supremacy of some men over other men and over all women. As such, hegemonic positions are dependent on foundations in social structures throughout society.[26] As class, race, and gender changed outside the navy during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, the group of attributes which granted certain men authority within hegemonic masculinity and in British society more generally changed as well. The nature of hegemonic masculinity also answers why, after over a century of making minor changes to the engineers' status, it was during the huge social upheavals of the late-Victorian and Edwardian period that the Admiralty determined it was necessary to make serious policy changes determining who could legitimately command authority within the navy. Some Royal Naval historians like Rodger and Lambert would suggest it was simply the brilliance (or folly) of an admiral which determined to make the changes. Others such as Geoffrey Penn and Denis Griffiths would suggest the changing status of naval engineers was an inevitable result of increasingly complex and pervasive machinery in naval ships. However, both of these explanations isolate developments in the navy from social developments in British society.[27]

Connell notes that creating an "exemplary man" is one part of the process by which a group of men forms and maintains the kind of hegemonic masculinity that confers authority. The other component is the marginalization of other configurations of masculinity by associating them with marginalizing factors such as race or class. Thus, any attempt to find masculinity operating in the navy needs to be sensitive to the language that Royal Naval personnel would have used to discuss both exemplary men and men

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[26] Ibid., 77.
[27] See Denis Griffiths, *Steam at Sea*; and Geoffrey Penn *Up Funnel, Down Screw!*

who were meant to be marginalized. Once the language used during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period is identified and placed in a proper context, tacit or implicit masculine assumptions about naval engineers become identifiable. Just as Lucy Delap uses "chivalry" and "heroism" as her basis for finding gender in shipwreck narratives, I will use "character", "efficiency", and "manliness" as indicators of claims at creating an exemplary masculinity.[28] To find marginalized masculinity, I will give attention to discursive references to race and class in regards to the capability of naval engineers to meet the exemplary standards set by the Admiralty. I will unpack the language of exemplary masculinity, especially the serious naval focus on "character" before turning to the language of marginalization. Particularly important in this discussion is the phrase "Lascar and oil-can": it brought race to class and framed a marginalized naval masculinity.

"Manliness" is perhaps the word most often linked with "masculinity" when doing historical research, and while manliness and masculinity belong together it is important to make a distinction between the two. Historian of masculinity John Tosh notes in his introduction to *Manliness and Masculinity*, that "manliness" is a social attainment striven for by certain men and provides a way by which to measure men against each other.[29] Tosh then defines masculinity as an expression of a man's internal feelings or personal authenticity.[30] While it is important to make the distinction between manliness and masculinity, Tosh makes a mistake in understanding the relationship between manliness

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[28] Lucy Delap, "Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things", 46-48.
[29] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 2-3.
[30] Ibid., 2.

and masculinity. Manliness is a way of representing one important aspect of masculinity, that of the exemplary man, and it is therefore necessary for the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. As such, masculinity has little to do with an 'internal drive' men experience to express themselves as 'authentically male', but it is a *system* within which being perceived as a certain kind of man gives benefits to the man including conferring a legitimacy to claim authority over others. This is what Connell would call the "patriarchal dividend".[31] Regardless of Tosh's misunderstanding, he is correct in noting that manliness is linked to masculinity and that manliness was one of the ways that nineteenth-century-Britons could discuss male gender although it is not, as he claims, the only way.[32]

A second phrase which often appears with regard to naval engineers is "efficiency". During the Victorian and Edwardian era, 'efficiency' was a culturally specific term with a grounding in science – most notably the science of energy as elaborated by Crosbie Smith. The waste of energy was considered culturally undesirable during the Victorian period, and a search for more efficient methods of harnessing steam became a cultural value.[33] While Smith does not explicitly state it, the association of efficiency with status as a man of science was close, and mostly male scientists and

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[31] Connell, *Masculinities*, 82.
[32] Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 3-4.
[33] Crosbie Smith, "*Dreadnought* Science: The Cultural Construction of Efficiency and Effectiveness", 135-164, in *The* Dreadnought *and the Edwardian Age*, eds. Blyth, Robert J., Jan Rüger, and Andrew Lambert, eds. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). While Smith does not mention explicitly some of the gendered implications of energy systems, the desire to preserve energy has a related history in research done on the "Spermatic Economy" which suggested men should save their sperm for marital childbearing and avoid masturbating lest they waste their manly energy and be left without vigour. See, for example, Ben Barker-Benfield, "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality", *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 1 (Summer, 1972), 45-74.

engineers competed to make engines that were more efficient. Over the course of the nineteenth century, efficiency became a masculine virtue – and mentions of efficiency in primary sources are another way to find hints of the influence of masculinity on decision making during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period.

The third phrase which was used often during the period was also seemingly innocuous but actually rich with meaning for masculinity: "character". A discourse around character pervaded Victorian culture, and as Stefan Collini points out good character was a social ideal across a broad ideological spectrum from socialists such as Sidney Ball to Liberal thinkers like Herbert Spencer and T.H. Green.[34] Peter J. Cain notes that the creation of good character was also a Conservative and imperial concern, with Conservative "ultra-imperialists" such as Lord Cromer and Lord Curzon arguing that the empire was critical to the formation of proper British character.[35] Character, then, held a central role in much political debate. But it was not simply a political token phrase. The definition of ideal character, as Ruth Livesay says, was "heavily coded as masculine", and several articles in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin's book *Manliness and Morality* give evidence for this claim.[36] The ideal character was independent, rational, and hard-working – an ideal that matches much of the detailed articulation of masculinity outlined in

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[34] Stefan Collini, "The Idea of 'Character' in Victorian Political Thought", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Fifth Series, 35 (1985), 29-32.
[35] Peter J. Cain, "Empire and the Languages of Character and Virtue in Later Victorian and Edwardian Britain", *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 2 (August, 2007), 249-254.
[36] Ruth Livesay, "Reading for Character: Women Social Reformers and Narratives of the Urban Poor in Late Victorian and Edwardian London", *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9, no. 1 (2004), 46-47. See also Roberta J. Park, "Biological Thought, athletics and the formation of a 'man of character': 1830-1900"; John Springhall, "Building Character in the British boy: the attempt to extend Christian manliness to working-class adolescents, 1880 to 1914"; and Allen Warren, "Popular manliness: Baden Powel, scouting and the development of manly character"; in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, eds. J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's book *Family Fortunes* which traces the development of middle-class masculinity in the first half of the nineteenth century.[37] Character and masculinity were closely linked in Victorian and Edwardian political discourse, and looking for examples of character can provide a way of observing masculinity.

Character as a coded word for masculinity provides a way to apply masculinity to research on the Royal Navy as character was a common concern for naval men. Admiralty correspondence shows many instances in which policies – from which ships were allowed to fly certain flags to determining which men could get pensions – came down to the perceived character of the men. This is demonstrated in the case of a petty officer who sought a promotion to gunnery officer in 1901 but was initially denied based on only achieving the rank of "good" rather than "very good" in 1900. He petitioned the Admiralty to give him special consideration because his "good" ranking was the result of a very minor infraction. The Admiralty agreed to grant him special permission, but only if his former commander would vouch for his character. Fortunately for the petty officer, his former commander readily did so, stating that his "education, manner, and bearing" was above average.[38] In another case, Captain Peter M. Wottan of the Royal Naval Reserve requested he be able to fly the Blue Ensign from his ship the *Royal Edward* because he was a member of the Royal Naval Reserve. However, his application was

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[37] Livesay, "Reading for Character", 47-48. See also Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, revised edition, (Routledge: London, 2002).

[38] TNA, Letter from C-in-C Mediterranean to Admiral Douglas (signed by J.A. Fisher), 7 June 1901, ADM 1/7504.

denied because the Admiralty required the commanding officer and ten men to be in the Royal Naval Reserve for this prestige to be granted, a number which they believed would indicate the high character of the crew.[39] The request, although it should have been simple because there were not enough Royal Naval Reservists aboard to 'prove the high character of the crew', generated a great deal of correspondence among Admiralty officers, who used the request as an opportunity to reaffirm the rules surrounding the blue ensign and which upheld its status as an indicator of good character. The navy placed extremely high value on character, and it was a major part of their determination of the status of the men who served in the navy.

With character considered critical to the creation of naval men, fostering good character was not just an individual concern but a policy concern as well. For example, Lord Selborne introduced the 1903 naval reforms by citing the need to improve the technical education of naval officers while maintaining their "unmistakeable naval character".[40] His reference to "unmistakeable naval character" might easily be dismissed as a throwaway line by people who already assume they know what unmistakeable naval character means, but it is precisely this reflex which conceals the role that masculinity played in British naval policy. When Lord Selborne called upon the unmistakeable naval character of the British officer, he was also conjuring in the minds of those who listened to him an entire set of assumptions about what 'naval character' meant. These assumptions, like assumptions we make ourselves in the present, were so foundational to

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[39] TNA, "Request from Cap. DM Wottan (Lt RNR)", In-letters and papers, 1910-1913, 4 Nov 1913. ADM 1/8335.

[40] *Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines,* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 3. [Cd. 1386].

understanding the British seafarer that they could remain mostly unarticulated and yet still conjure a notion of who was a man of 'good character'. These generally unspoken assumptions, combined with an incuriosity about what they obscure, allows even present-day historians to use 'naval character' and expect their readers to understand what is meant. Andrew Lambert and N.A.M. Rodger are the best examples of an uncritical use of the term. In many ways, its use bears the marks of a boys' club attitude in which one man praises another for his excellent 'character' so as to generally state that the individual being praised is a fine man indeed.

Reading manliness, efficiency, and character as code words for certain masculine assumptions about who is deserving of authority, I will first examine the few pieces of Admiralty correspondence I have uncovered about the quality of seamen and courts martial records from the Edwardian period. These primary sources are manuscripts available from the National Archives Admiralty collection in London and printed items in the Parliamentary Papers series. They can be brought into focus by reading them as prescriptive guides for appropriate male behaviour aboard naval vessels.[41] A further set of period publications drawn upon in this analysis are press reports and a novel. The press reports include letters to the editor of *Engineering* magazine which are available online and newspaper stories from Bristol, Sheffield, and Angus, Scotland. These I located in the online British Newspaper Archives. The major focus of the chapter on exemplary

[41] This is somewhat in line with work which finds gender in history by looking at prescriptive literature on women's behaviour. See: Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: domesticity and desire in the women's magazines. 1800-1914*, (London: Routledge, 1996); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, (New York: Routledge, 1987); Susan Kent Kingsley, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990*, (New York: Routledge, 1999).

masculinities, however, is a 231-page novel: *Naval Engineers and Command of the Sea* that was written by Francis G. Burton in 1896. Burton's book, found by tracing the origins of the term "Lascar and oil-can" through engineering magazines and Parliamentary Papers, is a fictional but well-researched and convincing story of a naval engineer who finds himself in the navy when Britain goes to war with France and then with the United States. Burton's description of the ideal naval engineer and the shortcomings of a navy that does not value its engineers well enough reveals the importance of skill in the perceived masculinity and thus effectiveness of naval officers.[42] In addition the novel provides clues to how masculine ideals were spread through representation in media. The third set of documents are Admiralty papers available at the National Archives in London concerning the Selborne Reforms of 1903 and tracing press coverage of the reforms, in particular in *The Times*.

By examining exemplary and marginalized masculinity through these primary sources, I can trace the way that the different types of masculinity influenced the production of the Selborne Memorandum and the implementation of the scheme by Admiral John Fisher. By focusing on the importance of exemplary masculinities in the novel and court martial records, I will show the standards by which the Admiralty measured the naval engineers' appropriateness for integration into the naval command

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[42] This method is similar to the method used by Graham Dawson in *Soldier Heroes*. Dawson examines the biographies of British imperial heroes such as T.E. Lawrence and demonstrates how each became a symbol of a specific type of British masculinity that was meant to be an example for British men. In creating "soldier heroes" like Lawrence of Arabia, biographers blurred the line between fact and fiction liberally. As Dawson notes, "Masculinities are lived out in the flesh, but fashioned in the imagination." With this in mind, a fictional novel with a naval engineering hero would provide the space to imagine a new type of masculinity. See Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British adventure, empire, and the imagining of masculinities*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-7.

hierarchy at a time when the men commanding the navy were being seriously scrutinized as protectors of the British nation and empire. I will also show the ways in which exemplary masculinity changed during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period as public and political pressure raised expectations of the Royal Navy as a key aspect of imperialism and British prosperity. By discussing marginalized masculinities and by highlighting the way in which social structures such as class and race intersected with masculinity, I will reveal the relational quality of naval masculinity and the gendered measurements by which a naval man was considered acceptable to have authority in the Royal Navy. Analysis of both marginalized and exemplary masculinities reveals the critical importance of masculinity to naval policy making with regards to naval engineers.

As the Royal Navy shifted from sail to steam throughout the nineteenth century, the types of manliness and character exemplified by admirals became increasingly disconnected from the naval situation as many naval observers and naval engineers saw it. At the end of the nineteenth century, naval engineers and their advocates in the press and popular culture began to establish a new exemplar of masculinity in response to the increasing importance of naval engineering. Men who matched this exemplar expected that they could legitimately claim authority in the Royal Navy provided they not only demonstrated their knowledge of running the ships' engines and their wealth of technical training but also that they adopted the appropriate cultural references that promoted their authority. Technical knowledge had to be accompanied by a demonstration of their virtue and health compared to naval engineers who had joined the navy in years past, including a demonstration of their whiteness and appropriate class. This new exemplar, found especially in popular culture, was in opposition to the existing perception of naval

engineers held by some admirals such as Anthony Hoskins that naval engineers did not have difficult jobs and were "tainted with the grease of the oil can and the odour of the Lascar."[43]

The increasing importance of the naval engineers resulted in a new social context for the men at sea, one which involved the new technologies of steam and electricity. The new social context forced members of the Admiralty to rethink how masculine authority was earned in the navy. The result of these considerations was the Admiralty's Selborne Scheme: an attempt by Admiral John Fisher and the Board of the Admiralty to re-establish executive naval officers as legitimate exercisers of manly authority aboard ships by requiring all men recruited and trained in the Royal Navy to have basic engineering training throughout their first several years before being divided into executive officers, naval engineers, and marines. While it was hoped that this change would be enough to quell naval engineers' dissent and give legitimate authority back to executive officers, the refusal to recognize naval engineers as men also deserving of authority led more far-reaching reforms only two years later in the form of the Cawdor Reforms. These 1905 reforms made naval engineers military officers and removed the barriers against engineers rising to the command of naval ships and even to authority on the Board of the Admiralty.

The Selborne Scheme was an attempt by the men in command of the navy, placed there partly by their embodiment of a kind of naval manliness rewarded within a hegemonic naval masculinity, to ensure that their manly authority could not be challenged

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[43] Francis G. Burton, *The Naval Engineer and Command of the Oceans: A Story of Naval Administration*, (Manchester: The Technical Publishing Company, 1896), 85.

by upstart engineers. However, the scheme's replacement two years later with further reforms to the engineers' position demonstrates that the Selborne reforms did not adequately address new social context of the navy in which men were expected to understand engineering if they expected to exercise authority. Fisher's mostly facile attempts to recognize the new naval masculinity expected both by engineers and more widely in British cultural imagination was not enough to re-establish the authority of the old executive officers. Studying the Selborne Scheme provides an opportunity to examine naval masculinity at the end of the nineteenth century and reveal the complex functioning of masculinity in the decisions of important naval policy-makers.

This thesis aims to undermine the naval history practiced by historians such as Rodger and Lambert by changing the very foundation on which so much naval history is built – an ignorance of masculinity and the assumption of the genius abilities of a few admirals to implement changes. I take into account the scholars who have used masculinity as a tool of analysis in their work, especially pioneers in the field like John Tosh and R.W. Connell upon whose work much of our current understanding of masculinity is based. I aim to show that decisions made about naval policy, influenced as they were by considerations of masculinity as it related to authority, were not made solely by "admirable admirals" but arrived at through gendered interactions between officers and the men they commanded.[44] My work will challenge naval history by not simply

[44] Jeffrey Glasco's work attempts to make this claim as well about men in the Napoleonic Era British Navy, although he relies on the suggestion that gendered relations between men, summed up in the plebeian-patrician model of male relations, remained essentially unchanged from ancient Roman times until the French Revolution, when it began to be replaced by an "egalitarian" model. Such a suggestion is extremely broad. Glasco also reduces all male relations to a function of masculinity, a suggestion that ignores that class and race are not simply part of gender but interact with gender. See Jeffrey D. Glasco "The Seaman Feels Him-self a Man", *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 66 (Fall, 2004), 40-56.

considering masculinity as an interesting thing to be described, as in Conley's model, but something which requires the full rethinking of how naval history is practiced. Being attentive to the functioning of masculinity provides new insights into what drove change more rapidly than previous times in the Royal Navy at the end of the nineteenth century. The effort the Admiralty made at integrating engineers more completely in the command structure in 1902 with the Selborne reform scheme, however imperfectly, was an effort to ensure the continued "fitness" of the men already holding power in the navy and in British society to continue being the "master of things." It was also an attempt to reassure the "old women of both sexes," in John Fisher's words, that the men in charge of the navy would have the appropriate "naval character" and knowledge in order to maintain command of the ocean. As many of the foundations on which the masculine authority of the admirals was based were shifting during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, the configuration of hegemonic masculinity needed to change with them.

Chapter 2: Cultural Imaginary and British Masculinity

2.1 The Navy and Cultural Imaginary

The Selborne Scheme was very much dedicated to reinforcing the authority of the executive officers over the men they commanded. The men of the Royal Navy were not merely pawns told what to do by their commanders, but men who were capable of thinking and acting on their own.[1] Thus, their obedience to their officers and happiness with the naval hierarchy could not be assumed – it had to be earned in some way. Particular constructions of masculinity were, I suggest, a major part of the way in which officers of the Royal Navy could legitimize their authority over the men they commanded. If a commander was not behaving in a way which was acceptable to the men at large, then they would be less likely to obey and in the most extreme cases, they could mutiny.[2] It was imperative to the integrity of the naval command structure that the men who occupied its highest positions were manly enough, or in more period-appropriate terms, were of "unmistakeable naval character", so that their credentials could not be questioned. The necessity of the obedience and duty of each man in the hierarchy was essential if the Royal Navy was to carry out its imperial mission. It is this necessity for authority figures in the navy to establish their manliness in order to hold legitimate authority that is hegemonic masculinity.

Considering that naval command was not a given but something emerging between commanders and their men with masculinity hegemonic, factors outside the

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[1] While this may seem like an obvious point, the agency of naval men is routinely ignored in history as inconsequential to naval matters, unless those naval men are admirals.

[2] Jeffrey D. Glasco, "The Seaman feel him-self a Man", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 66 (Fall, 2004), 40-56

direct purview of Royal Naval command could impact the ways in which these relationships were formed. The men who crewed the Royal Navy came from Britain, read British books, pamphlets, and newspapers, and occupied positions within British social structures of race, class, and gender. The cultural aspect of hegemonic masculinity – that is, the place men could look to in order to find exemplary depictions of manhood – could be created by different agents with different ends in mind. Considering British popular culture's potential to reflect and shape specific masculinities and the importance of masculinity in upholding naval hierarchy, popular culture was not trivial to naval matters but in fact extremely important. In this chapter, I intend to establish the importance of cultural constructions of "exemplary men" which privileged certain kinds of men with the legitimacy to command. I will provide evidence that the Royal Navy understood the opportunities and dangers of creating exemplary men to establish the legitimacy of officers. It will conclude by using a novel to investigate the discourses that involved hegemonic masculinity and naval engineers: *The Naval Engineer and the Command of the Seas* by Francis G. Burton. Burton's novel reflected and influenced culturally which men were considered legitimate as executive officers during the period of the most aggressive naval engineering advocacy at the end of the nineteenth century.

The importance of novels and a variety of other documents during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period was to create a "cultural imaginary of British naval masculinity" in the words of Lucy Delap. A cultural imaginary shaped and was shaped by the Admiralty and provided a means of determining how to demarcate which men were fit

to exercise naval authority.[3] Despite the men of the Admiralty occupying a hegemonic position with greater power to shape the cultural imaginary, however, the members of the Admiralty did not have sole control over a cultural imaginary – it was a creation of a variety of people including naval engineers, engineer advocates, and marginalized men. Thus, while popular culture and narratives had the potential to uphold certain masculine ideals and create exemplars which maintained the legitimacy of the hegemonic group of men, it also had the potential to undermine hegemony and establish new hegemonies.

Narratives about men, even those found in popular culture novels, were important to the formation of gender identity among men in the Royal Navy. It has been suggested by postcolonial scholar, Gauri Viswanathan, that in its very form as a book, the English novel be considered a "surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state". Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr are persuaded to adopt this insight in their edited essay collection *Ten books that shaped the British Empire*.[4] While Viswanathan argues that the English novel was used by British imperial authorities as an embodiment of British manliness to which Indian subjects were expected to aspire, Burton and Hofmeyr invoke the idea of an "imperial commons" made up of writing which formed a "paper empire" that represented the "chaotic plurality" of British imperial thought.[5] Books, including novels, contributed to a cultural imaginary of British naval masculinity. In other

[3] Lucy Delap, "Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things': Shipwrecks, Chivalry and Masculinities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain", *Cultural and Social History* 2006, no. 3 (2006), 45-74.
[4] Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr, *Ten books that shaped the British Empire: creating an imperial commons*, (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 1.
[5] Ibid., 2-3, 10-11.

words, a novel could became part of a "naval imperial commons" and form part of a "cultural imagination" within which naval policy was created.

However, it is difficult to suggest that a novel by itself directly caused policy decisions – although a search for such literal connections is beside the point. It is not particularly important if the actions of John Fisher when he produced the Selborne Memorandum are *directly* traceable to the ideas laid out in a specific novel, and as Burton and Hofmeyr point out, attempts to literally trace actions from books, as in "X read Y and then did Z" should be resisted.[6] A novel can be read instead as an attempt by the author to reflect and influence a general attitude. In the case of the Selborne Scheme, Francis G. Burton was, by writing his novel, framing the context within which debate on naval engineering policy was taking place. While perhaps not being as influential as Lord Thomas Brassey on naval affairs, Burton was still exercising his ability to add to, or at least refine and pass on, ideas in a cultural imaginary of British naval masculinity.[7] His novel is a snapshot of that effort worth examining for the attitudes about race, class, and masculinity that it reflects.[8]

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[6] Ibid., 10.

[7] Thomas Brassey, First Earl Brassey, was an authority on naval affairs at the end of the nineteenth century. First elected as a Liberal Member of Parliament in 1865, he became civil lord of the Admiralty in 1880. In 1886, he established *Brassey's Naval Annual*, and for much of his life he travelled around Britain giving talks on the state of the merchant marine and navy. See B.R. Penny, "Brassey, Thomas (1836-1918)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, available at: http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brassey-thomas-5339 [accessed 4 June 2015].

[8] For an example of this approach to using a novel as a primary source, see Lucy Delap, "'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things'". Delap examines Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* and press narratives of the event Conrad's novel was based on (the sinking of the British-commanded pilgrim ship the *Jeddah* in the Indian Ocean in 1880) to demonstrate that shipwreck narratives were a particularly powerful way to create a "cultural imaginary of British masculinity." While shipwreck narratives represent one place in which the cultural imaginary of British masculinity can be laid bare, they are by no means the only ones.

There is evidence that the Royal Navy recognized the power of fictional but realistic accounts of life in the navy, specifically stories of the manly behaviour of naval men, in the maintenance of the authority of captains aboard naval ships. The Board of the Admiralty encouraged lantern lectures in Royal Navy ships, which involved projecting light through coloured plates to provide images to accompany lectures on historical heroes and morality by chaplains and commanders. Originally used in boys' training establishments throughout the Royal Navy, in 1903 Admiral Swinton C. Holland, a commander well known for his thoughts on training seamen, encouraged their use on seagoing ships in the navy as a means of "stimulating the patriotism of the Seamen" by showing them the achievements of the British fleet throughout history.[9] To this end, lantern lectures included lecture notes with corresponding slides such as "Naval Achievements of Great Britain" and "The Great Pyramid", but also more biographical history such as "Gordon and Khartoum", "English Seamen", "Eminent Men", "Life of Martin Luther", and "Life of Nelson".[10] Each of these was meant to provide "religious and secular instruction", and use of lantern lectures was officially encouraged by the Admiralty in a 1911 Circular Letter as beneficial to the men and boys of the fleet.[11] By providing examples of British heroes such as Nelson or religious figures such as Martin Luther in a new and entertaining way, the Admiralty hoped to show the men of the navy what "they might have to fight for" as well as instruct them in appropriate morals.[12]

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[9] TNA, JWS Anderson "Letter to Naval Branch – overview of the history of Lantern Lectures", December 1912, ADM 1/8222. See also, "Death Of Admiral Swinton Holland", *The Times*, 10 June 1922, 13.
[10] TNA, *Catalogue of Lectures and Lantern Slides supplied for the use in His Majesty's Ships and Naval Establishments*, (Greenwich: Royal Naval College, 1909), 6-14, 1 April 1909, ADM 1/ 8222.
[11] TNA, "Circular Letter No. 30, N. 11716, Arrangements for the Supply of Lecture Lanterns and Slides", 28 August 1911, 1. ADM 1/ 8222.
[12] TNA, "Draft Circular, December 1911", ADM 1/ 8222.

The Royal Navy was also wary about what people would read about it or what might be published and distributed inside and outside the navy. A minor example of this was Admiralty correspondence which showed the concern of Captain Arthur W. Ewart about falsehoods printed in the British press, pointing to articles which reported that stokers had beaten seamen in gunnery contests. Ewart's superiors, including the First Lord of the Admiralty Lord Selborne, doubted that the "fables" carried much weight with the British public but they worried that the stories gave confidence to seamen from continental navies and as such would make those navies more formidable opponents.[13] They determined not to take any action against the press and accept falsehoods as a part of freedom of the press, although they did acknowledge the power that stories of the lacking manhood and capability of the British seaman could serve as potentially dangerous morale-instilling stories among Britain's possible enemies.

The Royal Navy took a more serious view of some stories. Ordinary Seaman Robert L. Moore was court martialed in 1903 for "publishing and selling … a pamphlet containing criticisms on the conduct and organisation of the ship".[14] This "pamphlet" was a fifty-five-page story of H.M.S. *Good Hope*'s maiden voyage in 1902. Moore, in his defence, said that he aimed "to pen a plain, unvarnished, and truthful narration" of life aboard a naval ship, which included the hardships and frustrations that the lower deck felt but also to present an overall positive view of the Royal Navy and its camaraderie.[15] The Admiralty responded that Moore's story was "an act to the prejudice of good order and

[13]TNA, "Erroneous Criticisms which appear in British Press, and use uttered by public speakers concerning British Navy", 28 April 1902, ADM 1/7596.
[14] TNA, "Circumstantial Letter", 14 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.
[15] TNA, "Prisoner Statement", 19 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.

naval discipline" because it was critical of the conduct and organization of the ship and thus encouraged insubordination and constituted an attack on the competence of the officers commanding the *Good Hope*.[16] Moore's story, by presenting naval officers as less-than-ideal versions of men, had the potential to tarnish the image of the Royal Navy and undermine hegemonic claims to authority made by the officer class. As such, while Moore did not intend to challenge the authority of his superior officers, his story was perceived as an attack on the legitimacy of the naval officer's claims to authority by showing they were not always exemplary men and thus not suitable as the men to whom naval might was entrusted within a system of masculine hegemony.

The entire pamphlet was presented as evidence, with the offending passages marked by Moore's commanding officer. The first alleged challenge to the authority of the commanding officers was Moore's description of a bet between two ordinary seamen on whether the crew would be satisfied with their commanding officers by the end of the voyage. The bet itself was a large part of the problem since gambling was considered unacceptable behaviour for naval men.[17] Throughout the rest of the pamphlet, every time Moore wrote that the men grumbled at having to do their duty, Moore's commander highlighted the offending content. In one instance, when Moore related that a watch was called late after supper, he stated that the men called up were an "ill used watch" and wrote a stream of sarcastic comments directed at the commanding officer who gave the

[16] TNA, "Circumstantial Letter", 14 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.
[17] Robert Moore, *Commission and Travels of H.M.S. Good Hope Part I: From Portsmouth to Simon's Bay*, (Cape Town: W.A. Richards and Sons, 1903), 15.

order. Moore's commanding officer underlined this entire section because it was clearly an example of Moore questioning the judgment of his superior officers.[18]

When the *Good Hope* was struck by a storm and no work could be done, Moore relayed that the ship was "very stuffy; very dirty; uncomfortable and leaky" with the mess deck being in an "unutterable state of dirt and confusion."[19] When an engine failed, slowing the pace of the vessel, Moore noted that everyone on board was upset, especially the captain who "fretted and fumed in a perfect fever of nervous excitement".[20] Moore's description of seamen who were grumbling and sarcastic as well as officers who could not endure storms with equanimity were potentially subversive. He was suggesting that naval officers did not measure up to the model of exemplary masculinity held out by the naval command. Moore's claim carried the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the commanding officers of the *Good Hope* by showing that men did question their orders and shedding doubt on whether officers were capable of maintaining control and conducting themselves with manly composure in adverse conditions.

The climax of Moore's story came when the ship docked to re-coal in Suez. Because the local coalers were not working quickly enough, the captain ordered the crew to take over the duty. What resulted, according to Moore, was an eighteen-hour day of hot, dirty work which left the men thirsty, dirty, and tired. They were further unable to sleep as they could not wash or drink since there was no water provided by their

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[18] Ibid., 27.
[19] Ibid., 28.
[20] Ibid., 31. As a characterization of life on a steam ship, this tale demonstrates a profound disaffection from the steam technology, one which would likely have negatively influenced views of naval engineers who were only in the navy because of the new technology.

commanding officers. The lack of water meant they could not sleep in their hammocks because they would make the hammocks dirty.[21] This state of affairs left them extremely exhausted. Due to their exhaustion, Moore declared that the men ignored orders to clean and to attend church on Sunday because no one was interested in churchgoing in such abominable conditions. Despite their exhaustion and thirst, they were put to work again loading shells on Sunday afternoon. According to Moore they worked another sixteen hours and then, presumably, they were allowed to wash, drink, and rest.[22] This entire segment of the story was marked by the commander, which was unsurprising because it portrayed commanders as cruel for working the men so hard without providing adequate rest and water. Moore indicated too that naval officers could not command the obedience of their men in keeping the ship clean and orderly. The latter had refused to obey commands out of exhaustion. The story challenged the belief in the ideal, benevolent commanding officer who was an exemplar of masculinity in the navy, and as such posed a threat to officers' claims to authority. This narrative, then, saw Moore court martialed. As it was critical for naval commanders to appear to live up to the exemplary status that enabled them to legitimize claims to power, Moore's story, based on the maiden voyage of the *Good Hope*, was a potential threat to their hegemony.

Moore pleaded guilty to the charges, but in his defence he noted that the story ended positively by showing that the ordinary seamen were happy with their journey and thus did not constitute a threat to naval authority. He argued the pamphlet should be

[21] Ibid., 42.
[22] Ibid., 44.

considered as a whole work and that his accusers should not pick out specific passages.[23] This defence, along with testimony from former commanders that Moore's character was consistently "Very Good" were taken into account, but ultimately the court ascertained that regardless of what was contained in the book, he had not asked for permission to sell or distribute it below deck. This act was enough to have him judged guilty and he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.[24] In March 1903, however, only fifteen days after his sentence was handed down, the case was reviewed and in consideration of his "former good character" and lack of malicious intent, the Board of the Admiralty felt they could be lenient in his sentence. The rest of his sentence was remitted and he was released.[25]

Moore's court martial shows that the Admiralty took the exemplary image of their officers very seriously, especially if they were challenged from within the navy. If we weigh the importance of meeting the exemplary standard of manhood with a view to Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, we can see how a story that challenged the officers' abilities to meet standards threatened their legitimacy within a masculine hierarchy. While the Admiralty later recognized that three months imprisonment with hard labour was too heavy-handed for the offence Moore committed, the fact that it held the court martial revealed their concern over the subversive power of stories. When Moore's father wrote the Admiralty requesting that the entire court martial be reversed and struck from his son's record, the Admiralty refused. In reply its officials confirmed

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[23] TNA, "Prisoner Statement", 19 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.
[24] TNA, "Sentence", 19 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.
[25] TNA, "Court-Martial on Robert Laband Moore, Ordinary Seaman, of H.M.S. "Good Hope"", written note, 27 Feb 1903, ADM 1/7683.

that Moore's book should have been suppressed and established that Admiralty authority had to be shown by judgment and punishment even if leniency was finally applied.[26] The Admiralty had no qualms about suppressing a story they believed could possibly encourage sedition. Moore had undermined claims to masculine authority by revealing the failings of officers to meet the manly standard they themselves set. The Admiralty clearly believed that the exemplary status of naval officers was critical for continued control of the lower deck and to that end they would use their authority to crush any negative portrayal of officers.

2.2 The Naval Engineer: "The brightest and noblest example of them all."

Robert Moore's court martial makes clear that the Admiralty understood the potentially subversive power of narratives that cast officers in a negative light or questioned their manly capabilities. A novel such as Francis Burton's, which showed admirals and captains as mostly inept leaders during wartime, was another potentially subversive document, but one which originated outside the Royal Navy. Although Burton's novel did not come from within the navy, it still had the potential to demonstrate the shortcomings of naval authority. Francis Burton was a moderately well-known engineer. He was the Secretary and General Manager of the Milford Haven Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, and he had found success writing about engineering before he turned to novel-writing. His previous book was a treatise on engineering estimates and cost accounts published by a company specializing in engineering handbooks.[27] Fictional

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[26] TNA, "Case of his son R.L. Moore late of HMS "Good Hope"", written note, 15 April 1903, ADM 1/7683.

[27] See Francis G. Burton, *Engineering Estimates and Cost Accounts*, (Manchester: The Technical Publishing Company, 1896). The most well-known publication from the Technical Publishing Company

as the novel was, he did extensive research into the background, drawing on letters in *The Times* from naval correspondents, from any naval officers who would write him with their opinions, as well as from handbooks written by engineering and naval experts.[28]

The story, although seeming to be a serious personal account of his experiences as a naval engineer from its rather dry title and composition in first person, was a novel which fit loosely into the burgeoning genre of 'invasion literature' which became popular in Britain after 1871. Several reviews noted that Burton would reach a wider public audience by writing a story rather than confining his observations to a technical essay.[29] He had serious intentions in writing his novel: exposing Admiralty ignorance of the new conditions of naval warfare that required highly-trained engineers and mechanics. The book was promoted hopefully as "of interest to everybody."[30] As the reviewer recognized, Burton's novel questioned the capability of the "old-fashioned" people who ran the navy and suggested that "This condition of things would spell disaster in war."[31] In place of the "old-fashioned" admirals, Burton created his own exemplary naval hero: the naval engineer Edward Haddow. In telling the fictional story of Britain at war in *The Naval Engineer and Command of the Seas*, Burton illustrated the kind of naval man he thought

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was the weekly magazine *The Practical Engineer* which was published in London and Manchester simultaneously every Friday and sold for two pence. They also published *The "Practical Engineer" Pocket-Book* annually. See Francis G. Burton, *The Naval Engineer and Command of the Sea: A Story of Naval Administration*, (Manchester: Technical Publishing Company, 1896), 233-235.

[28] For an example of being drawn word-for-word from the pages of *The Times*, see Reginald C. Oldknow, "Engine-Room Complements Of Her Majesty's Ships", *The Times*, 10 June 1892, 13; and Burton, *The Naval Engineer and the Command of the Sea*, 90-91. Oldknow was a regular contributor to *Brassey's Naval Annual* as an engineering expert.

[29] Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 11 December 1896, 3.

[30] Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 16 December 1896, 7.

[31] Ibid.

the Royal Navy required if it were to be an effective, efficient guard of the nation and the empire that could be relied on to uphold British imperial interests.

Burton's writing about naval engineers as naval heroes had deep meaning at the end of the nineteenth century when naval heroes were celebrated as the ideal men, "at once manful and godly, practical and enthusiastic, prudent and self-sacrificing".[32] In the Victorian and Edwardian mind, naval heroes were the exemplars of a kind of masculinity wherein men, if they behaved chivalrously, could claim authority and through their chivalrous governance bring comfort and stability to Britain. Lucy Delap traces the renewed interest in chivalry at the end of the nineteenth century in her appropriately-titled "Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to be the Master of Things." Through narratives of shipwrecks, Delap reveals the supposedly widely-believed idea of chivalry was in fact heavily contested. Thus, sources which contain arguments about naval heroes, or "exemplary men" in Connell's terms, must be considered carefully and not taken at face value.[33]

With this is mind, I am careful not to claim that Francis Burton's novel is a reflection of a complete turn toward viewing naval engineers as the new exemplar of manliness nor that it signals the total overthrow of a hegemonic order. Instead it marks one point in a political contest between different groups of men. The novel cannot be taken as evidence that all of Britain's people or British naval engineers were changing their idea of what was required for men to "prove their fitness" for authority, not even in a

[32] C.J. Hamilton, quoted in Lucy Delap "'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things'", 46.
[33] Ibid., 47.

naval setting. The novel was, however, politically instrumental in eroding old ways of conceptualizing who should be in charge in the navy. It must be repeated that there is no direct causality linking the novel with the decisions admirals made. It would be rather extraordinary if any admiral had left a note which explicitly stated he had read Francis Burton's novel and found it persuasive. As Antoinette Burton and Isabel Hofmeyr note in the introduction to *Ten Books that shaped the British Empire*, "we resist … a frankly vain search for literal connection."[34] The events described in novels, while perhaps being based on actual events and experiences, must be carefully noted as fictional and not used as literal evidence of what happened but more as a reflection of the values of the author.

Burton's novel offered an alternative vision of naval authority which was based on knowledge of and respect for naval engineering. He thus gave form to a new type of exemplary man – the virtuous naval engineer personified by Edward Haddow. Haddow was a highly-idealized man, at once virtuous, knowledgeable, and capable of undertaking physical work in the boiler room if necessary during active engagements when a head of steam might be required quickly. In offering a new exemplary man, Burton scornfully rejected the things that marginalized naval engineers in the eyes of the Admiralty including their association with the working class and Lascar seamen. These associations were tendentious, but were still given credence by some contemporaries.[35]

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[34] Burton and Hofmeyr, *Ten books that shaped the British Empire*, 10.

[35] For the working-class associations of the naval engineers, see Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). See specifically chapter 5, "The Class of Sailors and Engineers". The working-class association was exacerbated in the 1890s when the Admiralty, in response to a shortage of engineers, determined to recruit "emergency service" naval engineers directly from engineering technical colleges rather than through their own naval engineering college at Keyham, which was seen by engineers as an attempt to subvert the professional status of naval engineers. Ibid., 128-129. While engineers themselves were not seen as racial others, the difficulty of the skills they possessed was questioned by suggesting that they were so simple a

Burton began his book with a dedication to Lord Charles Beresford, who gallantly "served his country best by arousing the nation to a sense of the defect in … its naval defences", thus positioning his novel as another method by which the nation would be alerted to the defects as Burton saw them of the Royal Navy.[36] He continued by listing the heroic British admirals who most often received adulation for their victories but argued that in relishing of old victories, British people too often overlooked the monumental change that the switch to steam made in the functioning of the Royal Navy. While they believed in the invincibility of the fleet, they had ignored the critical importance of people who did not match the traditional British naval heroes, for those heroes were seamen from the age of sail. It was not simply the British public who were guilty of ignoring changed times that brought a new strategic importance to engineers, but more dangerously the Admiralty.[37] Burton set up a rivalry between the practical, eminent engineers and the flippant Admiralty authorities and suggested catastrophe was looming if the admirals did not wake up to the fact that knowledge of naval engineering was needed to run a successful fleet. When Burton imagined how wars between Britain and France and between Britain and the United States would develop, he laid bare his own assumptions about what type of man could rise to the new challenges of empire and which men would fail to measure up.

"Lascar with an oil can" could do them – a shot at mechanical artificers that drove the engines whom the engineers commanded. See *First Report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix*, (London: Henry Hansard and Son, 1888), 82-83.

[36] Burton, *The Naval Engineer and the Command of the Sea*, iii.

[37] Ibid., v. Suggesting that naval engineers were like slave drivers in oared galleys hints at how stokers were viewed during this time.

Throughout the fictional story of naval heroism, British military prowess, and imperial stoicism conjured in *The Naval Engineer and Command of the Seas*, Burton wrote idealized men as the main characters to serve as an example of the type of man whom the Royal Navy needed to maintain the British Empire at the turn of the twentieth century. The ideals that Burton reflected were increasingly important on the global scale for Britain to maintain its dominance of the oceans through which its political and economic might was projected. There are many examples throughout the novel of Britain failing to match its industrial rivals – France and the United States – in terms of naval engineers. In a world where steam and electricity were remaking war into an industrial activity, Burton questioned whether the old "unmistakeable naval character" of the admirals that had once allowed them to dominate the sea would be adequate for the new challenges the British Empire would face. In his novel Burton provided an example of the type of man that would be required for the new world; an exemplary man in the form of the professional naval engineer. He provided a new yardstick by which naval officers could be measured to determine if they were qualified to lead.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator – a young engineer fresh out of the naval engineering college at Keyham – is described as being from "a very quiet set," one "whose ambition was directed to mastering the principles of [his] profession rather than qualifying for young bloods." The young naval engineers are more inspired by the "feats of reason and the flow of soul" than by the wine cup. [38] The narrator's dedication to temperance and to mastering his work sets him and his peers apart from the older naval

[38] Burton, *The Naval Engineer*, 4.

engineers who were found wanting in terms of whether they were men worthy of authority.

Burton's fully-imagined exemplary man, however, is the chief naval engineer on H.M.S. *Terrible*: Edward Haddow. Haddow is a handsome and well-built man which gives him a commanding presence among even his superiors. While he is accomplished in his college classes, in the workshop, and at sea, he is not simply a "jack-of-all-trades" but a "good all-round man". In Haddow, the "brightest and noblest example" of British naval engineering is found, and Burton argues it would do the service well to have more men such as Haddow.[39]

Haddow's value as a manly leader is also found in his presence in the engine room. In Burton's imagining of the fictional "First Battle of Toulon" against the French enemy, the narrator notes that Haddow provides stable, stern leadership which is absolutely necessary for keeping the engine room in order even in the great heat of an engine room in a ship on the Mediterranean. The narrator relates that:

> As I stood on the engine-room platform I reeled for a moment with faintness, and would fain have escaped into the air had duty remitted it; but just by me stood my chief [Haddow], with calm face and sparkling eye, watching the operations staff. Sometimes by a kindly word, sometimes by an approving gesture, he encouraged them in their work. This was his way of treating them – this the means by which he won from them the utmost service their physical capacity would permit. A glance at his handsome face, a sound of his cool, commanding voice, was sufficient to restore my self-control.[40]

Indeed, Haddow keeps command and order in the engine room simply through his presence, his attentiveness to mechanical detail, and his handsome face. If Britain was to

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[39] Ibid., 37.
[40] Ibid., 61.

rise to the new technological challenges of warfare, Burton argues, naval engineers like Haddow needed to occupy positions of authority.

Later in the novel, during the "Second Battle of Toulon", Haddow is below deck "directing and encouraging his men, and at times assisting them with his own skilful hands."[41] When the engine room is struck by a shell which causes horrendous injuries to other engineers, Haddow remains unruffled, delivering his orders calmly and ensuring that his remaining crew would not be poisoned by the foul air from the explosion. For Burton, the exemplary man is well-versed in both the theoretical and practical sides of engineering, knowledge, and mastery which would allow a naval engineer to remain calm and commanding under extreme pressure in battle. If a captain or an admiral were to command a modern steamship, it was imperative that they have a good engineer in charge below if they wanted their ship to be effective in carrying out its imperial duties.

The exemplary naval engineer needed to not only demonstrate technical knowledge and mastery below deck, but also to understand the larger naval strategic picture and be able to advise the Admiralty on large issues. Many times throughout the novel, a lack of engineering knowledge at the strategic planning level of the Admiralty results in British military disasters. One such example is the sinking of the *Acorn*, an old sloop that had been pressed into service despite being obsolete compared to the new French cruisers. When the *Acorn* is ordered to return from the Mediterranean station with invalids at the outbreak of war with France, it is caught and sunk crossing the Bay of Biscay, resulting in the death of everyone on board. Burton argues in the novel that such a

[41] Ibid., 149.

disaster could have been prevented if the Admiralty allowed engineers to rise to executive positions so they could provide their advice on which ships were appropriate for which duties during the war.[42] As it was in the novel, the lack of respect for naval engineers resulted in many disasters for Britain throughout the story, and it is only when engineers are recognized for their strategic and tactical knowledge that Britain is able to turn its fortunes in war around. This strategic knowledge included which ships to decommission and where to most safely and effectively use certain types of ships. Their tactical knowledge included how to effectively control the speed of the steam engines and how to push engines to their limit in battle without causing an explosion which would limit the maneuverability of their vessel and as a result, the fleet as a whole.

In the novel, economic disaster is another result of the Admiralty's refusal to recognize the importance of naval engineers. Britain's dependence on its colonies for food and basic resources made command of the oceans with the Royal Navy extremely important for the survival of Britain as a nation and for its ability to make war. When Burton imagines the consequences of a British naval failure due to lack of naval engineers to run the engine rooms of the navy, such as the fictional British defeat at the "First Battle of Toulon", he describes the economic disaster for Britain that ensues in the bleakest terms. Food is scarce, shipping insurance companies go bankrupt paying out war losses, and trade virtually ceases as French ships roam the oceans with impunity, capturing or sinking British ships or forcing them to dock in neutral ports.[43] During the second British war depicted in the novel as waged against the United States, Belfast is razed by Irish-

[42] Ibid., 20-25.
[43] Ibid., 98-104

American privateers which results in a major loss of civilian life.[44] Conversely, once the Admiralty recognizes naval engineers and elevates the best of them – Edward Haddow – to a position of authority where his expertise can be used to greatest effect, Britain is able to once again gain control of the seas and save the trade that Britain relies on to survive.[45] After Belfast is burned, the Admiralty brings engineers into the navy in droves and uses the newly-enlarged fleet to exact revenge by razing New York.[46] By comparing the two situations of his own creation, Burton suggests that if British naval engineers were given greater recognition Britain would be better able to organize naval defence.

Edward Haddow was Burton's exemplary man: the character he created in order to demonstrate what a man needed to be like to earn respect and gain legitimacy in command in the new steam navy. Burton's novel was clearly not simply an entertaining tale, but a guide for how naval engineers should endeavour to behave. It also forwarded a claim for what type of men deserved authority based on their capability to assert mastery of the sea. Haddow was seen to be pivotal in Britain's fictional victory over both France and the United States, both maintaining manful control of the engine room and its crew while serving below deck and advising the admirals on the important engineering considerations of the fleet above deck. Burton's statement that Haddow's qualities as a man "would in a more favoured branch of the navy have landed him in high honours" demonstrated that Burton believed Haddow and all naval engineers like him could and should rise to exercising their authority if the naval hierarchy was redesigned to allow it.

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[44] Ibid., 213-217.
[45] Ibid., 146-147, 160-175.
[46] Ibid., 224-226.

To drive the importance of exemplary men home, the narrator suggested that all his own patriotic and professional successes were achieved by embracing the qualities he now attributed to Haddow. Haddow was, Burton said, "only an example of the modern engineer officer [but] … he was the brightest and noblest example of them all."[47]

2.3 "Tainted with the Grease of the Oil Can and the Odour of the Lascar"

The second front on which conservatives in the Admiralty maintained the hegemonic position of the military naval officer involved marginalizing other men who might present a challenge to the executive officers' authority.[48] At the end of the nineteenth century as naval engineers made claims to greater authority based on their having mechanical skills that executive officers generally lacked, the latter linked the skills of engineers with people who were not capable of command. Executive officers and commentators sympathetic to them sought to associate the skills required to work in the engine room with working-class men and with racial others – specifically Lascar seamen. By associating the skills with Lascar seamen and working class "roughs", the executive officers could undermine the claims made by engineers that their engineering skills made them deserving of greater authority.

Naval engineers were middle-class men by virtue of their ability to pay for their education at Keyham College and were invariably white and British. Their skills could only be cast in the light of the working class and of racial others because of the kind of men who provided the labour in the stokeholds of the new steamships. Coal to produce the steam that powered the engines was fed by stokers who were, in turn, invariably

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[47] Ibid., 37.
[48] Connell, *Masculinities*, 80

working-class. In the merchant marine however growing numbers of Lascar seafarers were employed in this role.[49] Naval engineers recognized the Admiralty's negative attitude toward engineering skills and wrote about it in newspapers, professional magazines, and in popular media. In the process the phrase "Lascar and oil-can" emerged. It is most resonant as the trope used by engineers themselves in bitter or sarcastic rhetoric to denounce the Admiralty's ignorance of the difficulty of engineering. It identified race and class as key parts of the engineers' claims to authority and to the contest of their authority. Masculinity was implicit in the proposition about what kind of man did duty in the stokehold or engine room of a steamship.

The "Lascar with oil-can" trope came from an exchange between the Second Sea Lord Vice-Admiral Sir Anthony Hoskins and Sir Edward Reed during the Select Committee on Navy Estimates questions in 1888.[50] Hoskins, as Second Sea Lord, was responsible for manning the Royal Navy and overseeing all personnel issues including those of the engineers. Reed was a naval architect, Liberal Member of Parliament, and the former chief constructor of the navy. In his capacity as a Member of Parliament, Reed was a proponent of greater recognition for naval engineers as he himself was an engineer who had designed steamships and understood the importance of good engineering.[51] At a

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[49] See for example, V.C. Burton, "Counting Seafarers: The Published Records of the Registry of Merchant Seamen 1849-1913", *The Mariner's Mirror* 71, no. 3 (August, 1985), 305-320.

[50] *First Report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix*. (London: Henry Hansard and Son, 1888).

[51] His opinion on engineering was a respected one. He was appointed Chief Constructor of the navy at the very young age of thirty-three, a position he held until his resignation in 1870. His resignation was due to his opposition to the construction of the *Captain*, a top-heavy ironclad which was ordered built by the Admiralty despite Reed's warnings that it would have the potential to capsize. When the *Captain* capsized in 1871, killing nearly 500 men, his reputation for engineering questions was secured. Thus, his line of questioning directed at Hoskins was an informed one and one which was respected throughout England. See "Death of Sir Edward Reed", *The Times*, 1 December 1906, 6.

time when there were approximately 550 steamships in the Royal Navy, Reed suggested that having only 645 engineering officers compared to over 3,000 lieutenants was an unbalanced distribution of personnel. Without engines, he purposefully pointed out, the navy could not function.

However, Hoskins' riposte was that 645 engineers was more than enough to efficiently man the navy. He suggested that while the public believed that the complexity of the triple-expansion marine engines required many engineers to run them, much of the work was simple and was done by artificers rather than engineer officers.[52] The work was so simple, he claimed, that he had recently witnessed the engineering work aboard a Peninsular and Oriental merchant steamer done by a "Lascar [with] a bottle of oil" who lubricated the machinery, hoisted cargo, and drove the engine by himself. As such, Hoskins stated, the work could not be that difficult.[53] While Reed pressed Hoskins on the subject and pointed out that engineers were required for proper oversight of the engines, Hoskins would not admit that more naval engineers were required, nor that their skills were particularly complex.

The gist of Hoskins' answer was distilled down over the course of the next fifteen years into the "Lascar and oil-can" trope which appeared in the professional and popular

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[52] The Royal Navy used triple-expansion to the end of the nineteenth century, although Sir Charles Parson had been improving the steam turbine since 1884 and by 1898 the Controller of the Admiralty, who happened to be John Fisher prior to his tenure as Second Sea Lord, was actively engaged in tests to potentially switch the navy to steam turbines. Two turbine destroyers, the *Cobra* and the *Viper* were launched in 1901 and although they both foundered quickly, in 1903 the cruiser H.M.S. *Amethyst* was refitted with a turbine for trials against other ships of the same class with triple-expansion engines, trials which proved that turbines increased the speed of ships notably. Roger Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 211-212.

[53] *First Report from the Select Committee on Navy Estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix*, (London: Henry Hansard and Son, 1888), 82-83.

press. The seeming simplicity of the phrase "Lascar and oil can" belies the deep levels of meaning that was contained in the phrase for Britons interested in the status of naval engineers though even on first hearing it draws upon racial othering. The phrase invokes Lascar seafarers from Southeast Asia. Although Lascar seafarers were British subjects they were routinely subject to the prejudice that they were not part of the "British race". The use of "oil can" suggested an association with manual mechanical labour and dirtiness, something which had class implications in the navy where mechanical skills were necessary but treated as less important than the "art or craft" of navigation or sailing. Beyond these, however, is another layer of meaning tied to the perceived manliness of naval engineers. As feminists using intersectional analysis have shown, race, class, and gender operate together. Class and race are involved in masculinity, and are inescapably part of the period understanding of engineers.

We can learn more of class as a marginalizing factor in the Royal Navy from the observations of "An Undistinguished Naval Officer" published in 1885. Included in the mistakes made by the Royal Navy that this officer listed was appointing naval engineers from working-class backgrounds at the beginnings of naval steam power. The anonymous writer noted that it was a great error to give the first naval engineers commissioned officer status, albeit only as civil and not military officers: "it placed persons, who not only were not gentlemen, but were even destitute of every particle of refinement, in the position of gentlemen."[54] On the evidence of this "Undistinguished Officer", gentlemen officers were outraged by being forced to accept the "mere mechanics" who were "guilty

[54] "An Undistinguished Naval Officer", *The British navy in the present year of grace*, (London: Adams & Co., 1885), 82.

of improprieties of every description" as commissioned officers.[55] As steam developed in the navy, so too did the engineering department. Yet the author claimed the navy still failed to interest any middle-class men in joining the navy to be an engineer. This the officer attributed to the fact that the navy mostly separated the engineers from the higher-ranking military officers, a situation which meant the entirety of the engineers were "recruited from a class who – socially – were undesirable" and who had none of the character required to be officers in the navy. They were, the officer concluded, practical men but "emphatically cads" because of their working-class background.[56] He believed, like many others of his time, that the engineers' association with the working class disqualified them from ever taking command in the Royal Navy.

Regarding race and the British navy, there was an understanding in British seafaring that the capabilities of Lascar seafarers compared poorly to British men. Thus, to suggest that engineering skills were simple enough for a Lascar seaman to handle by himself was an insult to naval engineers. In the racist stereotyping of the day it bracketed officer engineers with men who filled lowly positions regarded as needing little skill. In the 1883 study *The British Navy* by prominent naval commentator Thomas Brassey, Brassey quoted the merchant shipowner Mr. Eustace Smith suggesting that five Lascar seamen were required to do the work of just two British seamen.[57] The perceived gap between the abilities of British and Lascar seamen was subjective and variable, but never erased. Later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Captain George Patey of the

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 84.
[57] Thomas Brassey, *The British Navy – Its Strength, Resources And Administration. Volume V. – Part V. – British Seamen*, (1883), 23-24.

Royal Navy, representing the Admiralty at a parliamentary enquiry, estimated it took three Lascar seamen to do the job of two British seamen.[58]

By suggesting that the tasks of engineers were easily handled by a Lascar and that they required what were essentially manual skills as indicated by the inclusion of the oil can, the Admiralty and proponents of maintaining executive officer authority suggested that engineering officers were not so far different from the ratings in the stokehold that they needed to be created as executive officers holding disciplinary and other authority. Conversely the engineering skills required to run an efficient and effective navy – skills critical to the mastery of the navy and the survival of the empire – gave engineers the possibility of asserting that they rather than executive officers were exemplary as naval men. Executive officers in turn repudiated this claim by associating engineering skills with men who could not be considered for positions of authority due to their perceived inherent defects. The "Lascar and oil can" trope demonstrated that race and class, both tied up in arguments about naval masculinity, were major components of determining which men were less manly and thus less appropriate for authority.

Over the 1890s and early 1900s, the "Lascar and oil-can" trope was used in magazines, newspapers, and novels whose primary audience was engineers to exemplify the routine slights experienced by their kind at the hands of the Admiralty. By these means engineers and their advocates drew attention to their own unfair association with marginalized groups. *The Engineer*, a well-subscribed magazine for British engineers,

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[58] *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade to Inquire into Certain Questions Affecting the Mercantile Marine with Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, and Index*, (London: Wyman & Sons, 1903), 403-405. [Cd. 1608].

printed letters to the editor in 1890 which condemned the "Lascar and oil-can" trope. One correspondent thought that if Admiral Hoskins believed engineering skills were not complex and important enough to be trusted to British men his ability to judge the situation should be questioned.

Remuneration entered into this discourse on the under-appreciated and under-valued engineer: in a letter from "C.P." he noted that in 1851 there was not much difference in the pay of engineers in the Mercantile Marine and the Royal Navy, and if anything, naval engineers' pay was better. Both naval and the merchant marine engineers' pay increased until 1870. It was then that the Royal Navy began training engineers themselves rather than recruiting men who had already served an engineering apprenticeship. With this change, the pay of naval engineers almost ceased to increase. The figure given – £400 per year – was a professional salary in 1870. But that was where it remained for the naval engineer. Meanwhile, merchant marine engineers' pay continued to rise. This situation, the writer argued, demonstrated that the navy did not care about its engineers. As a demonstration of the level of animosity the executive officers felt toward naval engineers, he also cited a military and naval journal which declared if the rank of naval engineer were seriously examined, it would be abolished altogether. The sorry state of pay and the suggestions by executive officers that naval engineers were redundant demonstrated to "C.P" that there were many officers at the Admiralty whose actions were guided by their adherence to the "Lascar and oil can" trope.[59]

[59] "C.P." "Letters to the Editor: Engineers in the Navy", *The Engineer*, (12 September 1890), 208.

"Lascar and oil can" was used in popular newspapers to point out the Admiralty's outdated attitude toward naval engineers. The *Evening Telegraph* in Angus, Scotland noted in September 1902 that the admirals displayed such social prejudice toward engineers by associating their skills with Lascar seafarers that "gentlemen of the highest technical and practical attainments" – men who could potentially be excellent naval engineers – were choosing to take their engineering talents elsewhere where they would be more respected.[60] The prejudice against engineering officers needed to be stopped, the author declared, or else the best-educated and most-experienced engineers would continue to join the merchant marine where they would be respected for their knowledge and allowed to organize professionally.[61] One major step the author identified to improve the status of the naval engineer was giving them a proper military rank and title, not simply a rank as a civil officer.[62] In this instance, the author of the letter expressed his concern that the Admiralty's poor attitude toward skilled mechanical workers, summed up by the "Lascar and oil can" trope, would hurt the navy's potential to find 'gentlemen' of the middle-class who were willing to demonstrate their mechanical skills as professional engineers if it meant being associated so closely with marginalized stokers and artificer mechanics. If naval men were supposed to be the ideals of British manhood

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[60] D.B. Morison, "Engineer Officers in H.M. Navy", *Evening Telegraph* reprint of article in *Page's Magazine*, (9 September 1902),

[61] H.C McMurray, "Technology and Social Change at Sea: The Status and Position of the Ship's Engineer, 1830-60", in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, eds., *Working Men Who Got Wet: proceedings of the fourth conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, July 24-July 26, 1980*, (St. John's: Maritime History Group, Memorial University, 1980), 35-50.

[62] Ibid.

in order to reassure the British people that they could protect the British Empire, the men could not be associated with men of non-British races or with working-class men.[63]

Thus, Francis Burton's use of the "Lascar and oil can" trope was a strategic decision to both draw attention to the alleged attitude that the Admiralty held toward the mechanical skill while demonstrating how foolish it was to hold that attitude. Burton did not attempt to suggest that engineers' mechanical skills were trivial, because it was those skills on which they based their claims to greater authority. However, he did attempt to demonstrate that having mechanical skills did not make engineers less manly or more suspicious. Rather, Burton argued that engineering skills increased their manly capability by granting naval engineers both physical and mental mastery of the running of an engine room. Burton and many engineers claimed mental and mechanical mastery was the most important part of the ship and thus the most important part of the navy and British defence. Through a narrative that described the manliness of the so-called ""Lascar and oil-can" crew" under dangerous and gruesome circumstances and their heroism in putting their life at risk for their ship and their nation, Burton tried to illustrate the qualities that made naval engineers into men deserving respect and authority in the Royal Navy.

Burton addressed the concerns the Admiralty held about the class of naval engineers throughout his novel. The old type of engineer, drawn from workshops and who allegedly gave rise to the association with the supposed 'roughness' of the working class, was represented by the character of the Scottish naval engineer Mr. McPherson. The novel's narrator is from a distinctly middle-class background with its focus on

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[63] Ibid.

restraint, professionalism, and family, and when he meets McPherson he treats him as something of a curiosity, noting that in his engineering classes he had only been taught by extremely proper men who "never indulged in bacchanalian or other orgies".[64] In contrast, McPherson had once in his younger days been reduced in rank by court martial for holding a particularly noisy "wine party", a scandal that had marred his entire career and left him as engineer on the older and out-of-date *Acorn*. His exposure to McPherson's lifestyle acts as a morality tale for the protagonist which "forcibly impressed on [him] the folly of riotous living" and strengthens his resolve to remain professional and restrained so that he would not suffer the same fate. It is McPherson's "baleful character" and his pernicious influence on youngsters he commands that marked him out at "unfitted … for association with gentlemen."[65] McPherson represents a middle-classes view of the working class now prejudicially attached to naval engineers – given over to lack of self-control, excess, and riotous living. The narrator is however confused by McPherson and his inability to pin him down to a stereotype demonstrates that Burton was distancing the new engineers from those who in the first phase of steam more readily supported working-class identification. Burton's inclusion in the novel of McPherson was to demonstrate that if the stereotype once held some credence it no longer held any reality in naval engineering. Young engineers with appropriately middle-class morals and a serious education were a new type who were making, in Burton's view, legitimate claims to greater authority. They were doing so without any ambiguity and thus could be separated even from men like McPherson.

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[64] Burton, *The Naval Engineer*, 3-5.
[65] Ibid., 4-5.

Burton's description in the novel of the schoolwork that the narrator completes at Keyham College prior to becoming an engineer is another indicator of the narrator's middle-class status. McPherson joined the navy through a system which brought him into the service directly from the factory, and thus he had less ground to claim professional status. As the professionalization of middle-class work began in the nineteenth century, market forces contributed to the social distinctions working through the ability of an individual or his family to pay for the education required to be a professional.[66] Francis Burton's juxtaposition of the "old and new" type of naval engineer – one as a man entered directly into the navy from a factory, the other coming from a family who paid for his engineering education – was a contrast between old and new which was the crux of the argument about the naval engineer's class. Burton took a non-orthodox view of the matter, suggesting that the working-class connections of the new kind of naval engineer were overstated, and thus there were fewer obstacles to a naval engineer potentially taking command of a ship. The necessity of being a middle-class man in order to claim naval authority was why it was so critical that Burton also created Edward Haddow, a man who was both practically capable but also clearly refined by a civilizing education. When Haddow was described by Burton as working hard "at college" to attain the "finely-cultured mind of the scientific student", this was not simply a comment on Haddow's mental capabilities: Haddow came from a class that could afford to attend college, and perhaps more so rightly belonged in the nation's "finishing schools" for the

[66] Valerie Burton, "The Making of a Nineteenth-Century Profession: Shipmasters and the British Shipping Industries", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 1, no. 1 (1990), 101-102.

country's shapers and movers.[67] Burton was clear too that the skills of engineers were sufficiently complex that they warranted intensive training in college. This was a rejoinder to those who dismissed mechanical work in the navy as "Lascar and oil can" jobs. Those critics should open their ranks to naval engineers and see what unique knowledge the latter possessed.

Burton drew attention to the class of naval engineers at another point in his novel: during the fictionalized British war against the United States that followed the destruction of Belfast in an American privateer raid. Mr. Haddow is made responsible for finding the appropriate number of naval engineers to meet the new demands of a naval war with the United States, and his first act is to meet with the heads of the trade unions representing land-based engineers. Burton suggests these unions boycotted the Royal Navy because of its poor treatment of naval engineers in the past and the unions' previous inability to engage the Admiralty, but when Haddow acknowledges their political power, he changes the situation. Under normal circumstances such an arrangement, which resolves the problem by bringing many capable engineers to the navy, would never be imagined possible. Dire circumstances had made Haddow's solution possible. Burton encompassed the engineering labour leaders in his description of patriotic Britons, suggesting that they too did not want to see their country lose a war. Patriotism counter-balanced any working-class affiliations. Still, the men that the unions supplied were placed in mechanical jobs while engineering officers were brought in from the merchant marine and land-based engineering works. Even in this sympathetic fictional account middle-

[67] Burton, *The Naval Engineer*, 37.

class status was needed for an engineer to hold officer rank.[68] Despite the success of Haddow's scheme for supplying the navy with engineers, shortly after the American war was won, the unions and the navy returned to feuding. Unable or unwilling to bridge the class distinctions which were associated with engineering works, the Royal Navy left Britain open to further existential threat by failing to recognize the importance of the men who ran the engine rooms of their ships.

The other marginalizing factor naval engineers faced was their perceived manliness compared to men of other races, especially the Lascar seamen who were becoming a larger part of the merchant marine. Much as engineers in the merchant marine were denigrated as "mechanics in overalls", an indication of the lack of social standing of skilled labour, naval engineers were denigrated in a racial way: by having their skills associated with the "Lascar with oil can" trope.[69] Francis Burton used the phrase in a sardonic manner throughout his novel as a way of thoroughly drawing attention to the insulting nature of the phrase and its inappropriateness when describing the skilled work of the naval engine room. Engineers were men who risked their lives for the navy and their country and held an even greater risk of dying in defence of the empire than the executive officers and the deck ratings.

Burton took great pains to repudiate the association of naval engineering skill – and those who practiced these skills most often, the artificers and stokers – with the taint

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[68] Ibid., 221-222.

[69] Valerie Burton, "The Making of a Nineteenth-Century Profession", 110. V. Burton points to "mechanics in overalls" as a trope which the masters of merchant marine ships used to detract from the skills of engineers.

of "grease of the oil can and the odour of the Lascar."[70] Instead, he argued, the true nature of the engine room labourers was that they were hard working, brave, efficient, and dutiful men who were prepared to die for their country. His depiction of the engine room crew was glowing, and the skills that they were shown exercising established they had ample capacity to serve their country. He rejected the "Lascar and oil can" trope to invoke naval engineering skills by using it ironically in his description of the perfect efficiency and capability of the crew in complex situations. The novel's narrator relates: "'The "Lascar and oil can' could have been seen at work on [H.M.S.] *Terrible* this day in highest perfection, but it was a perfection of detail, an adaptation and economy of means, of which the gallant admiral who invented the insulting phrase could have no conception."[71] By profiling the complex nature of mechanical skills while suggesting that the "gallant admiral" (Admiral Hoskins) could have no conception of the difficulties of engineering, Burton demonstrated that mechanical skills were not simple enough to be completed by the weak Lascar seaman as envisaged in the recurrent discourse, but he also suggested that the Admiralty itself was short of what it needed for naval mastery if its admirals did not recognize skills which they might never accomplish. Skills, then, were an important part of the attempt to create a new exemplary naval man who could command the navy and ensure British superiority. A lack of mechanical skills would leave naval administration with a serious blind spot which would lead to questions of the capability of the Royal Navy to project British power and protect the British nation.

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[70] Burton, *The Naval Engineer*, 85.
[71] Ibid., 62.

The next significant opportunity for Burton to juxtapose the "Lascar and oil can" trope with the complexity and importance of the naval engineers' skills was a gruesome scene during the fictional "Second Battle of Toulon". Burton describes the details of a shell exploding in the engine room and destroying a boiler. The event kills many stokers and artificers. Burton envisages the engineers and their subordinates under serious threat of losing their lives in manly defence of their country. By his account naval engineers are just as willing to put their lives on the line in service of the empire, even more so than executive officers. Thus engineers deserved to be considered equals with executives in terms of their claims to masculine status and naval authority. Burton writes:

> The scene was appalling. Not only were men blown to pieces by the shell explosion, but others, even outside the boiler-room, were severely scalded by the escaping steam. The sufferers were engineers, artificers, and stokers, the idlers and non-combatants of the ship, members of the "Lascar and oil-can" crew, who were unfitted for the honours and promotions of the [executive officers], but not unfitted for the martyrdom of parboiling in high-pressure steam. … they so died, or for a time lingered in almost unendurable suffering in the simple discharge of the duty they had undertaken for their country.[72]

Burton uses "Lascar and oil-can" in a woeful and ironic manner. Engineers, stokers, and artificers died in the line of duty just as men above decks did, and yet they received no reward, recognition, or respect for the perils they faced. Their manly heroism was not acknowledged at the Admiralty and thus they went unrecognized as men and heroes. Again, Burton rejected the "Lascar and oil can" trope by profiling the masculine exertions of naval engineers and other skilled engine room ratings and narrating those endeavours

[72] Ibid., 160.

in such a way that the Admiralty is seen to be prejudiced in considering them too routine to warrant serious consideration.

Burton's novel, and the wider used of the "Lascar and Oil Can" trope in engineering journals and the press, highlighted how considerations of race and class factored into questions of authority and were tied up in masculine language. Naval engineers and their advocates like Burton sought to both create new exemplary naval men such as Edward Haddow and turn around the associations of engineering skills with working-class stokers and racial others by repudiating the phrase "Lascar with an Oil Can". Francis Burton's novel was an instance of a new naval exemplar created in popular culture which found its pitch against the old, out-of-touch executive officers present at the Admiralty. The admirals' ineptitude throughout the novel, when not guided by naval engineers, led to British disaster and threats to the survival of the empire. When naval engineers were granted power, the Royal Navy triumphed convincingly. The Royal Navy was becoming key to the survival of the British Empire at the end of the nineteenth century. Thus Burton's portrayal of its non-engineering personnel as failing abysmally during war when the empire was threatened was particularly powerful. It posed the question of which type of men ought to be hegemonic in the Royal Navy, and provided a clear answer.

The fact that naval engineers were not being recognized by being granted greater authority or access to promotion into the executive officer branch demonstrated to naval engineers that their profession in the navy, because of its association to their working-class industrial subordinates, was "tainted with the grease of the oil can and the odour of

the Lascar."[73] The marginalizing factors of class and race were used to detract from the skills of engineers and their subordinates by suggesting that they were not of paramount importance in the functioning of an effective navy. Paradoxically this was at odds with an increasing belief in Parliament and the public that engineers were necessary for Britain to keep pace technologically, and thus militarily, with its European rivals. The sardonic use of the "Lascar and oil can" phrase by engineering advocates such as Francis Burton was a way to repudiate the negative associations particularly when what the phrase conjured up could be juxtaposed with the difficult and sometimes horrific reality of naval engineering work in battle. That engineers could remain calm and commanding even in the face of horrifying situations where their subordinates were being parboiled to death from exploding boilers was a mark of their capability as men to command other men. Their quick action to minimize the suffering of their men while ensuring their ship remained functioning in battle showed their mastery as men which was necessary for the Royal Navy to reassure the British public, the "old women of both sexes", that they were capable imperial defenders.[74]

The new ideas about who was an exemplary naval man were not only present in popular culture, however. They were also a part of the deliberations that were taking place at the Admiralty around the discussion of the Selborne reform scheme published on Christmas Day 1902. The justifications given for the reforms drew heavily on assumptions about masculinity that were established as part of a "naval imperial commons" in naval literature from the press, Parliament, and popular culture such as

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[73] Ibid., 85.
[74] John Fisher, *Memories* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 18.

Burton's novel. The members of the Admiralty Board, especially John Fisher, looked to the future of the navy, changing the way in which naval men were to be admitted and trained to ensure that all men were capable, after passing the basic examinations, of joining whichever branch of the navy – engineering, executive, or marine – they wanted. The proponents of the Selborne Scheme hoped to ensure that all men, trained together, would have the basic engineering skills that would help towards their status as exemplary men in respect of accomplishing any task they might face in the service of empire. Thus, an executive officer would have enough knowledge of engineering to legitimately command men of the engineering branch. The attempt to train executive officers in basic engineering was an effort to undercut the claims that only naval engineers possessed the mechanical skills required to effectively command the navy and thus were worthy of authority. The Selborne Scheme was an admission by the Admiralty that engineering skills were a necessary component of claiming legitimate naval authority, an admission made necessary by the changing nature of skill and mastery in the cultural imagination of British naval masculinity.

Chapter 3: Masculinity and the Selborne Scheme

The Selborne Scheme was Admiral John Fisher's attempt to grapple with the new situation in which the Royal Navy found itself at the end of the nineteenth century. As the technology of the navy changed, the ways which men demonstrated mastery at sea changed with it. Men who understood the new technology, the naval engineers, wanted new authority that they felt their skills warranted. As a result, Fisher recognized that in order to maintain the hierarchy of command in the navy and retain the image of its officers as capable, efficient, and heroic men, executive officers would need to have some understanding of naval engineering. The Selborne Scheme aimed to pacify the naval engineers and reaffirm executive officers as men capable of commanding the major instrument of British imperial dominance. It was a sweeping reform in the training of officers, military and civil alike, that eliminated separate schools and training in favour of training and housing all together for the first four years and providing some uniformity in the three years of sea experience that followed.[1] Fisher's insistence in the Selborne Memorandum which outlined the reforms that engineering training be standard for all military and civil officers was an acknowledgment that as naval hegemonic masculinity changed in response to new technology, the means by which officers would be judged to be good commanders needed to change.

This reform was expected to eliminate the complaints of future naval engineers. They would, in the future, be commanded by newly-trained executive officers with engineering experience. More immediate remedies to the engineers' grievances were also

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[1] TNA, *Admiralty, Board Minute: Scheme for Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers, Men, and Boys for the Royal Navy*, 21 November 1902, ADM 7/941

incorporated into the Selborne Scheme. Engineering officers' titles were modified to underscore their military importance for they could now be "admirals", "captains", and "lieutenants". In reality however engineers' authority was not much extended, nor were positions on the Board of Admiralty turned over to them. As *The Times* editorial of 25 December 1902 stressed they were granted no new authority or advancement opportunity. With these half-measures the Admiralty might well have reaffirmed the stigma associated with naval engineers in the navy and confirmed suspicions that they thought the latter untrustworthy. The Selborne Scheme is therefore not to be seen as overthrowing of an old hegemonic masculine order by new masculine challengers to hegemony, but instead as a compromise by the Admiralty that bolstered the status quo.

The Selborne Scheme was published shortly after the Boer War at a time when the British military and the larger society were grappling with realization that many British men were unfit for military service. Not only was the rate at which men were refused for army service in the Boer War a revelation, but also the ability of the rural Boer settlers to maintain their struggle for so long against the might of the British Empire was salutary. They refused to surrender for three years, leading many British thinkers and politicians to fear that the British would in future be unable to maintain their empire.[2] Despite the Royal Navy's success in fighting the Boers on land with special naval artillery regiments which saved the British army from total defeat, the atmosphere of uncertainty around the capability of British men to fulfill Britain's imperial ambitions provided an opportunity for the Royal Navy to address their long-running problem with engineering officers. This

[2] Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", *History Workshop* 5 (Spring, 1978), 12.

problem became increasingly known to Edwardians as the "Engineer Question".[3] This cut to the heart of naval masculinity as it involved questioning what role naval engineers deserved to fill in the navy based on their skills, how they measured up to the qualifications for appropriate naval character, and whether tradition best resolved which men should command the navy and protect British imperial and national interests.

The "Engineer Question" was not only an internal debate in the Royal Navy, but also a widely considered public concern. In 1900, Vice-President D.B. Morison of the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders addressed the institute on the link between naval engineers and sea power, noting that with over 500 steam vessels in the Royal Navy, of which 258 were sea-going and the remainder were patrol and supply vessels, the "association of engineering with naval power is so intimate and pervasive that it has acquired predominating influence upon [naval power]."[4] Now that it was no longer possible to deny the importance of naval engineering skills in maintaining British naval supremacy, claims that engineers could be exemplary figures of naval masculinity such as those forwarded in Francis Burton's novel could also no longer be denied. With the shifting of hegemonic masculinity to require more mechanically-capable men, the legitimacy of the Admiralty and executive officers' authority was under threat. The Selborne Scheme was an attempt to acknowledge the new reality which would require

[3] T.T. Jeans, ed., *Naval Brigades in the South African War 1899-1900*, 2nd edn., (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2010 [original 1902]), xv-xix.
[4] D.B. Morison, "The British Naval Engineer: His Present Position and Influence on our Sea Power", in *Transactions of the North-East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders*, Vol. XVI, (London: Andrew Reid & Company, 1900), 185.

that engineering knowledge be threaded into the profile of the men who were expected to be the navy's commanders.

This solution to the "Engineer Question" was confronted by two major difficulties. The first was recruitment of enough engineers to fill positions in the engine rooms of naval vessels. Throughout the 1890s, recruitment of naval engineers became very difficult. Some commentators speculated that it was due to the poor treatment of engineers who made their careers in the navy compared with the merchant marine.[5] Compounding marine engineers' reluctance to join the navy were the navy's high standards for testing the merits of candidates. High naval standards for engineers meant that potential engineers were expected to work harder to gain employment while adhering to stricter discipline but also while experiencing greater disrespect and less opportunity to advance their career than their counterparts in the merchant marine. As one commentator put it, few parents wanted to send their bright boys to train at the Keyham Engineering College only to enter what was considered a dead-end profession when they could find much better employment with their same skills elsewhere.[6] The Admiralty's response was to enter "special service engineers" directly from non-naval training schools, a move which threw further doubts on the professional capabilities of the engineering officers since the quality of training of special service engineers was in doubt. Recruiting from training colleges was seen even by engineers as disadvantageous since it might

[5] "C.P.", "Letters to the Editor: Engineers of the Navy", *The Engineer*, (12 September 1890), 208.
[6] Monkswell, "The New Admiralty Scheme", *The Times*, 14 January 1903, 8.

compromise their claims to the public's respect for their technical expertise, manly capabilities, and naval character.[7]

The second difficulty was how engineers, whose duties were increasingly being carried out by artificers when engineers were not available, were expected to maintain control of their engine rooms when they themselves relied on their officers, above deck, to punish the men in the engine room. The engineer officer was subordinate to the executive officers but exercised command over the ratings of the engine room: the engine room artificers and the stokers. Artificers were mechanics, typically carrying out the dirty work of repairs and maintenance, although their role at the end of the nineteenth century was changing as the number of engineer officers were limited and some of the key duties of engineers in terms of monitoring the engines were given to artificers. The stokers, or firemen, were responsible for shovelling coal in the heat of the engine room which provided the ultimate motive power for the steamship. While engineer officers had command over these men, they did not have the same authority as executive officers because they could not dole out punishments for artificers or for stokers nor could they sit on courts martial if stokers, artificers, or engineers were on trial.

In terms of career advancement, engineers' options were limited as well. Naval engineers could advance administratively to work for the Admiralty as engineering advisors subordinate to the Controller of the Navy, but they could not themselves advance to command of the ship nor to a position as a Sea Lord on the Admiralty Board. Limited opportunity to advance through the ranks left many engineers aggravated with the navy.

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[7] Robert L. Davison, *The Challenge of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 129.

Years of experience and technical training and the career expectations of their middle-class families had, they thought, entitled them to more.

The reform scheme began by acknowledging the new importance of engineering skill as a part of the exemplary naval officer. "In the old days", the memorandum argued, "it sufficed if a Naval Officer were a seaman. Now he must be sailor, gunner, soldier, engineer, and man of science as well."[8] It continued that there were two elements in the creation of the modern naval officer: first, the formal education of Greenwich College which aided in the "formation of character" and second, the training by which the man of proper character mastered a "mass of technical knowledge." In the past, the navy had succeeded on the merits of the first part of the equation alone – that is, on the naval character of its officers. However, the future required that the second part of the equation be filled if Britain was to remain master of the seas.[9] For the naval man to accomplish the imperial ambitions of Britain and, in the words of John Fisher, "allay the fears of "women of both sexes"", he now needed to demonstrate that he was skilled in naval engineering.

So that naval officers might acquire the necessary training to understand the workings of the engine room of their ships, what the Admiralty planned in the Selborne Scheme was an end to the separate admittance of naval officer, marines, and engineering officers. All the officer class was to enter the same cadet program together. They would start at the age of twelve or thirteen at which age the "boys can be moulded to the desired form."[10] They would then train together in physics and engineering for four years after

[8] TNA, *Admiralty Board Minute*, 21 Nov 1902, ADM 7/941.
[9] Ibid., 1.
[10] Ibid., 2.

which time they would be sent for three years to sea to work in the naval engine rooms under the supervision of the fleet's existing officers. After three years at sea, the cadets would return to Greenwich College where they would take a further three months' training in mathematics, navigation, and pilotage before being sent to Portsmouth for a six-month course in gunnery, torpedo, and engineering. This allegedly rigorous program of training focused heavily on the technical aspect of seafaring in steamships. It would produce, the Admiralty claimed, a homogenous group of technically-capable men. These highly-trained men could then, at age nineteen or twenty, choose to specialize either as an executive officer, an engineering officer, or an officer of the marines.[11] The system was meant to eliminate the perceived differences of capability between the branches and give those who chose to be executive officers the background in engineering which would give them legitimacy when it came to commanding authority, most notably over the engineering staff and engineering officers.

The Selborne Scheme could not eliminate all differences, however, and specialized engineering training was provided for some of men in the hope they would choose to be engineering officers. Any sub-lieutenant cadets who determined to specialize in engineering would take a further two years of courses at Keyham to deepen their knowledge of engineering before they were raised to the status of engineering lieutenant and sent to sea. Men who chose engineering would become part of a system which would see them able to earn promotions to the same titles as executive officers, and there was a promise that the most successful engineers would be appointed to positions that were

[11] Ibid., 3-4.

equivalent to admirals and other high-ranking officers of the executive branch. However, 'equivalent' did not mean 'equal', as any engineering officers would be disallowed from ever exercising command as executive officers.[12]

The Admiralty was satisfied that the new system of admittance and training would in due course eliminate the grievances of the naval engineers. The new kind of engineer would be more willing to be commanded by officers with several years of technical training since all would have entered the Royal Navy in the same way and have shared experiences as classmates. In the meantime, the seniority titles of existing engineers were made the same as other naval officers though an "(E)" appended to their titles meant they could be distinguished as engineers. Thus, the Engineer-in-Chief of the navy and the Chief Inspectors of Machinery became "Rear-Admirals (E)", Inspectors of Machinery became "Captains (E)", Fleet Engineers became "Commanders (E)", Staff Engineers, Chief Engineers, and Engineers became "Lieutenants (E)", and the temporary service engineers entered directly from technical colleges would be "sub-lieutenants (E)". These titles reflected executive rank but it was stressed that the engineers' new titles would "in no way alter the existing status of Engineer Officer or confer *executive* rank on them, or involve a change of uniform."[13] As a status symbol this might have been acceptable to some engineers, but it did nothing to address the underlying discontent about authority and the opportunities to advance to command.

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[12] Ibid., 6-7. This limitation was meant to be offset by giving engineering officers better pay than executive officers.
[13] Ibid., 18

The major grievance which remained was that engineers were still unable to give punishment to their subordinates nor could they sit on courts martial when engine room workers were being judged. The Admiralty's refusal to grant this degree of authority to engineers suggested that it still believed authority should be concentrated in the captain of the ship and his deputy. Significantly the Admiralty framed the ability to punish as a responsibility and a burden: "there is no task more disagreeable than that of punishing" an official opined.[14] Arguing that devolving this power would be a step toward a loss of control in the navy, the Admiralty not only opposed any change but also underscored its opposition to divided authority by withdrawing the very limited power to punish men given to officers of the watch. Engineers would remain banned from sitting on courts martial, only being summoned as special technical advisors to the court when issues affecting the engine room were brought to a court martial.[15] In all of these refusals to bend to the engineers' demands the Admiralty can be seen as unwilling to risk losing its hold on determining what constituted exemplary masculine behaviour.

The Admiralty was less interested in allowing engineers access to the authority of the executive officers and more interested in ensuring that the existing officers maintained their authority by giving them the technical training that they lacked. The Admiralty did not recognize that the engineers' discontent was deeper than a demand for ceremonial military titles. The engineers believed that they met the exemplary standard set forth in a cultural imaginary of British masculinity and as such deserved to be allowed an opportunity to exercise power. In order to maintain the Admiralty's authority, Fisher

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[14] Ibid., 19
[15] Ibid., 19-20.

determined to ensure that all executive officers had some technical knowledge of the engine room. The Selborne Memorandum he wrote dictated that in the future, all men would have the same basic engineering training. Basic engineering training, he hoped, would mean that future naval engineers would respect the masculine authority of the executive officers. This does not mean they considered engineering skills difficult to master, however. The alleged simplicity of the skills still undercut any special claim to naval status by engineers. Existing naval engineering officers possessed skills that many at the Admiralty considered simple enough for a Lascar to accomplish and for working-class artificers to carry out. Thus, there was no special reason to grant them any new authority or opportunity to rise in the navy as executive officers.

The justification when the Selborne Memorandum was presented before Parliament by Lord Selborne in December 1902 was overtly gendered by assumptions about the men who would fill authority roles in the navy. The memorandum spoke of the necessity of adding a greater scientific training to the officer's education but in doing so, still preserve the "unmistakeable naval character" of those officers. This character was developed early in training. The memorandum emphasized responsibility and the self-reliance that came from responsibility. The arc which framed this was the "essential unity of the Service" or the ways that men felt they were linked together in brotherhood by their service. He also noted that while the education system in the Royal Navy had been criticized during the transition from sail to steam, the character of officers, which was more important than knowledge, had remained unimpeached. Of course, he stated, the

best naval officers were those who merged excellent character with a high level of professional knowledge, and that was the aim of the new scheme.[16]

"Unmistakeable naval character", as we know, meant the seafarer was from the middle-class and was a white British male. And while the scheme appeared to acknowledge that the existing naval engineers in 1902 were of utmost importance to the navy and that they were worthy of high status in the navy, there was still indication in the Admiralty's refusal to grant any new and meaningful authority to the naval engineers that they believed the engineers were not men of 'unmistakeable naval character'. The provisions in the scheme to train a new type of engineering officer in the future also indicate that the navy was addressing a reality of masculine command that had emerged unforeseen as naval technology rapidly advanced. If executive officers expected their authority to be considered legitimate, they needed to have knowledge of how their ships ran. This knowledge was a support to demonstrating manly mastery of the job.

The cost of the extensive education that the new scheme ushered in was also a factor in weeding out boys from families that might find it difficult to pay for expensive education. This cost was high enough to indicate they were intended for the middle-classes. The increased cost of training was not necessarily considered an acceptable way to accomplish this goal, however. Critics of the new system pointed out that that the costs attendant on having engineers and executive officers commence their training together was a significant new expense for entries to the engineering branch. A commentator in *The Times* questioned whether parents would be willing to pay £500 for their sons to

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[16] *Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training, and Employment of Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines,* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 3. [Cd. 1386].

enter the navy for training with no guarantee that they would secure an engineer's position at the end of their four years of training.[17] Still, it appears that the cost of education was being used to ensure the professionalization of the engineer's position and make it more appealing to students and parents who might choose it now that it was considered thoroughly middle-class and exclusive.[18]

Another insight into attempts to eliminate the working-class connotations of naval engineering is to be found in responses to the questions that the Admiralty asked of the United States Navy as it prepared the final report on the Selborne Scheme. The American navy had several years' lead in eliminating the difference between engineering and executive branches such that the British Admiralty could treat it as a case study. Speaking about the social class of engineers entered into the American navy, Rear-Admiral Evans of the United States Naval Squadron in China argued that when engineering officers were drawn from workshops rather than trained in the navy they were divided in their allegiance. Undoubtedly, the rear-admiral acknowledged, the old type of naval engineer "owed, in addition to the proper allegiance to his Captain, an allegiance to his profession of Engineer, to the traditions of that profession, to its Unions and their governing bodies."[19] Evans' statement was a dire warning to admirals, as divided loyalties would undermine discipline, leave executive officers with potentially insubordinate engineers,

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[17] Monkswell, "The New Admiralty Scheme", *The Times*, 14 January 1903, 8.
[18] For an example of this phenomenon in the merchant marine, see Valerie Burton's study of the professionalization of the role of master on merchant ships. Valerie Burton, "The Making of a Nineteenth-Century Profession: Shipmasters and the British Shipping Industry", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 1, no. 1 (1990), 97-118.
[19] TNA, "The Engineer Question in the United States Navy. Report of Captain Troubridge, R.N., Naval Attaché, of a Conversation with Rear-Admiral Evans, Commanding the United States Naval Squadron in China, on the Naval Engineering System that prevails in the United States Navy", 66. ADM 7/941.

and undermine the effectiveness of the Royal Navy. Evans suggested that if British naval engineers were trained exclusively in the navy, the efficiency of the service would be hugely increased because there would be no divided allegiances and discipline would be maintained much more easily. While this had always been the goal of the Admiralty, the reportedly harsh conditions, high standards, and questionable social standing of apprenticed engineers made boys and their families avoid naval engineering as a profession. Recruiting and training boys destined for the executive and engineering branches together, it was hoped, would eliminate these reservations.

Where advocates for the naval engineers argued for the engineers' manly qualities and rejected the marginalized masculinities associated with engineering, members of the Admiralty saw agitators who could be replaced with new cadets that would undoubtedly have the required "unmistakeable naval character" to command. The engineers who were trained under the new system would be beyond the influence of trade unions and would be commanded by executive officers who could theoretically forward the legitimacy of their masculine authority over engineers because they themselves would have technical engineering experience. While many commentators promoted the scheme as a revolution, it did not fundamentally alter the status of the existing naval engineers, nor did it grant any greater power to future naval engineers.[20] Executive officers would learn engineering well enough, it was hoped, to make them trusted as the men who could be relied on to defend the empire. The engineers that trained with them for the first seven years, however, would still not be qualified to be executive officers once they specialized at the

[20] Editorial, *The Times*, 25 December 1902, 7. Geoffrey Penn makes the same point in *Up Funnel, Down Screw!*, 137.

end of their training into one of the officer branches. While a spirit of camaraderie between boys and young men trained together for so long was expected to ease tensions between the branches, the lot of the naval engineer would remain essentially the same. The Selborne Scheme changed little in terms of conferring a new more powerful status on naval engineers.

"A Present Engineer Officer" wrote *The Times* with his thoughts on the Selborne Scheme only a few months after it was made public.[21] He began by expressing some satisfaction that the scheme demonstrated that the Admiralty understood the all-important nature of naval engineering, but then expressed serious reservations. It was, "a somewhat barren honour to be styled Engineer Lieutenant or Engineer Rear-Admiral" if authority as an executive officer did not come with the title. This correspondent placed huge emphasis on a recognition of engineers' entitlement, stating that "authority itself … is by no means a small matter. … [S]uch officially recognized authority is absolutely essential to the real efficiency of the engine-room department."[22] That for so long discipline had been maintained by engineers in the engine room without the officially recognized authority, he argued, was due to the critical thinking, leadership, and problem solving capabilities that engineering training gave to engineers which clearly matched or surpassed those of the executive officers. By this fact, the engineer concluded, "the engineer officer of the present must be entirely assimilated to the new order of things" because he had proved his capability to have authority through his engineering skills.[23] The writer, while expressing

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[21] A Present Engineer Officer, "The New Admiralty Scheme From A Naval Engineer's Point of View", *The Times*, 12 February 1903, 6.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

hope for the scheme, also made the case that naval engineers could legitimately claim authority in the navy because of their engineering skills without mentioning the race- and class-based concerns the Admiralty had about the masculinity of engineers. The letter's author was making a case for a new kind of hegemonic masculinity which saw engineering mastery as one way to legitimately claim authority in the navy.

Another letter was sent to *The Times* and published shortly after the Selborne Scheme became public. Lord Charles Beresford took up a defence of the Selborne Scheme. Although he acknowledged that engineers had never received the recognition they desired, he also noted that "there is no cast-iron secret or mystery with regard to marine engineering".[24] Implicit in his argument was that navigation skills made officers and commanders of men, and that simply knowing engineering was not good enough. But then he concluded that executive officers would still have to be "born leader[s] of men thus naturalizing the attributes of men who rose to command through a familiarity with navigational skills."[25]

Lord Thomas Brassey more bluntly addressed the social class of naval engineers in a letter to *The Times* in which he praised the Selborne Scheme for ending the practice of recruiting different parts of the Royal Navy from different classes of men.[26] Efficiency, he argued, would come from standardizing naval education and he praised the Admiralty

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[24] Charles Beresford, "Lord C. Beresford On The New Admiralty Scheme", *The Times*, 1 January 1903, 4. Beresford's belief that engineers could never command was revealed in 1911 when he wrote his polemic denouncing Admiral Fisher's reforms which occurred after the Selborne Scheme – notably the 1905 reform which removed barriers between engineer and executive officers. After 1905, engineers could compete for the same positions of authority as executive officers – a situation which Beresford thought was outrageous and destroyed the capability of the navy to protect Britain and the empire. See Lord Charles Beresford, *The Betrayal*, (London, 1912).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Lord Brassey, "The New Admiralty Scheme", *The Times*, 8 January 1903, 8.

for proposing it in the Selborne Scheme. Instead of every branch being admitted separately, and thus creating serious class divides between branches that caused animosity and disrupted discipline, every naval officer would be reconciled by having a class position in common. Admitted to the service together, they would become a "band of brothers", all equal to each other. Brassey thought this would placate the naval engineers who were demanding social and economic advances for their profession. The new men, with skills from every part of the naval hierarchy, would be overall "fully efficient" officers able to do all that was required of them in combat situations.[27] Brassey argued that the new system would ensure that only what he considered the proper type of man would be entered into the Royal Navy. This proper type was a man who came from the middle class but who had skills that would ensure that he could legitimately claim command over all other men including the engineers. Recruiting and training the men together would ensure that all men accepted the hierarchy of the navy and looked to the executive officers as the manly exemplar by which all naval men would be measured – something which ensured the executive officer's legitimacy to exercise authority over the other men.

It is also interesting to note that those who questioned the necessity of engineering skills in executive officers were met with gendered ridicule, further indication of the gendered nature of naval policy making. A letter from a member of the Order of Bath signed "Tria Juncta in Uno" asserted that everyone in the navy was to be engineers now because otherwise the navy would not function. That a member of the Order of Bath, a

[27] Ibid.

society dedicated to honoring chivalrous manhood with its roots dating back to the Middle Ages, was suggesting naval engineering skills were a necessity of naval manhood is another indication of the gendered nature of the Selborne Scheme.[28] The inevitability of engineers rising to command fleets was likened to the inevitability of the sun's movements or the movement of a glacier. Any man who opposed it was infantilized and emasculated. If a man advocated for the ability to be an executive officer without engineering training, he was nothing more than a "little cadet (standing four feet nothing in his shoes)" who would "turn up his dear little nose at the rest and call them "greasers" [engineers] and "lobsters" [marines] and probably a big, big D as a prefix, if his mother hadn't been careful of him in the nursery." [29]

Ultimately, while the Admiralty had made attempts to address the engineering problem, its position was ambivalent, neither embracing the new exemplar of the executive officer nor upholding its older manifestation. By the turn of the twentieth century, the admirals on the board needed to acknowledge that technical engineering skills were critical to the functioning of the Royal Navy. Their decision to change cadet training by adding engineering skills, led by John Fisher, was an admission that the system in which executive officers could claim military authority simply through their

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[28] "Tria Juncta in Uno", the Order of Bath's motto meaning "Three joined in one", was a fortuitous coincidence for the correspondent in the context of the Selborne Reform which was a move toward unifying the three major officer branches of the navy – the executive, the engineers, and the marines – into one branch. See "Order of the Bath", *The official website of The British Monarchy*, available http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Honours/OrderoftheBath.aspx, [accessed 7 June 2015].

[29] Tria Juncta in Uno, "The New Admiralty Scheme", *The Times*, 14 January 1903, 8. The reference to the "Big, big D" as a prefix for "greasers" and "lobsters" is adding a curse to their names (as in, "Damn greasers") popularized by Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The suggestion that he might use a big, big D if his mother had not been careful with him in the nursery might be a suggestion that he was himself so much a scourge in the nursery that his mother prefaced his name with a "big, big D". See Eric Partridge, *Routledge Dictionary of Historical Slang*, (London: Routledge, 1973), 1305.

social class and military titles was no longer tenable. However, this admission did not lead to greater authority for those men who did have the technical skills, because they were still marginalized by the rhetoric of class and race associated with them. The Admiralty's refusal to take any action beyond giving naval engineers hollow military-style titles with no corresponding increase in naval authority indicated that men who occupied a hegemonic position were loath to allow their position to be usurped. The new type of engineer was further denied the opportunity to rise to a position of command or to preside at the disciplinary processes of the Royal Navy, notably the functioning of courts martial. Executive officers were to remain the only men in the navy considered appropriate to exercise authority. Given its hierarchical nature, it is not surprising that the Admiralty was not moved to allow another group of men to successfully assert their own claims to legitimacy in command. More was at stake than class in the configuration of authority. Masculinity was defined in a way that upheld the existing power structure.

Attention to the operations of hegemonic masculinity in the Royal Navy indicates that masculinity was an ever-present influence in the decisions that the Admiralty made, and not just as a sideshow, but as a key component of naval thought when it came to personnel. The Selborne Memorandum was not simply a document which outlined common-sense reforms, but part of an argument over the changing nature of masculine naval authority. Authority was accessed by men who could meet the standard of the exemplary naval man and this was influenced by forces both inside and outside the Royal Navy. This exemplar was discussed in the navy but the institution was in the end deeply enmeshed in popular culture, for gender was an all-encompassing reference for life and work.

Conclusion

That the Selborne Scheme is replete with references to masculinity alerts historians to how strongly knotted together were concepts of naval authority and a specific way of being a man. In light of this evidence it is surprising that any naval historians ignore masculinity. Yet the most popular naval history ignores masculinity entirely in favour of celebrations of nationalism or praise for admirals as sublime, superhuman figures. While it is true that masculinity is difficult to find in history because it is so ubiquitous that it sometimes seems invisible, the challenges of gender historians and feminist theorists have been strong and clear: that historians must see and respond to the naturalization and normalization of the patterning of lives by gender. While historians do not have to agree with all interpretations of gender or even the extent to which gender influenced people in the past, there is no excuse for ignoring it entirely as so many naval historians have chosen to do.

By focusing on gendered language in naval documents, specifically on "efficiency", "manliness", and "unmistakeable naval character", the myriad ways in which masculinity was involved in the formation of new naval policy and the claims made by naval men to authority can be examined and brought into accounts of the formation of naval policy. Policy documents were part of a cultural imaginary of British masculinity, the intellectual and cultural space within which thoughts and discussions on the navy took place. The use of masculine code words in the Selborne Scheme was influenced by the ways they were used in other literature. By expanding our examination of these concepts beyond naval documents, the broad ways in which a culturally-specific

idea of the exemplary man who could claim to occupy the hegemonic masculine position within the navy were created by many different naval agents, including collective male groups such as naval engineers, are revealed.

While novels such as Burton's cannot be pinpointed as the source of specific elements of the Selborne reforms – there is no way to directly draw a bold line from Burton's novel to decisions that specific individuals such as Selborne and Fisher made (X read Y and did Z) – a cultural imaginary of British masculinity defined the space in which Fisher and other protagonists made decisions and on which their views and the British nation's views on the capability of men would have depended. The navy occupied a key place in the topography of power. It was undeniably critical to the international standing of Britain, and maintaining the nation's supremacy required the best men to lead the navy.

The examination of the Selborne Memorandum in this study shows that a cultural imaginary of masculinity underpinned by novels and narratives influenced the character of the reforms. The memorandum also reveals the gendered justifications for the scheme that Fisher undertook in 1903. Again, this is evidence that the actions of the Royal Navy were not common-sense or genderless, but that they came from a culture that was profoundly masculine. It also shows that narratives of masculinity created both cohesion and legitimacy as well as exclusion. The people to be excluded were women and feminized people; Lascar and other non-British seamen who were considered to be less capable as men, while the masculinity of men of the working class was devalued in narratives that made them less than men. This was how the navy created the "unity of purpose" that the Admiralty valued as conducive to the efficiency of the navy

This analysis of the Selborne Scheme has paid attention to a cultural imaginary of masculinity during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. From a reading of Francis Burton's novel it has shown that there are insights into gender in primary sources previously passed over by naval historian. In important ways the use of these sources can better integrate the Royal Navy into the fabric of past society. Even N.A.M. Rodger is on record as favouring that cause.[1] Especially at the end of the nineteenth century, the Royal Navy was a key part of British imperial society. Public celebrations of the navy betokening British prosperity and power indicate that the Royal Navy was tied more closely to what it meant to be British than ever before. The prominence of the navy as an institution that was key to protecting empire and nation meant that it needed men who could be trusted to always rise to any challenge from Britain's enemies. As Admiral Fisher, invoking gender overtly, put it, the Royal Navy required men who could "allay the fears of the "old women of both sexes" in regard to the invasion of England of the invasion of her Colonies." In Fisher's mind, the navy was without any shadow of a doubt male, but its enemies and those it ostensibly protected could be rendered diminutive as fearful old women, demonstrating the inextricable link between gender and the perceived effectiveness of the Royal Navy. Indeed masculinity played into determining which men were fitted to be masters of the navy.

The new cultural expectation that men of the navy were the key defenders of the nation and empire came at a time when steam technology was rapidly and continuously remaking the ships of the Royal Navy. The new technological situation created an

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[1] N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*, (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), lxiii.

atmosphere in which fewer people trusted that executive officers could rise to any challenge that the navy faced because they lacked the honed engineering skills that naval engineers possessed. Doubts about the capability of executive naval officers were expressed by the engineers themselves, who as masters of the ever-changing steam technologies could make their own claims to authority. In the cultural forms that entered popular culture such as Francis Burton's novel there were portraits of skilled, assured, and capable engineers. Here was the challenge to the Admiralty's uncompromising vision of the man that made a master of ships and of other men. Engineers and their advocates were attempting to remake a cultural imaginary of British naval masculinity. In doing so, they shaped a claim that was less about undermining the hegemonic operations of masculinity in the authority structure of the navy than about augmenting the qualities that were referenced as authoritatively masculine. A commanding officer still needed to measure up to naval standards but engineers were claiming to be models of heroic manhood too, and on the basis of rather more than the technical competency that had made them indispensable in the Royal Naval in the space of two generations.

The executive officers and the Admiralty, however, were still invested in the existing social and naval hierarchy, and were not willing to compromise their own authority in response to the demands of the engineers. Instead, they endeavoured to change the system of recruiting and training in the Royal Navy to one in which executive officers would be trained in rudimentary engineering with the idea that executive officers could lay claim to both navigational and engineering skills as the basis of their authority. While this new scheme made token concessions to engineers, including symbolic changes to their titles to match military officer titles, it did not grant naval engineers any greater

authority, nor did it allow for their promotion to overall command. No engineer would ever be master of any ship nor serve as a Sea Lord at the Admiralty. The Admiralty justified these measures by continuing to question the character of the naval engineer and suggesting that unlike executive officers, naval engineers were not "born to lead." Race and class were intertwined with the assumptions which barred them from being trusted by the Admiralty as commanders in the navy. As such, the Royal Navy cannot truly be understood without seriously considering masculinity.

It is far too easy to normalize by idealization and turn naval heroes into something more than mortals: these are the "sublime geniuses" of Andrew Lambert's imagination. Analysis of masculinity gives historians a way to find a more nuanced understanding of agency, especially in branches of history which focus heavily on rehashing the decisions of "great men", and reveal the mortal influences of these mortal men. Rather than viewing admirals as the sole agents of historical change in the navy, we find that they are deeply enmeshed in social structures made up of the men and women who were not admirals, kings, or Members of Parliament. While most of the men and women were not in positions of power, they still exercised influence on the world in which they lived through their roles in social structures like masculinity and limited the options that those in power could choose from when attempting to enact reform.

It is also far too easy to ignore the connections between masculinity and institutionalized violence that pervade our culture even to the present day if historians continue to refuse to meaningfully engage with gender.[2] The Royal Navy was an

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[2] See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, Completely Revised and Updated*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); *Globalization*

institution dedicated to enacting violence throughout the world in pursuit of Britain's imperial goals including dominance of people and trade routes which would bring wealth to the British nation. It was also an institution which could only be seen as capable of carrying out imperial violence by nineteenth-century contemporaries if it was sufficiently masculine. As such, masculinity was inextricably linked with mastery of men over others by any means necessary, including through force of arms. Such normalization of violence as part of manhood had and continues to have far-reaching implications for how men relate to each other and to non-masculine people.

Masculinity cannot be used simply as window-dressing for the other factors that historians have typically held more tangible such as class. In this study of the navy we see it operating as a foundational social structure intersecting with skill, race, and class. Serious attention includes moving beyond descriptive or narrative accounts of masculinity as exemplified in Mary Conley's account of the Royal Navy which does little to delve into the deeper implications of the changing image of the naval seafarer at the end of the nineteenth century. As Joan Scott suggests, studies of gender that only aim to describe or provide some evidence that relationships between sexes (and in our case, between men of the same sex) are social, do little to answer why gendered relationships are as they are, how they work, or what can cause them to change. Histories that seek to explain why gender is powerful rather than simply describe how gender is expressed, Scott suggests, are the histories that have the potential to change historical paradigms.[3]

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and Militarism Feminists Make the Link, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[3] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December, 1986), 1056-1057.

Ultimately, masculinity was a major factor in British naval policy during the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian period, yet mostly as a tacit influence. The question of the influence of masculinity and gender on naval history is not "sexy" or "trivial", but one of utmost importance considering that much of the Royal Navy's perceived capability came from it being heavily invested in the social imaginary of British masculinity. Gender is a critical component of history and it cannot be ignored or used as simply to extend the scope of descriptive histories. It must be engaged in a critical and analytical way. This includes recognizing masculinity as a part of gender, rather than simply thinking of gender as a synonym for "women" for that is the reflex which has kept gender out of the analysis of male-dominated institutions such as the Royal Navy. That so much naval history fails to adequately recognize gender is a mistake in need of correction. The Selborne Scheme provides one good example of the deep influence of masculinity on British naval policy and draws together questions of race and class, authority, changing technologies, cultural components of masculinity, and the interconnected roles of masculinity and imperialism.

This thesis is by no means the broad approach that is needed if we are to better understand how masculinity was involved in the sea-going military and in questions of state that turned on Britain's naval forces, but it is a start. My analysis has raised the question whether the Selborne Scheme of 1902-03 can be properly understood without knowledge of how gender contoured assumptions about the exercise of power at a time when technological change put that matter firmly on the Admiralty agenda. If naval historians ceased casting their narratives to make the individual genius of admirals history's determining factor and instead focused on the social tapestry of which admirals

were but one part, naval history would make a much more important contribution to a more inclusive and critical narrative of British history.

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