Of Other Spaces:

women's colleges at the turn of the nineteenth century in the UK

Last night I dreamt I was at Girton college[1]. Virginia Woolf was with me.[2] There was a cocoa party and the girls were having fun. I wanted to ask them, what it is like: being a woman student at a girls' college in the heart of Cambridge, the fortress of male knowledge and power ...

The aim of this paper is not to retell the story of Girton, the first university-associated women's college in Cambridge, or of those that followed it. This has been done in numerous historical and sociological studies, and it is a common theme of many auto/biographical texts of the nineteenth century.[3] However, Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald (1991) have posed the problem of the need for the rewriting of the history/ies of women teachers. They have pointed out unexplored paths for future feminist research, particularly stressing the need for further analysis of the personal lives of women teachers, as well as of their practices of resistance.

The university-associated women's colleges that were established in the UK at the turn of the nineteenth century have been searched and analyzed, either as public spaces, in terms of their contribution to the higher education for women,[4] or as private spaces, in terms of their role to the development of a female culture and a new way of life for single women.[5] In this paper, I am tracing how the textual as well as the social practices of women interrogate the traditional separation between private and public spheres in the space of women's colleges. I want to show how their personal choices and intellectual endeavors seen within a Foucauldian theoretical framework have undermined boundaries between public and private spheres and have destabilized the coherence of this binary opposition. I also want to explore how women students of colleges have both opened up their private space and remapped their existence in the public sphere and how the latter has been redefined through the involvement of women. Here I attempt to identify

the complex, interwoven, sometimes contradicting and antagonistic discourses, at play within the colleges.

In writing this paper, I have drawn on auto/biographical writings of women teachers and/or students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and particularly from 1860 to 1914. This period has already proved of particular interest for the historians of women's education[6]. It is a period that signalled major changes in the education of women. As Purvis (1991) has noted, there were various reasons for these changes, particularly the evolution of a state system of mass elementary schooling, which resulted in women's participation in the teaching profession. According to Pendersen (1991) it was also a period that created a new category of female teacher, the public school headmistress. Distancing themselves from a tradition that educated the girls of the middle classes for a private, leisured role, the public school headmistresses valued academic achievement and aspired to educate middle-class girls for a public role. Pedersen has argued that there is a need for further investigation into the ways that the reforms made in women's secondary education and the movement for the higher education of women influenced women's entry into public life and encouraged them to attempt roles beyond the private sphere.

To return to the auto/biographical writings of this paper, college women, first as students and later as teachers were amongst the first I have examined and this was the case of the Girtonians Louisa Lumsden and Constance Maynard and the Newnhamite Anne Jemima Clough.

Louisa Lumsden came from Scotland and was one of the five Girton pioneers. She went for the classic tripos and later became a tutor at Girton, then at Cheltenham Ladies' College and finally headmistress of St. Leonard's public school for girls. While at Girton, Louisa Lumsden met Constance Maynard, who came to the College in 1871, and they became friends. Constance came from a strict Evangelical family and had to overcome many difficulties, before she was allowed to sit the examinations for entering the college. She later founded Westfield College.

Anne Jemima Clough came from a previous generation. As a secretary of the North of England Council, she put forward the argument that women needed a different type of examination as a result of their separate and different education and secured the admission of women to Manchester and Newcastle colleges. In 1871 she took charge of what was to become Newnham College in Cambridge.

The writings of these three women reflect aspects of the self-technologies[7] developed by women teachers who studied and/or taught in the colleges associated to the university of Cambridge and became influential figures in the evolution of university colleges for women. The establishment of university-associated women's colleges, a movement initiated in 1869 with the opening of a college at Hitchin which was later to move nearer Cambridge and become Girton College, was a major step towards the opening of universities to women. It was very soon followed by the founding of Newnham College.

The existence of two women's colleges in Cambridge institutionalised the already existing differences with regard to the higher education for women. As it has been widely analysed, there were two main ideological directions with regard to the best way of leading women to higher education, 'the uncompromising and the separatists' as Sara Delamont calls them (1978a:154). The former claimed that women's colleges should follow exactly the same procedures and regulations with the traditional university colleges for men, while the latter argued that the particularity of being a woman and having a background of a differently oriented education, should allow for certain exceptions and more lenient regulations. What both directions and their followers shared, however, was their being bound to what has also been described by Delamont (1978a:160) as 'double conformity', that is a preoccupation with the standards of lady-like behaviour on the one hand and the aims and values of the male educational system on the other[8].

The teacher training colleges were also influenced by the educational changes at the turn of the century[9] and it is within this context that I have been interested in the autobiographical writings of Winifred Mercier. She was from Scotland and spent some of the best years of her life, looking after her ill mother. While working as a teacher, she also studied for her external London degree. Mercier

became a pioneer in the reform of teacher training colleges and later in her life a Girton College don. While at her first teaching post in Edinburgh in 1902, Mercier became lifelongfriend with two women teachers, J.K. Borland and K. Scott Moncrieff. Her correspondence with Borland, offers a view of suffocated feelings and repressed desires.

Excavating technologies of the self cultivated in spaces where women lived, worked and were educated collectively, I have further considered the self-writings of women who became known for their contribution to the development of girls' secondary education, a sector that was developed either in girls' public boarding schools or in daily high schools for girls[10]. I refer in particular to Miss Beale, headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies' College from 1858 to 1906 and Miss Buss, founder and first head of North London Collegiate School and Camden High School for girls from 1850 to 1894.

Although girls' secondary education was to some extent influenced by the divisions between the 'separatists' and the 'uncompromising', there is also a striking continuity in the way women organised their life and work in the newly established educational institutions. What women's auto/biographical writings convey most strongly is a matrix of ethical concerns, aesthetic orientations and social attitudes which links them to new emerging female culture of the university colleges. Such links were most of the time 'real' and practical rather than ideological, since the majority of the colleges' graduates would become teachers of secondary schools, while the pupils of the secondary schools would become students of the colleges.[11]

Women's colleges as Foucauldian heterotopias

I will try to explore the space of the college as an *heterotopia,* a term used by Foucault (1994) to describe *'... other spaces'.* Drawing on the poetic reflections of Bachelard (1994) on internal places of day-dreaming and intimacy, Foucault set out to explore external spaces and thus created the notion of *heterotopias*. As juxtaposed to *utopias or* unreal places, *heterotopias* are described as those 'real social places which surround us ...', sites which juxtapose in a single real social "place", several places' (Marks 1995:69). Foucault traces *heterotopias* in every culture and society and shows the different functions of the *heterotopias* in relation to the culture and the social context they will develop. Having a system of opening and closing, *heterotopias* are juxtaposed to other spaces and create transitory spaces, especially when people find themselves in conflict with the prevailing social conditions of their era. In this light, women's colleges may be seen as spaces of 'transition and tension', 'sites outside of society' bringing together, as I will show below, heterogeneous discourses - equal opportunities, male educational and ethical values, lady-like behavior - for the development of young women. What is particularly interesting in Foucault's analyses of 'other spaces', is the way he sees the interrelation of *utopias,* and *heterotopias* and their impact on the formation of identities. I will therefore trace, how, living in the *heterotopias* of colleges where dominant perceptions of womanhood were being disputed, but at the same time, compromises of different types were being imposed, women cultivated certain self-techniques to shape their lives differently. In this way I want to reveal the complex network of power relations and trace the meeting points and the juxtapositions of the discursive and non-discursive formations that were produced, or reproduced, then faded away or recurred in the context of the everyday life of women's colleges. In such an endeavor, questions of how different that new life was, will certainly arise.

Drawing on Homerton's life,[12] Elizabeth Edwards (1990) has focused her study on the reproduction of extended family models in women's colleges. There is no doubt that the college was the cell where new directions for life were being developed. These new directions however co-existed with several old ones. I do

not believe that one can really discern clear and definitive boundaries between the old and the new. However, what is common in all these new life directions was a deep wish for change, a wish that inspired contradictory aspirations, poetic creations and certainly intense feelings. In transgressing the boundaries of their families and their localities, those first women students of colleges, also transgressed the boundaries of their identities and challenged the dominant discourses of womanhood. If they did not create new models of existence, they certainly shattered the existing ones. Such changes occurred in a process that was not always linear or fast moving. There were discontinuities, recurrences, abrupt advances but also, unexpected backlashes. It is upon these irregular historical moments that this paper now focuses.

Mapping the heterotopias of women's colleges

Like every progressive step in history, the establishment of women's colleges was not easily achieved. There were first of all the ideological barriers of the Victorian era, concerning dominant perceptions about the female nature and role that had to be surpassed and reconstructed, but there were also the material and practical procedures which had to be gone through to bring ideas and beliefs to fruition. Emily Davies, founder of Girton College, writing to Anna Richardson about some of these practical difficulties:

> The Committee have arrived at the discovery that we have not been definite enough in our statements about the College life. People do not see it, and they hesitate about giving money to a thing about which they feel so much in the dark. Mr. Robbu suggested that in the papers to be read at Birmingham, I should give a sketch of the daily life of a student. The idea seems to me a good one, but rather difficult to carry out, as we do not know yet exactly what the life will be, and one has to steer clear between the temptation to make it look very pleasant, so as to attract students, and the risk of exciting the jealousy of parents.
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> (Stephen 1927: 174)

As it is clear from the above extract the technicalities of establishing a college were not merely 'practical'. These 'practical difficulties' involved dealing with issues relating to an overall social hostility towards the education of women. From the very moment of their emergence, colleges were conceptualized as threatening the traditional space division between the public and private spheres as well as women's position in them.[13] Women left the private domain of their families to join the colleges and create a new space for themselves. Although enclosed, the space of the college was in a way 'outside' and far away from the private domain, or what was socially accepted as a 'woman's place'. Women would go there either to delay their socialization in the traditional roles of a wife and a mother, or to avoid these roles and prepare themselves for the public spheres of life, the world of work[14]. In either cases, the first 'enemy' women had to fight against was their own 'beloved' families from whom they should be separated. However as it was the same families that had to provide permission as well as the money for the separation it is clear where the seeds of the first compromises would lay. As Emily Davies was writing again: '... how is it possible to describe College life without showing how infinitely pleasanter it will be than home? ... I do not believe that our utmost efforts to poison the students' lives at College will make them half so miserable as they are at home' (cited in Stephen 1927: 174). Here, Emily Davies contrasts the intellectually motivated life of women's colleges with the idleness of home life. Her comments reverberate the feelings and thoughts of many of her contemporaries which have been vividly expressed in various autobiographical writings[15].

A lot has been written about the above mentioned ideological controversies with regard to the higher education of women (Delamont and Duffin, 1978, Dyhouse, 1981). However, college women interacted with multifarious ways in these controversial cases. The ways they negotiated their personal existence within the newly founded educational spaces, created a whole range of self-techniques, practices and life directions that are now under scrutiny.

> This month I want to do over one book to Euclid, as far as the 80th page in
> the Greek Grammar, translate book ii of Virgil from the German, read 2nd

and 3rd volumes of Milman's *History of the Jews*, Milton over again and the second volume of Wordsworth. Working hard at these things may perhaps be of no particular use to me so far as knowing these things goes, but I may at least hope to acquire industrious habits and strength of mind, which I lack terribly. I am very much wanting in the power of expressing myself clearly about anything.

(Clough, 1897:23)

Studying the classics, a traditional male subject at Oxford and Cambridge, was a proof to the opponents of higher education for women[16], that the latter did have the ability to study and understand and even produce or recreate philosophy. As for mathematics there were several women who taking it as a subject showed how 'ordinary' girls could cope with abstract figures and concepts.[17] In both cases women were proving that they were able to control and discipline themselves and their minds, towards concrete and difficult targets. It is also significant that women would understand themselves and academic work in ways that at times broke with the tradition of gloomy college students and boring scholar work: '... I remember being amused at finding R.S. Cook lying flat on her floor "dressed like an acrobat" and reading Plato as if it were only French", records Maynard in her autobiography (Maynard, unpublished chapter 11, p. 345).

Women's success in dealing with difficult subjects, did not emerge all of a sudden. In their auto/biographical writings they have recorded long periods of struggling to cope with the new conditions of their lives: living collectively, complying to rules and regulations and structuring their time and ultimately their mental abilities: 'I am beginning to find myself much less clever than I once considered myself. I find I know very little and what I do know I don't make enough use of ...' (Clough, 1897:26). This struggle would involve meticulous every-day activities organized by the timetable of college life: 'I worked about eight hours a day, and worked like a tiger... Such was the kind of life, hard work and hard play... My work was now almost overwhelming' (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 11, p.p. 345, 346, 386). The result however of their attempts was rewarding not only in terms of the new knowledge they were acquiring, but also in terms of their personal expansion and development: 'I always find when I study

Euclid my mind is much stronger and better and I am not troubled with so many idle thoughts and wandering fancies' (Clough, 1897:26). What Clough stresses here as an achievement, is her ability to control her mind, and thoughts and indeed herself through the study of mathematics. This ability for self-control dominates women teachers' techniques of the self. Maynard regards self-control as one of the four main elements of the British national character (Maynard, 1910:263) and in her essay the 'Five Levels of Life'[18], Maynard (ibid.) again refers to the 'third level of life' as the 'Self-controlled Life'. Contemplating the ways she should work upon herself, Clough wrote: 'I must work hard to get myself steady again. I must not let my thoughts have too much liberty to run on their own course. I still want quickness in all I do, and constant mental exertion. I let my mind lie vacant for too long, and then it takes some time to get awake again' (Clough, 1897:24).

For both writers, Maynard and Clough, the ability for self-control is bound to the ability of working hard and being productive and successful. However it does not stop there, it goes beyond that, it is a way of building a strong character that can survive the difficulties and miseries of life. In terms of the technologies of the self, self-control is not given by nature, it is an ability that is cultivated by hard work upon oneself and needs continuous care so as not to fade or disappear (Foucault, 1988).

Miss Beale's biographers recount several stories about her objection to fainting which she directly related to a lack of self-control. Kamm records a story about how Miss Beale fainted herself in church one Sunday:

> Her neighbour untied the strings of her bonnet and was about to remove it when Dorothea came to and clutched at the crown, refusing to remain a moment in church with head uncovered. In all probability she never permitted herself to faint in church again; for in her own school, as in Frances Mary Buss's, fainting was looked upon as a major crime, indicating a quite unnecessary and most reprehensible loss of concentration and control.
>
> (Kamm,1958: 25)

In relation to the above incident, Raikes records how Miss Beale had a way of stopping just as one began to droop and saying sharply, "Miss Jones! control yourself and stand properly" (Raikes 1910:70). According to her biographer, another theme related to self-control was Miss Beale's insistence on silence. Kamm records in particular:

> When Dorothea first came to Cambray she found already in existence a silence rule, under which no girl might speak to another during school hours without permission. The rule was not being observed; but believing as she did that 'obedience to rule' was essential, she decided to enforce it. Unlimited permission to talk, she considered, would merely lead to the making of undesirable friendships, would encourage gossips and betrayal of confidences; whereas long periods of silence, which might only be broken when really necessary, would inculcate habits of self-control.
>
> (Kamm, 1958:60)

Another of the pioneers, Miss Frances Mary Buss who 'could herself be so uncontrolled' according to her biographer (Kamm, 1958), thought that self control was 'the prerequisite of a proper sense of duty, the watchword of every human being's life' (ibid.:228). As Miss Buss declared in her weekly homilies to her pupils, 'Self-control, will help you to shape your life right in every direction. It will keep you from hurtful indulgence in mere pleasure in food, in dissipation of time, and social enjoyments. It will make you put away pleasure at the call of duty' (ibid.). According to her biographer, for Miss Buss, 'genuine self-control over thought and speech' was 'one of the greatest and most important aims of life' (ibid.).

The need for self-control and silence are themes frequently traced in women's self-writings. In the same writings, however women 'confess' that they are often reflective and silent, not as a result of choice, but of necessity. Therefore, in strictly examining herself, Clough admits that : 'I am still a great coward in speaking out my opinions, indeed in speaking at all' (ibid.:64) and she explains that 'I have been so accustomed to conceal my thoughts, or veil them that it has

become a habit and I have almost ceased to give an opinion' (ibid.:76). Here is another instance, a letter about existential fears of silence that Winifred Mercier wants to share with her friend Borland, in August 1902: '... does not the terrible silence of things oppress you sometimes? ... We are surrounded by such myriad life, so many worlds; I am frightened in their presence ...' (Grier, 1937:37).

From a Foucauldian perspective the themes of self-control and silence might appear as an exemplary way of repression. Within the disciplinary space of the college human beings are openly prevented from expressing themselves freely and communicating with each other. However this undoubtedly disciplinary rule is a response to the possibilities of gossip, a phenomenon that has been historically and culturally attributed to the female nature. Silence for a pioneer of women's education was a way for women to keep themselves together, put their thoughts in a logical order, think more, think deeper and think better. Clearly, it is the male philosophical tradition that women follow here in their attempt to escape 'the frivolity' of 'female nature'. What is also interesting to consider here is how those pioneers used to think in terms of bipoles and pairs of contradictions. For them it would have to be either silence or gossip and they would see no space where alternative forms of verbal communication could occur. It was therefore for the women students of those colleges to undertake the burden of inventing other modes of talking with each other seriously or in a light way that would entertain them without involving them into gossip.

I think that this transition is forcefully illustrated in Constance Maynard's autobiography. Coming from a strict Evangelical background, Maynard refers how in the beginning of her college days she would despise the time of the evenings when the girls would meet to simply enjoy themselves. However, later on she comes to admit that these 'happy gatherings' would be sometimes engaged in political discussions: '... the latter end of the evening from 8 to 10 always seemed to me to be a waste of time, with its cocoa-parties, its political discussion, its analysis of some new word, or looking at sketches...' (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 11, p.345). She particularly refers to a meeting where the students were invited to discuss 'Three evils which afflict the College (1) Want of society (2) Narrowness of interest (3) want of amusement, both physical and mental' and as

an outcome of which, was 'the establishment of a Debating Society and a Shakespeare Reading' (ibid.392). Within the space of the 'heterotopias', students experience the paradox of finding opportunities to enjoy themselves at the same time that they struggle to be self-controlled, silent and even able to carry out political and philosophical discussions instead of chattering or gossiping. It is therefore exciting to trace how women, taking responsibility for their lives in the colleges and organizing their time in there, would begin to give form to the abstract relation of the personal to the political, a practice that has been central to women's struggles for both self-assertion and political involvement.

Expanding their space

Women teachers' emerging need for 'body space' arose out of the frustration produced by the strict space constraints of a long tradition that had kept women enclosed and immobile, imprisoned within their bodies. Maynard describes how as a child she was so fat that she would not be allowed to walk alone, but always with the support of a stick and the company of a nun she would walk some metres around the gate of her house (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 1, p.34). Thus, women's descriptions of the bodily exercises they would undertake as part of their college education, are full of excitement:

> Actual games were few. Cricket was tried, but we all bowled so badly that we used to call it 'the game of begging pardons' … Tennis was not as yet invented, or rather it came in during my College years, first in the form of Badminton and then as genius lawn tennis, but there was no ground properly laid out for it for a long while at Girton, and none at all at Hitchin. There was a fine swimming-bath down in the little town below us which was a pleasure for at least a few weeks in the year, but the joy that lasted all the year round was that of taking walks in the beautiful country of the neighbourhood.
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> (Maynard, 1910:193)

The actual games described by Maynard were not only few, but also prohibited at times. Sara Delamont has pointed out that despite the efforts of college education to instruct women how to maintain a healthy mind within a healthy body, Emily Davies stopped the Girton pioneers playing football on the lawn fearing that this might be a shock for society (Delamont 1978:149). The 'shock' women would cause in exercising their bodies relates to the image that women are subject to their bodies. The idea that women should be able to control their bodies and explore their potentials, seems to unsettle dominant gender ideologies[19].

Since the facilities of the newly-established colleges were not always adequate for regular gymnastics or games, women would search in the country surrounding their colleges for chances for both, bodily exercise and actual recreation. As Steadman recounts for Cheltenham Ladie's College: 'Boating on the Avon was a very favourite occupation for Saturday afternoons … I had never had an oar in my hand before, but I went to the river twice with a junior teacher, and after that, when and with whom I felt inclined' (Steadman, 1931:91). Although the narrator had no previous experience of boating, college life offers her the opportunity to exercise her body and have a good time at the same time. Students' outings would also include country walks, which turn out to be occasions for self-reflection, ways of knowing each other better, moments of both contemplation and recreation:

> On Friday I walked into Cambridge with Miss Lumsden and as we returned in the chill red sunset she spoke more and more sadly; first of how lonely and mournful beauty always seemed to her, and then of the want of harmony between man and nature and the cross-purpose of which everything worked, and then of the weakness and misery there was in the world and how one only lived by ignorance and was not that a wretched and unworthy life;
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> (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 14, p. 494)

Walks in the countryside further deepen the love and admiration of women students for the beauty of nature: 'Well, Hertfordshire is a charming county, and we had delightful country walks ... in Spring the fields and woods were blue with wild hyacinths, the English (not the Scottish) bluebell' (Lumsden, 1933:51).

College women's references to nature and especially flowers, as in the above extract, may seem to reproduce dominant gender stereotypes and the equivalent distinction between Nature/Woman and Culture/Man. As Rose has commented the consideration of this dualisms is important in capturing the meaning of being human in the West (Rose,1993:68). These writings could also be read as an effect of the discursive constraints within which the authors were attempting to present educated women in a favourable 'feminine' light. Without denying that these readings are possible, I suggest that college women in constructing their own version of femininity, are also attempting to discover the dynamic role of nature in helping the subjects recreate their relation to themselves. Foucault (1988) has stressed the importance of [man's] relationship with nature in the Stoic tradition of the care of the self. It is therefore in this light that I have read women's texts referring to nature: 'On Sunday there was a storm, but I had a good long time on the seashore and now again today I have spent the whole afternoon in solitude among the great fallen blocks under the East Cliff. I wonder whether it is right that I get so extremely 'subjective' when alone' (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 12, p. 474). Maynard's reflections reveal a further dimension of the new lives of women teachers, that is the widely expressed desire for solitude.

Solitude is a necessary condition giving subjects space and time for self-reflection, self-examination and analysis, so that a relationship with oneself can be unfolded. It was the Stoic tradition of attentiveness to oneself that women had the opportunity to follow in the context of their lives in the colleges, and would later carry with them when they left college and lead their lives as teachers. As Emily Davies wrote at the time she was working for the first women's college: 'Of all the attractions offered by the college life, probably the opportunity for a certain amount of solitude, so necessary an agent in the formation of character, will be the one most welcomed by the real student' (Stephen, 1927:176).

Technologies of the self / Technologies of resistance

In my discussion of the self-techniques that were developed in the context of women's life within the newly-established colleges of higher education, I have isolated two major themes: first, the relations between joy and work; second the relations between work and education. A number of technologies of the self were seen as interwoven in the meeting points of those relations. It was first of all the interrelation of the ability for self-control with success in attaining difficult educational targets, the need for solitude and retreat to the self, as a path for self-analysis and self-examination, further leading to deeper self-awareness and self-enhancement.

It is no wonder that the technique of self-control which was founded in Stoicism, would be so influential in shaping women teachers' ideals and perceptions. Mythology, history and literature are all full of foolish women leading frivolous lives and ultimately responsible for all sorts of calamities and disasters. As a consequence or perhaps reaction, the counter discourses of such ideas and perceptions about female nature, would be founded upon the construction of a self-controlled, 'prudent' female character. This model of male supremacy may seem equally oppressive. It certainly reflects dominant gender ideologies and discourses relating women with nature and men with reason.

However, it is not the ultimate image of a self-controlled female character that is interesting here, but the process through which women strove to surpass limits and constraints of their femininity and cultivate *technologies of the self.* These technologies, as Foucault explains: 'permit individuals to effect, by their own means, or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being so as to transform themselves, in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (1988:18). It is important to stress here, that the *technologies of the self* were not something that women invented by themselves. They were patterns that they found in their culture and which were suggested and at times imposed on them. However, within the educational space of their colleges and away from the constraints of domesticity, women had the possibility to act upon themselves, as active agents, rather than passive followers of social conventions of womanhood. In using technologies to transform themselves,

women followed the trails of the male tradition, but they also had the opportunity to deflect the lines of these technologies and create practices that would oppose and resist the legacy of their culture.

Thus, the different life that was emerging, would bear the signs of the old, while attempting to surpass the present. This struggle was not a simple one. Sara Delamont has shown how the new colleges of higher education were being bound by traditional and conservative ties, in spite of the innovations they were trying to bring forward in relation to women's position in society. Delamont is right in describing the 'double conformity' in ladies' education. However, I think that she fails to give enough credit to the reaction provoked by these ties to conformity and the ways these were resisted.

In theorizing colleges as 'heterotopias', my analysis considers of major importance the interplay of power relations within them as well as the paradoxes that were created. Women often found themselves in conflict with the disciplinary rules of their colleges. In this light, the way they negotiated the spatial arrangement of their dining-room can provide a paradigm of a molecular 'revolution' and in a Foucauldian sense create points of resistance in the matrix of the social relations within their colleges:

> The Mistress's sitting-room and the library, where lectures were given and which was also our common room, were on the ground floor, and the dining-room was in the basement, a bare ugly room with two tables, at one of which we students sat, while the Mistress and her friends sat at the 'High table' alongside. It was at first expected that we should sit in a formal row down one side of our table, lest we should be guilty of the discourtesy of turning our backs upon the 'High'. But this was too much and we rebelled, quietly ignored rule and insisted upon comfortably facing each other. So academically formal was the order imposed from the first at Hitchin, small as our numbers were.
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> (Lumsden, 1933:47)

The arrangement of the women students' seating is an example of a disciplinary process functioning in what Foucault has described as the 'art of rank' (1991:144). It is interesting to note that this disciplinary rule is masked as courtesy and women students are asked to comply with it for the sake of gentle, lady-like behavior. From a Foucauldian perspective, the disciplinary institutions must survey and control their space by carefully distributing their inmates in particular positions, but they also have to make sure that the divided areas can be useful and able to function effectively. It is what Foucault calls 'the rule of functional sites' (1991:144). However, college women object to this particular rule of seating and ignore it altogether. Again their revolt is masked as a need for comfort. The disciplinary arrangement of their seating turns out not to be 'functional' and this is perhaps a thread they use to deploy strategies of resistance. The power games that are played around women's seating are not intentional, nor accidental. As Lumsden perceives it, they derive from the academic formalities that Hitchin, later Girton College, had to adopt in order to become a real academic institution. It was the academic institution that dictated methods and imposed restrictions, in short it was the source of power, exercised upon the women students. The interesting paradox that emerges here, is that women students would interrogate and revolt against the rules of the academic institutions they had so strongly fought to enter.

Spatial problems were a major concern for the founders of the first colleges in Cambridge and resulted in contradictory decisions and arrangements. Newnham it was decided, would be housed in the center of the town of Cambridge, so as to enable the students to have easy access to the men's colleges in terms of tuition and libraries. However, 'Newnhamites' would always be chaperoned in their outings and would always be required to live and move circumspectly, since they were continuously under the strict gaze of a society which would not spare any bitter criticism of college women. Anne Jemima Clough records how different gossips about the girls' unconventional behavior would reach her ears every day: 'Many difficulties constantly arising about society matters and the conduct of the students, but I was for the most part silent, and did not either speak or write about these matters; so they passed over' (Clough, 1897:203).

In response to the same problem, Hitchin and later Girton were placed far from Cambridge, in the middle of the countryside. For the founders and especially Emily Davies, the idea was to give the students more chance to move around and at the same time protect them from social surveillance and criticism. This did not mean that there were no rules and regulations regarding students' mobility at Girton. The latter however were of a different kind:

> ... and how we waited on the path that overlooked the red and green lights of the station to see the 10 o'clock express from London to Edinburgh go roaring by. We often did this ... and as the College door was locked punctually at 10, we once or twice found ourselves shut out, though we scampered back in utmost haste.
>
> (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 12, p. 394).

What we read here, is women resisting the time restrictions of their college. The regulation of time constitutes a dominant set of disciplinary procedures especially when it is combined with disciplinary practices of space control. College women staying out late, knew that they would probably have to face some sort of temporary exclusion from the premises of their college. Things could be even worse in some cases, since according to Copelman, the archives of teacher training colleges reveal events of students who run away, particularly referring to the case of a certain student who stayed out all night and was finally expelled (1996:143). However, college women would take the risk of staying out late, simply to watch a train pass by. Strangely as it seems, 'trainspotting' would become a symbolic action of resisting the control of their space and the regulation of their time.

Therefore, in the case of the two colleges in Cambridge, while Newnham is situated in the town center, it creates restrictive spaces for its students, and limits their mobility. Women students have access to the public sphere, but they cannot 'live' in it. Girton on the other hand, being built in the country, allows its students considerable freedom of mobility, as long as they do not surpass restrictive boundaries of both space and time. However, in both cases, students find ways to

surpass conventions and by ignoring social criticism introduce their own rules to the power games.

Apart from space, however, there were other incidents of resistance. Barbara Stephen records an occasion of rebellion at Hitchin over a play, that students were not allowed to perform in men's clothes. Protesting against this, the students' main concern was their right to participate in decisions regarding the structuring of college life. As Miss Davies wrote to Mr. Thomkinson, consulting him and other members of the Committee whether the students might be allowed to act in male attire anywhere in the college:

> ... They seem to have been irritated by my references to undergraduate discipline, and some of them have made out to Mrs. Austin that before they came I held out expectations that the first students would have more share in the moulding of the College life that we are now willing to give them ... Mrs. Austin thinks the students look upon her and me as Evangelical and narrow and unartistic, and therefore unfit to judge in such a case as this.
>
> (Stephen, 1927:242)

The tension went much deeper to touch issues of freedom of choice and even to raise questions about the aims of college education:

> Apart from the question whether acting in itself was objectionable, the students felt strongly that they ought to be free to choose their own amusements, and that the question involved the principle of independence and responsibility which they felt to be one of the most valuable and necessary elements in the training given by the College.
>
> (ibid.:243)

Mrs. Bodichon was urgently invited to talk to the students at Hitchin, since as an artist and a theatergoer herself, she was thought more likely to be listened to. She reported that 'in all her experience she had never met such a spirit of revolt, and such self-confidence' (ibid.). There were more moments of tension at Hitchin. This time, a whole debate was developed about the timetable and the preparation

time for the Cambridge examinations. In her autobiography, Maynard records how:

> A. Bulley came back wild 'on a strike for more time' ... she held a College meeting in her room ... stating two main things: 1) more than 3 years is required for the Tripos and an extra year should be granted on application; 2) certificates on single subjects or groups of subjects should be given without passing the Preliminary Examinations ... We all welcomed these suggestions ... presented them to Miss Davies ... 'Cambridge degrees or nothing' was the verdict.
>
> (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 12, p. 385)

The drawbacks and difficulties of the new collective living were sometimes responded to with humor, reflecting women's positive disposition towards their new life, as well as their willingness to surpass 'material' difficulties given the compensation of new interests and possibilities: 'But the bareness and formality of the dining-room mattered little; what did matter was that we shared it with black beetles, gruesome crawling creatures, by no means pleasant table companions' (Lumsden 1933:47). College women's discourses seem to slip here towards the 'unbearable lightness of being'. When things become difficult, they prefer to distance themselves from the situation and simply laugh at it.

Feminism liberates in women amongst other things, a desire for lightness, notes Braidotti and she points to the merry spirit of the first wave of feminism, 'when it was clear that joy and laughter were profound political emotions and statements' (1994:167). Drawing on the Deleuzian idea of the possitivity of passions, Braidotti has theorised feminist subjectivity as an object of desire for women, creating intense passions in their lives (1994:167). It is therefore striking to bump into occasions, when college women, in distancing themselves from the miseries of their lives, invent humorous ways, to create parodical exits from the maze they sometimes find themselves in.

Revisiting heterotopias

In a way Milan Kundera (1984) has described most influentially, women seem to have been sliding between the poles of 'the unbearable heaviness and lightness of being'. This literal metaphor of 'the unbearable lightness of being' has been used by Simons (1995) to describe Foucault's attempt of reflecting upon the subject's attempts to fashion a life 'between constraining limitations', and 'limitless freedom', in a sense, a life bearably heavy or bearably light. Thus, women in colleges lived within a 'constraining reality', the social boundaries of accepted womanhood. At the same time, however, they were dreaming of a 'limitless freedom', the kind of freedom, education, economic independence and 'a room of their own' could offer them. In the 'heterotopia' of the college, heterogeneous and sometimes radical discourses coexisted with fears of breaking social taboos, as well as with traditional practices of educational discipline and control. Conformities of all types did exist and were in the process of being created. However, these conventions were not uniformly accepted, and indeed were sometimes rejected by the students in their new-found confidence. Since the ideologies and discourses of the new institutions were in the process of being formed, women students were in a position not only to be aware of these changes, but intervene in their formation.

In such a context of controversy, where for the first time women realized that the situation was multifarious and the struggle multileveled, the techniques women used to map their existence would be in a form of continuous resistance against everything and sometimes against everyone. It is this aspect of resistance, I believe, that continued to mobilize women towards shattering existing social and philosophical structures, even though they did not have a clear image of where they were going, or any certainty about what they kept and what they rejected.

Simons (1995) has pointed out, how in Foucault's analyses, subjects are 'subjected' to certain systems of power, but at the same time they have the capacity to act and resist the power relations imposed upon them. However, as Simons comments, resisting power always includes the danger of reinstalling it on

another plane. In the case of colleges while women were resisting patriarchal domination by claiming their right to education and to the public sphere, they replaced it with a patriarchal structure (albeit with a matriarchal name and body) in the organization of college life, with its strict Stoic emphasis on obedience to authority and control. Yet, what is of more importance in the analysis of the colleges as Foucauldian 'heterotopias' is not so much the effects of power, but the subjective capacities that were being developed in the attempt to resist the power that had made women what they were. It is through these procedures of resistance that women began to fashion new forms of subjectivity always oscillating between the unbearable lightness and heaviness of being, by adopting unstable positions between them.

Notes

1. The contextuality refers here to *Rebecca,* the well-known novel of Daphne du Maurier

2. *A Room of one's own* grew out of two lectures Virginia Woolf had been invited to give at Girton College and Newnham College in Cambridge, in 1928.

3. See Burstyn Joan, 1977.

4. See Clough B., A., 1897*,* Stephen B.,1927, Delamont S. and Duffin L.,1978, Dyhouse C., 1981, 1995.

5. See Vicinus M., 1985.

6. Sara Delamont (1978a, 1978b) and Carol Dyhouse (1977, 1978, 1981, 1995) have described the processes through which women strove to be accepted in the male world of knowledge, focusing particularly on the social class divisions between them. Martha Vicinus (1985) has traced the evolution of a network of social relations and the emergence of a feminine culture in the context of their life within the first university-associated women's colleges, as well as girls' boarding schools. Hilda Kean (1990) has followed the everyday activities of women teachers who were actively involved in the suffragette movement, while Dina Copelman (1985, 1996) has been particularly concerned with the life-style of elementary women teachers in London between 1870 and 1914.

7. The controversies between the 'separatists' and the 'uncompromising' were also transferred to the women's colleges of Oxford, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College respectively, which opened in 1879, one year after London University became the first to admit women to full degrees. It was soon followed by other prestigious universities all over the country, a procedure that lasted till 1947, the year when Cambridge University admitted women to full degrees, twenty-seven years later than Oxford.

8. In the secondary sector, girls were first officially admitted to the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1865 and to those of Oxford in 1870. By 1894 there were over two hundred public school for girls, and the majority of them were established or reformed after 1870. See Pedersen (1991:45).

9. As Purvis (1991:78) notes, the pupils of North Collegiate School were the first to sit the public examination of Cambridge and Oxford which opened to girls after the successful campaign of Emily Davies in 1860. By 1879, twelve old NCL students were at Girton. As Pedersen notes, over half of the early Oxbridge women students became teachers, sometimes inspired to take up teaching as a career for the love of it. According to Pedersen, 'this suggests the influence of the colleges in altering the idea of teaching from that of the last resort of the destitute gentlewoman to that of a desirable profession meriting, finally demanding advanced academic training' (1991:50).

10. Homerton was a Women's Training College in Cambridge

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[1] The contextuality refers here to *Rebecca,* the well-known novel of Daphne du Maurier

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[7] In his discussion of ethics, in relation to the formation of the self, Foucault had focused his analyses on the *technologies of the self,* a set of practices which 'permit individuals to effect, ... a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts and ways of being so as to transform themselves, in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Foucault, 1988:18).

[8] The controversies between the 'separatists' and the 'uncompromising' were also transferred to the women's colleges of Oxford, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College respectively, which opened in 1879, one year after London University became the first to admit women to full degrees. It was soon followed by other prestigious universities all over the country, a procedure that lasted till 1947, the year when Cambridge University admitted women to full degrees, twenty-seven years later than Oxford.

[9] I am mainly referring here first to the 1870 Education Act and the evolution of a state system of mass elementary schooling, which resulted in women's participation in the teaching profession and second to the movement for the higher education of women.

[10] In the secondary sector, girls were first officially admitted to the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1865 and to those of Oxford in 1870. By 1894 there were over two hundred public school for girls, and the majority of them were established or reformed after 1870. See Pedersen (1991:45).

[11] As Purvis (1991:78) notes, the pupils of North Collegiate School were the first to sit the public examination of Cambridge and Oxford which opened to girls after the successful campaign of Emily Davies in 1860. By 1879, twelve old NCL students were at Girton. As Pedersen notes, over half of the early Oxbridge women students became teachers, sometimes inspired to take up teaching as a career for the love of it. According to Pedersen, 'this suggests the influence of the colleges in altering the idea of teaching from that of the last resort of the destitute gentlewoman to that of a desirable profession meriting, finally demanding advanced academic training' (1991:50).

[12] Homerton was a Women's Training College in Cambridge.

[13] As feminist geographers have widely argued the public/private dichotomy is deeply rooted in the Western philosophical and political tradition and is openly and clearly gendered. See Duncan, Nancy (1996), McDowell, Linda (1999), Massey, Doreen (1994), Rose, Gillian (1993). However, it has also been pointed out that this distinction between the public and the private has often been interrogated by the practices of socially marginalised groups (ibid.). In this light, the new educational spaces that opened for women at the turn of the nineteenth century in the UK, created opportunities for women to transgress the boundaries between private and public.

[14] See among others, Lumsden, Luisa (1933), Vicinus Martha (1985), Purvis, June (1991).

[15] See, Clough Blanche,Athena, 1897, Collet, Clara (unpublished), Lumsden, Louisa (1933), Maynard Constance (unpublished, 1910), Smith Mary (1892).

[16] For the opposition to the movement for the higher education for women, see among others Delamont Sara (1978a, 1978b), Dyhouse Carol (1977, 1978, 1995), Stephen, Barbara (1927).

[17] For women's performance in mathematics in the first women's colleges, see Clough Anne, (1897), Maynard Constance (unpublished, 1910), Stephen Barbara (1927).

[18] The 'Five Levels of Life' is an essay, included in Maynard's book *Between College Terms(1910).* In this essay, Constance Maynard interrogates the motives of human actions and explores the issue of human choice.

[19] For the dominant gender ideologies in the Victorian and Edwardian Britain see among others Delamont S and Duffin, L. (1978) , Dyhouse C. (1977, 1978, 1981), and Purvis J. (1991).