"College Girls Don't Faint": The Legacy of Elsewhere

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Summary

This article is an attempt to pursue a localised cultural history of private girls' schooling in Natal during the apartheid era. Using an autobiographical lens, it looks at the traces of Victorian rhetoric and its codification within a feminine/feminist militarism evident in the speeches and songs as well as social and cultural practices of Durban Girls' College, a Presbyterian school in Durban. Using archival material and memory, my own and others', to trace the signs of "Englishness" in the formation of identity in white girls coming from mainly privileged backgrounds, I direct a self-reflexive gaze at the effects of such schooling on attitudes to race and culture prevalent at the time. In parallel, however, I also examine some archival material from Inanda Seminary, College's "sister" school, which has a different provenance, but which also catered for the privileged members of Zulu society. While I do not pretend to engage in a fully developed comparison of these schools, I hope to show that similar expectations about conduct and class were brought to bear on white and black girls in Natal during a specific historical period.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel wend ek 'n poging aan om 'n gelokaliseerde kulturele geskiedenis van meisies se opvoeding in privaatskole in Natal gedurende die apartheidsera na te gaan. Die artikel kyk deur 'n outobiografiese lens na die tekens van Victoriaanse retoriek en die kodifisering daarvan binne 'n vroulike/feministiese militarisme wat duidelik blyk in die toesprake en liedere, sowel as in die sosiale en kulturele gebruike van die Durban Girls' College, 'n Presbiteriaanse skool in Durban. Deur gebruik te maak van afgiefmateriaal en my eie herinneringe sowel as ander s'n om die tekens van "Englishness" in die identiteitsvorming van blanke meisies uit hoofsaaklik bevoorregte agtergronde na te spoor, rig ek self 'n refleksiewe blik op die uitwerking van sodanige opvoeding op die houdings teenoor ras en kultuur wat destyds geheers het. Ter vergelyking, egter, ondersoek ek ook sekere argiefmateriaal van Inanda Seminary, College se susterskool wat 'n verskillende herkoms het, maar wat ook vir bevoorregte meisies van die Zulu-gemeenskap voorsien het. Alhoewel ek nie wil voorgee dat ek my gaan inlaat in 'n ten volle ontwikkelde vergelyking tussen hierdie twee skole nie, hoop ek tog om aan te toon dat dieselfde verwagtings aangaande gedrag en klas vir swart en wit meisies gegeld het in Natal gedurende 'n spesifieke historiese periode.

> Colonialism is both a set of institutions and also, emphatically, a set of discourses.
>
> (Sudipta Kaviraj)

> More important then than the past itself, is its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present.
>
> (Edward Said)

> Postcolonial theory is one way of recognizing how decolonized situations are marked by the trace of the imperial pasts they try to disavow.
>
> (Simon Gikandi)

In this paper, I will explore the curious traces of Victorian feminist rhetoric within a particular setting: a private girls' school in apartheid Natal, South Africa. I will build on the excellent work that has been done on the effects of imperialism on educational practices in South Africa[1] but will conduct a narrower investigation, a local history of Durban Girls' College,[2] a private school for girls founded in 1877. Using an autobiographical lens, I use archival material, my own memories and those of other "old girls" to trace the signs of Englishness and the codes of colonialism in the formation of what I see as a peculiarly hybridised identity. In an attempt to recuperate the past, I will be looking at a selection of discursive material emerging out of the ethos of DGC and also of Inanda Seminary,[3] two seemingly different schools, which nevertheless have mutually constitutive genealogies and whose differences may be more superficial than is at first recognised. I do not intend to raise expectations that I will be engaging in a fully developed comparison of these schools and their ideologies.[4] Rather, I hope to show that despite the obvious differences in the racial identity of their pupils and the religious affiliation of their founders, Congregational American Board missionaries in the case of IS and English Presbyterian in the case of DGC, similar expectations about conduct and class were brought to bear on white and black girls in Natal. While I do not wish to underplay the inequalities which characterise these two locations, I hope to engage in a dialogic history that allows for the formation of different identities and gestures towards interconnectedness. I have found useful Susan Stanford Friedman's description of locational feminism:

> Locational feminism thus encourages the study of difference in all its manifestations without being limited to it, without establishing impermeable borders that inhibit the production and visibility of ongoing intercultural exchange and hybridity.
>
> (Friedman 1998: 4, 5)

Thus, while the two schools, DGC and IS, coexist within a spatial and temporal framework, they are also defined and separated by ideological, social and cultural asymmetries, as I hope to show in this paper.

I have also found helpful Edward Said's idea that the past is always present in cultural attitudes and, revisiting *Culture and Imperialism*, intend to approach my topic "contrapuntally, as making up a set of intertwined and overlapping histories" (Said 1994: 19). Similarly, following Said, the use of the term "elsewhere" in my title, is a sign both of considerable struggle on my part to avoid foregrounding the overdetermined concepts "imperialism" and "colonialism"[5] and also of a desire to indicate my own postcolonial positioning in relation to my topic, which, although it is located in a precise historical period (the 1950s and 60s in Natal under apartheid), and therefore has a materialist base, is also self-critical and interrogates the assumptions of metropolitan superiority implicit in the ethos of both of the schools I describe. In doing so, I am also situating this paper within the domains of feminism and postcolonial theory, both of which reject totalising discourses and which insist on the contingent nature of situated subject positions and local contexts.

In the history of colonialism, South Africa under apartheid is, as the South African Communist Party proposed in 1962, "colonialism of a special type". Previously a crown colony, Natal has a more curious history, which has an especial relevance for my concerns in this paper. Known, even today as "the last outpost of the British Empire", a large part of Natal, the part I grew up in, was, in the late 1950s, eccentrically and endemically "English". (The quotation marks are intended to convey a degree of irony as well as suggest that there is a large body of writing around this contested term.) It would be more correct to say that part of the population of Natal, centred mostly in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, "produced" itself as an English culture and undertook a rigorous performance of this English identity, of which bumper stickers proclaiming allegiance to the British Empire are an amusing modern cultural emblem. Mother country ("home") was England; local reality was apartheid South Africa. I am aware of the considerable amount of analysis that exists on the concept of "home" and "away" or "abroad" but refer only briefly to this in my article. Intrinsic to my approach here is the idea that colonialism is not a coherent, seamless entity but is riven with internal contradictions. What I wish to convey is what John Comaroff refers to as "an extraordinarily intricate web of relations" (1997: 165). It has become evident that the opposition between centre and periphery is itself being questioned in more recent research. In its place is the idea that we are now dealing with '"contact zones' ... positioned *between* 'peripheries' or 'inter-relating margins'" (Boehmer 2002: 2, 6). Most pertinently, my aim in this article is to shift the gaze of "strangeness", usually focused on the colonial other, onto the "centre" itself, demonstrating that "colonial encounters disrupt the identity of the 'two' cultures who meet

through the very process of hybridization – the meeting of the 'two' that transforms each 'one'" (Ahmed 2000: 12).

In the narrative of mid-twentieth-century Natal, therefore, the metropolitan centre is both away and at home, paying allegiance to Britain and America as well as being required to acknowledge the neocolonial presence of an Afrikaner government whose language a significant portion of the colony, by and large, did not speak. Thus, during daily morning prayers, DGC girls would fervently sing "God Save the Queen" as well as "Die Stem", whose unfamiliar words in Afrikaans we quickly learnt without necessarily understanding their meaning. Perhaps as an antidote to this lapse in intercultural communication, every Tuesday was deemed Afrikaans day, during which girls were supposed to converse only in Afrikaans. Morning prayers on Tuesdays were also conducted in that language. At no stage, however, was there ever mentioned the idea of having a Zulu day, a huge oversight in retrospect.

The apartheid laws, applied in this instance to education, have a marked bearing on the subject of this paper. In 1953, Hendrik Verwoerd introduced a bill to remove black education from missionary control to that of the Native Affairs Department: "I will reform it [black education] so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them" (Parsons 1982: 291).

However, according to Sylvia Vietzen, Natal constituted itself as an "echo effect of British culture" since permanent European settlement of Natal coincided with the beginning of Victoria's reign (1837) and Natal remained part of the British Empire from 1843 to 1910. Therefore, says Vietzen, a study of education in Natal is also a study of the structure and functioning of Victorian England (Vietzen 1980: 11). Refining on that idea, I will show how the study of the discourse of a white private girls' school in Natal alongside that of a black mission school in the same area uncovers a complex process of identification and alterity, engaging its staff and pupils in a narrative that emerged from England in the former case, from American missionaries in the latter case, and which encouraged them to "look elsewhere in the here", a phrase attributed to Said by Friedman:

> What is methodologically significant ... are [Said's] related strategies of looking elsewhere in the here. Such "worldliness" as an analytic process involves breaking the binary of global and local, of seeing how the global is always already present in the local; the local always already present in the global.
>
> (Friedman 1998: 111)

The Durban Young Ladies' Collegiate Institution began its history in 1876 out of a need, perceived by the prosperous merchants and businessmen of the time, for an exclusive Protestant school for girls. Weary of sending their daughters

to England for their education and frustrated by the impossibility of persuading competent Englishwomen to travel to Natal as governesses, the founding of a local school seemed the obvious solution. From its inception, then, College (as it later came to be called) defined itself within a narrow frame of reference. It was to be a school for Durban girls of prominent merchants, isolated by race and class from the "unsafe" environment of Natal, and nurtured by an ideology of England as "home" in which home is both a memory and an ideal (Williams in Said 1994: 85). Its formation as a Protestant school was a deliberate attempt to oppose Roman Catholicism and "high church" Anglicanism and to provide alternative schooling to that already established by the Holy Family Sisters in 1875. While this aversion to Catholicism was an echo of mid-Victorian evangelicalism (Vietzen 1980: 191), it was also part of the culture of exclusion which informed the school and many of the English-speaking families in Durban at the time. By establishing what "we" had in common with our "mother country", the school encouraged its girls to adhere to a system of familiar norms and behaviours, which ensured our encapsulation within a parochial band of privileged whiteness. At the same time, it excluded a rich realm of other cultural discourses, about which we knew nothing, and with which we were not encouraged to become familiar. The closest we got to acquaintance with "otherness" throughout the sixties while I was at school was an intercultural exchange with a local Afrikaans school, which lasted a week, and an afternoon visit to a nursery school in Kwa Mashu (a so-called township near Durban inhabited, according to the laws of that time, only by black people). I remember the feelings of strangeness at being forced to sit in class at the local Afrikaans school and eat my sandwiches in the company of girls from a different language group to myself. I felt as if I had gone to a foreign country. Ironically, though, the richer girls of my class were going on regular trips to England and "the Continent" to engage with a more familiar culture, that of London or Paris. I also remember the afternoon in Kwa Mashu where we graciously handed out food and toys and dandled three-year-old Zulu children on our laps, all the while glowing with reformist zeal and self-congratulation that bore no relation to the hardship of the lives we were allowed to glimpse.

This encouragement of self-enclosed adherence to a culture we thought of as ours while living in a remote corner of the southeastern tip of Africa is an anomaly I have tried to come to terms with and is the motivating factor in the writing of this article. The politics of exclusion operated in various ways: economically through the high fees charged at the school; culturally, by limiting access mainly to girls of a single cultural group;[6] through religion, by defining itself as evangelical Protestant;[7] socially, by limiting entry to girls who lived in Durban;[8] and, of course, racially, by excluding all girls of colour. In a speech given at Founder's Day, 1927, Harriet Robinson (previously at

Cheltenham College) uses a metaphor which suggests that generations of girls schooled at DGC are like books from the same print-run, underscoring the quasi-incestuous nature of DGC education:

> It is a very great thing in this comparatively new land to have traditions, to have schools like this, which have had within their walls mothers and daughters receiving the special impress of the school's individuality, and ready, because of the love they bear her, to uphold her traditions during school-life and afterwards; ready when the time comes, to send their children to receive the impress which they themselves received .... It is inspiring for a child to see her mother's name on the Honours Board as Dux of the school, or Scholarship winner, or to know that her mother played for the school in many a hard-fought match. All these things are an inspiration and a stimulus; the child feels that she too must, in all branches of school life, "play up and play the game" and so transmit this school not only, not less, but to a great extent better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to her.
>
> (*College Magazine*, Jubilee Number, 1927)

But, ironically, the original impetus for the establishment of the Young Ladies' Collegiate Institution came from the American Board missionaries who were aware of the urgent need for education for Zulu boys and girls, and who initiated both the Amanzimtoti Seminary for boys in 1853 (renamed Adams College in the 1930s) and the Inanda Seminary for girls in 1869, some eight years before Durban Girls' College was founded. The Inanda Seminary was the first private school for girls in Natal, indeed, "the first establishment of its kind in Southern Africa" (Hughes 1990: 197) and had the aim of providing girls with a good general education firmly rooted in Christianity. Daniel Lindley is quoted as calling it

> the best furnished building for educational purposes in the Natal colony. The white people who come along express a wish that the white girls could have the privilege of attending such a school. Some say outright that it is too good for Kafirs.
>
> (Lindley quoted in Vietzen 1980: 383)

The IS curriculum initially comprised Bible study, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography and sewing. Later, under the aegis of the principal, Miss Clarke, the school became known as an "industrial school" which implied a combination of academic and practical subjects with a strong emphasis on "Plain Sewing, Dressmaking, Gardening, Poultry Care, Housekeeping and Cooking" (Hughes 1990: 216). It seems as if subjects such as painting and botany, taught at DGC, were excluded in favour of domestic economy and gardening since the general aim at IS was to improve the standard of Zulu

womanhood, supposedly, to make good wives and subsistence farmers (*Natal Witness*, 29 October 2001). The emphasis shifted again in the 1930s, when IS was established as an "elite" school which competed successfully with the academic programmes offered to white girls. Professional training was now emphasised, with nursing as the chief emphasis.[9] From its inception, Inanda Seminary did not intend to train girls for a life of servitude. The Lindleys, Daniel and Lucy, who were key players in the formation of the school, wished to produce "Christian wives and mothers in accordance with their own gender ideology" (Hughes 1990: 202). It is significant that Lucy Lindley had defied the law by teaching slaves to read and write on a plantation in Virginia (Lindley quoted in Hughes 1990: 202) and was openly supportive of those who were discriminated against on the basis of skin colour. However, despite Daniel Lindley's sympathetic views on *lobola* and polygamy, the American Board set up strict rules for its girls at IS concerning traditional custom. The girls were not allowed to use their mother tongue at the school, for example:

> The women missionaries in charge of the Seminary were looking for a profound reorientation in the girls' world-view, an exacting task for the teachers and a daunting one for their charges.
>
> (Hughes 1990: 204)

In contrast to IS which had leanings toward Mount Holyoke Seminary, the Durban Young Ladies' Collegiate Institution was modelled on Cheltenham Ladies' College and showed, even in the 1950s and 60s, traces of gentility. On the curriculum were Greek dancing, music appreciation, needlework and botany (biology was considered unladylike and was not offered). The prospect of the annual deportment prize encouraged the girls to practise walking around with books balanced on their heads for hours at a time, casting an ironic shadow at young Zulu girls who also had to practice carrying objects on their heads, but for an entirely different and more practical reason: to allow them to carry home heavy buckets of water and huge bundles of firewood.

Shifting the gaze northwards for a moment, but at more or less the same time that I was at my privileged school, Mamphela Ramphele was experiencing a different type of Dutch Reformed Mission school at Bethesda Normal College, "an island of Protestant morality in the Bushveld", as she describes it in her autobiography (Ramphele 1995: 41) and at Setotolwale High School, an offshoot of the missionaries of the Anglican church in South Africa. Describing a schooling poles apart from the privileged life of young ladies in Durban, Ramphele talks about the bedbugs, the meagre food and the system of "huis-werk" (housework) – "forced labour to remind students that education was not an escape route from the inferior position blacks were 'destined' to occupy" (p. 38). Under Hendrik Verwoerd's punitive educational system for blacks in

South Africa, certain key subjects were omitted from the syllabus, such as mathematics, following his theory that "Bantu children should not be shown green pastures where they would never be allowed to graze" (p. 44).[10]

A strong ethos of conservatism is identifiable in educational practices for white and black girls in South Africa during the apartheid era. Black women who managed to matriculate were usually educated under a strongly conservative protestant ethos which emphasised the value of hard physical labour and a god-fearing practice. Girls at IS, for example, were expected to learn self-sufficiency by growing vegetables and maize, chopping wood, fetching water, cutting grass and tending the grounds (Hughes 1990: 207), while white girls at DGC were subjected to a less strenuous regime but one which nevertheless incorporated a strictly regulated day, compulsory sport and a backlash of Victorian feminism which taught that physical weakness was unacceptable in the well-educated girl. Gillian Avery elaborates on the "gridiron" concept that was a hallmark of Roedean School and which fostered "*esprit de corps,* the qualities of leadership, selflessness and self-discipline, and [to] be ready to go out into the world to serve others" (Avery 1991: 12). The concept of the gridiron-permeated schooling in Britain for a number of years was transmitted to the colonies. Its heritage can be seen stretching to the 50s and 60s in the determination of DGC headmistresses to "form character" in the girls, as will be seen later.

Again, while the originating points of schools for black and white girls varied between different religious affiliations, the outcome for girls was similar. For instance, with English culture as the originating point of College, girls were encouraged to become strongly individual, independent women fit to serve their community as competent wives. At IS the founders imagined producing a new breed of women who would take their place alongside their husbands as civilised and God-fearing wives. As Mary Edwards, headmistress of IS from 1869–1892, declares in 1858:

> The aim of this school ... was to give to the young woman-hood of the Native people an opportunity for advanced education .... The founders of the institution, however, considered this but a means to a greater end. That end was the evangelisation of the Zulu people .... [E]mphasis must be laid upon work for the future mothers of the race ... where they could receive education and practical training in some of the fundamentals of Christian homelife, in close and continuous contact with refined Christian ladies ....
>
> (Mary Edwards, 1858. KCM 52682)

However, girls from both schools were not encouraged to train as professionals but were offered the prospects only of teaching and nursing as future careers.[11] And, as I shall show in the following description of the headmistresses who

took up posts in Natal, the prospect of individualism and independence they offered to their pupils was an ambiguous one.

I would like to turn now to an examination of particular female figures who operated from a strong sense of duty but who were at the same time engaged in a rhetoric of imperialism, tied to past values and ideologies. As Simon Gikandi says of the Englishwoman who ventured to the colonies:

> There is, of course, ample evidence to show that English women were actively involved in the project of colonialism and saw the imperial enterprise as constitutive of their own agency and identity; but we also know that most of the women involved in the politics and culture of colonialism related to it in different ways than their male counterparts did. After all, if empire seemed to be overtly masculinised, it was to provide a point of contradistinction between men's work and female domesticity. Indeed, the Manichean division between masculinity on the colonial frontier and demure femininity at home was crucial to the sustenance of the fiction of Englishness in the Victorian period.
>
> (Gikandi 1996: 122)

This "fiction of Englishness" persevered into the 1950s and 60s when the English Oxbridge-trained headmistress was a familiar figure in South African educational practices. Usually single, wearing well-cut three-quarter length skirts and sensible shoes, with cropped grey hair and spectacles, the colonial headmistress ushers in a new mode of female subjectivity, defining itself in opposition to the trope of demure domestic femininity and uttering its mantra: "College *gels* don't faint". Here, following Spivak, it is evident that the ideology of imperialism, however that term is contested, provides fertile ground for the production of feminist individualism. The injunction to avoid fainting is in direct contrast to received stereotypes of placid and passive Victorian femininity in which hysterical behaviour such as fainting was entirely acceptable. Coded as a military tactic, it seems to have been intended as a salutary lesson in strength of purpose. College girls, like the soldier, had often to stand for long periods, listening to the scriptures or reciting prayers and hymns. Wriggling one's toes inside shoes was deemed to be correct behaviour in the case of the incipient faint. Notice, too, that the prohibition against fainting is not directed at girls in general. College girls were specifically *marked* as being different from those of the female sex who might faint at will. The military trope that emerges here is part of a martial discourse that also included a ban on coughing, sniffing, fidgeting and so on, and an attempt to abjure all signs of bodily functions. Encased in their uniforms, College girls had something to uphold and something to conceal – the proud bearing of a soldier in uniform was a disguise for corporeal femininity, a form of drag if you like.

The headmistress to whom I am referring had inherited her military discourse from a long line of doughty headmistresses, some of whom remained in Britain, but several of whom travelled to the colonies. It is even possible that she had absorbed her military ideas about girls and fainting from Miss Beale, almost a century earlier. As Gillian Avery comments:

> Tough and resilient themselves, the old-style headmistresses tolerated no weakness in others. Miss Beale once threatened to cut off the hair of the next girl who fainted in church, since the weight of it was clearly too much for pupils who had been collapsing in too great numbers. "You must never allow a girl to faint", Miss Buss said angrily to a pupil who had helped a friend out from the weekly sermon at North London Collegiate. Once I was in church with a pewful of girls. I noticed that one of them looked like fainting. I leant across to her, shook my fist at her, and said: "You *dare* faint." And she didn't.
>
> (Avery 1991: 220)

College girls, then, were marked by not being weak and feminine, but strong and steadfast, like soldiers. On the other hand, however, the wearing of trousers out of school hours (in the afternoons or at weekends) was expressly forbidden, as was any adornment of the hair. College girls during the mid-twentieth century, were compelled to wear the black "snood"(a narrow alice band of black velvet) in their hair on special occasions, no matter how long or short it was, presumably in an attempt to exert control over the flagrant locks of young women (one remembers here the scene in *Jane Eyre* where Julia Severn's hair proves too much for Mr Brocklehurst and he orders it to be shorn off). These norms regarding correct attire and control of hair in juxtaposition with the military expectation that we would neither cough nor faint, provide a curiously anomalous inversion of gendered norms. We were soldiers in skirts.

I would like to use once more the information received from an old girl, now living in London, which corroborates the emphasis placed on outer form:

> We were taught that "Stick-at-ability" was the characteristic of all College girls (gels as Miss C called them). "Stiff upper lip" and "suffering in silence" and "keeping up appearances" were also very important. Dress code was ridiculously prescriptive. Miss C tried to make us button up our blazers when we stood up (e.g. to answer a question in class) and unbutton them when we sat down. We all made such a "thing" of it that she soon abandoned the idea. We weren't allowed to leave the top button of our school uniform unbuttoned, the flat bow at the back of the hat-band on our panama hat had to be correctly folded and sewed. I was in the choir and the hemlines of the girls in the front row had to be at the same height from the floor. I rode a bike to school and we weren't allowed to let our hats blow off and hang down our backs as they did because of the elastic under

> our chins. So we rode with one hand keeping the hat on the head and only one hand on the handlebars. Riding dangerously was preferable to letting the hat slide back off one's head! In fact dressing properly was more important than anything else now I come to think about it. I did more detention for wearing the wrong pants for gym (they had to be those green bloomers) or rolling our socks down below our ankle bones, or rolling up our sleeves, or forgetting to wear those black velvet snoods on Speech Day than I ever did for more serious sins.
>
> (E-mail from Jill Speed)

The anomaly of feminine soldiers is given an enlightening emphasis by Mary Poovey in her analysis of the social construction of Florence Nightingale, who she describes as inhabiting two constructed subjectivities: the normative middle-class self-denying caretaker (the sweet lady of the lamp) competing with the politician, soldier and tough-minded administrator (Poovey 1988: 168). These interlocking narratives, the domestic and the military, as Poovey points out, are also evident in *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* and pervade colonial discourse for a century after 1860. They are foregrounded in several of the documents I have found in the College archives, in Headmistresses' speeches, the School Song and in poems written for special occasions. In "Jubilee Ode" for example, the fervour belonging to a military campaign is rendered in the atrocious rhythm and forced rhyme scheme:

> First on her playing fields we knew the joy
> Of eager girlhood and of strength's free play –
> Learning the gladness of the hard-fought fight,
> Or glorying in the beauties of the day;
> And knew that Life itself is one stern Game
> That players – wearying – must play the same.
>
> (College Archives Headmistress's Report 1947: 7)

And before June Drummond wrote College's new school song, the school sang Harrow's *Forty Years On* with seeming disregard for its patent unsuitability as an encouragement for young girls:

> Follow up! Follow up! Follow up! Follow up!
> Till the field ring again and again
> With the tramp of the twenty-two men.
> Follow up! Follow up!
>
> (College Archives Headmistress's Report 1947: 7)

In her Headmistress's report of 1947, Miss E. Middleton quotes the following lines:

> Courage and Fortitude are lovely words
> And lovely are the virtues they define,
> Yours was the courage, laughing Soldier, may
> The fortitude be mine.
>
> (College Archives Headmistress's Report 1947: 7)

She continues:

> That is what we all need: Sticking power, and Faith in the inherent Goodness of Life, even when it seems altogether evil.
>
> (College Archives, Headmistress's Report 1947: 7)

Ten years earlier, Miss Middleton had quoted yet another piece of military rhetoric, from Browning: "I was ever a fighter ... let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers, the heroes of old". She then went on to say that "the important thing is to learn what is worth fighting for, to find for oneself a true standard of values" (College Archives, November 1937). While I am of course using these excerpts from speeches to reinforce the military discourse that remained until at least the mid-century, I am mindful of the context in which Miss Middleton could speak of life as "altogether evil", with the alarming developments in Europe at the time: Hitler's rearming, growing tensions in Europe, the Spanish Civil War. However, it is interesting that it is particularly women who were conjoined to "play the game" and "fight the good fight" without ever being expected to join the armed forces. Indeed, any strength that would ensue from such coaching would be used specifically in the domestic and private sphere, leaving men to act in the public world. As Cornelia Connelly, an American who travelled to England to help educate children in the Roman Catholic tradition, is quoted as saying:

> We have to learn to make strong women, who, while they lose nothing of their gentleness and sweetness, should yet have a masculine force of character and will.
>
> (Gompertz 1922: 308)

The distinction between public as masculine and private as feminine can also be seen, as previously mentioned, in the careers offered to black girls in Natal. In Shula Marks's *Not Either an Experimental Doll* (a collection of letters written by a young Xhosa girl with the pseudonym of Lily Moyo, to her patron, Dr Mabel Palmer) a reply by Dr Palmer indicates not only the choices available to educated women, but also the hierarchy of value attached to these "professions":

> If for any reason you do not pass your matriculation, then you must resign yourself either to becoming a nurse or going into domestic service, and as I said when you came to see me, do not despise domestic service. Any sort of work well and conscientiously done is well worth undertaking.
>
> (Marks 1987: 136)

Dr Palmer does not even mention more elevated professions. Becoming a medical practitioner was unthinkable and nursing is elevated, but only just, above that of domestic service. And, as I have shown, the range of professions offered to privileged white girls, even as late as 1961, was as narrow as that offered to black girls. Thus Miss Middleton who was Headmistress of DGC from 1937 to 1956 was invited to address the school at the inauguration of its new wing in 1961. In her speech, she addressed the girls (of whom I was one) as follows:

> Your generation has a great contribution to make, for you must help the growth of those who, up to the present, have seemed unaware or indifferent to the real value of what the West has given to the world .... All of you, I hope will WORK. You may teach, typewrite, nurse or marry.
>
> (Middleton quoted in Wrinch-Schulz [s.a.]: 205)

The bathos of the last sentence is astounding, with its dismal prospects for the girls of 1961. Black and white women are thus similarly implicated in being given the promise of a life in which the range of available professions is circumscribed. It is an extraordinarily limited vision for women and ironically one not followed by either Miss Middleton herself, nor by Miss C, who was in her way an "extraordinary" woman, an adventurer of sorts. While teaching at Barnstaple Girls' Grammar School, she embarked on a number of excursions, cycling through Scotland, climbing to the top of Mount Vesuvius, and finally, accepting a position in southern Africa.

Looking now to College's older sister school, Inanda Seminary (this relationship was never overtly acknowledged), a comparison of the rhetoric of speeches and poems written by staff and students over a corresponding period results in a similar set of tropes. In an address given at the Seminary in 1939, Mrs N. Tantsi elaborates on the restrictions of gender and culture on the African woman in her role as cultivator of her race:

> Looking back 70 years ago we see the African woman in a pitiful state. As a child she was taught to till the soil, draw water, carry firewood and to string beads. All these, she was told, prepared her for matrimonial life .... As a grown woman she did not choose who to marry, but her parents sent her to any man they fancied, as long as he had enough cattle to give them in return .... This continued until the Light of the World shone into the hearts of certain Men and

> Women, who after they received that Great Light, volunteered to bring it to the shores of Africa.
>
> (Address given at Inanda Seminary 1939. KCM 52682)

We do not know who Mrs Tantsi's interlocutors are, but her speech makes a right-angled turn from the cultural oppression of the woman by her husband and parents, to a hymn of gratitude for the missionaries who, struck by the light of wisdom and benefaction, travelled to Africa to release the African woman from her purgatory by providing education at Inanda Seminary. Notwithstanding that this is a performance of gratitude for the benefactors whose relations may be in the audience, Mrs Tantsi's discourse is an example of what Grewal describes as the adaptation in an encounter "to their own 'domestic' culture what they find elsewhere ...". She continues: "any domestic setting serves as a site for absorption, appropriation, and transformation of cultural formations from elsewhere" (Grewal quoted in Friedman 1998: 112). In similar vein, but several decades later, Matseliso Bolofo, a student at the school, writes a poem on the 102 years that have passed since the building of Inanda Seminary and on the missionaries who started the school:

> Sad to leave their motherland?
> Sad to leave comfort behind?
> Not they,
> Africa,
> Joyful to receive them;
> South Africa,
> The chosen ones
> Was where a girls' school was built
> For flowers of the world,
>
> The wealth of the world,
> The mothers of tomorrow.
>
> (Bolofo 1971, KCM 52682)

Bolofo's poem echoes the words of an earlier headmistress, Miss Edwards, in the belief that the African woman's primary role is to be the mother of future races. Herein lies her value and her beauty (she is both flower and wealth). The eulogy is perhaps an indication that Inanda had become a more pleasant prospect for Zulu girls in the early 1970s, for in 1884 a pupil wrote:

> I do not think the missionaries did wrong to come among us for they came to tell us about the Word of God, and they did not want our land, but they have brought the white people, and the white people trouble us.
>
> (Hughes 1990: 208)

But it is difficult to impute intention to the writers of these documents without a greater degree of knowledge about their circumstances. While an attempt was made in 1923 to place Inanda school-leavers in domestic service, there were objections from teachers in the school concerning the poor living conditions of domestic workers in Durban, and the scheme was abandoned (see Hughes (1990) for further information). But domestic science was a popular subject at Inanda and regarded as a necessary part of the training for future wives – see also Deborah Gaitskell's (1990: 251–272) discussion of "devout domesticity" in relation to African woman's Christianity – as it was in College, as is evident from the following speech made in 1961 in which Miss C reiterates her vision of the girls' future:

> And whatever changes time may bring in one's personal circumstances, we are determined that College girls in the future, as in the past, shall be able to run their homes, if necessary, without a servant. You will find evidence of this in the beautiful suite of rooms devoted to cookery, needlework and housewifery. In future, all senior girls will do a practical course in housecraft and will learn everything from scrubbing a floor to planning, cooking and serving a formal dinner.
>
> (Wrinch-Schulz [s.a.]: 206)

The difference, of course, between the visions of the headmistresses of IS and DGC lies in the availability of domestic service. Miss C focuses on the unthinkable event of political life determining an end to an era in which white families might not be able to afford black domestic service. The Inanda girl, however, is encouraged to view her domestic role as being family maker and mother. It is assumed that she will do all the domestic chores herself. There is something virtuously self-congratulatory in Miss C's version of independent womanhood mindful of Mrs Beeton's injunction to her readers to gain the experience necessary to maintaining a good household:

> I have always thought that there is no more fruitful source of family discontent than a housewife's badly-cooked dinners and untidy ways. Men are now so well served out of doors, – at their clubs, well-ordered taverns, and dining-houses, that in order to compete with the attractions of these places, a mistress must be thoroughly acquainted with the theory and practice of cookery, as well as be perfectly conversant with all the other arts of making and keeping a comfortable home.
>
> (Beeton 1961: 5)

Looking at these different kinds of rhetoric, that of the Oxbridge-trained English headmistress and the American evangelist, as well as the African woman and pupil several prevailing metaphors, of light and darkness, of fruits,

flowers and harvests, serve to construct the girls as passive and docile and assist in their representation as strong yet subservient women. While the military discourse of galleon – the College song, composed by June Drummond has a chorus as follows: "Nisi Dominus Frustra / The ringing voices say / God speed our galleon / Safely on her way" – and soldiers are peculiar to the English tradition of colonial schooling, images of brave colonists bringing light to the dark continent seem to be a product of the American missionary, a trope which also contributes to the rhetoric of proud women as fruit of a spiritual harvest.

The metaphor of woman as flower is obviously derived from a deeply entrenched ideology of woman's proper place as a figure of gentle adornment as well as rooting her in nature, for a long time part of the binary opposition that located man in culture and woman in nature. In 1895, Sir John Robinson, Prime Minister of Natal, presented the prizes at DGC. In his speech, he

> trusted that the school would turn out the good old-fashioned, true English type of woman who had made England what it was and that it would not produce what was known as the "new woman" (Hear! Hear!). He fervently hoped to see flourishing in Natal not the yellow aster or the green carnation, but the roses, the lilies, the daisies and the violets that represented such noble qualities in home life as humility, purity, modesty and sweetness which, to all right-minded people, were the very embodiment of what a woman should be (Applause).
>
> (Robinson in Wrinch-Schulz [s.a.]: 57)

The overt comparison of women to various hierarchies of flowers (from rose to violet, noble to shy and retiring), nuanced precisely as particular types of pure strains and not as hybrids such as the "green carnation" warrants further examination. The ideal of purity is offered to the audience by naming so-called "pure" strains of well-known flowers. Yet, as is well known, the rose, to mention only one of the flowers quoted, is itself a hybrid species. Perhaps, Sir John wanted to appeal to his audience by pointing to a disturbing hybrid, the green carnation, known in Europe at the time as an emblem of homosexuality, made infamous by Oscar Wilde. Certainly, hybridity in other contexts, is regarded as a strength. For example, Marilyn Strathern cites a series of lectures given by a Professor Dixon at University College, London, in 1929 on "The English Character", "The English Genius" and "The English People" in which she characterises Englishness as "diversity". Referring to these lectures, Strathern comments:

> If England formed the basis of a hybrid nation, it was a vigorous hybrid, created centuries ago by waves of conquerors each of whom added their genes and skills to the stock ... [it became] an imagery of constant infusions of "new blood". The country's institutions were invigorated by cross-fertilisation. Each individual

> thereby contributed his/her unique portion without losing the transcendent characteristic of individuality that was preserved in the singularity of "the English" themselves.
>
> (Strathern 1992: 36)

Although Strathern is careful to include women in her summary of Dixon's lectures, Dixon, notably, does not, thereby excluding the category of gender from his analysis of the English race as hybridised. I can offer only conjecture at this point concerning the demand for purity by Sir John Robinson and the ideal of hybridity offered by Professor Dixon. A mere thirty-four years separate Sir John's speech at Founder's Day in Natal from Professor Dixon's lectures in London, years that saw the onset of both the Anglo-Boer war and the First World War. It is likely that the former's reference to the "new woman" has a direct bearing on the injunction to avoid hybridity. The "natural" woman, she who is "part of an ordered hierarchy of creation" (Pateman 1989: 18), was already becoming a contested term at the end of the nineteenth century. Generally characterised as disorderly, a disruptive influence on social and political life (see Rousseau's idea that women are unable to subdue their sexual appetites to the same extent as men who are "controlled by nature" (quoted in Pateman 1989: 21)), women were subjected to consistent admonitions to be modest. As Pateman says:

> It is worth remarking here that one way in which women (and their male kin and keepers) attempt to hide this contact with nature, their own natural functions, and hence their potential for disorder, is through cleanliness – presented as purity.
>
> (Pateman 1989: 26)

The term "new woman" then, refers to the rise of a new breed of women who contravened those attributes traditionally and culturally coded as "feminine". These women were independent, involved in social and political endeavours, vocal reformers, philanthropists who engaged with men in conversation about important matters, who worked, who earned their own money, who talked about sex. Among these "new" women, we can number Beatrice Webb, Georges Sand, Annie Besant and Olive Schreiner. Known variously as the "glorified spinster", the "masculine woman", "scribbling women" and "platform women", they invaded spaces traditionally reserved for men, such as the British Museum Reading Room, while crashing through less obvious barriers erected by the constraints of genteel Victorian femininity. Sir John's call to arms, then, against such a type, enthusiastically applauded by his audience, represents the traditional, male, colonial attempt to corral women into a manageable pasture. Did he realise that the headmistress who was listening to his speech, was in all likelihood, herself just such a new woman?

In 1881, a short time before Sir John's speech about the need for purity at College, Jacobus Matiwane of Verulam told the Natal Native Commission:

> Our authority over our children is less than that of the raw Natives ... the younger branches of our families think they know more than we do.
>
> (Matiwane quoted in Hughes 1990: 205)

His words are an indication of a general concern by "mission" people that in the shift from traditional mores to mission norms, they were losing control, as Hughes suggests, over the sexual habits of their daughters, and looked to Inanda Seminary to take over this function. Deborah Gaitskell (1990: 253) also discusses the role of the mission station in "protecting" young girls: "The mission station was a magnet for young girls avoiding marriage ... for cast-off wives; or for widows escaping the levirate". And see, also, "Testimony of a School Girl" by Susiwe Bengu, in which she explains how she fled to Inanda Seminary to avoid being married to a much older man (Bengu in Daymond et al. 2003: 134, 135). In this context too, the term "new woman" (used by Tim Couzens (1985)) meant correct behaviour and "correct conduct in personal relationships" (Hughes 1990: 218). An organization such as the Purity League, formed in the 1920s, had as its aim:

> [to teach girls] how to look after themselves ... how to nurse their lives ... instead of giving up their lives recklessly to boys and so on ... those who would choose to live clean lives.
>
> (Walbridge quoted in Hughes 2000: 218)

A pattern can be detected, therefore, in the analysis of the discourse of both schools. The narratives which emerge from school documents construct themselves as racially, culturally and historically distinct, yet were in fact "contaminated" (the word is Ahmed's (2000: 12)) by their proximity in specific ways:

- They emanate from elite institutions
- College owed its existence in part to Inanda
- Both adhered to ideals of purity, in different ways
- Both share cultural images (flowers, harvest, light).
- Most significantly, both aimed to produce young women with docile, self-regulating and restrained bodies.

In conclusion, the research done for this paper leaves me with several questions, chiefly, to what extent is imperial culture, transmitted by colonial education, a culture of elsewhere, a form of "othering" for its colonial recipients? The extraordinary homogeneity of the English private school

environment of the 50s and 60s, an environment consisting almost exclusively of Presbyterian, middle-class girls coming from the metropolitan area of Durban, echoed by the mission enclave at "rural" Inanda, which was both a sanctuary for girls and women as well as the custodian of a strict code of ethics from a foreign land, created school-leavers who discovered that they were others in their own country, in their own culture. For the daughters of settlers and the Zulu elite in Natal, a quasi-Victorian education did not lend itself to their being able to communicate with those who had been "othered" in another way, not so much by "English" culture, but by rigid and dehumanising government policies. I have to question the mutual legacies of those who benefited and those who suffered from a culture of otherness. For me, life after school was a long unravelling of the tight tapestry I was woven into: a journey towards recognition of difference and connection; not that all things begin and end in England, but that one can feel "at home" only in a recognition of the hybridity of one's colonial existence. I end with Edward Said:

> In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism ... lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices.
>
> (Said 1994: 8)

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Notes

1. See, for instance, Leon de Kock's *Civilising Barbarians* (1996); John and Jean Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1997); P. Randall's *Little England on the Veld: The English Private School System in South Africa* (1982); Catherine Woeber's "Error in the Religious Equation: Images of St Peter's School in South African Autobiography" (1995) and "A long Occupation of the Mind: Peter Abrahams's Perspective on his Education" (1997); and Robert Morrell's "Masculinity and the White Boys' Boarding Schools of Natal", 1880-1930. See also Basola Le's report, "'Household Treasures': Attitudes Towards the Education of Girls in the Transvaal, 1948-1990: A Female Perspective" (2000).

2. All subsequent references to Durban Girls' College are DGC or College.

3. All subsequent references to Inanda Seminary are IS or Inanda.

4. A fully developed comparative analysis of education for girls in Natal would also, of course, include a discussion of schools established for Indian girls. This is a topic I do not include in my article but see Hughes (1990) for a brief discussion, as well as Maharaj (1979).

5. See Neil Larsen's analysis of these terms in "Imperialism, Colonialism, Post-colonialism" (2000: 23-52).

6. It is important to remember that private schools (what are now called "independent" schools) began to accept children of all cultural and racial groups in the eighties.

7. During my time at College, the few Jewish girls who were accepted attained high academic achievements and one went on to write a satirical novel about growing up Jewish in Durban and attending Durban Girls' College. See Lynn Freed's *Home Ground* (1986).

8. The Board of Governors initially refused to have boarding facilities at the school despite the urgent need by farmers and other country people for good education for their daughters. Later, limited spaces were reserved for boarders but, even in my time, they were regarded as outsiders.

9. For further information on Inanda Seminary see A. Wood, *Shine Where You Are: A History of Inanda Seminary 1869–1969* (1972). For information on the period 1869–1945, see Heather Hughes (1990). I consulted the Seminary's papers in the Killie Campbell Library (Inanda Seminary Papers (ISP) for the speeches and essays from which I quote later in this article.

10. There is scope here for interesting future research on the influence of the different religions on education for girls in South Africa. I have cited here the American Missionary Board, Dutch-Reformed Protestantism, Presbyterianism, Catholicism and the Anglican Church of South Africa. A carefully nuanced comparative study might reveal significant differences in the formation of identity in the school-leavers of these various religious schools.

11. In response to a call for reminiscences from old girls of College, this description of Miss Christison's advice to matriculation girls is telling.
    When we left DGC:
    - we would go to university and train to be a teacher so that we could support ourselves in a respectable fashion before we married after which we would stop teaching and be able to be better mothers because of our teaching experience. (It went without saying that we would never have to earn a

living again);

- if we weren't intelligent enough to do that we could train and work as nurses because they made sensible and useful mothers and wives too;
- as a last resort some of us may have to be short-hand typists. But College "gels" never took up hairdressing – "and I don't think there was much else open to girls then. A friend wanted to be a medical technologist and Miss C was scornful and said she would be a bottle-washer in a lab. She actually retired last year as Deputy Director of Health Services/Laboratories in Kwa-Zulu Natal and was a frequent speaker at international conferences" (E-mail from Jill Speed).

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