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A cloistered ethos? Landscapes of learning and English secondary schools for girls: an historical perspective

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Stephen Ball and Sharon Gewirtz argue that English single-sex girls' state schools carry elite overtones and use their single sex status as a unique selling point by stressing their 'cloistered' ethos and fostering of responsibility, quietness, femininity and a particular role for the arts, dance and music.[1] Diana Leonard notes that like Francis Buss, Dorothea Beale and the Girls Public Day School Trust, single-sex girls' state schools manage to suggest that they parallel the private sector by giving a class coding to girls'-only schools, while simultaneously putting forward a form of feminism concerned with having equally high academic standards as boys.[2] This article suggests that the historical legacy of landscapes and educational spaces, imagined and material, of Victorian and Edwardian girls' public, high and state schools may work in subtle ways to inflect the 'cloistered ethos' and 'elite tinge' of today's single-sex schools.

The article interrogates the descriptions of buildings, grounds and surroundings of the schools that advertised in the *Girls' Schools Yearbook* (GSBY) between its inception in 1906 and 1995. The GSYB was set up as the 'official organ' of the Association of Headmistresses and carried entries for girls' schools with governing bodies, as opposed to private schools. The GSYB has been dominated by independent schools but early twentieth century volumes include endowed, direct grant and municipal girls' schools. No higher grade schools or secondary modern or technical schools created post 1944 were included and when the GSYB was incorporated into the *Independent Schools Yearbook* in 1986 the municipal entries ceased. The first entry for each girls' secondary school from the South of

[1] Stephen Ball and Sharon Gewirtz, 'Girls in the education market: choice, competition and complexity', *Gender and Education* 9 (2), 210.

[2] Diana Leonard, 'The debate about co-education', in S.Kemal, D.Leonard, M. Pringle, S.Sadeque (eds), *Targeting Underachievement: Boys or Girls?* London University, Institute of Education, 1995, 25.

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England up to Birmingham was collected, the first entry after 1944 and an entry between 1970 and 1995. This sample included most of the girls' schools with boarding provision, as these were established largely in the south and south-west of England; most of the girls' public schools,[3] as these were largely clustered around London and the Home Counties, with other groups in or near Malvern and Bristol; and the large girls' day schools clustered in London, and Bristol (but not the clusters in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds). Few Catholic girls' schools are included as these advertised in the Catholic Directories.

GSYB entries are formulaic. They include information on governors and staff, buildings, numbers of pupils, curriculum, aims, fees, entry requirements and scholarships and special facilities. Entries differ in the inclusion and space given to the various descriptors but after listing governors and staff, the text of most entries begins with descriptions of buildings and grounds. This article explores the accounts of buildings and grounds as languages of description - the translation devices whereby one language is transformed into another through metaphor and metonym. A language of description constructs what is to count as an empirical referent, how such referents relate to each other to produce a specific text and translate these referential relations into theoretical objects or potential theoretical objects.[4] The analysis also draws on work on school architecture [5] and Christine Trimmington Jack's discussion of English Sensibility and landscape in the education of Catholic girls at Kerever Park in New South Wales, Australia.[6] It employs William Marsden's

[3] The meaning of the term 'public' school has shifted in English usage from the narrow meaning attributed to the public schools recognised by the Clarendon Commission in 1861, through the broader meaning of the Headmasters Conference Schools to today's independent schools financed by fees paid by parents, rather than supported by rates and taxes. Richard Aldrich (ed.) *Public or Private Education? Lessons from History*, London, Woburn Press, 2003, 5.

[4] Basil Bernstein, *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: theory research, critique*, New York:, Rowman and Littleton, 2000, 132-3.

[5] Malcolm Seaborne and Roy Lowe, *The English School, its Architecture and Organisation, vol 11 1870-1970*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.

[6] Christine Trimmington Jack, 'Reproducing an English sensibility: landscape and schooling in the Southern Highlands of the New South Wales 1944-1965, *History of Education Review*, 31 (2), 2002, 2002, 1-15.

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insights from historical geography to consider education in towns and cities that were providing new opportunities for middle-class women to move through town and city space.[7]

Landscapes of learning 1: schoolgirl space as healthy setting

The detrimental effects of study on young women had been stressed by critics of academic girls' education,[8] with the result that schoolgirl health and 'overstrain'[9] was a particular concern to pioneers of girls' education in England. Many reformers of female education thought intellectual and physical health were closely connected[10] and in their efforts to demonstrate that education was not detriment to health,[11] they stressed the long-standing Enlightenment educational discourse of a healthy mind in a healthy body.[12] Hills and high ground are a recurrent theme throughout the volumes from the earliest volumes to the present day, with descriptions of schools in the country, by the sea or in the town point to the location of the school on 'healthy' high ground. Hampden House School Great Missenden Bucks, situated up in the Chilterns (1975) and, like the Masonic School Rickmansworth Herts, overlooking the valley of the River Chess, one of the streams of the back slope of the Children hills (1990); The Abbey, Malvern Wells, on the South-Eastern slope of the Malvern hills (1950); St James and the Abbey, West Malvern, on the western

[7] William E Marsden, 'Historical geography and the history of education', *History of Education*, 6 (1), 1977, 21-42.

[8] See for example, George J Romanes, 'Mental differences between men and women' (1887) in Dale Spender (ed.), *The Education Papers: women's quest for equality in Britain, 1850-1912*, London: Routledge, 1987.

[9] Andrea Jacobs, 'The girls have done very decidedly better than the boys: girls and examinations 1860-1902, *Journal of Educational Administration and History,* 33 (2), 2001, 120-136.

[10] Kathleen E McCrone, 'Playing the game' and 'playing the piano': physical culture and culture at girls' public schools c1850-1914', in G.Walford (ed.) *The Private Schooling of Girls: past and present*, London, Woburn Press, 37.

[11] Anne Jemima Clough, 'Women's progressive in scholarship', in D.Spender (ed.), *The Education Papers*, 295-304.

[12] Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London, Routledge, 1980, 135-6.

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slopes of the Malvern hills (1980); Ellerslie Great Malvern, at the foot of the Worcestershire Beacon (1965); Hawnes School Ampthill on a ridge of hills bordering the Ouse Valley (1950); Benenden, on the highest point of the weald of Kent (1950); Clifton High School, on high ground near the Avon Gorge (1950); St Margarets, Bushey, Herts, on high ground overlooking the Colne Valley (1945); the Godolphin School on a hill outside Salisbury overlooking the Wiltshire Downs (1945); Dr Williams' School Dolgelley North Wales, at the foot of the Cader Range (1950). Boarding schools less loftily placed, and in less rural areas, also pointed to the height of the school's location, with several citing their height above sea level in the school's entry.

Day schools and boarding schools in, or located near, to towns or cities also deployed the discourse of the hilly location. The voluntary-aided Wycombe High School was located 'on the spur of the Chiltern hills' (1950) at the top of Marlow Hill (1965). The Church Education Company's Atherley School for Girls in Southampton (1930) and their Guildford High School (1950) were both in one of the highest parts of the town. The GPDST noted that Brighton and Hove High school was in one of the highest parts of Brighton (1950) and their Ipswich High School on high ground; while the Parents National Education Union's school was in the highest part of Burgess Hill (1965). Plymouth High School on the north hill (1906); Headington School, Oxford, on Headington Hill (1945); Newport High School on high ground (1945); Hitchin Girls Grammar School on a hill (1950); and the Maynard School Exeter on ground overlooking the Barnfield (1980).

In descriptions of healthy locations, the sea played an important role. Some schools, like St Mary's Hall Brighton (1950), capitalised on their high position facing the sea, Wentworth Bournemouth Collegiate, on the cliff in the Boscombe district of Bournemouth (1950); Westcliff School, in the highest part of Weston-super-Mare, facing the sea (1950); Benenden with views towards the sea 15 miles away (1950); Lowther College, Rhyll with sea and mountain views (1930). St Winifred's Eastbourne, in a high sheltered, sunny position between the sea and downs (1940); Burgess Hill PNEU school close to the South Downs and the sea (1965); Bournemouth County School for Girls, situated among the pines, close to the sea and the town. (1930). Some simply highlighted that they faced the sea or were located near to the sea. Several schools pointed to the daily sea bathing undertaken by the girls. At Charters-Towers, the girls bathed, properly supervised in the sea daily in the summer, as well as in the swimming baths (1965). At Felixstowe College for Girls, where the main

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boarding house had 20 yards of lawn between it and the sea (1950), there was daily sea bathing in the summer from the school gardens (1935). At Talbot Heath in Bournemouth, there was swimming, both in the baths and the open sea, during the summer months (1965). At Westcliff School, Weston-Super-Mare, there was hockey on the sands (1950); while at Battle Abbey in Sussex, there was private coaching in sailing (1990).

Several schools explicitly linked their location with health. The climate of the island of Guernsey was described as exceptionally healthy, especially for delicate girls, with the result that the general standard of physique at the Ladies College was very fine (1965); the mild climate of Cornwall, the location of Truro High School, was thought to render it particularly suitable for girls born abroad (1945). Ellerslie School's entry for 1965 noted that in such surroundings it was not surprising that the health of the pupils was excellent, while Hampden House in Bucks remarked: 'The school's health record is attributable particularly to its position –710 feet above sea level - also to the quality and variety of the meals and interest take in the health of the girls'. The soil on which the school was built, linked to discourses of health through aspects of drainage (as well as to educational discourses of Nature) was commented on in several entries.

Nonetheless, girls did become ill and were thought to need rest and carefully watching through puberty, with the result that medical inspection, callisthenics and remedial exercises and games became a feature in most girls' schools.[13] In boarding schools there was the ever-present fear of the killer epidemics to which boarding establishments were vulnerable.[14] To re-assure parents, numbers of schools noted the acquisition of a sanatorium, separate from the rest of the school in the school grounds: Royal School for Naval and Marine Officers' Daughters (1940); Abotts Hill (1945); Godolphin (1945); Oakdene (1945); Benenden (1950); Felixstowe College (1950); Farrington's (1950); St Margaret's Bushey (1950); St Mary's Hall, Brighton (1955); and St Helen and St Katharine, Abingdon (1965). Some pointed to particular equipment and their qualified nursing staff. Others like Aylwin School and Haberdasher's Monmouth simply referred to their medical, or sick room.

[13] Paul Atkinson, 'Fitness, feminism and schooling', in S.Delamont and L.Duffin (eds), *The Victorian Woman, Her Cultural and Physical World*, London, Croom Helm, 1978.

[14] John Honey, 'The sinews of society: the public schools as a 'system', in Detlef K Muller, Fritz Ringer and Brian Simon, *The Rise of the Modern Education System: structural change and social reproduction, 1870-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 154.

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Landscapes for learning 2: schoolgirl space as country setting

Linked with discourses of health, many prestigious girls' schools in the country, country towns and by the sea made much of their rural location.[15] As in Trimmington Jack's analysis of Kerever Park, pastoral descriptions from the 1920s to the present drew on the romantic anti-urban view of the eighteen century propagated by Nature poets and writers like Carlyle, Kingsley, and Ruskin, that 'real communities' were located in the English countryside and that children could be best educated away from the influences of city life.[16]

Messages in boarding school entries about riding and hunting drew on long standing associations between the gentry, and the country. Several schools pointed to opportunities for riding and hunting, some with the extensive facilities associated with the country gentry. Lowther College kept its own riding horses for the use of the girls taking riding lessons (1930). By 1945 the school employed a residential trained riding mistress, and by 1950, older girls could take a course specialising in horsemanship. Croft House School had a riding department and a covered riding school under the direction of Miss A Hutchens BHSAI, with an able and experienced assistant. The school owned its own ponies and horses and the girls were trained in horsemanship and entered for the local riding gymkhanas, besides holding their own competitions (1970). Lavant House, Chichester, at the foot of the downs near Goodwood racecourse, had its own stables under the management of two qualified instructors. Girls could keep their own ponies at livery, or ride the ponies owned by the school. There was a good manege and jumping paddock and girls who were competent might with their parents' permission follow the Cowray and Chiddingfold hounds on Saturdays (1980). Similarly, St Stephen's, Folkestone, advertised the school with its own on site BHS approved Riding School with a qualified instructress. Girls were encouraged to join

[15] Boys schools were similarly located. See David Reeder, 'The reconstruction of secondary education in England, 1869-1920, in Muller et al, *The Rise of the Modern Education System,* 139

[16] The section on the country and the following on the country house draw on Trimmington Jack, 'Reproducing an English Sensibility'; Leonora Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle-classes, 1780-1850;* Leonora Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Harold Newby, 'Landscape with figures: home and community in English society', in J.Mitchell (ed.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976. See also Donald Leinster-Mackay, *The Rise of the English Preparatory School,* East Sussex, Falmer Press, 1984.

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the Pony Club and pass its tests; they had the opportunity to compete in gymnkhanas and when competent to joint the local hunt; they could keep their own horses or ponies at school on a part-livery basis; and resident students were accepted and prepared for the professional riding examinations (1990). Heathfield at Ascot, where Princess Anne, a keen Olympic horsewoman went to school, had its own paddocks (1980). Other entries pointed to opportunities for riding outside the school.

The country pursuits of such schools linked explicitly to the upper class and the upper echelons of the middle class and invoked rural idylls, which Davidoff et al argue provide 'a cognitive and moral map of the universe as a response to the need for imposing order, in an increasingly troublesome, impersonal and alienating real world'.[17]

Landscapes for learning 3: schoolgirl space as the country house setting

Associated with the lifestyle of country gentry were the messages about the grand parks in which some schools were located. Key boys' public schools had developed on sites surrounded by grounds and parkland, achieved, in some cases by gradually rebuilding and acquiring large estates. Boys' schools wishing to lay claim to a place in the first rank of English schools copied these developments.[18] Some girls' schools did the same. Many moved site, with some descriptions implying a connection between the new site and an improved status for the school.

Several entries referred explicitly to the 'estate' in which the school was located. These included Badminton School, at Westbury on Trym (1935); East Anglian School at Bury St Edmunds (1950); St Brandons School at Clevedon (1965); Queenswood at Hatfield (1965); and Bedgebury Park at Goudhurst (1965). Others pointed to the school's park and woodland. Many explicitly referred to the acreage of school grounds. Many of those in rural locations or close to country towns extended over large areas, with a number citing land between 450 and 200 acres, reinforcing the notion of the estate, or the country house residence.

Grounds and extensive gardens with formal and flower gardens figured in several descriptions. Like the notion of the estate, gardens and grounds provided a private Elysium

[17] Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures', 143,

[18] Seaborne and Lowe, *English Schools,* 43.

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that linked themes of class and the country house setting.[19] Metaphors of gardens, growth, and fruition through tender care formed part of Nature educational discourses that stretched back to Rousseau, in which the role of the gardener and that of the educator were equated. Celine Grasser traces how, as a closed and sheltered space, the private garden became an educational tool for the middle class child; as well as a space where, as Sarah Trimmer put it, 'one could benefit health by air and exercise'.[20] Maria Edgeworth portrayed the girl learning to become the rational manager of her household, able to exercise understanding, prudence and foresight through the management of her little garden plot.[21] The garden was also a place where girls could achieve rationality through the botanical observation of plants, which, theories of natural theology suggested would reveal the Creator God.[22] But the garden was a space that held different meanings for girls and boys. For girls, tending a little garden was a 'domestic amusement', aiding the formation of a 'domestic character',[23] supported by the symbolism often attached to plants. The symbolism of white lilies, like that of snowdrops overtly equated with purity in girls, was taken up at Worcester High School, where Alice Ottley planted lilies in the school gardens and placed them on the prayer desk in the school hall. She selected the 'virgin lily' for the school badge, with the motto, 'The white flower of a blameless life'.[24]

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[19] The section on school gardens draws on Jane Brown, *The Pursuit of Paradise: the social history of gardening*, London, Harper Collins, 1999, 272ff; Celine Grasser, 'Multiple borders: nationality, gender and bourgeois education in the garden in nineteenth-century France and England', unpublished paper, Women's History National Conference, 1999; and Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures'.

[20] Sarah Trimmer, *An easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature and Reading the Holy Scriptures* (1789), quoted in Grasser, 'Multiple borders'.

[21] Maria Edgeworth, *Rosamond*, part 111, *Early Lessons*, London, 1809, 5-12, 32, 60-71, quoted in Grasser, 'Multiple borders'.

[22] Alan Richardson and John Bowden (eds), *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology,* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983).

[23] Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, 1797, quoted in Grasser, 'Multiple borders'.

[24] Joyce Senders Pederson, 'Some Victorian headmistresses: a conservative tradition of social reform', *Victorian Studies,* (24), 1980-81*,* 478.

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Gertrude Jekyll's friendship with pioneers of Girton and Newham, especially with Barbara Bodichon at Girton[25] and Nora Sidgwick and Blanche Athena Clough at Newnham in Cambridge meant that her influences carried into the girls' schools. When Frances Dove one of the earliest students at Girton became the first headmistress of Wycombe Abbey School in 1896, she introduced gardening into the curriculum and supported the school's gardening teacher, Madeline Agar, in producing *A Primer of School Gardening* in 1909. Dove wrote in the introduction that 'the Primer's readers could not but be braced and refreshed by the quiet simple breezy activity of the chapters'. [26] As with the 1920s 'progressive schools', some girls' school entries in the GSYB linked gardening and health through the home-grown production of nourishing food. Gardening took on new meanings in the context of rationing and the dig for victory campaign in, and after, the Second World War. A number of schools stressed variety in diet, home grown food and kitchen and vegetable gardens during the war and its aftermath. Others mentioned garden plots for the girls.

A feature of school grounds in both rural and city locations were the tennis lawns and hard courts that were increasingly incorporated in the 1920s as features of the well-appointed middle-class home through the work of Gertrude Jekyll and garden designers belonging to the Arts and Crafts movement. In girls' schools, the tennis courts were accompanied by facilities for the new non-contact sports that did not carry masculine connotation - hockey, lacrosse, rounders and netball.[27]

The 'homeliness' of the girls' school was evoked by the use of Queen Anne, domestic architecture, or nineteenth century country house style. Queen Anne buildings used local materials and tended to look smaller and more homely than they really were. They formed a contrast to the grandiose houses of the first half of the nineteenth century in Gothic, Baronial or Italianate styles. With their oriel windows, turrets, narrow sash windows and stepped gables the domestic associations of Queen Anne buildings were reinforced in that they were not over-decorated. Seaborne and Lowe note that Queen Anne was hardly ever used for country houses, and only infrequently for secondary schools, which relied in the

[25] Pam Hirsch, *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon: feminist, artist and rebel*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1998, 274-7, 296-8.

[26] quoted in Brown: *The Pursuit of Paradise*, 277.

[27] Atkinson, 'Fitness, feminism and schooling', 113.

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main on later Gothic or more elevated Renaissance styles.[28] At Cheltenham, Dorothea Beale favoured pinnacles and stained glass windows and agreed with Edward Thring of Uppingham that the surroundings were to help in 'the great work of education, the fulfilling of human nature with the sense of spiritual underlying realities'. Joyce Pederson notes that the ecclesiastical style perhaps answered to the social as well as the spiritual aspirations of Cheltenham and an affinity to male educational establishments built in Gothic Style.[29]

Queen Anne was adapted for other girls' schools and women's colleges, most notably at Newham College, designed by Basil Champneys. [30] Queen Anne accorded with Champneys' view that buildings for women should have a 'domestic character', with approaches that were to be 'properly enclosed'. The 'feminine' inflections of Champneys' design was also apparent in the way the student rooms opened onto the corridors, rather than having staircases leading off a courtyard and up to a set of rooms, as was the case with the male colleges.[31] Queen Anne - and country house styles - were also featured at other girls' schools. Queen Anne was used by E R Robson at Truro High school, where building of the new school began in 1896,[32] and in his design for Blackheath Girls High School GPDST. [33]

Particularly when in a rural setting, surrounded by English gardens, Queen Anne buildings produced the girls' school as imagined home at the heart of the nation. But the girls' school as surrogate home could also act as a space separated from the parental home and family, and so became associated with opportunities for self-development. As Purvis notes, removed from the sheltered, protective environment of home, many schoolgirls had to cope on their own with the demands of boarding school life. Girls' schools' emphasis upon self discipline may well have worked to lessen home influence and to aid the

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[28] Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School,* 53.

[29] Pederson, 'Victorian headmistresses, 479.

[30] David Watkin, *English Architecture*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1979, 1997 edition, 174-5.

[31] David Watkin, *the Architecture of Basil Champneys,* Cambridge, Newnham College, 1989, 7,11, quoted in Joyce Senders Pedersen, 'Inventing tradition/coping with change: the Women's Colleges in late 19th and early 20th century Cambridge', unpublished paper, ISCHE.

[32] A.K.Clarke, *The Story of Truro High School*, Truro, Oscar Blackford, 1979, 53.

[33] E R Robson, *School Architecture,* with an introduction by Malcolm Seaborne, Leicester University Press, 1972, 32. Robson also designed St Hilda's Training College Cheltenham and additional buildings for Cheltenham Ladies College.

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development of individuality and confidence. While boarding schools, like sea-side holiday homes and country-house holiday homes represented a separation from home that was not of a permanent nature, nonetheless, the emotional tie between mother and daughter may well have been loosened, or even broken.[34] The process of separation from home and family was considerably enhanced as additional separate space and freedom was given by boarding schools to sixth-form girls. At Westwood School in the 1970s, for example, girls could plan their own outings in small groups to London on their lesson free weekday afternoons.

School grounds and gardens of the country-house ilk provided a contradictory space for women and girls. Located in its grounds and gardens the twentieth century country house offered tangible evidence of worldly success. It could operate as a space that separated women from public concerns and give them their sphere of social influence in the home.[35] It could be a space of social life and entertainment in which women held sway. It could form the power base for women to organise political, social and cultural encounters of significance, as was the case particularly for Conservative women in the shire counties of the south and the south-west of England.[36] 'Country-house' schools were contradictory in that, on the one hand, both grounds and girls were enclosed, safe and private, while 'what lay beyond the school boundaries was not'.[37] Grounds allowed for relaxation, recreation, friendship and movement, in a space in which girls could move around, while being protected from 'outside influences' - 'subject to surveillance by the school but outside the disciplinary gaze of wider society, freed from the necessity for chaperonage so long as they do not surpass restrictive boundaries of both space and time'. [38] Emancipatory aspects of education and physical boundaries might well be in tension. Physical and cognitive boundaries could meet, limiting aspirations and ideas about what was possible and desirable,[39] while the dislocation from the parental home might open new horizons.

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[34] June Purvis, *History of Women's Education in England,* Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1991, 91.

[35] Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures'.

[36] As, for example, with the women of the Souls, or more generally Conservative women, often involved with the Women's Institute, or local politics.

[37] Trimmington Jack, 'Reproducing an English sensibility'.

[38] Maria Tamboukou, 'Educational heterotopias and the self', Unpublished paper, BERA, 2002.

[39] Davidoff, et al, 'Landscape with figures'.

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Landscape for learning 4: schoolgirl space as aesthetic and historic setting

Themes of beauty, the picturesque and landscape are prominent in several of the GSYB descriptions. They are referred to most explicitly in the description of St Gabriel's School, Sandleford Prior, Newbury (1990) with the reference to the landscaping of the Priory by Capability Brown. Brown landscaped green gardens that flowed from the house into the whole landscape, with the land moulded into naturalistic contours, with deep serpentine valleys, watered by lakes or rivers.[40] Here, Nature and artifice melded in ways that hid artifice in much the same ways that the Rousseauan teacher used and artifice to produce the 'innocent' Nature that educated Emile.

Many schools made much of the beauty of their surroundings and some used the language of command, equating Nature with social power. Lowther College commanded magnificent sea and mountain views (1930); St James and the Abbey West Malvern, was on the western slopes of the Malvern hills, commanding impressive view of the mountains of South Wales (1980); The Abbey, Malvern Wells, was on the South-Eastern slope of the Malvern hills with magnificent view over the Severn valley (1950); Benenden on the highest point of the weald of Kent, 380 feet above sea level, the houses and grounds having uninterrupted views towards the sea about 15 miles away (1950); Dr William's School, standing in beautiful country at the foot of the Cader Range (1950); Edghill Girls' College, occupying an unrivalled position in one of the most beautiful parts of north Devon, situated on a hill on the outskirts of Bideford, two miles from the coast (1950); Felixstowe College for Girls, occupying a delightful position at one extremity of the sea front, the main boarding house standing within about 20 years of lawn between it and the sea (1935).

Such descriptions spoke to Sensibility - 'the capacity of feeling, a refined sensitivity of taste, to respond emotionally'.[41] Sensibility here drew on a relationship between landscape and schooling that was evoked in a mind that had been tutored through histories, poetry and music and stories into the 'distinctions' that constituted cultural capital and

[40] Penelope Hobhouse, *The Story of Gardening*, London, DK, 2002, 210.

[41] OED, vol XIV, 2nd edition, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1989, 982, quoted in Trimmington Jack, 'Reproducing an English Sensibility'.

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hence class.[42] The emphasis on 'aesthetically pleasing surroundings of the countryside' worked to blur the physical and the social environment 'in the assumption that because the countryside was aesthetically pleasing it contained an equally highly valued social existence'.[43] The evocation of the recognition of 'landscape' provided a backdrop against which wealthy and aspiring parents might envisage a daughter's future education and place in society.

Comparatively few entries in the GSYB used the word modern. Apart from a very few comments in descriptions of municipal schools, some of the references are located in discourses of science or health - in terms of the up-to-date medical facilities or healthy sleeping accommodation. More usual are historic, national, monastic and gentry messages mixed together in descriptions of some buildings that drew on Jacobean, Tudoresque and neo-Georgian styles and the location of schools like Cheltenham Ladies College and the Maynard School Exeter in historic towns and cities. These projected messages of stability and 'invented' historical tradition that lent legitimacy to the comparatively new venture of reformed girls' education occurring in many of these schools. Architects commissioned with the task of planning new buildings were required to meld old and the new.

Landscape for learning 5: schoolgirl space in the town, city and suburban setting

Whereas the country invoked images of safety, stability and wealth, the city had long been portrayed as a place of squalor, crime and class conflict[44] expressed through the binary of the corrupt city and the innocent countryside. The city was seen as especially dangerous for women, girls and children in general.[45] But by the late nineteenth and century, the city had become a place for middle-class women to traverse and in which to live and work. It had become the subject of their writing, investigation and social activism, with

[42] Ibid.

[43] Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures'.

[44] Ibid, 145.

[45] Leinster-Mackay, *The Rise of the English Preparatory School.*

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women social investigators and civic reformers carving out areas of work and expertise for themselves, contributing to national debate and claiming professional authority.[46]

Schools in county towns, cities and suburbs tended to represent themselves through 'watered-down' versions of rural discourses used to represent elite country schools. The majority of GSYB entries in town and city settings pointed to a location on the outskirts of the town or city, or specifically in 'residential' areas, or moved outwards as suburbs had grown. Suburban life was a middle class phenomenon, the 'ultimate experience in the separation of the classes'. Suburbs became middle-class enclaves from which the rich and the very poor were excluded. 'Social [en]closures' were expressed materially through entrances, drives, gates and hedges, and elaborate rituals of entrance, which created a sense of security for middle-class residents.[47] Seaborne and Lowe note that the development of the suburbs and the building of schools was a two-way process. The relocation of a new school building could initiate a wave of suburban building that was of importance to the development of a town and its shifting class relations,[48] resulting in the 1960s patterns where ethnic minorities lived in the older rented properties close to the heart of cities.[49]

Historians have noted that early nineteenth century suburbs recalled the rural idyll. At Hampstead the houses were built in a few acres of park-like grounds that provided the 'country estate in miniature', complete with paddock and meadows. As the scale of surburban villas decreased as land near city centres became scarce, the meadows and paddocks disappeared but the illusion of rural community remained as the basis of suburban development, with the shape and lay-out of the houses and gardens, and names like Laburnham Grove, reflecting the yearning for the rural community. This reached its apotheosis in garden cities, like Letchworth and Welwyn, which attempted to create the conditions for an Arcadian existence – 'city homes in country lanes'.[50]

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[46] Joyce Goodman, 'Sex and the city: educational initiatives for 'dangerous' and 'endangered' girls in late Victorian and early Edwardian Manchester', *Paedagogica Historica,* 39 (1-2), 2003, 75-84.

[47] Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures' 152, 162.

[48] Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School*, 51.

[49] Roy Lowe, *Schooling and Social Change, 1964-1990,* London, Routledge, 1997, 86.

[50] Davidoff et al, 'Landscape with figures', 162, 170.

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GYSB entries for some girls' schools pointed to this Arcadian nostalgia. Channing House School, noted that Highgate hill was near to the open heath and that its large grounds and playing field give it many of the attractions of the country as well as the unique educational opportunities which easy access to London alone afforded (1925). Others noted the local parks in close proximity to the school, reflecting discourses of healthy open spaces and fresh air for which medical officers of health had agitated in the period between 1902 and 1914 at congresses on school hygiene in the wake of the Committee on Physical Deterioration[51]: Highbury Hill High School LCC described itself at the north end of Highbury fields (1950); and Ipswich High School immediately opposite to Christchurch Park (1950). River locations provided similarly Arcadian messages. Surbiton High School (CSC) at Kingston on Thames was situated near the river (1990); and St Brandon's Clergy Daughters School, Clevedon, Bristol, on the shores of the Bristol channel (1950). Descriptions of girls' schools in the GSYB, whether in a suburb, or on the perimeter of the town or city, over-ridingly stress their location on high ground – above unhealthy (physical and sexual) pollution and 'safe' from the dangers of the town or city below. London girls' schools were often located on well-known hills.

Lacking the grounds and estates of the country park, many entries for city, town and suburban schools noted their location 'in their own grounds', drawing on the discourse of the surburban villa and country house – although some entries referred to school grounds and very occasionally to the school site. Gardens again featured in descriptions of schools in the London, Birmingham and Bristol areas, with the addition of playgrounds. Acreage - regulated by the Board of Education for maintained schools - was frequently mentioned in town and city school entries. Here, the voluntary aided Wycombe High School, which moved to a site of 43 acres at the top of Marlow Hill in the 1960s, ranked high, while some GPDST, Church Schools Company and LCC schools fared comparatively poorly. Acreage demonstrates that for some city and town schools ground was at a premium and not all sports facilities could be accommodated in the grounds. As Sarah Delamont comments, this meant that urban schools had a harder job hiding their unladylike sports clothes from the public gaze as girls travelled too and from the sports facilities.[52]

[51] Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School*, 75-77.

[52] Sara Delamont, *Knowledgeable Women: structuralism and the reproduction of elites*, London, Routledge, 1989, 83.

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Prestigious girls' schools located in, or near, to towns and cities drew attention in their GSYB entries to the cultural amenities of their location. At Milham Ford, Oxford, they capitalised on the pupils' study of painting, attendance at art lectures, the special study of architecture, visits to the colleges and churches of Oxford, as well as taking botanical and geological excursions in the summer term that were arranged by the science mistress. They also attended classical concerts and lectures given by the University Professor of Music in the Sheldonian Theatre (1910). At Badminton School, Westbury On Trym, the older girls took advantage of the educational facilities provided by Bristol University (1935), while the girls of Clifton High School shared the intellectual advantages of Bristol University and the city life (1950). The location of Howell's Llandaff, on the outskirts of Cardiff and two miles from the city centre meant that the pupils benefited from the cultural amenities of a capital city with its two university colleges (1990). Queen's Gate School was within easy walking distance of Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, the gardens of the natural history museum and many of the main museums of London (1980). Roedean pointed to the delights of Brighton, with its theatres, conferences and concert halls, university colleges of advanced technology, education and art, as well as schools of all kinds, which offered a rich variety of opportunities of profitable interest outside the school (1975).

Landscape for learning 6: schoolgirl spaces of travel in the city, town, suburb and countryside

Mirroring the increasing freedoms of middle-class women to move around the city in pursuit of work and recreation, middle-class girls at day schools had a daily 'public' and mobile existence as they travelled to and from school. Although working class girls occupied the space of town and city street,[53] travel to school for many middle-class girls, even in the nineteen fifties, afforded a measure of individual freedom of movement and space from families, although, as Irene Payne's account of her grammar school days illustrates, for some girls from the working-class, this mobility could be a dislocating experience.[54] Well into the twentieth century, travel for girls evoked aspects of 'double conformity', with girls being

[53] Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor: home, school and street in London 1870-1914*, London, Rivers Oram Press, 1996.

[54] Irene Payne, 'A working-class girl in a grammar school', in J.Purvis, and M.Hale (eds) *Achievement and Inequality in Education*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, 142-158.

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expected to achieve academically while still remaining 'ladies'.[55] In the early days of reformed secondary education for girls, some upper and upper middle class families employed a governess to accompany a girl to her day school. But for others, their new found freedom to travel alone to school meant rules for public behaviour and the regulation of the proprieties of womanhood that were to be strictly observed well into the twentieth century.[56] At Wycombe High School there was the insistence on gloves and hats and the prohibition on speaking with a boy from the Royal Grammar School when in school uniform, even if it was one's brother. - Girls were not allowed to travel in the same compartment in the train as a boy as late as the 1950s and train prefects inspected train carriages to ensure compliance.[57]

When opening their schools, the GPDST paid careful regard to transport routes, for girls had to be able to reach their schools, if their ventures were to remain viable. Descriptions of the locations of many city and town schools contained coded messages about viability and cost. The descriptions also map the daily traversing of town and city spaces by twentieth century schoolgirls. The GPDST entries for schools in the capital between 1940 and 1950 produce geographical webs of the London that mapped the daily journeys of their pupils. Entries for LCC schools in 1945 suggest a more local catchment area and a less mobile school population crossing London.

The improvement of railway communications meant that the more socially selective boarding schools could act independently of their location in drawing their pupils.[58] They tapped a national and in some cases international market for pupils, but one in which girls were likely to be accompanied to school. Here were larger spaces traversed but with the possibility of less personal freedom. This complemented the opportunities for movement within the enclosed estate of the boarding school.

Landscapes of silence

[55] Delamont, 'The domestic education'.

[56] Delamont, *Knowledgeable Women*, 85.

[57] Rachel Sutcliffe, *Wycombe High School: the first hundred years*, *1901-2001*, High Wycombe, Wycombe High School Guild, 2001, 18.

[58] David Reeder, 'The reconstruction of secondary education in England', 139.

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Silence 1 – The Catholic girls school. Catholic entries appear in Catholic Directories, rather than in the GSYB. Like the schools discussed in this paper, convent boarding schools stressed bracing air, extensive grounds, farm produce and good train connections to London.[59]

Silence 2 – the endowed or state-maintained school in a modern building. Some schools, like the endowed Burlington and the voluntary-aided Wycombe High School were in innovative and modern buildings. The modern is not a feature of the descriptions that appear in the GSYB. Several state schools do not mention their buildings, concentrating instead on the curriculum on offer, or facilities for the curriculum.

Conclusion

Many GSYB schools draw attention to aspects of health and to location on high ground, separate and safe from the city below, or commanding views over countryside. While this may have also been the case for boys' schools as well, who were also concerned with health, the girls' school on high ground may have been read through gendered and classed discourse that took on different meanings. Traces in descriptions of schools in cities and suburbs also suggest fragments of the pastoral – particularly the city school 'standing in its own grounds'. While this not an 'estate' it draws on the same classed connotations, despite the lack of acreage. 'In its own grounds' also resonates with enclosure. As languages of description, entries about buildings and grounds were metonymic in that they represented classed and gendered meanings of separation, enclosure and safety.

Analysis of the GSYB suggests that the 'cloistered ethos' and 'elite tinge' of single-sex girls' schools in England today may have been inflected through the landscapes and spaces, 'imagined' and material of Victorian, Edwardian and contemporary girls' public and high schools. It is not simply that educational spaces for girls were superficially indistinguishable from those designed for boys once account had been taken of the domestic curriculum's gendering of space.[60] Femininity and achievement may well have

[59] Barbara Walsh, *Roman Catholic Nuns in England and Wales, 1800-1937: a social history,* Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2002.

[60] Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School,* 54.

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been nurtured in subtle ways through landscapes and spaces to run as threads in past and present accounts of single-sex schooling.