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## *SPACING HERSELF*

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### *Getting away*

When I left school I wanted to go out, to go to London, to leave home. I wanted to be a teacher because I was afraid. I went to Goldsmith's because my teacher told me that it was the best training college in the country. It was also in London. To leave home for London when everyone in my family had always been local, got married and had children. *To get out yes.*<sup>1</sup>

(Walkerdine 1990:83).

Such a powerful description of her desire to get away from a familiar local environment and come to the 'big city' to become a teacher was not something I had expected to read from a woman educator towards the turning of the millennium. I had thought these were mainly concerns of the nineteenth century 'pioneers':

Next Saturday I am going to Leicester; I am not sure whether I shall like it; but I do know I shall like it better than being at home.

(Collet, unpublished: 2)

My mother ran away from home to become a teacher because she was tired of being kept in and made to do tapestry work by her mother. ... My mother was an ardent and active suffragette ...

(Kean, 1990:4)

What do I want? Freedom, opportunity, education, varied experience...

I have glimpsed the possibility of spiritual adventure - there is a fugitive radiance that must be followed; there are thoughts to be captured ...

(Corke, 1975:96,148).

In this paper I shall explore geographical, personal and social spaces of women. These 'spaces' are traced in fragmented narratives of lives of the first women who tried to navigate the difficult ways of forming a new self in various educational institutions, both as students and teachers of them. I therefore look into autobiographical writings of women teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and particularly from 1860 to 1914. This period signalled major changes in the education of women and has already proved of particular interest for the historians of women's education.<sup>2</sup>

I have focused in particular, on the autobiographical writings of the Girtonians Louisa Lumsden and Constance Maynard and the first principal of Newnham College, Anne Jemima Clough. The writings of these three women reflect aspects of lives of women teachers who studied in the colleges associated to the university of Cambridge and became influential figures in the evolution of university colleges for women. The teachers' training colleges were also influenced by the educational changes at the turn of the century and it is within this context that I have been interested in the autobiographical writings of Winifred Mercier, who became a pioneer in the reform of teachers' training colleges. I have further examined lives of women who worked in the secondary sector of the education of girls of the middle classes, as it was the case with Miss Beale, headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies' College. Clara

Collet, an Assistant Schoolmistresses in Leicester comes also from the secondary sector, but her diary tells the story of women who used teaching as a pedal for other occupations and careers. Finally I have considered autobiographical writings of teachers from the lower strata. This is the case of Molly Hughes, who trained at Homerton College, Helen Corke who became a primary teacher through the pupil-teacher system and Mary Smith, the only working-class teacher, whose life is read in this paper.

I have thus tried to give aspects of the lives of women teachers, inhabiting different social environments. While, however, the self-writings I have referred to, were produced within distinct social, financial and cultural conditions, this paper will not focus on the traditional division between working class and middle class women teachers. I think that feminist historians have already both explored and problematised the impact of social class on the education of women.<sup>3</sup> Instead, my inquiries look specifically into variations emerging from the social and personal spaces within which women teachers' lives were unfolded and where new types of identities were formed. A decisive -but not exclusive- factor for these autobiographical writings is the space/s of their production, an idea that will be further expanded in this paper. Yet, what they reveal as a whole is an extraordinary common area of ideas, feelings and attitudes, that seem to transgress social boundaries in their attempt to open up new directions in women's lives. What I want to document, is how women teachers in their differences, attempted to redefine their space and created moulds of lifestyles, strikingly different from classical models of class and gender identity. Thus, rather than referring constantly to 'some women teachers' or 'middle-class women teachers' I often refer to women teachers, keeping the previous categorisations in mind.

### *Explorations in women's spaces*

In considering the importance of space in the ways women teachers at the turn of the century, attempted to reshape their lives, I will draw on both Foucauldian and feminist theoretical work. The Foucauldian genealogical approach with its attentiveness to the microphysics of power is, I think, a most credible way of working upon the thematics of space. As Foucault pointed out in his 1967 Berlin lectures, 'The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time' (Foucault cited in Massey, 1994:249). Hebdige has pointed the influence of Foucault's thought in the theoretical configuration of spatial themes of contemporary social and cultural studies and has suggested that Foucault's genealogical histories have rescued space from 'the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile' (cited in Rose, 1993:141).

Recently, feminist theorists have widely theorised the role of space in the structuring of gender relations and the formation of subjectivities.<sup>4</sup> Looking at the nexus of meanings and connotations weaving around the terms of space and place, Doreen Massey (1994) defines space as a global dimension creating images of 'the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity' (Massey, 1994:1). At the same time however space is not taken as some static absolute, devoid of effects or implications. It is constructed out of social relations which themselves are saturated with an integral dynamism. Massey further theorises space in relation to time.<sup>5</sup> Since space is conceptualised in terms of the interrelation of certain social forces, place is theorised as an articulation of certain social relations of the spatial at a particular moment. Such a theorisation stands against the view of place as a permanent concept,

something that has been somewhere for a long time, creating the sense of belonging and of ownership, of a site of authenticity and nostalgia, a shelter, where ultimately one returns. The discourses of stability surrounding the notion of place are opposed by counter-discourses, designating the notion of place as a kernel point provoking tendencies of mobility and agility around it.

Both Marxist and feminist geographers have theorised the processes through which material spaces have been shaped by uneven social relations.<sup>6</sup> Spatial images, in Benjamin's thought, 'the images of our perceptions and ideas, and the metaphors with which we are surrounded' (Weigel, 1996:x)<sup>7</sup> surpass the imposed closures of material spaces and create 'other spaces',<sup>8</sup> beyond the limits of masculinist discourse, or, as Teresa de Lauretis has described them: '... spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus (cited in Rose, 1993:139).

Therefore, in focusing on the ways space, but also place, cut through private as well as public arrangements in women's lives, I attempt to throw light onto the multifarious ways, in which women have concerned themselves with both material spaces and/or spatial images. From the excavation of 'unimportant' moments in the lives of women teachers, what emerges is an account of women resisting the space restrictions imposed upon their lives, claiming space of their own, sometimes creating new space boundaries for themselves but also imagining different spaces beyond masculinist geographical closures. Women's moments of being seem to disregard distinctions between real and metaphorical spaces. Spaces are made meaningful through certain practices which women strategically use to act upon themselves. I am particularly interested in these very practices, the *technologies* in Foucault's terminology, women in education have used to negotiate places of their own, and survive the continuous hovering between multi-dimensional, shifting and contingent

spaces of this world. Thus, drawing on the intersection of space, power and knowledge in the constitution of technologies of the female self, I suggest that the autobiographical writings of women in education reveal two interesting spatial themes, weaving around women's need for privacy, a 'room of one's own' and their desire to map themselves on different dimensions, to travel. These points of reference concentrate the dynamism and complexity of space and place. I now turn to the unraveling of threads around these two themes.

### *Experiences of confinement*

*Go out, get out, be out, spread my wing, run away, leave*, are some of the verbs that can be frequently traced in women teachers' autobiographical writings and *out* as a participle, often accompanies these verbs of movement. Thus, women's self-writings present selves on the move, always attempting to cross the boundaries of their family, their locality, their town or city and in some cases of their country. Women tend to move, they experience great difficulties in remaining in certain spaces. They feel confined and oppressed. In Young's view, 'a space surrounds us in imagination that we are not free to move beyond' (cited in Rose, 1993:144). As Rose has noted, confinement emerges as a highly frustrating theme in women's accounts of their lives and has been used in feminist theory to describe oppression.<sup>9</sup> Women teachers' feelings of entrapment within oppressive spaces are harshly articulated in desires of discursive, imaginary and sometimes physical escape. Resisting space restrictions is therefore associated to a strong will to move, to depart, to cross imposed spatial boundaries, both real and metaphorical. This getaway tendency is definitely more positive than what has been identified in feminist

theory as women's desire to eliminate their existence from space, 'to make ourselves absent .... participate in our erasure' (cited in Rose, 1993:143).

Emerging, as it has been pointed out from diverse social and cultural contexts, women teachers' self-writings focus upon feelings of suffocation and estrangement: '...they (women) grew restless, they were like caged birds, with their strong passions intensified by the want of action' (Clough, 1897:96). The metaphor of the 'caged bird' very much underlines their lack of space in sharp contrast to their deep, inward wish for freedom. However, the picture of the cage is only a 'light' characterisation if compared to the idea of prison, that home and family life represents in the same self-writings: 'Gazy<sup>10</sup>... there was no scope at home for more than half her powers and also she was four years older than I and so her *captivity*<sup>11</sup> lasted longer' (Maynard, unpublished, chapter 4, p.60b). However, while middle-class women have difficulties in identifying the causes of their 'unbearable lightness of being',<sup>12</sup> in the case of teachers from the lower social strata, there are very obvious explanations for the unfairness of life. Social inequalities appear to be the determining factor for life being dull, without scope and without choice: 'Home life is by contrast wearily dull. I can see no future, have no plans ... A sense of isolation grows. Apparently there is *no place*<sup>13</sup> for me ... Life might be good if we were not poor, but in poverty is no freedom, no choice ...' (Corke, 1975:96). The spatial images, inscribed in the above quotations and recounted incidents, constitute an inimical territory for women, something to get away from. Women's sense of alienation from the everyday spaces of their lives is related to a fear, that they are always watched and evaluated. As it has been argued, this threat of being the object of the other's gaze is of critical importance in the objectification of the female self (Rose, 1993:146).



Life within the physical, institutional and ideological boundaries of the nineteenth century social spaces is a theme that has been explored in historical and sociological studies.<sup>14</sup> It has also been addressed from a range of quite different perspectives, including only recently some feminist problematics focusing on the implication of gender issues.<sup>15</sup> Although discourses of womanhood representing women as static images, ‘angels of the house’, are firmly rooted in the nineteenth century, the movement for the Higher Education of Women, as well as the mass involvement of women in teaching were historical events of the late nineteenth century, that drastically geared women to higher levels of social and/or spatial mobility.<sup>16</sup>

### *Home as a place to leave*

Place has been directly associated with the configuration of boundaries and the enclosure of subjects, bearing specific and closed identities usually counterposed with the ‘Other beyond the boundaries’ (Massey 1994:169). In terms of the formation of ‘gender closed’ identities, home and the surrounding locality has been recognised as a woman’s place *par excellence*, creating both a physical and sentimental sheltering and security, somewhere to refer and ultimately to return. Working in areas as diverse as literature, sociology, geography, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, visual arts, drama and cinema, feminists have interrogated the naturalness and common sense of such conceptualisations of a ‘place called home’ and have presented these as artifacts of masculine discourses (Massey 1994).<sup>17</sup> Drawing on the presentation of place as a formation of certain social relations interacting at a particular location, Massey argues against any closure in the conception of

place and the constitution of any 'identity of place'. Since place is conceived as a process rather than a static condition, it can never be either stable or unchanged, and consequently the identities of places rather than having frozen at a particular 'moment/location in space-time' (Massey, 1994:169) are themselves flux, unfixed and open to change and influences from the 'Other'. In theorising socio-spatial relations, Linda McDowell has used the term of *global localism* to describe the openness of place and has suggested that: 'For all people... whether geographically stable or mobile, most social relations take place locally, in a place, but a place which is open to ideas and messages, to visitors and migrants, to tastes, foods, goods and experiences to a previously unprecedented extent' (McDowell, 1996:38). In the light of such theorisations, women teachers' self-writings reveal how female subjects strive to cross their space boundaries and thus recreate themselves, drawing on experiences and aspirations that are opposed to what is generally considered 'proper' and 'natural'. For the majority of them the first step for a new life is always bound to distancing themselves from familiar locales, leaving their home, in de Lauretis' view, 'dreaming of elsewhere' (cited in Rose, 1993:149). Finding themselves outside the enclosed circle of their home, women mapped themselves within new spaces. Thus, women teachers' auto/biographical writings in the nineteenth century, weaving around their private space, 'a room of their own', reveal new dimensions in the deployment of their space/time.

### *A room of one's own*

The great point of Grant<sup>18</sup> was that for the first time in my life I had a room to myself... With snow actually drifting in and lying on the floor and with intolerable smoke from the chimney, my little room suffered much, but I was strong and did not mind it.

(Maynard, unpublished, chapter 4, p.78)

It seems that well before Virginia Woolf's influential lecture at Girton in 1928, where she related women's writing with economic independence and 'a room of one's own' (Woolf 1945), women teachers had been seriously preoccupied with the deep necessity of acquiring a space where they could think of and for themselves, articulate their intellectual worries, ultimately 'write themselves'.

It is this creative need that drove Dorothea Beale, first principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, to take her books and papers to a room at the top of the house, where she could work undisturbed, away from the family living rooms. So strong was her need for a room of her own, that 'she would not allow the servants to carry scuttles of coal to her attic, but worked through the winter without a fire, knowing that her chilly isolation would keep her intruding sisters in the warmth below' (Kamm, 1958:38).

'A room of their own' appears critical in the fashioning of women's life in Colleges: 'Each student will have a small sitting-room to herself, where she will be free to study undisturbed, and to enjoy at her discretion the companionship of friends of her own choice' (Stephen, 1927:176). This is Emily Davies writing during the preparations for the opening of Girton College. She goes on to comment that 'This great boon, the power of being alone is perhaps the most precious distinctive feature of College life, as compared with that of an ordinary family' (Stephen, 1927:311). As Vicinus (1985:142) has pointed

out, for the first time in their life college women had a small place that they could completely control. This sense of controlling their own space is powerfully expressed in their autobiographical writings: 'The main charm was our power to shut the door, or even lock it, and put up the notice "engaged" on it' (Hughes, 1936:123). 'The power to shut the door' is definitely boundary-centred. Setting the boundaries of their space and taking full control of it, is certainly important in women's perceptions of independence. Although they lived collectively, - and fully enjoyed doing so - women in the colleges kept their rights to privacy and their room was the territory *par excellence* where these rights were 'exercised'. While living with their families, these women may have had a room (though in most cases they shared it with one or more sisters) but this room was only for sleep; it was not a room to keep them creatively busy or even offer them moments of relaxation and reflection, even less a room to serve as their space to see their friends in privacy. Stephen has noted that the fact that the students at Girton had both a sitting room and a bedroom of their own struck them as something 'unusual' (Stephen, 1927:312). It is this 'unusual' idea of a sitting-room that enthralled Hughes, a student having just arrived in Cambridge for a new teacher's training college: 'I had always had a bedroom of my own at home, but that had been almost entirely occupied by a big double-bed, a washing stand, and a chest of drawers. But here was a real sitting room (for the bed looked like a couch) such as one Dim must have had, a room in College' (Hughes, 1936:120). Given these reactions, it seems that Miss Davies insistence on privacy, was largely an expression of her desire for freedom (Stephen, 1927:176) and that 'privacy was the only luxury which Miss Davies desired for her students; and in her eyes it was not a luxury - she despised luxuries - but a necessity' (Stephen, 1927:312). The right to privacy is bound to the right to freedom. What is interesting to note here is the paradox, that although confined in the private sphere, the home, these women longed for privacy.

So great was the enthusiasm of the women students in Colleges about the idea of a 'room of their own', that they would personalise it and make it a place to express themselves:

I had a notion to give my room a name, and the other students followed suit. I called mine 'The Growlery' after a room in *Bleak House* intimating thereby that anyone wanting to growl could come in and laugh it off. This proved as time went on, no empty invitation, and I had many visitors for the purpose.

(Hughes, 1936:121)

Their rooms would also become the locale to mirror their interests, their taste and their intellectual concerns: 'One of our number was an aesthete, and hung up a portrait of George Elliot, whom she resembled. She dressed in dark green velvet and was a free thinker' (Hughes, 1936:121). Even within the restrictions of the training colleges women teachers reminiscences depict their enthusiasm of having their own cubicles to live in and Mrs. Cox, a teacher in Copelman, 'remembered that she decorated it with postcards from the National Gallery (Copelman, 1996:147). Therefore, the decoration would often create an image out of necessity. What is striking, however, is that the fashioning of one's room is actually reflecting the fashioning of one's self. The vocabularies of space women have used in writing about their rooms reveal their room as a space of imagining themselves differently:

With the new curtains the Growlery had a gay aspect, even in the dreariest weather. This was as well, for otherwise the room looked very bare. While the others had been buying little ornaments and framed views of the colleges, my limited pocket-money kept me to the barest

necessities. So I made a bold move by adopting the role of a hermit, and telling everyone that I preferred my room to be severely plain, that this indeed was the latest fashion among people who really counted. Pictures I maintained distracted thought, an ornament merely for the sake of ornaments was *demode*. On a piece of cardboard I illuminated the words 'Thou shall think', and hung it over my mantelpiece. That would set the tone and prevent any tiresome remarks.

(Hughes, 1936:123)

In their autobiographies, women describe their rooms in meticulous and enthusiastic details. In filling their narratives with spatial drawings, women make their room an object of *topoanalysis*, Bachelard's notion of 'the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives' (Bachelard, 1994:8). Therefore in describing her room Hughes writes:

When my trunk was landed, I was shown my room. This was some twelve feet square on the ground-floor, with one small window flush with the pavement, a narrow bed, a scrap of carpet, a basket chair, one upright chair and a bureau. A fire crackled in the hearth. 'Is this *mine*?<sup>19</sup> cried I in ecstasy.

(Hughes, 1936:120)

Their room was identified with their solitude, became the place where they could retreat when unhappy: 'I needed my Growlery (after the failure of a lesson she had given) and retired to lick my sores there' (Hughes, 1936:133). Women would also meet there to share their fears, disappointments, worries and problems: Hughes recalls how a fellow student 'burst into the Growlery, without even stopping to knock, collapsed to the floor and exclaimed in tones of real heart-break, "I am ruined" ' (Hughes, 1936:134). However, it was also

in their room that women would enjoy themselves, and 'see one another and give tea-parties and cocoa-parties among themselves freely' (Clough, 1897:205). Their self-writings show how women, attempting to shape their private microcosm, open channels of communication, and ultimately turn their room into a locale for the interrelation of small forces, a place for the development of a specific social relationship of womanhood.

*Dreams of elsewhere*

Space is fundamental in any exercise of power. It is especially vital when structuring gender relations. Yet, while there are a great deal of analyses related to women's exclusion from public spaces, little attention has been paid to the ways women experience lack of space -sometimes no space at all- in their own houses, locales traditionally bound to the 'female sphere'. I am very often surprised to find that in many houses there is a playroom for the children or a study for the husband but no room of a woman's own. Consider for example, how Marilyn Frye draws a simple cartography of anger, portraying a young woman, living with her husband and contemplating on the spatial domains of her anger: '... the pattern was very simple and clear. It went with the floor plan. She could get angry quite freely in the kitchen and somewhat less freely ... in the living room. She could not get angry in the bedroom' (cited in Rose, 1993:142). This lack of personal space within the private sphere, is most significant when viewed from the perspective of 'bio-power' (Foucault 1987:140), the Foucauldian notion of an order of power which is characterised by the relations that have been established between power and life. In Foucault's view these power relations have been enshrined in a whole set of techniques that aim at the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations. Feminine bodies enclosed in restricted spaces and at the same time, being 'public' within their private space, seems to be even worse than simply being confined to the private. Home seems to operate as a 'panopticon', Bentham's architectural device, which for Foucault represents the triumph of disciplinary technology (Foucault, 1991:195-228). In such conditions of permanent visibility, women seem to be always watched, to the smallest detail of their activities. Home is therefore turned to a locale where even if there are discontinuities and dispersion in the gaze of the other,



women's integral surveillance is being carried on. Drawing on the intersection of space, power and knowledge, feminism has been particularly attentive to this disciplinary deployment of spatial relations in the micropolitics of the every-day lives of women. Rose (1993:144-146) refers among others, to the theoretical discussions of de Lauretis, Young, Bordo and Braidotti who have related women's estrangement from their surrounding space, with a deep self-awareness that they are continuously being watched and judged.

Home is also, however, at the same time a locale where interaction occurs, where power games are being played. For women the negotiation of a private space within the house goes beyond -or perhaps beneath- expectations of domination. It is bound to urgent existential needs. A room of a woman's own may be a space of dreams, imagination and creative interests. It is definitely related to any attempt at female self-assertion. In Susan Groffins narrative, women's spatial fear can be transformed in 'a dream of elsewhere': '... we have spoken; space has changed; we are living in a matrix of our own sounds; ... by our echoes we chart a new geography; ... by what we hear we are moved again and again to speak' (cited in Rose, 1993:143).

Women 'charting a new geography', are, however, women moving in space, changing places. It is to this movement beyond spatial boundaries, that the discussion of this paper is now turned.

### *Travellers...*

Women teachers' auto/biographical texts present their authors, deeply involved in a 'war' of and for space outside of their domestic circle, somewhere both in and out of the wide/wild world. In such a search, women's profound desire for privacy, 'a room of their own', somewhere to retreat, to assert control and choice is bound to another important life-search: towards somewhere where 'there is more room', somewhere beyond control, beyond surveillance.

Donald, wouldn't you like to go to America, Canada or the great wide west? where perhaps there might be more chance of finding out what manner of being you were? - Where there is more room, more freedom, and one is not so hide-bound by conventions - where you could get nearer the soil, and as I said before not be stifled by artificialities and habits and conventions, your own and other people's. Oh wouldn't you like it, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you?

(Mercier in Grier, 1937:34)

This extract comes from a letter written by Winifred Mercier, a woman teacher who later became a leader in the reform of teacher training colleges, to her friend and fellow teacher Borland<sup>20</sup>, in August 1902. While on school holidays, studying for her external London degree and looking after her sick mother, Winifred finds consolation in writing to her beloved friend. Her passionate desire for travel brings together a cluster of practices that are interwoven in the fashioning of women teachers' life style. Travel is a means of getting away from the 'artificialities and habits and conventions' that are imposed both internally and externally, 'your own and other people's', travel

to 'where there is more room, more freedom', in order to seek 'the manner of being you were'.

Women teachers' deep love of travelling is clearly discernible in auto/biographical writings of the nineteenth century. Sara Mills notes 'the sheer volume of writing' she encountered when she first started studying the genre (Mills, 1993:1). This is doubly significant given the prevailing assumption that 'very few women broke out of the domestic circle in the nineteenth century to venture into the wider world of self-acknowledged travellers' (Worley cited in Mills, 1993:1). Women teachers' travel writing in the late nineteenth century tends to contradict this assumption in a very marked way.

Maynard, an early Girton student and founder of Westfield College, has left a whole set of unpublished travel diaries, currently in Westfield College archives. Lumsden one of the five Girton pioneers, writes frequently about her travels in her autobiography, *Yellow Leaves*. She travelled extensively in Europe and America. Travel writings of women teachers from the upper strata, are obviously framed by specific relations to privilege, choice and often time.

Women teachers of the lower classes, however are also thrilled to the idea of travelling. Exploring the lives of elementary school teachers at the turn of the century, Copelman describes how 'the issues of the *Board Teacher* which preceded the summer break, abounded with travel suggestions, ranging from frugal British holidays to complicated Continental and even American itineraries' (Copelman, 1985:214). Teaching in elementary schools of South London, Helen Corke was always planning her holiday travels in the company of her friend and fellow teacher Agnes Mason. In Corke's view, 'the

freedom, leisure and opportunity they [holidays] afford is the unique advantage of the teaching profession' (Corke, 1975:168). Travel choices depend however, on the economic position and family commitments of women teachers. Corke comments on the practical difficulties, mainly financial, teachers face in taking holidays, stressing in particular that 'school holidays out of England are still the exception' (Corke, 1975:168). Writing from an even more disadvantaged social position, Mary Smith recounts the great difficulties of travelling: 'My experience of riding on the top of a coach over Stainmore, in the early part of February, was never forgotten' (Smith, 1892:77). Despite the difficulties, however she decides to leave home and travel to the north, in search of the unknown, and it takes her ten years to return to her homeland, after her initial departure at the age of twenty: 'It was the first time I had been on the sea and consequently I was very sick ... we found it a very trying voyage and I mentally vowed, I would never take another voyage on the sea' (Smith, 1892:167). In Bartkowski's theorisation of travel writing, the impossible journey narrated by Smith, is perhaps 'a representation of earlier journeys into subjectivity' (Bartkowski, 1995:xviii), an articulation of her fear of a new displacement, this time back to the home she had left. Later on in life, when she has established herself as a teacher in the North of England, she would often travel to the South, during her holidays. However, Mary Smith will never return home. Her dislocation has constructed new relations between herself and the world. Hers, was a one-way journey only.

Either cherished or hated, the theme of travel occupies women teachers' minds, becomes a strong motif in their lifestories and fills their autobiographical narratives with spatial images. Their travel writings have been read from different perspectives. Feminist readings place them in a female 'tradition' of writing and trace fissures of the female self behind the

text. Post-structuralist critics however, have questioned the assumption that the self, any self, can be faithfully transcribed into a text and concerns about the reading of texts from another period within a contemporary frame of reference have further problematised such readings. Emerging from such a context, travel writings by women educators remain a significant addition to the newly established tradition of women's travel literature. Through them, new aspects of travelling experiences have been recorded. In this paper these experiences are taken as fragmented moments in the lives of women teachers. Instead of being theorised 'wholesale' either as true or as distorted representations of the female self, women's travel writings may be read as part of a genealogical search for dispersed moments, for the tracing of those self techniques which their authors have developed and used to negotiate space for themselves within the rigid social structures that define their living and working conditions. As Bartkowski has noted: 'The demands placed upon the subject in situations of unfamiliarity and dislocation produce a scene in which the struggle for identity comes more clearly into view as both necessary and also mistaken' (Bartkowski, 1995:xix).

There is a tendency to perceive female travellers, as 'women of independent means and without domestic ties' (cited in Morris, 1994:xx). Women teacher travellers at the turn of the century do not quite fit into this category. Of course they were of independent means, but since some at least were educated working women, these 'means' were not the result of an income from a family on which they would be dependent. 'Domestic ties' of some type also existed, but these do not necessarily included looking after a husband and children. An elderly mother and/or siblings might occasionally be left behind, for a short while of course, without much social criticism of such behaviour. After all, hard work during the school term made holidays necessary. It is a necessity

set against daily responsibilities and the rigid disciplinary order of their schools or colleges. It is an occasion for the free floating of the mind.

Women teachers' holiday journeys are therefore of an ephemeral character, a joyous break into freedom, away from the constraints of work and home, a set of happily fragmented moments. Running away from their daily routine, women teachers enjoy themselves collectively, and write about their journeys, with wit, intelligence and humour. Occasionally, however, and contrary to their expectations that they can escape from all limitations and conventions, they are confronted by the bodily risks of being alone and unprotected. In their writings they express their concerns and disappointment about the restrictions on mobility they faced as a consequence of their sex:

That first visit to Florence was far more interesting than any later one. Though I fretted at restrictions on liberty, for a girl could not go out alone, the old city, ... almost unchanged from medieval days, with ... its many churches and convents (San Marco was still forbidden ground to women), its walls and towers ... was fascinating.

(Lumsden, 1933:34)

In writing about travels, women teachers show deep interest in different lives and cultures:

I would say if possible try to get a knowledge of at least one foreign country, of one foreign language by living among the people and learning something of their thoughts and ways...It would be worth while taking a situation as a governess in a family to gain such knowledge, or to take a post in some institution where help was

wanted. Surely this is better than merely travelling and sight-seeing. We then belong to the life, we see people in their ordinary ways, in their undress....For ourselves will remain many impressions; many mental photographs will be taken, and what a pleasure in after times to review them again and again and recall them.

(Clough, 1897:249)

What is missing from women teachers writings, however, is the mentality of 'beat' travelling, the sense of simply wandering and doing nothing as Kerouak describes it 'On the Road', although there have been some rare occasions as with Miss Lilla B. Strong, a teacher at Cheltenham, who '... with her violin, a pianist, and five singers, made a five week's tour ... They went in an ox-cart that carried a case of church music, and a case of secular music, besides tent, bedding, personal luggage and camp necessities ...' (Steadman, 1931:89).. These travels were obviously an exception. Women teachers' travels are orderly and purposeful, in the Victorian tradition of travelogue. The female self is strictly striving to put up structures and accommodate herself within them.

Some women teachers would also travel, to further their education or for the purpose of work; often combining further education and work. This tendency can be traced in the very beginning of the nineteenth century, as the biography of Charlotte Bronte exemplary reveals:

Towards the end of January, the time came for Charlotte to return to Brussels. Her journey thither was rather disastrous. She had to make her way alone; and the train from Leeds to London, which should have reached Euston Square early in the afternoon, was so much delayed that it did not get in till ten at night. She had intended to seek out the

Chapter Coffee-house, where she had stayed before and which would have been near the place where the steams-boats lay; but she seems to have been frightened by the idea of arriving at an hour which, to Yorkshire notions, was so late and unseemly; and taking a cab, therefore at the station, she drove straight to the London Bridge Wharf, and desired a Waterman to row her to the Ostend packet, which was to sail the next morning. She described to me ... her sense of loneliness, and yet her strange pleasure in the excitement of the situation, as in the dead of that winter's night she went swiftly over the dark river to the black hull's side and was at first refused leave to ascend to the deck ... The next morning she sailed ...

(Gaskell, 1987:250)

Far from being 'of independent means', some women were brave enough to set off with just the barest of necessities. However, even then one senses that they were thrilled by the experience of finding themselves striving alone in the wild world. Their strong desire for departure, together with the risks and dangers it entails seem to have posed a threat to the patriarchal structures of a society in which home is constructed as the woman's 'natural' place. What then, these travel writings reveal, is an attempt to transgress the female boundaries of place and identity and try for new and improbable conditions of existence. Either chosen or forced, or chosen and forced at the same time, travelling gives women the chance to distance themselves from daily entanglements, and think about themselves and the world around them in a different way. In the process of their continuous struggle to reconcile conflicts between their inner and outer reality, travelling gives shape to their transitional space.<sup>21</sup> Thus it bridges the gap between the inner and the outer world of the subject, giving pleasure, a sense of aliveness and continuity, and ultimately creating possibilities for self-reflection and for change.



*Technologies of the self / Technologies of space.*

In his discussion of ethics, in relation to the formation of the self, Foucault had focused his analyses on the *technologies of the self*, a set of practices which 'permit individuals to effect, ... a certain number of operations on their own bodies, and souls, thoughts and ways of being so as to transform themselves, in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Martin et al., 1988:18). According to Foucault, these self- technologies were integrated with various types of attitudes, rendered difficult to recognise and set apart from everyday experiences (Foucault 1990:45). In terms of everyday experience then, having a room of their own gave women the private space they needed to retreat, think about themselves, articulate their thoughts and conduct, find a way to voice their desires, ultimately put together fragments and pieces of their identity. Their college room was the place to avoid surveillance, destroy the mirrors through which distorted self images were being projected, map their existence in different dimensions. At the opposite pole of the space/time process, travelling offered them possibilities of escaping their prescribed places and roles, feeling free and trying 'new modes of being'. Finding themselves in different places, far away from their home, women underwent rare experiences, acquired knowledges that had the possibility of transforming their whole lives, and constructed quite novel personal relations to the new and unknown world. Therefore, going out to meet the world, women travellers also learnt how to stand on their own feet. Both space practices were

mutually affected and we should see them 'working upon' the female self in their interaction. Both were important in women's experimentation with multiple and differential selfhoods. Finally education was the locus par excellence where amidst other interests, women could both be private, within the space arrangements of college life, and travel by means of the economical and intellectual independence derived from their opportunity to work within education and because of it.

From a genealogical perspective, it has been accepted that the ways by which people attempt to decipher their relationship to themselves, varies according to their historical and cultural environments. The eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries celebrate the era of rationalism, when the Cartesian subject/man is driven to knowledge, a demystification of *his* existence and the creation of a new relationship to *himself*. In such a historical and cultural context, the techniques women adopted were consequently influenced by the principles of rationalism and scientific explanation of the world. Knowledge of their self 'the manner of being you are' was bound up with getting away from the confining domestic circle, 'the golden cage', towards more space, 'room to themselves'. This 'room for themselves' became their place of hiding, where disengaged from the social, they would cultivate their mind, and develop modes and techniques of self-knowledge. Travelling on the other hand, was a direct way of social engagement, an opportunity for the female self to try a different way of life, although new conventions, limitations and restraints would emerge to be confronted. In such a transitional space, the female self would fight, but at the same time, 'take refuge' without immediate risks of being utterly excluded from the social structures she was trying to challenge. The interaction of the microcosm of the 'room' and the macrocosm of travelling seems to have opened paths for self-exploration/revelation. What I have found stimulating in tracing technologies of the female self, is the ways women

have tried to work upon themselves in rearranging their space, and giving different dimensions to the unfolding of their lives. Indeed I would argue that technologies of the female self are historically associated with what I want to call, *technologies of space*.

## NOTES

1. My emphasis.
2. There were various reasons for these changes, particularly the evolution of a state system of mass elementary schooling, which resulted in women's participation in the teaching profession. Thus, Sara Delamont (1978) and Carol Dyhouse (1981) have described the processes through which women strived to be accepted in the male world of knowledge, focusing particularly on the social class divisions between them. Martha Vicinus (1985) has traced the evolution of a network of social relations and the emergence of a feminine culture in the context of their life within the first university-associated women's colleges, as well as girls' boarding schools. Hilda Kean (1990) has followed the everyday activities of women teachers who were actively involved in the suffragette movement, while Dina Copelman (1985) has been particularly concerned with the life-style of elementary women teachers in London between 1870 and 1914.
3. See Delamont S. (1978) , Dyhouse C. (1981), Purvis J. ( 1991).
4. See Wilson 1991, Rose 1993, Massey 1994, Duncan 1996.
5. Here Massey draws on the arguments of physical sciences which advocate the conceptualization of both space/time as processes in a unity and she cites Maen-wan Ho in biology, and Minkowski in physics (Massey, 1994:3).

6. Rose notes that from 1970 onwards, marxist geographers has been theorising the socio-economical processes through which material spaces have been shaped unevenly by capitalism and it is in relation to the work of marxist geographers, that one of the earliest essays of feminist geography appeared in 1973. Rose notes that the essay 'Social change, the status of women and models of city form and development' was published in *Antipode*, the journal of marxist geographers
7. Benjamin has seen these spatial imags as 'body-and image-space' (Weigel, 1996:x)
8. 'Other Spaces' is a foucauldian term, theorised in Foucault's article, 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault (1994) 'Des Espaces Autres' in *Dits et ecrits 1954-1988*, vol. 1980-1988, p.p. 752-762, Editions Gallimard, Paris.
9. 'Something pressed is something caught between or among forces and barriers ... which restrain, restrict or prevent the thing's motion or mobility' (Frye cited in Rose, 1993:144).
10. Maynard refers here to her sister.
11. My emphasis.
12. As Simons (1995:3) notes, 'Life is unbearably light when it has no purpose to it' and he points out that the image of 'the unbearable lightness of being' originates with Nietzsche, but has been formulated by Milan Kundera (1984).
13. My emphasis.
14. See Briggs A. (1955), Simon B. (1974), Jones G. S. (1976), Vincent D. (1982).
15. See Rowbotham S. (1977), Delamont S. and Duffin L. (1978), Widdowson F. (1980), Dyhouse C. (1981), Vicinus M. (1985), Swindells J. (1985), Kean Hilda (1990).
16. For the movement for 'The Higher Education of Women', see Stephen B. (1927), especially the chapter 'First steps towards the Higher Education of

Women', Maynard (1910:178), Glenday N. and Price M. (1974), Kamm J. (1958), Steadman C. (1931). For women and the professions see again Stephen B. (1927), especially the chapter 'Miss Davies and Miss Garrett' and Swindells J. (1985: 19-26).

17. See in particular the chapter 'A Place called home?' in Massey D. (1994) and McDowell L. (1996) 'Spatializing Feminism, Geographic Perspectives' in Duncan N. (ed) *Body Space: destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality*.

18. Grant is the place where Maynard's family were spending their holidays.

19. The emphasis in the text

20. Donald was Borland's nickname.

21. In Winnicott's theory there are three realities to which a healthy person always has access: inner, outer and transitional. The transitional space bridges the gaps between self and other, inner and outer reality. Culture arises out of that third space remaining within us, giving us pleasure and a sense of aliveness and continuity. In this space each relatively healthy individual carries on the lifelong process of creatively managing the strain of reconciling inner and outer realities. Jane Flax has referred to Winnicott's notion of the 'transitional space' as one of his most important contributions to (possible) post-Enlightenment thinking, since he breaks decisively with Enlightenment values in identifying the capacities to play and to 'make use of' and 'relate to' objects rather than reason, as the qualities more characteristic of the human beings (Flax 1990:116, 119).

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