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From New Women to College Girls at the Huguenot Seminary and College, 1895-1910

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In 1874, Andrew Murray – the influential moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) between 1862 and 1897 – founded the Huguenot Seminary in Wellington to educate middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans girls as teachers and missionaries.[1] The school was, in many ways, a copy of the Mount Holyoke Seminary in South Hadley, Connecticut, which was also established (in 1837) to provide a thoroughly academic, as well as Christian education to the young women in the area. After having read a biography of its founder, Mary Lyon, Murray wrote to the headmistress of Mount Holyoke, asking that a teacher from the school be sent to his parish in the Cape Colony to create a "South African Mount Holyoke". This request was by no means unusual – pupils from the Seminary had established "Mount Holyokes" all over the world – and in November 1873, two American teachers (the first of about thirty), Abbie Park Ferguson (1837-1919) and Anna Elvira Bliss (1843-1925), arrived to establish the girls' school in Wellington.[2] The Huguenot Seminary was an unprecedented success: it was constantly in need of extra room to house its overflow of pupils, the girls came near the top of the Colony's teaching examinations from 1875 onwards, and its associated College – founded in 1898 – was the first

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1. I take the term "Dutch-Afrikaans" from Marijke du Toit's "Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Social History of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, c.1870-1939." DPhil thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996, to refer to the Cape's middle-class Dutch population – consisting of a growing number of professionals, successful shop-keepers and wealthy farmers – as it negotiated an identity that was no longer exclusively European, yet distinct from the English-speaking and indigenous inhabitants of the Cape Colony during the latter half of the nineteenth century.
2. Research on Mount Holyoke abounds, but two sources that focus on its mission work and impact on girls' education in Asia, Africa and Latin America are: D.L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Mercer University Press, Macon, 1996); and A. Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1997).

women-only tertiary institution in South Africa.[3] It also established a series of branch seminaries – in, for example, Graaff-Reinet, Stellenbosch, Swellendam, Paarl, Bloemfontein, and Greytown – run by Mount Holyoke-trained teachers, as well as Huguenot alumni.[4]

This article explores the discourses surrounding the ideal of the educated woman that arose at the Seminary and College between 1895 and 1910, particularly as portrayed in the Huguenot annuals published during these years which were, crucially, edited solely by the pupils.[5] These annuals provide an insight into the girls' experiences of, and perspectives on, the education provided to them at Huguenot and from these magazines a number of both conflicting and complimentary discourses on femininity emerge, each of them attempting to explain and justify the importance, place, and role of the educated middle-class woman at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.[6]

The period 1895 to 1910 is a particularly useful window through which to analyse the construction of white femininities in the

3. Very little has been written about the Huguenot Seminary and College in relation to the construction of middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans femininity. The only full-length study of the school is: G.P. Ferguson, *The Builders of Huguenot (Being the History of the Huguenot Institution at Wellington from the Intimate Papers of the Builders)* (Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1927). It provides an adulatory overview of the institution's development. More recent analysis of the significance of Huguenot for the Dutch-Afrikaans society appears in: D.L. Robert, "Mount Holyoke Women and the Dutch Reformed Missionary Movement, 1874-1904", *Missionalia*, 21, 2, 1993, pp 103-123.

4. Two of these schools are still in existence: Bloemhof in Stellenbosch (founded in 1875) and La Rochelle in Paarl (acquired in 1890). The Huguenot Seminary has since become the Huguenot High School.

5. The Cape Town campus of the South African National Library has a complete collection of the Seminary and College's annuals, but for the purposes of this study, only the annuals published between 1895 and 1910 will be considered. *The Huguenot Seminary Annual* – the institution's first annual publication – appeared between 1895 and 1901. It changed its name to *The Huguenot Annual* in 1902, and then to *The Huguenot* in 1905. Only *The Huguenot* accepted articles in both English and Dutch. Before 1905, the annuals were entirely in English.

6. Versions of this article were presented at the Seminar Series, History Department, University of Stellenbosch, 5 October 2005, as well as at the GRAAT international colloquium "Stories for Children, Histories of Childhood", University of Tours, 18-19 November 2005. Grateful thanks to the Department of History at the University of Stellenbosch for funding, and to Albert Grundlingh, Denni Duff and especially Sandra Swart for reading earlier drafts.

Cape Colony. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represent a major turning-point in South African history, as the country shifted from being a collection of British colonies and Boer republics to becoming a unified and eventually semi-independent state in 1910.[7] The conclusion of Anglo-Boer War hostilities in 1902, and the consequent peace negotiations, had the effect of politicising minority groups and, although it was never as much of a powerful social and political force as it was in Britain, the first signs of an interest in women's suffrage (or simply in the predicament of women and children) appeared.[8] In Cape Town, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) had been founded in 1889, but developed a political wing, the Women's Enfranchisement League (WEL) in 1907.[9] The Guild of Loyal Women, a society created to foster support for imperialism and reduce English-Afrikaans tensions, began work in 1900.[10] Similarly, the predominantly Afrikaans *Zuid-Afrikaansche Vrouwe Federatie* (South African Women's Federation) was established in 1903 and was "preoccupied with the politics of reconciliation within the framework of empire".[11] A year later, the philanthropic *Zuid-Afrikaansche Christelyke Vrouwe Vereniging* (South African Christian Women's Society) was instituted. The National Council of Women emerged in 1909 to act as an umbrella body to foster women's interests, demonstrating the extent to which women's organisations in the Cape had proliferated.[12]

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7. A.M. Grundlingh, "Prelude to the Anglo-Boer War, 1881-1899", *in* T. Cameron & S.B. Spies (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa* (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 1986), pp 191-192; V. Bickford-Smith, E. van Heyningen & N. Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1999), pp 24-25.
8. S.B. Spies, "Reconstruction and Unification, 1902-1910", *in* Cameron & Spies (eds), *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, pp 219-222; C. Walker, "The Women's Suffrage Movement: The Politics of Gender, Race and Class," *in* C. Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (David Philip & James Currey, Cape Town & London, 1990), pp 321-322.
9. C. Walker, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in South Africa* (Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1979), pp 21-25.
10. Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, p 32. Also see: E. van Heyningen, "'The healing touch': The Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa, 1900-1912", *South African Historical Journal*, 47, 2002, pp 24-50.
11. Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, pp 30-32.
12. The ZACVV soon became the very influential ACVV, the subject of Marijke du Toit,'s monograph, "Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism".

While much of this increased activity was stimulated by the Anglo-Boer War and its aftermath, a lot of it was connected to the rising levels of education among white, middle-class South African women, the growing numbers of professional middle-class women, as well as an awareness of the global interest in women's franchise and rights during the period – as manifested in the writing and influence of Olive Schreiner.[13] Elaine Showalter has written about the *fin de siècle* as a significant watershed in the formation of gendered identities for the twentieth century. As a period of profound global social, economic, and political transformation, much of the anxiety arising out of this change was directed towards a heightened awareness of the fluidity of notions of what was considered to be the "proper" places for middle-class men and women.

How should married women behave? What degree of education should a middle-class girl receive? To what extent did this "New Woman" (the educated, professional, independent young woman) challenge traditional modes of domesticity?[14] These were questions that preoccupied writers, journalists, moralisers and educators, and which undoubtedly came under a great deal of consideration at the Huguenot Seminary and College. Indeed, while the Seminary had drawn attention to itself during the 1870s for what many felt to be the eccentricity of its desire to provide as thorough an academic education as possible to young women, by the late 1890s, it was prominent for its very "respectability" as an educational institution. Within a generation, it had become a distinguished feature of the South African educational landscape and thus had to reconcile its efforts to educate Dutch-Afrikaans girls with prevailing attitudes towards the position of middle-class women.

When analysing the place of white, middle-class women within nineteenth-century colonial societies, the greatest danger for the historian is to over-emphasise their agency or their lack thereof – thus producing a simplistic understanding of women as "heroines", "victims", or "villains".[15] Simon Dagut notes that "there is a real risk that women …

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13. Walker, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in South Africa*, pp 19-21; Walker, "The Women's Suffrage Movement", pp 321-324.
14. E. Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Bloomsbury, London, 1991), pp 3-5. Showalter does, though, demonstrate a fair amount of twentieth century *fin de siècle* anxiety herself.
15. J. Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13, 1-2, 2001, pp 112-114. Two excellent sources on gender and women's history in South Africa are:

will appear to be little more than the doughty 'settler's wives', helpless 'ladies' and vicious 'memsahibs' of nineteenth-century imperial mythology."[16] This is particularly true for the study of "hegemonic" femininity. As R.W. Connell writes of masculinity: of the multitude of gendered identities available to a society, one – usually because of its association with social, economic, or political power – is considered to be dominant and is, thus, held up as an ideal worthy of emulation.[17] This supremacy is maintained in opposition to other, subordinate gendered identities and, in the case of masculinity and particular forms of femininity, is used to justify and bolster the patriarchal order.[18] It is also produced within social institutions. Probably one of the most potent of these is the school in which, as Connell argues, children and adolescents encounter a variety of gendered identities around which they define themselves. Although, especially in "elite" schools, the ethos of the institution will tend to promote a hegemonic masculinity or femininity, other gendered identities are also open to the pupils and are accepted – with varying degrees of willingness – or rejected by the school's staff, parents, and alumni.[19] In his examination of the creation of settler masculinities in colonial Natal, for example, Robert Morrell pays close attention to the way in which the private boys' schools in the region assisted in inculcating the values widely connected to "model" upper middle-class, white, English-speaking male settler identity.[20] Similarly, an analysis of girls' schools shows how educated women both opposed

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P. Hetherington, "Women in South Africa: The Historiography in English", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26, 2, 1993, pp 241-269; and H. Bradford, "Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zone, c. 1806-70", *Journal of African History*, 37, 1996, pp 351-370.

16. S. Dagut, "Gender, Colonial 'Women's History' and the Construction of Social Distance: Middle Class Women in Later Nineteenth-Century South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 3, 2003, pp 556-557.
17. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995), pp 76-78.
18. Connell, *Masculinities*, pp 82-83.
19. R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1987), pp 177-178; Connell, *Masculinities*, pp 238-239.
20. R. Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1880-1920* (University of South Africa, Pretoria, 2001), pp 48-77; R. Morrell, "Masculinity and the White Boys' Boarding Schools of Natal, 1880-1930", *Perspectives in Education*, 15, 1, Summer 1993/94, pp 27-52. For a discussion of boys' boarding schools in the Cape Colony that pays some attention to the construction of gendered identities, see: P. Randall, *Little England on the Veld: The English Private School System in South Africa* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1982), pp 53-71.

and supported society's understanding of "ideal" femininity in their efforts to disseminate this vision to their pupils.

In order to speak of a "hegemonic" femininity, it is necessary to recognise that it differs in its construction and maintenance from hegemonic masculinity. While the latter is associated with the exercise of power and the subjugation of other gendered identities, hegemonic femininity is typically described as passive, gentle, childlike, and domesticated.[21] The Victorian notion of the mother as the "Angel of the House", or even the Afrikaner nationalist construction of the *Volksmoeder* (mother of the nation), are examples of this hegemonic ideal at work. It is possible to identify such a form of hegemonic femininity in the late nineteenth-century Cape Colony. Edna Bradlow has suggested that the position of English-speaking, white, middle-class women in the Cape was virtually analogous to their metropolitan counterparts in England and Europe – both groups subscribed to the same "cult of domesticity", for example.[22] Yet Marijke du Toit has shown that, despite the relative paucity of sources on Afrikaner femininity during the period, there is some reason to believe that Dutch-Afrikaans women, especially in rural areas, did lead lives of relative independence and responsibility as they worked alongside their menfolk in the management of farms and cared for the smooth running of the homestead.[23] These women indeed

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21. Clearly, what is considered to be hegemonic is determined by the context in which this femininity is produced. As Gillian Avery demonstrates in her survey of British independent schools for girls, different schools encouraged a variety of forms of femininity. G. Avery, *The Best Type of Girl: A History of Girls' Independent Schools* (André Deutsch, London, 1991), pp 98-108. Connell shows how an elite Australian girls' school successfully reorientated itself as a more "academic" institution by celebrating a femininity which highlights independent, competitive, diligent hard work, and rejecting the previously hegemonic "debutante" feminine ideal. Connell, *Gender and Power*, p 178. This transformation is the subject of: R.W. Connell, G.W. Dowsett, S. Kessler & D.J. Ashenden, "Class and Gender Dynamics in a Ruling-Class School", *Interchange*, 12, 2-3, 1981, pp 102-117.

22. E. Bradlow, "Women at the Cape in the Mid-19th Century", *South African Historical Journal*, 19, 1987, pp 51-67. The difficulties of middle-class women's lives in Cape Town are particularly well described in: N. Worden, E. van Heyningen & V. Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town, the Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1998), pp 200-206.

23. For a brief discussion of gendered roles within Boer families before and during the South African War, see: H. Bradford, "Gentlemen and Boers: Afrikaner Nationalism, Gender, and Colonial Warfare in the South African War", *in* G. Cuthbertson, A.M. Grundlingh & M-L. Suttie (eds), *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War,*

worked inside a prescribed domestic sphere, but within that area wielded a great deal of influence.[24] Natasha Erlank and Kirsten McKenzie, amongst others, have demonstrated nineteenth-century, white, middle-class women's ambivalence towards their privileged status, especially as regards the pressure on them not to enter into any form of employment outside of the home.[25] There were, of course, schools that promoted a kind of passive and relatively frivolous femininity. In the 1897 and 1898 annuals of the Good Hope Seminary,[26] for example, marriages of past

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1899-1902 (Ohio University Press & David Philip, Athens & Cape Town, 2002), pp 44-51.

24. Du Toit, "Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism", pp 21-24. Also see: L-M. Kruger, "Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the *Volksmoeder* Discourse of *Die Boerevrou* (1913-1931)." MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991, pp 103-107; E. Brink, "Man-Made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the *Volksmoeder*", *in* C. Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, pp 273-292; K. Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner: A Woman in South Africa, 1855-1881* (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1991), pp 209-219, for discussions of Dutch-Afrikaans femininity during the late nineteenth century.

25. See, for example, N. Erlank, "'Thinking it Wrong to Remain Unemployed in the Pressing Times': The Experiences of Two English Settler Wives", *South African Historical Journal*, 33, 1995, pp 62-82; K. McKenzie, "'My Own Mind Dying within Me': Eliza Fairbairn and the Reinvention of Colonial Middle-Class Domesticity in Cape Town", *South African Historical Journal*, 36, 1997, pp 3-23; K. McKenzie, "Wollstonecraft's Models?: Female Honour and Sexuality in Middle-Class Settler Cape Town, 1800-1854", *Kronos*, 23, 1996, pp 57-90.

26. The Good Hope Seminary was founded in 1873 by a group of Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) ministers who desired to establish a less denominational school for girls, as at the time the two prominent institutions for girls' education in Cape Town respectively were Roman Catholic and Anglican concerns. Andrew Murray originally was on the committee, but resigned, probably as the result of the death of a child in his family. Unlike the Huguenot Seminary, however, Good Hope was never funded by the DRC (even though it was under the care of Reverend G.W. Stegmann) and was run by a group of teachers from England and Scotland. Its first headmistress, Georgina Thompson, was from Scotland and resigned after a year, following a quarrel with her board of governors about, apparently, their decision to use her drawing-room as a dormitory. In 1874 she married Saul Solomon, the prominent publisher and politician, and became active in women's philanthropic and suffrage organisations. Anna Bliss and Abbie Ferguson visited Good Hope when it was under her care (and found it "very pleasing") and later took tea with her and her husband. After Miss Thompson's departure, and under the leadership of Mrs Percival from England, the Good Hope Seminary became known as the "highpriced, fashionable school of Cape Town". Good Hope Guild, *Annual Report* (Van de Sandt de Villiers and Co, Cape Town, 1898), p 1; Dutch Reformed Church Archive (hereafter DRCA), Huguenot Seminary Collection (hereafter HSC): K-Div 615, Abbie Ferguson –

pupils are listed before the institution's academic achievements (which were relatively limited).[27] Training in feminine "accomplishments" is given greater prominence than academic study,[28] and an article on college education for women concludes with:

> Though the privilege of adding B.A. to one's name is envied by most, yet the exertion of reaching this is a severe strain on the whole of a girl's nature, and it is questionable whether this giddy height should be aspired to by her.[29]

The hegemonic femininity promoted at the Huguenot Seminary differed from the anti-intellectualism practised at Good Hope, but supported its understanding of women's "proper" place being in the home. It is striking that the articles which most vigorously expound this understanding of femininity were written by the teachers (predominantly Ferguson and Bliss), alumnae, and winners of essay competitions – demonstrating the extent to which this was the "official" feminine discourse within the Seminary and College. As one author wrote:

> We take it for granted, of course, that a girl on going back to her home [after matriculating] will look upon it as a sacred duty and privilege to do what she can to help the mother who has done, and sacrificed, so much for her, and that she will become proficient in all that a woman should know of the art of making a home pretty and attractive, and also learn to cook, and make her own clothes.[30]

Yet there was also a feeling that the educated woman had a wider, spiritual duty. A possibly fictionalised account of a former pupil by Bliss serves to summarise this point of view:

> Let me tell you of one of our girls that I heard about to-day. She studied beyond Matriculation and Second Class Teachers' Examination and then took a position that surprised many of

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Maggie Allen, Wellington, 16 November 1873, 11 March 1874; DRCA, HSC: K-Div 606, Anna Bliss – E.L. Bliss, Wellington, 15 August 1875.

27. Good Hope Guild, *Annual Report* (Van de Sandt de Villiers and Co, Cape Town, 1897), pp 11-13, 18; Good Hope Guild, *Annual Report* (1898), pp 5-7. These annuals are kept by the Cape Town Campus of the South African National Library.
28. The Seminary had clubs for music, needlework, art and painting. The girls were also provided with elocution classes. Good Hope Guild, *Annual Report* (1897), pp 1-6, 13.
29. Good Hope Guild, "College Life", *Annual Report* (1898), p 11.
30. "A Talk to the Old Girls", *Magazine of the Huguenot High School, Paarl*, November 1908, p 7.

> her friends, as they said she might have looked for a higher place and a higher salary.
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> She said, "I think I am needed there, and that God wants me to go and do that work," and she went. For three years she laboured faithfully amid much that was uncongenial, and then married a farmer in the neighbourhood. Was her education thrown away? A lady, who was in her home lately, told me how she was impressed with her sweet, cultured face, and said, "It seemed strange in that out-of-the-way place, in an ignorant community, on a Dutch farm, to see volumes of Longfellow, Tennyson, Browning, and Ruskin lying on the table, evidently used," and added, "It was wonderful to hear the people speak of her, and of their appreciation of what she had done for them. She is raising the intellectual and moral tone of the whole community." May there be many such going into the waste places of Africa![31]

This passage rehearses the familiar themes of self-sacrifice and self-denial that recur in the letters of the teachers during the first decade of the Seminary's existence. Despite her academic achievements, the subject of Bliss' parable eschews worldly success so that she may put her skills to good work in a rural area and it is easy to confuse her teaching activities with those of a missionary – she is called to a difficult position so that she may spread God's work. Yet it is after her marriage – which, in itself, is implied to be an act of heroic surrender, as this "Dutch" farmer is probably no more educated or sophisticated than his neighbours – that she is able to do the most good for the community: by allowing them access to works of "culture" she is able to raise the "intellectual and moral tone" of the area. In this way, the woman's education acquires a spiritual and moral function which, she realises, obliges her to assist in the upliftment of the "waste places of Africa". The education of women is justified by pointing to the broader good that it will do for the (white) population of South Africa.[32] This is succinctly summarised in the final two stanzas of the prize-winning poem, *A College Student's Advice to Mothers*:

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31. A. Bliss, "Educational Growth", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 4, 1898, pp 20-21.
32. This way of justifying the education of women – that what they would learn would be of immeasurable benefit to their communities – was the dominant discourse within American women's colleges until, at least, the 1890s. Considering that Ferguson and Bliss would have been steeped in this discourse while at Mount Holyoke, it is not surprising that they persisted in its dissemination in the Huguenot annuals. V. Ricks, "'In an Atmosphere of Peril': College Women and Their Writing", *in* C. Hobbs (ed), *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville & London, 1995), pp 65-66.

> If famous the men, sure, then, famous the wives,
> And the fate of our country depends on their lives;
> If thoughtful the mother, then thoughtful the child,
> For they through this learning grow gentle and mild.
>
> Educate your daughters, for queens they must be:
> Queens to the world, to you and to me;
> If not, then allow me to make this bold stand –
> You love not your daughters, you love not your land![33]

The educated woman's power is not in her ability to lead, but in her role as a "gentle and mild" wife and mother: she is in the position to influence her husband (whose status defines her position in relation to the world) and it is she who is responsible for the training of the next generation of leaders and decision-makers. As a result, the education of women becomes an issue which is of national interest. That this poem was written only two years before the declaration of the Union of South Africa and in the midst of the negotiations for the settlement, is by no means surprising. It echoes the concerns of late eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century post-independence Americans who, desiring to propagate the ideals of the Revolution, constructed the notion of "Republican Motherhood" which elevated women to the position of producers of, and carers for, the future leaders of the independent United States. Their political contribution was to be "channelled … through maternity"[34] and, as a result, these nurturers of the American future would require an education that would befit them to raise rational, intelligent and hard-working young citizens.[35] Indeed, this linking of traditionally domestic activity – child-rearing – to wider, political aims shows the extent to which the poem was influenced by the emergent *Volksmoeder* ideology of the period during which "[f]or the first time the Boer woman's role as mother and central focus of her family was expanded to include the concept of Boer women as mothers of the nation".[36] As the writer of a piece entitled *Puddings, Politics, and Poetry: A Homily on the Virtuous Woman* argued, every woman should have demonstrated an interest in politics "for the education of those coming warriors who are now peacefully sleeping in their cradles or playing in the school play-ground".[37]

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33. P. Rossouw, "A College Student's Advice to Mothers", *The Huguenot*, 14, 1908, p 13.
34. S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1999), p 60.
35. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States*, pp 60-61.
36. Brink, "Man-Made Women", p 280.
37. M.E. Macintosh, "Puddings, Politics, and Poetry: A Homily on the Virtuous Woman", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 4, 1898, pp 54.

For women who did not marry and have children, this independence was justified by their selfless and wholehearted devotion to the education – both intellectually and spiritually – of the "less deserving". In articles describing the lot of women who teach rather than run households, their lives were shown to be difficult and uncomfortable, and it was suggested that they lived rather like nuns – chaste, pious and almost literally wedded to their work. That this sort of existence would require a great deal of self-discipline, is by no means surprising, and it is this which the authors of articles about the need to educate women, tended to stress. One argued that the "discipline of receiving an education" helped to "lay the foundations of a pure, strong and upright character, and enable[s] the student to fulfil her place in life in the worthiest manner",[38] while another admitted that College graduates would eventually forget the Greek, mathematics and botany that they had been taught, "but the power, the self-control and the perseverance which they have gained by trying to master these subjects remain of use to them in after life".[39] It is self-control and the ability to discipline oneself – to persist under conditions of great difficulty and to efface one's own needs and desires in order to assist others more successfully – that validated the existence of these women. This mastery of self (which is, in many ways, a renunciation of self) allowed these women a form of freedom, but, ironically, this independence was described as an absolute submission to a higher power.

Considering that this hegemonic discourse defended the education of girls – as well as the position of single, working women – by emphasising the extent to which it allowed them to fulfil their "natural" roles as carers and nurturers, it is little wonder that Ferguson and Bliss promoted it so consistently. Nevertheless, by the 1890s, as the Seminary transformed into a college, it began employing greater numbers of women holding formal degrees from single-sex and coeducational tertiary institutions in particularly America. While the generation of teachers who had worked at Huguenot during the 1870s and 1880s in most cases were only qualified by having graduated from a seminary or academy that offered teachers' training (Ferguson, Bliss and others did not possess formal degrees or teaching certificates), or had worked as pupil-teachers, educationalists like Bertha Stoneman, Adelaide Smith and Florence Snell held postgraduate qualifications from Cornell, Wellesley, Göttingen and

38. K. Joubert, "Student Life at Wellington", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 7, 1901, p 20.
39. S. le Roux, "Why Should Girls Go to College?", *The Huguenot*, 11, 1905, p 22.

Oxford.[40] It is difficult to gauge to what extent there existed a tension on a personal level between these two generations of teachers, but it is clear that as the College was founded, the whole Huguenot institution changed from being a religious, mission-based school for girls, to a modern college.[41] In a series of letters written in 1899 by Ferguson, she demonstrated the extent to which the values on which Huguenot had been founded had to make way for the coming of a professional college:

> Our teachers are not altogether one with us [Ferguson and Murray] in what seems to us the most important part of the work. They want more time for study, which seems to us to mean less time for quiet time and prayer. I know they want to put the interests of the Kingdom first, and it is not easy to see things from our standpoint with the pressure of examinations upon them. If it is wise for us to make any change I want to be willing to see it, but I feel that I want first of all to cry night and day to God that we may make no mistake, may not mar His work, or do that which will jeopardise the future.[42]

It is clear that this shift in principles did occur. By 1917, Sue Leiter – a Mount Holyoke-trained instructor in physics at the Huguenot College – wrote that "[t]he girls … are like college girls the world over. It is not a missionary institution".[43] Perhaps the best articulation of this more "professional" attitude towards the higher education of women is E.M. Clark's *Abstract of a Paper on the Higher Education of Women in South Africa*, published in 1905. Elizabeth Clark was a member of staff at the Huguenot College and had studied English and German literature at Bryn Mawr College and at the Universities of Leipzig and Zurich.[44] Clark argued that secondary and tertiary education should have been made available more widely. Not once did she justify her stance through a recourse to religion – and, unlike Ferguson, Bliss and the older generation of teachers, she viewed the university as existing solely to

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40. *Calendar of the Huguenot College and Seminary, 1904-1905* (Huguenot College and Seminary, Wellington, 1904), p 47; *Announcement of the Huguenot College, 1906-1907* (Huguenot College, Wellington, 1906), p 6.
41. A similar tension – between a discourse justifying the education of women based on their nurturing role in the community and a discourse arguing that women had a right to tertiary education, regardless of what they chose to do with it, occurred in American women's colleges during the 1890s. Ricks, "'In an Atmosphere of Peril'", pp 66-68.
42. DRCA, HSC: K-Div 615, Abbie Ferguson – Maggie Allen, Wellington, 21 March 1899.
43. Quoted in: D.L. Robert, "Mount Holyoke Women and the Dutch Reformed Missionary Movement, 1874-1904", *Missionalia*, 21, 2, 1993, p 122.
44. *Calendar of the Huguenot College and Seminary, 1904-1905*, p 47.

provide an academic (not a spiritual or moral) education to both men and women. Her argument was underpinned by a belief that it was no more unusual for a woman to enter college than it was for a man.[45] This "professionalist" discourse ran parallel to its hegemonic counterpart in the Huguenot annuals, which suggests something of the friction between the new and the old ways of understanding women's education. In a series of articles describing the life of young women at colleges and universities in Britain and America, their lack of religiosity is striking – and they did not link these colleges and students to the "higher cause" as Ferguson and Bliss did. All of these pieces depict young women enjoying themselves at university or college –challenged by their academic work, but, nonetheless, having full and active social lives.

A similar picture was drawn by a number of articles describing life at the Huguenot College – and there was a comparable emphasis on the "rounded" education of the young women in Wellington. A prize-winning essay on daily life at the College described how classes in the morning were balanced by the half-hour's compulsory exercise in the afternoon, and how homework in the evening was brought to a close by girls visiting and taking tea with one another before bedtime.[46] Indeed, there was some emphasis on the need for social activities after study: "social functions take a very important part in our College home life, for we do not often go to outsiders, and unless we made pleasure for ourselves, our home life would not be as happy as it is".[47] Considering that the annuals were written as much for parents as they were for pupils and alumni, there seems to have been some awareness of parents' worry that girls would emerge from the College determined bookworms with little or no social ability – or "physically fit for nothing".[48]

This belief that education had the potential to transform girls into tomboys or "manly women" was by no means unusual – it was an argument that had accompanied the extension of higher education since its inception. If nineteenth-century notions of "true" middle-class womanhood revolved around women's ability to reproduce, educated women who did not marry, chose to delay pregnancy, or did not have

45. E.M. Clark, "Abstract of a Paper on the Higher Education of Women in South Africa", *in* W.E.C. Clarke, E.M. Clark & W.A. Way (eds), *Papers on Cape Education, Read Before the British Association* (J.C. Juta, Cape Town, 1905), pp 18-29.
46. K. Joubert, "Student Life at Wellington", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 7, 1901, pp 18-20.
47. J. Retief, "College Home Life", *The Huguenot Annual*, 8, 1902, pp 35.
48. J. Deas, "Expectations", *The Huguenot Annual*, 10, 1904, p 3.

children at all, were clearly not fulfilling their "natural" roles. It seemed logical, then, to assume that their training had encouraged them to think (or even behave) like men.[49] Female teachers subscribing to a more "professionalist" understanding of teaching were at pains to demonstrate that educated young women were not at risk of becoming "manly". In many schools and colleges, this resulted in students being required to behave and dress as "young ladies" – they would dress for dinner, wear fashionable clothing, avoid romping on the sports' fields, and would assiduously avoid contact with men deemed to be "unsuitable" by their teachers.[50] It is true that girls at Huguenot were not permitted to meet boys during school hours or without the permission of their teachers, but they did not lead an entirely cloistered existence. Men from the area could, and did, enrol at the College,[51] older girls were allowed to correspond with young men,[52] and from time to time the students from the affiliated Mission Institute would be invited to joint picnics.[53] The resistance to male company was not based on a dislike of men in general,

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49. C. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1985), pp 182-184; L.D. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920", *American Quarterly*, 37, 2, 1987, pp 213-215; E. Edwards, "Educational Institutions or Extended Families? Women's Colleges in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *in* L. Dawtrey, J. Holland & M. Hammer (eds), *Equality and Inequality in Education Policy* (Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 1995), pp 94-98.
50. S. Delamont, "The Contradictions in Ladies' Education", *in* S. Delamont & L. Duffin (eds), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World* (Croom Helm, London, 1978), pp 144-151; Edwards, "Educational Institutions or Extended Families?", pp 94-98. It is interesting to note that when Mary Lyon attended the Byfield Seminary, her roommate and teachers drew her attention to the need to appear genteel in order to be deemed socially "acceptable" by "polite" society (on whose funds she would rely when opening her own school). Chronically short of funds, she usually wore coarse, shapeless dresses of home-spun cotton, but, with the assistance of more affluent friends, learned to dress neatly, if not fashionably, to style her hair, and to behave in a more "ladylike" manner in company. Delamont, "The Contradictions in Ladies' Education", p 145; A. Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1997), p 51.
51. For an amusing and frank account of life for a boy at the overwhelmingly female Huguenot College, see J.H. Bailey, "Some Experiences in the Life of a Huguenot College Boy", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 7, 1901, p 32.
52. DRCA, HSC: K-Div 615, Abbie Ferguson – Maggie Allen, Wellington, 13 February 1874.
53. DRCA, HSC: K-Div 615, Abbie Ferguson – Maggie Allen, Wellington, 11 November 1884.

but rather on a desire that the girls should mix with the right "sort" of boys. In the annuals, there is much description of typically "feminine" behaviour – predominantly shopping, sewing and having tea-parties – although there are no articles dedicated solely to these subjects.

Physical activity was the other means of rebutting arguments that education caused women to become more susceptible to illness. Nearly every issue of the annual contains at least one article on the Seminary and College's athletic achievements or on the importance of girls taking regular exercise. These pieces attempted to demonstrate that with the proper attention to exercise, a girl at the College would have emerged with both a BA degree and perfect health. In fact, as the Calendar put it, "well regulated exercise is a valuable aid to mental as well as to physical development".[54] The women at Huguenot were quick to institute compulsory exercise in the form of tennis, basketball, hockey and Scandinavian therapeutic exercises,[55] and imbued them with the important function of actually assisting the girls to perform better academically. An article dating from 1897 made the link between "physical well-being" and "moral strength" very clear, and went as far as to say that the advancement of the "modern" woman could be measured in terms of her physical betterment: "While the girl of yesterday fainted at the sight of a snake, the girl of to-day catches it by the tail and bottles it for exhibition and examination".[56]

Thus by demonstrating that women could remain both feminine and healthy as professionals dedicated to a life of teaching, this professionalist discourse provided an alternate means of understanding the position of the educated woman that did not rely either on religion or on a recourse to an ideal of the "Angel of the House". The suggestion that a woman could enjoy independence – that the "sacrifice" of married life and a family was not as painful as hegemonic discourses of femininity claimed – challenged notions of a woman needing to master herself in order to justify her autonomy. Indeed, there is something of an implication that this professional woman did not submit to anyone's

54. *Calendar of the Huguenot College and Seminary, 1904-1905*, p 10.
55. The exceptionally popular Scandinavian exercises seem to have been similar to a less energetic form of present-day aerobics. *Calendar of the Huguenot College and Seminary, 1904-1905*, pp 10-11; P. Atkinson, "Fitness, Feminism and Schooling", *in* Delamont & Duffin (eds), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman*, pp 92-93; Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, pp 257-260; Avery, *The Best Type of Girl*, pp 266-276.
56. F. Lawton, "Our Seminary Athletics", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 3, 1897, p 26.

authority – neither to God's, nor a husband's. For the professional teacher, the acquisition of self-discipline was useful in that it allowed her to study and work more efficiently – and presumably assisted her in training her body to keep up her stamina and strength. There was the same emphasis on the need for young women to be trained, but this secular mastery was expressed in terms of having a well-disciplined body,[57] an ability to think rationally and logically, and a desire to succeed academically in order to secure a future career. The differences between hegemonic and professionalist discourses should not be exaggerated, though both required that the teacher should have remained single during her working life, thus expecting her to devote herself to household, husband and family after marriage. Teachers of the younger generation also had to submit to popular notions of what it meant to be "feminine". Wearing trousers or cropping her hair would have turned the professional teacher into an object of ridicule. Moreover, both discourses understood the girl's period at college simply to be a phase in her development – as a means to an end. As a result, the need for girls to study for a degree was defended in terms of what they would learn that would assist them in future life. Yet there is evidence to suggest that a third, and possibly even more subtle discourse was at work in the annuals: namely that of the "College Girl", which was a celebration of a young woman's life at her university or women's college that (although an American import) seems to have found some favour among the Huguenot students.[58]

It is clear that the professionalist discourse was in some way connected to the phenomenon of the "New Woman" that arose in Britain, Europe and America during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.[59] Benefiting from the foundation of institutions dedicated to women's higher education during the mid-1800s and a slow liberalising of laws regarding the status of women, a generation of middle-class women at the turn of the nineteenth century began to define themselves not as wives and mothers, but as working women who had the training to retain their independence for as long as they desired.[60] Characterised as

57. Of course, this understanding of the female body – of it requiring containment and disciplining because of its innately "dirty" and "irrational" nature – fits neatly into Enlightenment discourses surrounding an increasingly mechanised view of the functioning of the body. D. Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies* (Sage Publications, London, 1995), pp 131-142.
58. Grateful thanks to Sarah Carter for drawing my attention to the phenomenon of the College Girl.
59. A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (Arrow Books, London, 2003), p 440.
60. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, pp 176-178. This is a fairly broad overview of the New Woman. There were distinct phases in the development

intellectually sophisticated, ambitious, individualistic and deliberately unconventional, they entered the business world as clerks, became teachers, journalists, civil servants, social workers and (less frequently) doctors and lawyers. They joined political organisations, rode bicycles, often refused to wear corsets and bustles, and wore their hair short.[61] There is only one article in the Huguenot annuals that engaged directly with the idea of the New Woman, and, interestingly, it was written by Maggie Ferguson, the eldest daughter of Abbie Ferguson's brother, George, the principal of the Mission Institute.[62] In *Our Place as Teachers*, Ferguson aligned herself with the values underpinning New Womanhood – she argued that women should participate actively in life, and not vicariously through husband and father:

> ... the spirit of the age has produced women who begin to think, crudely no doubt, on many questions, for she is still handicapped by her long submission; but above all has made woman no longer willing to be a mere consumer, she must also be a producer.[63]

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of the ideal. The first generation – educated during the 1870s and 1880s – tended to be outspoken feminists and social activists who, despite their unconventional lifestyle, were inclined to adhere to bourgeois values surrounding marriage and female sexuality. The second generation, who came into their own after World War One, generally were less interested in social issues and placed greater emphasis on self-fulfilment. They truly flouted and challenged dominant conceptualisations of the role of the woman, seeing themselves as equal to men and, thus, entitled to the same privileges. Due to the paucity of research on the New Woman in South Africa, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the discourse was a feature in debates on social and political issues in this country.

61. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, pp 176-178.

62. Margaret Ferguson graduated from the Huguenot Seminary in 1881, having become a pupil in 1878 after arriving in the Colony with her parents and siblings. She stayed at home for six months after leaving school – her mother was a chronic invalid requiring a great deal of care – before travelling to Europe and America. She enrolled at Mount Holyoke in 1883 and studied there for at least two years. By 1898 she was a teacher at the Huguenot Seminary. DRCA, HSC: K-Div 621, *Memorandum Catalogue of the Pupils of the Huguenot Seminary, Wellington, Cape of Good Hope, from January, 1874, to January, 1884* (W.A. Richards & Sons, Cape Town, 1884), p 28; "Catalogue of the Boarders of the Huguenot Seminary, Wellington", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 4, 1898, pp 63, 66; DRCA, HSC: K-Div 615, Abbie Ferguson – Maggie Allen, Wellington, 11 March 1884, 13 March 1884, 22 July 1885, 28 September 1885.

63. M.E. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 1, 1895, pp 30.

She argued that as a result, women needed to learn how to reason, and she felt that the female teacher had a duty to encourage the exercise of creative thought and individuality wherever she went.[64] Nevertheless, she remained aware of the difficulties facing the New Woman who desired to act as independently as her male contemporaries:

> We are still handicapped by old absurd ideas, we are paid only about a fourth for the same work as men, we are shrieked at if we venture out of certain grooves, but still it is an understood thing that we may earn our bread.[65]

This is certainly a considerably more spirited defence of working women than anything that appeared in Abbie Ferguson's writing. Nevertheless, Maggie's definition of the New Woman is considerably more conservative than that in Europe or America:

> [B]y the New Woman [is] mean[t] the woman who thinks and who recognizes her responsibilities as a human being … Such a woman takes up teaching as a piece of honest labour".[66]

She added that women are particularly suited to this work – and are, thus, almost obliged to take it up – because of their intuitive abilities and their supposedly "natural" love of children;[67] in fact, "there is no question that teaching lies within a woman's sphere. Women have always been teachers; for what else is the rearing of children?"[68]

This ambivalence about the position of educated women pervaded the annuals; the few references to women's suffrage and the existence of "bluestockings" at the Seminary and College were at once mildly supportive and faintly dismissive, even though some articles were dedicated to demonstrating the intellectual prowess of the female students. In *An Ethereal Visit to Cummings Hall*, a ghost in search of a place to rest was frightened off by the chatter of girls discussing women's suffrage,[69] while in another piece the author described the relief of an elderly relative when she discovered that the girls at the College were not "veritable 'blue-stockings'".[70] Yet another humorous dialogue entitled *Afternoon Tea in Hades*, in which a collection of historical figures

64. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", p 31.
65. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", p 30.
66. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", p 31.
67. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", p 31.
68. Ferguson, "Our Place as Teachers", p 30.
69. J. Earl, "An Ethereal Visit to Cummings Hall", *The Huguenot*, 14, 1908, p 20.
70. Deas, "Expectations", p 3.

discussed Shakespeare's visit to the Huguenot College, was generally approving of the students' serious debates about *Macbeth* and their efforts in the laboratory – and, in its ridiculing of Samuel Johnson's horror of women's education, did not censure Shakespeare's reference to the Huguenot girls as bluestockings.[71] Pieces such as one pupil's explanation of her socialist principles,[72] or a description of the lively debate at dinner time, show the intellectual sophistication and maturity of these young women.[73]

Perhaps one way of understanding this relatively mixed response to the issues traditionally associated with the New Woman – the higher education of women, universal suffrage, women's intellectual powers in relation to men's – is to consider the extent to which the students at the College identified with the construct of the "College Girl". While virtually unknown in South Africa, the "College Girl" was at once a manifestation of, and reaction against the New Woman in America. The pioneers of women's education between 1865 and 1890 were depicted in the American popular press as "mannish" and relatively unfeminine. The College Girl, on the other hand, arose out of the illustrator Charles Dana Gibson's understanding of the "modern woman" (or the "Gibson Girl" as she rapidly became known). His drawings depicted her "as tall, long-legged and graceful, with upswept hair, faintly pink cheeks, a provocative eye, and a cool detached air … unencumbered by bustles or convention".[74] The College Girl retained these qualities, but added a liveliness and playful impudence to them which were intended to render her even more charming. Of course it is clear that the College Girl (and the Gibson Girl) were intensely conservative responses to the New Woman – what defined these "Girls" (as opposed to "Women") were their physical attractiveness and simultaneously coy and arch attitude towards men. They were innately frivolous, self-centred and obsessed with their looks; Gibson's illustrations are frequently accompanied by anti-suffragist captions such as "Not Worrying about Her Rights", or "No Time for Politics". The concept of the College Girl, too, calmed worries that education "spoiled" women for marriage in that it emphasised the lack of impact that the College had on the Gibson Girl: she attended classes and wrote examinations, but otherwise retained her fun-loving demeanour.[75] The Gibson Girl was a fantasy of (willingly)

71. G. Phillips & M. Smith, "Afternoon Tea in Hades", *The Huguenot*, 13, 1907, pp 8-9.
72. P. Sugarman, "Old News Retold", *The Huguenot*, 16, 1910, p 4.
73. "Students at the Dinner-Table", *The Huguenot*, 16, 1910, pp 8-9.
74. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College", p 211.
75. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College", p 215.

submissive, childlike womanhood that achieved a wide and influential following among both men and women.[76]

It would be an exaggeration to state that the girls at Huguenot identified wholeheartedly with this "College Girl" understanding of female behaviour, but it is striking how many of the leisure activities of the students mentioned in the annuals coincided exactly with those ascribed to College Girls: they had fudge-parties, cocoa-parties, tea-parties and, consequently, possessed tea-sets and (very basic) cooking utensils; they indulged in schoolgirlish pranks and "larks"; they had picnics and shopping expeditions; they preferred basketball to study; and the gossip columns were packed with references to boys and tart remarks about classroom antics.[77] Of course, much of this conduct can be dismissed as being typical of a group of young women confined to a strict timetable and living in close proximity to one another over a relatively long period of time. However, in a large proportion of these articles, the students referred to themselves as "College Girls" and seemed to have embraced a kind of "college culture" that was more American than it was British.[78] It is by no means unlikely that the Huguenot students would have come into contact with representations of College Girls: the popularity of the Gibson Girl was such that it is more than likely that she would have appeared in some form in South African periodicals, and the young American teachers at the College would have been familiar with the College Girl, even if they did not approve of the idea. As E.M. Clark remarked: "in the States … girls go to college for the sake of the social life".[79] This was by no means an "official" discourse in the annuals in that it was expressed in pieces written by members of staff or the editorial board of the magazine, but it appeared in the poetry, humorous articles,

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76. Gibson-Girls, www.gibson-girls.com, accessed 1 September 2005.
77. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College", pp 215-219.
78. A "College Girl" culture does not appear to have been as much a feature of British women's colleges as it was in America. Considering that the Gibson Girl was an American construct, and it was less unusual for American women to attend tertiary institutions than it was for British girls, this does not seem surprising. Indeed, Horowitz implies that the notion of a distinct "college" or "campus" culture is a largely American phenomenon. Clark, "Abstract of a Paper on the Higher Education of Women in South Africa", p 20; Delamont, "The Contradictions in Ladies' Education", pp 156-160; Edwards, "Educational Institutions or Extended Families?", pp 94-97; H. Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987), pp 4-11.
79. Clark, "Abstract of a Paper on the Higher Education of Women in South Africa", p 20.

gossip pages and student doggerels that provided light relief between the arguments about women's education and reports on achievements in the missionary field.

For example, in *The Day's Journal* – a satire on similar articles in *The Spectator* – the author provided a brief description of a typical Wednesday, during which she "tried a new hair effect" and noted that she "look[ed] best in mauve", "[d]onned [a] frill" and "[g]azed at the effect in the glass", stole sweets from the pantry, met with "Mr X" who "made an appearance with violets" and then "[t]ried to solve the problem of the Intermediate examination in the bunch of violets" during evening study.[80] According to this article, attending classes seems to have been merely an excuse to have fun during free time. A similar sentiment is present in *A Monologue* which described a basketball enthusiast trying – and failing – to learn her Latin grammar while simultaneously watching a match from her bedroom window. She concluded study time by carelessly "[p]itch[ing] [her] book on to a shelf and [hurrying] downstairs" for dinner.[81] In *How to Prepare for Study Hour* the author suggested ways of putting off studying as long as possible (losing one's matches to light the lamp, having drinks of water at the tap, filling one's fountain pen).[82] This attitude towards academic work was repeated in *Class-Room Echoes*, where a girl who had not studied the South Sea Bubble as required for her history class, was persuaded by her friends that "it was a big balloon into which people coming from the south poured South Sea water" to hilarious consequences.[83]

There were also attempts to suggest the eccentricity of the students at the College: a series of recipes for snacks prepared by the girls served to illustrate their comically dogged attempts to cater for themselves regardless of the lack of proper ingredients and utensils. For "balcony fudge" there was a tacit acknowledgement that the vital components would have been missing ("[t]ake all the sugar left over from last time" and "[a]dd what milk the housekeeper can spare"), that they did not have the correct equipment (the fudge will only be able to "[b]oil if there is enough oil in the lamp" and old examination books are "bent into box forms" to hold the scalding hot liquid), that the cook might have been lacking in experience (the author remarked that it was better to remove the shells from the nuts before adding the nuts to the mixture), and that

80. "The Day's Journal", *The Huguenot*, 15, 1909, p 13.
81. V. Bottomley, "A Monologue", *The Huguenot*, 15, 1909, p 47.
82. "How to Prepare for Study Hour", *The Huguenot*, 15, 1909, p 11.
83. M. Farr, "Class-Room Echoes", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 7, 1901, p 15.

the girls' timetable did not allow them enough free time to cook successfully ("If the warning bell rings before it is cooked enough, what is left … may be called cocoa the next morning").[84]

Indeed, small parties of all kinds were popular in the evenings: as in America, the girls held "fudge parties" or simply offered cocoa and tea to one another.[85] One girl, it was said, who was particularly able at hosting tea-parties, was "presented with a beautiful china tea set, by her kind friends, one of whom confessed that she hoped to receive a standing invitation to afternoon tea".[86] Of course, who was, and who was not invited to these little gatherings, was a matter of some interest – it was, for example, commented upon that the BA junior class made a point of not inviting male students to tea, even though the "only three representatives … of the sterner sex generally stroll[ed] about the *campus* during this time … look[ing] longingly" up to the room where the girls met.[87] Despite the fact that the gossip columns are frequently incomprehensible as a result of the students' slang or the opacity of their allusions, what emerges from them is an idea of the intricacy of the social life at the College. In one such piece, entitled *As Others See Us*, the author remarked, spitefully, "[t]hat the members of the Literary B.A. Class should restrain their too-evident love of outward adornment".[88] This was by no means the only personal comment: one student was advised to "endeavour to control her nervousness",[89] while another was criticised for submitting a poem on marriage because she "did not [always] find everything as 'merry as a marriage bell'".[90] Other comments, such as "Literary students should not have recourse to imaginary arguments in order to hide deficiency of knowledge",[91] and that "some of the Intermediates can write fairly good compositions; it is a pity they did not contribute more to our annual this year",[92] not only

84. "College Recipes", *The Huguenot*, 12, 1906, p 45.
85. Presumably the fudge was a little more digestible than the substance described in "College Recipes". M. Muller & M. Anderson, "A Little Nonsense Now and Then", *The Huguenot*, 12, 1906, p 53; Retief, "College Home Life", pp 34-35; E. Doidge, "Informal Social Life", *in* E. Doidge (ed), *Phases of Student Life*, *The Huguenot Annual*, 10, 1904, pp 21-22.
86. Retief, "College Home Life", p 34.
87. "Tea Club", *The Huguenot*, 11, 1905, p 37.
88. "As Others See Us", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 5, 1899, p 47.
89. "Odds and Ends", *The Huguenot Annual*, 9, 1903, p 33.
90. H. le R., "Artium Baccalaurei Loquuntur", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 7, 1901, p 15.
91. "Current Comment", *The Huguenot Annual*, 8, 1902, p 35.
92. "Odds and Ends", p 33.

revealed the tensions within the institution, but also the extent to which the girls were entirely absorbed by their life at the College.

There is little sense here of them preparing for a "higher cause" or a successful professional career. They defined themselves as College Girls and took pleasure in the experience itself, stressing their difference from their parents, families and friends outside of Huguenot by describing their unconventional behaviour, providing glimpses into their apparently Byzantine social network, alluding to their slang[93] and providing relatively detailed accounts of a lifestyle entirely unique to a student at a tertiary institution. This had the effect of celebrating the life of the student, and of validating it as an important phase in the life of a young woman. As a result, going to college was presented as an entirely "normal" activity for a girl that did not require elaborate justification. However, it also showed parents that their daughters behaved like "girls" at College – by involving themselves in student jokes, by dressing up and having boyfriends – and suggested the relative harmlessness of the well-educated woman. The students in these poems, monologues and gossip columns come across as gently eccentric, impractical, clumsy, gossipy, and with their heads in the clouds.

The College Girl did not have to master herself in the sense that she had to learn self-discipline – and it was her lack of discipline that caused her to be so charming – but she did have to submit to a form of behaviour that demonstrated that her position at a tertiary institution had not caused her to assume an identity that in any way challenged commonly-held assumptions about the "correct" mode of feminine behaviour after graduation. In a sense, her period as a College Girl allowed her the licence to indulge in relatively childish activities, to be irresponsible and to become totally involved in the minutiae of her community. Although these South African College Girls were generally more academically-inclined than their American counterparts, they presented an "acceptable face" of women's education to the readers of the annuals – many of whom may have been put off by notions of the "New Woman" taking hold at Huguenot. It is not difficult to understand why the College Girl can be seen as a reaction to the fairly strident ideals embodied by the New Woman, but at Huguenot, perhaps because the College Girl discourse was so muted or, even, as the result of marriage

93. In "Oom Polo and Tante Griet" (a conversation between, respectively, a dog and a cat belonging to the Seminary) the latter complains that "[o]nly yesterday my Katrina came home with a new English slang [sic], I know it not in Dutch, so it must be English". A.L. Geard, "Oom Polo and Tante Griet", *The Huguenot Seminary Annual*, 5, 1899, p 48.

not being mentioned as the goal of the students, this College Girl was not quite as anti-feminist as in America: there remained an attempt to reconcile the intellectual with the domestic. The Huguenot College Girl was portrayed as academically gifted, but, nonetheless, as being interested in housekeeping, shopping, cooking and dressmaking. These two spheres of interest complemented, rather than contradicted, each other. Yet much of this was undermined by many of the articles' pervasive self-ridicule which highlighted the "silliness" of the Huguenot students. This feminine ideal was not presented as an ideal worth emulating, nor as a particularly desired mode of behaviour for these women after graduating, implying an awareness of the relatively sheltered existence of the girls at Huguenot. Outside the institution's boundaries, most of these young women would have had difficulty in balancing intellectual interests with domestic responsibilities – the College Girl was a fiction suited to carefree young womanhood, not to the rigours of everyday existence.

It would be misleading to suggest that a single discourse of femininity emerges as dominant in the Huguenot annuals. Clearly, the hegemonic femininity to which the older generation of teachers at the Seminary and College subscribed, served as the institution's "official" discourse. Their belief that young women should be educated so that they could better serve their communities and fulfil their duty as Christians, slotted neatly into a post-1902 understanding of womanhood, as linked to the development of the South African nation. Indeed, it provided what was in all likelihood the most convincing explanation of why a girl's relatively theoretical education would not be wasted when she married and produced children. Key to this understanding of femininity, though, was an emphasis on women being able to monitor themselves to ensure that the needs and wants of others were always uppermost in their minds: their willing self-sacrifice was what validated the existence of (especially) unmarried, working women. Yet even though the "professionalist" discourse of the younger generation of teachers at Huguenot did not, to the same extent, subscribe to their forebears' evangelical Christianity, this sense of preparing girls for life after graduating, was one of the values underpinning it. While it emphasised that the lot of the professional teacher did not render her masculine or physically deficient, it also illustrated the need for young women to acquire a mastery over their thinking, behaviour and bodies, so as to allow them to perform better as teachers. Even the few references to "blue stockings" and the "New Woman" are positioned so ambivalently that it becomes difficult to distinguish a discourse that did not insist upon some form of feminine

self-discipline and self-sacrifice as justification for women choosing to work, rather than marry.

It would appear, then, as if the relatively unconventional and frivolous activities of the "imported" discourse of the College Girl would have undermined this need for self-control; however, the College Girl's lack of discipline rendered her both charming and childlike, in this way diminishing whatever worry there might have been that educated women were wilful and uncontrollable. She did, though, need to master herself in that she had to be self-consciously feminine and, although willing to participate in pranks and "larks", fully conscious of when it was expected of her to conduct herself more decorously. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the College Girl discourse to the annuals, was a validation of the life of the female student as an important period in itself, and as "normal" as it was for her brothers – unlike the hegemonic and professionalist discourses which asserted that the young woman's stay at college was simply a means to an end.

The co-existence of these three discourses in the Seminary and College's sixteen annuals between 1895 and 1910 reflects the turmoil within South African society, as it was forced to look at itself self-consciously in the midst of the social, political and economic upheaval of the Anglo-Boer War and the long years of negotiation and tension leading up the declaration of Union. Typically, as societies examine their own construction – or become aware of the extent to which their values are being challenged – focus is shifted to arguments regarding the "proper" behaviour of men and women (as the main components of the basis of society – the family). While the annuals do not shed light onto discourses surrounding masculinity, they do illustrate how women of different age groups and professions attempted to negotiate places for themselves within their world. These women probably felt this need particularly acutely, as they had chosen a way of life widely considered to be that of outsiders to mainstream white, middle-class society. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that their position as unmarried women, dedicated – nun-like – to their work, allowed them a great deal of power and influence within their communities. In this way, it demonstrates the extent to which young, white, middle-class women were engaged in a process of negotiation among differing forms of femininity – that, in a sense, they could be *Volksmoeders*, New Women, and College Girls almost simultaneously.

Abstract

The Huguenot Seminary was established in Wellington in 1874 by Andrew Murray with the aim of training middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans girls as teachers and missionaries. It was modelled along the lines of the American Mount Holyoke Seminary, which was also founded to provide an academic and religious education to young women. The Huguenot Seminary proved to be an enormous success and its associated College – founded in 1898 – was one of the first institutions in South Africa at which women could study for university degrees.

Little has been written about the impact of the education provided at Huguenot – the school of choice for the daughters of the Cape Dutch-Afrikaans bourgeoisie – on notions of "femininity" within middle-class Dutch-Afrikaans society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Seeking to address this lacuna, this article explores the discourses surrounding the ideal of the educated woman that arose at Huguenot between 1895 and 1910, particularly as portrayed in the institution's annuals. These publications provide an insight into the girls' perspectives on their education, as expressed in a number of conflicting and complimentary discourses on femininity, each of them attempting to engage with the ideal of the educated middle-class woman at the turn of the century.

Opsomming

Van *New Women* tot *College Girls* aan die Hugenote-seminarie en -kollege, 1895-1910

Die Hugenote-seminarie is in 1874 deur Andrew Murray in Wellington gestig met die doel om Hollands-Afrikaanse meisies uit die middelstand as onderwyseresse en sendelinge op te lei. Dit is geskoei op die voorbeeld van die Mount Holyoke-seminarie in die Verenigde State van Amerika, wat insgelyks gestig is om 'n akademiese en Christelike opvoeding aan jong dames te voorsien. Die Hugenote-seminarie was uiteindelik 'n reuse sukses en sy assosiaat, die Hugenote-kollege (wat in 1898 gestig is) was een van die eerste instellings in Suid-Afrika waar vroue universiteitsgrade kon behaal.

Die Hugenote-seminarie en -kollege was die instellings van voorkeur vir dogters van die Kaap se Hollands-Afrikaanse bourgeoisie. Min is tot op hede geskryf oor die impak van die opleiding, wat gedurende die laat negentiende en vroeë twintigste eeu aldaar aangebied

is, op idees oor “vroulikheid” binne hierdie middelstand gemeenskap. Ten einde die leemte aan te vul, ondersoek hierdie artikel die redevoering omtrent die ideaal van die geleerde vrou wat tussen 1895 en 1910 aan die instellings plaasgevind het, veral aan die hand van die Hugenote-jaarboeke. Hierdie publikasies bied insig in die meisies se perspektiewe op hulle geleerdheid, soos uitgedruk in ’n aantal uiteenlopende, asook komplimenterende argumente oor vroulikheid, wat almal die ideaal van die geleerde middelstand vrou tydens die era om die draai van die eeu aanspreek.

Key words

Afrikaner; Andrew Murray; College Girl; education; femininity; girls; Huguenot College; Huguenot Seminary; middle class; New Woman; teachers.

Sleutelwoorde

Afrikaner; Andrew Murray; *College Girl*; Hugenote-kollege; Hugenote-seminarie; meisies; middelklas; *New Woman*; onderwyseresse; opvoeding; vroulikheid.