

## **Inventing Tradition/Coping with Change:**

### **the Women's Colleges in late 19th and early 20th Century Cambridge**

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In 1908, Emma List, earlier a student at Girton College, Cambridge, published a volume of verse and essays celebrating the traditions of the college.<sup>1</sup> The titular poem "Girton my Friend" recalls the charms of the buildings and the countryside. An essay evokes golden summer days spent with a Girton Reading Party during the Long Vacation. There are poems about "Hall" (where meals were taken), "Tray" (evening cocoa parties in the girls' rooms), "A Fire Alarm," "My Friends," and "The Dons" ("Friends of our past's best memory. / Ye the kind and the wise"). Given these effusions, it comes as something of a surprise that "the kind and the wise" had judged Emma incompetent. She failed the math tripos (honors examination) in 1903. Captivated by the traditions of college life, Emma evidently accepted the verdict without rancor. Emma's experience points up a dilemma at the heart of modern university and professional culture: how to secure acceptance of meritocratic norms and values when these conflict with individual self-interest.

According to liberal paradigms of history, the realm of tradition (in which legitimacy derives from precedent) should everywhere be in retreat with the advance of rational, calculative out-looks and bureaucratic forms of organization, as part of what Max Weber famously termed the "disenchantment" of the world.<sup>2</sup> However, as a much-remarked volume on *The Invention of Tradition* made clear, new traditions blossomed in many institutional contexts in the 19th and early 20th century.<sup>3</sup> These invented traditions lent legitimacy to what were in many cases new communities, new status and power relationships, new values and behavioral norms. Emma's history suggests that rather than being at odds with the rational, calculative modes of thought and meritocratic standards associated with modern university life, the "irrational" loyalties fostered by tradition may have helped to secure commitment to these norms and values. This paper considers the "invention of tradition" at the first Cambridge women's colleges from this perspective.

Two women's colleges were established in later Victorian Cambridge: Girton in 1869 and Newnham in 1871. Emily Davies, the prime mover behind Girton College, saw women's higher education as the cornerstone on which equal rights for women were to be constructed, enabling them to take their place in a meritocratic society. Henry Sidgwick (later Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy) who took the lead in founding Newnham was primarily interested in University reform and viewed women's education as part of this general project, aimed at revitalizing the University and enhancing its influence upon society. (Sidgwick's agenda included an end to religious tests, a revival of college teaching, curricular reform, and university extension.) While their priorities differed, both Davies and Sidgwick had liberal, meritocratic commitments.<sup>4</sup>

The provision of higher education for women can be seen as part of the process by which the university extended its social and intellectual reach and came to play a key role in the diffusion of professional norms and values.<sup>5</sup> However, the women's colleges at first had no formal link with the University. Individual dons taught and provided examination papers for the students on their own initiative. In 1881, the colleges secured a limited measure of recognition, when women students were admitted to the university's honours examinations (the tripos exams). Women were not admitted to the exams leading to the Ordinary Degree, nor were they awarded degrees. Qualified women secured the *titles* of degrees in 1921, but degrees and full membership in the university came only in 1948. Long before this, however, collegiate traditions asserted women's claims to membership in the university community.

The women's colleges began on a small scale in rented dwellings. In organizing themselves staff and students drew inspiration from at least three sources: Victorian family life and private social morés, girls' schools, and existing Oxbridge traditions. At Girton, Miss Davies' "fundamental idea" was that the college was to be "at the earliest possible moment a constituent part of the University of Cambridge."<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to this idea, she wished Girton to conform as closely as possible to male collegiate practice. Thus, although Girton began with just five students, Miss Davies insisted that the Mistress dine separately at a notional "High Table," as was the practice at the men's colleges. At Newnham the arrangements were initially more familial. The students and Principal (who had earlier kept a small private school) took their meals at the same table, and the students did their lessons together in two or three common rooms. However, the students chafed at these arrangements, and they were altered the following year, when the college moved to a larger dwelling. Here, a "small meal table system was developed," and the Mistress's table eventually evolved into a High Table.

The students studied more in their own rooms. "[O]ur life was in all ways freer and fuller and more enjoyable," a student recalled.<sup>7</sup>

The colleges developed a tradition of tutorial instruction early on. Thanks to Sidgwick's influence, such supervisions, only recently introduced in a few male colleges, were adopted at Newnham almost from the beginning. Although Miss Davies was initially reluctant to spend money on resident staff, Girton soon followed suit. The women's colleges thus helped pioneer a tradition of teaching that came to be seen as a distinguishing feature of an Oxbridge education.<sup>8</sup> Notionally, as promoted by Sidgwick, the model was Socratic. However, in practice much of the teaching at the women's colleges was geared to exam preparation. At least one former Girtonian thought that the tradition of personal supervisions helped students pass exams but dampened the enterprise of the creative few.<sup>9</sup>

Collegiate traditions defined exam success as a matter of collective concern. At both colleges, special "tripos teas" were arranged for students taking exams. (Complaints about college food were frequent, and examinees were thought to benefit from extra sustenance.) In May, 1892 a Newnham student wrote home that she was responsible for two tripos candidates: "We have elaborate feeding arrangements; administering soup before hall each night, and giving victims a good supper." Roast chicken (purchased from a pastry shop) and asparagus and tomatoes (to be boiled in the student's room) were on the menu that evening.<sup>10</sup>

Individual success occasioned communal celebration. Generations of Girtonians commemorated the achievement of the first three women students who passed the tripos exam in a favorite college song. When news arrived (in 1873) that the students had passed, flags were hoisted, the alarm bell rung, and the students sang "Gaudeamus igitur" from the College roof. Subsequently they composed a song of their own honoring "The Girton Pioneers." This was the beginning of a tradition of songwriting and singing that flourished at the college until the First World War and then died, only to be revived after the Second World War. The songs, written both by staff and students, were sung on ceremonial occasions and on the last evening of summer term. A few were set to music composed by students, but most were set to familiar tunes. The songs commemorated historic events in the annals of the college (e.g. "Ye Gracious Senate" celebrated women's admission to the tripos exams in 1881) and facets of collegiate life (e.g. a "Tripos Song," a "Lament of a Graduate on Leaving Cambridge," a hockey song.) "The Girton Pioneers" declared that the three students were paving the way for degrees for other Cambridge women:

And when the goal is won, girls,

Who showed the way we follow,



decades the Commemoration Celebration slowly changed its orientation. As the founders died, the emphasis gradually shifted to celebrating the College and its founders, thus aligning the tradition with the annual feasts held in male colleges.) **15** A Newnham student recalled "I always considered at the time [1881] that Newnham and Girton had been accepted as official colleges of the University."**16** In fact, women students appropriated a Cambridge identity long before they were legally entitled to do so. In 1908, 400 women marched in a suffrage demonstration behind a "Cambridge Alumnae" banner embroidered by Girton and Newnham students.**17** Reproduced on postcards and scarves (sold at the colleges) and on Girton's website today, the banner has itself become part of the colleges' traditions.

Decisions were taken to build in the 1870's. Girton's buildings were designed by Alfred Waterhouse who had recently restored Balliol College at Oxford. This seemed to Miss Davies "the very best training he could have for our purpose." The College was built in an extravagant meld of styles -- Tudor, Gothic, French Renaissance, and assorted other touches. As the historian of the college buildings observes, the "Tudor" tower can be seen as "echoing other far older gateways."**18** Girton was constructed around courtyards, as were most men's colleges, and since male undergraduates generally had sets of rooms, Miss Davies insisted that Girton students, too, be provided with two rooms (bedroom and a sitting room), although fund raising was always a problem. Newnham was designed in Queen Anne domestic style by Basil Champneys who considered the style "universally adaptable." If the tradition answered to Sidgwick's open-ended philosophical commitments, more immediately it accorded with Champney's idea that buildings for women should have a "domestic character." He was also concerned that "the approaches must be properly enclosed."**19** Whereas most male colleges had staircases leading off onto a courtyard up to sets of rooms, at both Newnham and Girton the student rooms opened onto corridors. The design of the colleges was thus broadly compatible with Oxbridge collegiate traditions but it had a feminine inflection.

The corridors may have facilitated control, but the students were more impressed by the freedom they associated with having "a room of one's own." Long before Virginia Woolf's tract appeared, "a room of one's own" was associated with opportunities for self-development, self-expression, and freedom. As a Girton student explained in 1882: "To have a room of one's own means to be able to impress one's individuality on one's surroundings and this most of the students do." **20** Students' letters home are full of details of their color schemes and other arrangements. A later Mistress of Girton remarked that the first thing former students wanted to see when they returned to the college was their own room. **21**

Their rooms were space that the students controlled. If they put "Engaged" on the door, they could remain undisturbed. In both colleges it was customary for friends to gather in one another's rooms at 10:00 in the evening. The colleges provided free milk. The guests arrived with their milk, and the hostess provided tea or cocoa or coffee and something to eat. At Girton in the early decades, the girls had afternoon tea in their rooms, as well. (Alcohol, it may be noted, scarcely figured in the women students' subculture.<sup>22</sup>) Collegiate traditions of "private" sociability facilitated the formation of friendships, which some women considered the most precious legacy of their college experience. Returning to Girton in 1910, a former student was distressed to find that tea was now being served in the hall. Time was saved, she acknowledged, and perhaps the College honour lists profited. But the new arrangement seemed to her to savor of "boarding-school rather than collegiate life." "[T]he social life of the college," she thought, "suffered." For this woman, a cherished and defining feature of college life was "the opportunities it offered for intercourse among friends." <sup>23</sup>

Status within the student community became entwined with the tradition of "propping" -- proposing to another student that you call one another by your Christian names. The tradition had its origins in the conventions of private social life but transposed to the world of the colleges it took on a life of its own. By the 1890s, there was a strict code governing who could "prop" whom. Freshmen might prop one other, but older students had to take the initiative in propping younger ones. To be "propped" by an older student carried with it status, and as student numbers increased and different sets developed in the colleges, being "propped" signalled acceptance into a set. "Propping" lingered on in the rather secluded world of the women's colleges through the early years of the First World War. However, as social morés changed, its symbolic value became increasingly attenuated. A student who entered Newnham in 1916 and found college etiquette absurd and "intimidating" thought the tradition had origina-<sup>ted</sup> as a joke. Between 1917 and 1919 it was abruptly discarded by the students. <sup>24</sup>

As the colleges expanded, relations between staff and students became more distant. The staff acquired territorial privileges. A Girton girl wrote a friend who was coming up in 1894: "I must warn you of two things which freshers often do & which always raises a laugh against them -- going into the front row at prayers & going out of hall by the dons' door." <sup>25</sup> Traditions underscored the special status of the college heads. Eleanor Sidgwick (who became Principal of Newnham in 1892) adopted the practice of dining once weekly in each hall, and during their third year, students were invited in groups of two or three to breakfast with her privately in her rooms. Most students found her intimidating. An invitation to dine at High

Table with Mrs. Sidgwick, one recalled, was viewed "with mingled apprehension and dismay." At Girton students in their last year were invited by twos to dine at the High Table with the dons and then to have coffee in the Mistress's room -- an "ordeal," one student remarked, mitigated only by the circumstance that they were invited by twos. **26**

Although authority had a bureaucratic aspect, it continued to carry personal associations. The dons were customarily given nicknames by the girls. Rumours circulated about them. At Newnham, in the 1890s it was rumoured that "B. A." (a resident don) stalked the corridors at night smoking (which was strictly forbidden) and listened in on the girls' cocoa parties. Twenty years later, rumours were still circulating about B. A.'s smoking habits. But now the story had it that she was in the habit of taking a hansom cab out to a certain secluded spot to enjoy a cigarette in the fields. **27**

Traditions of organized sociability helped foster a sense of community amongst individuals who found themselves accidentally thrown together. **28** A lively round of social events soon developed at the colleges. Weekly dances and debates were held in the halls. (The girls danced with each other). A costume dance was held once a term at Newnham. At Girton there was a Freshman Rag. At Girton by the 1880's the second-year students organized an annual entertainment for the dons and fourth year students, and the third year students gave a dance for the "freshers." A flourishing club life developed early on, as well. At first both staff and students took the initiative in establishing college societies, but soon most clubs formed part of a specifically student subculture. For some students extra-curricular activities loomed large. A student (who arrived in 1904) declared: "I can't imagine Newnham without [the] Political [a debating society modelled on the House of Commons]." **29** On the other hand, already by 1885, a contributor to the *Girton Review* felt things had gone too far. College societies, she thought, were draining time and energy from "the real work of the College" (presumably academic) and from the general social life of the college. However the only remedy she could suggest was an anti-society society. A riposte appeared in the *Review*'s next issue, suggesting that societies offered "an opportunity of cultivating that public spirit in which women are, as a rule, so lamentably wanting." **30**

Like other "cloistered elites," the women students developed slang that identified insiders. Some terms were adopted from male undergraduate usage. A Girton student related that the Mistress of the College disapproved of "dons" and preferred "lecturers" : "but lecturers is barely understood among us!" **31** Other usages were specific to the individual colleges. At Newnham girls invited one another to "cocoa" in the evenings -- whatever beverage was served. At Girton, on the other hand, girls were initially invited to "tea." However, from the

1880s Girtonians were invited to "tray". (Each evening a tray with milk and a roll was placed outside each student's door by a maid.) By 1910, after arrangements had been changed and jugs of milk were set out in the corridors, students invited one another to "jug".<sup>32</sup>

Gradually, emblems of corporate identity were adopted. However, these proved unstable in the early years. Newnham first adopted the daffodil as its emblem; but by the early 1880's they had changed to the iris, which appears in various connections, including the College bookplate.<sup>33</sup> After a debate, in 1894, the Girton students decided that henceforth the colors of the college would be fawn and blue. However, when the college acquired a coat-of-arms in 1924 the colors were altered to red, green, and white.<sup>34</sup> Girton applied for a coat-of-arms when it received a Charter from the Crown "as a mark of the new dignity and status." Newnham acquired a coat-of-arms in connection with the College's Jubilee in 1921.<sup>35</sup>

Like their male counterparts, the women's colleges developed strong sporting traditions, a tradition reinforced by their growing links to girls' public schools. At first lawn tennis was the favored game. An annual match between Girton and Newnham was instituted in 1878, and from 1883, there were matches with the Oxford women's colleges.<sup>36</sup> When the girls began pushing for team sports, this initially caused friction with the college authorities, fearful of scandal. However, the authorities came round, and by the 1890s team sports were a fixed feature of collegiate life. Hockey was preeminent, but cricket and lacrosse were also played. Sporting events provided an occasion for expressing communal loyalties. College colors were sported, trophies displayed, songs sung. Sports and other extra-curricular activities offered opportunities for students who were not outstanding academically to gain communal recognition. An annual inter-collegiate hockey match between Newnham and Girton, initiated in 1893, loomed large in the colleges' social calendar. Newnham won in 1912. A participant related that upon returning to the College the team was celebrated with cheers, a dinner, a concert, and a dance. It was a glorious day.<sup>37</sup>

Sporting competitions also provided a means of identifying "significant others," extending participants' sense of community beyond their own institution. In the 19th and early 20th century, the Cambridge women's colleges played matches against other women's colleges, "Cambridge Ladies" (probably dons' wives), girls' public schools, and former students. In 1895 the two Cambridge colleges were among the charter members of what became the All England Women's Hockey Association, which included county and territorial associations and private clubs, as well as school and college teams.<sup>38</sup> In this way, sporting traditions contributed to a sense of wider community particularly amongst educated women that issued

in the formation of such institutions as a University Club for Ladies in London in 1886 and later, in 1907, the British Federation of University Women.

Hardly had the colleges been established before they were celebrating their past. Already in 1884, Newnham's *Cambridge Letter* (put out by past and present students) recounted the early history of the college. The histories of the institutions were often related on ceremonial occasions. At an Old Students' lunch in 1913, Miss Davies told "about the beginning of the College, and gave a moving picture of some of the anxieties." In the mid 1920s, a Girton student recalled, the Mistress told new students about the history of the College.<sup>39</sup> College histories, usually written by staff members, were produced on jubilee occasions.<sup>40</sup> In this way their histories became entwined with the traditions of the colleges.

The historical tradition appropriated by the colleges was Whiggish and consensual. It assumed the colleges' rightful destiny was to be fully integrated into the University and that this would be to everyone's advantage. "In another twenty-five years there will be no need to explain the position of women in our universities," a former Girtonian asserted in 1895. "There will be nothing left to say then, except that . . . 'the woman's cause is man's!'" <sup>41</sup> In 1921 Mrs. Sidgwick reiterated the point. Expressing regret that the University had again refused to grant degrees to women, she remarked: "I feel sure [this] would be for its own advantage as well as for the advantage of women's education." <sup>42</sup> Conflicts of interest have little place in this historical scheme. Opponents of the women's colleges are depicted as benighted or misled. Accounts of the University's rejection of degrees for women in 1897 and 1921 thus emphasize the part played by "backwoodsmen" -- obscure M.A.s who travelled to Cambridge to cast their vote against the women -- and callow undergraduates. <sup>43</sup> The achievements of outstanding women students are interpreted as mandating further entitlements for other women students. <sup>44</sup>

Founders and benefactors are omnipresent at the colleges. Their portraits stare down from the walls of the dining halls and corridors. Their names are attached to buildings and courtyards and gates and towers. They are commemorated in annual Founder's Memorial Lectures, at college feasts, and in the college arms.<sup>45</sup> In the annals and traditions of the colleges, the founders figure as exemplars of an ethos of public service that was an important legacy of both men's and women's colleges in Victorian Oxbridge.<sup>46</sup> Generation after generation of women students were reminded of the sacrifices that had been made on their behalf and urged to carry on the tradition. Recounting the work of Emily Davies and other "pioneers" of women's education, *The Girton Review* reminded its readers that "we profit by their labours. It is for us to do our part, while handing on the task to generations to come." <sup>47</sup>

Newnham's *Cambridge Letter* recalled an incident when Sidgwick scolded students who rebelled against restrictions imposed by the Principal Miss Clough. "[T]hey risked a cause for which others made such sacrifices for their immediate petty convenience." The guilty parties were "reduced almost to tears."<sup>48</sup> In this way, collegiate traditions encouraged an ethos of service to the community that was compatible with the values of an emergent professionalism.

A good many students appear to have taken the lessons to heart. An early Newnham student recalled, "We worked very hard for we were pioneers and we had to do credit to the 'Cause'"<sup>49</sup> The idea that women students were in the University on suffrage and that any social or academic delinquency would endanger the whole enterprise of women's higher education runs like a red thread through their memoirs at least to the end of the First World War. The girls' good-natured acceptance of the often absurd and inconsistent chaperone rules enforced until the end of the First World War should probably be seen in this light. Most appear to have regarded the rules as guaranteeing not their own reputation but the Colleges'.<sup>50</sup> Collegiate traditions encouraged self-discipline in the interests of the larger community.

Most students were only at college for three years for three eight-week terms. But for many it was an intense experience at an impressionable age, associated with friendships and surroundings that they found compellingly beautiful. A Newnham student mused that she found it difficult to disentangle her experiences of the First and Second World Wars but "my College life is still very clear in my mind even after half a century."<sup>51</sup> Some continued to identify closely with their college long after they had left. These "Old Students," as they styled themselves, created traditions that helped perpetuate their identity as college women. In 1880 the Newnham College Club was established by former students. It published an annual *Cambridge Letter*, which carried news of the college and its graduates. At Girton an annual Old Students' Dinner (held at the College) was inaugurated in 1876. From 1899 it alternated with a biennial London luncheon at which toasts were customarily offered to the College and to current and former heads. (Water was the beverage.) In 1887, a Girton Club was established in London by former students. A member related: "here in these little rooms we are no longer high school mistresses or writers or doctors or mothers of families; we are just old Girton students; we have some of that delightful feeling of home that comes over us all at Old Students' dinners. It is not Girton but it is a reflexion of it."<sup>53</sup>

Eva Knatchbull-Hugessen was one of the students who acquired an enduring attachment to her college. Eva was at Newnham from 1883-86. Eva *loved* college life. The family had aristocratic connections, and summer holidays brought invitations to a ball at Lord

Salisbury's and a garden party at the Archbishop of Canterbury's. Eva found life at Newnham incomparably better: "[T]here is nothing," she thought, "like a Newnham tea party, no friends like college friends -- no talk like College talk!" "Nowhere else perhaps are people valued so entirely for what they are." <sup>54</sup> Commended for her public spirit, Eva participated in many collegiate activities. She was a member of the Dorcas society (which made clothes for the poor) and the choral society. She served as President of the Newnham Debating Society. Eva also worked hard at her studies, and she was bitterly disappointed when she only gained Third Class honours. However, this did not change her feelings about Newnham. Returning home, she hankered after college life. During the first three years after she left College, Eva spent 83 days in Cambridge. She was a member of the Newnham College Club's Committee and regularly attended college reunions. In 1894, after her parents' death she returned to the College, where she served as librarian until her own premature death in 1895. Identifying with the communal life of the college, Eva remained loyal to its values although these entailed being rated intellectually third class.

Eva's experiences suggest that the "invention of tradition" was the obverse of the creation of the modern university. Traditions helped make the norms and values associated with an individuated, rationalistic, meritocratic social order bearable by embedding these in a web of personal and institutional loyalties. In the invented communities which invented traditions helped define and sustain, individuals found a sense of order and belonging and intimations of meanings that transcended their immediate circumstances and seemed to link them to past and future generations. In this way tradition encouraged a loyalty to institutions and values that were frequently at odds with individuals' self-interest and need for self-esteem.

The "modern" university's ability to sustain itself as a realm of disinterested scientific inquiry and assessment depends on broadly shared ethical commitments that include irrational, non-calculative, non-individualist components. Without the ethical commitment of the great majority of its members, both staff and students, the modern university cannot function effectively either as a place of learning or scholarship. Even the most busybody nanny state or evaluation center or oversight committee can't keep its eye on *every* scholar and teacher and student *all* the time. As university life -- and professional life generally -- has become more directly market-driven and rationalized, ethics courses are being introduced in professional schools and evaluators are being appointed to evaluate the evaluators. But that these "rational" modes of instruction and control will have the same compelling force as traditions associated with youthful friendships, loved surroundings, sporting triumphs, and

the judgments of dons who were familiar figures and often respected as individuals seems doubtful.

### *Notes*

**1** E. Brenda List, *"Girton My Friend "and Other Matter* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons; London: Simpkin Marshall and Co., 1908).

**2** "Traditions" are patterns of behavior with a symbolic or normative content passed down from generation to generation. Edward Shils suggests that customs must span at least three generations to qualify as traditions but notes that the concept of a generation is elastic. In a university setting with a three-year degree course, three student generations may span less than a decade. Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 15.

**3** Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

- 4** Rita McWilliams-Tullberg, *The Women at Cambridge* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1975); Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism. University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy 1860-86* (London: Allen Lane, 1976); Gillian Sutherland, "The Movement for the Higher Education of Women: its social and intellectual context in England, c. 1840-80" *Politics and Social Change in Modern Britain. Essays Presented to A. F. Thompson* P. J. Waller, ed. (Sussex: The Harvester Press and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Joyce Senders Pedersen, *The Reform of Girls' Secondary and Higher Education in Victorian England: A Study of Elites and Educational Change* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987).
- 5** Sheldon Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons. Cambridge and Society in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Harold Perkin, *Key profession : the history of the Association of University Teachers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society in England since 1880* (London and New York, Routledge, 1979).
- 6** Girton College Archives, letter from Emily Davies to Mr. Tomkinson, 6 January 1869.
- 7** Quote from A. M. P. M. "The Growth of Newnham," *Cambridge Letter*, 1884, p. 5; "Early Life at Newnham By One of the First Students, *Cambridge Letter*, 1883, p. 5. Miss Davies wished the students to dine in a row facing the Mistress to avoid having their backs to her, but here they drew the line and insisted on seating themselves around their table. [Louisa Lumsden], "An Ancient History of Girton College". *The Girton Review* Michaelmas Term, 1907 pp. 13-21. By 1879, perhaps earlier, Newnham had a High Table. Ann Phillips, ed. *A Newnham Anthology* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 11.
- 8** Christopher N. L Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge 1870-1990* Vol IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 319. M. C. Bradbrook, *'That Infidel Place' A Short History of Girton College 1869-1969* revised ed. (Cambridge: Girton College, 1984).
- 9** Ethel Sargant, "The Inheritance of a University," *The Girton Review*, no. 2, New Series, Lent Term, 1901, p. 17.
- 10** Catherine Durning Holt, *Letters from Newnham College 1889-1892* Elizabeth O. Cockburn, ed. (Privately printed; [n.p.; n.d.]). pp. 41-42; Phillips *Newnham*, p. 49.
- 11** B. Megson and J. Lindsay, *Girton College 1869-1956. An Informal History* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., [1960]), pp. 39-40. Girton College Archives, mss. Girton College Songs, Copied and presented to the College by C. S. Maynard. [1876]; *Girton College Song Book* [Girton College, Cambridge, n.d.] p.9.
- 12** Margaret Wilson, *A Kent Girl-Graduate* (Tonbridge: privately published, 1994) pp. 41-42.
- 13** Sargant, "Inheritance," pp. 9, 13. Newnham's first research fellowship was created in 1900, Girton's in 1910.

**14** Girton College Archives, "Girton my friend" Songs, Copied . . . by C. S. Maynard, 1876; *Girton College Song Book*, p. 17.

**15** See Wilson, *Kent Girl*, p. 32. Newnham College Archives, "Resolutions as to Commemoration adopted by a Meeting of the College," May Term, 1895.

**16** Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 23.

**17** Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women. Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

**18** Prudence Waterhouse, *A Victorian Monument. The Buildings of Girton College* (Cambridge: Prudence Waterhouse: Girton College, 1990) pp. 3, 11.

**19** David Watkin, *The Architecture of Basil Champneys* (Cambridge: Newnham College, 1989) pp. 7, 11.

**20** Alice Zimmern, "Lady Students at Cambridge: Girton College" *London Society* (May, 1882) p. 495.

"Emerson has said that the real advantage of University life is that of having a room and fire of one's own," she asserted.

**21** Bradbook, *Girton* p. 60.

**22** "The Girton Pioneers" proposes "let us fill a tea-cup / And drink a health to those / Who studied well and played well " *Girton College Song Book*, p. 9.

**23** Laudator Temporis Act, "A Lament", *The Girton Review* No. 29, New Series, May Term, 1910, pp 16-17. See, too, Phillips, *Newnham*, pp. 69, 111.

**24** *Ibid.*, p. 109, also pp. 118, 110, 66-67.

**25** Girton Archives. Letter from Margery (Elizabeth Margaret) Cunningham to Elizabeth Leebody 27 August 1894 . Hereafter, Cunningham letter.

**26** Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 74. Gwendolen Freeman, *Alma Mater. Memoirs of Girton College, 1926-1929* (Cambridge: Mistress, Fellows and Scholars of Girton College, 1990) p. 86.

**27** Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 41, 125. Also Girton College Archives, Cunningham letter.

**28** When a new hall opened in 1880, an observer noted that students began their College life "on a very crude and formless basis: few of them had previous acquaintance with each other, all the surroundings were new and there were no precedents to follow. " But soon, "a sound corporate life had begun . . . . This desirable social

unity . . . continues and grows, as the numerous clubs &c. that have been formed within the last year . . . bear witness." *Cambridge Letter*, 1881, pp.7-8.

29 Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 56.

30 A[ ]PA[MOΣY]NH, "Societies" *Girton Review*, no 10, March 1885, p. 5 Lethe, "A Plea for Societies" *Girton Review*, no 11, July 1885 , p. 6

31. Girton College Archives, Cunningham letter.

32 A. M. Adam, "Girton in the Eighties," *Girton Review*, Michaelmas Term, 1927, p. 12.

33 Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 23.

34 Megson and Lindsay, *Girton*, p. 39.

35 The Girton Coat-of-Arms," *The Girton Review*, no 78, Michaelmas Term, 1928, pp. 2-4. E. M. Chrystal "The College Arms," *Newnham College Roll, Letter*, January, 1924, pp. 26-27.

36 Kathleen E. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 27.

37 Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 93.

38 McCrone, *Sport*, pp. 27-38, 129-30; *Girton Review*, May term 1909 no 26 New Series p. 5; Holt, *Letters*. p. 36

39 M.P.M, "The Growth of Newnham, *Cambridge Letter*, 1884, pp. 3-7; E. M. Lloyd, *Anna Lloyd (1837-1925) . A Memoir with Extracts from her Letters* (London: The Cayme Press, Limited, 1928), p. 76; Freeman, *Alma Mater*, p. 14 .

40 E.g. Bradbrook, *Girton*; Alice Gardner, *A Short History of Newnham College* (Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, 1921); Barbara Stephen, *Emily Davies and Girton College* (London: Constable, 1927); Barbara Stephen, *Girton College 1869-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

41 Alice Zimmern, "Women in European Universities" *Forum* (April, 1895) p. 199.

42 Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick, "The Fifty Years" *Newnham College Roll Letter*, January, 1922 p. 25.

43 Bradbrook, *Girton*, p. 66; Gardner, *Newnham*, p. 105.

**44** Girton histories point to Agnata Frances Ramsay (the only candidate to place in the first class of the first part of the Classical Tripos in 1887); Newnham histories to Philippa Fawcett (who placed above the senior wrangler in Part I of the Mathematics tripos in 1890).

**45** The "invention of tradition" was often a patchwork affair. Girton's shield included elements of the family arms of Lady Stanley of Alderly, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, and Mr. Tom-kinson. Miss Davies, whose family was not armigerous, presented a problem. To represent Miss Davies the Welsh colors green and white/silver were selected as the predominate colors of Girton's shield, the purported link being that her father, a clergyman, was the son of a Welsh farmer. The awkward circumstance that Mme. Bodichon was illegitimate was ignored. "Girton Coat-of-Arms," p. 2.

Newnham's shield incorporated elements from the arms of the Balfour, Kennedy, Clough, and Sidgwick families. Chrystal "College Arms," pp 26-27.

**46** Reba N. Soffer, "Authority in the University: Balliol, Newnham and the New Mythology," *Myths of the English* Roy Porter, ed. (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992).

**47** A.[lice] Z.[immern] Review of Emily Davies' *Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women*. in *The Girton Review* no. 29 New Series (May Term, 1910) p. 12.

**48** "Professor Sidgwick," *Cambridge Letter*, 1900, p. 12.

**49** Mary Paley Marshall, *What I Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947) p. 15.

**50** A Newnhamite remarked: "I do not blame the Newnham and Girton authorities. There was, we were told, a group of Cambridge ladies -- wives of Professors-- who kept an eagle eye on our behaviour and every lapse would be immediately reported to the University and would delay the granting of equal rights. Phillips, *Newnham*, p. 59.

**51** *Ibid.*, p. 119.

**52** A participant in 1913 described a "truly wonderful lunch for 3/9d per head" -- flowers on the tables and ices for dessert. E.M. Lloyd, *Anna Lloyd*, p. 80.

**53** Alice Zimmern, "The University Club for Ladies, *The Girton Review*, no 52, April, 1899, p. 1.

**54** Wilson, *Kent Girl-Graduate* p. 26.



Invented traditions In the introduction to the volume, Hobsbawm informs the reader that "Traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented. The concept of tradition is changing historical circumstances so as to maintain relevance and vitality. In this delivered by Hobsbawm himself in the concluding essay on 'Mass-producing regard, traditions are not unlike customs and this challenges Hobsbawm's traditions: Europe, 1870-1914'. In Middle English 'invention' was taken to mean discovery (from identified as the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, when the past was the Latin *invenire* - contrive or discover). 'Inventing Tradition/Coping with Change: the Women's Colleges in late 19th and early 20th Century Cambridge' by Joyce Senders Pedersen blossomed in many institutional contexts in the 19th and early 20th century.<sup>3</sup> These invented traditions lent legitimacy to what were in many cases new communities, new status and power relationships, new values and behavioral norms. Emma's history suggests that rather than being at odds with the rational, calculative modes of thought and meritocratic standards associated with modern university life, the "irrational" loyalties fostered by tradition may have helped to secure commitment to these norms and values. This paper considers the "invention of tradition" at the first Cambridge women's college. By the late 17th century trade was an increasingly important part of the English economy. Meanwhile industries such as glass, brick making, iron and coal mining expanded rapidly. During the 1600s the status of merchants improved. These scientists changed the beliefs of their followers to create a more modern way of life. In the sixteenth century, the beliefs of Aristotelian-Ptolemaic were accepted by society. The geocentric theory was one of many that was created during this century. 'Inventing Tradition/Coping with Change: the Women's Colleges in late 19th and early 20th Century Cambridge' by Joyce Senders Pedersen blossomed in many institutional contexts in the 19th and early 20th century.<sup>3</sup> These invented traditions lent legitimacy to what were in many cases new communities, new status and power relationships, new values and behavioral norms. Emma's history suggests that rather than being at odds with the rational, calculative modes of thought and meritocratic standards associated with modern university life, the "irrational" loyalties fostered by tradition may have helped to secure commitment to these norms and values. Two women's colleges were established in later Victorian Cambridge: Girton in 1869 and Newnham in 1871.