

TOM BROWN IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY

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GRAHAMSTOWN
RHODES UNIVERSITY
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Mr Vice-Chancellor, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen—

“Archangels, angels, virgins and professors”

—thus wrote¹ the 17th century poet William Alabaster. But when Alabaster looked forward to hearing in heaven the singing of “archangels, angels, virgins and professors”, he intended no tribute to the academic profession; that was merely a reference to believers, those who “profess”, or affirm their faith.

This sense of the word “professor” seems to me peculiarly appropriate to an inaugural lecture, for this is pre-eminently the occasion when a new entrant to the professoriate is allowed to indicate—at some length and to a more-or-less captive audience—that aspect of his discipline, that view of his specialism, in which he has particular reason to believe, and which, professedly, justifies his approach to his subject in the university. This, at any rate, is my conception of this ritual and the use I intend to make of this opportunity.

Hence my title, “Tom Brown in South Africa”, for a large part of my research interests for some years now have been preoccupied by an attempt at a revaluation* of certain developments in the English public school in Victorian times, seen in the context of British society as a whole. My conviction is that, in the absence of any explicit and articulated philosophy of English education in the 19th century, the model of the Victorian boys’ public school has exercised a decisive influence on the emergent English concept of the ‘school’ as an educative community, right down to our own times. Some observers, indeed, would go further, and the historian G. G. Coulton has

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claimed that the educational tradition which developed in these schools constituted (I quote) "probably the greatest educational movement of 19th century Europe"².

The origin of these developments lay in the person and career of Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School from 1828 to 1842. His ideas and achievements, or at least the impression of them which was put abroad by the successful propaganda of his fervent disciples, was to lead to the salvation of a type of schooling which, represented in only half-a-dozen or so public schools, had been in danger of extinction; and not just its survival—its expansion, indeed, into a powerful and coherent system of 60 to 100 schools which, by the end of Victoria's reign, virtually monopolised the secondary education of the English upper and upper-middle classes. The essence of Arnold's educational ideas included a new conception of the role of the headmaster, emphasising his authority and independence, and of that of the assistant master, emphasising his pastoral function; a new use of the prefect system as a method of boy self-government, and a new conception of the school as a self-contained, organic community.

Among the members of the Rugby staff-room who after Arnold's death profited from his reflected glory to obtain promotion to the headmasterships of other schools was his close colleague, G. E. L. Cotton, who became headmaster of Marlborough in 1852. Marlborough had been founded as recently as 1843 as a school primarily for sons of clergy, but by an actuarial mistake—what nowadays would be blamed on the computer—the fees had at first been fixed too low to be economic; impoverished parsons from all over the country rushed to enter their sons, and there were 500 boarders in the first term, in premises ill-equipped to accommodate them. Lack of recreational provision to keep the boys from mischief was one of the reasons for the 'Great Rebellion' which the boys staged in 1851, which led to the resignation of their unhappy first headmaster, Wilkinson. Such rebellions were not new—there had been serious disorders at Rugby in the 1780s (twice) and again in 1797; at Harrow in the 1770s and again in Byron's time; at

Eton in 1768, 1783 and 1798, and the famous flogging headmaster of Eton, Dr Keate, had to deal with rebellions in 1810 and 1832. Winchester had seen disorders on four occasions between 1770 and 1793, and in 1818 the boys, led by the prefects, took over part of the school, barricaded themselves in for 24 hours and withstood a summons by a magistrate attended by the constabulary. Only after the militia had been called out did the boys surrender. This pattern resembled a similar situation in France back in the 17th century, when armed riots, strikes and picketing in schools were common and violent: school-children used to go about armed, and school rules required that swords and firearms be handed in before pupils went into class³.

Cotton came to recognise—though not because of any connection he had with Arnold—where the fault lay. Up to the first half of the century, games like cricket and football had certainly existed in public schools (along with poaching, cock-fighting, etc.), but were not for the most part recognized by the authorities, and certainly not officially organized. Cotton at Marlborough introduced organized games and the device was immediately successful and was soon taken up by other schools. Boys were now profitably occupied in activities in which, at least to some extent, they supervised one another; a further important result was the new relationship between boy and master stimulated by common activity and interest in the sports field. Within a few years organised team games were standard recreation in English public schools; by around 1880 they were becoming compulsory. By a further development, by around 1900 even spectatorship was frequently compulsory for pupils.

Arnold's reputation as an educationist was originally based primarily on the portrayal of him by his favourite pupil A. P. Stanley, who published his best-selling *Life of Dr Arnold* two years after Arnold's death. Already while Cotton was inventing new ingredients in the scholastic machinery, another of Arnold's pupils, Thomas Hughes, was writing his own version of school-boy life at Rugby which showed a picture of a boys' world very different from Arnold's high-minded educational idealism, and one far closer to that which Cotton's innovations were

designed to cope with. This was *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, which came out in 1857, and was an immediate best-seller, has been re-printed year after year, has been filmed, and was dramatised for television in Britain as recently as last December. Readers who remember the un-named "young master" who appears near the end of the book will be interested to know that that master was in fact G. E. L. Cotton.

Arnold's stated hierarchy of educational values had been "first, religious and moral principles; secondly, gentlemanly conduct; thirdly, intellectual ability"⁴.—though in practice intellectual ability rated very high. The educational priorities of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* are reflected in the passage in which Squire Brown muses on what he is sending Tom to Rugby School for. "Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make him a good scholar? Well, but he isn't sent to school for that—at any rate not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles or the digamma, no more does his mother If he'll only turn out a brave, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want"⁵. Arnold's and Squire Brown's objectives are not dissimilar; Arnold visualises a scholarly Christian gentleman, Squire Brown a Christian gentleman nurtured by processes described in the rest of the book (and certainly not part of the official, recognised Arnold regime)—processes implicit in Hughes's picture of boy-life in the raw, a rough-and-tumble of games and fisticuffs, which goes on to include what may have been the first—and was certainly the most influential—explicit justification for the character-building benefits of team games.

So already we have an important variation of the ingredients in the Arnold recipe, a new "working part" in the "machinery" of school life which will have important effects on the final product. To the enormous success of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* you must add the barrage of school literature of all kinds—other school novels in this new genre which Hughes had virtually created, periodicals like the *Boys' Own Paper*, later the *Gem* and the *Magnet* and their imitators—which from the later Victorian period onwards have projected a conception

of school life which is modelled on a *Tom-Brown*-like picture of public schools, and which has influenced the expectations of schoolboys in all classes in many countries—from cockney urchins in London to schoolboys in India. All this has contributed powerfully to the triumph of athleticism—the cult of games, especially team games—in British society. This phenomenon was both cause and result of the widely-held theory that there was a strong connection between the qualities developed by games-playing and those needed to create and govern and defend an empire. Comparisons were made between the flabby products of the educational systems of those nations—e.g. the French (or even the Scots)—which emphasised intellectual training, and the tough, manly products of the public-school games-playing tradition who in terms of specific intellectual or administrative training were “gentlemanly amateurs”. This new phenomenon—energetic participation by adults in vigorous ball games—led to a changed connotation for the word “sport”, a word hitherto restricted to the activities of huntin’, shootin’, and the turf. A similar trend was at work in the later 19th century in the U.S.A., where inter-university sport was to become a major industry in its own right.

What special relevance, you may ask, has all this to South Africa, geographically so far removed from these trends and ideas? I would contend that the formative influences on the educational systems of white South Africa in the Victorian period and for at least part of the 20th century, notably but by no means exclusively in the Cape and Natal, have been twofold: a competition, and to some extent a fusion, between the influence of the Victorian public school model, and the influence of educational practice in Scotland. By contrast with the English public school model, and the values that were associated with it, the characteristics of Scottish (or as Tom Brown and all the Victorians would have said it, Scotch) education derived from its far more democratic nature, from the fact that Scotland was centuries in advance of England in the provision of widespread if not universal elementary education, and included a much greater emphasis on merit—sheer intellectual merit—displayed not just in classics but in important subjects like mathematics

also—compared with the emphasis on ‘character’, ‘leadership’, ‘gentlemanliness’, in the English public schools.

We can see this Scottish influence represented powerfully by some of the key men in the organization of education at the Cape in the 19th century. Of the first three Superintendents-General of Education for the Cape between 1839 and 1915, two were Scotchmen. But between the first, Rose Innes, and the third, Sir Thomas Muir, came the 33-year reign of Sir Langham Dale, a product of Oxford and of the English public school Christ’s Hospital. A figure influential on education policy in the early period was the astronomer Sir John Herschel⁶, who lived at the Cape for four years in the 1830s: his own education had been, first, at the unreformed Eton, and then at the hands of a private tutor described as a “Scotch mathematician”. Muir was a graduate of Glasgow and, early in his term of office, the curriculum of the South African College is reported as having become “more austere mathematical, and less humanely liberal”, with “accuracy ousting outlook”; more generally, observers noted cynically that Cape education had been “scotched”⁷. At any rate, Muir increased the pace of recruitment of teachers from Scotland, and certainly in the field of South African primary education one could allow that the predominant influence has probably been a Scottish one. It is also true that many secondary schools have been extensively infiltrated by Scotchmen; for example, in this town of Grahams-town of the first ten headmasters of what is now Graeme College, i.e. between 1873 and the Second World War, eight had degrees from Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen. Nevertheless, for reasons which I shall give later, I believe it true to say that, in the sphere of secondary, as opposed to primary, education, the conception of a school and what goes on in it which was to predominate was an English one, and the influence of the English public school model can be seen in many aspects of South African high schools—in private schools (obviously) but also in English-medium government schools, and even to some extent in Afrikaans-medium schools also. Indeed, I would go further, and say that in some notable respects, South African high schools are stuck fast in the 19th century model of the

English public school, and have, in fact, stronger links with Tom Brown than have some of their modern British counterparts.

If this is so, how did this process come about? Where, in 19th and 20th century South Africa, do we see these influences at work?

First, we may look at men. Let us take some of the early Anglican bishops and other clergy in South Africa, remembering that churchmen were more important and influential in the 19th century than to-day. Bishop Gray, first Bishop of Cape Town, was an Old Etonian, and sent his son over to England to attend the public school Bradfield. Colenso, first Bishop of Natal, had been a housemaster at Harrow. All the bishops of Grahamstown in the 19th century were English public school men. Armstrong, who had been at Charterhouse, founded St. Andrew's here. Cotterill had been headmaster of Brighton College. Merriman had been at Winchester, Webb at Rugby. Cornish had been both boy and master at Uppingham under one of the most famous headmasters of all time, Edward Thring. Canon Ogilvie, headmaster of St. George's Grammar School, Cape Town, and later of "Bishops", had been a boy at Winchester and a master at Bradfield, and is regarded as the founder of Rugby football in South Africa⁸. William Marlborough Carter, later Archbishop of Cape Town, came to South Africa first to be Bishop of Zululand: the son of an Eton housemaster, he was educated at Eton and Oxford, then did sterling work for the Eton Mission in the East End of London (originally known as the Rough Boys' Club⁹). Indeed, it was his efforts to civilise the barbarous cockneys of the slums which were held to make him peculiarly fit for missionary work in Zululand.

So the list could go on: if, after prelates, we turn to politicians, we think immediatley of John X. Merriman, premier of Cape Colony, who had been sent to England (from Grahams-town) for a public school education at Radley; Harry Escombe, premier of Natal, had been at St. Paul's. To identify all the public school men in politics, the colonial service and the army in South Africa would be endless. But let us now turn to South

African schools. It goes without saying that all the leading boys' private schools—"Bishops", St. Andrew's, St. John's, Michaelhouse, Hilton—were founded in conscious imitation of the English model. "Bishops" (Diocesan College, Rondebosch) was founded by Bishop Gray and modelled specifically on Radley, whose dormitory system Gray specially admired, and Radley's staffroom has furnished headmasters for both "Bishops" and Michaelhouse even in recent times. (The sister of Radley's founder, the Rev. William Sewell, originated the movement to found Diocesan Schools for Girls, and one of her disciples became headmistress of a Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown¹⁰). Even toddlers were not safe: the person sent out in 1900 to be Superintendent of Kindergartens for South Africa was no less than the sister of Churchill's Harrow headmaster, Bishop Welldon¹¹. At Hilton, the sole qualification of H. V. Ellis to be its second headmaster in the 1870s—for he had no degree—was that he had been a boy at Rugby School.

No less significant is the "colonization" of government schools by men identified with public school ideals. Let us look at the two high schools in King William's Town around the year 1890. The Diocesan Grammar School was headed by a man (Canon Porter)¹² who had, as a boy in England, witnessed the transformation of his school at Bedford into a leading public school, at the hands of a former Rugby School assistant master, Phillpotts¹³. At the government school, Dale College, the headmaster was J. G. Sutton, also in Anglican orders, who in that decade brought out from England masters with a public school background. One of these masters, William Archer Way, educated at Christ's Hospital and Oxford, immediately set about creating at Dale College a cadet corps, strong cricket and football teams, and a number of other institutions designed to foster the school's esprit de corps. From Dale, William Way went on to be headmaster of Graaff Reinet High School and then to be fifth Rector of Grey High School, Port Elizabeth, where it was "his constant endeavour" (the school's historian¹⁴ tells us) to provide his pupils with an education comparable with his own English public school education. In doing this at Grey he was

following in the footsteps of the first Rector of that school, the Rev. H. I. Johnson, who had earlier been a Maths. master at Brighton College under the future Bishop Cotterill of Grahams-town, and of the second Rector, Thurlow, who had come out straight from the English public school Rossall, and of the third and fourth Rectors, Noaks and Meredith, both of whom initiated reforms in imitation of the English public school¹⁵. Or if we look away from the Eastern Cape, to Natal, the man who was head of Durban High School when the future Governor General E. G. Jansen was a pupil—W. H. Nicholas—aimed to create “a great public school after the English model”¹⁶, an aim shared by many of his colourful successors at D.H.S.¹⁷.

One could multiply examples of this process from all over the country. But the process is traceable not merely when identifiable Englishmen alternated with Scotchmen, Irishmen, Welshmen or native-born South Africans as headmasters of schools. It owed its widespread prevalence to the undoubted consumer appeal of the “Tom Brown” formula, and to the fact that government schools operated in competition with private schools whose institutions they imitated—indeed were forced to imitate. One of the most obvious forms which this competition took—games—conveniently furthered the process.

It is instructive to look at some of the results of the influence of this model, on the South African school. Starting with an area where the influence was apparent but perhaps not too strong, let us take the conception of the headmaster, his qualities and rôles. The headmasterships of the leading English public schools attracted men of the highest gifts, such as could have won them top posts in almost any professional career—indeed, some of them ended up, as bishops or archbishops, in the House of Lords. The material rewards available matched their gifts, at least in the leading English schools where headmasters might be paid salaries equivalent in our money values to R80,000 a year or more—which, if it might not attract an Oppenheimer or an Anton Rupert into the profession, gave a certain security, and a social position which enhanced that other aspect of the great English headmasters, the degree of authority

and independence they enjoyed. In South African schools—certainly outside the private schools—no headmasters have ever been so amply salaried, and, in government schools particularly, their limited independence and scope for initiative are reflected in their relatively modest social status and in their functions as bureaucrats—and relatively minor bureaucrats at that. English public school heads had normally taken the highest academic honours and could have moved in and out of top university posts—and frequently did. South Africa hardly ever attracted men of this academic calibre, either as headmasters or churchmen: they are much more likely to have taken more modest honours, like Kettlewell, headmaster of St. Andrew's and member of Rhodes University Council, with his double third class in classical mods. and greats at Oxford, or even, like Phelps (Bishop of Grahamstown, Chairman of Rhodes Council, and later Archbishop of Cape Town) who at Oxford had been placed in the fourth class—a class alas! recently abolished, but in its day conventionally reserved for those who had given very long, very interesting, and often quite intelligent answers to questions the examiners had not asked.

Some aspects of the English headmaster rôle did rub off on their South African counterparts. Outside the very large schools, headmasters of more 'middling' English public schools had to attend to finance very much as the South African high school principal is now preoccupied with fund-raising in order to keep essential school activities going. The "businessman" rôle of the headmaster is one for which candidates seem to get no specific training, and one wonders what value there might be for present-day heads to study the "business" methods such as helped one English public school headmaster to save his school. A Grahamstown headmaster has already quoted my account of the Rev. W. R. Dawson, who rescued the fortunes of Brighton College around 1900. This was the same school which had sent out its headmaster, Cotterill, as second Bishop of Grahamstown (and another master as Rector of Grey High School) but by now it was R100,000 in debt. Dawson took over and soon built up numbers to over 600, including a large contingent of foreigners—Spanish, Argentinian, French and Italian boys, though they seldom stayed long in the school:

“I take them on my own terms [Dawson once explained to a friend]—two years’ fees in advance as surety for their good behaviour. They’re all highly sexed and it’s only a matter of time before they sleep with a housemaid. Then out they go”¹⁸.

It is questionable, though, whether talents of this order would have won promotion in the provincial educational system of South Africa, with its combination of remote bureaucratic and local control, the premium on “safeness” and social respectability for its headmasters. Not that South African headmasters have been colourless men: many of them have been much larger than life, and some, like Langley of Durban High School—“brutal, vindictive and superbly unreasonable”¹⁹—have carried to strange lengths that type of frustrated megalomania which is the occupational hazard of principals of large schools. Yet, in general, one doubts if the conditions existed in South Africa which in English headmasters allowed for the indulgence of quite spectacular degrees of eccentricity and absent-mindedness—like the well-authenticated case of the successful headmaster of a famous English school who, when accosted by a returning Old Boy in the school quadrangle, greeted him with “Ah, yes, *Robinson* . . . Tell me, was it you or your brother who was killed in the war?”²⁰

Let us turn now to a second area of influence, the spread of the cult of athleticism. We have noted the origins of this phenomenon in England, and the stages of its growth in school and adult society there. It is instructive to compare the actual historical reasons for these developments with the rationalizations which were devised to justify them. For organized games in schools were in the first place invented, and in the second place extended to involve everybody, for two basic educational reasons: first, they satisfied the need to occupy large numbers of boys innocently and thus helped remove the spectre of rebellion; secondly, they were the schoolmasters’ answer to a problem which by the end of the century had become a real obsession: the problem of sex in adolescence. Though the Headmasters’ Conference went into secret session when they discussed this

subject, a wealth of evidence exists to confirm the prevalence of the view summed up in the housemasters' maxim, "Send the boys to bed tired, and you'll have no trouble". Listen to the Vice-Principal of a London Training College (St. John's, Battersea), in an article in the *Journal of Education* in 1900, on "The Moral Aspect of Athletics":

"The effect [of games] on the morals not only of individuals, but of whole classes, can be traced historically. If we compare the tone of our public schools and universities now [1900] with what they were in the 1830s, the change that has come over them is enormous, and a very large part of that change is due to the progress of athletics. This change, beginning among a select few in the large public schools which first felt the effect of Arnold's influence, has now spread far and wide through English society, and it seems reasonable to hope that an influence which had such a share in altering the bestial habits of the well-born and well-to-do may gradually improve the habits of the very poorest . . ."21.

The man who wrote this, the Rev. E. B. Hugh-Jones, had, as a boy at Marlborough, been strongly influenced by masters who had been colleagues or pupils of Cotton during the key period in the development of athleticism in schools. It was this same clergyman, Hugh-Jones, who narrowly escaped being appointed headmaster of St. Andrew's, Grahamstown, in 1903, and went on to be head of Michaelhouse shortly afterwards.

But, as I have already suggested, a more common rationale was that which linked the games and cadet corps with the fostering of discipline, leadership, etc.—qualities which were already closer to the values of colonial society and had a readier appeal than arguments about the suppression of 'bestial habits'. (In considering the schools cadet corps, we remember that in South Africa these were actually called out for active service in the 19th century). At any rate, South African schools had already taken to the new cult with little concern about the need to justify it—though a Michaelhouse master in the 1890s did feel

impelled to set out a case that Rugby football was a necessary intellectual tonic in that it stimulated the flow of blood to the brain²². Athleticism took root most naturally in South Africa because its apostles found that, compared to England, here was a country where the games-playing ideals of Tom Brown's successors could be striven for in a decent climatic setting. Once it had taken root, its growth was nurtured by other circumstances peculiar to South African society. In England, Rugby football is socially divisive: it is the game identified with the middle and upper classes, and, apart from a few special cases, the social pretensions of schools are classifiable by whether they play rucker or soccer. (This applies to *England*: Wales is quite different in this respect.) In South Africa, on the other hand, this kind of classification has never caught on, despite the efforts of some, like the headmaster of Durban High School in the 1920s who sneered at the local Tech. as the "soccerite school for poor children". The function of Rugby football in South Africa has been, rather, to unite the white nation, to bridge the differences between Afrikaner and Englishman in a common religion, with common rituals and a common language; with a high priesthood and a company of saints (and even martyrs) who belong to all. Sport performs another social function. In England, the social-class differences which inhibit conversation between strangers are relieved by the possession of an innocent, a neutral, talking point—the weather; similarly, in South Africa, political tensions are kept at bay in such casual conversations by possession of a politically-neutral common talking point in sport.

There are just two points I would add on the implications of the games cult in the school situation. When, as a result of the national obsession with sport, schools come to be judged on their record of wins, headmasters, games coaches and teams are under great pressure from parental and Old Boy opinion to have their teams "play to win" rather than "play the game", an inversion (indeed perversion) of the values claimed for games-playing which is so complete that it is amazing that such pressures continue to be tolerated (as I fear they are tolerated²³). Secondly, I suppose we would have to concede that

the games cult has played its part in making possible the continuing under-payment of South African teachers, by attracting men to, and keeping them in, teaching for the games-playing opportunities it affords when, on the basis of salary alone, the staff-rooms would long since have emptied, and governments would have been forced to take more resolute action on salaries.

A third area of influence of the Tom Brown tradition in South Africa involves the intangible and elusive sphere of values. The historian David Newsome has drawn attention²⁴ to that phenomenon in the Victorian period which involves the changed connotation of those favourite words of our grandfathers, "manly", and "manliness". For Thomas Arnold and his contemporaries, manly was the opposite of *childish*, and manliness had more to do with the condition of adulthood and maturity than with the qualities of virility connected with the hearty enjoyment of physical pursuits with which it came to be associated later in the century. With the new emphasis on virility, and the suspicion of "effeminacy", came the emphasis on concealment of the emotions exemplified in the "stiff upper lip" held to be the desirable attribute in a public school product. How pervasive this "stiff-upper-lippery" has become in Anglo-Saxon culture (as opposed, say, to the demonstrative emotionalism of the Latin peoples) is perhaps illustrated in a revealing incident in the 1972 American presidential election campaign, when one of the original front-runners for the Democratic nomination, Senator Muskie, was widely held to have damaged his chances irreparably by a television appearance in which he was goaded into weeping publicly by insults to his wife. (This stiff-upper-lippery did not always apply to the Old Harrovian Winston Churchill, but he was a special case.) In a school context, the new concept of "manliness" and the stiff upper lip were associated with the rigours of the games field and the cadet corps, and the hardness, even brutality, of much of school life. The provision in Rhodes's will for the foundation of the Rhodes Scholarships to Oxford is a classic reflection of this complex of beliefs. As is well known, the selection of these scholars was to take account not only of "literary and scholastic attainments" but also of

“fondness for, and success in, manly outdoor sports, such as cricket, football, and the like”, of other qualities such as courage and devotion to duty, and of qualities of “fellowship” and “leadership”. What is perhaps not so well known is that before he died Rhodes had already supervised a “trial run” selection at “Bishops” in 1901, in which the choice of Rhodes Scholar was based on the following²⁵ weighting of qualifications:

Scholarship	40%	} 60%
Athletics	20%	
Manhood	20%	
Character and Influence			20%	

—a very unintellectual (some would say anti-intellectual) loading of the selection. Rhodes’s emphasis on these non-academic criteria was a reflection of the special admiration Rhodes had conceived, at second hand, for the English public school—his own schooling had taken place before attendance at a public school had become the rule for members of his class.

Leaving aside the effects of the creed of “manliness” in areas of society such as sport, we observe one manifestation of it every time we see a father rebuke his young son for the entirely natural, even desirable, release of the emotions involved in crying; another example, perhaps, is the persistence in our schools of various institutionalized forms of brutality which certainly derive from the English public school but which in the 20th century have tended to lose their importance there. I think especially of caning, the regular resort to which in some South African schools—even well-known and otherwise reputable government schools—can only be explained on two grounds: the blind atavistic worship of tradition for tradition’s sake (“I had to put up with it in my time and look what an effect it had on me,” etc. . .) and the persistence of an uncritical, insensitive value called “manliness”. I have even heard it suggested that the image of the headmaster that is most acceptable to South African parents is of one who parades the corridors during the break, brandishing a cane. Here *Tom Brown* influence is not exclusively to blame, for the alternation of English and Scottish headmasters in the histories of South African schools has simply meant the alternation of the cane and the strap.

Right across Victorian society stretched that fine but all-important line which distinguished those who were gentlemen from those who were not. Yet, according to the English peer and Colonial Secretary, who gave his name to the town of Kimberley, "in Africa, nobody stays a gentleman for long". The English public school system evolved as a self-contained system of élite schools in order to furnish men with the recognizable credentials for acceptability as "gentlemen". In South Africa this was not, except in the case of a few private schools, the real function of the public school model. In a frontier society, where men were judged rather for their own exertions than for their antecedents, such an aim would have been largely unrealistic. Furthermore, English public school products who landed up in South Africa—whatever the admiration they excited in Cecil Rhodes—were, as Lord Kimberley's remark confirms, a very mixed bag. We know from Stuart Cloete's autobiography that, at any rate by the end of the century, special private schools existed in England to receive boys expelled from the public schools (for all kinds of interesting activities), and by a training in agriculture, etc., to process them for export to the colonies²⁶. And when a combined English Public School Old Boys' Association was founded in Cape Town, under the patronage of the Archbishop, in 1898 (because there were not enough Etonians, Wellingtonians, etc., at the Cape to support separate Old Etonian/Wellington, etc. Associations), the very laudable purposes of the Association included a somewhat unexpected one. The chief published reason for its existence was that (I quote):

" . . . a large number of public schoolboys who have been failures [back] home, but [are] really good fellows in the main, are sent out here to make a fresh start. Often and often these men fall into vice, being away from all home influences, and go from bad to worse, and become irreclaimable. It [is] felt that much could be done to give a helping hand to these before it [is] too late"²⁷.

In Britain the gentlemanly standing of a public school product was ensured by his nodding acquaintance with the dead languages, justified by arguments such as that of Dean Gaisford,

head of an Oxford college in Tom Brown's time, that "the study of Greek literature not only elevates above the vulgar herd, but leads not infrequently to posts of considerable emolument"²⁸. In both private and government schools in South Africa Classics did gain a foothold—at Queenstown in the 1860s Latin was taught "with the Scotch pronunciation"²⁹; at Durban (Boys') High School, "Latin was taught with a club"³⁰—but Classics never achieved here the dominance they maintained in England, and they gave way earlier and more readily to new subjects like the sciences, geography and history, than was possible in England, where inertia and prejudice were stronger, and suspicion of new subjects (even for primary schools) appeared in the most unlikely places: as a witness to a House of Commons Select Committee explained in 1879: "Geography, sir, is ruinous in its effects on the lower classes: reading, writing and arithmetic are comparatively safe, but geography invariably leads to revolution"³¹.

We may say, then, that the main general influence of the Victorian public school model was *not* in creating in South Africa a self-conscious public-school élite (within the English-speaking white élite) whose members penetrated top positions in the professions, etc. (as in England) by projecting each other into jobs, though there were areas where the "Old Boyery" copied from the English public schools did operate. My colleague Mr Michael Ashley has shown³² the extent of the penetration in a wide range of élite positions by the products of 12 English-speaking South African schools, most notably Durban High School, whose bid to colonize Rhodes University has been spearheaded by the appointment of Arthur Noble to a Chair of Education. Secondly, the influence of Old Boys in determining policy and values in some schools—generally in a conservative direction, and especially in key areas such as sport—must not be underestimated, and this applies to government schools no less than to private schools in South Africa.

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We must not forget that Tom Brown was not only a schoolboy at Rugby, he was also an undergraduate at Oxford, like his author, Thomas Hughes, who was at Oriel College in the 1840s. *Tom Brown at Oxford* was published in 1861, but it never enjoyed the same success or influence as the earlier book, though the Americans did once make a film of it. I would like to look at undergraduate life in Tom Brown's time and to isolate one or two themes which I think have particular relevance to the profession of education in the 1970s.

Tom Brown's Oxford of the mid-19th century was in a state of somnolence, stagnation and genteel corruption in which it had been for centuries, but with this difference, that it contained the seeds of future change. The root of the weakness lay in the conception of the rôle of the university teacher. Theoretically, teaching was mainly in the hands of college fellows, but their conditions of appointment and style of life furnished every disincentive to efficiency. Provided they could avoid the one pitfall, matrimony, appointment was for life. A few of them did, in fact, teach; some could claim to be engaged in what Hensley Henson later called "that state of restful coma which is dignified by the universities with the name of research"³³, but there was no obligation to do anything at all, and we remember that in the sister university, Cambridge, the great Greek scholar, Porson, throughout his fifteen-year professorship, had given no lectures—a record surpassed by Dean Gaisford himself during his nearly twenty years as Professor of Greek at Oxford³⁴. Most of the effective teaching was done by private coaches who, of course, had to be paid over and above one's fees. Scotland provided—as usual—a much more edifying example of efficient university teaching, though even so their professorial system had not worked out all the answers. Not all their professors were paid a salary: some had to draw their entire subsistence from fees, which put a high premium in efficiency and popularity but with disconcerting side-effects. Thomas Charles Hope was professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh when Arnold went to Rugby. Relying entirely on class fees, he made his subject very popular and earned the equivalent in our money values of more

than R20,000 a year. But the system also made him a monopolist, jealous of any competition—for example, his tutorial assistant (who also had his living to make) was allowed to use the professor's apparatus for explanation, but never for demonstration³⁵. I am not arguing against an element of "payment by results" as an incentive to good university teaching, but only against the complete dependence on fee income as making university teaching a commercial speculation, and being almost certainly inimical to research.

This sort of example was not the pattern for reform which Tom Brown's Oxford needed. The change, when it came, involved what one historian, in a Cambridge context, has called "the revolution of the dons"³⁶—the concentration of the college fellows on the domestic task of training their pupils³⁷. The assumption that the activity of teaching, rather than research or public affairs, constituted the noblest conception of the academic life, and that this should be carried on in institutions which were real communities, living organisms, animated by the experience of the common life of teacher and pupil—this assumption transformed the Oxford of Tom Brown, enacted largely by Arnoldians and especially by Arnold's disciples at Balliol College; a parallel transformation took place at Cambridge.

Again I ask the question: is there anything for us, this time as university teachers, to learn from the change in school and university life in the 19th century which I have associated with the Tom Brown tradition? Let us take first the phenomenon of the schoolboy rebellion, so common around 1800, which the Tom Brown recipe (as developed by Cotton) of organised games and closer boy-master relationships was virtually to eliminate in English schools by the end of the century—though headmasters did not begin to feel safe until after about 1880, and we remember that in South Africa there was a non-violent "rebellion" at Hilton College, Natal, as recently as 1953³⁸, and rebellions are not uncommon in African schools.

In general, it is true to say that the schoolboy rebellion or mutiny has moved a few years up the age scale, and is now a characteristic rather of the university student. And here there

are some uncanny and frightening parallels with the world of Tom Brown. During the last *great* public school rebellion, the one at Marlborough in 1851 which led to the resignation of Dr Wilkinson and the appointment of the reformer Cotton, the boys plundered the desks of the headmaster and other masters in the schoolroom. I quote from the account of a boy who was in the school at the time: "Dr Wilkinson had given eleven years' work to an edition of Thucydides, which was, I suppose, to establish his reputation as a classical scholar. The manuscript was in his desk. The boys took it out and burnt it, without, I believe, knowing the importance or the cruelty of what they were doing"³⁹.

Between 1966 and 1970 particularly, there were student "rebellions" in many parts of the world—the London School of Economics in 1966-7, in which some South African students were very active, France in 1968, Germany, Holland, Japan, America and many other countries. Even South African universities have witnessed such manifestations, though on a far gentler scale. From both Holland and the United States I have heard reports of exactly similar atrocities to those of 1851—the raiding of university offices and studies and the wanton destruction of research files on which professors or lecturers have worked for years, even decades—and here there is not even the excuse of the rebels' ignorance of what the Marlborough schoolboy called "the importance or the cruelty of what they were doing".

Yet the study of "Tom Brown" situations offers us not just macabre parallels with which to feed our disgust at barbarism wherever it may be found: I believe it can tell us something also about the character of a university which may illuminate our own situation. The Arnoldian conception of a university was, like that of a school, a complex of structures, of communities within communities, within which there was something of the character of a family linkage, whose members had a *relationship* with one another, not because they necessarily liked one another, or chose one another, or had special qualifications to counsel and help one another—but because of common activities, common life, and their common relationship to the institution

as a whole. University residence as the simple coming together of people, among whom the desired values would be generated spontaneously—this was never the view of the Arnoldians. What was needed was a set of structures, relationships, and activities which would guarantee the penetration of the mass of pupils by the approved values (and, incidentally, remove the danger of rebellion). In the school context this meant, for structures, boarding houses which were individual communities; for activities, games and studies; and for relationships, a new closeness between teacher and pupil which was associated with the new conception of the pastoral rôle of the schoolmaster. The implications for a residential university would seem to be the greatest possible association between the university teachers and the residential system—of colleges or halls of residence—with all university teachers either living or at least dining, and in regular pastoral relationship, with the student body: whether in fact they teach those particular students or not. Without this relationship such a form of residence becomes for the Arnoldians (as the Oxford professor and reformer Goldwin Smith put it) “nothing but barracks for students”⁴⁰.

It may well be objected that this conception of a university, appropriate perhaps for the 19th century conditions of élite education in which it was born, is wildly inappropriate to the new situation of universal higher education, with the sheer problem of numbers that that involves, and with the resistance to custodial authority which is a characteristic of the modern student. The Arnoldian would claim that no recipe for a stable teaching community is likely to work which does not enshrine these principles and create these relationships. Among adolescents and young adults, with their paradoxical mixture of childishness and maturity, of intolerable presumptuousness and disarming helplessness, the teaching function is now unworkable unless the teacher can assert a new discipline—though in fact a very old discipline—a discipline grounded and rooted in love: love of people, built on personal relationships between pupils and teachers, pupils and peers; love of an institution—the university and colleges or residences and their traditions; love of an activity—the activity primarily of *study*.

But even if you granted all this in the way you ran a university, even if you could create these structures, relationships and activities, what would be the moral impulse of such an institution—with what values would you use this machinery to penetrate the student body? For without such a moral impulse you would not be a university, merely an institution; in the words of an Arnoldian headmaster in the 1880s whose school, Clifton, was to furnish Grahamstown with one of its headmasters, you would simply become “an association for the advancement of learning and of football”⁴¹. The Arnold tradition offers us one value which could be, and has been, the principle which could infuse and infect the studies of a university. This is the principle of service. Its first implication is to enjoin upon students that, if they have zeal for reform, their first objective will be to change not society, but themselves. And if earlier I appeared anything less than respectful to the man whose name adorns this university, let me make restitution by quoting Cecil Rhodes in 1899:

“ . . . there are those who throughout the world have set themselves the task of elevating their fellow-beings, and have abandoned personal ambition, the accumulation of wealth, perhaps the pursuit of art, and many of those things that are deemed most valuable. What is left to them? They have chosen to do what? To devote their whole mind to make other human beings better, braver, kindlier, more thoughtful and more unselfish, for which they deserve praise of all men”⁴².

Considering the department in which I teach, perhaps I may be allowed to relate this principle of service to the work of the teacher in schools, and to remind you of the direct connection between Tom Brown’s headmaster and what was then a new and lofty idea of the distinctive vocation of a schoolmaster.

Most of the fun in the school lives of *Stalky and Co.*, the boys in Rudyard Kipling’s deservedly famous novel of school life, was at the expense of the masters, yet Kipling prefaced his

novel with some verses which offered a restrained panegyric to those men who faced their thankless jobs in a spirit of service. If you ask me what spirit I think should animate those who in this university offer themselves to study and train for the teaching profession, I answer by quoting a small part of Kipling's prefatory poem⁴³ in that 1899 school novel:

'Let us now praise famous men'—
Men of little showing—
For their work continueth,
And their work continueth,
Broad and deep continueth,
Greater than their knowing!

This we learned from famous men,
Knowing not its uses,
When they showed, in daily work,
Man must finish off his work—
Right or wrong, his daily work—
And without excuses.

Wherefore praise we famous men
From whose bays we borrow—
They that put aside To-day—
All the joys of their To-day—
And with toil of their To-day
Bought for us To-morrow!