

Women's History MAGAZINE



Issue 70
Autumn 2012
Issn 1476-6760

Laura Hamer on Negating gender politics and challenging the establishment: women and the *prix de Rome* in musical composition

Lesley Hall on Articulating abortion in interwar Britain

John Thomas McGuire on Women's progressive activism in New York State and feminist citizenship, 1917-1919

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Plus

Nine book reviews
2012 Conference reports
Carol Adams Prize: winning essay
Prize reports

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Women's Histories: the Local and the Global

In 2013 the Women's History Network is combining its 22nd Annual Conference with the international conference of the International Federation for Research in Women's History. This will be a wonderful opportunity for us to make connections with scholars of women's history from around the world.

Our conference will explore the history of women worldwide, from archaic to contemporary periods. Engaging with the recent global and transnational turns in historical scholarship, it will examine the ways in which histories of women can draw on and reshape these approaches to understanding the past. It will explore the interplay between the 'local' and the 'global' in histories of women, and discuss the relationship between nation-based traditions of women's history writing and transnational approaches which highlight connections and comparisons between women's lives in different localities.

Key questions the conference will address are:

- How can women's histories reshape our understanding of the relationship between the 'local' and the 'global'?
- What implications does a transnational framework of analysis have for nation-based traditions of writing women's history?

Please note that your own research does not have to be transnational in approach: we have included a comparative history strand to enable us to group together papers on similar themes relating to different localities.

For details of strand themes and online submission of paper proposals see the conference website:
www.ifrwh2013conf.org.uk

Note early deadline for first call for proposals: 31st OCTOBER 2012



Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn 2012 issue of the *Women's History Magazine*. Those of us who were fortunate enough to attend the annual conference in Cardiff enjoyed one of the few sunny weekends in a miserable summer. We bring you reports on the conference, the AGM of the Network and the award of three of the WHN prizes. The Carol Adams Prize for the best essay on women's history by a final year school pupil has been awarded for the last time but there are plans to introduce a new Community History prize next year. Special congratulations are due to Katie Barclay, the leader of our editorial team, on winning this year's WHN Book Prize. We have a bumper collection of book reviews by members and a bumper list of titles seeking reviewers. There is also a news item on the launch of an important project on the history of Kentish women and an introduction to Clare Midgley, who is organising next summer's joint conference on behalf of the IFRWH.

Our three main articles cover a short span of time, the years between the two world wars, but deal with the widely varying experiences of women in three different countries. Laura Hamer assesses the achievements of women competitors for the prestigious French musical prize, the *prix de Rome*, during the interwar years. She shows how success in the competition symbolised the greater access to professional status women were, with difficulty, attaining at this period. The second article also covers the interwar years and deals with the topic of abortion, to which we plan to devote a forthcoming issue of the *Magazine*. In an article that ranges over medical, legal and literary sources, Lesley Hall establishes the part played by feminist campaigners in the 1930s in creating a public debate on abortion which was to lead ultimately to legislative reform in the UK. Finally, John McGuire argues that the years between 1917 and 1919 saw significant developments in progressive women's activism in New York State, which led Democratic women to become active agents in partisan politics by the late 1920s. He also shows how the dispute over women's labour legislation between social justice feminists and their women opponents was an important factor in defining feminist citizenship in the United States. By a happy coincidence the essay that won the last Carol Adams prize is on a similar subject – the effect on women's civil rights in the USA of the 19th Amendment. We publish the essay below, with a brief biography of the young winner and wish her well with her historical studies.

As people and institutions tighten their belts and postage rates soar, the thorny question of the cost of the *Magazine* rears its head, as the Network considers whether it brings value for money and how to pay for it. In this context, we thought it would be worth reflecting on what the Magazine does well. In some ways, the Magazine has an identity problem: alongside fully peer-reviewed articles, it publishes news items, short discussion pieces and information for and about our membership. It is not quite an academic journal, but neither is it a popular history magazine. Yet, although something of a hybrid, we feel that we have found a niche in the market that also corresponds well with the aims of the Women's

History Network. As well as remaining a home for work on women's history from academics at all stages of their careers who recognise that our audience is the largest collection of women's historians in the United Kingdom, we publish three important types of article: by early career researchers, by academics with English as a second language, and finally and significantly, by those outside the academy. The main reason that we receive and can publish such articles lies in our committed team of editors, who go beyond the normal editorial expectations to help authors edit their articles and respond to peer review feedback. Because we are willing to spend time offering advice, correcting English and supporting our authors, we ensure that women's history that might not be published elsewhere makes it into print. We feel that, in this way, we embody the commitment of the Network to promoting and nourishing women's history and historians of women. Moreover, we believe that we manage to produce a publication that is informative, interesting and makes a valuable contribution to the field.

As we move into a consultation over the next few months on how to ensure the future financial viability of the Network, we feel that the *Magazine* remains good value for money and a central way that the Network achieves its aims. A reduction in the number of issues might save money, but it would also limit the opportunity for speedy publication, at a time when the number of submissions remains healthy. While the final decision is one for the membership, we hope that you share our belief that the *Magazine* remains an interesting and informative read. Remember also that new submissions are always welcome!

Editorial team: Katie Barclay, Sue Hawkins, Ann Kettle, Anne Logan, Kate Murphy and Emma Robertson.

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Cover: Marion Dickerman (far right) with Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Caroline O'Day in 1929. (With the kind permission of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum)

Negating gender politics and challenging the establishment: women and the *prix de Rome* in musical composition, 1919-1939¹

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From its inauguration in 1803, until it was discontinued in 1968, the *prix de Rome* (Rome Prize) was France's most important award in musical composition. It brought financial reward, official recognition, and critical exposure. Winning the *prix de Rome* could represent the first step in a successful career; the prize was won by many of France's top composers, including Hector Berlioz (1830), Charles Gounod (1839), Georges Bizet (1857), Jules Massenet (1863), Claude Debussy (1884), and Henri Dutilleul (1936). Women composers were allowed to enter the *prix de Rome* competition for the first time in 1903, and Lili Boulanger became the first woman to win in 1913.²

Women composers' entry into the competition marked a significant step forward in their struggle to achieve professional status. Historically, the majority of women who composed were compromised into focusing their efforts upon small-scale musical forms suitable for amateur performance within the domestic sphere, such as songs and short piano works, as they lacked contacts in the male-dominated professional music industry.³ Winning the *prix de Rome* could open the door of professional composition via the opportunities it brought for public performances, commissions and publications. As it was obligatory for candidates to compose a cantata setting of a chosen text, the competition regulations also helped both to normalise women composing within large-scale forms and to prove that they were capable of doing so. This article will argue that, despite the gender struggles which marked French society during the interwar period, women's admission to the *prix de Rome* came to full fruition during these years, when it was won by four female composers: Marguerite Canal (1920), Jeanne Leleu (1923), Elsa Barraine (1929), and Yvonne Desportes (1932).

The *prix de Rome* in musical composition

The origins of the *prix de Rome* lie in the seventeenth century, when Louis XIV granted financial support to promising young artists to undertake a period of study in Italy. It became formalised into an annual competition following the establishment of the Institut de France in 1795. The *prix de Rome* was organised by the Académie des Beaux-Arts (one of the five *académies* of the Institut de France); each of the five arts – composition, painting, sculpture, engraving, and architecture – had its own competition.⁴ The Académie des Beaux-Arts was, and remains, the most important artistic institution within France; the awarding of its most prestigious musical prize to a young composer denoted official endorsement from the cultural establishment. During the interwar years, the *prix de Rome* was open to all unmarried French people under the age of thirty. The winner was entitled to a period of funded residence at the Académie de France in Rome:

the Villa Médicis. They were also given the right to the title 'Premier Grand Prix de Rome', which could be written after the name of the recipient in the space traditionally reserved for honours and degrees.⁵

The competition opened each year in May with an eliminatory first round, the *concours d'essai* (trial competition). This was judged by a specialist music jury, which consisted of the six musician members of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and three adjunct members (who were well-known composers). Candidates were required to compose a vocal fugue plus a work for chorus and orchestra, based on a poem chosen by the jury. The competitors wrote the required works under strict examination conditions, over a period of several days, locked away in the Palais de Fontainebleau. Whilst at Fontainebleau they were provided with their own rooms with pianos, in which to work and sleep, but shared meals and recreation. After having heard the round-one pieces performed, the specialist music jury then chose up to six finalists to progress to round two, the *concours définitive* (definitive/final competition). The second-round candidates returned to the Palais de Fontainebleau for a further thirty days to compose a cantata setting of a second poem chosen by the academicians. After their confinement, and the official deposition of fair copies of the cantatas at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the candidates had several weeks to prepare the presentation of their cantatas (by vocal soloists with piano accompaniment) at the Institut de France, in the presence of the academicians. Each competitor was responsible for choosing their own singers and pianist, rehearsing their musicians, and conducting the final performance.

The *prix de Rome* competition had a three-level award structure: *premier grand prix* (first grand prize), *premier second grand prix* (first second grand prize), and *deuxième second grand prix* (second second grand prize). The second and third prizes were both labelled as 'second prizes'. The judging was extremely complicated and involved two stages. Firstly, there was the *jugement préparatoire* (preparatory/initial judging) in which the specialist music jury proposed who should be awarded the three prizes. All proposals made by the specialist music jury had to be ratified by the entire Académie des Beaux-Arts during the *jugement définitive* (definitive/final judging) when all of the academicians were entitled to vote. It often took many rounds of voting before any decisions could be reached. Only the winning cantata of the *premier grand prix* was performed with a full orchestra on the day of the prize giving. It was exceptional for a candidate to win the *premier grand prix* on their first attempt. An eventual winner usually participated at least twice, if not three to four times, working their way from admission to the second round to winning the two second prizes and then, perhaps, the *premier grand prix de Rome*

itself. Candidates could only ever receive a higher prize in successive competitions, never an equal or lower one. It was generally acknowledged that the awarding of a *premier second grand prix* heralded the candidate most likely to win the *premier grand prix* in the following year.

Gender struggles in interwar France

The plight of women candidates in the *prix de Rome* competition mirrors wider gender conflicts within the interwar period. The 1920s and 1930s were decades of contradictions, paradoxes, and struggles for French women, which had their origins in the pre-war period. Although the First World War is often seen as a crucial turning point in European history, women's history in France is better understood as undergoing a gradual period of change from the *fin de siècle* (turn of the twentieth century) into the interwar years.⁶ Women's involvement with the *prix de Rome* fits within this wider pattern of ongoing change. Initial admission to the competition in 1903 came to full fruition after the First World War.

As early as the 1890s, contemporary commentators began to raise concerns about the emergence of a new type of woman (*femme nouvelle*) within French society, who was more independent.⁷ Susan K. Foley has commented that the presence of these women in *fin-de-siècle* society 'brought a strong reaction from all who feared the demise of the dependent and domestic woman'.⁸ The appearance of the new woman was accompanied by the steady development of feminism. By 1914, feminist aims were clearly defined: suffrage; access to education and careers; the abolition of paternal authority within marriage and the family; revision of the Civil Code to end the treatment of adult women as minors and allow them full civil rights; social legislation to ameliorate the situation of women (such as easier divorce and state childcare); the elimination of the double standard of the criminal code. The movement had a strong membership.⁹ Many feminists embraced the First World War as a chance to prove themselves, as Steven C. Hause observed, 'French feminists believed that the end of hostilities would bring legislative attention to the rights of women'.¹⁰

The war did, indeed, make a significant difference to the position of French women. As men were mobilised to fight, women were mobilised to take over their jobs. In rural areas women farmed the land, and in urban areas they took on responsibility for transport and munitions manufacturing. More women were also employed in white-collar professions, particularly nursing and teaching. In addition, the war was responsible for the government allowing women more legal rights. In 1915, for instance, married women were granted paternal authority in situations where their husbands could not be contacted, such as when they were trapped in an occupied zone.¹¹ Superficially, it would appear that women had achieved some significant steps forward. Many of the changes, however, were temporary, and purely the result of extraordinary circumstances. Many of their wartime occupations, for example, had only been granted for the duration; their jobs were redistributed to returning veterans at the end of hostilities. Françoise Thébaud has gone

so far as to state that 'the changes due to the war were limited, objectively and subjectively, by the preservation and even reinforcement of traditional sex roles'.¹²

Reinforcement of traditional sex roles became one of the most pressing concerns of the interwar period. Feminists' hopes for recognition were dashed, as women's suffrage was not granted. A proliferation of governmental issues – including the reconstruction of the warzone, the negotiation and application of the Treaty of Versailles, and the demobilisation and economic reintegration of hundreds of thousands of veterans – pushed the woman question far down the agenda. In political terms, women suffered a conservative backlash which aimed to restore the traditional balance between the sexes. Susan K. Foley has commented:

The post-war years were marked by a determined reaction against the cultural changes signalled by the freer lives of urban women from the 1890s, which had accelerated during the war ... the post-war period largely restored the bourgeois model of female domesticity, and emphasised women's duty of reproduction and men's right to command in both the public and the private domains.¹³

Against a backdrop of pro-natalist discourse, the French government reacted to the depopulation crisis, which was one of the most sobering consequences of the war, by passing harsh laws against contraception and abortion. Incentives to reproduction included payments for large families and the establishment of medals for women with five or more children.¹⁴ Mary Louise Roberts has observed that 'the *mère de famille nombreuse* (mother of a large family) became an obsession in post-war France'.¹⁵ These conservative maternity policies were accompanied by a concentrated effort to remove women from the workforce and restore jobs to veterans.

It proved impossible, however, to restore France to the halcyon days of the *Belle époque* (turn of the twentieth century), after which so many people in post-war society appeared to be hankering. The war had ruptured society to an extent that proved impossible to reverse, and gender relations, which had begun to alter several decades before the outbreak of the conflict, were no exception. Pro-natal policies had little effect, and the birth-rate remained low. Efforts to return women to the home ignored the unusually high number of widows, wives of maimed husbands, and single women in post-war French society who had to work in order to provide for themselves and their families. By the 1920s, the workplace had become largely sexually diversified, with few men competing for jobs in feminised occupations such as nursing, secretarial work, or the textiles industry. The changing position of women in post-war society was made more palpable by their increased visibility; the old practice of the chaperon had proved impossible to maintain during the conflict and was never restored. Women also looked different after the war as many embraced the new fashions for shorter skirts and bobbed hair.¹⁶ Refusal to accept traditional female roles was also manifested throughout the 1920s

and 1930s through the steady development of the feminist movement and the women's rights campaign.¹⁷ In short, gender relations throughout the interwar period remained in a state of dynamic flux, with waves of gradual change counterbalanced by sometimes hostile and conservative reactions. That women continued to knock on the doors of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, and that these opened to them a bit more often during these years, may be understood as fitting within the gender struggles and gradually changing position of women of the time.

Women and the *prix de Rome* competition

Women were allowed to enter the *prix de Rome* for the first time in 1903. The radical, left wing government of Émile Combe forced the Académie des Beaux-Arts to admit women. Although some of the more conservative academicians attempted to resist this ministerial interference, the government was the Académie des

Beaux-Arts' official patron and dependence on the government for financial support made them unable to oppose the decision.¹⁸ The resistance of the Académie des Beaux-Arts was gradually overcome; Hélène Fleury became the first woman to win a prize in the composition competition when she was awarded a *deuxième second grand prix* in 1904, and Lucienne Heuvelmans became the first woman to be awarded a *premier grand prix* – in sculpture – in 1911. In 1913, the nineteen-year-old composer Lili Boulanger became the first female to win the musical branch of the competition. Lili Boulanger's triumph facilitated her entry into the world of professional composition. Caroline Potter has commented that her victory in the *prix de Rome* brought her much favourable press coverage and opened doors for her. Most importantly, the publisher Ricordi offered her a monthly stipend so that she could concentrate on composition.¹⁹

Lili Boulanger's achievement proved that it was possible for a woman to win and acted as a powerful

Year	Premier Grand Prix	Premier Second Grand Prix	Deuxième Second Grand Prix
1919	Jacques Ibert/ Marc Delmas	Marguerite Canal	No record of award recipient
1920	Marguerite Canal	Jacques de la Presle	Robert Duassaut
1921	Jacques de la Presle	Robert Dussaut	Francis Bousquet
1922	No first prize awarded	Francis Bousquet	Aimé Steck
1923	Francis Bousquet/ Jeanne Leleu	Robert Bréard	Yves de la Casinière
1924	Robert Dussaut	Edmond Gaujac	Not awarded
1925	Louis Fourestier	Yves de la Casinière	Not awarded
1926	René Guillou	Maurice Franck	Not awarded
1927	Edmond Gaujac	Henri Tomasi	Raymond Loucheur
1928	Raymond Loucheur	Not awarded	Elsa Barraine
1929	Elsa Barraine	Tony Aubin	Sylver Caffot
1930	Tony Aubin	Marc Vaubourgoin	Yvonne Desportes
1931	Jacques Dupont	Yvonne Desportes	Henriette Puig-Roget
1932	Yvonne Desportes	Marc Vaubourgin	Lucas-Émile Marcel (called Marcelin)
1933	Robert Louis Planel	Henriette Puig-Roget	Henri Challan
1934	Eugène Bozza	Jean Hubeau	René Challan
1935	René Challan	Pierre Maillard-Verger	Marcel Stern
1936	Marcel Stern	Henri Challan	Henri Dutilleux
1937	Victor Serventi/ Pierre Lantier	Jean Hubeau	André Lavagne
1938	Henri Dutilleux	André Lavagne	Gaston Litaize
1939	Pierre Maillard-Verger	Jean Grunenwald	Raymond Gallois-Montbrun

Table 1: Winners of the Interwar *prix de Rome* in musical composition, female winners identified in bold

stimulus for the women competitors of the interwar years. The awarding of the *premier grand prix* to Lili Boulanger in 1913 also appears to have helped change attitudes towards women at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, as no further opposition towards them was manifested during the interwar period. The *prix de Rome* competition was suspended throughout the years of the First World War but re-instated in 1919. An examination of the records of the contestants for the *prix de Rome* from 1919 to 1939 reveals that women entered regularly. Although male candidates continued to out-achieve females, women often progressed to round two and were frequently awarded prizes (see table 1).

The most important consequence of women being allowed to enter the *prix de Rome* was that it enabled them to compete on an equal footing for the same professional opportunities as men. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, such as Louise Bertin, Augusta Holmès, and Louise Farrenc, women composers in France had consistently been denied both professional status and opportunities throughout the nineteenth century.²⁰ Winning the *prix de Rome* brought the successful candidate many important career opportunities, of which the trip to Rome itself was not the most significant. The *prix de Rome* was a famous competition and one of the most important events in the French cultural calendar. Thus, it was eagerly covered in the press and the names of the prizewinners and the finalists were published in all the leading newspapers, often accompanied by full accounts of the competition, interviews with the candidates, and other details. Successful candidates were frequently offered publication contracts, as Lili Boulanger had been. Upon their return from Rome, previous winners were generally appointed to teaching appointments at the Paris Conservatoire. Winning the *prix de Rome* could launch a young composer's career.

The conditions of the competition created a number of gender-specific ramifications for women, which were intimately linked to the professional status that it could also confer. Firstly, candidates were required to write large-scale works for both rounds of the competition. Traditionally, female composers had lacked opportunities to engage with large-scale genres; writing large-scale works for the *prix de Rome* opened the door to women engaging equally with the full range of musical genres. Secondly, and related to this, the judging of the *prix de Rome*, in the presence of the academicians and invited members of the press, was a semi-public event. The presence of women signified the move they were making from the private realm of the *salon* to the professional sphere. Thirdly, as women were responsible for directing the final performances of their cantatas, they permeated into a second previously male-dominated musical realm: conducting.

Marguerite Canal: a *premier grand prix* by a unanimous vote

The first woman to win the *prix de Rome* in musical composition after the First World War was the thirty-year-old Marguerite Canal (1890-1978). She had displayed a precocious aptitude for music and entered

the Paris Conservatoire in 1903, at the age of eleven.²¹ Canal excelled and was awarded *premier prix* (first prize) in harmony (1911), accompaniment (1912), and fugue (1915). During the First World War she became one of the first women in France to conduct an orchestra. She directed the orchestra of the *Union des Femmes Professeurs et Compositeurs de Musique* (Union of Women Teachers and Composers of Music) at a series of concerts at the Trocadéro from February to May 1917 and, in the autumn of 1917 and into 1918, she conducted a series of *Matinées Françaises* in aid of the wounded at the Palais de Glace. It was during the First World War that she made her first serious efforts at composition. In 1916 she wrote a cycle of *Six Chansons Écossaises* and in 1918 she set to music *Ici bas, tous les lilas meurent* by Sully Prud'homme. In 1919 she was appointed to the staff of the Paris Conservatoire as a teacher of *solfège* (music theory).

Canal competed for the *prix de Rome* for the first time in 1919. She was admitted to the second round and received a *premier second grand prix*. In 1920, Canal won the *premier grand prix de Rome* outright after receiving a unanimous vote from the entire Académie des Beaux-Arts. She had been one of eight female candidates (out of a total of thirty) who had entered the *concours d'essai* and had progressed to round two in the company of five men: Paul Fiévet, François Dussaut, Guillaume Sauville de la Presle, Robert Siohan, and Jean Déré.²² The fact that women made up nearly a third of the round-one candidates in 1920 – the second year that it was re-instated after the war – provides strong evidence that Lili Boulanger's victory did much to open up the competition to women. The text chosen for the 1920 *prix de Rome* cantata was an adaptation of an extract from Molière's *Don Juan* by Eugène Adenis. The candidates' settings were performed on Saturday 3 July. The *procès verbaux* (recorded minutes) of the Académie des Beaux-Arts reveal that Canal received a unanimous vote for the *premier grand prix* with the comment that the decision was motivated by her cantata's 'temperament' and 'sense of theatre'.²³ For any candidate to win the *prix de Rome* by a unanimous vote would be a remarkable achievement, as it usually took the academicians many rounds of voting to reach a decision. A unanimous decision was exceptional. That Canal's cantata received a unanimous vote provides evidence that, after the First World War, the Académie des Beaux-Arts accepted women contestants and was prepared to award them the first prize when their cantata deserved it.

Acceptance of female candidates by the interwar period is further indicated by the press response to Canal's cantata, which, notwithstanding a certain amount of gendered language, was mainly positive. In his annual review of the competition for the music journal *Le Ménestrel*, Paul Bertrand declared that Canal's cantata had received a unanimous vote for the *premier grand prix* because it was incontestably superior to the others; distinguishing itself by its sense of poetry and drama:

Amongst the six cantatas performed, that of Mlle Marguerite Canal, second prize in 1919

... placed itself so unquestionably above the others that it received a unanimous first prize. ... it distinguished itself by a very delicate poetic sense, which affirmed itself from the opening of the prelude by a precise declamation an appropriate expression, a sense of drama.²⁴

Although Bertrand relies upon feminine gendered language to praise Canal's cantata, this does not prevent him acknowledging her work 'unquestionably above the others'. Inequality of criticism has been one of the most serious barriers facing female composers. Marcia J. Citron has argued that 'women have been subjected to gender-linked evaluation, placing them in a "separate but not equal" category ... Women composers were criticized as being true to their sex if their music exhibited supposedly feminine traits, yet derided as attempting to be masculine if their music embodied so-called virile traits'.²⁵ After the First World War, this began to change. Although critics continued to employ language and adjectives typically associated with femininity – such as, delicate, pretty and charming – to describe women's compositions, they also began to treat them with a greater degree of respect as serious artistic efforts. In a similar vein, Charles Dauzat, in *Le Figaro*, praised Canal's work and stressed that her talents justified her prize, but felt it necessary to remark on her sex in terms which highlighted the fact that, as only the third woman to win a *prix de Rome*, she was still seen as a pioneer:

It is the third time that it gives the ultimate prize to a woman. Mlle Heuvelmans, sculptor, was the first to go to Rome, where she was followed a few years later by the late Lily (*sic*) Boulanger. This new feminine success is greatly justified by the talent of Mlle Canal, whose cantata ... made the most vivid impression on all of the audience gathered together at the Institut de France. Mature stagecraft, contours, colour, nothing was lacking in the winner's work.²⁶

Le Petit Parisien reported the interesting news that, on hearing she had won, Canal had been so overcome that it was necessary to revive her.²⁷ This fainting fit is intriguing as it begs the question, was Canal deliberately acting against received expectations of feminine behaviour? It is possible that Canal's swoon was perfectly genuine: Paris can be very warm in July and the judging of the *prix de Rome* was always a very anxious occasion. To this it must be added that there were two reasons that would have made the judging of the 1920 competition particularly tense for Canal. Firstly, being awarded the *premier second grand prix* in 1919 had already marked her out as the most likely overall winner in 1920. The rule of never receiving a lower or equal prize meant that there was no other prize she could win in 1920: it was the *premier grand prix de Rome*, or nothing. Secondly, at thirty, Canal had already reached the upper age limit. For her, the 1920 *prix de Rome* really was a now-or-never situation. If the faint was simulated, Canal's motives may be difficult to explain.

She could have been gambling for maximum attention, although, as the winning candidate, press exposure was already guaranteed. On some levels, it is difficult to imagine her deliberately feigning feminine behaviour tropes, as she was known to have feminist leanings. The *Union des Femmes Professeurs et Compositeurs de Musique*, whose orchestra she had conducted during the war, was a feminist society, formed to promote the rights of women musicians. A decade later, she denounced what she perceived as institutionalised discrimination against female composers in the feminist journal, *La Française*.²⁸ What is certain is that, in 1920, Canal was an ambitious young composer who knew exactly what winning the *prix de Rome* could mean for her career.

Jeanne Leleu: a forgotten *prix de Rome* lauréate

In 1923, Jeanne Leleu (1898-1979) became the third woman to win a *premier grand prix* in musical composition. She is not, however, always credited with this. In his table of *premier grand prix de Rome* prize winners (1919-1939), Eugène Bozza lists only Francis Bousquet as having won the *premier grand prix de Rome* in 1923.²⁹ This omission is, however, indicative of wider trends in older musico-historical sources to overlook women composers. The incidence of no *premier grand prix* awarded at the 1922 competition, as none of the cantatas entered that year were considered worthy of the first prize, enabled the jury to award two in 1923.

Leleu came from a musical family in Lorraine; her father was a bandmaster and her mother a piano teacher. Following her initial musical training in Rennes, Leleu entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nine and also studied piano at the École Marguerite Long.³⁰ Leleu excelled at the piano as a child, and attracted the attention of the eminent composer Maurice Ravel. At the age of eleven she gave the première of his piano duet for children, *Ma Mère l'Oye* (*Mother Goose*), with Geneviève Duroney at the first concert of the Société Musicale Indépendante at the Salle Gaveau, 20 April 1910.³¹ In 1913, Ravel dedicated his *Prélude* for piano to Leleu, after she played it very successfully at a Paris Conservatoire sight-reading competition. At the Conservatoire, Leleu first completed the preparatory piano class of Marguerite Long before entering the prestigious advanced piano class of Alfred Cortot. She won her *premier prix* in piano performance in 1913. The disruption to Parisian concert life caused by the First World interrupted her career as a concert pianist, and she gravitated towards composition. She studied counterpoint with Caussade (*premier prix*, 1919) and composition with the distinguished composer Charles-Marie Widor, who was sufficiently impressed to encourage her to enter the *prix de Rome*.

Leleu competed for the first time in 1921 but failed to get past the first round. In 1922 she progressed to the second round and received a *mention honorable* but no prize.³² In 1923, Leleu jointly won the *premier grand prix* with Francis Bousquet for her cantata-setting of *Béatrix* (text by Jean Gandrey-Réty). Paul Bertrand, in his 1923 review, praised Leleu's facility for creating atmosphere,

and the fluidity of her writing:

Mlle Jeanne Leleu ... has made ... considerable progress. A delicate and contained sensitivity which affirms itself from the prelude, a little short; an aptitude for creating atmosphere by the persistent repetition of a brief thematic design; an appropriate sense of expression which we would wish to see, sometimes, more brought out; a distinguished fluidity of writing, which makes one think of Gabriel Fauré, all worthy of the first prize ...³³

Bertrand's reference to Leleu's delicate sensitivity (*sensibilité*) is interesting as *sensibilité* was a quality often deemed feminine, and hence inferior, in the nineteenth-century gender order (as was delicacy). Similar to his treatment of Canal, Bertrand, once again, praised a female winner within the confines of gendered language. The comparison to Fauré, although high praise on one level, is also significant when read against a long tradition of praising attributes of women's writing that appeared similar to features found within a male composer's output.

Significantly, it was Widor who prompted Leleu to enter the *prix de Rome*. This encouragement from so distinguished a musician suggests that Leleu must have exhibited sufficient talent as a young composer to attract his attention. Widor was known as both sympathetic and supportive towards women composers; he admitted large numbers of female students to his composition class at the Paris Conservatoire and encouraged the best to enter the *prix de Rome*. Espousal from an eminent male composer, who was also an academician of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, helped talented young women to overcome gender obstacles and find the courage to persevere in their ambitions to break into a profession that was still very male dominated. It is worth noting in passing that Widor, as one of the composition teachers at the Paris Conservatoire, would have been justified in urging his best students to enter the competition as their successes reflected on his own teaching talents. Between 1919 and 1927 (the year that Widor retired) his pupils regularly entered the competition with four winning *premier grand prix*: Jeanne Leleu (1923), Francis Bousquet (1923), Robert Dussaut (1924), and René Guillou (1926). Furthermore, from 1914 to his death in 1937, Widor was the *Secrétaire Perpétuel* (permanent secretary) of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and continually involved with the competition. Thus, Widor's support of Leleu, as a celebrated musician, one of the Conservatoire's most eminent composition teachers, and an academician of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, represents strong endorsement of female competitors from within the French artistic establishment.

Elsa Barraine: a musical prodigy

In 1929, Elsa Barraine (1910-1999) won the *prix de Rome* at the remarkably young age of nineteen. Her extraordinary musical talents were apparent from a very young age and she entered the Paris Conservatoire when she was twelve.³⁴ During her studies at the Conservatoire,

Barraine proved herself to be an exceptional student and collected an impressive roster of prizes including *premier prix* in harmony, fugue, and accompaniment.

Barraine entered the competition for the first time in 1928, when she was one of two women, the other being Claude Arrieu, out of a total of ten candidates for the *concours d'essai*. Barraine, along with Henri Tomasi, Maurice Franck, Raymond Loucheur, Marc Vaubourgoin, and Georges Favre, progressed to round two.³⁵ The text chosen for the cantata was *Héraklès à Delphes*, by René Puaux. The *jugement préparatoire* took place on 29 June, and Barraine was proposed for the *deuxième second grand prix de Rome*, with a majority of five votes (out of a possible nine), with the additional comment that her cantata displayed a 'very pretty musical nature', 'talent' and 'serious promise'.³⁶ At the *jugement définitif*, which took place the next day, Barraine received five votes (out of twenty-three for the *premier second grand prix*, the other eighteen members abstaining); as a result the prize was not awarded. For the *deuxième second grand prix*, Barraine received twenty-three votes, representing a very strong endorsement of her entry. In his review for *Le Ménestrel*, Paul Bertrand praised Barraine's precocious compositional talents and her solid technique, though once again dwelt upon her sensitivity, a quality which he seemed to regard as feminine:

Mlle Elsa Barraine ... who was competing for the first time, has obtained straightaway a *deuxième second grand prix* ... This very young girl, who already possesses a singular sureness of writing, is in addition gifted ... with a fine, sensitive nature, which, as yet, only incompletely expresses itself, but which is full of promise ...³⁷

Encouraged by her success at winning a prize on her first attempt, at only eighteen, Barraine re-entered in 1929. That year eight candidates entered the *concours d'essai* (including three women: Elsa Barraine, Yvonne Desportes, and Claude Arrieu). Barraine, with Tony Aubin, Marc Vaubourgoin, Georges Favre, Jean Marie Dupont, and Sylver Caffot, progressed to round two.³⁸ The text for the 1929 cantata, *La Vierge Guerrière*, was written by Armand Foucher. The specialist musical jury proposed Barraine for the *premier grand prix* on account of 'the musicality of her work and the qualities of her orchestration'. The Académie des Beaux-Arts upheld the musicians' decision, with Barraine receiving twenty-two out of a possible thirty-one votes.³⁹ Paul Bertrand praised Barraine's developed musicality, the inventiveness of her writing, and, once again, her sensitivity:

Mlle Elsa Barraine ... to whom, this year, the Académie des Beaux-Arts has very justly awarded the *premier grand prix*. Her cantata ... confirms a nature that the cantata of 1928 had already fully revealed. This nature is of an essentially musical and non-dramatic order; a very contained sensitivity gives birth to an especially cerebral musical substance, but of high quality, and of a seduction all the more intense for being enveloped in a complex

writing, but also sure and distinguished writing, in which more refined than expressive chromaticism dominates ...⁴⁰

The extremely young age of the successful candidate in the music division of 1929 did not escape the notice of the wider press. The critics also remarked upon Barraine's sex. *Le Matin* commented on her youth, sex, and the precocious development of her talents:

This competition marks a great feminist success. Indeed, it is Mlle Elsa Barraine who won the first prize. The student ... is ... only nineteen years old. Last year she won the second prize. At the age of twelve, she entered the Conservatoire. Small, very dark, lively eyes behind horn-rimmed spectacles, the happy candidate did not conceal her joy.⁴¹

The description of Barraine's win as a 'great feminist success' is intriguing, and may be understood as fitting within wider contemporary journalistic trends to view women's artistic achievements as feminist manifestations. Jean de Merry, writing in *Éclair* in 1923, for instance, described Germaine Tailleferre and Hélène Perdriat's ballet *Le Marchand d'Oiseaux* as 'something which will please the feminists', despite the fact that neither Tailleferre nor Perdriat had any pronounced feminist leanings and that the work does not contain any strong feminist overtones.⁴²

In a curious review, which mingled admiration for Barraine with general disparagement towards women composers, *Le Petit Parisien* also commented on her youth and sex:

Mlle Barraine is not twenty years old ... She has, in her blue eyes, a calm seriousness, and we discern, behind her ample forehead, a world of totally fresh ideas. She welcomed her success with simplicity. Women have, in music, a diminished role: amongst them, there are few creative minds. Mlle Barraine, whose cantata on Joan of Arc has made a strong impression on the masters who have heard it, is she destined for something else?⁴³

The misogynistic assertion that Barraine was exceptional is undermined by the fact that she was the third woman to win the musical competition in the ten years since its reinstatement after the war, and further discredited by the public presence of many female composers in interwar French musical life, including Armande de Polignac, Germaine Tailleferre and Claude Arrieu. Moreover, Barraine was not the only woman to win a *premier grand prix de Rome* in 1929; she went to the Villa Médicis in the company of Aleth Guzman, who became the first woman to win the engraving section of the competition.⁴⁴

It is unsurprising that Barraine's victory caused widespread press reaction; nineteen was an exceptionally young age for any candidate, of either sex, to win. In gaining a prize on her first attempt (*deuxième second grand prix*, 1928), at the age of only eighteen, she actually surpassed even Lili Boulanger. Similar to Leleu, Barraine was encouraged to persevere with the competition by a

distinguished male composer: her teacher, Paul Dukas. That he, like Widor, actively supported female composition students provides further evidence that attitudes towards them were changing throughout the interwar period and more doors were opening.

Yvonne Desportes: following the classic *prix de Rome* pattern

In 1932 Yvonne Desportes (1907-1993) became the last woman to win the *premier grand prix* during the interwar years. Desportes came from an artistic family and received her earliest training from her father, the composer Émile Desportes. She entered a preparatory *solfège* class at the Paris Conservatoire in 1918, and studied for three years at the École Normale de Musique (1922-5) before returning to the Conservatoire where her talents secured a high number of prestigious prizes, including *premier prix* in harmony (1927) and fugue (1928).⁴⁵

Desportes competed for the *prix de Rome* four times: 1929, when she did not get past the *concours d'essai*; 1930, when she won the *deuxième second grand prix*; 1931, when she won the *premier second grand prix*; and 1932, when she finally attained the *premier grand prix*. Desportes' relationship with the *prix de Rome* followed the classic model of attempting round one, then progressing to the *second grand prix* awards before winning the *premier grand prix*. Her son, Michel Gemignani, has described her determination to win:

For her, the *grand prix* represented two things: it was the end of the musical training of a composer and it was the means by which to enter the professional world, because it was open to everyone. It was very difficult for a woman but she was obstinate because the *prix de Rome* was the assurance of acceptance, all the professors of composition at the Conservatoire had won. She was encouraged in her decision to persevere with the competition by the other women who had won.⁴⁶

In 1930, Desportes progressed to the second round for the first time with Tony Aubin, Marc Vaubourgoin, Georges Favre, Jacques Dupont and Jean Vuillermoz.⁴⁷ She was proposed for the *deuxième second grand prix* after receiving eight votes (against one for Dupont) at the *jugement préparatoire*; this decision was upheld by the Académie des Beaux-Arts: she received twenty votes (against seven for Dupont) at the *jugement définitif*.⁴⁸ Paul Bertrand's review of Desportes' cantata was couched in gendered terms, which highlighted the femininity of her cantata:

Mlle Yvonne Desportes ... competing for the first time, has obtained the *deuxième second grand prix* ... On the whole it is conceived harmonically and not contrapuntally. It is all delicacy, all femininity, attested by a marked predilection for ternary measures and rhythms, evoking with a pleasant spontaneity, a touching freshness of feeling ...⁴⁹

'Delicacy', 'femininity' and 'freshness' are typical descriptions

of women's compositions. There is, furthermore, a long association, in musico-critical writings, between femininity and ternary time signatures and rhythms.

Encouraged, Desportes re-entered in 1931 and progressed to the second round with Henriette Puig-Roget, René Challan, Jacques Dupont, Olivier Messiaen and Émile Marcelin.⁵⁰ The musical jury proposed Desportes' cantata, *L'Ensorceluse*, for the *premier second grand prix* (she carried six votes, against one for Marcelin, and two abstentions), the Académie des Beaux-Arts upheld the musicians' judgement (with nineteen for Desportes, two for Marcelin, three for Messiaen, and one abstention).⁵¹ Paul Bertrand's annual review argued that Desportes had produced the most homogenous and skilful cantata, but that it was marred by a lack of compositional scope and sensitivity:

Mlle Yvonne Desportes ... obtained this year the *premier second grand prix* ... Her cantata was perhaps, out of all of them, the most homogenous and the most skilful by a keen sense of progressions and contrast. But it seemed to lack somewhat both scope and real sensitivity.⁵²

Desportes competed for the final time in 1932, when she succeeded in winning the *premier grand prix*. That year she progressed to round two with Marc Berthomieu, Émile Marcelin, Henriette Puig-Roget, Jean Vuillermoz and Marc Vaubourgoin.⁵³ The text was *Le Pardon* by Paul Arosa. Desportes was proposed for the *premier grand prix* by the music jury (with six votes against three for Marcelin), with the comment that her cantata was 'well treated, good craftsmanship, good orchestration, good character development'.⁵⁴ The Académie des Beaux-Arts upheld the decision (with Desportes taking sixteen votes against Marcelin's six).⁵⁵ Paul Bertrand commented on Desportes' sensitivity and theatrical expertise:

The *premier grand prix* has been awarded, very rightfully, to Mlle Yvonne Desportes ... Mlle Desportes possesses a real sensitivity and a precious gift for dramatic expression. She found herself at ease in the interpretation of a text of clearly theatrical nature. Without sacrificing to excess the intrinsic quality of the music, she subordinated it to the drama, and notably gave to the Romance a colour at once simple and moving, enveloped the drinking song in a picturesque fantasy.⁵⁶

Desportes' achievement is extraordinary, and her desire to win the competition all the more pronounced as, throughout the duration of her struggles with the competition, her personal life was complicated by her first marriage, daughter's birth, and divorce. Throughout its history, the Institut de France has generally been considered a conservative institution. Awarding the *prix de Rome* to Desportes in 1931, a time when the French government sought to marginalise women within the domestic sphere and exclude them from public life, suggests that women

were sufficiently accepted by the Académie des Beaux-Arts for them to award their highest prize to a young mother, whose divorce and determination to succeed as a musician represented a significant flouting of normal social conventions. Like Barraine, Desportes was encouraged by Dukas, their mutual composition teacher.

Conclusion: the *prix de Rome* as professional recognition

Obtaining the *prix de Rome* generated immediate benefits for all of the female winners. The competition's prestige, and high level of press coverage, brought them immediate attention, which resulted in opportunities for commissions, performances, and publications. Leleu's *envois de Rome* (works completed at the Villa Médicis), for example, entered the performing repertoire of the Orchestre Colonne in the late 1920s. On their return from Rome, Canal, Leleu, Barraine, and Desportes all received teaching appointments at the Paris Conservatoire, as was the usual custom for former *prix de Rome* winners, though none of them were appointed to teach composition. They all pursued successful careers. That they have now become obscure figures within music history says more about musicology than about the times in which they lived and worked. Serious study of women composers only emerged within music history in the late 1980s and much work still remains to be done in this area.

In assessing the achievements of the women competitors for the *prix de Rome* during the interwar years, however, it is important not to overstate their attainments. Twenty-four *premier grand prix de Rome* were awarded between 1919 and 1939 but only four of these went to women. The large proportional difference between the number of awards won by men and women suggests that it was still difficult for a woman to win. The criticism that all four received, whilst acknowledging their talents, still contained gendered language. The winning candidates' successes, however, represent public recognition of their talents from the most important artistic institution in France. Greater professional opportunities were opening up for women composers in France during these years, with works by women regularly appearing in print, and on the programmes of all the major Parisian concert series. Success in the *prix de Rome* competition symbolised the greater access to professional status which women were attaining and represented another facet of the wider gender struggles of the time.

Notes

1. This article is based upon doctoral research funded by the Cardiff University Eleanor Amy Bowen Award. A preliminary version was read at the Royal Musical Association/Society for Music in Ireland Joint Annual Conference, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin, July 2009. All translations from the original French are by the author.
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- Politics', in *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A. Bernstein (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 2004), 60-86.
3. See Marcia J. Citron, 'Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon', *The Journal of Musicology*, 8/1 (Winter, 1990), 102-17.
 4. *Le Prix de Rome en composition musicale*, information brochure, Académie des Beaux-Arts.
 5. Eugène Bozza, 'The History of the "Prix de Rome"', *Hinrichsen's Musical Yearbook*, 7 (1952), 487-94 and David Gilbert, 'Prix de Rome', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, volume 20, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, Macmillan, 2nd ed. 2001), 385-7.
 6. Susan K. Foley, *Women in France since 1789* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 155.
 7. *Ibid.*, 157-8.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. Steven C. Hause, 'More Minerva than Mars: The French Women's Rights Campaign and the First World War', in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1987), 100-1.
 10. *Ibid.*, 99.
 11. Foley, *Women in France*, 171.
 12. Françoise Thébaud, 'The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division', in *A History of Women in the West: V. Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA, Belknap Harvard University Press, 1994), 43.
 13. Foley, *Women in France*, 172.
 14. Karen Offen, 'Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1950', in *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the Welfare States, 1880s-1950s*, ed. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (London, Routledge, 1991), 138-159.
 15. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilisation Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994), 91.
 16. Mary Louise Roberts, 'Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashions in 1920s France', *The American Historical Review*, 98/3 (1993), 657-84.
 17. Steven C. Hause with Anne R. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984).
 18. Fauser, "'Fighting in Frills": Women and the Prix de Rome in French Cultural Politics', 60-86.
 19. Caroline Potter, 'Nadia and Lili Boulanger: Sister Composers', *The Musical Quarterly*, 83/4 (1999), 548.
 20. For a study of women composers in nineteenth-century France, see Florence Launay, *Les Compositrices en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, Fayard, 2006).
 21. Dominique Longuet, 'Marguerite Canal', in *Compositrices Françaises au XXème siècle*, ed. Association Femmes et Musique (Paris, Delatour France, 2007), 67-71.
 22. Archives of the Institut de France (AIF), Box 5E79.
 23. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (3 July 1920).
 24. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome (3 Juillet 1920)', *Le Ménestrel*, 9 July 1920.
 25. Citron, 'Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon', 108-9.
 26. Charles Dauzats, 'L'Académie des Beaux-Arts – Le Grand Prix de Rome', *Le Figaro*, 4 July 1920.
 27. Anonymous, 'Mlle Canal obtient le prix de Rome de musique', *Le Petit Parisien*, 4 July 1920.
 28. Marguerite Canal, *La Française*, 30 May 1934.
 29. Eugène Bozza, 'The History of the "Prix de Rome"', *Hinrichsen's Musical Yearbook*, 7 (1952), 487-94.
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 31. Cecilia Dunoyer, *Marguerite Long: A Life in French Music, 1874-1966* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993), 94.
 32. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (1 July 1922).
 33. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome', *Le Ménestrel*, 6 July 1923.
 34. Raffi Ourgandjian, 'Elsa Barraine', in *Compositrices Françaises au XXème siècle*, 41-6.
 35. AIF, Box 5E82.
 36. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (29 June 1928).
 37. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome', *Le Ménestrel*, 6 July 1928.
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 39. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (29 June 1929).
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 41. Anonymous, 'Une jeune fille de 19 ans Grand Prix de Rome de Musique', *Le Matin*, 30 June 1929.
 42. Jean de Merry, 'Pour les féministes', *Éclair* (24 May 1923); see Laura Hamer, 'Germaine Tailleferre and Hélène Perdriat's *Le Marchand d'Oiseaux* (1923): French Feminist Ballet?', *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 4/1 (2010), 213-20.
 43. Anonymous, 'Les Prix de Rome de musique', *Le Petit Parisien*, 30 June 1929.
 44. 'Victoires des femmes', press clipping, Fonds Elsa Barraine, Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, Paris.
 45. Marecl-Jean Vilcosqui, 'Yvonne Desportes', in *Compositrices Françaises au XXème siècle*, 99-105.
 46. Interview with Michel Gemignani (3 July 2007).
 47. AIF, Box 5E82.
 48. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (5 July 1930).
 49. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome', *Le Ménestrel*, 11 July 1930.
 50. AIF, Box 5E82.
 51. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (3 and 4 July 1931).
 52. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome', *Le Ménestrel*, 10 July 1931.
 53. AIF, Box 5E82.
 54. AIF, *Procès verbaux* (1 July 1932).
 55. *Ibid.*, (2 July 1932).
 56. Paul Bertrand, 'Concours de Rome', *Le Ménestrel*, 8 July 1932.

Articulating abortion in interwar Britain

Lesley A. Hall

Wellcome Library London

At the end of the First World War abortion was illegal, and not a subject publicly discussed: it was debated by doctors and lawyers under discreet veils of professional privilege, or in whispers and hints between unwillingly pregnant women, their partners and their associates. By the end of the 1930s, the subject had featured in several well-received novels and the question of legalisation was extensively discussed throughout the decade. This article sets out to establish the significant part played by activist feminist women in creating a public debate on abortion, leading ultimately to the reform of the existing laws in the UK.

The agency of women was crucial in moving the question of abortion from a private matter into public spaces, to enable the discussion of its prevalence openly and advancing the case for legalisation. Several leading women's organisations passed resolutions during the 1930s urging reform of the law as it stood, and amnesty for the women currently imprisoned for procuring 'backstreet' abortions. An Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) was founded in 1936 by a group of leftwing feminist women, many of whom had previously been active in the Workers' Birth Control Group's struggle to legitimate contraception during the 1920s. In 1937, through the intervention of the woman doctor Joan Malleson (one of the founders of ALRA), the eminent gynaecological surgeon Aleck Bourne made a principled challenge to the law in court and achieved a case-law ruling on the parameters within which a doctor might licitly procure an abortion.

Prior to this movement doctors were permitted to discuss abortion, but only as a matter of professional interest with other medical men: this was just as hidden from general view as the discreet and coded whispers of women over the kitchen table or on the factory floor. The topic was kept out of the public domain by something that was less a deliberate conspiracy of silence than a silent miasma of unspeakableness outside certain very specific contexts: the discourses were highly if informally controlled. The emergence of a public debate around abortion in the UK between the two world wars owed a good deal to a North European Protestant tradition and also to the British common-law system. Far from being private confessions, several important acts in the British interwar abortion debate could be considered as forming part of a tradition of testimony, or bearing witness, as a public gesture (as with the 1877 Bradlaugh and Besant prosecution for publishing a birth control manual).¹ Not only Aleck Bourne's courageous offering of himself for a test case in court,² but the painful account based on personal experience of Olivia's abortion in Rosamund Lehmann's *The Weather in the Streets* and Stella Browne's declaration to the Birkett Committee in 1937 that she had herself undergone abortion without adverse health consequences, fit this model.³

Legal and medical discourses

It is necessary to consider the context within which women were speaking out about women's experiences of abortion. The matter was seen as falling strictly within the professional purview of lawyers and doctors, rather than being suitable for general discussion. References in literary texts were considered shocking even though usually euphemistic. Harley Granville Barker's 1907 play *Waste* was refused a licence for public production in part because the plot turned on the (offstage) death from illegal abortion of a woman who had had a brief affair with the protagonist. It was not produced on the public stage until 1936, at a point when abortion was already becoming a topic of lay discussion.⁴

The actual law penalising abortion in England and Wales was the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, under which the maximum penalty for an attempt to procure an abortion was imprisonment for life. In practice the law was unenforceable to anything like its fullest extent since the operation was impossible to police.⁵

Legal and medical attitudes were by no means monolithic, given dissension between judges and doctors over whether the latter were obliged to give evidence obtained through clinical attention upon women who had had illegal operations. Mr Justice Avory, at the Birmingham Assizes in December 1914, criticised medical men, who had attended a woman who subsequently died as the result of an illegal abortion, for their failure to pass on information enabling a statement to be taken from the woman about the abortionist. He did 'not doubt, that it is the duty of the medical man to communicate with the police, or with the authorities' in order to obtain evidence in correct legal form. These strictures induced the Royal College of Physicians to obtain counsel's opinion, and pass a resolution 'Concerning the Duties of Medical Practitioners in Relation to Cases of Criminal Abortion'. These stated the 'moral obligation' to respect the patient's confidence; without her consent a doctor would not be 'justified in disclosing information obtained in the course of his professional attendance'. However, if a doctor was convinced that criminal abortion had occurred, he should urge the patient, especially should she be likely to die, to make a statement, 'provided always that her chance of recovery are not therefore prejudiced'. If she refused to make a statement, the doctor was under no obligation to take further action except those to do with his medical attendance upon the patient. Practitioners were strongly advised to take the best medical and legal advice available, both to ensure that any statement by the patient had evidential status, and 'to safeguard his own interest' in the case of any 'subsequent litigation'. While this did not constitute the law of the land, the doctor's compliance should ensure the support of influential professional

institutions.⁶

The subject naturally concerned the medical profession. Professional male complicity with notions of women's essential reproductive function and the selfishness of women attempting to avoid maternity, or a refusal to conceal female sexual misconduct, seem to have been rather less influential causes of medical reluctance to terminate pregnancies than the possibility that a well-meaning doctor might end up in court and struck off the medical register. *Taylor's Principles and Practice of Medical Jurisprudence* (7th edition, 1920) claimed that 'Medical science has ... been busy in perfecting the means of safely emptying a uterus', rendering the operation 'almost free from risk' and 'assuredly free from any traces that a medical jurist could detect as by themselves evidence of malpraxis'. However, it was also pointed out that 'strictly speaking ... there is no such thing as justifiable abortion; the law recognises no such possibility; a medical man must always remember this when he contemplates emptying a pregnant uterus'.⁷

Counsel to the Royal College of Physicians had given the opinion in 1896 that 'the law does not forbid the procurement of abortion ... [where it] is necessary to save the mother's life'. However, 'to prevent a false charge, a chance of blackmail, and even to prevent misapprehension on the part of a woman', the sensible medical man, prior to 'emptying a uterus, [should] place himself in the position of being able to prove' that he did it to save the woman's life, 'and for no other' reason. The golden rule was first to obtain 'a second professional opinion as to its necessity' (emphasised in the text), ideally in writing, given the risks of prosecution should the woman die.

The intriguing comment, however, that, 'Because one obstetric practitioner of large experience may have frequently and successfully induced premature labour, without observing the above rule, and without any imputation on his character, this cannot shield another who may be more fortunately situated', suggests that it was fairly common knowledge within the profession that certain specialists were prepared to undertake terminations.⁸ The Interdepartmental Committee on Abortion (Birkett Committee), appointed in the late 1930s, similarly remarked that, 'It would be optimistic to suppose that the one or two medical practitioners' recently convicted under the relevant law were 'the only doctors who have transgressed the law in this matter'. It was quite clear that there were those 'ready to perform the operation at a price, without further question', whose activities escaped detection.⁹

Doctors' professional reputations were not only endangered by performing abortions themselves. The Glaisters, in their *Textbook of Medical Jurisprudence* (1931), warned of potential dangers to medical practitioners in cases where the woman herself or an accomplice had induced the abortion. A doctor might be called in 'to save the life of the woman from the consequences of the illegal act' and if she died might 'be compromised in the eyes of the law'. Lacking a second medical opinion to testify that he had endeavoured to treat, rather than induce, a miscarriage, the doctor was advised to 'quietly arrang[e]



Abortion Pills (image with the kind permission of the Wellcome Library)

that a female neighbour or nurse should be called in so that she may be able to speak to the facts of the onset of the abortion'.¹⁰

The attitude of many members of the medical profession towards abortion was thus characterised by a fearful timidity of the potential professional hazards it might involve, rather than concern over its ethical status. The continuing impression is of doctors being very careful indeed to cover their backs, but at least there was a prioritisation of factors promoting the possible recovery of the woman and her right to die in peace. This contrasts with the situation in many parts of the USA, described by Leslie Reagan in *When Abortion was a Crime*, where dying women in hospitals were badgered to give evidence against illegal abortionists, while doctors were pressured by the state legal authorities to permit this.¹¹

Works on medical jurisprudence and forensic medicine consistently struck this cautionary tone. Nonetheless, 'induction of abortion' found a place in textbooks of obstetrics and midwifery of the same era, which simply mentioned that it was 'legitimate treatment under certain circumstances',¹² and not criminal if 'performed by a registered medical practitioner and on absolutely justifiable grounds'.¹³ Even so, the necessity of a second opinion from 'an independent practitioner of standing' in writing was emphasised, as this would prevent 'any attempt at blackmail'.¹⁴

Most textbooks merely delineated acceptable medical grounds, but the fifth edition of *Midwifery by Ten Teachers* (1935) went rather further, cautioning that, with the increased safety of surgery generally, 'there is a distinct tendency to have recourse to this ... on grounds of expediency rather than of absolute necessity'. Indeed there might be 'pressure on the practitioner ... so strong that he may be persuaded against his better judgement'. Doctors were reminded that:

No social questions, no pressure from husbands, relatives or friends, no objections of the patient to continuing with the discomforts and troubles of her pregnancy, must be allowed to weigh in the decision. The

question is to be settled purely on medical grounds, and every effort must be made to check the patient's story by observation, for she will exaggerate every symptom, and produce new ones if the old ones fail to give the looked-for result.¹⁵

This is a striking passage, not only for what it tells us about the attitudes of the authors, but for the picture it paints of the strategies which patients employed to obtain the desired result and, indeed, its implication that these were commonly encountered in the consulting room. It may not explicitly invoke the 'selfish society woman' stereotype, but this does seem to lurk in the subtext.

The legal profession also had particular opportunity to observe the extent of the problem even though cases that reached court only represented the tip of the iceberg. They encountered 'great reluctance among juries to bring in verdicts of wilful murder for abortion, from an idea that there is no "malice aforethought" in the act, and that, as a matter of fact, the abortionist hopes that she will recover and may do his best to assist recovery'. It was difficult to persuade juries 'of even the technical guilt'.¹⁶

One of the first figures to bring the topic into the public realm was the High Court Judge, Mr Justice McCardie, speaking from the bench in his judicial capacity at Leeds Assizes in 1931. While he may not have been entirely representative of his colleagues in the legal profession, a number of jurists of the day concurred with his view that 'the law of abortion should itself be amended' in the light of medical and surgical progress and social changes. McCardie expressed sympathy not only with women 'exhausted with childbearing ... doomed to misery' but also with abortionists such as Frances Wring, who had 'performed this act at the distracted request of a girl of 19'.¹⁷ There was an increasing feeling among lawyers and judges that the law itself was bad and needed emendation; just as other laws, such as the two divorce acts of 1923 and 1937, relating to personal conduct and morality issues were being amended at this period.

General practitioners consider the issue

Medical textbooks were written by eminent consultants. While they might hold honorary posts at hospitals, the bulk of their practice, and the most remunerative part, would have been among privileged private patients. A rather different perspective was to be found among general practitioners, who were more likely to encounter pleas for abortion which, even lacking definite medical grounds, might seem amply justified for wider social and economic reasons. They were also much more likely to see the outcome of illegal abortions. Furthermore, it was much more probable that, should things go wrong, a humble GP was at greater risk of prosecution than Sir Eminent Gynaecological Surgeon with a Harley Street address and consultant posts at famous hospitals.

In 1934 the British Medical Association, which represented this sector of the profession, set up, admittedly against considerable resistance within its

ranks, a committee on the medico-legal aspects of abortion. Its report was published, after a good deal of controversy, in 1936. This emphasised the vagueness of the law; even though it had been suggested that the law was in fact adaptable in practice, although not in theory, to changes in social theory, it was hardly fair to place upon the doctor the responsibility of interpreting public opinion. There was great divergence of views and practice among doctors themselves. The Infant Life Preservation Act of 1929 had only confused the situation further. The existing law allowed of 'a wide latitude of interpretation' which could lead to 'very unfortunate consequences', from those who believed it justified abortion 'on the basis of the mental anxiety, sleeplessness, etc, which accompany an unwanted pregnancy' to those who would 'allow the patient's health to be seriously prejudiced in the absence of overwhelming evidence that the continuance of pregnancy is certain to cause death'. The law contained 'elements which [might leave] the doctor exposed to risks of suspicion and professional damage', and even unjustified indictment resulting in acquittal might 'severely damage the reputation of a medical man'. As the result of the lack of clarity in the situation, many practitioners might 'demur to perform therapeutic abortion, with a consequent risk of sacrifice of the health or life of the patients under their care'.¹⁸

The committee thus reached the conclusion that the law ought to 'contain an explicit statement of the principles which should govern the lawful artificial termination of pregnancy'. It thought that some system which wrote into the law the recurrent theme of the second opinion would suffice, providing that safeguards against collusion were also present, possibly by giving certain doctors a specific status for approving such operations (an analogy with the Mental Treatment Act was invoked). The Committee believed that the acceptance of this proposal would 'be one of the greatest boons that could possibly be conferred on the profession in regard to the whole matter'.¹⁹

It would also reduce the incidence of unlawful abortion. There was even a nod to the arguments for legalising abortion 'under certain controlled conditions, for social and economic reasons', if only because this would rescue women from the 'risk to life and health implied in an illicit procedure in the hands of unskilled persons'. However, although doctors were 'peculiarly able to appreciate' the 'social, the economic and the ethical factors' which led women to seek abortions, this was not something on which the 'profession in its corporate capacity' could be expected to have an opinion.²⁰

Women and abortion

Was what was going on in the interwar period a case of the legal and medical professions, still, at that time, both overwhelmingly male, making necessary adjustments to a changed world and improvements in surgical safety? Without the intervention of women, it is highly questionable whether abortion would have become a publicly debated issue, leading to the appointment of a government committee of investigation.

Many women at the time had no idea that abortion was illegal. It was part of women's subculture, and something that has only fairly recently been addressed by historians. Kate Fisher has demonstrated that 'respondents' representations of abortion were strikingly different from the late twentieth-century, Western culture of abortion. While they might realise that going to an abortionist was illegal, there was 'less perception that self-induced abortions were criminal' and there was little concern over the 'right to life' of the unborn foetus: it was the health risks to the woman herself or family economic factors which dominated women's decisions to abort. It was accepted as a practical necessity of life. There was a very fuzzy boundary between taking measures to bring on a delayed period and actively envisaging terminating a pregnancy.²¹ Emma Jones has further illuminated these attitudes and the existence of neighbourhood and workplace networks accessed by both women and men to obtain information on local abortionists.²²

Similar attitudes towards the termination of pregnancy can be seen in the correspondence received by Marie Stopes, author of the bestselling advice manual *Married Love* (1918) and founder of the first UK birth control clinic in 1921. She received copious amounts of correspondence from readers of her books and articles by or about her in the media, including, much to her horror, requests for assistance in dealing with unwanted conception which had already taken place. This was usually couched, as Fisher's evidence would lead us to expect, in terms of 'bringing on' a delayed period: e.g. 'to advise me to something to bring my monthly appearance as I am just over a week of my time'²³ and 'I ought to have seen 27 May and I did not see anything ... please, please do help me'.²⁴ There was little sense that they were asking for anything illegal, and it seems to have been pervasively believed that in the early stages, this was quite licit.

The official line promoted by Stopes, and the birth control movement in general, was that birth control was quite distinct from abortion, and that lifting restrictions on the dissemination of contraceptive advice would make a substantial contribution to the problem of illegal abortion and its consequences for the health of numerous women. Records kept by clinics from their earliest days revealed the extent to which women were resorting to self-induced or backstreet abortion, or if nothing else, the consumption of various supposed remedies which were either expensive scams or in themselves deleterious. The public line of the movement remained anti-abortion, on grounds of the dangers backstreet abortion posed to women's health, rather than right-to-life arguments. The struggle for birth control was uphill enough in itself for most campaigners to resist the temptation to burden themselves further with demands for the legalisation of abortion. Dora Russell of the Workers' Birth Control Group wrote, looking back, that 'the agitation for abortion law reform was a definite hindrance to what we were trying to do about contraception' during the 1920s,²⁵ although during the 1930s Russell became one of the founders of the Abortion Law Reform Association.²⁶

However, public protestations and private practice

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were rather different. In private letters to correspondents, Stopes was occasionally prepared to go rather further than she dared in her published works, as carbon copies of responses, which she helpfully kept, indicate. She gave recommendations for treating menstrual irregularity (though emphasising that this would only be effective if the trouble was a delayed period).²⁷ In some cases, she was prepared to go so far as to recommend 'the evacuation of the uterus' on health grounds, and even to recommend a doctor who might undertake the operation.²⁸ Stopes was not unique. The writer Naomi Mitchison, who was involved with the North Kensington Women's Welfare Clinic in the 1930s, said in an interview many years later: 'Of course we all knew one or two people who could do planned abortions. It was highly illegal and probably all the committee helped people who were in desperate trouble. We all did. The amount of prison sentences that I could have accumulated!' She added that she had no regrets about this.²⁹

Mitchison was representative of a group of women, many involved with the birth control movement, for whom abortion was a matter of personal interest and concern. These were self-consciously modern women, feminist in outlook, taking advantage of the new sexual freedoms possible to women in their relatively privileged positions; Mitchison, for example, had a mutually agreed-upon 'open marriage'.³⁰ In biographies of, and memoirs or novels clearly based on personal experience by, women of the period,

abortion frequently occurs: as attempted, considered, or at least an ever-present possibility. Mitchison's own novel of contemporary life, *We Have Been Warned* (1935), includes the contemplation of a termination by one of the main characters, already married with several children.³¹ A joint biography of the Mitford sisters reveals that Diana had an abortion (presumably in a Harley Street nursing home) when she was living with, but not yet married to, Oswald Mosley, to avoid damaging his political career. Her sister Jessica had a five-pound backstreet abortion 'deep in the East End slums', after the family had cut her off for marrying the communist Esmond Romilly.³² The best known literary portrayal of abortion, in Lehmann's 1936 novel *The Weather in the Streets*, was based on her own experience, involving referral *via* a socialite relative to a successful physiotherapist in the West End who ran a 'flourishing practice on the side'. Although this seems to have cost the typical £100, it did not even involve nursing home care. After the 'little intervention', Lehmann was sent home to await the miscarriage and the novel describes this experience in harrowing detail.³³ The distinguished civil servant, Dame Alix Meynell, mentioned in her autobiography that for an unmarried, sexually-active, young career woman, such as she had been, the possibility of needing an abortion was always on the cards. She cited £100 for the operation in a discreet nursing home.³⁴ The politician Jennie Lee horrified Aneurin Bevan's sister by saying that if she got pregnant she had £100 and knew exactly what to do.³⁵ Pamela Frankau's 1939 novel, *The Devil We Know*, mentions the 'safe' £100 abortion and the one which cost £10-£20 and 'was all right' (i.e. it was at least performed by medical professionals), involving seedy general practitioners in semi-slummy areas.³⁶

However, while women were beginning to give voice to this facet of their lives, the subject remained taboo. René Weiss, in his study of the Bywaters/Thompson murder case, claims that Edith Thompson's attempt to self-administer an abortifacient (which her husband actually ingested), was too shocking to be brought in evidence, even though this left the impression of a deliberate attempt to poison her husband.³⁷ F. Tennyson Jesse's fictionalisation of this case included the Thompson character undergoing a backstreet abortion from a woman living over a newsagent's shop.³⁸

So between the actual presence of an increasingly articulate birth control movement emphasising the need for women to control their reproductive destiny, and the willingness of women to go public on this secret facet of female life, abortion was moving out of the realm of whispered conversations about ways and means. But it took some time to become a cause for women in the way that birth control had by the early 1920s.

Women taking abortion into the public sphere

When Dora Russell referred to the agitation for abortion law reform as 'a definite hindrance to what we were trying to do', she was alluding to just one woman, who from 1915 until 1934 lived up to the statement in Janet Chance's chronology of the movement for abortion

law reform.³⁹ Between the 1861 Offences against the Person Act and 1935, the sole entry (in block capitals) reads 'STELLA CAMPAIGNS ALONE'.⁴⁰ Throughout this period Stella Browne, who was active in the birth control movement as a member of the Malthusian League and a supporter of the Workers' Birth Control Group, was emphasising the need for legal and safe surgical abortion. She pointed out that facilities for adequate instruction in birth control were still very inadequate, available methods were unreliable, and even conscientiously used might fail. She took the extreme radical line that abortion was necessary to provide women with control over their own reproductive capacities, rather than basing her arguments on maternal and child health. She also made the point that legalising abortion would facilitate research into methods both of more reliable contraception and of safer and earlier methods of abortion.⁴¹ She appears to have been well in advance of most of the medical profession in grasping the implications of the Ascheim-Zondek hormonal test, which could diagnose pregnancy at a much earlier stage than existing methods.⁴²

However, throughout the 1920s, she was regarded as something of an embarrassment by colleagues in the birth control movement, though Dora Russell admitted, 'I did glory in her intransigence'.⁴³ After the concession by the Ministry of Health in 1930 that birth control might be given in certain stringently-defined circumstances in local authority maternal welfare clinics, and the establishment of the National Birth Control Association (NBCA) as a coordinating body for the various organisations already working in the field, a number of activists saw abortion law reform as the new frontier. Several women who had been prominent in the Workers' Birth Control Group, which having achieved its aim dissolved itself and handed over its assets to the NBCA,⁴⁴ began informally to promote the need for reform of the law. Except in the case of Stella Browne, their arguments tended to be framed in terms of the suffering created by self-induced and backstreet abortion among working women, contrasting this with the availability of abortion to the better-off and better-informed.

On 3 November 1932, a meeting to discuss 'the present laws concerning abortion' was organised under the auspices of the British Section of the World League for Sexual Reform. While the moving spirit appears to have been Dr Norman Haire, the leading figure in this organisation, he only chaired the public meeting, which was addressed by the French campaigner for female reproductive choice, Mme Berty Albrecht, Dora Russell, Janet Chance and Stella Browne. 'Needless to say', Stella wrote to *The Weekend Review*, 'the meeting was not reported in the daily Press'.⁴⁵ Stella and her colleagues continued to promote a cause which was also being addressed as an urgent issue of public health with adverse repercussions on national population by other bodies: the British Medical Association committee has already been mentioned.

In 1934 the extent to which this apparently unpopular cause had mass support among activist women was demonstrated by the overwhelming majority at the annual conference of the Women's Cooperative Guild supporting

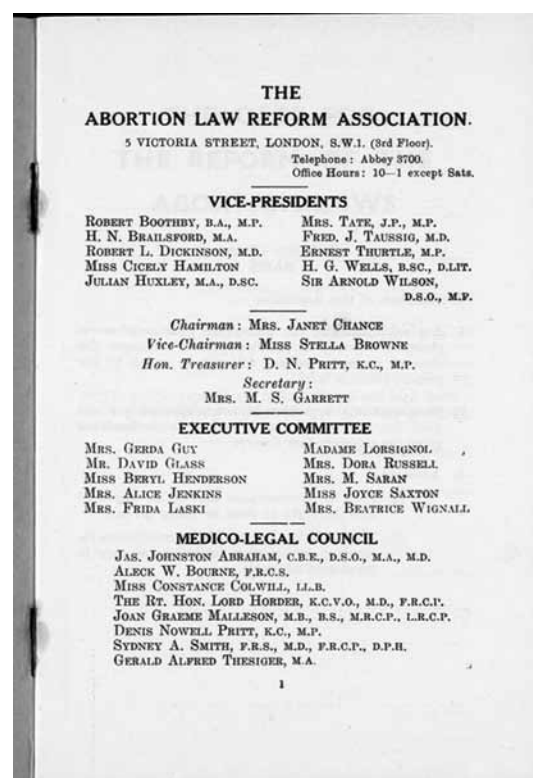
a resolution in favour of legalising abortion and providing amnesty for convicted abortionists.⁴⁶ The passing of similar resolutions by other large women's organisations followed: the National Council of Women in the following year,⁴⁷ and the National Council for Equal Citizenship in 1936.⁴⁸

Around this time, there appears to have been something of a shift in the gendered stereotypes of the abortionist. A counter-image to the wise and implicitly male doctor who might, in very rare cases, safely induce miscarriage to save a desperately ill woman's life, and his antithesis, the evil filthy hag with a knitting needle, was emerging. The female abortionist became a sympathetic, even maternal, good neighbour motivated by the urge to assist a fellow woman in desperate straits for little or no monetary reward.⁴⁹ Emma Jones has noted that fictional depictions tend to include allusions to attention to cleanliness and hygiene.⁵⁰ The male doctor became the smooth Harley Street surgeon, adept at bending the letter of law for the appropriate remuneration: the sum constantly cited across a range of diverse sources was £100 or sometimes guineas - equivalent to £4000-5000 in modern terms. Dorothy Thurtle, in her account of this trade, suggested that at least some of the doctors in question were acting from humanitarian motives but she deplored their furtive evasion of the law, instead of openly arguing the need for its wider reform, and the severe economic limitations on who was able to access their services.⁵¹

Early in 1935, Dr Joan Malleson organised a conference, of which details are frustratingly scanty, on the legalisation of abortion,⁵² leading to the formation, the following year, of the Abortion Law Reform Association, by a group of laywomen who had already been active in the cause. They proposed, as a basis for an Abortion Society, repeal of the existing law in favour of one 'freeing the medical profession from all legal restrictions except those required by medical or humanitarian considerations'.⁵³

On 15 May 1936, an inaugural conference took place at Conway Hall, London. A number of distinguished figures in medicine, politics, feminism and the birth control struggle were present, and letters of support were read from well-known names.⁵⁴ After this, the Association proceeded with a campaign of lecturing to potentially sympathetic groups and coordinating the sending of letters to the press on the subject of abortion law reform.⁵⁵

Other bodies were also concerned with the problem, though the BMA Committee's report, mentioned earlier, only recommended making it easier for doctors to make the clinical decision without fear of prosecution. The Joint Council on Midwifery set up a committee in 1936 to investigate illegal abortion, which undertook surveys in several areas between 1937 and 1939. However, its agenda was from the outset the prevention of abortion rather than changing the existing law, and its solution was to advise restricting the sale of abortifacients and introducing notification of miscarriages.⁵⁶ This solution the BMA had dismissed, as unlikely to 'furnish any reliable information' and which might well 'increase the reluctance of the patients to consult a registered medical practitioner'.⁵⁷



Abortion Law Reform Association: Officers and Executive Committee (image with the kind permission of the Wellcome Library)

Finally, in May 1937, the Government took action, setting up an Inter-Departmental Committee on Abortion (the two departments concerned were the Ministry of Health and the Home Office) under the chairmanship of the eminent lawyer, Norman Birkett. This heard extensive evidence from numerous interested organisations, including the Abortion Law Reform Association, as well as receiving individual statements from Stella Browne and other members of the Association. It failed to reach any agreement satisfactory to all members: when the report finally appeared in 1939, it included reservations both individual and collective from various members, and a dissenting Minority Report from Dorothy Thurtle, formerly of the Workers' Birth Control Group.⁵⁸ Also, by the time it appeared, war loomed and the Government and the country as a whole had other painful priorities.

However, in the previous year, a law-case had occurred which owed its initiation to the concern and debates which had led to the appointment of the Birkett Committee. This was the trial of the eminent obstetric surgeon, Aleck Bourne, for terminating the pregnancy of a fourteen-year-old girl, pregnant as the result of gang-rape by soldiers at Kensington Barracks. Bourne had already been on the lookout for a suitable test case of the law and, early in 1938, Joan Malleson, having seen this girl and her parents in her own practice, contacted him with the view to providing an abortion. Bourne took the girl into St Mary's Hospital, where he kept her under observation to assure himself that she was really pregnant and that her physical and mental health were at severe risk. There seems to

have been a subtext to make sure that she really was a good girl who had been the victim of a traumatic event. After performing the operation, he sent the evidence to the Metropolitan Police. He had picked this case wisely. Many people who would not have assented to any wider extension of the law nonetheless considered that it ought to be allowed in cases of rape or underage sex. The girl had undergone an ordeal, to which she had testified in court, and her attackers had been convicted.

The judge of the case, Mr Justice McNaughton, was clearly in sympathy. Counsel for the defence asked, before addressing the jury, if McNaughton would clarify his reading of the law, as he could not argue a point of law contrary to the judge. McNaughton responded that there might be a lawful procuring of abortion; 'the operation if done by a skilled person in good faith without risk to the mother must be lawful'. Four witnesses for the defence were called (Malleeson had been a witness for the Crown). They were four eminent medical figures: the police surgeon who had examined the girl after her rape to testify to the damage; J. R. Rees of the Tavistock Clinic to speak to the likely mental effects; William Gilliatt, a gynaecologist who had known Bourne for twenty years and could testify to his character and skill; and, probably the trump card, Lord Horder, an extremely eminent physician and public figure. The judge summed up that the operation had been 'performed by a surgeon of the highest skill at one of our teaching hospitals, unquestionably believing that what he was doing was in fact his duty as a doctor', adding that, 'Regarding the danger to life, none could be certain of this danger unless he waited until the patient was dead'. The jury retired for forty minutes, and returned a verdict of 'Not Guilty'. The leading medical journal, *The Lancet*, while congratulating Bourne on this victory for his principled stand, suggested that paradoxically a less triumphant acquittal might have done more for a thorough examination of the state of the law.⁵⁹

Did it make any difference?

It could be argued that the judgement in the Bourne case, as modified by a couple of later judgements, *R. v. Bergmann and Ferguson* in 1948 and *R. v. Newton and Stungo* in 1958, which further established the parameters within which a doctor might procure an abortion, went as far as most members of the medical profession would have wanted to go, by giving some leeway for psychiatric, as well as more obvious physical indications for termination, to be clinically permissible.⁶⁰ The Bourne case reassured those who simply wanted to feel confident that clinical judgements did not have to be made with a phantom policeman's hand on the back of the collar, and tended to stymie any demands from the profession for more searching reform of the 1861 Act's provisions.

This upsurge of concern and activism around abortion during the 1930s appears to have had little substantial immediate impact on changing the law. Any possibility of further reform was put on hold by the outbreak of war. Momentum was lost and, although subsequent case law further defined the parameters within which a doctor

might in good faith plead clinical necessity, no statutory legislation ensued. As Paul Ferris discovered in his investigation of abortion in England and Wales just before the passing of the Abortion Act, caution still pertained in the care with which a second opinion was sought and discretion employed, even by those who had extensive and remunerative practices based on terminations.⁶¹ The desire of medical professionals to cover their backs over an operation which, even if granted legality, remained an area of intense ethical anxiety for many, was embodied in the requirement of the 1967 Abortion Act that two doctors needed to approve a termination. This may be regarded as a hangover of long-established medical practice, aimed at avoiding unpleasantness with the law and the General Medical Council.⁶² Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis in their work on abortion in Scotland, where the law was significantly different, have similarly indicated the desire of doctors for the security of a second opinion, even after the 1967 Act.⁶³

However, the agitation of the 1930s in making abortion a subject of public debate does appear to have been instrumental in bringing about a gradual but decisive shift in attitudes both generally and amongst women in particular. Emma Jones has shown the significant differences between the terms in which women wrote to Marie Stopes concerning unwanted pregnancy and the language used by women seeking assistance from ALRA after the Second World War, in particular a greater degree of explicitness and a desire for qualified medical assistance.⁶⁴

ALRA continued its campaign throughout the 1950s, building up a network of allies and developing lobbying skills. The organisation was revitalised by an influx of younger women in the early 1960s as a result of the thalidomide scandal. By articulating this hidden matter as an appropriate subject for public discourse and political action during the interwar years, and developing and maintaining a dedicated organisational base, foundations were laid for the passage of David Steel's Abortion Act in 1967, and women's agency played a central role in both of these elements.

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A complex process: women's progressive activism in New York State and feminist citizenship, 1917-1919

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Introduction

In August 1919 a troopship entered New York City's harbour bearing thousands of servicemen returning from Europe. Among the exultant returnees were Marion Dickerman and her partner, Nancy Cook, who had just completed thirteen months of Red Cross service. Uncertain futures, however, faced the two women, for their former school-teaching positions in the upstate New York town of Fulton were not guaranteed. Dickerman's brother met them after disembarkation with a surprising announcement: a coalition of New York's women progressives awaited them at Manhattan's Metropolitan Club. The three travelled by taxi to the meeting. Mary Elisabeth Dreier, the coalition's leader, immediately asked Dickerman to run against the New York State Assembly Speaker, Thaddeus C. Sweet, in the coming fall elections; Dickerman and Cook came from Sweet's district. The other women, who represented a newly formed coalition of women's progressive organizations in New York called the Women's Joint Legislative Conference (WJLC), pledged their support. After accepting the offer, Dickerman and Cook returned to Fulton to establish a preliminary campaign headquarters.¹

Historians generally agree that the Progressive Era in the United States lasted from 1890 to 1920. They also have seen the period between 1917 and 1919 as a moribund coda, as domestic progressivism became subsumed by war, then by resurgent post-war conservatism. In recent years, however, historians have reassessed this viewpoint. The late Alan Dawley demonstrated how progressives became international activists, while Joseph McCartin analysed labour's efforts to establish industrial democracy. A more nuanced interpretation is also needed in women's history, for no one has examined how female progressives during those years tried to develop new strategies to continue the advances of pre-war progressivism, or how their movement divided over the issue of women's labour legislation.²

This article argues that the years from 1917 to 1919 witnessed two remarkable developments in progressive women's activism in New York State. Firstly, social justice feminists formed the Women's Joint Legislative Conference (WJLC) to promote aggressively a six-part progressive legislative agenda, including a health insurance bill for all private employees. When a coalition of conservative Republican legislators and opponents of women's labour legislation successfully blocked the passage of the WJLC agenda, the coalition entered politics directly through Dickerman's candidacy. While this move proved initially unsuccessful, it started a series of events that led Democratic women in New York to become active agents, instead of passive participants, in partisan politics

by the late 1920s.³ Secondly, the years in question also saw the start of an important development in the ongoing evolution of feminist citizenship in the United States. As scholars have pointed out, a definition of citizenship usually involves: questions of full membership in a community (usually a nation state); the social, political, and economic rights and obligations of those who acquire such membership; and equality of membership.⁴ White women in the United States did not suddenly enter the national political system upon the 19th Amendment's ratification in 1920. From the early 1800s they slowly increased their involvement in the United States' political system, mostly through petitioning and legislative lobbying. Between 1914 and 1919, however, a wide variety of white women reformers began establishing what has been called the grounding of modern feminism. Social justice feminists centred their efforts on using women's labour legislation as an entering wedge for the eventual inclusion of all workers under the state's protection. They encountered the opposition of fellow progressive women who claimed that such legislation constituted gender discrimination. This burgeoning conflict became central to the struggle over the definition of feminist citizenship in the United States until after the Second World War.

Formation of the Women's Joint Legislative Conference

In November 1917 representatives of fifteen women's organisations met at the Women's City Club of New York (WCCNY) to discuss future political activities. The organisations included the New York Women's Trade Union League (NYWTUL), established in 1904 to promote the rights of working-class women and the Consumers' League of New York (CLNY), the flagship branch of the National Consumers' League (NCL), an organisation created in 1898 to coordinate women's consumerist reform efforts. Among the women mingling at the meeting were NCL general secretary Florence Kelley, leader of the coalition of New York's women progressives, Mary Elisabeth Dreier and Irene Osgood Andrews of the American Association for Labor Legislation (AALL).⁵

Two factors made the late autumn of 1917 a propitious time for this general meeting. Firstly, women progressives wanted to continue the advances made in the last six years, in which they helped the Factory Investigating Commission (FIC) promote and pass fifty-six new laws that covered the health and safety of New York's industrial workers, ranging from fire escapes to fifty-four hour working weeks for women factory workers. This desire received more impetus with the regaining of Republican control in the New York State legislature

after the 1914 state elections.⁶ Sweet, who became State Assembly speaker in January 1915, immediately set the tenor of his stewardship by announcing that he would emphasize legislation that 'will insure utmost efficiency and economy'.⁷ Women progressives in New York persuaded the Governor of New York to veto a repeal bill of the FIC legislation in early 1917, but they also knew that gubernatorial largesse could not always be depended upon.

Kelley became a central participant in this effort as the result of her social justice feminist movement, formed after she assumed leadership of the NCL in 1899. Social justice feminism achieved its first significant victory when Kelley, NCL research secretary Josephine Goldmark and noted Boston attorney Louis Brandeis compiled the famous sociological brief that convinced the United States Supreme Court to uphold a women's hours law in 1908. Although social justice feminists continued their efforts in the court system, progressivism in New York soon became an important element in their fight for women's labour legislation. When the state legislature created the FIC after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory disaster of March 1911, Goldmark became involved in the Commission's efforts to pass a night work law for women workers in 1913. Kelley thus intended to continue progressive efforts in New York in the midst of war.⁸

The second factor that made late 1917 a key time for women progressives in New York centred on the recent acquisition of women's suffrage through a state wide referendum. Lillian D. Wald, the noted nurse and social worker, expressed the general feeling of exhilaration in a letter to her progressive colleague in Chicago, Jane Addams. 'We are now nearly bursting over our citizenship', Wald related, 'I had no idea I could thrill over the right to vote'.⁹ Progressive women thus hoped that this new right could not only further progressivism, but also women's political and social status.

After meeting regularly for nearly a year, the conferees created, in September 1918, the WJLC: a coalition of twenty women's reform organisations which not only included the NYWTUL, the WCCNY and the CLNY, but also the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). After electing Dreier as the first chair, the new coalition declared in a press statement that its purpose centred on the establishment of 'democracy at home' for women on a sounder basis, particularly through the introduction of six sponsored bills for the new legislative session in January 1919. The bills, if passed, would establish an eight-hour working week and a minimum wage commission for factory women; limit the working week of female transportation, elevator, and office workers to a maximum of fifty-four hours, including no night work; and provide health insurance for all private employees in the state. Five of the bills, the result of a 1918 NYWTUL conference, represented incremental advances. That did not prove true for the health insurance measure, which constituted the most controversial bill. The proposal came from the AALL, which had previously promoted the successful passage of workers' compensation laws and hazardous substance regulations in states such

as Wisconsin. The organisation's officials believed that national health insurance encompassed the next, necessary step for social legislation in the United States. Although the New York State Assembly had failed to pass a previous health insurance measure, WJLC leaders decided to make the new version the central goal of their efforts.¹⁰

The WJLC agenda and growing conflict among progressive women

As the WJLC leadership prepared for the 1919 legislative session, it faced the formidable obstacle of a divided government. While newly elected Democratic Governor Alfred E. Smith supported the coalition's agenda, conservative Republicans still controlled the state legislature, including a commanding thirty-eight vote margin in the State Assembly. To offset this Republican hegemony, Dreier and the WJLC approached the New York State Federation of Labor (NYSFL), which not only represented hundreds of male trade unionists, but also actively supported the passage of labour legislation. This outlook represented a sharp break with the policy followed by the United States' most powerful male labour leader, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor. Although Gompers increasingly pursued political involvement, he still advocated a policy of voluntarism, through which direct negotiations occurred between labour and capital without state intervention. Dreier highlighted the NYSFL's support when she spoke to reporters in January 1919, adding that 'laboring people of this state are standing together for equal opportunity for men and women'.¹¹ Progressive women in New York thus tried to demonstrate cross-gender support for their agenda, a key factor for a legislature still consisting entirely of men.

Conservative Republicans, however, did not comprise the only substantial opposition. The emphasis of social justice feminists on the passage of women's labour legislation faced increasing criticism within New York's community of progressive women. Some female reformers feared that the gender-specific legislation could be discriminatory in two ways: by treating women workers differently from their male counterparts on such issues as wages and by providing employers with grounds to fire their female employees because of their ostensibly special status. The extent of this concern began even before the WJLC's formation. In 1915, a coalition of working-class and professional women formed the Women's Equal Opportunity League (WEOL).¹²

Harriot Stanton Blatch, the daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, became one of the WEOL's key leaders. Blatch's opposition to women's labour legislation stemmed not only from the legislation's perceived gender discrimination, but also from her prior, problematic relationship with working women. In 1902, Blatch had created the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women (Equality League), which centred on recruiting working women to the suffrage cause. Within five years, Blatch's goal seemed accomplished, with rising women labour leaders such as Rose Schneiderman and Leonora O'Reilly

joining the Equality League. During, however, the famous 1909-1910 New York City garment workers' strike, also known as the Uprising of the Twenty Thousand, Blatch became one of only two members of the NYWTUL's executive board to oppose the proposed expulsion of Eva McDonald Valesh, a wealthy benefactor who wanted to end the strike. Blatch's decision angered Schneiderman and O'Reilly, who soon after left the Equality League. The estrangement between Blatch and her former working-class supporters grew over the next ten years and intensified when Schneiderman, now NYWTUL president, became a central WJLC leader.¹³

Blatch quickly publicised the WEOL's opposition to the WJLC agenda through an interview in January 1919 with the *New York Tribune*.¹⁴ Since newspapers represented the most direct means of public persuasion at the time, WJLC leaders quickly responded to Blatch's charges. Legislative representative Grace Phelps noted in *The New York Times* that working-class women leaders supported the proposed legislation, while Dreier explained that, with most women workers not organised in trade unions, legislative remedies remained the only immediate solution for their problems.¹⁵

While newspaper ripostes garnered necessary publicity, both sides knew that the central battle lay in convincing New York State legislators. Social justice feminists and their opponents began their real efforts in March 1919, when legislative committees began considering the WJLC bills. When the WJLC and NYSFL staged a demonstration of several hundred people in the state capital of Albany, WEOL leaders immediately organised their own counter-demonstration and condemned the bills as paternalistic in legislative testimony.¹⁶

Apprehensions over 'foreign influences' provided further complications. The entry of the United States into the First World War may have encouraged progressives to implement their principles internationally, but the war effort soon became ugly, as innocent pre-war advocacies became suspect associations. Hull House founder Jane Addams found herself denounced as a traitor for her once-respected pacifism. Conservative women's organisations also began attacking social justice feminists in New York. *The Woman Patriot* (*Patriot*), published by the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS), denounced Dreier for her alleged pro-German sympathies, while Schneiderman was described as 'the radical suffragist president' of the national Women's Trade Union League. These proclivities, the *Patriot* added, demonstrated that the two women possessed ties with the newly established 'Soviet system'. It is hardly coincidental that Alice Hay Wadsworth, the wife of anti-suffragist New York U.S. Senator James Wadsworth, presided over the NAOWS. Moreover, while no evidence suggests that WEOL leaders coordinated their attacks with the NAOWS, the *Patriot's* attacks provided a ready precedent for later attacks.

The use of anti-Americanism as a pretext for attack continued after the end of the First World War. During what is generally termed the Red Scare, national phobias about a socialist revolution in the United States



Marion Dickerman (far right) with Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Caroline O'Day in 1929. (With the kind permission of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum)

prompted the federal government to take action, arresting thousands of suspected radicals and deporting 1,200 of the arrestees without due process of law by the end of 1920. Opponents of women's labour legislation wasted no time in taking advantage of the inflamed situation. 'Pretty soon', WEOL leader Amy Wrenn warned the state legislative committees, 'you will see legislation forbidding women to give birth to children between the hours of 7 A.M. and 10 P.M.'¹⁷ Such testimony portrayed the WJLC bills as attempts to invade even the sacrosanct area of procreation.

In the first three months of 1919, Sweet never directly attacked the WJLC bills, but instead used his control of the Assembly Rules Committee to keep the six measures from a final vote. Dreier first expressed her frustration privately. 'We are in the midst of the fight for our bills', she informed her sister, fellow reformer Margaret Dreier Robins, '[and the] Republicans are unwilling to give us anything'.¹⁸ She eventually took direct action in late March and led a delegation of WJLC women to Sweet's office. A flustered Speaker first tried to evade their queries, and then claimed that his fellow Republican Assembly members opposed the bills by a three-to-one margin. 'We know that this is not so', Dreier later asserted to the waiting press.¹⁹ Throughout April, the WJLC leadership continued its efforts, urging organisations to send telegrams to their representatives and for members to attend legislative hearings, and warning that 'thoroughly aroused' woman voters would soon punish recalcitrant male legislators.

Public entreaties and polemical threats failed to change the minds of either Sweet or his fellow Republicans. With legislative adjournment drawing near in mid-April 1919, the Speaker finally revealed his opposition to the proposed agenda. 'I have had these measures urged upon me', he declared, by a group that tried to create 'Soviet government' in New York.²⁰ Three days later, a Republican Assembly caucus statement denounced the WJLC as a 'Bolshevi[k]' organisation.²¹ Despite a final motion from Assembly Democrats to allow a vote on the health insurance bill, the subsequent adjournment of the state legislature effectively terminated consideration of the major WJLC measures.²²

Before leaving Albany, however, the state legislature did enact the 54-hour bills for elevator and transportation workers.²³ Schneiderman remained suspicious of this seeming triumph, warning privately that the '[rushing of] the transportation bills through the last night of the session' did not provide a positive augury.²⁴ Subsequent events demonstrated her sagacity. When male veterans began returning to their jobs in the summer of 1919, New York employers used the new laws to fire their women employees. The dismissed workers naturally, if unfairly, blamed the new laws for their misfortunes. 'The sooner that society women understand that they must keep their hands off the working woman', one women worker declared, 'the sooner the working woman will be better off.' Social justice feminists could therefore find no satisfaction by the late spring of 1919. Most of the WJLC agenda remained in legislative committees, while the enacted laws led to a further estrangement with the very group they wanted to protect.²⁵ The key question for the WJLC now became: should another option be considered? Dreier felt this quandary most keenly, finding herself caught between a long-time Republican allegiance and a waning optimism about the party's progressivism, '[M]y patience with the Republican Party in New York State is at an end', she declared to her sister.²⁶

WJLC leaders initially expressed their confidence in the 1920 legislative session, declaring that '[we] feel sure of success'. In private, however, leaders counselled restraint. By June 1919, Marion Booth Kelley, the chairman of the WCCNY's legislative committee, suggested that the WJLC propose a revision in the state legislative laws that would allow quick, final votes on proposed bills. Such a proposal, however, could take years to enact.²⁷ In mid-summer Dreier and the WJLC leadership decided to contest Sweet's re-election in November. They needed to find a viable Democratic challenger, no small feat in Sweet's heavily agricultural, heavily Republican legislative district.²⁸ As a trip to the area failed to reveal any prospects, Dreier and her colleagues decided to approach the young, untried, but enthusiastic Dickerman.

Dickerman and the 1919 State Assembly race

While mostly remembered today as one of Eleanor Roosevelt's closest friends, Marion Dickerman accomplished more than that historic association. While only twenty-nine years old when she returned from France, she nonetheless retained a prominence among

New York's progressive women for her previous suffrage and lobbying activities.²⁹ Although she unconditionally accepted the WJLC offer, Dickerman realized that she faced a tough fight, particularly with the lack of confidence from the local Democratic organisation and the fact that Sweet co-owned the only factory in his district.³⁰ Dickerman quickly gathered support for her campaign in three ways. Firstly, she sent out letters to local editors announcing a joint resolution by the WJLC and the NYSFL, requesting that voters send to Albany 'only those candidates who are pledged to the passage of health insurance, the eight-hour day, and the minimum wage' and noting that WJLC organisations represented 'more than a million newly enfranchised voters'. The nascent candidate thus not only tried to prove the strength of her state-wide support, but also emphasised the newly acquired voting rights of women. Secondly, she began campaigning in early October with the still-popular Alfred E. Smith, the state's Democratic Governor. Finally, Dickerman advocated enforcement of the recently ratified 18th Amendment and the securing of better agricultural prices, not only appealing to widespread Prohibitionist support in upstate New York, but also to the key voting bloc of local farmers.³¹

Even as Dickerman presented a confident, united front, internal conflicts increased within the WJLC. YWCA leaders began to withdraw from the coalition's activities, even refusing to honour speaking commitments on behalf of Dickerman. They soon made it clear that previous accusations of radicalism against the WJLC now made them uncomfortable. 'We have to accept the fact that [the YWCA] is a very conservative group', Dreier confided to Dickerman.³² In addition, the NYWSFL became reluctant, even recalcitrant, especially after its president, James Holland, endured persistent questioning from a special legislative committee, headed by Republican State Senator Clayton R. Lusk, about his connections with Schneiderman. After denouncing his working-class colleague as 'Red Rose', a nervous Holland withdrew all financial and logistical support for Dickerman's campaign. Realising that Dickerman needed immediate support, Dreier became her unofficial campaign manager, while Dickerman coordinated a successful voting registration drive among local Democrats.³³

Sweet now adopted a traditional tactic of incumbents, cleverly using surrogates to attack his opponent. The local Republican newspaper ran headlines such as 'Democratic Women Take Little Stock in Miss Dickerman' and 'Real Working Women Opposed to So-Called Welfare Bills'. Local physician Mary Gage O'Day, supported by WEOL leaders, accused Dreier of being an 'enemy alien', and Lusk supported his colleague by claiming that the district faced 'organized treason heavily financed from abroad'.³⁴ While Dickerman publicly remained calm, she privately conceded to WJLC colleagues that she did not expect to have a 'shred of reputation left when this campaign is over'. She even consulted friendly attorneys about the possibility of suing for libel.³⁵

By late October 1919, New York advertisers hired by Dreier had begun their campaign in the district's newspapers. A full-page advertisement declared that Sweet had made unjustifiable last-hour attempts to evade

defeat, asserted that both the late Theodore Roosevelt and the New York State Senate approved the WJLC agenda and concluded, 'Have the voters ... forgotten American fair play?' In another advertisement, Dickerman declared that the WJLC's organisations encompassed 'American women thinking and working for America'. It is uncertain whether these ripostes mitigated the damage done by Sweet's campaign.³⁶

Outside observers concluded just before the election that the final result remained uncertain, with *The New York Times* noting that Dickerman's speaking ability and willingness to hit her opponent's vulnerable points counterbalanced Sweet's formidable advantages.³⁷ As the campaign ended, Dreier sent a reassuring telegram to Dickerman. 'Do not worry only men and women who are making a victorious fight are attacked as you are being attacked. Your own fine record of life and service is the all-sufficient answer'.³⁸

The pre-election prognostications of a close result proved erroneous. While Dickerman received approximately 10,000 votes, twice the total of Sweet's Democratic opponent in 1917, the Speaker still won by approximately 7,000 votes. Dreier quickly placed the blame on Sweet's aggressive use of the charge of anti-Americanism. 'We [should] ask the voters', she declared in a post-election telegram to Dickerman, 'why in a campaign waged for the protection of women in such commendable and simple legislation ... bolshevism [sic]... and socialism should be dragged in?'³⁹ Sweet wasted no time in attacking social justice feminists, announcing at a WEOL conference in December 1919 that he would seek the repeal of the recently passed 54-hour laws. Florence Kelley's immediate denouncement of Sweet's 'undemocratic and tyrannical' announcement ironically demonstrated how progressive women could now use only rhetorical weapons.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Historians of the Progressive Era in the United States tend to see domestic progressivism as quiescent after early 1917, first subsumed by war, then by resurgent conservatism. This article has argued, however, that women's progressive activism in New York State went through two remarkable developments between 1917 and 1919. First, the WJLC's evolving strategy of legislative lobbying, then the direct support of Marion Dickerman's candidacy, provided a significant harbinger of how social justice feminists eventually became direct participants in the New York State political system. Dickerman's defeat naturally discouraged other white women from undertaking direct political candidacies. After 1921, however, Eleanor Roosevelt and other Democratic women created a strong partnership between social justice feminism and the New York Democratic party, a precedent for the 1930s.⁴¹ In addition, the dispute over women's labour legislation between social justice feminists and their women opponents signified an important factor in the evolving definition of feminist citizenship in the United States.⁴²

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27. 'Story of a Legislative Fight', 8; Letter from Dreier to Robins, 16 Apr. 1919; 'Report of the Legislative Committee, June 1919'.

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29. Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One, 1884-1933* (New York, Viking, 1993), 320-33, 397-402 and *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume Two, 1933-1938* (New York, Viking, 1999), 136-7, 360-2, 526-7; Kenneth Davis, *Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts Based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman* (New York, Athenaeum, 1974); Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York, Signet, 1971), 375-6, 623-7; Eleanor Roosevelt, *This Is My Story* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1937), 346-7.

30. Dickerman, 'Mary Elizabeth Dreier', 3-4; Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One*, 321.

31. Savers, 'Thaddeus C. Sweet', 82; Dickerman Papers, Box 2, Letter from Marion Dickerman to Editor, 11 Sept. 1919; Dickerman, 'Democratic Women Meet', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 2 Oct. 1919, 2; 'Elect Democrats, Smith to Women', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 4 Oct. 1919, 3; 'Warm Welcome To Mrs. Dickerman', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 10 Oct. 1919, 9.

32. Dickerman Papers, Box 2, Letters from Mary E. Dreier to a 'Dr. Doane,' 10 Oct. 1919 and to Marion Dickerman, 10 Oct. 1919.

33. *Ibid.*, Letters from Dickerman to Dreier, 6 Oct. 1919, Dreier to Dickerman, 7 Oct. 1919, Dreier to Mills, 8 Oct. 1919 and Roy Durstine to Mary E. Dreier [Oct. 1919?]; 'Women's City Club Meets', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 27 Jan. 1919, 8; 'What Women May Cast Votes', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 6 Oct. 1919, 3; 'Predict Big Victory for the Democrats', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 7 Oct. 1919, 3; Letter to the Editor, 'Vote for Miss Dickerman', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 11 Oct. 1919, 6; 'Registration Is Heavy', *Oswego Daily Palladium*, 11 Oct. 1919, 10.

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35. Harriet Laidlaw Papers, Women's Studies Manuscript Collections from the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Series 1, Women's Suffrage, Part B: New York, Reel 3, Folder 40, Letter from Marion Dickerman to Harriet Laidlaw, 4 Oct. 1919.

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39. Dickerman, 'Mary Elizabeth Dreier', 7; Savers, 'Thaddeus C. Sweet', 86-7; Dickerman Papers, Box 2, Letter from Mary Dreier to Marion Dickerman [Nov. 1919?].

40. 'Speaker Predicts Repeal of Welfare Bills', *New York Times*, 26 Dec. 1919, 20; 'Consumers Attack Sweet', *New York Times*, 26 Dec. 1919, 3.

41. Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One*, 227-36, 302-37.

42. Lynn M. O'Leary Archer, 'The Contentious Community: The Impact of Internecine Conflict on the National Woman's Party, 1920-1947' (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Southern California at Los Angeles, 1988), 18, 19, 22, 27; Nancy F. Cott, 'Feminist Politics in the 1920s: The National Woman's Party', *Journal of American History*, 71 (1984), 44, 57-9; Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989).

Knowledge transfer project on Kentish women's history

Anne Logan

University of Kent

Later this autumn the University of Kent and Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery will launch a collaborative project entitled *Inspiring Women: Hidden Histories from West Kent*. Supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, this 'knowledge transfer' project consists of a website with resources for teaching about the lives and activities of women in the area one hundred years ago and an exhibition in the Tunbridge Wells Museum, which will open in January 2013 and run until Easter.

The timing is apposite as 1913 was an extraordinary year for the women's suffrage movement in Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area. New branches of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) were springing up in towns and villages all over Kent. Local women who refused to pay taxes until granted the vote had their property seized and auctioned off. In July 1913, many Kentish women enthusiastically walked to London as part of the NUWSS 'Suffrage Pilgrimage'. In addition, sportsmen in Tunbridge Wells were outraged when suffragette arsonists apparently burnt a cricket pavilion to the ground. An anti-suffrage protest meeting, chaired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was held in the town's Great Hall while suffragettes organised a counter-demonstration in the street outside.

However, the *Inspiring Women* project is not only about women's suffrage. It will also explore the working lives of all kinds of women in an area with the most heavily female population in all of Kent and in a town where a

service economy was already dominant by the early 20th century. Women's activities in the First World War will also be examined, including the introduction of female police patrols, women's voluntary war work in a soldiers' laundry, and the aid given to refugees from Belgium. The web resources will thus enable teachers to explore with their pupils attitudes towards refugees, as well as to discuss issues of democracy, protest and citizenship.

It is hoped that this project will not just be of local interest in the county of Kent. Historians' understanding of the ways in which the women's suffrage movement played out in different localities across the British Isles and internationally is undergoing rapid development. The *Inspiring Women* project will achieve a welcome by-product if it stimulates further activity and research in the southeast corner of England and elsewhere. It is itself part of the flourishing of research in women's past lives that has taken place over the past thirty years and of which the Women's History Network is such an essential part. When I began to research the women of Tunbridge Wells fifteen years ago the existence of the town's powerful early-20th-century women's movement really was 'hidden from history'. Soon, thanks to all the work of women's history practitioners, we may no longer be able to use that phrase.

For further information about the website and the exhibition, please contact Anne Logan at the University of Kent, A.F.logan@kent.ac.uk



*Suffrage Pilgrims
in Tunbridge High
Street, July 1913
(photograph by kind
permission of Mr
Dennis Goodland)*

Book Reviews

Angela V. John, *Evelyn Sharp: Rebel Woman, 1869-1955*

Manchester: Manchester University Press,
2009. £16.99, ISBN 9780719080159

(paperback) pp. 304

Reviewed by Anne Logan
University of Kent



Twenty years after Johanna Alberti demonstrated the various paths along which women's suffrage activists took their principled commitment to reform from 1914 onwards, there appears to have been another surge of interest in the activities of early twentieth-century British humanitarian women.¹ Professor John's fascinating biography of Evelyn Sharp is part of this trend. Although readers will probably know Sharp best for her involvement

in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and United Suffragists (for whom she edited the paper, *Votes for Women*), this book reveals to them so many more aspects of her life and work. The chapters covering Sharp's relief work and journalism in the war-devastated territories of Weimar Germany, civil war-torn Ireland, and Bolshevik Russia are perhaps the most memorable sections of a thoroughly absorbing account of her life.

Professor John takes her title *Rebel Woman* from Sharp's self-presentation as the rebel of her large, respectable Victorian family. The biography covers Sharp's multiple identities - feminist, charity worker, pacifist, fiction writer, folk dancer (Evelyn's brother, Cecil Sharp, was the founding director of the English Folk Dance Society), professional journalist, even opera librettist - and skilfully handles them thematically, while preserving a strong sense of biographical chronology. The reader first learns about Evelyn's childhood and family and then the period she spent as a young, independent adult in 1890s London, effectively living the life of the paradigmatic 'New Woman'. Soon we find her engaged in social work for a women's settlement and in the anti-sweating campaign, as well as establishing her reputation as a writer of children's fiction.

Her involvement with the suffrage movement began in October 1906 when she travelled to Tunbridge Wells to report for the *Manchester Guardian* on the annual conference of the National Union of Women Workers. This event, we are told, changed Evelyn's life, when she heard Elizabeth Robins' 'unscripted intervention' (p. 52) in support of WSPU members who had been arrested during the course of a protest in the House of Commons lobby. Soon Sharp was to join the WSPU herself, and, as Professor John emphasises, she remained committed to, and involved in, the struggle for women's votes even

after the Pankhursts had abandoned the campaign. During the First World War Evelyn also became attracted to the pacifist cause and was among the group of distinguished British women who were refused permission by the government to attend the Women's International Congress in The Hague in 1915. She faced bankruptcy proceedings as a result of non-payment of taxes during the height of the suffrage campaign, action which, coupled with two spells in Holloway Prison, illustrates the depth of her commitment to the Cause.

Although the book focuses mainly on Sharp's long and eventful public careers as writer and activist, Professor John sensitively handles her subject's private life, especially Evelyn's long-term relationship with a married man, her fellow journalist and author, Henry Nevinson. The couple first met in 1901 but did not marry until after the death of Henry's first wife, Margaret, thirty years later. Evelyn and Henry's relationship is aptly characterised as a political and professional partnership, as well as a personal one. Their comradeship in the women's suffrage cause, in myriad other political activities over several decades (up to and including the launch of the National Council for Civil Liberties in 1934) and as fellow journalists and travellers is thoroughly explored. This book therefore provides an interesting companion to Professor John's earlier study of Nevinson himself.

As an accomplished and seasoned biographer, Professor John has once again brought a previously neglected subject to life. This is the first full-length account of Sharp's life and the subject richly deserves such treatment. Sharp's biographer, however, does not neglect to place her into her political and social context. For example, the reader learns interesting details about women's role in journalism at the beginning of the twentieth century and much about the troubled international situation in the interwar period. Professor John's account of Sharp's witness of starvation in post-World War One Russia is particularly memorable, successfully conveying the vivid nature of the source material. Similarly, the examination of Sharp's journalistic output regarding both women and children is related to the social and economic conditions that prevailed, especially in the deprived areas of London, the city in which she lived most of her life. However, while she has obvious and understandable empathy with her subject, Professor John nevertheless maintains distance from some of Sharp's attitudes with which she has trouble identifying, such as the latter's willingness to approve of institutional care of delinquent children (p.171).

Both those familiar with Professor John's work on the suffrage movement and those with a general interest in the history of the early 20th century will find much to enjoy in *Rebel Woman*. Evelyn Sharp is a worthy subject of biography and this book does belated justice to her life story.

1. Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-28* (London, Macmillan, 1989).

**Jeanette Hardage, Mary Slessor,
*Everybody's Mother: The Era and Impact of
a Victorian Missionary***

Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010. £20,
ISBN 9780718891855 (paperback), pp. xii +
344

Reviewed by Jo Stanley

Centre for Mobilities Research, Lancaster University



MARY SLESSOR EVERYBODY'S MOTHER
The Era and Impact of a Victorian Missionary



Women missionaries can be productively seen as early business travellers, proto-explorers, and as activists operating with extraordinary agency by doing a type of aid work in less-developed countries. Gladys Aylward and Mary Slessor were the counterparts of lauded heroes, such as David Livingstone and Albert Schweitzer, and are numbered among the many thousands of

less-famous female warriors for God's kingdom on earth who spent their lives far from home.

Recently such women have begun to be studied by feminist scholars, such as Karen K Seat, Barbara Reeves-Ellington *et al.* However, the focus has tended to be on US women, particularly in China and Japan. Jeanette Hardage's book is therefore valuable not least because it focuses on a British (Scottish) woman in West Africa.

Presbyterian Mary Slessor (1848-1915) was so famous that she replaced David Livingstone in 1998 as the face on £10 notes issued by the Clydesdale Bank. This is ironic because it was his death in 1874 which brought her to such work, as the result of the waves of missionary fever that then swept Scotland.

After she went out to 'the White Man's Grave' in 1876, her feats included campaigning, with some success, against the killing of twins at infancy and setting up the Hope Waddell Vocational Training Institute in Calabar, as well as giving major publicity to the missionary enterprise on her furloughs back home and raising a number of children as her own. She became a legend while she was still alive. British colonial authorities appointed her as their very first female magistrate anywhere in the world, at a time when they were still refusing women the right to vote or become MPs.

There have been at least four other books about Slessor, two of which were published in 1926. The value of this very thoroughly researched volume is how much the author understands her missionary subject because she herself went to Calabar, where the former Dundee jute mill worker lived among the Efik and the Okoyong people, in what is now Nigeria. Indeed, there is probably a good

book to be written about Hardage's research process, particularly her travels.

The author has used many documentary sources that help us see what an imperious, uncontrollable anomaly Slessor was in the Foreign Mission Board's eyes. Normal missionary behaviour, as mission archives show, was obedient, thought-through, and well regulated. Slessor, however, went barefoot, didn't wear petticoats or filter her water, and above all didn't obey orders or adhere to rules. She was an unmanageable and eccentric solo-operator. It is hard to say whether she was a success as an evangelist but as an idiosyncratic disciplinarian and healer she was certainly highly effective.

The book's chronological structure shows Slessor's development, including her increasingly dictatorial roles deep in rural Calabar, and her complex relationship with tribal chiefs and British government representatives. Although the book succeeds well, it could have been enriched by a more politicised systemic understanding, for example about what it meant to be in West Africa at a time when Britain was struggling for possession of territories there. While Slessor would not have known much about diplomatic negotiations, her country's exploitative moves specifically positioned her as European outsider with the right to interfere in local life. Hardage, a professional writer on Christian matters, is too gentle to tackle explanations about what looks to us today to be imperialistic racism; Slessor renamed all 'her' children with European names such as Annie and Janie. The penultimate chapter, Remembrance, to some extent tries to tackle the thorny problem that missionaries were agents of imperialism. Hardage suggests that, while Slessor was an 'imperial mother', she was also very definitely a 'liberating sister' who furthered women's rights, in particular to earn a living and to keep any twins they bore.

Over all, the approach is not a rigorous post-2000 feminist one. Indeed, it reads slightly like a work initially created in the 1980s or 1990s, so there are some wasted opportunities to make points, for example, about othering and gendered contestation. A good schematic map would have helped because so many minute locations are referred to. High marks go to the easy writing style, which made this rich volume a really engrossing narrative throughout. The author's approach is particularly welcome as it counters hagiographers' tendencies to turn Slessor into a one-dimensional heroine. Instead, Jeanette Hardage helps us get to know a rather unknowable pioneer who would be a very uncomfortable but admirable neighbour if she lived next door. An indomitable, sometimes irritating, older woman fighting in her lone, anomalous way to improve many strangers' lives.

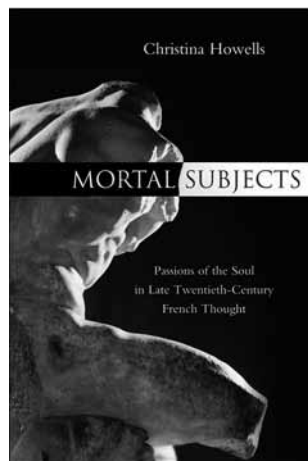
Christina Howells, *Mortal Subjects: Passions of the Soul in Late Twentieth-Century French Thought*

Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011. £17.99, ISBN

9780745652757 (paperback), pp. x + 263

Reviewed by Katie Barclay

University of Adelaide



Most academics like to imagine that we broach the 'big questions' but, in *Mortal Subjects*, Howell perhaps explores the biggest of them all – what is the nature of humanity and where does it lie within the body (if at all)? To do so, she goes to the French philosophers of the twentieth century and looks to their thinking on the nature of the 'subject', in particular their thoughts on mind-and-body separation, self and other,

death and desire. The exact relationship between these elements is complex, but what connects them is that French philosophers have placed them at the heart of their discussion of humanity. While mind/ body separation has pervaded western thought since Descartes, these thinkers are explicitly anti-dualist, looking to situate the self firmly in the body (if in different ways). In seeking to understand its nature then, questions of the body and its boundaries, the nature of the 'soul' or 'mind' (or the numerous other ways of framing this spark of personhood), of death which culminates the end of the self, and with desire (viewed at its most simplistic as the basic human drive to survive, but bringing with it a heavy baggage of emotional resonances and implications, including love and connection) come to the fore.

Howell explores these questions and the relationships between them through the work of different philosophers, dividing them into chapters by their broad philosophical outlook, including phenomenologists such as Sartre and De Beauvoir, religious philosophers like Marcel and Levinas, psychoanalysts including Lacan and Kristeva, and finally the deconstructionists Derrida and Nancy. This is fascinating survey of their major philosophical positions on these very difficult questions, nicely describing the contours as well as the limitations of their thought, and placing them in their wider philosophical context. Perhaps it is the nature of such a study that there is no straightforward account or argument, rather there are themes that come to the fore repeatedly in these works. The nature of the embodied self and how pain, illness, sexual desire and death shape its nature is one. Another is the relationship between the self and the other: the self is at least partly defined by the 'other', by difference, but to what extent? Does the other shore up our own separateness, our own individuality, or is it the case that we are defined by the 'other', so there is nothing but difference, no unique self? Does death define the self,

create the self or is irrelevant to self? And so on. These are big interesting themes and fascinating to think through, and Howell does a wonderful job of navigating the reader through. It is also a really useful overview of the field, if one that a beginner to philosophy may wish to broach with dictionary of philosophy in hand. The work left this reader with a much better understanding of why current French philosophers take the positions that they do and what they are responding to. In this sense, it acts as a useful introduction to the field. At the same time, as a historian reading this work, the question of historicity kept springing to mind. This is not because Howell is a bad historian – far from it! Indeed, this is a wonderful history of French philosophical thought, highlighting how these thinkers developed on each other's works and how their thinking was shaped by the thinker's own historical moment. But the nature of this philosophy implies that, underneath the historical specificity of particular cultural conditioning, there is a universal human subject (or at least a body). This effect is ironically reinforced by Howell's own historicity, wherein the limitations of each thinker's philosophy become ascribed to their historical boundedness. Yet, whether there is a 'universal self' is a question of debate amongst historians of the emotions, who are influenced by fields such as neuroscience, which indicate that the brain, and the body, are plastic and shaped by culture as well as biology. If the body is plastic, can the self also be plastic and, if so, can the self be dualist at one historical moment and anti-dualist at another? Does desire feel the same at different historical moments and does it supersede culture? There are moments within this book – Luce Irigaray's challenge that Lacan is ahistorical and the responses of Kristeva and Ricoeur to neuroscience – which could have led to these questions being formed and explored, but, as Howell herself notes, these discussions were not fully pursued by the philosophers.

Perhaps historians should join the debate? If we plan to do so, Howell's *Mortal Subjects* is a must-read in getting us up to speed.

Jennifer Newby, *Women's Lives.*

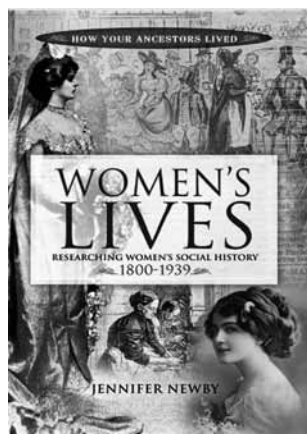
Researching Women's Social History 1800-1939

Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2011. £12.99, ISBN 9781848843684 (paperback), pp. vii + 184

Reviewed by Susan Cohen

University of Southampton

Jennifer Newby is a freelance writer, and has recently been appointed as commissioning editor of Pen and Sword Books, having previously worked for the now defunct *Family History Monthly*. *Women's Lives* is a well-written, charmingly illustrated and engaging beginner's guide to researching the lives of women from across the social spectrum. A short introduction to general sources precedes the six thematic chapters, which look at women working in the areas of domestic service, on the land and in the factories, and at middle-class women, aristocratic



women and criminal women. Each chapter closes with a brief overview of source material, with further primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography. The book concludes with a short timeline of key events in women's social history.

For me the strength of the book lies in Newby's use of extracts and vignettes to illustrate the individual, and it is these personal case studies along with the delightful images, which illuminate everyday lives and whet the reader's appetite. In the three chapters covering domestic service, work on the land and in factories, she provides brief overviews of why women had these jobs, how they came about them, what the work entailed and where they lived. In the chapters on middle and upper class women, Newby defines who these women were, how they were educated and what their expectations of life were. The final chapter on criminal women looks at their crimes and punishments, as well as the *loci*, and here (pp. 137-8) Newby quotes the social investigator, Andrew Mears, which I assume should be Mearns, but does not mention his book, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, from which these came.

As this is a book aimed at a general readership, the absence of footnotes is not surprising, but it is rather a shame because in many instances, as with Mearns, the reader is left wondering where to locate the original source. This is not a problem when books such as *Lark Rise to Candleford*, *The Examiner* newspaper and named memoirs are cited, but could be difficult in other cases. For such a short guidebook, *Women's Lives* covers a broad canvas, and does an excellent job in introducing readers to the subject, but there are some omissions which surprised me. Although nursing is dealt with briefly in the chapter devoted to middle-class women, I found it curious that Newby makes no mention of district nursing, nor of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses, the professional training organisation established in 1887. The archives at the Wellcome Institute (Series SA/QNI) are a rich source of information for family, social and medical historians, and the records cover every aspect of the organisation. These include Badge Registers covering the period 1887 to 1945 and Roll Books listing thousands of individual Queen's nurses, each of which reveals details of their family, educational and professional history, as well as their social background. Indeed, many of them came from very ordinary working class backgrounds and were not particularly well educated. There is a direct reference to the Salvation Army in the caption to an illustration on p.134 and a mention of William Booth, the founder of the evangelical movement, as a social investigator (rather than reformer), on p.133. There is, however, no mention of the organisation's archives, much of whose welfare and social reform work has been aimed at women since the organisation began in 1878. Their extensive records,

including those of their rescue homes, maternity homes, Mother's Hospital and knitting and needle workrooms shed incredible light on the lives of both the female givers of help and the recipients.

The bibliography is rather thin and could have included reference books such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which is relegated to a mention at the end of the chapter on aristocratic women (p.131). Since the ODNB was first published in 2004, the editors have made a concerted effort to include more women amongst the entries, including the late-Victorian Queen's Nurse, Martha Loane, certainly not of aristocratic lineage, and Dr Lillias Hamilton, a pioneering female doctor and author. With regard to the latter period covered by the book, a source such as Sybil Oldfield's *Women Humanitarians* would have been a useful addition to the bibliography. Some readers may of course be frustrated by the difficulty in accessing material in the Women's Library, for not only are there many uncatalogued collections which remain closed to researchers, including the papers of the British Federation of University Women, but the future of the library itself is at time of writing uncertain.

Researchers who are new to investigating women's lives will find much to enjoy in this book, and will hopefully be inspired to continue their explorations.

Mary Davis, ed., *Class and Gender in British Labour History, Renewing the Debate (or starting it?)*

Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2011. £16.95, ISBN 9780850366686 (paperback), pp. vi + 221

Reviewed by Vicky Davis

Institute of Historical Research, London

The debate amongst historians and historiography of the role of women within the working sector has been ongoing since the 1970s. This is a key debate that fuels the majority of gender and women's history on work even now and one that we are all aware of. Mary Davis' edited collection aims to detail the experiences of working women within the labouring industry and bring to the fore once again the issues faced as a result of class and gender bias.

Published by Merlin Press, a known promoter of labour history texts, it is no surprise Davis emphasises the more theoretical (developed, for example, by E. P. Thompson) and Marxist sides behind this area of history and argues for the importance of labour history with regard to an increasing interest in women's history. Whilst this a useful topic of discussion within the introduction and first chapter (also by Davis), it raises the question whether these now old debates need to be brought to historians' attention once again or whether it is time to move on now that women's and gender history is an ever-growing field. Moreover, the distinction between women's and gender history is also important. Whilst the text's title includes the word 'gender', the only references to men are small comparisons within the chapters. Indeed, there

are no chapters offering a viewpoint on the male labour workforce. Davis' argument is a strong one with regard to highlighting the inseparable link between gender and politics when women's work is studied. Without, however, a male labour history, or indeed any history, gender and women's historians cannot move forward to offer their research in a comparative form. This point needs to be made more often than it already is.

The twelve chapters are divided into four thematic areas: introduction and theoretical framework (two chapters); women and work (five chapters); women and trade unions (three chapters) and women and politics (two chapters). Davis has produced a varied and interesting collection. Working within the four themes, the chapters are arranged chronologically between Sian Moore's chapter on Bradford's worsted industry starting in the 1820s, and Sheila Rowbotham's chapter on Alice Wheeldon, relating to documents from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Despite this (almost) two-hundred-year span, the collection does not seem stretched in any way and individual chapters can be read by themselves if need be.

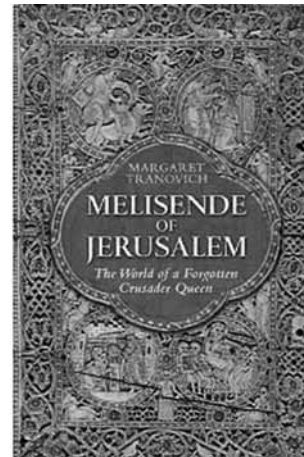
With notable contributions from Sheila Rowbotham and Gerry Holloway amongst others, the collection has a wealth of knowledge behind its production and the research undertaken to produce each chapter is detailed and informative. The chapter on working black women by Caroline Brassey is a welcome addition, especially as the topic is to an extent still ignored in wider gender and women's histories. The locations featured within the chapters are limited with a bias towards the northern cities and their industrial trades, with Bradford and Leeds dominating, whilst other chapters are more generalised. Annemarie Hughes' chapter on Scottish socialist women mitigates the Anglo-centric research bias, but the inclusion of more Welsh and Irish history would be appropriate within a collection such as this. Furthermore, the limited nature of labour history is visible in that sweatshops, the worsted industry and the construction industry are key themes. There is no definition of 'labour' within the text and it would have been interesting to know what parameters the editor was using.

In conclusion, the text offers a detailed collection of essays that highlight the struggles faced by working women from 1800 onwards without being dragged into the 'separate spheres' debate. With each chapter offering a different viewpoint but still being able to complement the others, the book provides a good point of reference for those wanting an overview of the issues in the period. The lack of index and general conclusion is noted and, whilst not overly important, these would have allowed a reader to source a general opinion quickly. Some of the definitions could also be looked at, given the title contains the words 'gender' 'class' and 'labour'. Overall, however, Davis' edited work certainly does bring the debates back into focus and it should interest those working in the field accordingly.

Margaret Tranovich, *Melisende of Jerusalem: The World of a Forgotten Crusader Queen*,

London: East & West Publishing Limited, 2011.
£14.95, ISBN 9781907318 061 (paperback),
pp. 191

Reviewed by Ruth E. Richardson



Melisende was the eldest of four daughters of Baldwin II, King of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, and his wife Morphia, a Christian Armenian Princess from Edessa, in present-day Turkey. As Baldwin was Count of Edessa when they married, in c.1100 AD, Melisende may have been born there. The couple had no son so Baldwin involved Melisende in administration, her signature appearing alongside his on

documents. As heiress presumptive her marriage was of prime importance and the man chosen was recommended by Louis VI, King of France. Fulk, Count of Anjou was a widower whose son, Geoffrey, was married to the Empress Matilda, daughter of King Henry I of England and Normandy.

Melisende, then in her late twenties, married Fulk, who was forty years old, in 1129. When dying in 1131, Baldwin II transferred power jointly to Melisende, Fulk and their young son, Baldwin III. King Fulk's attempt to replace local magnates with Normans was vigorously opposed by his wife. One local noble seems to have had an affair with Queen Melisende which, if true, must have exacerbated the situation. This scandal is occasionally used now to undermine Melisende's importance. The quarrel was resolved but, extraordinarily for that period, Melisende remained in power, signing charters with her husband. Fulk ably defended the kingdom, something Melisende could not do, but died in a hunting accident in 1142, leaving his wife and two young sons. Queen Melisende and the thirteen year old Baldwin III were 'anointed, consecrated and crowned' together in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Christian sanctuary remodelled during her reign. For nine years Melisende's rule was absolute and when Baldwin asserted his rights in 1151, her involvement continued for another six years. She died in 1161, aged about sixty years.

The author of this book is an art historian. Her expertise is apposite given the sparse documentation available concerning Melisende. As the author notes, Melisende's reign bridges the time between the establishment of the Crusader kingdoms in 1099 and the loss of Jerusalem to the Muslims in 1187. It is, therefore, of enormous interest to those studying the impact of Crusaders on the region and the changes the eventual loss of Outremer initiated in Europe.

The few references include the charters mentioned above, a letter to Melisende from Bernard of Clairvaux, and a chronicle written by William, Archbishop of Tyre. Plausible inferences can be made about her character from the willingness of her father to promote her and by the way she remained in power despite the quarrels with her husband. St. Bernard obviously found it difficult to advise her, pointing out that as a woman she was 'weak in body, changeable in heart, not far-seeing in counsel nor accustomed to business'. At the same time he told her to 'act like a man ... prudently and discreetly, so all may judge you from your actions to be a king rather than a queen'. Since William of Tyre describes her as 'a woman of great wisdom who had had much experience in all kinds of secular matters', she was probably quite capable of sifting Bernard's advice for tenets that benefited her.

One glorious artefact that does still survive is the carved ivory book covers of the *Queen Melisende Psalter*, now in the British Library. Described by the author in detail, they lead her to an examination of the art that would have been familiar to her subject. This provides an entirely different dimension from most biographies, as Melisende is firmly placed in the context of the artistic influences of her time. Chapters are devoted to the life the Crusaders knew in Europe, the riches and ritual of the Byzantine Empire, and the influences of the Islamic world. Each area examined includes a concise and very readable account of the culture and history of the given topic. The details are complicated but it is one of the triumphs of this book that it is relatively easy to follow exactly who is being referred to at any point. The carefully chosen illustrations, many in colour, add fine detail. The reader is given a beautiful impression of Queen Melisende's way of life, through discussion of architecture, textiles, jewellery, household objects and more. It is a revelation to have the names of many of the artists who created such works. This rounded picture, despite few written sources, gives the reader an accurate account of the context of her life.

In her introduction the author explains too much about what she intends and in the book as a whole there is some repetition. There is a short glossary, a useful bibliography and a reasonable index. Occasional points in the text can be questioned. She is at her weakest, for instance, in discussing European food arrangements but she also tells us about Arabic cookbooks whose recipes permeated back to Europe. She excels in her field of art history but is also good at delineating the differing views of the western and eastern Churches. In addition, the Byzantine Emperor's distrust of the Crusaders is admirably explained and it is interesting to be navigated through the convoluted politics of the period.

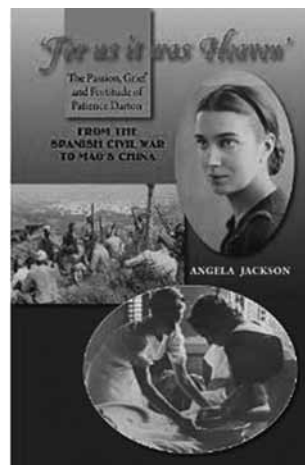
Many books compartmentalise their subjects. This biography provides a refreshing approach that largely overcomes the dearth of primary evidence. Although the author does not mention it, Melisende belongs very much to that group of powerful women, such as Matilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine, who were able to make an impact despite the handicap of their gender. The author ends by hoping that this book will lead to further books about Queen Melisende and 'other women unknown to us from history'. This unusual biography is both readable and very interesting.

Angela Jackson, *'For Us It Was Heaven': The Passion, Grief and Fortitude of Patience Darton*

Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2012.

£22.50, ISBN 9781845195151 (paperback), pp. xx + 239

Reviewed by Anne Logan
University of Kent



'*For Us It Was Heaven*' is a fascinating portrait of Patience Darton (1910-1996), who as a young and idealistic nurse travelled to Spain during the 1936-9 Civil War to work on behalf of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee, nursing primarily the men who were fighting in the International Brigades on behalf of the Spanish Republican government and against Franco's nationalists.

Largely based on lengthy interviews conducted by the author with the subject, this is an immensely satisfying biography which grants the reader insights both into the character of the subject, her generation and the personal and political situations that members of that generation found themselves embroiled in. Patience is not always the most sympathetic of subjects (she comes over at times as an imperious, opinionated and as a somewhat inappropriately named individual) but Jackson treats her words and views with care and contextualises them, as well as allowing Patience to speak for herself in lengthy quotations from the interviews and her letters. As such the book is a revealing and meticulous study of a member of a generation largely now no longer with us, whose cadences and slang, together with their political commitments and reactions to momentous world events, are here preserved in the written word. Patience is therefore not only a unique individual but in some ways a voice for her generation.

Patience Darton had a conventional middle-class upbringing in a family which (like so many others in the difficult economic climate of the post-First World War era) experienced financial difficulties that had the effect of curtailing her education. She nevertheless trained as a nurse and gradually became more radical politically as she witnessed the poverty of some working-class Londoners first hand. After travelling to Spain she gradually moved into the thick of the action, nursing the wounded at the Battle of the Ebro in 1938. At this point Patience's story becomes even more personal, as it takes on the form of a tragic love story. The poignant tale of her relationship with a young, German Jewish International Brigadier is told by Jackson with great sensitivity and may well linger in the reader's mind long after details of Darton's nursing assignments are forgotten. However, interesting points are also made concerning the lessons the nursing and

medical professions were able to draw during the Spanish 'dress rehearsal' for the combat of 1939-45.

Personally, I found the later chapters on Patience's years living in the Republic of China shortly after the 1949 Revolution of equal interest to the Spain chapters. This was not only because the involvement of British left-wing activists in supporting Communist China is an interest of mine, but also because of Jackson's skill and frankness in tackling a period of her subject's life which she had not discussed in any great detail with her. The absence of oral evidence thankfully is compensated for by the lengthy letters which Patience wrote to her sister at home in London. Once again there is insight into both the personal and the political. Details of Patience's marriage, pregnancy and reactions to the onset of motherhood are coupled with an – albeit relatively brief – discussion of some of the difficulties and cultural misunderstandings (even fervently Communist) British people experienced in the Revolutionary China of the 1950s.

At last, the story comes full circle as Patience returned to Spain to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of civil war there. Not for the first time we have glimpses of the dignified, if elderly, lady the author came to know personally. I hope this review has not contained too many 'spoilers', because *'For Us It Was Heaven'* is a worthwhile read, and it is no disrespect to Jackson's skill as a historian, or to the serious and tragic events covered in the book, to say that it is a thoroughly enjoyable one too. The book is well illustrated, thoroughly referenced and there is a good index. It is, however, the blend of 'personal and political', and the way in which Patience was both an individual and a representative of so many in her generation that make this biography particularly special. It deserves to be read by anyone with an interest in the seismic international events of the mid-twentieth century.

Rene Kollar, *A Foreign and Wicked Institution? The Campaign against Convents in Victorian England*

Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2011.

£22.75, ISBN 9780227679920 (paperback),

pp. xiii + 304

Reviewed by Mary C. Treacy

Liverpool Hope University



The religious world of Victorian England was marked by a strong element of anti-Catholicism, especially after the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850. At the same time, paradoxically, there was a notable increase in the number of women's religious orders, both Anglican and Roman Catholic, dedicated to education and various forms of outreach to the derelicts on the margins of

society. Their contribution to that society was often unacknowledged, while they themselves became the object of fear, suspicion and vilification. Ignorance of the life of these women fuelled literary and verbal suppositions that led to the campaign calling for government inspection of convents on a par with that conducted in asylums and other refuges.

The author, Benedictine monk Rene Kollar, professor of Church History at St. Vincent's College in Pennsylvania, has a special interest in nineteenth-century British history. Through thirteen chapters, most previously published as separate articles, he illustrates by specific examples the opposition born of prejudice and misunderstanding to which female members of religious orders were subjected. These women constituted a threat and a challenge to patterns of Victorian life hitherto enshrined in patriarchal society. They bore clear testimony to the ability of women to manage their own affairs with competence. Not only that, they demonstrated that a woman could find personal fulfilment outside the married state in commitment to children not her own and to the many poor, especially in the growing urban centres.

From a religious point of view, the convents, and particularly the Anglican sisterhoods, threatened the dominance of evangelical Protestantism within the Church of England, which was already being questioned by the Tractarian movement. One of the repeated objections of ecclesiastical authorities to Anglican convents, as Kollar points out, was their frequent adoption of 'Romish customs' such as the use of candles and statues and, above all, the voluntary practice of auricular confession. Fear of conversion to Catholicism was further expressed in the opposition to convent schools attended by Anglican girls who were considered to be particularly impressionable and subject to subliminal environmental pressures.

For those unfamiliar with the topic, the volume provides a colourful introduction to the stereotypes of convent life found in the plethora of books and pamphlets devoured by a prurient and credulous readership. Convents were often depicted as having tyrannical superiors who, in the name of obedience, subjected the nuns to degrading penances or enjoined menial tasks on them. The Victorian gothic imagination conjured up the vision of young nuns imprisoned against their will, seduced by priest-confessors and left to languish in underground vaults with no recourse to outside intervention, much less to parental rights. The suspicion and underlying fear of coercion of the individual was very strong. Yet, perhaps unconsciously, the nuns were, in fact, asserting their freedom to choose a way of life that liberated them from the constraints imposed by the society of the time – but at the price of enduring prejudice and hostility.

Nevertheless, while stating the case for the nuns by exposing falsehoods or furnishing rational explanations behind certain factors, the author does not shy away from presenting the negative impact of some ill-considered enterprises on the part of individual

sisters or communities. The overall content, though, presents a generally positive image of mature women often struggling against harassment from family, church and civil authorities in order to follow their religious and humanitarian vocation.

Each essay is accompanied by basic footnotes and a bibliography. Since it is a collection of papers united around one theme, the individual bibliographies are often repetitive. A single bibliography of sources would have been preferable. Given the structure of the work, there is also a certain amount of repetition as, for example in the case of the Anglican foundress of the Devonport sisterhood, Priscilla Lydia Sellon, who is mentioned in several of the essays under different headings. The fourteenth essay, on Newman and the Achilli case, is certainly connected to the underlying theme of anti-Catholicism and illustrates

the atmosphere of the time but it seems irrelevant to the issue of the anti-convent campaign.

The book presents a facet of Victorian life which, like the convents themselves, is often *terra incognita*; it opens a window on a commonly overlooked aspect of the social and religious life of the Victorian era.

Elizabeth Norton, *Margaret Beaufort, Mother of the Tudor Dynasty*

Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011. £9.99, ISBN 9781445605784 (paperback), pp. 255

Reviewed by Ruth E. Richardson

Independent Researcher

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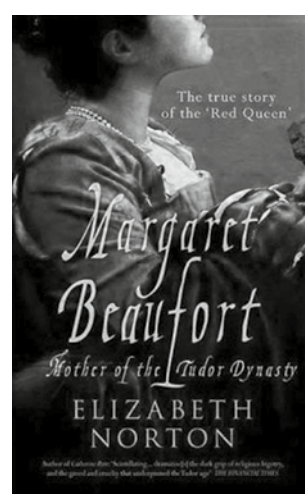
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Margaret Beaufort, born 1443, was pivotal in linking the Plantagenet and Tudor dynasties. Without Margaret's persistence - and the author makes a good case for this - it is probable that her son, Henry, would not have acquired the English throne. Others, notably George, Earl of Warwick and Richard III, had superior claims. The author suggests that Margaret, aware of this, was the instigator of the final

negotiations for Henry to marry Edward IV's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York. Henry won his throne through battle, but marriage with Elizabeth consolidated his position.

Through her father, John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, Margaret was descended from Edward III via John of Gaunt through his liaison with Katherine Swynford whom Gaunt later married. Their children were declared legitimate but a question remained whether this allowed claims to the throne. Margaret's father died before she was a year old. As one of the greatest heiresses in England, her wardship, a valuable asset for Henry VI, was granted to William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. Margaret, who was allowed to remain with her mother, was well educated for the time, becoming proficient in French. She was contracted in marriage to Suffolk's son but this was dissolved.

On Suffolk's downfall, the wardship was reassigned to the king's half-brothers. The elder of these, Edmund Tudor, Earl of Richmond, aged twenty-four, married Margaret, aged twelve. Edmund died before their son was born the following year. A difficult birth, combined with her small stature, nearly proved fatal and left Margaret unable to bear more children. Nevertheless, her proximity to the throne and her wealth still made her a desirable match and she was married a third time to Henry Stafford, son of the Duke of

Buckingham, and yet again to Thomas Lord Stanley, later Earl of Derby. Throughout her marriages and subsequent times of widowhood Margaret continued to use her title Countess of Richmond. It allowed her to sign her name *Margaret R*, which could be mistaken for signifying that she was queen, but perhaps that was her intention! She certainly passed her claim to the throne to her son and she worked tirelessly to achieve his succession, managing to negotiate the dire pitfalls of the politics of the time.

Margaret outlived her son who died on 21 April 1509. As Henry VIII was two months short of his legal majority, Margaret, as the only adult member of the immediate royal family living in England acted as Regent for the interim. She was her son's executor and arranged his funeral. She selected the members of her grandson's first Council, ensuring it was headed by churchmen and was balanced between scholars and soldiers. She lived to see Henry VIII's first marriage and attended his coronation. Margaret died, aged sixty-six years, on 29 June, the day after Henry's eighteenth birthday. She had taken a full part in the life of the new royal family and played a significant role in the lives of her grandchildren. In particular, she had made known her views concerning a too-early marriage for her eldest grand-daughter, suggesting she retained painful memories of the early consummation of her second marriage.

Although Margaret was known to be acquisitive, she also had a reputation for piety. Constant kneeling caused her great pain in later life and she wore penitential hair shirts and girdles under her clothes. After years of marriage, Margaret, with the permission of her fourth husband, took a vow of chastity, though she and Stanley seem to have remained on good terms. She used some of her wealth for charitable works and was a patroness of learning. This included the founding of lectureships in theology at both Oxford and Cambridge. She trusted, and was influenced by, (Saint) John Fisher. As a result, she favoured Cambridge, founding Christ's College and facilitating the foundation of St. John's College.

Elizabeth Norton has written a very readable and interesting biography that brings clarity to the convoluted politics of the period. Of necessity, she focuses on the main story, as relationships were so intertwined that anything else would have become a real complication. One problem with this book is the arrangement of the footnotes. These are very difficult to use as they are, unfortunately, placed in continuous paragraphs. Conversely, the list of illustrations, which has additional notes, actually functions as footnotes. The book has an extensive bibliography and a reasonably full index though, again unfortunately, it is separated from the rest of the book by advertisements. This makes for a curious format. The book also has three family trees, which would have been more helpful if the print was larger and dates had been added to the names. The extensive quotations would have benefited by transcription into modern English. However, two interesting points do arise from having original spellings. Firstly, Edward IV's daughter, named 'Cecill' or 'Cecyll' has her name modernised to Cecily, but perhaps her name really

was Cecille and, secondly, the spelling of Margaret's name as 'Margareyte' may suggest it was actually pronounced as Marguerite. Some fascinating detail is included, for example, the ironic fact that Henry VIII was considered as a future Archbishop of Canterbury if his older brother had lived. No wonder he thought himself an expert in theology.

BOOKS RECEIVED & CALL FOR REVIEWERS

If you would like to review any of the titles listed below, please email Anne Logan: bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

Barry Charles, *Kill the Queen: the Eight Assassination Attempts on Queen Victoria* (Amberley)

William Cross, *The Life and Secrets of Almina Carnarvon* (William Cross)

G. Hammond & P.S. Forsaith, *Religion, Gender and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting* (Clarke)

Harpenden Local History Society, *Theodora's Journals: from Victorian Times to the Eve of World War Two*

Sue Hawkins, *Nursing and Women's Labour in the Nineteenth Century* (Routledge)

Sophie Heywood, *Catholicism and Children's Literature in France: the Comtesse de Ségur (1799-1874)* (Manchester University Press)

Pete Kelly, ed., *From Osborne House to Wheatfen Broad: Memoirs of Phyllis Ellis* [a Norfolk-based naturalist] (Wheatfen Books)

Ann Kramer, *Women Wartime Spies* (Pen and Sword)

C. Lee and P.E. Strong, *Women in War* (Pen and Sword)

Amy Licence, *In Bed with the Tudors: The Sex Lives of a Dynasty* (Amberley)

David Loades, *Mary Rose, Tudor Princess* (Amberley)

Norah Lofts, *Anne Boleyn* (Amberley)

Adelaide Lubbock, *A Cog in the Wheel* [diary: Lubbock who worked with the Allied Commission in Austria 1945-6] (Loaghtan Books)

R.J. Minney, *Carve her Name with Pride* [about Violette Szabo of the SOE] (Pen and Sword)

Sue Niebrzydowski, ed., *Middle-aged Women in the Middle Ages* (Brewer)

Elizabeth Norton, *Bessie Blount, Mistress to Henry VIII* (Amberley)

Bernard O'Connor, *Women of RAF Tempsford* (Amberley)

Bernard O'Connor, *Agent Rose* (Amberley)

Eleanor O'Gorman, *The Front Line Runs Through Every Woman: Women and Local Resistance in the Zimbabwean Liberation War* (James Currey)

Cliona Rattigan, 'What Else Could I do?' *Single Mothers and Infanticide, Ireland 1900-1950* (Irish Academic Press)

Hew Stevenson, *Jobs for the Boys: the Story of a Family in Britain's Imperial Heyday* (Dove Books)

Christine Weightman, *Margaret of York, the Diabolical Duchess* (Amberley)

Last call for reviewers

The following titles have yet to find reviewers. If you would like to review any of them please email Jane Potter (j.potter@brookes.ac.uk).

Any books unclaimed by 31 January 2013 will be donated to an appropriate charity.

Lynne Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space* (Manchester University Press, 2010)

Laura Auricchio, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution* (Getty Publications)

Anne Bridger & Ellen Jordan, *Timely Assistance: The Work of the Society for the Promoting of Training for Women, 1859-2000* (SPTW, 2009)

Kate Culkin, *Harriet Hosmer: A Cultural Biography* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2010)

Margaretta D'Arcy, *Loose Theatre: Memoirs of a Guerilla Theatre Activist* (Trafford, 2005)

Allan T. Duffin, *History in Blue: 160 Years of Women Police, Sheriffs, Detectives, and State Troopers* (Kaplan, 2010)

Angela Escott, 'The Celebrated Hannah Cowley', *Volume 7: Experiments in Dramatic Genre, 1776-1794* (Pickering and Chatto, 2012)

Menna Gallie, *You're Welcome to Ulster* (Honno, 2010)

Laura Hein and Rebecca Jennison, eds. *Imagination with Borders: Feminist Artist Tomiyama Taeko and Social Responsibility* (University of Michigan, 2010)

Anne Jordan, *Love Well the Hour: The Life of Lady Colin Campbell (1857-1911)* (Matador, 2010)

Máire M. Kealy OP, *Dominican Education in Ireland, 1820-1930* (Irish Academic Press, 2007)

Marti Kheel, *Nature Ethics: an Ecofeminist Perspective* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008)

P.F. Kornicki, Mara Patessio, and G.G. Rowley, eds, *The Female as Subject: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Japan* (University of Michigan)

Rachel Jones, *Irigaray* (Polity, 2011)

Lesley Lawson, *Out of the Shadows: The Life of Lucy, Countess of Bedford* (Hambledon Continuum, 2007)

David Llewellyn, *The First Lady of Mulberry Walk: The Life and Times of Irish Sculptress Anne Acheson* (Matador, 2010)

Stuart L. Love, *Jesus and Marginal Women: The Gospel of Matthew in Social-Scientific Perspective* (James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 2009)

Charles Margerison, *Amazing Women: Inspirational Stories* (Amazing People Club, 2010)

Massimo Mazzotti, *The World of Maria Gaetana Agnesi, Mathematician of God* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2007)

Phyllis Demuth Movius, *A Place of Belonging: Five Founding Women of Fairbanks, Alaska* (Alaska)

Judith Niechcial, *Lucy Faithfull: Mother to Hundreds* (Judith Niechcial, 2010)

Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge UP, 2012)

Mara Patessio, *Women and Public Life in Early Meiji Japan: the Development of the Feminist Movement* (University of Michigan, 2011)

Laura Passerine, et.al., *Women Migrants from East to West: Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe* (Berghan Books, 2007)

Lynda Payne, *The Words and Knives: Learning Medical Dispassion in Early Modern England* (Ashgate, 2007)

Rosemary Raughter, *The Journal of Elizabeth Bennis 1749-1779* (Columbia Press, 2007)

Glyn Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life and Death of Luisa de Carvajal* (Oxford UP, 2008)

Lindsay Reid, *Midwifery in Scotland: A History* (Scottish History Press, 2011)

Duane W. Roller, *Cleopatra: a Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

WHN Book Prize

An annual £500 prize for a first book in women's or gender history

The Women's History Network (UK) Book Prize is awarded for an author's first single-authored monograph which makes a significant contribution to women's history or gender history and is written in an accessible style. The book must be written in English and be published the year prior to the award being made. To be eligible for the award, the author should be a member of the Women's History Network (UK) and be normally resident in the UK. The prize will be awarded in September 2013.

Entries (books published during 2012) should be submitted by 31 March 2013.

For further information please contact Ann Kettle, chair of the panel of judges, Mediaeval History, School of History, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9QW
Email: bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

Clare Evans Prize

*An annual £500 prize for a new essay in the field of
GENDER AND HISTORY*

In memory of Dr Clare Evans, a national prize worth £500 is offered annually for an original essay in the field of women's history or gender and history. Essays are considered by a panel of judges set up by the Women's History Network and the Trustees of the Clare Evans Memorial Fund. Subject to the normal refereeing criteria, the winning essay will be submitted to the *Women's History Review* for possible publication.

Clare Evans was an outstanding woman who died tragically of cervical cancer on 30 November 1997, aged just 37. Born in Bath, she read history at the University of Manchester, graduating in 1982. She continued her studies, registering for a PhD at the University whilst preparing and delivering seminars on feminist history, creating the first feminist historiography course in collaboration with Kersten England and Ann Hughes. Clare would have approved of an award which helped women to publish for the first time, giving them the confidence to further develop their ideas.

To be eligible for the award, the candidate must be a) a woman who has not yet had a publication in a major academic journal, b) not in a permanent academic position, and c) normally resident in the UK.

The article should be in English and of 6,000 to 8,000 words in length including footnotes. We welcome submissions from any area of women's history or gender and history.

Please send completed essays to Ann Hughes by 31 May 2013. Please also include brief biographical details (education, current job or other circumstances) and include a cover sheet with title only (not name) to facilitate anonymous judging.

Those wishing to apply for the prize should first email or write for further details to:

Ann Hughes, Department of History and Classics, University of Keele, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG.
Email: a.l.hughes@keele.ac.uk.



Carol Adams Prize: Winning Essay

How far do you agree that the 19th Amendment was a false dawn for women's civil rights in America?

Francesca Whalen

The Grammar School at Leeds

It is undeniable that the 'Anthony Amendment', when it was finally passed in 1919 and ratified in 1920, was a significant gain for women's civil rights in America. Women were recognised as citizens with the right to vote bringing the first major success of any women's campaign. However, this did not create the gains in political, economic and social civil rights that many suffragists had anticipated. The *de jure* recognition of women's equality to men served only to expose their inequality *de facto* in the work place, politics and the eyes of wider American society making the description of the Amendment as a false dawn accurate. Perhaps most damning of all was the lack of further progress made as a result of reduction in activism, something only really recovered with second wave feminism nearly forty years later, making this description unfortunately accurate.

The 19th Amendment did of course bring gains to women's political rights; they were given a federal political voice for the first time which allowed them to put pressure upon government. This was used to great effect during the 1960s when members of NOW campaigned for legislation to protect women's rights. The right to vote also brought women out of the separate sphere of the home for the first time. However, this *de jure* change failed to have an impact upon many women who remained uninterested in politics with studies showing that 'the majority of married women voted as their husbands did'.¹ There was not a strong enough challenge to the idea of the cult of true womanhood to break the internalised notion that politics was unsuitable for women. This was perhaps because the campaign for suffrage was never a mainstream movement; only involving two million women, mostly white and middle class, the suffragists were described as 'a well dressed crowd'.² In addition, while some women were campaigning for suffrage as a basis for total gender equality, others saw it as an extension of their role as the moral arbiter, arguing that 'the state needed women (as voters) precisely because of their difference'.³ Therefore, for some the 19th Amendment served to reaffirm the separate sphere and as a result, although women gained the right to vote, this proved to be a false dawn as they did not gain a true political voice with only nine women entering federal politics by 1939.

Many historians view the campaign for the 19th Amendment as crucial for the later success of women's rights campaigns as it showed women that their actions could achieve federal level improvements in gender equality and provided campaigning experience. Despite Wilson's fop about the amendment being a reward for women's war efforts, his support for it as early as 1915 shows it was actually a result of the campaigns of NAWSA.

However, such experience was also gained in the temperance movement, which was just as successful and involved twice as many women. There was in fact a drop in women's activism after 1920 with various groups unsure as to what the next step might be. Many saw suffrage as the climax of the women's rights campaign, ignoring the many social and economic inequalities they faced because the cult of true womanhood remained largely unchallenged. This lull in activism, with a few exceptions such as Margaret Sanger, lasted until after the Second World War. While it may have added to campaigning experience, this experience was not immediately utilised for further gains making the 19th Amendment a false dawn.

There were no improvements in women's economic rights or position as a result of the 19th Amendment. Although the 1920s saw an increase of eight million employed women with 28 per cent of married women working, this was simply a temporary change, the result of the near full employment of the boom years. Their earnings remained lower than those of men in every profession and the attitude to women's work, of both society and women themselves, was not altered. Eighty per cent of women wanted to return to the separate sphere of the home after their work during the First World War and during the depression that followed the 1929 Wall Street crash attitudes were made all too clear. Twenty-six states tried to ban married women from working, the American Federation of Labour was openly hostile to women workers 'taking men's jobs' and a 1936 Gallup poll showed that 82 per cent of Americans (men and women) were opposed to women working. Women had clearly not gained any real economic equality in the eyes of American society as a result of gaining the vote.

Arguments are made that the 'flappers' of the 1920s heralded a new era of women smoking, drinking, and socialising un-chaperoned, inspired by their new status as voting citizens, equal to men. These were, however, a minority of rich white women who had very little impact upon the average woman in wider American society. Most 1920s women only experienced this new 'revolution', if at all, through watching Clara Bow and others on movie screens. If anything the backlash against these women with their racy dances and loose morals reinforced the cult of true womanhood, reasserting values of sexual purity and femininity. This lack of attitudinal change is evident in the continuing hostility towards Margaret Sanger's 'voluntary motherhood' campaign throughout the decade. There were no solid social changes in the perception of women after the 19th Amendment, so it was indeed a false dawn.

The *de jure* improvements of the 19th Amendment

should not be understated. However, the Amendment failed to challenge the ideas of the cult of true womanhood and the separate sphere and as such brought little *de facto* change to the political, economic or social rights of women. The stalling of the women's rights campaign following the Amendment, in combination with the lack of attitudinal change of both women themselves and wider American society, means that the 19th Amendment was indeed a false dawn for women's civil rights in America.

Notes

1. D. Paterson, C. Willoughby and S. Willoughby, *Civil Rights in the USA, 1865-1992* (London, Heinemann, 2009), 236.
2. S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1999), 42.
3. *Ibid.*

Carol Adams Prizewinner

Francesca Whalen



I have just completed my A-levels in History, Maths, Further Maths, English Literature and French at the Grammar School at Leeds and hope to read History next year at Balliol College, Oxford. I have always enjoyed studying History at school and I have been lucky enough to have been taught by a succession of very enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers throughout my senior school career who really fuelled my passion for the subject. I would like to say a

Remember the WHN in your Will

Do please consider leaving a gift to the Women's History Network in your will. Many people who give to charities also choose to leave something in their wills to a particular cause. Not only is this a fitting way to ensure that your commitment to the WHN continues in the longer term, legacies often constitute a very important income stream for smaller charities, passing on some excellent tax advantages not only for us, but also for you! Leaving a legacy to the WHN, for example, could save on inheritance tax, as the value of your donation, no matter how large or small, is normally deducted from the value of your estate prior to inheritance tax being worked out. There are several forms of legacies of which a Pecuniary Legacy (a fixed sum) or Residuary Legacy (part or all of your estate once all your other gifts have been deducted) are two of the most common.

If you are interested in finding out more about how to go about naming the WHN as a beneficiary of your will please contact the HM Revenue and Customs website which has some helpful basic information www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/donors/legacies or consult your own solicitor.

If you would like to discuss legacies, and the ways in which they could be deployed by the WHN, please contact our Charity representative, Sue Morgan, email charityrep@womenshistorynetwork.org

No matter how small, your gift will make a difference.

particular thank you to Miss Sutheran who has taught me for A-level and who has been influential in making me consider carefully my approach to women's history in particular. At A2 I studied civil rights in 20th-century America across four different groups, African Americans, Native Americans, Trade Unions and Women. This was my first real exposure to women's history and I found it fascinating. Most interesting was looking at the way the varied experiences of women in their social, economic and even geographical backgrounds marked them out from the other groups we studied. I chose to write my essay on the effects of American women gaining the vote because I felt that this period best exemplified these differences and the way they both helped and hindered the progression of women's civil rights. I certainly hope that this will not be my last opportunity to study women's history as I have found it interesting and inspiring over the last year.

WHN Book Prize Awarded

This prize (£500) is awarded for a WHN member's first single-authored monograph that makes a significant contribution to women's history or gender history and is written in English in an accessible style. The book must be published the year prior to the award being made, and the author must normally be resident in the UK when the book is written. This year's judges were Angela John, Ann Kettle (chair), Clare Midgley, Jane Rendall, Alex Shepherd and Penny Summerfield.



WHN Bookprize winner Katie Barclay (left) receiving her prize from Ann Kettle

Although the number of submissions was small, the field was a strong one and there was a broad subject and period coverage. The judges were pleased to have the opportunity to read so much original and exciting scholarship. The prize was awarded to Katie Barclay, recently appointed as a postdoctoral research fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions in the University of Adelaide, for her monograph, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester University Press, 2011). With a solid evidence base of letters in the papers of sixty-five Scottish families, the book charts changes over two centuries in the way in which men and women among the Scottish elite negotiated their marriages within a patriarchal context. The panel of judges found it a welcome contribution to the history of marriage, to the rising field of the history of emotions and to the revival of patriarchy as a useful concept in women's history. An important and original study, it is intellectually ambitious, sophisticated in its conceptual approach and written with clarity and conviction.

Ann Kettle, Chair of the Judges for the WHN Book Prize

Clare Evans Essay Prize Awarded

The Clare Evans prize, established in 1997 in memory of Clare Evans, a talented and committed scholar of women's history from Manchester University, is awarded for the best essay on women's or gender history by a women historian at the start of her career or working outside an academic context. This year we had a great many interesting and wide-ranging entries for the prize, covering medieval to contemporary periods and British, continental European and comparative history. The prize attracts early-career, postgraduate and independent scholars of women's history; the judges learnt much from reading them and we are pleased that the prize continues to encourage high-quality work in women's and gender history.

After much discussion we decided to award the prize for 2012 to Rachel Ritchie (Brunel University) for a lively and original essay, building on feminist scholarship on glamour and with important insights into women in the 1950s: "Beauty isn't all a matter of looking glamorous": attitudes to glamour in the Women's Institute and Women's Cooperative Guild magazines during the 1950s'.

Two further essays were highly commended: Lucienne Boyce, a writer based in Bristol, for an essay that used a carefully researched case-study of Bristol to make distinctive arguments about attitudes to the suffrage movement: 'Suffragettes and students: arson and riot in Bristol' and Rosie Horrod, an MPhil student at Cambridge



Rachel Ritchie receiving the Clare Evans prize from Clare's daughter Merlin.

for 'The power of images in the education of twelfth-century female monastic communities', a beautifully written essay on female learning that deployed visual as well as written sources.

The judges were Karen Adler, Amanda Capern, Merlin Evans, Kath Holden and Ann Hughes. *Ann Hughes, Chair of the Judges for the Clare Evans Prize*

The twenty-first annual conference of the Women's History Network

Women, State and Nation

Cardiff University, 7-9 September 2012

For the first time, the Women's History Network's annual conference was held in Wales, at an event co-hosted by Cardiff and Glamorgan Universities. The campus of Cardiff University provided the actual venue,



Conference front desk

with the hub of the Humanities Building providing a friendly refreshment base and meeting point for delegates as they returned invigorated from the extensive sessions that were on offer. There was as usual an impressive range of panels and speakers. Sessions were arranged thematically into four strands: 'Gender and the Nation (1) Crises and Responses'; 'Feminism, Female Agency and Change'; 'Imagining the Nation: Art, Fiction, Drama and Music'; Gender and the Nation (2) Religious and Cultural Identities'.

There was a strong international flavour to the three plenary sessions, a welcome foretaste of next year's WHN conference in Sheffield that will be hosted jointly with the International Federation for Research in Women's History. On Friday evening, the Wallace Lecture Theatre in the grandiose Main Building welcomed Dr Padma Anagol, an academic at Cardiff University. Her absorbing paper, '"In the Interest of the Nation": Women's Role and Participation in the Birth of the Hindu Right in Colonial India' focussed on the life and work of Laxmibai Dravid and the conflicts inherent in researching and reclaiming a woman who held many anti-feminist views. On Saturday afternoon, Professor Mineke Bosch from the University of Groningen captivated the audience with her paper, 'Histories of Transfer and Entanglement: The Case of Aletta Jacobs and British Feminism 1870-1929'. Here she explored the many links between the Dutch physician and Britain's radical, suffrage, medical and peace movements. The final plenary, at Sunday lunchtime, was with Professor Elsa Barkley-Brown from the University of Maryland. 'On Play and Citizenship: African-American Women and the Undisciplined Body' was a spell-binding paper that

considered the political portrayal of black women's bodies in the USA, ending with a critique of Michelle Obama.

Alongside the panels and plenaries there were opportunities to network and relax with a wine and buffet reception in the Viriamu Jones Gallery on Friday night and prize-givings, book launches and a conference dinner on Saturday night. Professor Diana Wallace read from Hilda Vaughan's *Here we are Lovers*, a new edition of which was launched at the conference by the Welsh feminist publishing company Honno. Then it was time to head into Cardiff city centre and a lively conference dinner.

The current economic climate has meant that funding and sponsorship was much harder to come by this year, which is all the more reason to congratulate Stephanie Ward and Fiona Reid for their excellent organisation. It may have been a 'wine and crisps' reception that Stephanie welcomed us to on Saturday evening, but her broad grin said it all.

Kate Murphy, Bournemouth University

Women's History Magazine Back issues

Back issues of *Women's History Magazine* are available to buy for

£4.50 inc postage (UK)

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Most issues are available, from Spring 2002 to the present. Discover the contents of each issue at

www.magazine.womenshistorynetwork.org

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Professor June Hannam introduces Professor Mineke Bosch

Bursary holder's conference report

The theme of 'Women State and Nation: Creating Gendered Identities' set the stage for the twenty-first annual conference held at Cardiff University. Papers were given on a variety of subjects and covering a variety of geographical areas and cultures, from the UK to the USA, India, Asia and Africa. Papers were arranged in four themes; 'Crises and Responses', 'Art, Fiction, Drama and Music', 'Religious and Cultural Identities' and 'Feminism, Female Agency and Activism'. This wide range of interesting panels made choice very difficult, and certainly offered something for all the varying interests of those present.

As a historian of childhood, I attended a number of panels throughout all of the strands that focused on young people. Alison Enever's paper on the construction of female identities within the *Girls' Own Paper* in the UK contrasted with Anja Tschörtner's study of German girls' fiction within World War One Germany, which provided a view from the other side of the war. Within 'Female Agency and Activism', Maggie Andrews looked at Evacuees within a reception area – a change from existing studies that concentrate on sending areas. This viewpoint allowed for a detailed examination of the stresses faced by families forced to accept evacuated children. Pamela Schievenin spoke on Italian postwar politics and the demands of women from different political sides, examining the differing demands of childcare and maternity leave provisions on women politicians. Continuing the childcare theme, Laura Paterson looked at postwar nurseries in Dundee, Glasgow, Newcastle and Preston.

The panels were arranged in a way that provided for excellent discussions afterwards. Following Jane Potter's presentation on US women serving in the First World War and Lucy Noakes' paper detailing the influence of women on the recruiting campaigns of the ARP, a discussion was held on the nature of military recruitment today. These two papers certainly shed light on current army recruitment adverts and the different terminology they use to attract men and women. Themes of the 'outsider' were present in a number of papers, including Jenny Pearce's study of the governess and her role as an outsider within British and colonial society, and Diana Reinhard's paper looking at American medical publications and their representations

of non-Western practices. Clare Gallagher's work on the Ellis Island school provided a picture of the foreign 'other' and how notions of American citizenship were inculcated into the young.

In addition to the wide variety of papers, the conference offered a fascinating local history walk with Bill Jones of Cardiff University and a book launch of Honno Press' newest addition to their Welsh Women's Classics selection – Hilda Vaughn's *Here are Lovers*, edited by Diana Wallace, who provided an interesting introduction. These sessions provided a welcome break from papers whilst still encapsulating the women's history themes.

The conference featured three engaging plenary speakers. Padma Anagol's paper on the birth of the Hindu right and the writings of Laxmibai Dravid, was both entertaining and highly informative, providing an insight into Indian history, which many, including myself, knew very little about. Her detailed exploration of Laxmibai's beliefs certainly provided an insight into notions of feminism outside of the West. Mineke Bosch delivered an engaging paper on the life of Aletta Jacobs and her relationships with British feminists, exploring the entanglements between what she both took from and gave to British feminism. The final plenary speaker, Elsa Barkley-Brown, explored the African-American woman



Honno book launch

and the body, and the way that this has been depicted in popular culture. Her detailed analysis of the 'brute' images portrayed in the 'Darktown' cartoons of the late nineteenth century through to the playful nature of Michelle Obama's dress, demonstrating the changes in attitudes to African-American women, whilst still indicating that there is a way to go until all African-Americans are allowed to 'play' with their images in the same way as the First Lady.

The twenty-first annual conference therefore presented an array of interesting papers, covering a variety of themes, nations and time periods and was a thought-provoking weekend. The next WHN conference, to be held jointly with the International Federation for Research in Women's History on the theme of 'Women's Histories: The Local and the Global' is certainly not to be missed.

Anne Holdorph, University of Southampton

Getting to Know Each Other

Name

Professor Clare Midgley

Position

Research professor in history at Sheffield Hallam University and currently President of the International Federation for Research in Women's History (IFRWH)



Name: Position: How long have you been a WHN member?

I attended the founding conference of the WHN, way back in 1991, just after I'd completed my PhD, and have been a member ever since. I convened the tenth anniversary conference at the Women's Library in London in 2001 and am currently busy organising the joint IFRWH / WHN conference which will be held in Sheffield next year.

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?

I was inspired by the feminist movement of the late 1970s and 1980s, especially the challenges of black feminists / womanists. I came to women's history from an earlier career as an archaeologist – after a wonderful 'gap year' in the US when I was inspired both by auditing courses at the University of Iowa on feminist theory and women's roles cross-culturally, and by meeting and reading the work of visiting women writers on the international writing programme.

What are your special interests?

From the beginning, I've been interested in making connections between the history of women and the history of 'race' and empire. I've also always been interested in exploring transnational and cross-cultural connections among women activists, and am currently working on a new book exploring debates on the 'woman question' between nineteenth-

century British, American and Indian religious liberals and social reformers.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

It is very hard to single out any one individual woman but my list of heroines would have to include: Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, for her courage and lack of deference to authority; anarchist Emma Goldman, for her radicalism and love of having fun; anti-slavery campaigner Elizabeth Heyrick for not letting her lack of worldly power stop her speaking out for justice; and my grandmother, Caroline Mary Freeman, for her sheer determination in raising my mother as a single parent in interwar Britain.

Women's History magazine is keen to carry profiles that celebrate the diversity of WHN membership. If you would like to complete a 'Getting to know each other' questionnaire, or you would like to nominate someone else to, please email editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

Annual General Meeting

The WHN AGM took place during the Cardiff Conference on Saturday 8 September. The convenor reported that the Network had had another successful year, thanks to the hard work of the officers and members of the steering committee. New publicity material had been designed and the WHN Blog was now well established. Although the Network's finances are in good shape, the treasurer expressed concern at the rising cost of postage for the *Magazine* which might necessitate either an increase in subscriptions or a reduction in the number of issues.

The convenor thanked the retiring members of the committee – Henrice Altink, June Hannam, Krista Cowman and Juliette Pattinson – for the work that they had done during their time on the committee. It was reported that June Purvis had joined the committee as representative of the International Federation for Research into Women's History. This role was of particular significance, as the next WHN conference will be held in conjunction with the IFRWH international conference in Sheffield.

Five new members were elected to fill vacancies on the committee: Maggie Andrews (Associate Head of the Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts at the University of Worcester), Lucy Bland (formerly of London Metropolitan University), Sue Bruley (Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Portsmouth), Meagan Butler (PhD student at the University of Glasgow) and Imaobong D. Umoren (PhD student at King's College London).

All WHN members are invited to attend meetings of the Steering Committee which take place at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. Visit www.womenshistorynetwork.org for the date of the next meeting or email convenor@womenshistorynetwork.org

Publishing in *Women's History Magazine*

Women's History Magazine welcomes contributions from experienced scholars and those at an earlier stage in their research careers. We aim to be inclusive and fully recognise that women's history is not only lodged in the academy. All submissions are subject to the usual peer review process.

Articles should be 3000-8000 words in length. Contributors are requested to submit articles in final form, carefully following the style guidelines available at:

[www.womenshistorynetwork.org/
whnmagazine/authorguide.html](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org/whnmagazine/authorguide.html)

Please email your submission, as a word attachment, to the editors at

editor@womenshistorynetwork.org



What is the Women's History Network?

The WHN was founded in July 1991. It is a national charity concerned with promoting women's history and encouraging women interested in history. WHN business is carried out by the National Steering Committee, which is elected by the membership and meets regularly several times each year. It organises the annual conference, manages the finance and membership, and co-ordinates activities in pursuit of the aims of the WHN.

Aims of the WHN

1. To encourage contact between all people interested in women's history — in education, the media or in private research
2. To collect and publish information relating to women's history
3. To identify and comment upon all issues relating to women's history
4. To promote research into all areas of women's history

What does the WHN do?

Annual Conference

Each year the WHN holds a national conference for WHN members and others. The conference provides everyone interested in women's history with a chance to meet and it has become an exciting forum where new research can be aired and recent developments in the field can be shared. The Annual General Meeting of the Network takes place at the conference. The AGM discusses issues of policy and elects the National Steering Committee.

WHN Publications

WHN members receive three copies per year of the *Women's History Magazine*, which contains: articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history; reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions; and information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities.

Joining the WHN

Annual Membership Rates

Student/unwaged	£15*	Overseas minimum	£40
Low income (*under £20,000 pa)	£25*	UK Institutions	£45
High income	£40*	Institutions overseas	£55
Life Membership	£350		

* £5 reduction when paying by standing order.

Charity Number: 1118201. Membership application/renewal, Gift Aid Declaration and Banker's Order forms are available on the back cover or join online at www.womenshistorynetwork.org

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For magazine back issues and queries please email:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

*You may now join the WHN online – just go to
www.womenshistorynetwork.org and follow the instructions.
Payments, standing-order mandates and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well – see panel on page 21 for further details*

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I would like to *join / renew my subscription to the Women's History Network. I */ enclose a cheque payable to Women's History Network / have filled out & returned to my bank the Banker's Order Form / for £ _____ (* delete as applicable)

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Tick this box if you DO NOT want your name made available to publishers/conference organisers for publicity: ☐

Detach and return this form with, if applicable, your cheque to: Dr Anne Logan, University of Kent, Gillingham Building, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4AG

Email: membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

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3. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration (see note 1).

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Pay to the account of the Women's History Network, Account No. 91325692 at the National Westminster Bank, Stuckeys Branch, Bath (sort code 60—02—05), on _____ 20__, and annually thereafter, on the same date, the sum of

(in figures) £ _____ (in words) _____.

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