

# *Women's History* **MAGAZINE**

**ISSUE 49, SPRING 2005**  
**ISSN 1476-6760**

*Judy A. Hayden on  
Guinevere in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Historical Chronicles*

*Jennie Batchelor on  
Re-clothing the Female Reader: Dress and the 'Lady's Magazine'*

*Katherine Storr on  
Belgian Women Refugees in Britain in the Great War*



***PLUS:***

*Five Book Reviews*

*Conference Notices/Calls for  
Papers*

*Steering Committee News*

women's  
HISTORY  
NETWORK



14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Women's History Network  
**Women, Art and Culture:  
Historical Perspectives**

September 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> 2005, Southampton

Southampton Institute, Sir James Matthews Conference Centre, Southampton, Hants.



*Papers are welcomed on the following themes:*

**Women and the visual arts; painting, sculpture, architecture, and the decorative arts.**

**Women and the Arts and Crafts Movement/Home Decorating.**

**Women and the performing arts.**

**Women and the literary arts.**

**Women as art objects/images of women.**

**Women as mediators of culture.**

**Women as collectors and benefactors.**

*Plenary Speakers:*

Frances Borzello on 'Women Artists: Self Portraits'

Marina Vaizey on '20th Century Women Collectors'

Speakers, papers and a provisional programme will be posted at

**[www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org)**

as soon as they become available. Papers will be considered for special issues of:

***Women's History Magazine & Women's History Review.***

Abstracts of 200-300 words should be sent by **01/06/05** to: Dr Anne Anderson, FMAS, Southampton  
Institute, Southampton, S014 ORF.

**[conference2005@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:conference2005@womenshistorynetwork.org)**

Welcome to the largest edition yet of *Women's History Magazine*. This issue should have something of interest for everyone as it contains three articles that span the medieval, early modern and modern periods. Judy Hayden opens the issue with a study of how medieval chroniclers subtly altered their representations of Guinevere in each retelling of the Arthurian legend. While never breaking the familiar gendered stereotypes of victim/whore, over time Guinevere nevertheless changes from the helpless victim of rape and kidnap to an incestuous seductress and symbol of all the evils that could befall a divided nation. For Hayden this shifting imagery was determined by a number of factors including the civil war between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda, contemporary anxieties about the role of queens in medieval society and an increasing reliance by ecclesiastical authorities on the texts of early church fathers, which resulted in a more vociferous condemnation of female sexuality.

Contemporary anxieties about female sexuality, or rather the use of fashion to allure male suitors, is one of the themes taken up by Jennie Batchelor in her article about the eighteenth-century *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1832). Ostensibly a response to a booming consumer interest in fashion and dress aimed specifically at women, the magazine was nevertheless intent on promoting a reformation of manners. It thus attempted to engage its readers with articles and pictures describing the latest fashions, while at the same time warning them against the follies of excessive interest in and consumption of fashionable clothing. In examining this paradox, Batchelor has shed new light on two key debates regarding the feminization of eighteenth-century culture and the ways in which female readers respond to didactic literature. Despite high levels of editorial mediation, reader contributions to the magazine suggest considerable resistance to the magazine's moralizing project without any diminution of enthusiasm for its more fashionable content.

Our final article focuses on alternative modes of resistance by Belgian refugees in Britain during World War I. Katherine Storr challenges assumptions about the powerlessness more usually associated with poverty, gender and refugee status, by defining power as the ability to control one's own life choices and to force others to employ their time, energy and money to support those choices. She goes on to show how Belgian women exercised a considerable degree of agency over issues around work, parenting, status and accommodation. Indeed, despite the fact that many remained poor, the

common contemporary conviction that Belgian women and their families enjoyed better treatment than their British counterparts, was not unfounded.

The WHN committee is delighted by the excellent response to the new prize for a first book that makes a significant contribution to the field of women's or gender history. Six books have now been nominated and the winner will be announced at the annual conference which takes place on 2nd-4th September 2005 at the Southampton Institute. Entitled Women, Art and Culture: Historical Perspectives, the conference takes as its theme the interaction between women and the arts as both producers and consumers. The theme was inspired by the International Arts and Crafts Exhibition 1880-1930 currently at the V&A and to mark the founding of the Southampton School of Art 150 years ago in 1855. It is therefore an opportune time to assess the benefits that arose for women with the founding of the Art Schools and the emergence of the Arts and Crafts movement. Plenary speakers will include Dr Frances Borzello, well known for her books and exhibitions on the female artist, and Marina Vaizey, joint author of *Great Women Collectors*. We are very much looking forward to welcoming many of you there.

*The WHN's editorial team:*

Claire Jones, Jane Potter, Niki Pullin and Debbi Simonton.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Judy A. Hayden: 'Sorry to be Alive': Guinevere in Twelfth- and Thirteenth- Century Historical Chronicles	p. 4
Jennie Batchelor: Re-clothing the Female Reader: Dress and the <i>Lady's Magazine</i> (1770-1832)	p. 11
Katherine Storr: Women, Poverty and Power: Belgian Refugee Women in Britain in the Great War	p. 21
Book Reviews	p. 32
Conference Notices	p. 37
Clare Evans Prize details	p. 41
Steering Committee News	p. 42

Front cover picture—see article starting on p. 11.

# ‘Sorry to be Alive’: Guinevere in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Historical Chronicles

Judy A. Hayden

University of Tampa

*For the purposes of washing out those stains from the character of the Britons, a writer in our times has started up and invented the most ridiculous fictions concerning them, and with unblushing effrontery, extols them.... He is called Geoffrey, surnamed Arthur, from having given...the fabulous exploits of Arthur...and endeavoured to dignify them with the name of authentic history.<sup>1</sup>*

So concludes William of Newburgh (c.1196-98) in his discussion of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* [*History of the Kings of Britain*, written c. 1136-8].<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey’s text, William observes, lacks ‘plain historical truth’ and ‘impertinently and impudently he falsifies in every respect’ (399). Another near contemporary of Geoffrey of Monmouth is the cleric Gerald of Wales, who in his *Descriptio Cambriae* [*Description of Wales*, c.1200], refers to that ‘false book,’ the ‘fabulous history of Geoffrey Arthurius.’<sup>3</sup>

Although his contemporaries may criticize him sharply, it is, nevertheless, Geoffrey who appears to have established the paradigm on which later writers drew in their chronicles for Arthur and the history of the Britons. Notwithstanding that Geoffrey’s twelfth-century quasi-history does indeed offer more fiction than fact, it presents nevertheless the first lengthy development of Arthur; thus, Geoffrey’s text proves valuable not only for an exploration of Arthur, but it serves particularly well as a starting point for the study of Guinevere, Arthur’s queen. While Arthur’s characterization changes little in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century histories, Guinevere’s portrayal undergoes radical development. Arthur is always depicted as a Christian king, a warrior who unites his people, rebuilds churches, slays giants, halts an attempted incursion by the Romans, and conquers much of the European continent. This is not the case for his queen.

In this essay, I will argue that the initial construction and development of Guinevere by early historians changed radically to reflect the context of ecclesiastical

ideology about, political disempowerment of and social change to women’s roles, particularly queenship, which occurred during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in England. For example, one of the earliest depictions of Guinevere may be found in Caradoc of Llancarfan’s twelfth-century *Vita Gildae* [*Life of Gildas*]; although a biography more than a history *per se*, Caradoc (d.1156?) offers a singular view of the Arthur and Guinevere of whom Geoffrey of Monmouth writes.<sup>4</sup> In the *Life of Gildas*, Guinevere is depicted as a victim of kidnap and rape. In his *History of the Kings of Britain*, however, Geoffrey, depicts her as a faithless queen who engages in adultery—and incest—with Mordred, her nephew by marriage. Later historical writers draw on Geoffrey’s depiction, and in the process they not only embellish the queen’s sexual indiscretion, but they elaborate on the nature of her complicity and her ultimate punishment as well. Within the next few decades, Caradoc’s Guinevere, a powerless victim of kidnap and rape, undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis in which she becomes in the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century historical chronicles a power-mongering seductress. This remarkable shift in character, I will argue, reflects the twelfth-century ‘revision’ of women in general and queenship in particular.

The ‘historical’ Guinevere is considerably different from her prose romance counterpart, and this difference no doubt correlates with the nature and purpose of genre. The early chronicles provided a record of the events and progresses of a particular society, political reign, or abbey, and so forth. The details in these chronicles suffered somewhat in accuracy and much of what was recorded included personal comment from the writer; but it is the personal comment as well as the historical events which make these chronicles such valuable sources today. In his *History*, Geoffrey palpably conflates fact and fiction as he records the deeds of the ancient kings of the Britons so that they could be ‘praised for all time’ (51).

The ‘romance’ Guinevere, on the other hand, reflects courtly love, an idealized literary form of fiction which includes handsome, valiant knights and beautiful courtly ladies. In the literature of courtly love, the knight serves his lady, much as he serves his lord; she in return inspires him to accomplish the great deeds by which he wins honour. The couple are not married, and in fact, the woman may be married to someone else, as is indeed the case with Guinevere, who is served and loved by the knight Sir Lancelot, who is Arthur’s favourite knight and is frequently referred to as ‘the flower of all chivalry’.<sup>5</sup>

While her love affair is adulterous, it is not incestuous, and Arthur, who is keenly aware of the affair, appears to consent (owing to his love for Lancelot) as long as he is not forced to recognize publicly his wife’s treason. Guinevere, one of the most beautiful ladies of the land, is

often petulant, faithless, and demanding; yet as queen, she also dispenses punishment to Arthur's knights, who often seduce, sometimes marry, and occasionally kill women. In these romances, it is Arthur who commits adultery with his sister and begets his son Mordred, who eventually brings down the kingdom in a war with his uncle/father.

In both the historical chronicles and the romances, Arthur is always a Christian warrior king, securing domestic peace and protecting his kingdom from foreign invasion. It is Guinevere who is culpable for the political breakdown which divides the country and instigates the Battle of Camlan in which Arthur's tragic death occurs.

As noted earlier, Geoffrey's contemporary Caradoc of Llancarfan is one of the first writers who offers more than a cursory nod to Guinevere. While his *Life of Gildas* is not an historical chronicle, it offers nonetheless a place to begin this study. Caradoc records Arthur as a rebellious king, whose twenty-three brothers constantly rise up against him (91). When 'the wicked king Melvas' abducts Guinevere and then plays a cat-and-mouse game, moving around Britain in a ruse to hide her from 'the tyrant Arthur,' Gildas steps in to prevent war between the two kingdoms. Caradoc praises Gildas for securing the peace between these two kings and restoring Guinevere to her husband, Arthur (99-101). Caradoc's Guinevere is a woman abducted, ravished, and restored only through the intervention of this saintly peace-maker. The queen is little more than a powerless, coveted prize fought over by 'two kings of Briton,' neither of whom demonstrate particularly promising attributes.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, Arthur leaves the kingdom to fight on the continent, and while he is absent, his nephew Mordred usurps the throne—and the queen; thus, the villain of this 'historical' version of Arthurian tragedy is ostensibly Mordred, whose treachery in both usurping the throne and taking the queen in Arthur's absence ultimately leads to the downfall of the kingdom. From this early twelfth-century text, later writers developed the legend in a wider context, and in the process, they typically assigned greater responsibility for the treachery to Guinevere. These writers aggressively explore her engagement in incest with Mordred, her nephew by marriage, and ultimately find her culpable in the events which lead to the death of Arthur and the fall of the kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Geoffrey completed his text at a crucial moment in English history. When in 1127 it became clear that King Henry I (1100-35), would have no heir, he secured from his nobles an oath that they would support his daughter, the Empress Matilda, as his successor. In the aftermath of Henry's sudden death in 1135, Stephen of Blois,

Henry's nephew, rushed to England and claimed the throne. Initially, the opposition to him was not particularly strong, although rebellion ensued along the Welsh border and King David of Scotland, who as uncle of Matilda supported her claim for the throne, invaded the northern border. The nobility appeared largely willing to accept the situation in spite of the oath they had given to King Henry. 'Many nobles felt they were not compelled to honour their oaths to Matilda, not only because they had sworn unwillingly, but also because Henry had nominated Stephen over Matilda on his deathbed,' or so the claim went.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Matilda did not take quietly the loss of the throne. Although early in the crisis she was engaged in securing her continental lands, by 1136 a few of the nobility had already begun to support her cause. In 1138, she and Stephen engaged in a lengthy civil war, at the end of which she secured the succession in favour of her son, who would become Henry II (1154-89).

Political unrest, then, may well have played a role in Geoffrey's development of Arthurian legend since during the period he wrote, England no doubt strained under the divided allegiance of the nobility. Geoffrey alludes to the repercussions of political instability in the following observation: every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself shall fall (264).

While the country's domestic situation may well have contributed to the mood of Geoffrey's text, Guinevere's dramatic character revision in the historical chronicles was probably influenced to a greater extent by twelfth-century ecclesiastical, political, and social changes, a period to which some scholars refer to as one of 'reform'. These changes directly affected queenship, constraining the public power that eleventh- and early twelfth-century queens wielded and relegating queenship to a private domestic function.

One of the most dramatic changes in the configuration of the queen—and women's role in general—came about with the return by twelfth-century ecclesiastics to the teachings of the early church fathers, such as Jerome and Augustine. They claimed that although virgins were praise-worthy, women were to be abhorred for 'sin came through a woman (Eve), but salvation through a virgin.'<sup>8</sup> Jerome, for example, warns that 'woman's love in general is accused of ever being insatiable; put it out, it bursts into flame; give it plenty, it is again in need; it enervates a man's mind, and engrosses all thought except for the passion which it feeds.'<sup>9</sup> Augustine supports the suppression of female power by concluding that man's superiority to woman is because woman was created from man in man's

image, rather than by God in God's image, and therefore she can never be equal with man. It is natural for her to be dominated and governed by man.<sup>10</sup>

The existence, or perhaps I should say persistence, of medieval misogyny is a well-established fact, and the Church's attitude toward women as the origin of evil, easily seduced by the devil, and temptress of man was typically perpetuated by theologians and scholars who were writing history.<sup>11</sup> Gerald of Wales launches into a severe tirade against women, quoting from *Ecclesiastes*, 'Small is the wickedness of man compared to the wickedness of woman' and from Tully, 'Men, perhaps, for the sake of some advantage will commit one crime; but woman, to gratify one inclination, will not scruple to perpetrate all sorts of wickedness.'<sup>12</sup> Additional invectives against women are perhaps redundant here; however, the rise of medieval ecclesiastical hostility to women may offer at least a partial answer for Guinevere's negative depiction in twelfth- and thirteenth-century historical chronicles.

Women's sexuality caused considerable discomfort to the clergy. Woman was Eve, a force for disorder. 'She enticed men into the material realm of sin just as Eve had enticed Adam.'<sup>13</sup> It was not simply that women were weaker than men, less rational than men, or more wicked than men, but that her carnal desire was such that she was a danger to men. 'For them [the clergy], at the source of every contravention of divine law was sex. The capital sin was that of the flesh.'<sup>14</sup> Therefore, twelfth-century sermons included a strong message that women should use the Virgin Mary as their model, since she is the paradigm of virtue, humility, and obedience.

A further and certainly poignant potential for the metamorphosis of Guinevere's character is political reform. During the twelfth-century, the slow development of a more centralized royal administration began to exclude the traditional, and often direct, use of power by the queen. The number of sheriffs was increased and their role regularized, for example.<sup>15</sup> Robin Frame also demonstrates the move toward departmental structuring and an increase in record-keeping and the judiciary (80-83). In an age, Lois Huneycutt writes, when there was little distinction between the royal household and public affairs, the queen had considerable power; however, once the concept of a 'centralized monarchy, bureaucracy and professional administration' began to take form, the queen's power was severely curtailed.<sup>16</sup> As the court became more public and more bureaucratic, the queen was slowly removed from her role in government affairs and into the private domestic sphere.

Curtailed of women's power and independence came about through social changes (which were, of course, influenced by the Church and government reform) taking place not only in England but across the continent as well. Certainly up to this point, English queens had proven to be 'prominent women who often acted as regents for absent husbands, and they drew independent wealth from dower estates held during their marriages.'<sup>17</sup> But in the twelfth century, as part of the economic reforms, the monarchy sought to erode some of the power of the aristocracy.<sup>18</sup> With Henry II, who set about actively rebuilding and consolidating his economic power, John Carmi Parsons claims, the financial resources of the queen were severely curtailed, thus limiting her independence, and, hence, her power. By the thirteenth century, Peggy McCracken argues, 'queenship in most European monarchies had become a public office with only symbolic and, of course, reproductive functions.'<sup>19</sup>

Parsons has recently pointed out the hesitance of medieval society to allow the queen to acquire the sort of power exercised by her husband.<sup>20</sup> Lois Huneycutt suggests that between 1070 and 1150, writers begin to reshape queenship in their texts, particularly offering biblical women as patterns of behaviour, and medieval ecclesiastics began an idealization of the queen as a virtuous maternal figure and nurse.<sup>21</sup> This particular idealization would have proven problematic in the development of Arthurian legend since Guinevere provides no heirs for Arthur.

Ecclesiastical, political, and social reform worked together to reduce the power of the queen and to reconfigure her role. For example, Huneycutt has shown how the clergy presented examples of Esther to provide lessons in queenship.<sup>22</sup> The biblical story of Esther afforded the religious an opportunity to appeal to the queen as an 'intercessor who would mollify the king and bring about a peaceful solution to the kingdom's problems' (130-31). Thus, although her public power was curtailed, the queen's private role as intercessor, mother, and nurse were prescribed and encouraged.

In his *History of the Kings of Britain*, Geoffrey depicts the power of queenship already in decline for when Arthur leaves for the continent, he 'handed over the task of defending Britain to his nephew Mordred and to his Queen Guinevere' (237). The image of the ideal woman of the epic is one who can 'run households and protect estates in the absence of a man.'<sup>23</sup> By the twelfth century, however, this image of woman had begun to change, and we will see in succeeding historical chronicles how writers depict woman as weaker, both physically and morally, and lacking in judgment. Thus, in offering Guinevere 'joint rule' rather than serving as

regent in her own right, Geoffrey demonstrates this change in power afforded a queen.

Thorlac Turville-Petre reminds us that 'each medieval chronicler reshaped the work of his predecessors,' and, in the process, they revised the work and added their own emphasis.<sup>24</sup> Thus, in his French *Roman de Brut*, which was presented to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1155, the Jersey poet, scholar, and teacher Wace (c.1100 - c.1174) adds rather extensively to Geoffrey's Arthurian material.<sup>25</sup> While Wace, like Geoffrey, notes that Arthur left '[t]o Modret and to the queen...everything but the crown' (281), he elaborates on Geoffrey's text, detailing Mordred as 'a great and valiant knight,' while Guinevere is simply Arthur's wife (281).

Parsons observes that with the arrival of Eleanor in 1155, queens of England no longer witnessed royal charters nor issued writs, and after Eleanor's fall of 1173, queens no longer served as regents.<sup>26</sup> In what is perhaps a corresponding historical note, Guinevere after Wace's text is no longer accorded power during Arthur's absence. She is neither described as regent nor co-regent; rather, Arthur leaves the throne entirely in the care of his nephew Mordred with the queen as subject and usually 'well-guarded' at that, which further indicates her vulnerability, her husband's general distrust, and certainly her incapacity to rule, even temporarily.

In his *Brut*, Layamon (fl.1200), a priest or perhaps household chaplain, Guinevere's power is severely curtailed, for when the pious and confident Arthur leaves for the wars, he places his kingdom under Mordred's protection, *as he does the queen*, 'the most excellent woman of all who lived here in this land'.<sup>27</sup> Although Layamon describes Guinevere as 'a maiden of exceeding beauty....gracious in speech and behaviour, and so refined in bearing' (571), he also depicts her as vain and tyrannical. On the day of her coronation, he writes, she ordered the wives of the leading men in the country and daughters of noblemen to attend her, 'upon pain of her extreme displeasure' (631).

By the early thirteenth century, attitudes toward Guinevere in the chronicles have clearly begun to shift as the pattern of female disempowerment continues throughout the century. Thus, in his *Flowers of History* Roger of Wendover (d.1236), a monk of St Albans, records that Arthur committed 'all Britain and his wife to the care of his nephew Modred' before he left for the continent;<sup>28</sup> and in his metrical chronicle, Robert of Gloucester (fl. 1260?-1300?), who may have been a monk at Gloucester, also notes that Arthur entrusts his kingdom and his queen to Mordred, who then usurps the crown.<sup>29</sup>

As the power and authority of the medieval church reached its apex in the thirteenth century, historiography

begins to mirror the changes taking place within society, church, and state.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Arthur typically bears the image of the Virgin on his shield (probably taken originally from the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* [c. 800] usually attributed to Nennius), invokes the name of the blessed Virgin before battle, and restores churches destroyed by the Saxons. Guinevere, on the other hand, is characteristically described as a woman who surpasses all others in the kingdom for beauty. Typical of historical texts concerning women, whenever females enter the political narrative, their 'roles are presented in a gendered way.'<sup>31</sup> While a woman is often described as beautiful and well-mannered, she is also weaker in judgment than her husband. Oddly, however, in an age when women were encouraged to be pious and to devote themselves to charitable work, Guinevere's piety and charity are left virtually unexplored. Sometimes depicted as proud, arrogant and lustful, she commits in nearly every historical text after the paradigm set by Geoffrey of Monmouth that most heinous of sins—incest.

As the historical chronicles develop the story of Guinevere's incest, her complicity becomes marked. In his *History*, for example, Geoffrey records that when Arthur had defeated Lucius and was preparing to set out for Rome, word is brought to the king that

his nephew Mordred, in whose care he had left Britain, had placed the crown upon his own head. What is more, this treacherous tyrant was living adulterously and out of wedlock with Queen Guinevere, who had broken the vows of her earlier marriage. (257)

The sense here is that Guinevere may well have been the victim, much as she was in Caradoc's *Life of Gildas*; Geoffrey, however, chooses not to elaborate on the incident, stating only that, '[a]bout this particular matter most noble Duke, Geoffrey of Monmouth, prefers to say nothing' (257). Instead Geoffrey turns his attention to the romance of the battle between Arthur and Mordred, as each man attempts to assert his right to the realm and, ostensibly, the queen.

Wace, on the other hand, depicts Mordred as sinister, claiming that when Arthur left the kingdom initially to Mordred and Guinevere, Mordred 'was [already] in love with the queen, but this was not suspected. He kept it quiet' (281). Whether he argues that the two had begun to have an affair or that Mordred simply desired the queen is left unclear at this point. However, once Mordred decides to take the crown for himself, Wace embellishes Geoffrey's text, noting that Mordred also takes 'homage from all the barons and hostages

from all the castles' (327). In addition, Wace charges, 'Modret did another evil deed, because against Christian law, he took to his bed the king's wife'(327).

Where Geoffrey had earlier refused to comment on Guinevere's complicity in the adultery, Wace demonstrates no such hesitance, writing that

[s]he remembered the wickedness she had done in tarnishing her honour for Modret's sake, shaming the good king and desiring his nephew. He had married her illicitly and she was badly degraded by it. She wished she were dead rather than alive. (331-3)

Guinevere, Wace claims, had actually *desired* Mordred, her nephew by marriage. Such an image of the queen is hardly in keeping with the twelfth-century ecclesiastical idea of queen as mother, particularly given that her primary duty was to provide an heir.<sup>32</sup> But Guinevere does not give Arthur an heir, a fact of which Wace makes a point on at least two occasions, a reminder perhaps of women's natural duty.

In his *Brut*, Layamon carries Guinevere's infidelity and incest one step further than Wace, writing that not only had Mordred secretly desired her before Arthur left for the wars on the continent, but that the two had already begun their affair. Layamon does not finish quickly with this 'excellent woman' for having accused her of infidelity and incest, he castigates her and Mordred in the following manner:

It was a great misfortune that they were ever born! By countless wrongs they brought this land to ruin; and in the end the Devil brought destruction upon them whereby they lost their lives and damned their souls, and were hated ever after in every land, so that no one would offer prayers for the good of their souls because of the treason he had committed against his uncle. (655)

Layamon also expands upon Geoffrey's version of Arthur hearing the news of the couple's betrayal. During his wars against Rome, Layamon writes, Arthur dreams that Mordred, accompanied by an army, rides up to the hall where Arthur sits astride it like a horse and begins to chop down the supports.

There I saw Guenevere, the dearest of women to me, pulling down the whole roof of the great hall with her hands... . And I, grasping my beloved sword in my left hand, struck off Modred's head... . And I hacked the queen all to pieces with my trusty sword; and then I thrust her down a black pit. (717-19)

Layamon's depiction of Arthur's subconscious desire to commit such extreme violence toward his queen is an original addition to the story that I have not found elsewhere. If Layamon's viewpoint is particularly harsh here, we only need to remember that 'behind many images lurked the deep-seated fears of the seductive, independent, sexually mature woman, the emasculator of effeminate men, the fear of the sexual and procreative power of woman within the family, compounded by Christian distaste for sexuality.'<sup>33</sup>

Even so, Layamon's misogyny does not end here, for when Arthur is advised by his men that his dream is true, and that Mordred has in fact usurped his kingdom, the king resolves to 'slay Modred and burn the queen' (721). Arthur's nephew Gawain, who is also brother to Mordred, declares that he will hang Mordred 'higher than any criminal,' but Guinevere will be 'torn apart by horses in accordance with God's law' (723). Layamon leaves little doubt as to Guinevere's complicity, for when the adulterous, incestuous queen learns of Arthur's plans, she immediately informs Mordred, 'who was the dearest of men to her,' of Arthur's intention (723).

In his *Flowers*, entered under the year 540, Roger of Wendover notes that a great mortality at Constantinople occurred, for which Justinian ordered the Purification of the Virgin; this Roger contrasts with the following entry: 'Modred, Arthur's nephew, to whom he had committed the kingdom of Britain, assumed his crown and in violation of her former nuptials, married the queen Guenhumara [Guinevere]' (1:42). However, Roger also records that after the celebration of the Purification, the mortality at Constantinople ceased. Roger's observation provides an unmistakable example of Church teaching that salvation comes through a virgin, while the destruction of man comes through a woman—in this case, Guinevere. As his readers are already aware, Mordred's usurpation of the crown and the queen brings about the destruction of Britain.

When Robert of Gloucester records the details of Arthur's insight as to the situation at home, he notes the incident as if in passing; a messenger informs Arthur that his nephew has usurped the kingdom, crowned himself, and is holding the queen 'in spousebruche in vyl flesses dede' (1:317).

Geoffrey of Monmouth interrupts his description of the battle scene at Camlan long enough to report that when the queen learns that Mordred, 'the Perjurer,' is losing the battle, she gives way to despair. 'She fled from York to the City of Legions and there, in the church of Julius the Martyr, she took her vows among the nuns, promising to lead a chaste life' (259). Guinevere, Geoffrey suggests, is penitent and her story ends in the church. Of Arthur

Geoffrey records: 'our renowned King was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds could be attended to' (261). Of Mordred Geoffrey notes only that he died in battle.

Wace's queen, who 'wished she were dead rather than alive,' flees to Caerleon where she takes 'the veil and was concealed; she was neither heard nor seen, neither known nor found, because of the shame of her misdeed and the sin she had committed' (333).<sup>34</sup> There is no promise here of a chaste life; instead, Wace's Guinevere, who was 'beautiful, courteous and well-born,' lapses into anonymity owing to her great sin and shame.

Fortunately for Layamon's Guinevere, a 'treacherous soldier' hears the violent threats against her life and hurries to inform her. Layamon describes the queen, who is at York, as 'the saddest of women' and 'sorry to be alive'. When she hears of Mordred's defeat at Arthur's hands, this 'most wretched of women' steals to Caerleon by night to become a nun. A portion of line 14,215 is missing here; that portion of the line extant notes 'when she was submerged in the water' which may suggest that Layamon, who heretofore has recorded a passionate hostility toward the queen, intended her to suffer an even more violent ending than simply the taking of the veil as Geoffrey of Monmouth records. Layamon may have been alluding to an idiom meaning 'without a trace,' thus further reinforcing the concept of Guinevere's non-existence (887-8 n.730).

As noted earlier, the thirteenth century had already witnessed a dramatic curtailment of the queen's power. No longer the threat that she was in the previous century, neither Roger of Wendover nor Robert of Gloucester express Layamon's desire to burn the queen, drown her, or hack her to pieces. In Roger's version, as soon as Guinevere receives news that Arthur had dispersed Mordred's troops and set him in flight, she hurries immediately to the City of Legions where she 'assumed the religious habit among the nuns in the monastery of Julius the martyr' (1:42). Although Robert of Gloucester refers to Guinevere as the 'evil queen,' he stops short of eternal damnation and instead offers a rather witty treatment to her end. When Arthur returns to Britain, Guinevere hurries to Caerleon where she becomes a nun and lives a chaste life, reasoning that it was better to become a nun than to come under Arthur's hand. Given the available choices, Robert suggests, she made the right decision.

In all of these histories, Arthur's fate is generally the same, although the degree of doubt with which these writers record the details varies somewhat. The mortally wounded king is taken to Avalon, where his wounds are tended and from whence he will one day return. In this

manner, the majority of these early historians do not allow this Christian king to suffer a mortal death and therefore leave open the possibility of the return of the Britons to power. One of the exceptions is Robert of Gloucester, who assures his readers of there being little chance of such a resurgence, for he records that Arthur's bones were found in Glastonbury (1190). It may be, too, that once the bones were found, although the incident was fraudulent and devised solely to obtain money for abbey buildings which had been destroyed in a fire in 1184, Robert felt committed to acknowledge Arthur's death.

While Arthur is typically depicted in terms that suggest his 'Christ-like' virtues, the spiritual fate of his opponent Mordred is left unrecorded; he simply dies in the Battle of Camlan. Guinevere's spiritual fate is generally the same in these texts: she hurries to a monastery where she typically takes the veil for her sins and thereafter slips quietly into anonymity.

Although I have mentioned only a few texts, Arthurian legend was obviously a subject of great interest for twelfth and thirteenth-century historical writers. The legend's content alone was doubtless of tremendous political economy in both foreign and domestic spheres, particularly given that Arthur, the national hero, had descended from Brutus, united the Britons, and, as victor in a number of battles, was claimant to a large area of the continent. Even so, its value as a window to perceptions of medieval queenship should not be understated.

Later chroniclers who take up the paradigm Geoffrey has constructed, and skew it dramatically to reflect a lascivious, treacherous queen, appear to be reflecting Church fears about women, power, and sexuality. Given the period in which Geoffrey wrote, his initial concern may well have been one of succession. Matilda was coming to power at a time "when the rise of professional administrative bureaucracies, coupled with changes in inheritance patterns and marriage customs were combining to erode women's freedom to act in the public sphere."<sup>35</sup> That Guinevere not only committed treason but that she had also failed to provide an heir surely suggests a fear of female power and the uncertainty of the succession. There had yet to be a queen of England. Given the domestic image that contemporary teaching prescribed for the queen, and particularly in the light of the expanding fervour of clerical misogyny, that fear is understandable.

That Geoffrey never castigates Guinevere in ways that subsequent historians do, and that Geoffrey dedicates his book to both Robert, Earl of Gloucester, who was step-brother to Matilda (and the illegitimate son of

Henry I) and Waleran, Count of Meulan (or Mellent), son of Robert of Beaumont and one of Stephen's major supporters, suggests that he is taking a mediating position.<sup>36</sup> This was a period in which family politics dominated,<sup>37</sup> and Geoffrey quickly points out that a kingdom 'divided against itself...shall fall' (264). This warning perhaps lost its significance once the dispute over the crown was finally settled.

Nevertheless, in regard to the queen, the course of Arthurian legend had been set, and Guinevere's culpability in the ensuing incestuous relationship with Mordred was embellished in the chronicles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Historical discourse about this queen appears to be in keeping with clerical ideas about women's predatory sexual nature, in which irrational woman is 'more prone to lust than men, and at every turn waiting to seduce men.'<sup>38</sup> Layamon certainly suggests this in his *Brut*, where Guinevere (and Mordred) not only bring the kingdom to ruin but she is damned eternally and hated in every land (655). Thus, Guinevere's character evolves from helpless rape victim to beautiful, incestuous seductress, who desires her own nephew.

Guinevere never fully redeems her reputation; but by the late thirteenth century, chroniclers largely begin to relent on the vehement disparagement offered by their predecessors. The political turmoil for which her representation apparently served had been abated. As medieval queenship, under pressure from the Church, political reform and society, eventually evolved into a maternal, supportive, and nurturing role, so Guinevere, who heretofore had suffered 'so mykel sorewe' in a succession of historical texts, finally began to move more lightly through the chronicle pages where little is recorded of her by the fifteenth century.

## Notes

1. William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (c.1196-98), in *The Church Historians of England*, trans. Joseph Stevenson, vol 4, part 2 (London, 1856), 398.
2. The text I am using for this essay is Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* (1136-38?), trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966).
3. Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Cambriae* [*The Description of Wales*] (c.1200), trans. Sir Richard Holt Hoare, in *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*, rev. and ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1863), 489.
4. Caradoc of Llancarfan, *Vita Gildae. Two Lives of Gildas* (c.1130), trans. Hugh William (1899. Felinfach, 1990). The Berne and the Harlech manuscripts of Geoffrey's *Historia* include a remark in which Geoffrey refers to Caradoc, to whom he prefers to leave the describing of the kings of the Welsh after the fall of the Britons.

Unfortunately, this does not prove that Geoffrey knew Caradoc or had read or knew of his *Vitae Gildae*.

5. One of the earliest romances in which Guinevere appears is *Erec and Enide* (1170) by Chrétien de Troyes. Chrétien's contemporary, Marie de France, depicts a much different Guinevere than the generous woman in *Erec and Enide*. In her *Lanval* (c.1170), Marie depicts Guinevere as a seductress, who failing to lure the foreign knight Lanval into her bed, accuses him of accosting her and thus sets in play a trial over her honour. Marie subverts here masculine power by turning Arthur into a weak king, emasculating the knightly Lanval, and suggesting what modern scholars would call the 'homosexual nature' of the bond between knights.
6. The names and places in the primary texts I used for this essay are spelled in a variety of ways. For the purposes of continuity, I have standardized these, except for direct quotation of passages from the chronicles.
7. Christopher Daniell, *From Norman Conquest to Magna Carta. England 1066-1215* (New York, 2003), 37.
8. Carolly Erickson, *The Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception* (New York, 1976), 198. For a more detailed discussion of early church attitudes toward women see Angela M. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages. Religion, Marriage and Letters* (New York, 1983).
9. Jerome, 'Against Jovinian,' *A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, V. VI*, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace. (New York, 1893), 367, as quoted in Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex. Female Sanctity and Society ca. 500-1100* (Chicago, 1998), 22.
10. St. Augustine, *Against the Manichees*. Book Two in *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees and on the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J. (Washington, 1991), 2:11-13, 111-115.
11. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages*, 115.
12. Gerald of Wales, *Itinerary through Wales*, 346-47.
13. Farmer, Sharon, 'Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,' *Speculum* 61.3 (July 1986), 519.
14. Georges Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jean Birrell, vol. 3 (1996. Chicago, 1998), 43.
15. Robin Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles 1100-1400*, Oxford, 1990), 78.
16. Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Medieval Queenship,' *History Today* 39.6 (1989), 16.
17. John Carmi Parsons, 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England,' in *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago, 1995), 149. See also, for example, Daniell, *From Norman Conquest to Magna Carta*, 93-4; David Bates, 'Kingship, Government, and Political Life to c.1160' in *The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries 1066-c.1280*, ed. Barbara Harvey (Oxford, 2001), 75; Francis Gies and Joseph Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1978), 41.

18. Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, 'The Power of the Women Through the Family,' in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowalski, (Athens, Georgia, 1988), 96.
19. Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery. Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, 1998), 6
20. John Carmi Parsons, *Queen's Intercession*, 147.
21. Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos,' in *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago, 1995), 131.
22. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen,' 127-46.
23. Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200* (London, 1972), 44.
24. Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation. Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford, 1996), 5.
25. Wace, *Roman de Brut*, in *Wace's Roman de Brut, A History of the British*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies, gen. Eds. Marion Glasscoe and M. J. Swanton (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1999) 243. Although a number of scholars have written of Wace's text as a French translation of Geoffrey's work, in her introduction to the *Roman de Brut*, Weiss notes that Wace also relied on texts from William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Geffrei Gaimar. See Weiss xvii. There are a number of differences and elaborations in the *Brut* which are clearly worth exploring, particularly in the context of women's studies.
26. Parsons, 'The Queen's Intercession' 149-50.
27. Layamon, *Brut or Hystoria Brutonum* (c. 1200-1220), eds. and trans. W. R. J. Barron and S. C. Weinberg (Harlow, Essex, 1995, 655.
28. Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History* (1231-36), trans. J.A. Giles, 2 vols. (London, 1849) 1:40.
29. Robert of Gloucester, *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester* (c.1300), ed. William Aldis Wright, 2 vols. (London, 1851) 1:290.
30. James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1954) 268-71.
31. Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester, 2003) 24.
32. Huneycutt, 'Medieval Queenship' 22.
33. Pauline Stafford, 'The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries,' in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York, 1993), 145.
34. Weiss suggests that since Guinevere flees owing to Mordred's defeat and flight, and thus his inability to defend himself, she clearly indicates her guilt (xx).

35. Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-century Churchmen,' in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York, 1993), 190.
36. Bartlett, Robert, *England Under the Norman and Angevine Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford, 2000) 21-22.
37. Daniell, From Norman Conquest to Magna Carta 41.
38. Jacqueline Murray, 'Thinking About Gender,' *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago, 1995) 11.

## Re-clothing the Female Reader: Dress and the *Lady's Magazine* (1770-1832)

**Jennie Batchelor**

*University of Kent*

Recent studies of eighteenth-century literature and culture have sought to undermine the absolute binaries through which the period has been traditionally read and understood. Feminist criticism and studies of women's writing and women's history have been instrumental in demonstrating the inadequacy of such inflexible binaries as that of public and private spheres, for example, to accommodate the multiple and sophisticated ways in which women participated in politics, and in the consumption and production of texts, commodities and ideas. Although this scholarship has successfully and irreversibly remapped the field of eighteenth-century studies, another, and intimately related, binary holds fast in criticism of the period, represented on the one hand, by celebratory accounts of the feminization of eighteenth-century culture and, on the other, by studies which emphasise the more insidious and opportunist motives which lay behind the period's reification of feminized virtues.

G. J. Barker-Benfield and Terry Eagleton, for example, have celebrated the ways in which eighteenth-century society empowered women by privileging those characteristics — particularly a heightened emotional sensitivity — which had traditionally precluded them from various forms of heterosocial exchange and by reading women as a barometer of national and

commercial progress.<sup>1</sup> Other critics, however, have pointed to the more sinister aspects of feminization, which reified feminine virtue only in order to oppress and colonize the feminine. Taking their lead from Mary Wollstonecraft, critics such as Claudia L. Johnson, Mary Poovey and Mitzi Myers have demonstrated how writers gave women with one hand what it took with the other:<sup>2</sup> elevating women to the status of angels, only to 'sink them below women'.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to write about eighteenth-century literature without recourse to one or both of these narratives of oppression and opportunity. However, neither provides a full account of the impact of the feminization of culture upon women's lives. As Harriet Guest and E. J. Clery have recently pointed out, the feminized virtues promoted in virtually every genre of polite literature from the sentimental novel to the conduct manual, pocket book and periodical are neither monolithically oppressive nor unquestionably empowering.<sup>4</sup> As Clery argues, the discourse of feminization, which first emerged in the 1690s but was given renewed energy and cultural prominence in the 1740s with the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), 'altered the climate of the republic of letters and made it more welcoming to female authors', but there was also a price to pay for those women who refused to embrace this ideology and 'its insidious linkage of the progress of commercial society and the progress of women'.<sup>5</sup> Although Clery's important study examines the complex and often unwelcome effects of the feminization of culture on women writers such as Elizabeth Carter, its impact on the lives of women outside the republic of letters is largely unexcavated territory. This essay aims to redress this fact through a discussion of the popular *Lady's Magazine*, a periodical whose efforts to promote and make synonymous commercial and moral virtue signify its participation in the wider debate on the feminization of culture.

The *Lady's Magazine* ran monthly between 1770 and 1832<sup>6</sup> and, at its height, had an estimated circulation of sixteen thousand readers.<sup>7</sup> Its success was in large part a consequence of its creation of a community of devoted reader-contributors who penned much of the magazine's content. In its twin efforts to promote the qualities desirable in a good wife and mother and to afford its readers a voice in the form of contributions and letters, the magazine offers unique insights into some of the ways in which the writer/reader relationship could be configured in the period. Neither paralysed by the magazine's more prescriptive dictates nor blindly persuaded by its ambiguous promises of the rewards of female virtue, the magazine reader emerges in this study as a strategic and informed individual able to take from her reading only as much as she wanted or

would find useful. In making this argument, this article draws upon recent work by Edward Copeland and Jacqueline Pearson which demonstrates how the ideological fault lines detectable within the late-eighteenth-century magazine allowed for various and potentially contradictory readings. However, by placing dress at the heart of this discussion, this essay seeks to complicate these accounts. Rather than perceiving the magazine's 'double-think' as an accidental, but inevitable, by-product of the miscellany format,<sup>8</sup> or as a deliberate and commercially canny bid to secure a wide readership,<sup>9</sup> I suggest that the ideological tensions that underpin the *Lady's Magazine* are, in large part, produced by the publication's reliance upon dress as the prime weapon in its moral arsenal.

Information on dress and debates provoked by the burgeoning consumer revolution and the 'commercialization of fashion'<sup>10</sup> had enlivened periodicals from their inception in the late seventeenth century. From the outset, this interest in all things sartorial was inextricably yoked to the moral project to which many periodicals laid claim. The *Tatler* (1709-11) and *Spectator* (1711-14) in particular placed dress at the core of their publications and the reformation of manners they intended to effect. As Erin Mackie has demonstrated, in identifying fashion and luxury as the antithesis of the ratio-critical sphere championed by the papers, Addison and Steele realized the potential to reform their readers through a remodelling of fashion in the periodicals' pages. Both papers acknowledged that dress was central to the gendering of character and of public and private spheres, but recognized that if dress policed the gendered boundaries the periodicals did so much to uphold, it could also blur them. The woman who avidly followed fashion transgressed the domestic/public divide with her participation in the commercial world. Therefore, one of the aims of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* papers was to liberate the woman of fashion from this 'slavish submission to the tyrant fashion' in order to 'free [her] to go home' to the domestic household, which was to become the paradigm for the newly reformed public sphere.<sup>11</sup> To this end, the *Tatler* and *Spectator* persistently pitted external modes of self-representation and disembodied commercial transactions against a more authentic, embodied subjectivity. Ironically, however, the periodicals sought to regulate fashion not 'by retreating to a realm that transcends the superficial ephemera of the mode but by entering — if in a mystified way — the mode, the fashion market itself'. Not only did the *Tatler* and *Spectator* indulge in scenes of fashionable life and celebrate the growth of commerce, the papers were also themselves the offspring of the fashionable periodical market.<sup>12</sup>

This simultaneous immersion in and condemnation of

consumer culture left a legacy that continued to inform periodicals and magazines throughout the eighteenth century. As the essay-periodical epitomized by Addison and Steele's titles evolved into the more miscellaneous magazine format familiar today these contradictory impulses became ever more palpable.<sup>13</sup> As Kathryn Shevelow has noted, from the mid-century onwards, periodicals were increasingly marketed at an apparently expanding cohort of female readers. This change in form necessitated a change in content too, as an emphasis upon 'the acquisition of "learning" as an indirect form of regulation gave way to the provision of other forms of knowledge more directly relevant to female lives'.<sup>14</sup> Dress, as one of the primary signifiers of gender distinction became an ever more unavoidable subject for periodicals and magazines that targeted female readers. Although the provision of fashion plates, short written fashion reports and essays on various items of dress was undoubtedly a shrewd commercial move on the part of magazine editors, it also served the magazine's ideological imperatives. Dress encodes so many socio-economic debates that it is impossible to discuss it in isolation. As a vehicle through which to address broader concerns regarding consumption, luxury, female sexuality, and class and gender distinction, it proved a particularly effective weapon in the battle to reform the fair sex.

Through a sleight of hand familiar to readers of contemporary conduct books, magazine editors and contributors presented a prudent adherence to fashion as a means through which women could make themselves more attractive to men. However, in using dress — that notoriously slippery signifier — as a vehicle through which to outline its blueprint of virtuous femininity, the magazine anticipated the unravelling of its moral project and actively encouraged readings against the grain of its self-professed agenda. In their representation of dress and fashion, therefore, the magazines discussed here fail to sit easily with either side of the feminization debate. Through a reading of the strategies developed by the *Lady's Magazine* to contain fashion within its publications' overriding moral framework, and through an exploration of the responses of reader-contributors, this essay suggests that the feminine ideal created by the magazine became a model which women might reject, accept or deploy as they saw fit.

The persistence with which magazines sought to justify their fashion coverage attests to the perceived difficulty of assimilating such trivial and potentially transgressive material within the periodical's moral framework. When an early fashion periodical entitled the *Fashionable Magazine* published its first issue in June 1786, it boldly declared itself to be an innovative and much-needed title: '[the] dominion of Fashion having been long universally

established in this kingdom, a Magazine issuing it's [sic] decrees, and confirming it's sway, must be allowed to appear with singular propriety. Indeed, it seems astonishing that, in an age of literary adventure, this eligible plan should have been hitherto overlooked'.<sup>15</sup> The editor attributes this startling oversight both to publishers' lack of imagination and, more significantly, to a fear of not being able to surmount 'the extreme difficulty of executing' so 'arduous a task' of writing about dress 'with any sort of propriety'.<sup>16</sup>

The magazine's claims for originality are typically overstated. In fact, *The Fashionable Magazine* strikingly resembles another short-lived title called *The Magazine à la Mode* which ran monthly throughout 1777, and was probably the first English periodical to market itself as a fashion magazine.<sup>17</sup> The earlier publication's brief history seems to support *The Fashionable Magazine's* claims for the difficulties it faced. *The Magazine à la Mode* increasingly found itself having to withdraw from its original intention to be a purveyor of the latest styles, replacing its distinctive fashion plates and accompanying commentary with engravings of historical figures such as Elizabeth I, Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>18</sup> Following Neil McKendrick's lead, Minna Thornton attributes the magazine's withdrawal of plates to a 'moral panic' directed against unregulated consumption and fuelled by the proliferation of fashionable images through such forms as the fashion plate.<sup>19</sup> The magazine itself however, suggests more mundane reasons for this withdrawal. The April 1777 issue of the *Magazine à la Mode*, for example, substituted a plate of 'A Country Woman' and 'Citizen's Wife of Wotiac' (a province in Siberia) for plates displaying 'spring dresses as worn at Ranelagh' due to an artist's illness and subsequent failure to meet the publication deadline.<sup>20</sup> Equally problematic was fashion's sporadic failure to live up to the magazine's expectation of monthly sartorial innovation. The July issue included no plate or commentary on men's fashions because it claimed that 'No alteration worth notice [had] taken place in the gentlemen's dress' that month.<sup>21</sup>

The short, troubled life of the earlier publication illuminates the *Fashionable Magazine's* introductory comments. Despite the editor's self-promotional bravado, he clearly shared the anxieties he attributed to other, less imaginative, magazine editors and publishers concerned that they may not be able to execute their task with propriety. In order to ward off accusations of impropriety, therefore, the *Fashionable Magazine* sought to contain its interest in current fashions by adopting a more traditional magazine format. 'Gay



Fig. 1 Frontispiece to the *Lady's Magazine* for 1780 (P.P.5141). Reproduced by permission of The British Library.

descriptions of dress, fashion and amusements' were accompanied by 'literature of every species' — including letters, moral essays and domestic and foreign news — in an effort to create a publication that would have truly 'universal' appeal.<sup>22</sup>

The *Fashionable Magazine's* presentation of literature as compensation for the title's fashion coverage is only one of many devices (some subtle, some flagrant) that magazine editors would adopt in order to contain and police fashion reports and plates. However, as the frontispiece to the January 1780 *Lady's Magazine* attests (fig. 1), these strategies of containment could only be effective if the reader willingly bought into the magazine's agenda. This engraving of a fashionably dressed woman, torn between a life of folly and wisdom marked a significant departure from the traditional iconography of the magazine's annual frontispiece engravings. The reconfiguration of the Minerva figure (on the right of fig. 1) is particularly revealing. Commonly, the frontispiece engravings envisage Minerva imparting wisdom, frequently in the material form of the magazine itself, to young women entering or inhabiting a temple of knowledge or virtue (see, for example, fig. 2). In the 1780 engraving, however, the attainment of virtue is no longer a *fait accompli*. Rather, the image seems less than confident in its ability to successfully arbitrate the conflict it imagines. The woman at the engraving's centre has symbolically turned away from Minerva and emphatically gazes upon the attractive figure of Folly



Fig. 2 Frontispiece to the *Lady's Magazine* for 1776 (P.P.5141). Reproduced by permission of The British Library.

to whom we anticipate she will turn.

Although Folly is holding playing cards, suggesting both the unsuitability of this particular fashionable pursuit and the gamble a young lady takes with her reputation and character by following such diversions, the attractiveness of Folly to the young woman, and potentially to the magazine's readers, is a problematic feature of the engraving. Perhaps Folly's attractiveness is a deliberate strategy to force the reader to recognize her own weakness in that of the young woman of the engraving, thereby making her more responsive to the magazine's lessons. But this manoeuvre, if indeed intentional, represents something of a gamble in itself. A choice between sartorial splendour and virtuous austerity may represent no choice at all in the minds of many potential readers.

As a self-professed purveyor of both domestic morality and fashion, the *Lady's Magazine's* task was indeed arduous. The preface to the first issue of August 1770, however, displays none of the anxiety evident in the 1780 frontispiece:

The subjects we shall treat of are those that may tend to render your minds not less amiable than your persons. But as external appearance is the first inlet to the treasures of the heart, and the advantages of dress, though they cannot communicate beauty, may at least make it more conspicuous, it is intended to

present the Sex with most elegant patterns for the tambour, embroidery, or every kind of needlework; and ... we shall by engravings inform our distant readers with every innovation that is made in the female dress. As this is a branch of information entirely new, we shall endeavour to render it more worthy of female attention, by an assiduity which shall admit of no abatement. ... In this we consult not only the embellishment but likewise the profit of our patronesses. They will find in this Magazine, price only sixpence, among variety of other Copper-plates a Pattern that would cost them double the money at the Haberdasher.<sup>23</sup>

Through a series of subtle twists and turns, the preface attempts to map dress into the periodical's moral framework. Having established that the adornment of the body is of secondary importance to that of the mind, the author subsequently acknowledges dress's significance in a society which sets so much store upon appearance. In such a society, the magazine advocates, women must cultivate a sufficiently appealing exterior, but only in order that they may subsequently divert the observer's attention to 'the treasures of the heart'. The lack of an identifiable subject in the sentence on 'external appearance' as the 'first inlet to the treasures of the heart' — the 'heart' could presumably signal the heart of woman or that of the publication itself — suggestively attributes dress with a double meaning here. On the one hand, dress is presented as bait, deployed by women in order to captivate onlookers that they may subsequently demonstrate the more permanent allures of unimpeachable probity. On the other, dress (in the form of reports, plates and patterns) appears as bait through which the magazine lures readers in order that it may divert their attention to the pearls of wisdom at the heart of the publication itself.

Denying any possible antagonism between its moral and fashionable content, the preface suggests that female virtue and dress could be mutually constitutive: women could make their virtue more conspicuous by learning how to dress appropriately, while dress, by virtue of its inclusion in a morally-improving periodical would become a more 'worthy' subject for female attention. As the 1780 frontispiece engraving implies, however, fashion content may have diverted readers from, rather than attracted them to, the moral treasures at the publication's core. The very structure of the magazine as a compartmentalized repository of articles and fiction, helpfully indexed to guide readers to items of particular interest, potentially allowed women to prioritize articles and topics the publication deemed to be of lesser importance. Edward Copeland, for example, has

imagined a typical *Lady's Magazine* reader as a window-shopper, seeking out 'the illustration of the month's story' before 'skip[ping] to the end [to] see if there is perhaps an illustration of a Paris Dress or some sheet music or a pattern for an apron'.<sup>24</sup> Between this initial, visual consumption of the magazine and her reading of the rest of the publication exists a 'wide arena', Copeland argues, 'for negotiating the contemporary social discourse inevitably embedded in the magazine's style and presentation'.<sup>25</sup>

Close scrutiny of the magazine's content and format suggests that the magazine was no less aware of the divergent reader responses it might have provoked than the contemporary critic. Indeed, as Jacqueline Pearson suggests, this appeal to various readers can be understood as a cynical, if prudent, strategy deployed to secure a wide readership. If this approach was intentional, however, it was certainly not unproblematic. The magazine thus sought to manage readers' interpretations through various strategies seemingly designed to temper and control the interpretation of its more contentious offerings.

The decision to present its fashion coverage in the form of editorial, rather than in the form of the engravings and reports promised in the magazine's first issue, is the most overt signal of the magazine's mistrust of unmediated fashion coverage. Although embroidery patterns were published in the unbound monthly issues of the magazine, fashion plates were scarce and fashion reports at best sporadic. As early as November 1770, the magazine was forced to explain that it had 'not lost sight of [its] promise to the Fair Sex', that it would provide the most early intelligence of the revolutions that shall be made in fashions'.<sup>26</sup> Increasingly, however, it became apparent that this was a promise the magazine could not or would not keep. In part, the magazine's failure was symptomatic of its reliance upon unpaid (and therefore understandably unreliable) fashion reporters. But the failure may have had as much to do with the publication's concern over its lack of control of fashion reports and the messages they could be imagined to send to readers.

The magazine's subsequent decision to present fashion information in more generalized articles has led some critics to argue that the magazine did not give dress the prominence it promised in its first issue. Jean Hunter, for example, has suggested in her critical survey of the *Lady's Magazine* that the topics of morals and manners dominated the content of the sampled issues, whereas beauty and fashion rarely exceeded five percent of the magazine's pages.<sup>27</sup> Hunter's otherwise invaluable study is somewhat misleading, however. Although the percentage of articles devoted to fashion is

comparatively small, dress is so deeply implicated in the magazine's conception of virtuous femininity that it is an implicit, or often explicit, subtext of countless articles, letters and fictions on various subjects throughout the magazine's history. Discussions of dress feature in serials such as 'The Rambler', 'The Female Reformer' and the long-running agony-aunt column, 'The Matron', in letters, poems and short moral maxims as well as in essays on such diverse subjects as modesty, education, taste, 'oeconomy', beauty and prostitution.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, dress lies at the very core of the magazine's ideology, symbolizing a series of values (including vanity, foolishness, selfishness and luxuriousness) against which the magazine sought to define itself and its readers.

Almost all of the annual Addresses prefacing the January publications allude to this opposition. The January 1777 issue, for instance, outlines the magazine's hopes to 'turn away the female eye from the glitter of external parade, to fix it upon [the] more permanent and more brilliant objects of mental acquisitions'. Likewise in 1788 the magazine expressed its hope to emulate the periodical precedents of Addison and Steele by making 'Polite Learning', rather than physical beauty, one of 'the most fashionable Ornaments' a woman could wear. The use of sartorial imagery in the 'Addresses' performs a rhetorical shift familiar to readers of contemporary conduct books. Dress is initially identified as the antithesis of the virtues and accomplishments for which the publication stands. Subsequently, sartorial metaphors are assimilated within the publication's moral framework by suggesting that accomplishment, learning, and virtue are the only truly desirable fashionable ornaments. The project of the *Lady's Magazine* is thus a dual process of re-clothing: re-clothing women in a garb of probity and learning to make them more attractive and appealing wives, mothers, and friends, and re-clothing probity and learning to render these virtues more attractive propositions to the magazine's readers.

The status of dress in the *Lady's Magazine* is always precarious. On the one hand, dress is a trivial subject, whose inclusion must always be justified. On the other hand, and as a commodity that emblemizes so many of the magazines concerns, it appears as the very crux upon which virtue, various social institutions, and the social structure itself, rest. The social institution most vulnerable to an injudicious deployment of dress is marriage. The importance of an appropriate dress sense before and during marriage is a recurrent theme in the *Lady's Magazine*, dubiously privileging women, as the conduct book did, with a double-edged responsibility for maintaining the stability of the domestic household. In an argument that rehearses the mock-chivalric

techniques deployed in many male-authored periodicals which attempted to reform female clothing, many of the *Lady's Magazine* contributions on this subject seem unable to perceive dress as anything other than a bait to attract lovers or future husbands. The first instalment of 'The Female Rambler', for example, opens with the typically convivial assertion that the writer is 'far from wishing to deprive the youth of its seasonable gaiety, or to deny beauty the tribute of admiration'. The article proceeds with a less generous warning against the 'delights in finery', questioning whether 'women would delight so much in finery, if it did not heighten their own charms, and attract the notice of men'. Despite the article's admonitory and condemnatory tone, however, its author partially exempts unmarried women from such criticism, provided their desire to be fashionable has marriage as its goal. Once married, however, a woman's appearance must be more circumspect and subdued, since it is no longer necessary for her to dress 'to please her husband, and it will be unnecessary for her to dress to please any one else'.<sup>29</sup>

Yet if a woman's fashionable appearance after marriage left her open to suspicion, negligence in dress offered no guarantee that she would live free from unfavourable conjecture either. As conduct books reminded readers, a married woman's dress offered testimony to both her character and that of her husband, as well as to the state of their marriage. As an anonymous writer opined in a 'Letter to the Editor' in April 1773, that 'ladies are apt after marriage to grow careless and negligent with regard to their dress ... has been the cause of much misunderstanding between married couples'. Rehearsing a disturbingly prevalent contemporary argument, sartorial neglect is viewed as a license to adultery: a 'slighted husband', the author suggests, understandably seeks 'pleasure ... abroad' where he can no longer find it at home.<sup>30</sup>

A 1775 conduct-book serial entitled 'Mrs T—SS's Advice to her Daughter' developed these arguments further by advocating a fashion system that would differentiate 'between the dress of married and single women'. In an instalment upon 'Dancing in Public and Dress', Mrs T—SS argues that history has proven the effectiveness of fashion systems in which 'young unmarried women [were allowed] every liberty, in respect to dress', but married women 'were not allowed to shew the least part of their neck or arms, and their face always was veiled'.<sup>31</sup> Although dress is an acceptable means through which unmarried woman can 'allure and captivate' a future husband, married women who dress fashionably, the writer concludes, may justly be accused of 'committing adultery'. The association of dress with sexual transgression is, of course, one of the most enduring critiques of clothing, but what is of interest here

is that men, rather than women, are depicted as the seduced victims of fashion. If a woman throws such sartorial 'allurements before the eyes of men', she may force them to 'become bold enough to take unbecoming liberties', the possibly 'criminal' effects of which will be of her own making. Giving with one hand what she takes with the other, Mrs T—SS bestows her female readers with a certain power acquired and exercised through the deployment of dress, only to argue that if women want to fully maintain this power they must regulate their dress in order to preserve them from the dangers of male 'liberties'.

Such mediated and highly moralized articles on fashion could easily be assimilated within the magazine's self-professed agenda. Indeed, Mrs T—SS's method of empowering her female readers only to argue that true power must be regulated in order to remain effective, is a frequently deployed trope in contributions to the *Lady's Magazine*, which partially disguised its projected reformation of women through the promise that a reformation in female manners would rehabilitate male libertines. Nevertheless, these extended commentaries on dress often anticipated alternative or misreadings that suggest that the magazine's efforts to reform its readers may have fallen on deaf ears. Throughout its history, the *Lady's Magazine* appeared to maintain a steadfast faith in female rationality as the antidote to vice and folly. As the aptly named columnist, 'The Reasoner', argued: 'Consideration alone is necessary to convince us how amiable goodness is ... Consideration alone is necessary to convince you of the ugliness of vice'.<sup>32</sup> But where it may have been possible to reason with women upon the evils of various female vices, fashion, as an inexplicable and characteristically irrational social dynamic, posed particular problems to those who sought to warn against it.

In April 1773 an article on 'The Education of the Fair-Sex' included the following description of fashion's irrational and contagious spread:

Caprice and fantasticalness are the parents of fashion, which is a great prejudice in its disfavour. ... If a lady of elevated rank, or of a remarkable fantasticalness, should take it into her head to dress herself in a particular manner, all the rest of the sex would adopt her *ton* of dress, however ridiculous, or uneasy it should appear. The contagion commences from those who are familiar with the person who introduces a new mode; after which it communicates itself to their acquaintance, or those who hold them in the theatre or private walks. The city adopts it after the court; from the city it spreads into the country, and foreign parts.<sup>33</sup>

Like other social and moral evils, fashion is cast as a disease: a biological organism that affects those biologically determined by their gender to be vulnerable to contagion. Although its progress may be predictable — from individual to community, to city, to country, to the fashionable world — containment of the epidemic seems impossible. As the offspring of 'Caprice and fantasticalness', fashion is fickle, inconstant, and irrational and therefore immune to the inoculating power of rational reflection. As the contributor resignedly argues, 'women of this age pique themselves on account of their reason and judgement more than ever they did; but they shew very little of either in their conduct with respect to fashions, with which they are more infatuated than ever'.<sup>34</sup> To attempt to reason women out of a love of fashion is essentially to reason against something, by nature, unreasonable, and as the 1780 frontispiece uneasily explores, merely juxtaposing folly and wisdom may not have sufficient weight to persuade its readers to take the right metaphorical path.

The magazine therefore developed a range of strategies that enabled it to satisfy reader desire for fashion information without seeming to compromise its moral agenda. From the magazine's first issues, fashion reports and plates were apparently popular with readers. In the November 1770 issue, the editor remarked upon the great 'satisfaction' the first edition's fashion plate had given its readers, so much so that he found 'it imitated by most of the annual pocket-books for the use of the ladies'.<sup>35</sup> But the magazine's emphasis upon reader contributions hindered as much as encouraged its coverage of fashion, leaving it vulnerable to the whims and inclinations of readers and unpaid amateur contributors.<sup>36</sup> Just as readers were, from time to time, disappointed by fictional serials that were simply left unfinished by their contributors, so they were frustrated by the unreliability of the magazine's volunteer fashion reporters. The 'To Our Correspondents' column of the May 1779 issue, for example, cites the complaint of a reader who signs herself a 'humble servant of the Wou'd-be-Fashionable' and who laments the 'want of articles on dress'. Her criticism spurs the editor to 'request some of our correspondents, residing in the metropolis, to assume the task' of acting as fashion reporter, promising other dissatisfied readers that 'so important a department in *etiquette*' will not remain 'unnoticed'.<sup>37</sup> Yet the problem did not diminish. In 1777, 1783 and 1784 the magazine was forced to publicly entreat fashion reviewers to produce reports more regularly, and in 1780 the magazine evidently experienced difficulty in finding anyone at all to report on fashion.<sup>38</sup>

The inability to provide regular accounts of fashion was

a recurrent source of embarrassment for the magazine, yet when fashion was reported, the publication was still reluctant to simply let fashion speak for itself. Rather, through editorial comment and the judicious placement of articles, the *Lady's Magazine* persistently arbitrated and policed the sartorial information it provided. Part of the difficulty in representing fashion seems to have been the lack of an established language — of the kind Barthes analyzed in his *Fashion System*<sup>39</sup> — through which it could be disseminated. 'A Description of the Newest Dress' submitted under the pseudonym 'Patronessa R.' to the May 1775 issue, for example, expresses anxiety about the ability of the written word to truly accommodate fashion. Fearing that her description might not be 'intelligible' Patronessa accompanied her description with a drawing, which she hoped would more clearly 'illustrate my meaning'.<sup>40</sup> The editor evidently shared the contributor's fears, referring to the article as 'somewhat obscure', forcing him to commission the accompanying engraving despite considerable expense. The editor does not dismiss written reports on fashion out of hand, however, perhaps because the expense of engravings dictated that written descriptions were the only viable option for regular features on dress. After slighting the obscurity of the Patronessa's description, the editor proudly announces a subsequent article inserted to convey 'a more general description of the fashions, from a fair hand, who has for some time reigned unrivalled in [t]his department'.<sup>41</sup>

Even so 'unrivalled' a writer upon fashion does not escape editorial invective, however. Following the very matter-of-fact description of 'Ladies Dress for May' the editor chivalrously thanks the correspondent 'for resuming her pen' while declaring his hopes that she will not 'torture' her readers again by taking so long to submit her report.<sup>42</sup> Such sugarcoated criticism was to be directed at fashion reporters throughout the magazine's history. The soon familiar mixture of flattery and criticism that accompanied fashion reports characterized the magazine's attitude to fashion more generally: at once yielding to its attractions and attacking its unreliability and inconstancy; praising its charms yet presenting itself as discriminating enough to avoid becoming fashion's victim.<sup>43</sup> Thus even while the magazine reports on the latest styles of dress and undress, it implicitly criticizes, and through criticism regulates, the images it gives to its readers.

In the absence of editorial comment, editorial decisions may have affected how fashion reports were read. A report on 'Fashionable Dresses for April 1783', for instance, immediately followed an installment of 'The Female Reformer' entitled 'Fashion's The Word', which criticized the 'great absurdity, for ladies to

follow the fashions'. The next month's report, which commented that 'riding habits [are] much worn in the morning', is likewise preceded by 'The Matron', which includes a reader's condemnation of the fashion for wearing riding habits, a trend which the reader argues masculinizes women. In a publication so invested in promoting a bourgeois feminine ideal characterized by economic prudence, moral rectitude, maternal affection and wifely devotion, it is hard to see such juxtapositions as accidental. Although the *Lady's Magazine* is often perceived as a unique literary forum that created a community of female reader/writers, it is important to note that this community was inevitably regulated by editorial decisions, interpolations and juxtapositions. If the magazine presented itself as a discursive arena for issues concerning female morality and education, then, to a significant extent, it was one in which the conclusions were inevitable and already known.

This argument is perhaps best illustrated by a 1789 two-part article entitled 'On Dress, A Conversation Piece'. The article is presented as an overheard conversation between the fashionable Clarinda, 'an elderly philosopher, with a portion of the cynic in him' called Darnley, and the rational Addisonian Charles. The discussion rehearses many of the pro- and anti-fashion arguments that had appeared in the publication's pages since its first issue. The most hostile condemnations of dress are voiced by Darnley, who perceives fashion as a danger to health, 'a trespass on the symmetry of nature', and fashionable women as 'the slaves of mantua-makers and milliners, who impose any thing upon you as *new*, that tends to the consumption of an article they may have on hand too long'.<sup>44</sup> The pomposity of Darnley's comments makes him seem ridiculous. As Charles points out, the logical conclusion of Darnley's arguments would be the eradication of all articles of clothing which are not 'absolutely necessary', and with this the eradication of luxury, a necessary social evil which, according to Darnley's Mandevillian line of argument, acts as a spur to industry and invigorates the economy.

By contrast, Clarinda's arguments against the condemnations of fashion's critics seem altogether more reasonable than the counter-arguments of the elderly cynic. Fashion may be irrational, she suggests, but very few of its critics have countered it with the same kind of 'rational method ... that is applied to other subjects'. Writers caution against 'excess in dress' yet fail 'to lay down rules for dress ... rather telling us what we ought not, than what we ought to do'. Dresses may at times appear 'fantastic', but given that fashions are continually changing it is not possible they 'should always change for the better'. Inevitably 'disproportions' occur, she argues, but fashion repairs itself: the fickleness which so many of its critics condemn also ensures that fashion swiftly

replaces its errors. To Charles's comments that fashion should not simply be adopted 'because it is *new*' but rather because it accords with 'true taste', Clarinda points out that 'true taste' is as 'variable, uncertain [and] inconstant' as fashion itself. True taste also presumes, she argues, some 'supreme judges of taste' whose opinion represents the true standard. But to whom can society look for a universal standard in dress when critics often condemn the styles of 'People of rank' and the interested views of 'milliners and mantua-makers alike'.<sup>45</sup>

Clarinda's arguments in favour of fashion win through in the first article. But just as the 'Reply' to Artichoke Pulse justifies fashion only to subsequently limit and qualify this justification, so the concluding part of 'Dress: A Conversation Piece' tempers the positive take on fashion voiced in the first. The 'Conversation' ends with the rational, arbitrating voice of Charles, who, having addressed the individual pro- and anti-fashion arguments made by his companions, draws them together to conservatively pronounce that while 'the ornamenting of a person is no crime, it ought to be done with that eye to simplicity which is the chief ornament of all the works of nature and art'. Charles reneges upon his Mandevillian argument, condemning the sartorial emulation that *The Fable of the Bees* (1711) had broadly celebrated, and preaching, more conventionally, that although 'beauty is not a permanent possession', and 'age and ugliness will come on in spite of all our art', moral beauty never dies. Although it might 'be necessary to comply with the fashions, as not to discover the pride of singularity', to 'consider it as the great duty of life ... is unworthy of a rational creature'.<sup>46</sup>

The article in many ways mirrors the magazine's approach to fashion: shrewdly indulging women's interest in dress, while containing this potentially transgressive subject within a conservative ideological framework which privileged the mind above the body and attempted to promote morality as the new fashion. Rather than attempting to effect its reformatory project through prescription *per se*, the magazine attempted to encourage women to reform themselves through a process of self-reflection generated by a considered contemplation of the magazine's content and evidenced in their own contributions to the magazine. The magazine's faith in their readers was not always well placed, however. An article entitled 'Fashion', a purportedly true account written by a grocer attacking the ridiculous and financially devastating consequences of his family's efforts to follow fashion, attracted a vehement response from a female reader.

A 'Reply to Artichoke Pulse', the pseudonym of the author of 'Fashion', was published one month after the original article in September 1782 with a view to

'repelling the number of attacks made on different parts of our dress':

It appears a subject of sufficient consequence, for every mortal that can hold a pen. I have often heard the haughty masters of the creation declare, 'it is a matter the most trifling, for the ladies to have a knowledge of writing.' — And pray Madam, had we ever so glorious an opportunity of retorting on them; when alas! their eloquence, — their abilities, can be applied to no nobler purpose, than ridiculing those they ought to protect from it?<sup>47</sup>

The anonymous writer perceptively underscores many of the contradictions that characterize anti-fashion writing. Male writers on dress frequently ridicule fashion's inconsequentiality, yet the vehemence of their arguments, and the sheer number of articles on fashion, attest to its perceived significance. The reader also sees through the mock-chivalric strategies through which many male writers on fashion (from the *Tatler* and *Spectator* to countless other male-authored male-oriented periodicals and innumerable articles in the *Lady's Magazine* itself) claimed to educate women against a misplaced love of fashion. Such criticisms insult the intelligence of women readers, the writer of the 'Reply' argues, particularly 'when the wits' assume the 'characters of *Green Grocers*' to 'insult us'. If men decry fashion, like female writing, as 'trifling', then women must counter these insinuations by using the magazine as a forum in which to express written justifications of their 'partiality' to dress.

The 'Reply' constitutes a radical attempt to play men at their own game, revealing the specious mock-chivalric tactics deployed by men, including male contributors to the *Lady's Magazine* itself, to persuade them to give up their love of finery in order to attract and reform men. Predictably, this radical argument is downplayed later in the article when the contributor reveals a class bias that was entirely in keeping with the magazine's middle-class temperament. Although she champions women's right to the 'attainment of dress', she confines this privilege 'to those whose fortune and connections have a right to assume it', concluding that she hopes 'never to see them [hooped-petticoats] arrive at such a pitch, as when servants in the country used to attend the tea-tables in as large ones as ever graced the heroine of a tragedy'.<sup>48</sup> While this article evidences the ultimate conservatism of even the most outspoken of the magazine's readers, it nevertheless reveals fault lines in the magazine's project that it virulently sought to deny. Its assertion that readers can be both 'partial' to fashion, yet also rational, accomplished women,

dismantles the straightforward binaries between folly and wisdom and fashion and virtue that the magazine elsewhere sought to articulate.

The *Lady's Magazine* can fruitfully be understood as both a product of and an agent in the feminization of culture in the late eighteenth century. The virtues of restraint, frugality, modesty and prudence that the magazine championed placed women at the centre of the nation's moral and financial economy while attempting, like the conduct book, to police female virtue and sexuality through the promotion of an ideal of self-regulation designed to repair the nation's moral fabric. Unlike the conduct book, however, the magazine afforded the reader a physical space within which she could engage with and contest the values which the magazine promoted. In a period in which excavating reader responses to texts is notoriously difficult, the magazine provides a rare, perhaps unique, test-case for examining the ways in which women internalized sentimental ideology and thereby offers a valuable corrective to critical readings of the feminization of culture as predominantly empowering or debilitating for women. This is not to say that the reader responses' documented in the magazine's pages are unmediated. Editorial decisions on content, the juxtaposition of articles and essays and editorial comment did much to arbitrate readers' views, while maintaining the fiction that the magazine was an open forum in which women could freely write to, about and for other women. Nevertheless, editorial strategy anticipates and reader contributions demonstrate resistance to the magazine's moral project. As an anonymous contributor wrote in a 'Letter to the Editor' in the April 1773 issue, the *Lady's Magazine* had to accept that for each reader whose 'prejudices [we]re not so strong', there was another whose 'ears [we]re shut against conviction'.<sup>49</sup> If the magazine offered its readers a choice between folly and wisdom, like the woman of the 1780 frontispiece, there was no guarantee that she might be persuaded to make the *right* choice.

## Notes

1. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago and London, 1992) and Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1982).
2. Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s*. Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen (Chicago and London, 1995); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago and London, 1984); Mitzi Myers, 'Sensibility and the "Walk of Reason": Mary Wollstonecraft's Literary Reviews as Cultural Critique', in *Sensibility in Transformation: Creative Resistance to Sentiment from the Augustans to the Romantics, Essays in Honour of Jean H. Hagstrum*, ed. by Syndy McMillen Conger (London and Toronto, 1990), 120-144.
3. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. by Miriam Brody (Harmondsworth, 1992), 197.
4. Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago and London, 2000). E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke, 2004).
5. Clery, *Feminization Debate*, 12.
6. In 1832 the *Lady's Magazine* joined with the another magazine, the *Ladies' Museum* to form *The Lady's Magazine and Museum of Belles Lettres*. This title, in turn, ran until 1838 when the publication joined with the *Court Magazine* to form *The Court Magazine and Monthly Critic and Lady's Magazine and Museum of Belles Lettres*. This title ran until 1847.
7. Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron, *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine* (Basingstoke and London, 1991), 16.
8. See Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women's Fiction in England, 1790-1820* (Cambridge, 1995), 117-158.
9. Jacqueline Pearson, "'Books, my greatest joy'" Constructing the Female Reader in *The Lady's Magazine*', *Women's Writing*, 3: 1 (1996), 3-15.
10. Neil McKendrick, 'The Commercialization of Fashion', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society*, ed. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (London, 1982), 34-99.
11. Erin Mackie, *Market à la Mode: Fashion, Commodity and Gender in The Tatler and The Spectator* (Baltimore and London, 1997), 114.
12. *Ibid.*, 27.
13. Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London and New York, 1989), 167.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
15. *The Fashionable Magazine: Or, Lady's and Gentleman's Monthly Recorder of New Fashions*, 1 (June 1786), p. iii.
16. *The Fashionable Magazine*, 1 (June 1786), iii.
17. The first magazine solely concerned with fashion was Nicolaus von Heideloff's *Gallery of Fashion* (1794).
18. Minna Thornton, 'The Fashion Plate in London, 1759-1809' (unpublished master's thesis, Victoria and Albert Museum and RCA, 1993), 54-9.
19. *Ibid.*, 54-9.
20. *The Magazine à la Mode*, 1 (April 1777), p. 196.

21. *The Magazine à la Mode*, 1 (July 1777), p. 244.
22. *The Fashionable Magazine*, 1 (June 1786), p. iii.
23. *LM*, 1 (August 1770), 3.
24. Copeland, *Women Writing*, 117.
25. Ibid.
26. *LM*, 1 (August 1770), 170.
27. Jean E. Hunter, 'The Lady's Magazine and The Study of Englishwomen in the Eighteenth Century', in *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. by Donald F. Bond (Morgantown, 1977), 112.
28. In February 1785 the *Lady's Magazine* published an article on 'One of the Leading Causes of Prostitution', the 'Dress of Servant Girls above their Station'.
29. *LM*, 2 (May 1771), 169-70.
30. *LM*, 4 (April 1773), 203.
31. *LM*, 6 (November 1775), 604.
32. *LM*, 6 (January 1775), 40.
33. *LM*, 4 (April 1773), 199.
34. *LM*, 4 (April 1773), 199.
35. In fact pocket-books had published fashion plates since the late 1750s, long before the first issue of *The Lady's Magazine*.
36. See Hunter, 'The Lady's Magazine and The Study of Englishwomen', 106.
37. *LM*, 10 (May 1779), no page number.
38. Hunter, 'The Lady's Magazine and The Study of Englishwomen', 107.
39. Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (London, 1985).
40. *LM*, 6 (May 1775), 233.
41. *LM*, 6 (May 1775), 235.
42. *LM*, 6 (May 1775), 235.
43. See, for example, *LM*, 11 (January 1780), 'To Our Correspondents', no page number.
44. *LM*, 20 (July 1789), 372.
45. *LM*, 20 (July 1789), 372.
46. *LM*, 20 (August 1789), 406-7.
47. *LM*, 13 (September 1782), 475-6.
48. *LM*, 13 (September 1782), 476.
49. *LM*, 4 (April 1773), 207.

## Women, Poverty and Power: Belgian Women Refugees in Britain in the Great War

**Katherine Storr**

*Independent Researcher*

### Introduction

In August 1914 the influx into the U.K. of approximately 260,000 refugees, mostly Belgian women and children, began. Reports of female refugees fleeing from the German invaders, published by *The Times* in August and September 1914, depicted them as defenceless and homeless, clutching few belongings, frantically seeking or burdened by their children and aged parents, heading towards the coasts of Holland, Belgium or France and the safety of a foreign land. Many such refugees had lost everything except the possessions they carried and had no money with which to support themselves and their families when they reached England. Furthermore, the majority did not speak English. Who could be more powerless than women in this situation?

The historiography on Great War Belgian refugees is limited; for example, Marrus gives this period little attention in *The Unwanted*.<sup>1</sup> More recent writers include Cahalan, whose *Belgian Refugee Relief in the Great War*<sup>2</sup> is a study of these refugees, but his focus is on the War Refugees Committee and its relationship with the Government. Kushner<sup>3</sup> considers local responses and the significance of place in Belgian refugees' welfare, and my own work and that of Kevin Myers,<sup>4</sup> has been concerned with the enormous number of Belgian children being temporarily educated in the U.K. Women have remained marginalized in all of this work.

Power, as defined by the O.E.D is 'the ability to do or to act.' It implies control over one's own life and taking from other people their time, energy and money. Women's power has been associated with wealth and high status, such as that of queen or empress, but also as wife; an instance of the latter is examined here. Women have used their social position, cultural capital and property to challenge patriarchy and poverty, but it has not been suggested that poverty itself could be used as a means to power.<sup>5</sup> Emily Green Balch wrote that 'Public opinion is power'<sup>6</sup> and while public opinion played an important part in determining the extent of Belgian refugee power, that inherent in more everyday determinants, such as *The Power to Choose*,<sup>7</sup> power

through self-expression;<sup>8</sup> and the power of tradition<sup>9</sup> are some of the means by which Belgian refugee women themselves were able to display power. But their sex and associated gender assumptions, their identity as Belgian women and their poverty as refugees assisted autonomy even more significantly under the unique circumstances in which they lived in Britain during W.W.I.

Refugee status implied poverty, even though some were well-to-do; British people did not expect a middle-class woman to appear as the representation of a young mother shown here does. (See Fig. 1) A Mrs. Lovatt, for example, asked about a Belgian child's family 'why, if they were rich people there [as the father said] did they not bring some amount of clothing with them? The child's clothing (what little there is) is not that of a well-to-do family.'<sup>10</sup> Knowing this expectation, it was possible for some refugees to pretend to poverty to gain the help given by specially-established local voluntary committees consisting largely of women. Committee members were the most usual recipients of refugee power, however expressed, because they provided the necessities of life, raising finances through voluntary contributions sometimes for the full four years of war. Committees also arranged special instruction in language and other skills that enabled refugees to become more autonomous in Britain and prepare for their survival on repatriation. Provision of this far-reaching support therefore gave the refugees power over their hosts' resources when British people themselves were suffering a diminution of these and some were actually starving during this period of 'total' war.<sup>11</sup>

From the moment of arrival the refugees had the power of choice - to accept or refuse accommodation offered, to complain, to be honest in declaring their resources, to exploit systems at the expense of their hosts, to co-operate or be difficult, and from October 1914 whether to take paid employment or refuse it. Various kinds of work available are outlined, indicating the limitations to women's power and achievement dictated by the patriarchal, militaristic, capitalist society in which they lived. I also indicate how and why some refugees refused to work, using their power to get what they wanted with as little effort as possible. Nevertheless, those who chose to become self-supporting as far as, and as soon as possible, were in the majority; for most the issue was to regain self-respect by becoming autonomous.

Inevitably, there must have been people so traumatised by their experiences for whom making any choice was impossible at the beginning of their time as refugees; also, the uncertainty of the military situation, and



Figure 1. Representation of Female Belgian Refugee. Refugee Centre, Messines, Belgium. May 2004. By kind permission of David Budgen.

therefore of the timing of their return to Belgium had a strong influence on decisions. Anna Davin<sup>12</sup> has suggested that it is 'easier to unearth casualties' in our research than those who are more successful and less troublesome. By the time the local committee reports were written in 1917, casualties of this type had apparently recovered, since very few are mentioned. However, the situation of women in other kinds of difficulty, including unmarried mothers, are examined to see what, if any, power was in their position, how power was used and by whom being matters that might be open to the reader's individual interpretation.

### Female Belgian Refugee Power

Approximately a month after the first refugees arrived in August, Herbert Samuel announced in the House of Commons that the British Government had invited the Belgians to become the British nation's guests. Unless the pressure of numbers made it impossible, refugees were 'sifted' at Calais and Ostend before being allowed onto ships; this examination involved checking physical condition, ethnicity and whether they could support themselves financially; some young men were not allowed to board. Being female, however was an advantage, for although Belgian women were suspected of being spies, they were nonetheless automatically qualified to come to the U.K especially if seen as part of a family group.<sup>13</sup> As Sally Alexander argues in *Becoming a Woman*, women represented sexuality linked to reproduction;<sup>14</sup> women's reproductive capacity was symbolic of social order and in the chaotic state in which

the Belgian nation found itself, maternity was a particularly potent reminder of that order and of Belgian survival. It is indicative of British people's lack of experience of war that women needing maternity care were not at first expected to be among the refugees; nevertheless, maternity and waiting homes were soon provided for them at Folkestone, the approved port of entry, despite the fact it was in an area prohibited to aliens. In London, where refugees were sent onwards, and across the nation where more permanent homes were provided, maternity care was given, often without charge by the attending doctor, a concession not necessarily granted to British poor. Their *enceinte* condition therefore gave Belgians preferential care. Being a mother, especially of a large brood, also ensured popular sympathy. For example, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1914 it was noted that 'one poor woman with twelve children' had arrived in Bristol with the first batch of refugees to be sent to that city.<sup>15</sup> Such sympathy often resulted in extra gifts and privileges which the refugee would not otherwise have received.

At this time, although widely dispersed over at least four European countries typifying Benedict Anderson's concept of an 'imagined community,' the Belgian nation retained considerable legitimate political value<sup>16</sup> and, as keepers of culture, women were in a strong position to keep Belgian identity alive. To the surprise of the British, the Belgians were determined not merely to maintain social status, but also to increase differences by emphasising class and ethnicity – both were important parts of Belgian identity with many nuances that the British were unaware of. British conceptions of Belgian social class were connected to whether the woman spoke French or Flemish. French-speaking refugees were categorised as middle class, while those speaking Flemish might be identified as peasants regardless of actual status; but both languages were spoken in Brussels. Miss Lea Rothschild, who had lived in Brussels for 8 years, possessed more insight than most into the subtleties of the Belgian class system. She wrote:

We knew that the Wallons (sic) were very different from the Flemings. They are of different origin. The Flemings of Northern race being Saxon and the Southern or Walloons Latin. We knew that it would be fatal to house families of these mixed races under one roof. We knew also that the Belgians of the different classes of society do not associate at all and could not be mixed or disagreement would follow.<sup>17</sup>

As the Hull committee realised by 1917, these two races were 'dissimilar in character, in habits, in language.' In

addition,

distinction was requisite in the treatment of each and of the four classes into which each was divisible – the cultured, the upper bourgeoisie, the lesser bourgeoisie, and the manual workers. In both races the classes first and thirdly named were, almost without exception, readily satisfied, unwilling to reveal their troubles or to proclaim their needs.<sup>18</sup>

But the matter did not end here. As the Sanderstead Belgian Refugees Relief Committee reported:

Among the better-to-do classes we found a certain amount of reserve between refugees who came from different towns. This may have arisen from hereditary civic antagonism, or was the outcome of a suspicion of Countrymen whose standard of manners and conduct differed slightly from their own.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, most refugees came from Flanders where a high proportion of women worked outside the home; continuing to do so was another means of confirming the identity of parents and children alike. However, this raised problems of child care and consequently women began to exert pressure on the authorities to provide Belgian boarding schools for their children. Conversely, and entering the debate on whether language determines nationhood,<sup>20</sup> confused here by the two languages spoken, Belgian identity could be affirmed by refusing to learn English or go to work. Finally, Belgian identity was visibly avowed when women assisted in the establishment of communities running Belgian shops, laundries, cafés and so on.

As well as quarrels between refugees, such as at Pill (near Bristol) where wives argued with each other,<sup>21</sup> there were arguments between the refugees and relief workers who were forced to spend much time trying to resolve problems. In December 1914 three Belgian families arrived at a comfortably furnished house in Church, near Accrington. There were three children, one of whom died from exposure as a result of the hardship suffered before arrival in England, and a baby was born in the summer of 1915. In December 1915, by their own choice, the three families divided the furniture and moved into separate small houses. By February 1916 the three women all found employment in a local calico printing works and each family became self-supporting.<sup>22</sup>

The Government became financially involved in refugee care following its September 1914 invitation, channelling funds *via* the Local Government Board through the voluntary War Refugees Committee in London and thence to local committees. The L.G.B. also helpfully gave its 'ideal example' of how female hostel refugees should spend their day: food preparation and housework in the morning; sewing in the afternoon, including making garments for other refugees, comforts for the troops, and preparing for repatriation; no English paid labour should be used in running the hostel. This did not, of course, address the issue of shared housing and in some places local refugee committees were able to provide alternative, separate accommodation. In such cases, the L.G.B. pontificated: 'Where each family occupies a separate house or cottage, housework should be done by the wife and possibly a grown daughter.'

In September 1916, the L.G.B. gave similarly helpful advice about women's employment. Where it was possible for a woman to work outside the home, the committee should go through Labour Exchanges helping them to find work either on the land, in domestic service or in schools, shops or factories where there was a scarcity of female labour. However, it pointed out, as if committee members were unaware of it, that accommodation must be considered<sup>23</sup> because the refugee might not be able to find new 'hospitality' in areas where work was available.

Although most refugees were working-class, being 'of the better classes' brought certain rights to improved accommodation and general standard of living. Even so, the middle class was frequently reported as the most difficult, some pretending to be without money. The committee at Chapel-en-le-Frith reported that well-to-do Belgians who could support themselves were accepting hospitality, but were not satisfied; one man had been given a suit, but complained because it wasn't fashionable enough.<sup>24</sup> Cheltenham's experience was similar, noting that 'Fondness of dress appears to be a characteristic of the Belgians of all classes, and they have managed to provide themselves with smart clothes.'<sup>25</sup>

Middle class refugees were sometimes given homes in the house of a well-to-do local person: Mrs. Noble at Henley took girls of the better class into her own home while their parents made suitable arrangements for accommodation for the whole family.<sup>26</sup> When Lord Gladstone appointed himself, as Lady Lytton called it, 'dictator' of the War Refugees Committee, Lady Lugard, its founder, devoted herself to helping those of the 'better class.' On arrival at ports, refugees were given blue or pink cards denoting social status and type

of help required, if any. Those suitable to be helped by Lady Lugard's committee were given red tickets. Like all other refugees, they were at first taken to the W.R.C.'s offices at the Aldwych, London but would then be interviewed separately and 'kept apart from the ordinary ruck of cases which come before the Private Relief Fund Committee. ... Payments to such refugees should be by cheque.'<sup>27</sup>

One such case was a family living in a boarding house in Holland Park Avenue, London, with resources of £17.7s. per month - the man, Mr. Wamback, aged 60, being a 'musician of the first rank,' was receiving half pay from his Belgian employers. His wife was aged 51, and his two daughters aged 25 and 21 were too delicate to do housework. He also had two sons aged 15 and 13. The W.R.C. offered to pay boarding school fees if the family would agree to move to a flat; this would save money for the W.R.C. whose resources depended on voluntary contributions and were always limited. The family refused to move.<sup>28</sup> It is only possible to guess at the women's involvement in this decision.

If refugees were living at the committee's expense personal resources could remain undisclosed. In Cheltenham, prior to November 1915, refugees were asked to declare their resources and to make some contribution towards their own support. However, 'arrangement of these contributions was a thankless and unpleasant task.'<sup>29</sup> But hiding income could sometimes go awry as shown by a perpetually quarrelling married couple living in a Glasgow hostel. The husband had received free garments from the committee for which he should have paid. After a particularly virulent quarrel, the wife told Mary Boyle, the Assistant Matron, that she had paid her husband not to throw her out of the window. 'Right,' said Matron. 'Now he can pay for the [clothes]!'<sup>30</sup> The woman, by telling the Matron of her payment to her husband, had used her power as a wife not only to wreak retribution against him, but also to control British resources, knowing that as refugees they would still be provided for. It was a relief to local committees when refugees could begin to support themselves, since it eased the financial burden, which, as the war continued, many found difficult to maintain.

When refugees first arrived they were not allowed to take jobs, the Government fearing that they would undercut British workers. However, King Albert of the Belgians made it clear that his people should not 'eat the bread of idleness'<sup>31</sup> and employment was allowed in October 1914. The wording of the British invitation provided opportunity for abuse, most obviously shown by a man who refused to work because he was the King of England's guest,<sup>32</sup> thus ensuring that the British had no choice but to support him. Women also exploited this

loophole by doing as little work as they could get away with. For example, a Belgian washerwoman in Glasgow<sup>33</sup> 'was paid the same wages as the British worker, but arrived an hour later, left an hour earlier and took exactly double the time to get through the work.' Whether this achieved the refugee's aims cannot be known, but her services were dispensed with, for the report continues: 'Now we have a Scottish washerwoman.'<sup>34</sup>

Sexual division of labour was accepted as normal; British relief workers and Belgian refugees expected married women who had children to concentrate on their upbringing and on domestic duties rather than take employment. This is shown by the statistical information that of 57,000 Belgians registered for work in April 1918, only 10,000 were women, who entered the workforce more slowly than men.<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that there were more women than men, information in the committee reports about female refugees is limited by comparison to that on men, whose work to support the family was of paramount importance. Men's attitudes to obtaining work despite difficulties of language and the type of work for which they were fitted, therefore provided subjects for comment since they reflected on the well-being of the wife and children. For example in Peterborough in October 1916, it was reported that 'all able bodied men were in constant work in munitions, railways, etc.' but the writer continued: 'wives and children were left unsupported because of the Belgian Military Call up.'<sup>36</sup> The plight of British soldiers' wives and children whose separation allowances were delayed or refused is notorious but here the word 'unsupported' does not necessarily imply the same lack of financial support for Belgian women<sup>37</sup> because they had local refugee committees to turn to for help.<sup>38</sup>

The call-up occurred in March 1915 when Belgian men between 18 and 25 had to appear before a Belgian recruiting committee for enlistment in military or public service, or exemption. In July 1916 the age at which Belgian men were called up was changed to between 18 and 41 to be in line with the British,<sup>39</sup> leaving yet more families without their male earner. Like British wives, many Belgian women found that their separation allowances were insufficient and this drove them to seek work, especially when their children were old enough to be left, although it also increased their demands for boarding schools like those available in Belgium.<sup>40</sup> The view that married women should not go out to work therefore altered as the war progressed. It is in the area of work that the limits of female refugee power are most clearly seen. The Munitions Act of 1915 was deliberately framed to encourage women to enter the industry, but it provided less protection for women than for men and tightly controlled and exploited workers of both sexes.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequent Orders were in most cases completely disregarded by the employers and women might receive as little as 8s. per week for working eight or twelve hours per day, six or even seven days a week. Sylvia Pankhurst argued for, but did not get, a minimum of 30s. per week for this dangerous work. It is extremely unlikely that Belgian women obtained better wages than British women alongside whom they often worked in the 700 munitions factories in England.<sup>42</sup> Despite the conditions, in February 1917, 600 women were employed at the Pelabon Works, 75 by Kryn & Lahy, 60 at General Stores & Munitions – all owned by wealthy Belgian refugees.<sup>43</sup> However, shared nationality did not imply concern for compatriots. A Report from the Richmond War Refugees Committee dated 20 March 1916 stated that housing refugees at the Pelabon Factory was difficult, the employers having shown no desire to provide accommodation which made action by the Committee imperative. Twenty houses were being rented, and let to about 175 refugees.<sup>44</sup> In Glasgow, employers sent records of wages to the Committee and workers were obliged to refund the cost of their maintenance. Nonetheless, they were better off than British workers, because although they had to pay for coal and light, they lived rent-free.<sup>45</sup> British people believed, despite official denials, that refugees received higher relief than the families of British soldiers.<sup>46</sup> In March, 1915, the discrepancy between allowances caused the Blackburn Trades' and Labour Council to attempt to have British families' allowances raised to that of the Belgians. A Belgian couple with one child got 13s. per week compared to the British 13s. 6d., but Belgian couples with two or more children not only received more cash than the British but had coal and accommodation rent free whereas the British had to pay for these out of their allowances.<sup>47</sup> This contributed to the anti-Belgian feeling that developed as the war progressed.<sup>48</sup>

Also open to Belgian women were more traditionally female occupations - domestic work, as governesses or ladies' maids, in lace-making and various forms of needlework in which women and girls were given training; in the Jewish Poland Street refuge they were given the opportunity to learn dressmaking under 'competent instruction.'<sup>49</sup> Belgian lace, particularly that of Flanders, had a high reputation and there were many hostels that catered specifically for lace-makers. For example, one house in Buckinghamshire was used as a hostel for making lingerie and the Buckinghamshire Belgian Refugees Country Committee opened a special hostel at Upper Brook Street where between twelve and fourteen girls who had lost all traces of parents and friends were housed and either made or learned how to make lace and other fine needlework. All their work was sold in support of

the Belgian refugees in Holland, where conditions were, in some cases, 'quite terrible';<sup>50</sup> people were suffering from food shortages which occurred even in neutral countries as a result of the British blockade and some were living in 'tomato houses'. Always referred to in such terms in the reports, these seem to have been huge greenhouses which provided limited shelter, no privacy, and, of course, no sanitation. In Glasgow there were two workrooms for women under direct control of the Corporation Committee, one in the old German church, Woodlands Road, where the sale of lace and embroidered articles raised £200. The other was at 24 North Portland Street, where refugee workers made up cast-off clothing, mainly children's apparel, for use of refugees who went to the Clothing Store.<sup>51</sup> These women received from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per week, in addition to maintenance, and had to buy clothing and car fares. The idea as with Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, was to get them to look for better-paid work.<sup>52</sup>

Partly as a result of help from America, other workrooms for women were established across England. Women were housed with their families in little flats or hostels and because they looked after their children and did housework they were unable to take up paid employment outside the home. The Chelsea Committee sent them materials and instructions and when the items were made they were sent to Belgium.<sup>53</sup> There were over 820 women working on materials provided by the English Relief Societies. Although the records do not state that these women were paid for their work, they might have been; alternatively with their agreement, pay might have been put aside for repatriation. As already noted refugees received maintenance via the local committees. The work might have been seen as a *quid pro quo* for this support, or as a form of training for their future life. Alternatively, it might have been war-work, a means of helping their compatriots in Belgium who were suffering appallingly, the German occupation being more severe than that under the Nazis in the Second World War, although this was partly due to the Allied blockade. It is also possible that the women were being shamefully exploited by the militaristic psychology of the day.

Some women got jobs as machinists and tailoresses. More unusually, two young women, Anna Verschuere, aged 27, and Raphaele Geeraerts, aged 18, were both employed as grooms at £1 per week each; this was good pay. They were possibly related to Emile Van der Heydon, a clerk aged 48, who had been a clerk but also got a job as a groom, at 15s. per week – less than the women.<sup>54</sup> This was most unusual. Where women had previous experience in an occupation it was sometimes possible to find similar employment. For example in Cambridge, one young woman who

possessed previous trade experience was employed as a shop assistant by Messrs. Sayle.<sup>55</sup> Teachers, however, were not always so lucky despite the presence of at least thirty thousand Belgian children in the country. Whether a teacher could get work depended on where he or she had been given accommodation, how many Belgian children there were in the neighbourhood, and whether the local school felt it could make use of the teacher. In Darlington was a family with three daughters all over 30 who had held posts in state schools in Belgium; there was no indication at the time the report was written that they had been able to find teaching work locally.<sup>56</sup> However, ability to teach was one of the most usual ways by which middle-class Belgian women could obtain work and according to Cahalan 1,000 girls entered teaching.<sup>57</sup> Belgian teachers were accepted without question unless they were to teach British children. For example, at the Belgian Children's Home at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, a Flemish-speaking governess was employed to teach the children. Teachers sometimes worked away from their family's accommodation; Clothilda Tysmans left hers in Grimby to teach in London at £60 per annum. Another teacher, Angelina Tysmans, (the name might be a coincidence) earned the better wage of £100 at the Municipal College, Cleethorpes.<sup>58</sup> Girls were, however, wanted as domestic servants and this was the biggest occupational group among female refugees, most of whom remained in service in the UK, probably with their Belgian employers.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to those who found employment outside the home some women were self-employed in one of the Belgian communities that sprang up in various parts of Britain. These Belgian enclaves boasted bakeries, laundries, and shops where horsemeat was sold, laundries for the getting up of fine linen, and cafés and bakeries where special Belgian foods were procurable.<sup>60</sup> Richmond, for example, had over fifty such shops.<sup>61</sup> It is only possible to make an educated guess at women's involvement in the setting-up and running of these establishments.

Nevertheless, not all women worked and local committees commented adversely upon young, unmarried women who preferred to remain at home, living at British expense. For example, in Cambridge one girl 'of the artisan class' lived for nine months at the expense of the local refugee committee, caused trouble and anxiety, left Cambridge clandestinely and was not heard of afterwards.<sup>62</sup> At Porton, a 17-year old girl refused to look for work. The committee felt they could not force her to do so, and had no choice but to continue to support her.<sup>63</sup> At Conisborough another girl, aged 20, also refused to work; as she did not speak English this might have been part of the reason. Domestic work was found for her, but 'she had no aptitude and was unhappy,' so the committee

supported her until she and her brother left for London.<sup>64</sup> Because they were Belgian, these young women were given aid that a British woman would not have received.

The Town of Cambridge Committee thought that there was a cultural aspect to this refusal to work. It seemed

to be less customary in Belgium than it is here for grown up young women to take factory or commercial employment away from the parental home, and the conditions of life in a foreign country not unnaturally make some of the older refugees shrink from allowing their girls to leave them.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, another Cambridge Report stated that 'Some of the young unmarried women have taken posts as resident or daily governesses, nursery governesses, companions, or mothers' helps.'<sup>66</sup>

It was noted above that lack of ability to speak English might have been part of the cause of refusing to work. Once permission was given in October 1914 for refugees to obtain jobs, inability to speak English was a barrier to doing so. As Alexander has pointed out, language gives power to translate need and desire into demand.<sup>67</sup> Cambridge County Refugee Committee regarded it as essential that adults should learn English<sup>68</sup> and most refugee committees arranged at least informal lessons, although many made arrangements at local colleges. In Chelsea, as elsewhere, most refugees 'gladly availed themselves of (the) advantage' of instruction in English organised by Mrs. Wisdon Carr and 'some clever helpers,' thus increasing their cultural capital.<sup>69</sup> However, learning English was also important to women who stayed at home since it enabled them to do their own shopping and to communicate with local people, including refugee committee members. In Barnes refugees were using their newly developed language skills to ask the committee for help and advice in July 1917.<sup>70</sup>

There was, however, a significant difference between men and women and the ethnic groups as to how quickly they learned English. The Conisborough Committee reported that the French-speaking men picked up English quickly, whereas the women did not. On the other hand, the Flemish-speaking women were good at learning English and the men not.<sup>71</sup> In Carlisle Mrs. H.E. Scott conducted English Classes for Belgians for two years; four refugees entered for the R.S.A. exam in English and French, paying their own entrance fee of 2s.6d. Three out of the four candidates gained their certificate, but had it been set in English and Flemish there would have been nine or ten good entries, as the Flemish-speaking

Belgians made even better progress than those who spoke French.<sup>72</sup> If the Conisborough information can be generally applied, this would indicate that the candidates were women.

However, some Belgian women did not learn English, perhaps because they were traumatised by finding themselves refugees, because they expected to return quickly or because learning a new language is very demanding. Keeping firmly to their mother tongue, be it French or Flemish, was a way of confirming their identity in the face of the German invasion - a means of resisting the Germans even though the latter were unaware of such resistance. By not speaking English, it could be argued that the Belgian women were speaking as political subjects through their 'silence.' Nonetheless, English-speaking or not, refugees found 'voices' for their discontents and urgent requests; relief workers learned there were occasions when these were impossible to ignore or refuse, however expressed. Alice Essington-Nelson of the Catholic Women's League met refugees at London's railway stations. Her task was to gather groups together and take them to accommodation that had been prepared for them. One day, when she already had more than the proper number a

dear old woman came and took hold of my hand and pointing to herself with tears streaming down her face kept on begging me to take her saying 'e nix, e nix' meaning she had no one belonging to her and possessed absolutely nothing. I need hardly say she became an extra to our party!<sup>73</sup>

Language was not always vital to obtaining what was wanted since body language can be even more powerful than the spoken word. A family who arrived in Cornwall to good accommodation refused to leave the station and had to be taken back to London the next day. Another family in Littlehampton, which became a proscribed area from which all refugees were to be excluded, refused to move. They stayed put.<sup>74</sup> In Brighton newly arrived women refused to allow their families to be split up, even temporarily; when a rest and recreation room was made available for the men, the women insisted on accompanying them into it.<sup>75</sup> They could also make their dietary wants and dislikes known. Mary Boyle in Glasgow reported the refugees as being fussy over food, although in this instance it appears body and tongue operated together: 'We don't eat this in Belgium, and can't eat that.'<sup>76</sup> At the Convent of Jesus and Mary, where one would imagine the nuns would not stand any nonsense, the refugees were reported as refusing to eat rabbit<sup>77</sup> - despite meat

and other foods being scarce due to the submarine blockade by Germany.<sup>78</sup> In the same Glasgow Hostel, a married man helped a young woman to make cards; this led to slander and the wife wanted her husband fed on ham - a cure for all debility! Her daughter had weak eyes, and the mother also wanted her given ham. Had this request been complied with further trouble would have ensued because of apparent favouritism.<sup>79</sup> They did not get the ham.

Applying pressure through complaining is an exercise of power. Lord Gladstone's comment 'Those who complain to all authorities are usually chronic grumblers who will be with us until the day of repatriation arrives,'<sup>80</sup> implies that there were many who used this method. Women were, however, reported as being easier to satisfy than the men<sup>81</sup> as they had their domestic duties to perform and consequently time did not hang so heavily on their hands. Yet complaining did achieve results. An official at the L.G.B. wrote to the Belgian Minister in London acknowledging

quite openly that a Madame Van Bael Parmentier who is allocated at 121 Goven Street, Glasgow, is being provided for in a way that places her in a better position than the wives of our own soldiers and I think that this is all that can be reasonably expected of my committee. This refugee is one of those who are in the habit of writing in all directions making complaints in the hope of getting additional support.<sup>82</sup>

As indicated above, the language of 'hospitality' and being the nation's 'guest' could enable refugee agency. We now come to individual cases which indicate clearly how 'being difficult,' or 'in trouble,' can be a manifestation of personal power since they take from other people two of their most important assets - energy and time. The W.R.C.'s Rescue Department in London, formed to give assistance and advice to young Belgian girls and for 'rescue work' was run by Mrs. Webbe.<sup>83</sup> If the situation became really bad, the police became involved.<sup>84</sup> Although it was more usual for a whole family to be described as difficult, some individual women were sent back from their accommodation to the big London refuge for 'undesirables' at Edmonton; for example, one was returned to London from Peterborough for an unspecified type of 'insubordination'.<sup>85</sup>

The records do not necessarily provide the full stories of these women, one of whom was Mme Marie Wybo, aged 29, who had thrown vitriol and threatened suicide.

She was brought to Mrs Webbe on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1915 by Miss Alma Tadema, daughter of the artist. A younger girl in unspecified trouble, possibly theft or being out all night, was Maria Caroline Verwilt, aged 15. In this instance, as in many others, Mrs Webbe, was appointed her Guardian by the Old Street Juvenile Court. Women who were categorized as morally deficient were likely to find themselves in positions where power relations became particularly complex. One of these was Gertrude Kuypers. In May 1917 Somerset House, responsible for refugee registration, asked the W.R.C.'s Intelligence Department to find Gertrude's baby for her. It was found in Nazareth Convent at Hammersmith, placed there by Father Christie, the Catholic priest who worked with the W.R.C., because Gertrude was leading an immoral life. She and the baby were then taken to the W.R.C. Hostel in Maida Vale from which she absconded with the baby. In July 1919, by which time she should have been repatriated, the police were still trying to trace her.<sup>86</sup> Another example is Julyana Keyen who was put into a convent as being a lunatic, apparently on W.R.C. instructions. The definition 'lunatic' might have been applied because of 'immoral behaviour' but she might also have been suffering from trauma, such as shell shock. In August 1916, after seventeen months, a visiting priest found her there, and approached the W.R.C. for permission to release her as he had obtained a place for her as a servant. Who had placed her in the convent remains a mystery, as the W.R.C. had never heard of her.<sup>87</sup>

In all but the last of these cases the refugee women were exhibiting and using certain types of power - to create trouble of various kinds, to make demands, to travel, to steal. There is even one case where it is possible that the wife reported her husband's domestic violence against her. Mr. Claes beat his wife and threatened relief workers; six examining doctors decided he was not insane, but, nevertheless he was sent to Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum and his wife given police protection, something which today's victims of domestic violence might be glad to have.<sup>88</sup> Women also displayed ability to continue to conform to society's standards, for example, regarding marriage. Some chose to wait for their fiancés who were fighting in Belgium or France, but others cemented their relationships with partners through the marriage ceremony; in 1914 the Catholic Women's League attended six refugee marriages.<sup>89</sup> Yet despite the moral strictness of the day, unmarried Belgian mothers received sympathetic help. The W.R.C. ran a Hostel for Girl-Mothers, and since most were Catholics, they were visited by nuns who pressed on them the importance of keeping their babies.<sup>90</sup> Marte Verbist, however, was urged to get rid of hers. Her story was related by Lady Lyttleton, one of the founders of the W.R.C.

Marte had been raped by German soldiers during her escape from Belgium. Discovering that she was pregnant she first wanted an abortion, but then decided to have the baby taken away as soon as it was born. After the birth she again changed her mind. The Belgian doctor who attended her said she was no true patriot if she kept him; he wanted her to put the baby in an orphanage as being 'not Belgian.' Nevertheless, she decided that she would keep him, naming him Albert. Needing to earn some money, she weaned him; Mrs. Webbe found a crèche but Mrs. Lyttleton warned Marte to go and see it first. It is not stated that she did so, or for how long she used it, only that she 'left the baby for the day ... and gets it at night'. However, when she visited in the dinner hour, the baby was lying crying in a wicker cradle with no mattress and Marte said 'it's not been properly cared for,' snatched up the child and said she would call the police. The next day the baby was ill. Mrs Webbe sent her own nurse and a specialist, but to no avail; Mrs. Lyttleton visited Marte in her flat in Soho, but was unable to help. A few days later Marte's fellow lodger rang Mrs Lyttleton at 10.00 p.m to say the baby was very ill, 'please come'. Despite the fact Mrs. Lyttleton was expecting her own son back on leave, she went and sat up with the mother and child all night.

Poor little Albert ... kept uttering little cries of pain all the time. Marte had been told to give him nothing but water for some hours, then try milk but he could keep nothing down and went into convulsions. Marte's anguish was dreadful.' Mrs Lyttleton said it 'broke my heart. About 6 a.m. I left and walked home through empty streets. Mrs. Webbe's nurse was to help again but the baby died. Marte was frozen in despair.

Marte's cousin Albert was due to marry her, but she received no word from him until 1917. In 1919 Mrs Lyttleton visited Marte in Brussels. Her father was dead, but her stepmother was good to her, and she was working at home as a *Brodeuse*. Albert said that war had altered him, and he 'can't be faithful to one woman, and didn't want to marry her, so she told him nothing of her story.' Despite its sadness her story nevertheless indicates that only in relation to her baby's deteriorating health and ultimate death and the changing attitude of her fiancé was Marte Verbist powerless. Her decisions show that she had power over her own life; indeed, her difficult situation gave her power over others, including making a friend of an influential, aristocratic woman.<sup>91</sup>

Whereas Marte Verbist chose to keep her baby, Constance Stroobants deserted hers. Firstly, she gave false addresses and when her real address was discovered, her Landlady said she thought Constance

drank and that the baby was in hospital. In March 1917 Constance told W.R.C. workers that work was more important than her Baby; she earned 22s. per week, a fairly good wage, paying 6s. rent. The following month she abandoned the baby who was taken to the City of Westminster workhouse. Constance herself was found in Manchester with her brother and she, together with her brother and family, then returned to London where she was charged at Westminster Police Court with deserting her child. She pleaded guilty and then went back to Manchester with her family.<sup>92</sup> Her decisions might be judged unwise, but they nonetheless indicate autonomy and influence over her family who appear to have been supportive in dealing with problems she apparently created for herself.

Many of the women cared for by Mrs Webbe's Department were young – in their mid- to late teens and early 20s. All the girls helped were found jobs and after initial assistance some were reported as 'doing well'.<sup>93</sup> Mrs. Webbe dealt with arguments and separations of married couples, attempted suicides, and disputes between employer and employee. Between February 1915 and July 1916 she had dealt with 660 cases.<sup>94</sup> In March 1916, although she had three paid and three voluntary workers, she needed more help. Mrs. Webbe was ill from overwork. Refugee power had taken its toll.

## Conclusion

This preliminary analysis shows us that under special circumstances and when combined with other factors such as gender, nationality and the power of choice, poverty can be a means of power in which other people's time, money and energy can be manipulated. As 'guests of the nation,' Belgian refugees could exploit their hosts' financial resources, hiding their own. Women chose to use the experience of being refugees individually, but used wartime conditions as springboards to ensure the survival of Belgian culture and tradition. Their association with the domestic sphere enabled some to determine the form it took, how their children should be educated and whether women, especially unmarried girls, should work. Above all, because of the over-riding connection of women with reproduction, Belgian women of all classes were given help that similarly destitute British mothers did not receive. The British conviction that wives and families of Belgian soldiers received preferential treatment of various kinds is revealed as accurate, although viewed at the time by the authorities as necessary positive discrimination. However, some refugees undoubtedly remained very poor and Belgian women's ability to earn money in places such as lace

workshops or munitions factories was determined by contemporary gender assumptions regarding women's earnings in relation to men's and the place of civilians, especially women, in nations at war.

Nonetheless, the stories of these Belgian women indicate that there were degrees of powerlessness. It was their assumed poverty that enabled different manifestations of power even in the desperate situation when they first became refugees and their poverty was taken for granted. Most used the help offered, taking back into their own hands the power to determine independently the course of their lives. Others exploited their dependence financially or expressed themselves by disruption and refusal to conform or comply. Nevertheless, their experiences challenge us to redefine our notions of 'power', to note that there are different kinds and modes of its expression and to ask what sort is available in certain situations. We should also note that it was those upon whom moral judgements were made who were the most powerless.

## Notes

1. Marrus, Michael, *The Unwanted: European Refugees In The 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. (Oxford, 1985).
2. Cahalan, Peter, *Belgian Refugee Relief in England during the Great War*. (London, 1982).
3. Kushner, T., "Local Heroes: Belgian Refugees in Britain during the First World War." *Immigrants & Minorities*. 18, no. 1 (1999): 1-28.
4. See Myers, K, "Hidden History of Refugee Schooling in Britain: the case of the Belgians, 1914-1918." *History of Education*. 30, no. 2 (2001), 153-62. Storr, K. 'Belgian Children's Education In Britain In The Great War: Language, Identity and Race Relations.' *History of Education Researcher*, November 2003, Issue 72.
5. See, for example: Vickery, Amanda (ed). *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*. (Stanford, 2001).
6. Addams, Balch, Hamilton. *Women at the Hague: The International Congress of Women and its Results*. (New York and London, 1972.), 109.
7. Kabeer, Naila, *The Power to Choose. Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka* (London, 2000).
8. Sakr. Naomi (ed). *Women & the Media in the Middle East – Power through Self-expression*. (London, 2000).
9. Billson, Janet Mancini, *Keepers of the Culture. The Power of Tradition in Women's Lives*. (New York, 1995).
10. I.W.M. BEL 2.2/20/18.
11. See, for example: Richard van Emden and Steve Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* (London, 2003), 137-240. John Turner (Ed). *Britain and The First World War* (London, 1988), 31, 65. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front* (London, 1987; First published 1932), 136-137; Stephen Gower, 'The Civilian Experience of World War 1: Aspects Of Wolverhampton, 1914-1918.' D.Phil. Thesis, Birmingham. (July 2000), 218-219.
12. Anna Davin, 'Women and History' in M. Wandor (ed) *Body Politic* (London, 1972), 219.
13. Imperial War Museum Department of Printed Books. Women's Work Collection. BELGIUM 1.20 (Hereafter I.W.M. BEL or BO).
14. Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman, and other essays in 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Feminist History* (London, 1994), 123.
15. I.W.M.. Dept of Printed Books. Women's Work Collection. BEL 6.28/11.
16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1992), 4.
17. I.W.M. BEL 9.1/2
18. I.W.M. BEL 6.118/3, 19, 30
19. I.W.M. BEL 6.213/5
20. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 145.
21. I.W.M. BEL 6.191/2
22. I.W.M. BEL 6.56/1-2
23. I.W.M. BEL 1/19. Memo 1, p.2. Local Government Board. 8.9.1916
24. I.W.M. BEL 6.52/2 Chapel en le Frith
25. I.W.M. BEL 6.53/1-3 Cheltenham. 27.11.1915.
26. I.W.M. BEL 6.111/7
27. Public Record Office. Ministry of Health. 8.6 Sub-Committee of W.R.C. for Making Money Grants to Refugees of the Better Class. Signed: Mr. Leggett, 3.5.1916. (Hereafter P.R.O. MH8/6).
28. P.R.O. MH8/6. June, 1916.
29. I.W.M. BEL 6.53/1-3. Cheltenham
30. I.W.M. BEL 6.110/5
31. I.W.M. BEL 6.99. Glasgow
32. I.W.M. BEL 1, 1-4, 18
33. I.W.M. BEL 6.100/5
34. I.W.M. BEL 6.100/5 49.
35. Cahalan, *Belgian Refugee Relief*, 287
36. I.W.M. BEL 6.190/3
37. Pankhurst, *Home Front*, 21
38. Gower, 'Civilian Experience', 235.

39. Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971*. (Basingstoke. 1988), 90.
40. I.W.M. BEL 1/7. W.R.C. Second Report. December 1917, 54.
41. Pankhurst, *Home Front*, 189
42. *ibid.* 186, 347, 349, 207
43. I.W.M. BEL 1/7 p.48, Report of the War Refugees Committee. Second Report. December 1917.
44. I.W.M. BEL 6 202/1-5, Richmond War Refugees Committee.
45. I.W.M. BEL 6.99/17, 'Belgian Refugees, What Scotland Has Done.' Glasgow Committee's Work, reprinted from *The Glasgow Herald*, July 29, 1916.
46. Labour Party Archives, Blackburn & District. LP/WNC/28/8/91-4.
47. John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester. WNC 28/8/93
48. Kushner, T. 'Local Heroes', 16.
49. I.W.M. BEL 1/20, p. 26. LGB Report on the Special Work of the LGB arising out of the War. Up to 31.12.1914. Cd 7763. Roundell's Report on Reception of Jewish Refugees.
50. I.W.M. BEL 6.31/2.
51. I.W.M. BEL 6.99/10 Glasgow. 27.12.1915.
52. I.W.M. BEL 6.99/17 Glasgow.
53. I.W.M. BEL 6.52/4. Chelsea.
54. I.W.M. BEL 6/105 Grimsby.
55. I.W.M. BEL 6.39/8 Borough of Cambridge.
56. I.W.M. BEL 6.72/2 Darlington.
57. Cahalan. Belgian Refugee Relief, 291.
58. I.W.M. BEL 6.105. Grimsby. Report on those who have left Grimsby, 18.
59. Pankhurst, *Home Front*, 287.
60. Peel, Mrs. C.S., *How We Lived Then. A Sketch of Social and Domestic Life in England during the War*. (John Lane, 1929), 31.
61. Amara, Michael. 'Belgian refugees in the First World War.' Unpublished paper. In Flanders Fields Museum Colloquia. Ypres. May 2004.
62. I.W.M. BEL 6 40/7
63. I.W.M. BEL 6.194/2
64. I.W.M. BEL 6.61/1-2
65. I.W.M. BEL 6.39/6, 5. Town of Cambridge Hospitality Committee.
66. I.W.M. BEL 6.39/6.
67. Alexander, *Becoming a Woman*, 101.
68. I.W.M. BEL 6.38/2 Cambridge County.
69. I.W.M. BEL C.52/12. Chelsea.
70. I.W.M. BEL 6.11/1-4 Barnes.
71. I.W.M. BEL 6.61/1-2.
72. I.W.M. BEL 6.45/3 Carlisle. Report dated 27.3.1919.
73. I.W.M. Department of Documents. 86/48/1
74. P.R.O. MH 8/6, 2 of 6.
75. I.W.M. BEL 6.27/1-4
76. I.W.M. BEL 6 100/5 ,49.
77. P.R.O. MH8/2. 50/67
78. P.R.O. MH8/2. 50/193. 24.11.15.
79. I.W.M.BEL 6.100/5, 35.
80. I.W.M. BEL 1/7. W.R.C. Second Report. 1917, 15.
81. I.W.M.BEL 6 195/2.
82. P.R.O. MH 8/6, C.C. to Paul Hymans, 27.2.1917.
83. I.W.M. W.R.C. Report, August 1916, 60.
84. P.R.O. MH8/7. Folder 66. LG 13. Statistics.
85. I.W.M. BEL 6.190/3 Peterborough.
86. I.W.M. BEL 4/9 Typed Report on individuals. 1917-1919.
87. P.R.O. MH8/7. 98.87.
88. I.W.M. BEL 4.1.15.
89. I.W.M. BO 3.2. 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1914, 12.
90. I.W.M. BEL 1/7, page 64. Second W.R.C. Report, December 1917.
91. I.W.M. BEL 2.2/15.
92. I.W.M. BEL 4/9, 20.
93. P.R.O. MH8/7 98.90. 28 Beaufort Gardens, S.W.
94. P.R.O. MH8/7.

**Visit the WHN website to keep up to date!**

[www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org)

Full details of forthcoming conferences etc.  
are regularly updated

## Book Reviews

Leigh Ann Whaley

***Women's History as Scientists, A Guide to the Debates***  
**ABC-CLIO: California, Colorado and Oxford, 2003.**  
**£57.95, 1 57607 742 X (hardback), pp. vii - 253.**

Review by Claire Jones

*University of Liverpool*

Scepticism about women's capacity for abstract thought has a long and persistent history; the idea that femininity is somehow in conflict with rationality, and that women are therefore disqualified by their sex from contributing to serious learning, can be traced back some 2000 years. In this readable book, which is one of a series on 'Controversies in Science', Leigh Ann Whaley sets herself the ambitious task of presenting the arguments for and against female reason which have been debated in European thought since the time of Aristotle and Plato.

Whaley's perspective on her subject is not biographical or strictly chronological; instead, shunning any inversion of the familiar 'heroic men of science' narrative, she focuses on the pivotal question 'Are women capable of doing science?'. In this sense, 'science' is used broadly, beyond our modern understanding of the term, to denote the systematic reasoning, often contemplative, that before the seventeenth century would more usually be called 'natural philosophy'. Science in the sense of a special methodology or privileged epistemology - a body of knowledge with an 'objective' status above that of opinion or other conjecture - is a construct that began to appear much later with the birth of experimental science in the seventeenth century. One of the early usages of the term 'scientist' is attributed to Cambridge historian and natural philosopher William Whewell who used it in 1834 in a review of the work of mathematician Mary Somerville. In this context, the main title *Women's History as Scientists* could be a little misleading, an impression compounded by the modern image of a white-coated female peering into a microscope which illustrates the front cover. Rather than documenting women 'scientists', Whaley's central theme is the changing understandings of 'female nature' and the ensuing arguments about women's capacity for education and learning that arose from these differing conceptions.

The first two chapters of the book take us from the classical debates on female inferiority in the ancient world through to the medieval period when the Christian church, although adopting conflicted attitudes to women,

facilitated a brief flowering of female scholarship within the context of the convent as a space of female authority. This is followed by chapters outlining the 'Querelle des Femmes' of the late Middle Ages, the rise of the salons in France as an outlet for learned women during the seventeenth century, and the dialogues conducted on the subject of feminine nature by thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant during the intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century. Chapter eight takes us to the nineteenth century and is entitled 'The 'New Science' and the Debate about Women'; here a thoughtful account of the new sciences which developed from Darwin's evolutionary theories situates the presentation of female inferiority as 'objective' scientific 'fact' within the context of (and as a response to) campaigns for women's higher education and the vote. The succeeding chapter summarises the long history of women's relations with medicine, charting the debates that raged from medieval times to the nineteenth century over the question of female physicians and midwives.

Whaley's concluding chapter presents a change in tone as she examines 'The Feminist Critique of Science' and provides an introduction to challenges to the status of science as neutral, objective and value-free, which emerged in the 1960s and continue today. Arising out of a more general debate surrounding the philosophy and methodology of science, historians, philosophers and practising scientists such as Londa Schiebinger, Carolyn Merchant and Evelyn Fox Keller, turned the debate from one about the nature of women to one about the (masculine) nature of science. This section of the book provides a welcome exposition of the issues and, for those new to the topic, a useful stepping-stone to recent important scholarship on science, and science and gender, which is often theoretical and challenging both conceptually and linguistically. (For an example see: *Gender and Scientific Authority*, Edited by Laslett, Kohstedt, Longino and Hammonds, Chicago, 1996).

A strength of this study is that each chapter works well on its own as well as being a part of a coherent whole, an advantage reinforced by Whaley's clear and accessible prose. This, together with the comprehensive guides to further reading provided for each chapter, make the book a valuable teaching aid for students across various disciplines including the history of women, the history of science and the history of education. *Women's History as Scientists* provides a comprehensive introduction to the debates about women's nature and serves a broad audience beyond just scholars or students interested in the history of science and women.

Judy Giles  
***The Parlour and the Suburb***  
**Oxford and Providence, Rhode Island: Berg, 2004,**  
**ISSN: 1 85973 7021 (paperback), £16, pp. 228.**

Review by Maroula Joannou  
*Anglia Polytechnic University*

Judy Giles may be known to WHN members for her work on Englishness and for the interest in working-class women that runs throughout her academic work. *The Parlour and the Suburb* is an inter-disciplinary study of the making of the modern woman in the early twentieth-century that draws upon oral history, sociological and literary resources from Orwell's suburban novel, *Coming Up for Air* (1939) to Betty Friedan's path-breaking analysis of the frustration of the educated American middle-class housewife (the 'problem with no name') in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

*The Parlour and the Suburb* takes issue with the scarcely disguised condescension with which many commentators have dismissed the manicured lawns of suburbia and shows how the modern suburban home often functioned as a place of safety and comfort for women. At its simplest, Giles contends that modernity was experienced by millions of early twentieth-century women as the desire to create a domestic space in which violence, insecurity, sickness, discomfort and suffering of the past would no longer have a place. There is, of course, an obverse side of this picture and this must include the heavy pressures exerted on women to purchase expensive consumer products and to aspire to the creation of an ideal home that was by definition unattainable. Giles argues that domestic modernity was perceived differently by women of different social classes and that cultural transformation offered many new opportunities that bestowed women with dignity and improved their self-esteem. Moreover, women's projects centred on the home provided a sense of achievement and agency at the same time as it engendered a sense of citizenship and achievement as well as new forms of feminine subjectivity.

The book provides an intelligent summary of recent cultural debates on the city and the suburbs and of the modern endorsements of Dostoevsky's vision of the city as a metaphor for the speed, activity and restlessness of modern life and as a place of heroic adventure. This is in contradistinction to suburbia which stands for respectability, conformity and monotony. *The Parlour and the Suburb* offers useful sections on shopping and domestic service including analysis of the role of the grotesque housekeeper, Mrs Danvers in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and an extended discussion of

Celia Fremlin's *The Seven Chairs of Chelsea* (1939). This purports to be a social survey of domestic service which uses fictional elements to make its points about the relationship between mistress and maid. Giles summarises debates in parliament about help for exhausted housewives in the aftermath of the Second World War and makes interesting use of oral history in her interview with Hannah Armstrong, a retired parlour maid who recounts the story of her working life.

For feminist cultural critics Giles' emphasis on the importance of the home and her reconfiguration of domestic space as an arena in which the intersections of gender and class can be read as formative elements in the construction of new modern feminist sensibilities constitute a powerful contrast to the masculinist version of the modern which 'imagined itself away from home, marching towards glory in the battlefields of culture', and to the familiar landscapes of literary and architectural modernism, which are tendentially avant-garde with their imagery of anonymous suburban crowds and steel and concrete skyscrapers.

I would recommend this book strongly although there is always some danger that any celebration of the suburban will restore women to that from which feminists have been trying to escape in horror. Literature is replete with images of spirited early twentieth-century heroines like the eponymous heroine of H.G. Wells' *Ann Veronica* (1908) fleeing from restrictive suburban homes and values. We also have many vivid first-hand accounts of suburbia experienced as entrapment, such as Valerie Walkerdine's reminiscences of childhood in Liz Heron (ed), *Truth, Dare, Kiss or Promise: Growing up in the Fifties* (1985). Like Alison Light's important analysis of conservative modernity in *Forever England (Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars)* (1991) *The Parlour and the Suburb* replaces a black- and-white picture of social class and social change with a picture that is satisfying precisely because it is with more nuance. For countless working-class women like my mother, who had grown up in poverty, the washing machine represented a welcome relief from hours of drudgery at the washtub. The importance such women often attached to acquiring material goods for their children was because such possessions symbolised the security, comfort and status of which they themselves had been deprived.

Judy Giles has written an absorbing and accessible account of how and why women's relationship(s) to domestic space is essential to an understanding of their acquisition of a sense of themselves as 'modern' citizens.

Patricia Mainardi

***Husbands, Wives, and Lovers. Marriage and Its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France***

**New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003, ISBN 0-300-10104-X, pp. 310.**

Review by Rebecca Rogers  
*University of Strasbourg*

In this beautifully illustrated book, art historian Patricia Mainardi proposes a series of monographs on the subject of marriage and adultery drawing on a variety of cultural productions in order to illuminate the *mentalité* of early nineteenth-century France. She contends that the obsession with adultery at this time was not simply evidence of timeless interest in this subject, but a reaction to specific cultural and social changes following the French Revolution that culminated during the period of the Bourbon Restoration (1815-1830). The Restoration represents a moment when a new focus on individual rights and personal happiness, which gained expression in the quest for companionate marriages, collided with harsher legal measures that repealed divorce, established harsher measures against female adultery, and ushered in an age of stern religious morality. In addition, this period in French history stifled the ambitions of a generation of young men whose cultural productions bore witness to their political, social and economic frustrations. In lithographs, theatrical productions, novels, and paintings, authors and artists portrayed young men who sought sexual revenge on their older 'fathers' through cuckoldry. Mainardi argues that the attention paid to adultery during these years parallels that later held by prostitution, a far more familiar theme for social and cultural historians.

Mainardi divides her study into six chapters with a lengthy introduction that summarizes changes in family law and establishes the legal framework necessary to understand the specific constraints of the Restoration period. The individual chapters then exploit very different sources which all speak about marriage and its discontents. The first chapter uses the courtroom dramas presented in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* to show how real-life individuals, particularly men, used the courts to press charges against the adulterous behaviour of their spouses. The book then goes on to examine discussions of marriage and adultery in conduct manuals, engravings and lithographs, theatrical productions, novels, and paintings. Each monograph begins with an introduction concerning the cultural production under examination and then offers a series of

vignettes around specific images, melodramas, novels, or paintings paying careful attention to situate them within their social and cultural context. The author argues that the 'thread that runs through the plot, as it were, is the attempt to find personal happiness and to define what ideal relations between men and women should be in the modern world' (p. ix).

Men more than woman are the subject of analysis, since not only did they have legal advantages over women—husbands were acquitted for the murder of their wives if they caught them in the act of adultery—but they also monopolized cultural production as writers, playwrights and artists. As a result, the book tends to emphasize the ways men, and particularly young middle-class men, view the institution of marriage in an age when the marriage of reason is increasingly challenged by the rise of companionate marriage. No clear position triumphs, however, and Mainardi concludes that this period highlights the 'marriage of contradictions' and that opinions on the subject had a generational base.

The book's structure offers readers a fascinating introduction into a range of cultural phenomena as well as generally up-to-date historiographic interpretations on these subjects. Women's historians may be frustrated that greater effort was not made to uncover women's perceptions on marriage, notably within conduct manuals and moralizing literature where women's voices are far from absent. While women authors are mentioned—Mme de Genlis and George Sand get the most extensive treatment—far greater attention is paid to such better-known male figures as Balzac, Hugo, or Stendhal, whose portrayals of marriage are far more biting and sarcastic than those of the pious Pauline Guizot. And yet middle-class women were probably more likely to read Guizot than Stendhal. In the end, the reader comes away with a rich kaleidoscope of images that suggest the multiple ways in which marriage came under attack during the Restoration. For this reader, the quest for happiness seems a less convincing guiding thread, however, than the rise of a heavily Catholic middle-class ideology centred around the family where women were expected to assume an impossible role as paragons of virtue. What Mainardi shows, nonetheless, is the centrality of marriage in cultural life at the time, marriage whose premises and functioning were the object of debate, not just within families, but also more widely in the streets, on the planks and in salons.

Dror Wahrman

*The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*

**Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2004. £25, ISBN 0-300-10251-8 (hardback), pp. xvii + 414.**

Review by Philip Carter  
*University of Oxford*

Unlike many books concerned with explaining periods of dramatic change, Dror Wahrman's immensely energetic and diverse account of the 'making of the modern self' is rather more interested in the world left behind than with that ushered in by his late eighteenth-century cultural revolution. Wahrman conceives the modern self as a particular, and historically contingent, definition of personal identity defined by its interiority and individuality. The rise of the modern self, which Wahrman traces to the final two decades of the eighteenth century, brought forth a notion of identity characterized by the essence of the individual, a unique quality with which one was stamped at birth and which prompted the 'modern' fusing of self with identity. What this left behind, and in keeping with Wahrman's notion of late-century cultural revolution, was an '*ancien régime* of identity' in which all selves were thought malleable and mutable through the influence of external forces; this was an age of the 'socially-turned self' in which identity was created or adapted by the individual, and his or her relationship to others, from the outside in. In a motif which recurs through the book, Wahrman likens this socially-turned self to the masquerade, an unsurprisingly classic eighteenth-century entertainment, in which identities were assumed and abandoned through a disguise that later observers would not tolerate or could not fail to see through.

Wahrman analyses the preceding *ancien régime* with reference to four categories of identity: race, class, the relationship of humans to animals, and above all gender. As regards gender (and Wahrman sees a similar pattern across each category), the eighteenth century was characterized by the potential for flexibility and performance, illustrated by contemporary attitudes to female and male types existing in an environment subsequently deprived to members of 'modern' society. Thus, the *ancien régime* of identity permitted, accepted, and to some degree celebrated, the Amazon, the cross-dressing female soldier, the sentimental man of feeling, and the macaroni. The transition to modern identity in each case saw the closing down of what Wahrman calls 'a space for play' by a move to a more rigid notion of possible male and female behaviour via a late period of

'gender panic' in which fluid identities were rapidly rethought. In the case of the Amazon, therefore, earlier eighteenth-century associations with nobility and heroism gave way, from the 1780s, to critical statements of a type which was now seen to defy the acceptable identity of modern womanhood. In the Amazon's place came the mother: not a new type, as Wahrman acknowledges, but one now accorded heightened status in an identity culture in which motherhood as a general good gave way to its identification as the essence of every woman, and so took with it the now deviant Amazonian. As Wahrman argues, 'Suddenly, the dense web of interlocking eighteenth-century practices and forms that had capitalized in one way or another on the relative elasticity of former perceptions of gender became socially unacceptable and culturally unintelligible.' In terms of the relationship of sex to gender, while a distinctly playful *ancien régime* had begun with a clear and exploitable gap between body and performance, the eighteenth century closed with an increasingly rigid association of normative gender identities with fixed sexuality. And where the *ancien régime* had drawn on the externalities of the mask and disguise to effect gender play, clothing now reinforced essential gender identities with its emphasis on ultra-femininity and masculinity.

Wahrman's thesis contributes, as he readily acknowledges, to a well-established discussion on the emergence of modern notions of selfhood and the autonomous individual. Different contributors to this debate have identified a range of dates in which the shift to the modern occurred: attitudes to male homo- and heterosexuality, for example, are traced to the 1720s; the rise of a concept of personal space to mid-century, and so on. Wahrman's analysis is at its strongest on the breadth of cultural change in contrast to these existing case studies. That change occurred across identity categories—race and class, as well as gender—prompts him to speculate on the rise of a modern concept of selfhood as opposed merely to aspects of gender (or other) identity. Indeed, Wahrman is explicit in his limited use of philosophical treatises on selfhood, preferring instead the accumulation of evidence from a range of cultural themes: from dress to theatre to attitudes to children.

Wahrman's understanding of modern gender attitudes as a consequence of the 'gender panic' from the 1780s and 90s also has interesting implications for contemporary feminism. It was, he argues, not what was said that drew attention—the arguments of the 1790s being no more radical than previous statements; rather the modern context in which such opinions were advanced was now less accepting of an ideal of woman

as malleable through personal and political reform. The 'modern' consequently emerges both as a conservative force resistant of change and as a historical artefact in its own right. At points there are contradictions over how today's readers will regard the *ancien régime* of identity: in places the book identifies the socially-turned self as bizarre and incomprehensible, whereas Wahrman's more forceful argument identifies the connections between eighteenth- and twenty-first century attitudes to gender in which flexibility is a defining characteristic. So dramatic and extensive a transition from *ancien régime* to modern demands, of course, a substantive explanation. For Wahrman this is found in the American War of Independence, a civil war in which traditional identities, and categories of identity, were subject to concerned questioning. This is not quite the big-bang thesis that it may at first appear. Wahrman traces a persistent unease with the playfulness of earlier identities and sees the revolution as bringing these concerns into focus and, from the 1780s, into effect. The plausibility, or otherwise, of such pivotal moments is a staple of history, and questions will certainly be asked of Wahrman's argument. But discussion is clearly something the author is keen to foster in this accessible, wide-ranging, provocative, and often consciously speculative study: more the start of debate than the end of argument.

Barbara Taylor

*Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*

**Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, £45, ISBN 0 521 66144 7 (hardback), £16.99, 0 521 00417 9 (paperback), pp. xvi + 331.**

Review by Amanda Capern  
*University of Hull*

Barbara Taylor's *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* is a beautifully-written intellectual biography of one of modern feminism's most powerful icons. It is set to become the definitive biography of Wollstonecraft, one that provides an exciting and convincing contextualisation of Wollstonecraft and her ideas.

Taylor points out that in many ways Mary Wollstonecraft did not have so much influence in her day and that her reputation suffered posthumously because of Godwin's frank biography. She points out that despite her elevated status in modern feminist hagiography, Wollstonecraft began her adult life doing very ordinary things for a woman of her class. The failed career as governess was a plight endured by

many women and even turning to writing was a common career move for a woman by the late eighteenth century. Modern feminism reveres her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but Taylor pulls us up short with her observation that it was a 'pot-boiler'. Taylor states what really is the obvious – Wollstonecraft was *not* the twentieth-century bourgeois liberal that succeeding generations of feminist writers have wanted her to be, but a jacobin *philosophe* of the 1790s. Her book constitutes a highly persuasive elucidation of what this means.

Crucially Taylor distances Wollstonecraft from a modern secular reading of her 'feminism', though she does so with subtlety, demonstrating how a foreign past can masquerade as oddly familiar at the same time. For example, Taylor asserts that Wollstonecraft shared with modern feminists the uncomfortable anti-woman imperative that leads both to despair of the female condition (and female sexuality) and, more importantly, to women's collusion in their own subordination. Taylor also juxtaposes Joan Wallach Scott's comments about the 'chimera' of 'politics purged of feeling' with Wollstonecraft's assertion that 'we reason deeply when we forcibly feel'. However, Wollstonecraft's project for lifting women to a higher state was not a secular but a *Christian* one. In a sense she looked backwards to seventeenth-century ideas about 'Christian liberty' which were far removed from modern interpretations of 'freedom' (or licence), meaning instead the freedom, or even duty, to behave in the right way. Wollstonecraft's vision of female 'perfection', while emanating from earlier ideas about women gaining strength through seeking God-given perfection (conformist seventeenth-century male writers like Richard Allestree argued the same), was also wholly dependent on the newer Cartesian belief in female rationality. Through *reason*, a woman imagined or fantasised herself to a state that was closer to God. Posthumously, Godwin paid Wollstonecraft what she would have regarded as the highest compliment saying that 'her mind constitutionally attached itself to the divine'. Thus, Wollstonecraft's *Christian* feminism did not arise out of a theology of an omnipotent (and foreordaining God); rather it made God the goal in a slightly mystical quest for human perfection that combined comfortably with Enlightenment ideas about human progress and civilisation. Taylor's argument that Wollstonecraft found feminism through her Christian beliefs is one that can be applied to seventeenth-century Quakers and many nineteenth-century suffragists as well.

Wollstonecraft moved amongst the Rational Dissenters (Unitarians) of North London, finding patronage and a form of literary tutelage under Richard Price and publication under the radical auspices of Joseph Johnson. It was an intellectual circle that enjoyed radical respectability until the French Revolution of 1789 turned

into the Terror of 1792. *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was at first reasonably well received on its publication. It transformed Wollstonecraft from woman writer to fully-fledged *philosophe*, but at a time when her disagreement with Burke and Rousseau would transform her further from a member of the jacobin intelligentsia to potentially dangerous 'ultra-radical'. Wollstonecraft's *Historical and Moral View of the Origins and Progress of the French Revolution* argued that nothing hindered 'man' from 'new-modelling' 'at each epoch of civilization'. Thus she retained her belief in perfectability beyond the horrors of revolution; despite her reservations about the same she never fell back on the nationalistic Enlightenment construction of English 'polite' society as further down the road of human progress.

Barbara Taylor ends her biography of Wollstonecraft with a quite moving restatement of her enduring importance: 'However distant her ideas and imaginings may be from feminist thinking of the present...Mary Wollstonecraft remains as vital and necessary a presence today as she was in the 1790s'. Taylor's biography is primarily interested in those 'ideas' (in her political thought) and 'imaginings' (in her fiction). The facts of Wollstonecraft's life are here, as are the emotional milestones that made her the frustrated and passionate person she was. Her father's brutality to her mother and her destructive affair with Gilbert Imlay figure, but this is not a factual life narrative or even a psychoanalytical profile; it is an intellectual profile that is both lucid and convincing. Taylor's biography of Wollstonecraft is, quite simply, the best book I've read in a long time.

## Conferences/Calls for Papers

Please note that conference announcements and calls for papers are regularly updated at  
[www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org)

### *Call for Papers*

**West of England and South Wales WHN  
 11th Annual Conference - June 25, 2005, Glamorgan  
 Women, Faith and Spirituality**

*Deadline for Proposals: March 25, 2005*

The West of England and South Wales WHN is holding its eleventh annual conference at the University of Glamorgan on Saturday, June 25th 2005. Individual papers or panels are invited from academics, postgraduate students and independent scholars. We encourage submissions on a wide range of themes related to women, faith and spirituality in any place or period. All papers must have some historical context and content.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent to Ursula Masson or Fiona Reid at: School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd CF37 1DL. Email: [umasson@glam.ac.uk](mailto:umasson@glam.ac.uk) or [friedl@glam.ac.uk](mailto:friedl@glam.ac.uk)

The deadline for submission of abstracts is Friday 25th March 2005. When submitting your abstract, please provide your name, preferred mailing address, email address and telephone number.

### *Call for Papers*

**Sixth European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC)**

**Amsterdam, the Netherlands - March 22-25, 2006**

*Deadline for Proposals: May 1, 2005*

An important part of Social Science History lies in the areas of Women's and Gender History. We are looking for papers in these areas with a focus on the methods of the social sciences as explanations for historical phenomena. The topics and historical periods for presentations are open, as the conference is organized into many small groups within larger networks rather than into large and formal plenary sessions. Proposals for papers and pre-registration are due by May 1, 2005.

Further information about the ESSHC, as well as information about where to send abstracts for consideration and pre-registration can be obtained from the conference website at <http://www.iisg.nl/esshc> Or from the Conference Secretariat: ESSHC, c/o International Institute of Social History, Cruquiusweg 31, 1019 AT Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 20 6685866 Fax: +31 20 6654181 Email: [esshc@iisg.nl](mailto:esshc@iisg.nl)

### *Conference*

**Midlands WHN**

**Women, Health and Medicine in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

May 14 2005, University College, Worcester

The Midlands Women's History Network holds two conference mornings a year at University College Worcester. On May 14th 2005 the topic for discussion will be Women, Health and Medicine in the 19th and 20th centuries. For further information please contact Sue Johnson, Humanities, University College Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ. Email: [s.johnson@worc.ac.uk](mailto:s.johnson@worc.ac.uk)

## Conference

### **The Gentler Sex: Responses of the Women's Movement to the First World War 1914-19**

September 8-9 2005 - **Institute of German and Romance Studies**, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

The First World War marked a crisis for the burgeoning women's movements in Europe and in the United States. The outbreak of the war forced those active in the women's movement to make a choice between supporting their own country in a time of crisis or remaining true to the dominant vision of the natural pacifism and international sisterhood of all women. This two-day conference aims to bring together scholars with an interest in gender and the First World War, working in the fields of feminist/gender studies, women's history and women's writing, to explore from an international and interdisciplinary perspective the impact of war on early feminist thought and activism.

Papers will examine women's writings produced during the war and its immediate aftermath by women active in the women's movements. Topics will include discussions and conflict over the interpretation of a specifically womanly response to war, women's relationship with state and nation, the reality and status of women's wartime service (nursing, charity work, munitions and factory work, women taking on men's work); women's role as mothers in wartime; sexuality; attitudes to peace and war; guilt and responsibility.

The conference will be held at the IGRS in London on Thursday, 8th and Friday 9th September 2005. The organisers will bring out a volume of selected essays, either as a book or as a special issue of a suitable journal, soon after the conference has been held. The focus of this volume will be on writing produced by women active in the women's movement in the various countries during the period 1914-1919, although we could include diaries, letters and other material published at a later date. By bringing together contributions from scholars working on women from different combatant nations as well as those who offer a comparative approach, we hope to make a distinctive and worthwhile contribution to this area of studies.

For further information, please contact Ms Ingrid Sharp, Department of German, University of Leeds, email [i.e.sharp@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:i.e.sharp@leeds.ac.uk) or Dr Alison Fell, Department of European Languages and Culture, University of Lancaster, email: [a.s.fell@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:a.s.fell@lancaster.ac.uk)

## International Public History Conference **'People and their Pasts'**

Ruskin College, Oxford, UK, Friday – Saturday  
September 16th—17th 2005

### Speakers include:

Paul Ashton: co-director 'Australians & the past' project, University of Technology, Sydney.

Bronwyn Dalley: chief historian, New Zealand Ministry for Culture & Heritage.

Lawrence Goldman: director of the New Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford.

Darryl MacIntyre: group director Museum of London, formerly of National Museum, Canberra.

Patrick Wright: writer and broadcaster.

Papers, presentations, displays, contributions and interactive workshop sessions are invited on the broad theme of people and their pasts. Topics contributors are invited to consider include:

The relationship between personal, local and national histories.

Forms of radical /popular history.

The relationship between the ways in which the past is both presented for people and people's own practices & sense of the past.

The role of art, memorials and buildings in creating particular histories.

Recent developments in education, museums and television.

These themes are not intended to be restrictive- we positively welcome contributions crossing subject boundaries /forms of understanding of the past.

Please provide an abstract of c.100 words and contact one of the following organisers with your proposal by **April 8<sup>th</sup>** at the latest. Please feel free to contact us for initial discussion on your proposal:

Phil Coward WEA organiser (particularly for community history) [pcoward@wea.org.uk](mailto:pcoward@wea.org.uk)

Hilda Kean (particularly for family history or the visual) [hkean@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:hkean@ruskin.ac.uk)

Paul Martin Museum Studies, Leicester University & Ruskin (particularly for museums / collecting) [paul@mardel.free-online.co.uk](mailto:paul@mardel.free-online.co.uk)

Steve Mills American Studies, Keele University (particularly for landscape/ commemoration) [s.f.mills@ams.keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.f.mills@ams.keele.ac.uk)

Ron Noon Social Sciences School, Liverpool John Moores (particularly for popular / radical history) [r.p.noon@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:r.p.noon@livjm.ac.uk)

Martin Spafford, History teacher in an East London school (particularly for education) [martinspaff@ntlworld.com](mailto:martinspaff@ntlworld.com)

Melanie Tebbutt History Department Manchester Metropolitan University (particularly for local history/landscape) [m.tebbutt@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:m.tebbutt@mmu.ac.uk)

General enquiries to - Hilda Kean, Course Director MA in Public History, Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford, OX1 2HE. Email: [hkean@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:hkean@ruskin.ac.uk)

---

**Gendering Education in the Archives  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Saturday, 25 June 2005**

A one day symposium for historians and archivists interested in working in the field of gender and education in any period. It will provide a unique opportunity to discuss current research themes and issues around the use and preservation of education archives. This symposium builds on the initiative supported by the History of Education Society to foster dialogue between representatives of the archival and historical professions, record creators and postgraduate researchers.

Plenary Speakers: **Professor Carol Dyhouse, University of Sussex**  
**Dr Christine Joy, Manchester High School for Girls**

For Further information please contact:

Dr Nicola Pullin  
Gendering Education in the Archives Conference  
Bedford Centre for the History of Women  
Royal Holloway,  
University of London  
Egham,  
TW20 0EX  
[Nicola.pullin@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Nicola.pullin@rhul.ac.uk)

Organised in conjunction with:



The History of Education Society



The Centre for the History of Women's Education,

**Feminist & Women's Studies Association  
(UK & Ireland)  
18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
King's College, University of Aberdeen  
Scotland**

**9-11 September 2005**

**Call for Papers**

**GENDER AND VIOLENCE:  
An Interdisciplinary Exploration**

This conference aims to explore male and female violence, and the complex relations between reality and representation, in a variety of practices, fields and discourses. It will provide an opportunity to investigate the many forms in which 'violence' has been expressed historically and continues to be expressed globally, and the role that gender plays in all those manifestations. In addition to inviting papers from all disciplines, we particularly welcome papers which are interdisciplinary in approach. Contributions from activists as well as academics are most welcome.

**Conference themes will include:**

Domestic Violence—Sexual Violence—Medical perspectives—Pornography—Cross-cultural practices—Female Genital Mutilation—Historical Perspectives—Gender and Terrorism—Women and War—Violent Offenders—Legal/political initiatives on sexual/domestic violence—Cultural/media representations of violence—Cosmetic surgery and body modification

Confirmed plenary speakers are:

**Vera Baird, Q.C., M.P.**  
**Haleh Afshar (University of York)**  
**Sharon Olds, American poet and writer**

**Abstracts** (250 words including title of paper) and short biographical details should be submitted to Dr. Jeannette King, School of Language and Literature, King's College, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen AB24 3FG by **30 April 2005** Email: [j.m.king@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.king@abdn.ac.uk)

Further details and registration forms are available from the Conference Administrator, Dr Joyce Walker, Email: [j.a.walker@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.walker@abdn.ac.uk)

**'Sisters are doing it for themselves'  
Women and Informal Port Economies**

Liverpool, 24th - 25th June 2005

A two-day conference to be held jointly at the School of History, University of Liverpool, and Merseyside Maritime Museum.

Ports present a particular economic situation for women. Many of the economic opportunities available for women are casual, informal or otherwise hidden from history. In many port cities much of the adult male workforce may be absent for protracted periods of time, leaving women to fend for themselves and their families. At the same time, the high influx of sailors, visitors, and pleasure-seekers present many opportunities for women in the service industries.

This conference will examine the ways in which women were both affected by, and contributed to, the port economy. Themes might include: the port economy, casualism, types of work and occupations, politics and protest, ethnicity, race, networking, the family, crime and leisure. Workshop and poster sessions will complement the formal papers.

Contact: Dr Sari Mäenpää (smaenpaa@liv.ac.uk) or Dr Sheryllynne Haggerty (sheryllynne@ntlworld.com)  
School of History, University of Liverpool, 9  
Abercromby Square, Liverpool, Merseyside L69 3BX.

---

**The West of England and South Wales WHN  
Eleventh Annual Conference - June 25th 2005**

**Women, Faith and Spirituality**

The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network is holding its eleventh annual conference at the University of Glamorgan on Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2005.

**Further details available from: Ursula Masson or Fiona Reid at: School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, CF37 1DL**  
**e-mail: umasson@glam.ac.uk or freid1@glam.co.uk**

**Call For Papers**

**The Sexuality Network of the European Social Science History Conference**

22 - 25 March 2006      Amsterdam      Deadline: 1 May 2005

Papers on the history of sexuality are invited for inclusion in the Sexuality Network programme of panels at the sixth ESSHC. Papers and panels on all historical periods are welcome, including full panels (3 papers, 1 discussant, 1 chair) as well as offers of individual papers.

The Network's interests include but are not limited to: Sexual activity in historical context; the formation of sexual identities; sexuality and marriage; individual sexuality; fertility and sexuality; sexual subcultures; geographies of sexuality; prostitution; sexually transmitted disease; HIV/AIDS and sexuality; representations of sexuality; the medicalization of sexualities; sex education; moral reform movements; legal regulation of sexuality; sexual violence; globalization and sexuality; historiographical and theoretical approaches to sexuality.

We are particularly interested in encouraging proposals on histories of sexualities and their intersection with themes such as ethics, the body, gender, medicine, space and geographies, nationality, ethnicity, post-colonialism, or globalisation. Papers on methodological questions in the history of sexualities, and papers on problems of historiography in the history of sexualities, are also strongly encouraged.

Panel and paper proposers must pre-register at the conference website in order for their offers to be considered: <http://www.iisg.nl/esshc/index.html>  
Information about the conference fees and conditions are also available at this site. The deadline for pre-registration is **May 1, 2005**.

Contacts for further information about the Sexuality Network: Geertje Mak, [Geertje.mak@hetnet.nl](mailto:Geertje.mak@hetnet.nl) or Dan Healey, [D.healey@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:D.healey@swansea.ac.uk)

---

Full details of the Women's History Network's 14th Annual Conference, to be held in Southampton from

## CLARE EVANS PRIZE for a new essay in the field of GENDER AND HISTORY

In memory of Dr Clare Evans, a national prize worth £250 is awarded annually for an original essay in the field of women's history or gender and history. The essays will be considered by a panel of judges set up by the Women's History Network and the Trustees of the Clare Evans Memorial Fund. The closing date is **31 May 2005** and the prize will be presented by Clare's daughter at the Women's History Network Annual Conference at Southampton in September.



Clare Evans was an outstanding woman who tragically died of cervical cancer on 30 November 1997, aged 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. By examining census material gathered by Quakers, Clare saw how the changing attitudes to women's participation in the workplace were revealed through the responses to major subsistence crises in the early to mid-nineteenth century. As part of this work, Clare showed how men were constructed as sole wage-earners yet women offered sewing schools to create a new Victorian model following mass unemployment in the cotton mills (a result of the American Civil War). Focusing on textile workers in the Nelson and Colne districts of Lancashire, she uncovered the reality of women's lives to free them from contemporary ideas as dependents within family wage ideology. 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,
- c) normally resident in the UK.

The article should be in English, 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. It is anticipated that the winning essay will be published in the *Women's History Review* (subject to the normal refereeing criteria). The completed essay should be sent to Ann Hughes by **31 May 2005**. 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 e-mail, or write for further details to, Ann Hughes ([hia21@keele.ac.uk](mailto:hia21@keele.ac.uk)) Department of History and Classics, University of Keele, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG.

## Committee News

A busy agenda was scheduled for the last meeting of the steering committee held on January 22nd 2005 at the Institute of Historical Research, on Malet Street in London. We were saddened that one of our committee members, Yvonne Brown, has decided to step down as her maternity leave comes to an end. Thanks for all your hard work, Yvonne, you will be missed. We are pleased to welcome Jean Spence to the committee, who steps up to take Yvonne's place. For those of you who do not know Jean, she is lecturer in community and youth work in the School of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Durham.

One of the main issues discussed was the need to maximise our income: although WHN membership is very healthy, our income from subscriptions has been falling, largely because many of our members pay the lower rate. We would therefore ask long-standing members to check the rate they are currently paying and ensure that it is still the correct one. This is especially important if you pay by direct debit - it's easy to forget when your circumstances change and you become eligible for the full rate! If you find the rate you're paying is incorrect, please complete a new banker's order form (on the back page of the magazine, along with details of membership rates) and return it to your bank. Don't forget to cancel your old standing order with your bank!

The committee was disappointed that there did not seem to be any women's history on the agenda at the February 2005 conference on 'History in British Education', organised by the Institute of Historical Research, the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association. A letter has been written to the organisers and we have begun a dialogue, in the hope that this omission will not be repeated in the future. However, we were encouraged that one of the papers given at this event did mention the WHN for the work it does in promoting women's history in schools.

The committee was also concerned about the proposed ranking of journals in order of importance, which comprises part of the current AHRB exercise. Fearing that journals featuring women's history will be marginalized, we have written a letter expressing our concern that such a ranking system is likely to produce long queues as scholars compete to place work in the narrow list of journals selected. Other good journals, which at present publish useful and interesting work, will be denied 'top' ranking and are likely to

experience difficulties as a consequence. At this stage, it is unclear whether the AHRB is going to abandon this plan or not.

The next meeting of the committee will be held at the IHR on Saturday April 16th 2005 at noon. All WHN members are very welcome to attend – if you intend to come along, please email [enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org) first, just to ensure that there have been no last minute changes.

### Susie Innes 1948—2005

As some readers may know, Susie died suddenly in her sleep on Thursday 24 February.

A member of the Women's History Network Committee, and vice-convenor of the Scottish Women's History Network when illness struck, Susie was also heavily involved in co-editing the *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*.

A fuller appreciation will follow in the Summer issue of the Women's History Magazine.

### PLEASE NOTE

**WHN Regional Organisers** can request current and back numbers of this magazine to sell at conferences. I have copies of most of the issues since the revamped magazine started with Issue 40 in February 2002. Issues cost £4 each, and are sent out to you on a sale or return basis. I also have available some Women's History Network T-shirts, in a range of sizes, in black or white cotton, and these can also be sent to you. They retail at £10 each.

Please contact Joyce Walker by e-mail: [admin@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:admin@womenshistorynetwork.org)

or c/o History Dept., University of Aberdeen, Crombie Annexe, Meston Walk, Old Aberdeen AB24 3FX.

## **FUTURE MAGAZINE ISSUES**

The Women's History Magazine is published three times a year:

**SPRING; SUMMER; AUTUMN**

From time to time we issue a call for papers for themed issues but, in practice, we will accept articles at any time.

These should be prepared and submitted as per instructions on the Women's History Network website:

[www.womenshistorynetwork.org](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org)

All articles are sent for peer review, so authors should allow time for this process—which can be lengthy.

**Authors must include their name, affiliation and email address on their papers**

## **PUBLICITY**

### **Our Publicity Officer**

**Claire Jones**

can be contacted by email:

[enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org)

or at 7 Penkett Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 7QE

She provides an invaluable service in publicising conferences, arranging media coverage of events, etc.. and should be contacted immediately such services are required.

## **WHN CONTACTS**

To submit articles or news for the WHN magazine, please contact any of the editors at the addresses below:

**Deborah Simonton**, Department of English and Danish, University of Southern Denmark, Engstein 1, 6000 Kolding, Denmark. Email: [dsimonton@language.sdu.dk](mailto:dsimonton@language.sdu.dk)

**Nicola Pullin**, Dept. of History, Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX  
Email: [Nicola.Pullin@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Nicola.Pullin@rhul.ac.uk)

**Claire Jones**, 7 Penkett Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 7QE.  
Email: [enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org)

For book reviews, please contact **Jane Potter**, Wolfson College, Oxford, OX2 6UD.  
Email: [bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org)

**To update contact details, or for any membership inquiries (including subscriptions), please contact Fiona Reid, at the following address: HLAASS, University of Glamorgan, Trefforest, Wales, CF37 1DL.**  
Email: [membership@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:membership@womenshistorynetwork.org) or [fried1@glam.ac.uk](mailto:fried1@glam.ac.uk)

### What is the Women's History Network?

The WHN was founded in July 1991. It is a national association 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
5. To establish a database of the research, teaching and study-interests of the members and other related organisations and individuals

### What does the WHN do?

#### Annual Conference

Each year the WHN holds a national conference for WHN members and other. The conference provides everyone interested in women's history with a chance to meet and 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 *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	£10	Overseas minimum	£30
Low income (*under £16,000 pa)	£15	UK Institutions	£35
High income	£30	Institutions overseas	£40

### Membership Application

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)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (work): \_\_\_\_\_

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 **Fiona Reid, at: HLASS, University of Glamorgan, Trefforest, Wales, CF37 1DL. Email: [membership@womenshistorynetwork.org](mailto:membership@womenshistorynetwork.org) or [freid1@glam.ac.uk](mailto:freid1@glam.ac.uk)**

Banker's Order

To (bank) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Account no.: \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_ 200\_, and annually thereafter, on 1 September, the sum of

(in figures) £ \_\_\_\_\_ (in words) \_\_\_\_\_.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_