Women's History MAGAZINE

ISSUE 47, SUMMER 2004
ISSN 1476-6760

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13th Annual Conference

WOMEN, WEALTH AND POWER

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PLENARY PAPERS

Amy Erickson~ 'Possession and the other one-tenth of the law'

Hilda Smith~ 'Women intellectuals and intellectual history: their paradigmatic separation'

For full details of all papers accepted, and a provisional Conference timetable, please go to:

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Administrator:
Dr. Joyce A. Walker (Women's History Network) , Department of History, University of Aberdeen, Crombie Annexe, Meston Walk, Old Aberdeen, AB24 3FX
E-mail: admin@womenshistorynetwork.org

It's summer, and most of the journalists are turning to thoughts of 'lazy days'. However, I don't know many women's historians who even know what the words mean. Summer seems to be the time everyone is trying to do what they hoped they could do all autumn, winter and spring. Perhaps, however, this issue will give you a break, and a chance to think more widely and holistically about women's history. It is the first of several themed issues, and focuses on writing and presenting women's history. All the articles were drawn from the Aberdeen Conference, *Contested Terrains*, and address a problem that many of us face: how to understand women's past in the context of national, political and gendered agendas. Myrtle Hill writes on the problems of writing Irish women's history in the context of not only a fraught political struggle, but against shifting definitions and geographies of the Irish. Wu Na uses the depiction of women in historical Chinese films to explore how women have been portrayed, how their stories have been reinscribed, and the dogmatic limitations that still remain in telling women's stories. Sarah Dangelas and Linda Brigance both address issues of museums and sites of history in exploring how women are reinserted into the American past and the challenges and limitations that infuse this process. Saara Tuomaala picks up many of these threads in reporting on a dual edged historiographical project in Finland to understand women's ex/inclusion from the historical canon as students and writers of history.

The next few issues of the Women's History Magazine will also largely draw on the Aberdeen conference, due to the wealth of submissions that we received. It has given us a real chance to plan ahead, and further details are on the inside back cover. Obviously, however, we still want new submissions, and are pleased to have seen the breadth of topics that have found their way into the editorial box lately. The Magazine is peer reviewed, so there will always be a delay in getting back to authors as we send out and retrieve articles; we do attempt to move as swiftly as we can. Like all WHN committee members, we are volunteers.

This is my lead-in to asking for more volunteers: we would like to hear from people interested in two areas of the work. Related to the magazine, with the growth in submissions, it would be helpful if we had contact details of people prepared to read and comment on submissions. Simply a note to Claire Jones (back page) with your contact details and areas of 'expertise' would be helpful.

The committee also needs volunteers. Each year committee members stand down, as per the constitution, so we always need new blood (or recycled blood, if you will forgive the term). If you are interested, there is more information on the committee page at the back. It is a good experience, and a fine way to feel really networked.

The programme for the 2004 conference *Women, Wealth and Power* at Hull is now available on the website. By the time you receive this, the registration will be closed for residential bookings, but if you haven't yet organised yourself, do contact Judith or Amanda (A.L.Capern@hull.ac.uk or J.M.Spicksley@hull.ac.uk). Hope to see you there.

The WHN's Editorial Team:
Claire Jones, Jane Potter, Niki Pullin and Debbi Simonton

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Reflecting on Re-Presentations: Writing the History of 20th Century Irishwomen

Myrtle Hill

Queen's University Belfast

As historians, and particularly as historians of the lives of women, we are constantly challenged by the demands of our profession. Our attempts to reconstruct and interpret the past necessitate constant, rigorous and detailed analysis of the power inherent in both past and present discourses.[1] Having recently completed a book on women's lives in twentieth-century Ireland, I would like to share some reflections on the process of researching and writing on this topic.[2] Like most forms of knowledge, history has been subject to critical scrutiny in recent decades, with both feminism and post-modernism promoting epistemological and contextual interrogation of traditional sources, narratives and methodologies.[3] Nonetheless, in a work which was to a large extent a synthesis of other writings, the intricate relationship between the past being researched and the constantly shifting perspectives of the present struck me with renewed force. For example, I had not fully realized the extent to which the feminist agenda had produced a historiography that favoured the champions of 'popular' causes, so that, in attempting a comprehensive overview of women's experience, it was difficult to locate the conservative, the anti-feminist or the extreme right wing. This bias is not totally explained by the availability of sources. As Himani Bannerji puts it,

> the historian's ideological knowledge frameworks, her chosen focus of re-presentation, may or may not permit certain presences and visibilities. The projects of recovery, of rendering visible, may continue to produce and reinforce conceptual practices of power.[4]

While there are clear signs that feminist history is now moving in a more challenging and inclusive direction,[5] it is worth pausing to consider some unresolved issues at this stage of its evolution. Of course, many of the original problems highlighted by feminist historians are still perpetuated in mainstream accounts, and I found clear evidence of omissions, marginalisations and misrepresentations. One of the most interesting examples of the latter was the way in which, during different periods of conflict throughout the century, female advocates of physical force were either romanticized or demonized in both contemporary and historical discourse. A further, in many ways, deeply personal challenge, was to find an appropriate narrative voice with which to speak about recent, much-disputed, historical events. This paper comprises some thoughts on these and other issues raised by my recent study, but which have wider significance for the discipline of women's — and of Irish — history.

One of the first problems I faced was that of structure – how to talk about the experience of women on an island which was politically divided for much of the century. Several factors were important here. Firstly, academic writing about the island of Ireland, whether historical or sociological, often refers glibly to 'Ireland' while ignoring the sociological, political, economic, or above all administrative variations which impact on life in the separate Northern Ireland jurisdiction, resulting in a story which is skewed and full of unacknowledged gaps. For, whatever one's attitude to the formation of the six counties into a constitutional entity, its political, welfare and legal systems are different to those in the Republic and must be acknowledged as such. Making sure that Northern Ireland wasn't ignored, undermentioned or just bolted on (like they used to bolt on an extra lecture on women in Politics or History), was not easy, and indeed the balance may not be perfectly achieved, but there were real advantages to this concurrent approach.[6] Most significantly, despite the different constitutional and economic contexts, it became clear that there were many similarities in the experiences of women on either side of the border. For the purposes of this paper I will mention only one. Much has been made in recent decades of the oppressive nature of the Irish Catholic Church, particularly in the area of sexuality. Less often articulated is the negative impact on northern women of the dominant evangelical Protestant ethos, which was so socially and culturally pervasive. In discussing issues of sexual freedom and identity, contraception and abortion on the island as a whole, it was evident that women on each side of the border were constrained by a conservative religious discourse which, whether or not it was written into the constitution, proved stubbornly resistant to feminist pressure. A structure, which, where possible, embraced both jurisdictions, facilitated many similarly revealing comparisons.

That said, it very quickly became apparent that the uneven and contradictory advances in women's lives and aspirations over the course of the century, and the hierarchies and divisions between women themselves, clearly defied any attempt at a simplistic analytical

overview. Women's experiences were shaped by a multiplicity of factors – age, class, locality, religion and so forth. They prioritized different goals at different stages of their lives, and employed an impressive range of strategies to achieve those goals. Multiple identities and conflicting loyalties reflect both the complexity of reality and the pitfalls and dangers of historical reconstruction. In the early stages of my work I found the observations of Canadian feminist historian Micheline Dumont particularly relevant. 'Historians', she noted, 'take pride in putting reality in order by emphasizing only the important facts, when of course historical truth is a discourse on the complexities of reality and therefore is, indeed should be, disorderly and messy'.[7] Try reasoning that with a publisher anxious to see your structure, outline and chapter headings!

There is, of course, a serious issue here – who decides which 'facts' are important? How do we separate out interlocking strands to decide which of the multiple dimensions of identity we wish to prioritize? How much of reconstruction could be considered construction? Many of our decisions are based on the availability of sources, and we thus always risk reinforcing gaps in the narrative. We rely heavily on stories already told, and as such the role of the media and of past historians, as well as contemporary players and observers, are critical. From what are, at best, incomplete, at times unreliable, records, we then select, prioritize and interpret events according to our particular remit – and that remit itself often has a role to play, impacting on the story we tell. For example, much of the writing of Irish women's history during the second half of the twentieth century was influenced by the dominant concerns of *that* time – nationalism and feminism. This is not surprising. As Mary Cullen has commented, 'changes in women's history did not just happen. They grew directly from the current feminist movement'.[8] Thus much of the history of women's experience which emerged, while fascinating and illuminating, was unbalanced – the nationalist, unionist, masculinist, feminist players often politically constructed from a twentieth-century standpoint**.** Biographies of suffragists, nationalists and pioneers of women's rights abound, and the stories of victims of patriarchy – prostitutes, wives and workers, have been recovered and reassessed. Only relatively recently have women's domestic, religious and welfare roles been presented in more affirmative ways. Catriona Clear, for example, in warning of the dangers of assessing the past by the criteria of the present, offers a positive re-interpretation of women's lives in the home, whether in rural or urban Ireland. Clear argues that the realities and aspirations of their experiences, as revealed through interviews and a wide-ranging survey of the literature, are not consistent with the historical focus on an oppressive 'domestic ideology'. While acknowledging the hostility to women expressed in much of the public discourse, Clear presents persuasive evidence that many women found their domestic tasks satisfying and fulfilling. With a majority of women, past and present, situated in the home where they are carers, mothers, and workers of all kinds, it is hard to disagree with her conclusion that 'the women whose 'duties' made and remade daily life over several generations deserve to be seen in all their complexity'.[9]

Moreover**,** writing in 1997 Mary Daly commented that, 'until relatively recently, Irish women's history has usually been analyzed from a perspective that has led to an excessive emphasis on the uniqueness of the Irish experience'.[10] As she suggests, the more recent advent of comparative and contextualizing studies reflect the growing sophistication of the discipline. But some areas remain under-researched. In comparison to British and European historiography, for example, I found very little analysis of the part played by Irish women in, or the impact of Irishwomen on, the major political ideologies of inter-war Europe, despite some intriguing allusions to the Irish experience.[11]

In 1930s Ireland, right-wing ideologies were expressed by a coalition of forces alarmed by recent government policies, such as the release of IRA prisoners and the economic war with Britain. While Fearghal McGarry is probably right to argue that Eoin O'Duffy's national Guard – the Blueshirts – had more to do with internal Irish politics than with wider fascist movements, these marching columns of disciplined, uniformed men certainly suggest parallels.[12] As with fascist movements elsewhere, the Blueshirts proved attractive to Irish women, making up around 25 per cent of the overall membership. It has been asserted that these — mostly unmarried — 'blue blouses' were merely following the party political preferences of their parents, however, I would hesitate to dismiss their personal political allegiance. While it is difficult to find out precisely what their motivations were, the attraction of these political ideologies throughout much of Europe at this time is undoubted, and Irish women's participation should be explored in this wider context.[13] As in Hitler's Germany, Fianna Fail policies also restricted women's economic role, and it was not difficult to see in contemporary Ireland a 'backlash against the modern woman and an emphasis on conservative social values fostered by an alliance between the Catholic Church and fast spreading fascism'.[14] Certainly, the Irish Women Workers' Union saw it like that and warned of the possible consequences of the spread of fascism, particularly for women, warning that,

> Women in the Fascist State have no status, no rights, no powers. Wherever possible their work

> is taken from them and their places given to men. They must marry and breed sons to become soldiers. They must learn 'how to buy more food on less wages'. (In Italy women working in the fields earn 2 1/2d an hour). The Fascists have no use for women except for washing dishes and nursing children.

They went on to argue that 'the Fascist attitude towards women is growing in Ireland. Already there is talk of reserving for men jobs where the women have a fair wage and leaving only 2 1/2d jobs for women'.[15]

In the North too, fascism had its supporters, although a letter from the District Officer of the Ulster Women's Units of British Fascists in 1927 had admonished local women for their lack of enthusiasm, declaring that 'women fascists are necessary everywhere and Ulster is not being so energetic in forming new branches as she should be'.[16] In Kilkeel, County Down, Dorothy Harnett led a section of the British Fascists, not associated with Moseley, but combining extreme loyalism with fascist ideology.[17] Lady Londonderry, like many aristocrats of the period, believed Hitler to be 'the friend of Europe'. Having twice spent time on the European continent during which she met and talked with the Führer, she published her opinions in an article for the *Anglo-German Review* in 1938:

> I have never heard anything approach the acclamation, which he received. Seeing a man thus idolized by the masses, the living symbol to them of a resurrected and united nation, I felt myself in the presence of a born leader. I am quite convinced now that he stands for peace. The last thing Germany wants is another war. Herr Hitler by his efforts saved Germany from Communism. By his example he may well be called upon to save Europe. That he is the genuine friend of Europe I have no doubt.[18]

Such optimism would, of course, proved short-lived and subsequent events pushed fascism well into the realms of the unacceptable – and in some cases, out of the historical record. But Salma Leydesdorff, discussing the issue of identification with historical subjects, urges us to reintroduce into the picture 'those elements which conjure up unpleasant feelings and are therefore in danger of being forgotten or omitted. Such a project would focus on the difficulties and contradictions as well as the triumphs of women, placing them firmly in the context of their own time'.[19]

There are more recent examples of historical bias against 'unpopular' ideological or political positions. One sociologist commented on how students researching the conflict in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s appeared to find Catholics 'more sympathetic, more fashionable and more interesting subjects of study than their Protestant counterparts.'[20] - a bias which has, until very recently, left those living in loyalist and unionist communities, increasingly vulnerable in a changing political and economic scenario, with only a fragmented and superficial recorded history. It is not surprising that Protestant women, already marginalized in conservative patriarchal communities, face particular problems with both popular and academic (mis)representations of their experiences. One woman described how, arriving as an undergraduate student at the University of Kent in the 1970s, she felt herself to be 'falling through the net in my new enlightened environment, where Ulster Unionists were regarded as *Sun*-reading Ayatollahs'.[21] Ruth Moore, from Fermanagh, discussing the need to transcend sectarianism and the imposition of a one-size-fits-all identity described how, as a Protestant woman, she experienced her identity as 'other to English women and the English state, other to Catholic women and Catholic domination in Ireland as a whole, and other to protestant men in Northern Ireland'.[22] Whether within or outside their home country, women in the north (like men) are positioned within one or other of the two dominant discourses, with no acknowledgment of either the multiple facets or the instability of identity which shape their experiences.

While women's role in left-wing movements has been given more attention, this is not so true of Irish Communism which remains under-researched both north and south. Although sectarian strife and the issue of partition generally weakened the labour movement in Northern Ireland, the troubled thirties did give an impetus to more extreme left-wing movements. Sadie Menzies, founding member of the Revolutionary Workers' Group and Communist Party of Ireland, recalls that about thirty members of the communist party in east Belfast busied themselves in raising money for the republicans in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Edwina Stewart, whose parents were also involved, noted that party members were mostly from the Protestant section of the working class, although her own parents were atheists. The Soviet Union, of course, provided the supreme example of workers' solidarity and many women, north and south of the border, spent time there as delegates and observers. Charlotte Despard, secretary of the Friends of Soviet Russia, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Sheila Downing, Helena Moloney, and others, made an extensive tour of the Soviet Union in 1930, and were deeply influenced by all they saw. Sadie Menzies spent a month there, while Betty Sinclair attended the Lenin School in Moscow for eighteen months.[23] Rosamund Jacob's diary of her visit to the Soviet Union in 1931 contains fairly typical sentiments:

> We have seen with what joy we cannot here express, the freedom of women in the USSR from the economic dependence and its accompanying sense of inferiority which keeps them down in capitalist countries … [24]

While women in the Irish Communist Party were small in number, their influence, particularly in the North, appears to have endured through the political twists and turns of the second half of the twentieth century. There are clear links, for example, particularly in terms of overlapping membership, between the Communist and Civil Rights movements, the 1970s Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement and the Women's Coalition Party formed in 1997. With allegiance to Communism always subject to harsh criticism from mainstream politics, it's not surprising that many choose to drop that particular label as they advance through their political careers, but the tensions/relationships/interactions of these various ideologies do need to be teased out. As in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a relatively small number of individual women made significant contributions to both feminist and national political discourse, with both their activism and their ideologies either marginalized, misrepresented or undermined in mainstream histories.

In contrast to those motivated by ideological fervour during the 1930s, a group of women from counties Tyrone and Derry took to the streets in the early 1960s in direct response to discriminatory housing policies which impacted on their daily lives as housewives and mothers. In May 1963, a group of forty young Catholic housewives in Dungannon challenged their local council with a petition and later took their protest onto the streets. The angry, pram-pushing women were given a significant degree of media coverage and their actions encouraged others to become involved in local politics, ensuring that women were also very much to the forefront in the subsequent formation of the Homeless Citizens League and the Campaign for Social Justice.[25] However, these women are mostly absent from the official records and mainstream histories of this turning point in Irish social and political history. Why?

The American historian Kathryn Nasstrom points out that women were often the pioneers who paved the way for actions that brought male leaders to prominence – her own work demonstrates for example how the black civil rights movement in Chicago was 'male-led' but 'women-organized'. She argues that while organizing is an important cultural movement in its own right, it is an activity too often overlooked because it lacks formal authority. I found many parallels with Northern Ireland in her discussion of the relationship between individual women and their community, 'working as they did at the juncture between the leaders and the led, their actions blurred the distinctions between them'.[26] Significantly,

> 'These women did not see themselves as feminists, did not see themselves as fighting any great battles, but fighting a very practical, day-to-day battle'…. They were ordinary people whose names were not known….[27]

Nonetheless, as Catherine Shannon points out, these women played 'a significant role in heightening the Catholic sense of grievance and in preparing large segments of the northern Catholic community to move beyond personal and local grievances to embrace the broader political ideology of civil rights'.[28] Once that civil rights agenda became part of mainstream political debate (male-dominated), it is not surprising that it was the men such as John Hume and Austin Currie, who carried it forward, who became acknowledged leaders. The women who brought the issue onto the streets were caught up in larger stories, in which they were important agents, but from which their experiences were all too often omitted or appropriated. In explaining this, Nasstrom also draws attention to the consequences of how the evolving story of civil rights was disseminated and analyzed – by the popular media and by scholars who had their own agenda and their own preconceptions of what was and what was not significant. This is central to the concerns of this paper – how stories and histories come to be told, the complexities of the process of remembering and reconstructing. And indeed, the role of the media in shaping both contemporary and historical opinion merits attention, particularly in relation to women engaged in actions of politically motivated physical violence.

Women's role during the militant republican campaigns of the early twentieth century has lately been the subject of much feminist analysis, with not only their actions, but the popular images and representations they provoked, coming under close scrutiny.[29] For example, Louise Ryan points out that during the 1916 Rising, the mockery of Countess Markievicz by the popular press completely undermined not only her personal contribution, but also the serious nature of the rebellion itself.[30] Similarly, during both the War of Independence and the Civil War, revolutionary women were portrayed in the negative, hysterical press as unnatural, dangerous girls, 'die-hards', 'whose ecstasies at their extremest can find no outlet so satisfying as destruction'. President Cosgrove argued that female rebels 'should have rosaries in their hands or be at home with knitting needles'.[31] Stepping outside the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour, militant women of every generation face similarly gendered discourse, confirming that, in Ireland as elsewhere, 'war

is a highly gendered experience which is both informed by and informs constructions of masculinity and femininity'.[32]

Thus, during the more recent conflict, the media responded with predictable outrage to the 'frightening cult of the violent women', labeling them 'fanatics'.[33] Republican women prisoners held in Limerick were referred to as 'caged cats', the terror of the prison staff.[34] Secretary of State Merlyn Rees compared Maire Drumm to 'the knitting harridans of the French Revolution'.[35] Bill Rolston, discussing the depiction of women in novels about the conflict in the North since 1969, asserts that 'the explanation of women's violence is always on the emotional level'.[36] The fictional stereotypical representations that he analyses are equally applicable in the non-fictional world. The gendered treatment of women paramilitaries ignores any possibility of their 'rational and committed participation in armed struggle'. Marion Price, in a letter to her mother written in 1974 while she was on hunger strike, explained

> Of course I hate the suffering you are all going through and I would take that away if I could… I'm not being morbid but sometimes we achieve more by death than we could ever hope to living. We dedicated our lives to a cause that is supremely more important than they are.[37]

Histories of violence, whether by or against women, produce particular kinds of discourse, with marginalized and stereotypical heroines and victims portrayed as no more than a backdrop to heroic masculine militarism. The deeds of women, like those of men, require more contextualized treatment.

Moreover, and finally, if discourse analysis is important to us in terms of our understanding of the past, the significance of how we employ language – the words we use, the tone we (often unconsciously) adopt – in the histories we write, also became very clear to me. In a country whose political make-up is disputed, how a place is named – Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland/the North – is highly significant. So too is how an organization is labeled – for example, to describe a community group as 'neutral' if it is receiving state funding is unacceptable in some quarters. Descriptions of peace activists are also problematic. Peace is, after all, more than the absence of violence, and the pursuit of peace therefore must follow a political agenda, whether or not that is articulated, acknowledged, or even understood. The discussion of militant activists, particularly during the recent bloody conflict, when their activities and their consequences are within the living memory of the writer (who comes with all her own baggage) proved particularly testing: one woman's terrorist is another woman's freedom fighter. The best we can do in our historical investigation is to employ a thorough methodology and adopt a reflexive approach. Thus, to explain the complexities of motivation and aspiration of physical-force adherents, we need to access and consider the words of these individuals, as well as others, to place them in their personal, family and community context and to understand the wider political and historical mind-set in which they operate. Nonetheless, because the historian can never divorce herself from the past under study, for me the pages became a minefield as I struggled with language, tone and terminology.

Both the difficulties surrounding and the significance of the ways in which we record history are – I hope – apparent here. Women are clearly not a unified sub-group. Their experiences, in the past as in the present, were multi-layered, with overlapping allegiances to different political agendas and sometimes tenuous links between groupings – and the 'models which have been used to describe and explain their experiences' require significant reassessment.[38] In the recent history of Ireland they have too often been 'denied, stereotyped or marginalized' within mainstream accounts and analyses, while in the North they are most often portrayed as 'passive victims of the Troubles, viragoes of the barricades, advocates of a messianic peace'. As Bill Rolston points out, none of these stereotypes reveal the true situation of women living in a socially deprived, war-torn, rigidly patriarchal society.[39] Jean O'Barr puts it well, asserting that 'the realities of women's lives differ substantially from how these lives are remembered and valued in the formal systems of knowledge that constitute the curricula of schools, colleges and universities'.[40] In discussing here the complexities of reconstructing women's experiences, on an island which is itself a contested entity, I am not at all sure that a clear pattern or even series of patterns emerges. But it is surely important, as Susan Friedman argues, that 'the politics of competing histories [do] not paralyse the need to tell the stories',[41] and that, in this postmodern era, we accept that 'a working awareness of the perspectival and selective nature of history-making functions to acknowledge those lived realities, not to theorise them out of existence'.[42]

These past experiences have helped to shape the contradictions of our present dilemmas, and it is only by continually questioning and problematizing the myriad ways in which the complex realities of women's lives have been constructed and appropriated in different contexts, that we are not only able to 'hear' different

voices, ensuring the continuing vibrancy and integrity of the historical process, but to validate different responses to the pluralities and complexities of contemporary Irish society.

Notes

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4. Himani Bannerji, 'Politics and the Writing of History', Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaundhuri, *Nation, Empire, Glory: Historicizing Gender and Race* (London, 1998)

5. Sheila Rowbotham claims that women's history, 'is in the process of transcending its own boundaries by reaching outwards to contest how the existing topics of "history" are interpreted', Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United states* (London, 1999), p. 3

6. Thanks to Jennifer FitzGerald for her comments on this aspect of the work.

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17. McGarry, Irish Politics and The Spanish Civil War, p. 21

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20. E. Moxon-Brown, quoted in Rosemary Sales, 'Gender and Protestantism in Northern Ireland', in Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern (eds.), *Who are 'the People'? Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland* (London, 1997), pp. 14-57, p. 147

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22. Ruth Moore, 'Proper Wives, Orange Maidens or Disloyal Subjects: Situating the Equality Concern of Protestant Women in Northern Ireland, *Women's News* (June/July, 1994), p. 6

23. Helen Morrissey, 'Betty Sinclair: A Woman's Fight for Socialism, 1920-81', *Saothar*, vol. 9 (1983), pp. 121-32, p. 124

24. Reports of the Irish Delegation, 21 May 1931, Rosamund Jacob Papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms. 33,192 (2)

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27. Mary Kathryn Bolster, 'Women on the March: Women in the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland in the 1960s', M.A. University College, Dublin, 1991, p. 20

28. Catherine Shannon, 'Women in Northern Ireland', in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds.), *Chattel, Servant or Citizen: Women's Status in Church, State and Society* (Belfast, 1995), pp. 2238-53, p. 241

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34. *Sunday World*, 30 November 1975

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38. Valerie Morgan, Peacemakers? Peacekeepers? – Women in Northern Ireland 1969-1995, Derry, 1996

39. Rolston, 'Mothers, whores and villains'

40. Jean O'Barr, 'Exclusions and the Process of Empowerment: The Case for Feminist Scholarship', in Backhouse and Flaherty, *Challenging Times*, pp. 136-49, p. 144

41. Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Making History, Reflections on Feminism, Narrative, and Desire', Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader* (London, 1997), pp. 231-238 , p. 232

42. Bannerji, 'Politics and the Writing of History

Mastermind

The BBC TV quiz programme Mastermind (despite its gendered title) is keen to recruit female contestants, who are under-represented on the programme. They have contacted WHN as part of their efforts to attract more women for forthcoming series. If you are tempted, details can be found at www.bbb.co.uk/whatson/beonashow/shows/mastermind.shtml

Or by emailing:

mastermind2004@bbc.co.uk

Or by writing to: Mastermind Applications, Room 4031, New Broadcasting House, Oxford Road, Manchester M60 1SJ

Reinscribing Her Stories in Chinese Contemporary History: Decoding *Goddess out of Battlefields*

Wu Na
Guangdong University, China

When addressing the question, what does it mean to have a history? Michel Foucault implies that to have a history is equivalent to having a legitimate existence.[1] History and legitimating coexist with each other. History often quite violently legitimates certain groups of people at the cost of others' oppression and exclusion. Following Nietzsche, who said that people decide what they want and then fit the facts to their aim, Foucault also believes that all knowledge is an expression of the 'will to power.' This means that we cannot speak of any absolute truth or of objective knowledge. People recognize a particular philosophical belief or scientific theory as 'true' only if it fits the description of truth laid down by the intellectual or political authorities of the day, by members of the ruling elite, or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge.[2]

Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, all industries and institutions, including Chinese cinema, involved in defining contemporary Chinese history have been under the control of the central government. Chinese cinema serves as a tool for political struggle rather than as an artistic medium independent of politics.[3] Therefore, Chinese cinema has been working as an essential mass apparatus to legitimate the Communist presence in contemporary Chinese history. As presented in mainstream Chinese movies, contemporary Chinese history is one of harsh class struggle from darkness to light under the wise leadership of the Chinese Communist party. The representation of both men and women has been cast with clear political overtones. The depiction of human desire and unconsciousness in these movies is usually reflected in the course of class and political struggles. Women are still represented in a strong manner of patriarchy either shaping them as 'iron women' contributing to the grand mission of revolution or casting them as new women saved by male CCP members. In other words, Chinese women, though molded in the shape of the revolutionary, have always been represented as the Other from patriarchal perspectives in Chinese history. Their own stories have been repressed, silenced, excluded from mainstream historical discourse.

However, because of the specific political, social, economic and cultural changes in China since the end of the Cultural Revolution, there has been a growing visibility of female subjectivity in Chinese cinema, paralleling an increasing awareness of female body language in Chinese culture in general, though this visibility is still fraught with difficulties and anxieties. With recourse to theories of representation and feminist studies, as well as Foucauldian analyses of power and history, this paper is an interdisciplinary critique of the representation of female voices, physical and emotional, in the movie *Goddess out of Battlefields* (Hereafter *Goddess*) with a special focus on reconstructing contemporary Chinese history through representation of female subjectivities.

Structurally speaking, this essay consists of three parts. Part One gives a brief introduction to the movie's historical background and a summary of the movie. Comparing the representation of women in mainstream Chinese war texts, specifically *Red Detachment* in the second part, I shall focus on the strategies that the director of *Goddess* employed to create a distinctive voice of women in wartime and thereby reinscribe in contemporary Chinese history Her stories which have been repressed in mainstream Chinese cinema. The essay concludes with a critical evaluation of the representation of women in the movie.

Introduction

The movie *Goddess* is adapted from Jiang An's novel of the same title, which tells the story of some female soldiers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) towards the end of the Chinese civil war or Chinese People's Liberation War (1945-1949) based on a number of fragmented interviews with some female PLA soldiers. From winter 1948 to spring 1949 the PLA became overwhelmingly superior to the Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT) army in power, which collapsed along the north bank of the Changjiang/Yangzi River. Then, most of mainland China was under the PLA's control apart from South China and Northwest China. The KMT army wanted to counterattack the PLA with the Northwest as its base. The First Field Army from the PLA was thus appointed to fight against the KMT army.

A team of PLA soldiers under the leadership of one female battalion commander and a male scout company commander from the First Field Army was ordered to escort 50 pregnant female soldiers to one field hospital to give birth. Unexpectedly, this hospital was bombed by the KMT army just before they arrived. They then had to leave and look for the main force of their army. All the way through they were giving birth while being chased by and fighting the KMT army, suffering from hunger and a terrible shortage of medical care. After enduring all these incredible hardships, these fifty female soldiers survived together with their newly born babies, but at the cost of some PLA soldiers' lives.

Reinscription of Her Stories

As Foucault points out in *The Order of Things,* history itself is a discursive practice: while the latter cannot be simply equated with the textual record, it cannot be crudely opposed to it either.[4] In other words, history is inseparable from 'reality' in the sense that it produces knowledge of past stories; but history is not factually exact, as it often selects what to represent. Thus history is simply one possible discursive form of understanding or representing. It cannot provide an unquestionable basis for knowledge of the past. Essentially, history is a selective mode of knowledge, a reconstructed narrative, a rewritten sequence heavily marked by gaps and ruptures, instabilities and discontinuities.[5] If we accept this contemporary notion that history is only a linguistic construction, we have profound reasons to question mainstream historical narratives and explore unseen stories. With her cinematic text of *Goddess* Wang Wei succeeded in revealing a new sector of contemporary Chinese history by articulating previously silenced stories. Predominantly, women are remembered in contemporary Chinese history not because of their particular female existence, but because of their efforts to abolish the old society and to build a new one. The representation of women in mainstream historical discourse either focuses on their suffering and struggling in the old semi-feudal and semi-colonial society or concentrates on their contribution to the Chinese revolution and construction of the new socialist order. Women's sufferings were usually presented as the very reason to inspire people to abolish the old society and to celebrate the birth of a new one. Their class identity is overstressed, while their gender identity is usually constructed in a patriarchal manner while their sexual identity is often ignored. For instance, in one of the most popular and classic Chinese war movies, *Red Detachment*, what the female character, Wu Qinghua, holds most dear to her heart is a deep hatred towards her landlord, the representative of the exploiting class. What she intends to do is to kill him, to demolish the system of exploitation. Her sexual identity has been totally blurred by her political ambition. As a female revolutionary, she is deprived of her gender and sexual identity, cast in a political mould.

Ironically, such a sorrowful woman can only become a real revolutionary under the instruction of a male Communist revolutionary comrade, depicted here by Hong Changqing. The gender hierarchy is overtly

implicated. Being a personification of Communism and revolution, Hong undoubtedly dominates Wu Qianghua in their relationship. He is a prophet while she is a lamb astray; he directs while she follows; he is the saver while she is the saved. The movie has not in the least challenged but, on the contrary, reinforced the conventional patriarchal narrative. Meanwhile, the characters are cast in an obvious political mould. Wu Qinghua cannot exert her revenge successfully unless she joins the revolution and works together with other comrades under the leadership of the Communist party. Only when she becomes a member of the revolutionary family, regarding comrades as her sisters and brothers and Communists as her parents, can she escape the sea of sorrows and live a good life. The representation of her life journey from suffering to happiness serves to reinforce and distribute the message that there can be no new China, no new life for the Chinese people without the Communist party.

But in the movie *Goddess* the conventional gender relationship is challenged and even subverted to a great extent, as profoundly illustrated by the relationship between Chen Daman (female) and Zhen Qiang (male). In terms of official rank, Chen is superior to Zhen, but she is more cooperative than dominating or demanding. Her decisions are usually made out of sincere consultation and discussion with Zhen Qiang. At the same time, the pregnant soldiers are represented as both protected and protectors as well, reversing conventional gender roles. Sharing a strong belief in their dreams, in their Communist convictions, the female soldiers are presented as just as brave as their male counterparts. They put other comrades' welfare before their own and are always ready to sacrifice their lives for the Chinese revolution. For instance, Liu Xueming boldly mounts a horse and decoys the KMT army away so as to protect the rest of the pregnant soldiers. Discovering that the KMT army is approaching, Ban Ershao, Liu Xueming and Sun Zhimei leave their babies, pick up their guns and go back to block the enemy so that the rest of the soldiers may safely cross the river and get to the liberated area. Knowing there is little food left for the army, Ban Ershao, after giving birth, refuses two birds' eggs by saying that she is strong enough to survive and insists on giving one egg to other comrades. Through all these presentations, a myth of the goddess is conveyed: these female soldiers are heroines who have fought as bravely and as fiercely as their male counterparts; they are winners who have survived their special difficulties and sufferings. The director of the movie seems to stress that Chinese history may lose much of its charm if it fails to record these female soldiers' heroic commitment.

As Robert Young argues, History, with a capital H, similarly cannot tolerate otherness or leaves it outside its economy of inclusion.[6] Although he is criticizing the violence of the historical discourse on European imperialism, his argument is relevant to my understanding of the mainstream construction of Chinese contemporary history. There are similarities in the appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge within a totalizing system to be set alongside the history (if not the project) of its hegemonic historical discourse. The greatest mission of the Chinese Communist revolution is to overthrow the Three Big Mountains — Feudalism, Imperialism and Bureaucratic Capitalism to set up a new socialist order. Any ideology and social behavior relating to these three 'isms' deserved to be despised and abolished. For instance, romantic love stories that were once regarded as the poisonous grass of capitalism were forbidden among revolutionary socialists in China. As a major apparatus of advertising Communist convictions and achievements, Chinese cinema took it as its mission the construction of a lofty image of Communists by excluding their love stories. Nevertheless, though their affections are regarded as proletarian love, they do involve personal feelings and desires. The relationship between Hong Changqing and Wu Qinghua presented in *Red Detachment* is a case in point. Their conversations are completely devoted to revolution and class struggle, never getting round to their personal feelings. However, there is a subtle yet conspicuous process of Wu's changing attitudes towards Hong. She is at first very grateful to him because he has saved her from her master (the landlord); then she becomes more respectful towards him after understanding more about his ideology and career; finally they become comrades fighting side by side. The audience is then left with its own common sense and imagination to conclude the two soldiers' personal love story through decoding those political images.[7] As Shohat and Stam observe, the connotations of 'representation' form the religious, esthetic, political and semiotic battleground of the mass media, 'the struggle over representation in the simulacral realm homologizes that of the political sphere, where questions of imitation and representation easily slide into issues of delegation and voices.[8] In the context of the People's Republic of China, the main function of cinema is to educate audiences about the predominating ideology of the existing social and political system. At the onset of socialism, with its emphasis on the monolithic and impersonal feelings of the proletariat, anything involving the personal was regarded as evidence of retrogression or corruption that needed to be abolished. A proletarian must be in total conformity with the doctrines of Chinese Communism, both in body and in mind.

With the social, economic and political changes both inside and outside China, Chinese cinema has undergone correspondingly profound transformations in its

representation. The movie *Goddess* severely challenges the stereotypical representation of the Chinese communists through its celebration of all those soldiers' romantic love stories. The love narrative of the movie is fully expressed by Zhen Qiang's love song and his display of affection — a pair of slippers to Chen Daman as well as by Ban Ershao's romantic love stories. The movie has in effect deliberately embodied a love journey between Chen Daman (heroine) and Zhen Qiang (hero) into the army's march of fighting and birth-giving. As the movie demonstrates, it is a romantic love game, which finds its expression in the process of their expressing, refusing and accepting, then exchanging and sharing love and finally sacrificing their love for the revolution. Chen Daman, captured and raped by the KMT soldiers and abandoned by her lover, devotes herself completely to the revolution with the repression of her own feelings. When Zhen Qiang expresses his love for her, Chen ignores it at first. But their love develops through their comradely cooperation, their common effort to protect the pregnant soldiers, their mutual understanding, encouragement and support. Four episodes in the movie deserve consideration in this regard. First of all, at the very beginning of the movie, Zhen Qiang sings a love song on the train soon after they embark on their journey to the hospital. The rattling of the train here acts as a sign not only of the imminent fighting against the KMT army and the concurrent struggle to protect the pregnant soldiers but also as a commencement of the love story between Zhen and Chen. Secondly, at one crucial moment, when the only doctor has left to get medicine and one pregnant soldier starts going into labour, Zhen Qiang encourages Chen Daman, without any practical nursing skills or experiences, to help the would-be mother give birth. It is both Zhen Qiang's encouragement and her own strong sense of responsibility that enable Chen Daman to fulfill the commitment. This episode is not only an expression of the female soldier's courage and her heroism, but also a turning point in the relationship between Zhen and Chen. It is from this moment on that Chen Daman begins to accept Zhen's affections. Their affection for each other then develops implicitly by the exchange of gifts: Zhen gives Chen a pair of slippers; Chen gave Zhen her towel to wipe away his sweat. Finally, Zhen sacrifices his life in a battle against the KMT army. It is at this last moment that Zhen expresses his sexual love more explicitly by saying, 'I want to father a baby', which is matched by Chen's response: 'I want to mother a baby, too', though their desires are still presented in the light of fulfilling the procreative responsibility of humankind. The sacrifice of their love is meaningful and worthwhile, since it is devoted to the revolution. The director creates a sense of both the fertility and the mortality of their revolutionary love by letting Chen Daman adopt a deserted boy in a village, whom she names Zhen Guoqiang in memory of her lover. With such a comprehensive representation, the director explores a 'legitimating existence' for revolutionary love stories in Chinese contemporary history, a history whose representation used to be dominated by struggles and fights.

While Robert Young asserts that history is a reconstruction of reality and is written for the benefit of the dominant groups with a heavy repression of others, Cixous goes on to argue that history does not only mean the linguistic recreation of reality but also entails another forgotten story of oppression. As she puts it:

> [T]he 'reality' that supports History's progress: everything throughout the centuries depends on the distinction between the Selfsame, the ownself…and that which limits it: so now what menaces my-own-good…is the 'other'. What is the 'Other'? If it is truly the 'other', there is nothing to say; it cannot be theorized. The 'other' escapes me. It is elsewhere, outside: absolutely other. It doesn't settle down. But in History, of course, what is called 'other' is an alterity that does settle down, that falls into the dialectical circle. It is the other in a hierarchically organized relationship in which the same is what rules, names, defines, and assigns 'its' other.

For Cixous, the binary system works hand in hand with the process of constructing history. The mode of historical knowledge as a politics of arrogation is always pivoting at a theoretical level on the dialectic of the same and the other. As Robert Young comments, such knowledge is often centred in a self even though it is an outward-looking search for power and control over what is other to it. Consequently, history unavoidably turns out to be the realm of violence and war.[10]

So, in the battlefield of history, how could the oppressed groups fight for their subject status? Robert Young suggests that a counter-history merely involves making subalterns the subject of their own histories.[11] In other words, the construction of subjectivity can only be formed through acts of identification. But, the one-sided effort of identification is not enough to gain the subject status, as the whole structural terrain is so hegemonic and exclusive.[12] Thus, the critique of the structures of Communism with its long–term strategy to effect a radical restructuring of Communist thought and, particularly, historiography proves to be advantageous in rewriting history. With the policy of reform that began in the late seventies, there has been the accompanying attempt in the social sciences and humanities to question and reevaluate Chinese Communist practices and the forms of its history. Displacing the norms of Communist revolutionary representation, questioning the assumptions of grand history as an ordered whole with a single

meaning, challenging the narrative of mainstream discourse constitute the central features of contemporary Chinese artists' articulation of their particular voices. By representing the PLA soldiers' special female experience, their enjoyment of talking about their love lives, their pride in becoming mothers of the next revolutionary generation, Wang Wei has certainly achieved the same end through repainting those silenced stories onto the map of Chinese contemporary history. The director attributes their endurance of those unspeakable hardships for their unshakable belief in Communism as well as their affection to their revolutionary husbands. There are numerous shots of female soldiers' painful cries in the process of giving birth. As the movie indicates, their great gesture of childbirth should be regarded as a key part of their revolutionary career, as they are giving birth to the next generation of Chinese Communists. These children's very names, Jiangguo (to construct the country); Shengli (Victory), Hong Xiang (Red Sunset) suggest that they will carry on their parents' revolutionary course and make contributions to the new China. Therefore these female soldiers' stories deserve to be explored and relocated in the contemporary Chinese historical discourse.

While appropriating the strategies of grand historical narrative in its presentation of the female revolutionaries' strong belief in Communism, their sisterhood, their unselfish collectivism, their bravery in fighting against the enemy, the director of *Goddess* offers her audience a fresh way to read contemporary Chinese history by directing much of our attention to their female experiences: their emotions, their affection for their husbands, their love journeys, their special experience of giving birth on the battlefields. By unearthing all these once excluded stories, the movie not only challenges the stereotypical representation of the Chinese Communist revolutionaries but also enriches contemporary Chinese history by re-articulation of Her untold stories. Through the representation of those buried stories, the female artist has presented us with a new picture of female Chinese soldiers' experience, their feelings, emotions, desires, pleasures, conflicts and pains, and has succeeded in her exploration of female terrain in Chinese history. The historical narrative the Chinese female filmmaker embedded in the film reverberated what Dipesh Chakrabarty has advocated: the invention of a narrative that 'deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices'.[13] By so doing, the artist not only destabilizes the conventional Chinese historical narrative by creating a different voice but also succeeds in reclaiming, renaming and re-inhabiting women's existence in contemporary Chinese history.

Interrogating women's representation in *Goddess*

Although *Goddess* has created a new version of contemporary Chinese history through its presentation of female soldiers in a resolutely fresh manner, it is nevertheless constrained in the system of political ideological narrative. It is extremely difficult for artists to be completely independent of their social context when the movie industry is still under the central control of powerful groups always eager to inculcate the audience with their own political ideology. In discussing the mission of cultural critique, Shohat and Stam contend, 'Cultural critique needs to see contemporary popular culture in a fissured relational context to ask who is producing and consuming what, for what purposes, in what situation, for whom, and by what means —— always with an eye on the power constellations and the emancipatory projects at stake'.[14] Locating *Goddess* in a specific social and political context, it is still confined within the order of 'authority (power) and obedience.' As the general indicates at the very beginning of the movie, women should return to their families and have babies when the KMT is overthrown. In fact, he not only directs what Daman is to do but has also found a potential husband for her. One cannot help wondering what women get from this revolution. How much liberation have they gained from the revolution besides the physical unbinding of their feet? Have the women in the war questioned the value of their existence as female and as a human being as well? The commander's order expresses a general intention of reestablishing the patriarchal order by reconstructing a modern allegory of the feudal female model Hua Mulan, who enjoyed a great reputation throughout Chinese history by disguising herself as a man and substituting for her senile father for conscription, only to put on her old dress as soon as she shed her armor after returning home from military triumph. As David Leiwei suggests, Hua Mulan has been highly praised in China from generation to generation not only on account of efforts to preserve the safety of the feudal society through her harsh fighting on the battlefield but also because of her contribution to maintaining the patriarchal social order by afterwards resuming her traditional female social status.[15] Cheng Daman, unhesitatingly obedient to the commander, accepts the order to mother babies after fighting shoulder to shoulder with her male revolutionary comrades. Although the revolution is over and successful, the ideology embedded in the Confucian maxims of the three obediences and the four virtues seem to die very slowly.[16] The commander's order and Chen Daman's acceptance of it have promoted the perpetuation of the social hierarchy as well as male hegemony. Therefore, women's value in a new society is fundamentally to be judged by

how well she could meet the needs of her husband both physically and psychologically, which is not very different from how much women were judged in the old patriarchal society. One impressive statement the director employs to demonstrate the development of Chen Daman's affection for Zhen Qiang is Chen's declaration, 'I'll follow you this time.' Such a remark is in fact cultural capital invested in the myth that female gentleness can only find its expression in obedience to her lover or husband.

Although the movie has succeeded to an extent in redefining contemporary Chinese history by reproducing once-buried stories, the director is still constructing female soldiers' thoughts and fates, pains and pleasures within a phallocentric canon. As the prologue to the movie states, the movie is an encomium *to the Great Mothers in wartime*. By identifying the female soldiers as mothers, the director expresses the significance of motherhood to women, especially to female soldiers. Through this celebration of motherhood, the movie actually reinforces the patriarchal message that women's existence is to be evaluated more by their association with their husband and their children than their own achievement. Women cannot become full women until they have babies. Zhen Qiang dies regretfully without fathering an heir, then his lover Chen Daman has to adopt a child not only to fulfill Zhen Qiang's last wishes but also to attain a real sense of womanhood. Liu Xueming intends to drown her own baby after she is told that her husband is a traitor. Ban Ershao is ready to suffer as much as she can and gives birth to as many children as possible until she has a baby boy for her husband so that her husband's family line may continue. Bing Gu insists in having a baby for her husband at the risk of her life as she believes that her husband is in great need of a boy to carry on his career and family name. Ban Ershao's suggestion that calling their husbands' names when suffering too much pain during childbirth not only reinforces male hegemony in the sexual relationship, where women suffer and lose while men gain and enjoy; but also indicates that it is their sacrifice to their husbands that makes women's existence meaningful.

At the same time, although these female soldiers' love stories have been given more attention and presented more explicitly than those in classic mainstream Chinese war movies, their love stories are readable only in relation to the Chinese revolution. Individual value is to be judged by the collective standard of belief in Communism and contribution to the Chinese revolution. Otherwise, their love will lose its glow and become worthless. And these female soldiers have unconsciously internalized the idea that their husbands' success is much more important than their own commitment. Their love stories are always male-centered to a point that their own existence disappears. The topics that Ban Ershao discussed with her girlfriends, intending to share her happiness, focus exclusively around her physically absent husband. What is more expressive, she even gives up her own name and takes her husband's after marriage. It is very ironical in the sense that she herself seems fundamentally absent although she is physically present; while, her husband, although physically absent, becomes visible through her repetition of her pride in and affection for him. Although Liu Xueming has devoted herself to the revolution, she always feels inferior, marginalized and even disgraceful in front of other female soldiers and regains her pride only after being told that her husband has not betrayed the revolution.

In short, while subverting the traditional representation of Chinese women in Chinese cinema, director Wang Wei has been intensely circumscribed within contemporary cultural, political and social phenomena. A product of her inherent social-historical limitations, Wang Wei cannot be expected to overcome the gender hierarchy that constructs and characterizes the world to which she herself belongs. In fact, while redefining Chinese contemporary history by reinscribing the stories of those female soldiers, the director is simultaneously excluding other, non-female soldiers' stories through her confirmation that Chinese grand historical narrative is essentially a history of Communist revolutionary wars. As Stuart Hall comments, 'we speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of particular experience, a particular culture.'[17] Wang Wei is no exception, nor am I. But my meditation on this movie has encouraged me to believe that Chinese female artists are rewriting their own stories in the historical terrain with the challenge against the conventional history. I am also encouraged to believe that they are not only recreating history, but also making the future!

Notes

1. Foucault quoted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, 2001, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 335.

2. Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker (eds.), 1997, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp. 185-86

3. Yaping Ding, 2002, *Collections of Theoretical Essays on One Century Chinese Cinema from 1879-2001*, Volume II, Culture and Art Publishing House, Beijing, p. 380.

4. Michel Foucault, 1970, *The Order of Things*, Tavistock, London, p. 31

5. Sihui Mao, 1999, *Technologising the Male Body: British Cinema 1957-1987*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, p. 124

6. Robert Young, 1990, White Mythologies: Writing History and the West, Routledge, London, p. 4.

7. Ding, Collections of Theoretical Essays, p. 568.

8. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994), Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, Routledge, London, p. 183

9. Young, *White Mythologies*, points out that history is constructed through the comprehension and incorporpration of the other. Thus, a series of attempts has been made in history to reinscribe a place for, and a relation with, the other as the other, outside the sphere of mastery, p. 12; Helene Cixous, quoted pp. 70-71)

10. Ibid., p. 15.

11. Ibid., p. 161.

12. In *Power and Representation*, Ernesto Lacan comments on the constitution of the historical subject: "The hegemonic subject cannot have a terrain of constitution different from the structure to which it belongs…. [This structure] is inhabited by an original lack, by a radical undecidability that needs to be constantly superseded by acts of decision. These acts are, precisely, what constitute the subject, who can only exist as a will transcending the structure. Because this will has no place of constitution external to the structure but is the result of the failure of the structure to constitute itself, it can be formed only through acts of identification.' Quoted in Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 163.

13. Quoted in Ashcroft et al., *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 357.

14. Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 431.

15. David Leiwei Li, 1988, "The Naming of a Cross-Cultural America 'I': Cross-CulturalSign/ifications in The Woman Warrior," *Criticism,* Fall 1988,Vol.30, No.4, p. 505.

16. The Three Obediences mean that a woman must be obedient to her father before marriage, obedient to her husband after marriage, and obedient to her son after the death of her husband. The Four Virtues refer to woman's morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work.

17. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 1996, *Stuart Hall, Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies,* Routledge, London and New York, p. 447

Restoring Our Foremothers: Feminist Historic Preservation Projects in the US

Sarah Rose Dangelas
University of Maryland, College Park

Introduction

Over the past several years, I have been studying historic house museums, memorials, monuments, and historic sites. As a feminist, woman, and scholar, I am too often struck by the sheer dominance of the male experience in the stories we tell at our preserved places. This seeming lack of evidence of women in our past is misleading, for certainly, as has often been pointed out, women's experiences have constituted half of all history. The neglect, sometimes erasure, of women's stories from the places surrounding us must be remedied. Feminists working through preservation have made tremendous progress over the past two decades. This conscious feminist approach to preservation is my focus here. I'll start with examples of preservation projects that are women's-history-oriented. Then I will present a framework for future projects.

Historic preservation comes in many forms. The preservation projects I am going to describe do not all fundamentally conserve a structure, but they work to revalue places significant to women's historical experiences. I have noted both in feminist activism and in preservation policies, the belief that to move toward our goals, we must attempt change on many levels simultaneously, employ a variety of tools and understand that we need a combination of strategies to succeed.

Preservation Projects

The following are samples and illustrations of types of preservation projects that are useful to re-placing women's history into the landscape. I am certainly not the first to provide such a review of preservation methods. This is rather a summary of five strategies I find most representative.

Project Type 1 - identify, record and designate

The first type of project works to create a consciousness of women's history in the landscape. Because of the relative lack of knowledge about women in the past, and the division between the stories and their settings, we

need preservation projects that attempt to survey, identify, and record the locations of sites important to women's history. For example, sites could be officially designated as historic, or described in gazetteers, as Jane Legget has done for Great Britain.[1] Ultimately, I believe, knowing where these places are and how they are significant will lead to re-valuing the sites, and subsequently, preserving them.

My first illustration for this type of project is the 1989 to 1994 Women's History Landmark Project, which was a collaborative effort between the Organization of American Historians, the National Park Service, and the National Coordinating Committee. This project aimed to identify, nominate, and ultimately pave the way for the preservation and interpretation of sites significant in American women's history.

From the start, the group realized they lacked a yardstick by which to measure 'significance'. So they wrote a book — called *Reclaiming the Past* — that would help historic preservation officers and others recognize those building types and sites important to women's history. They devised a new thematic framework that categorizes women's experiences into seven overlapping themes: architecture, the arts, work, community, education, politics, and religion. Each chapter recounts a brief history of American women's roles in these arenas, suggests places to find evidence in the landscape, and provides reference points for judging significance. The work of the Women's History Landmark Project helped countless public historians and others become more aware of women's history and how to see that history in the places around them. Remarkably, the project is also responsible for 40 successful National Historic Landmark listings.

Project Type 2 - historiography projects

A second project type works to put women back into the histories of the field of preservation. Although women — named and anonymous — are credited with the creation of the national preservation movement in the US, women's stories are not the dominant narrative in the histories of historic preservation in the US. In fact, several important stories about women in preservation seem only marginal in the histories. For example, the work of women volunteers has been absolutely invaluable for preservation since the nineteenth century. Yet, full consideration of this is missing from the histories. New, revised histories of the Preservation movement are beginning to change this.

Polly Welts Kaufman's recent book, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice* is an example of a revised history of the field that scrutinizes gender.[2] The book looks at women's ever-present, but ever-changing relationships with the National Park Service, the federal system of natural and cultural conservation and public parks. Kaufman shows how women maintained their presence and influence in the Park Service despite having to constantly deal with someone else's concepts of 'woman's place.' Kaufman follows some of the key issues that have persisted in the National Park Service for women since the beginning — including legitimacy, e.g., being seen as competent naturalists or technicians; double discrimination for minority women; equal access to professional training; and gaining proper recognition for their accomplishments.

Another book that works to reframe the history of the field is Patricia West's *Domesticating History*, which considers the origins of historic house museums in the US.[3] Through several case studies, West complicates these preservation projects by looking to the political motivations and controversies that spurred and hindered them, and to the legacies each house now exhibits. West's history is specific to the house museum movement, but it also provides insight on preservation history in general. Her framework is political; she is constantly asking what ideologies and political systems were working at the time for the preservationists in each case study. She insists that house museums are not isolated heterotopias, but are instead fully entangled with the surrounding social climate (which is ever-changing) and reflective of social and political debates of their time. She highlights the sex of the preservationist and the expected gender roles of the times as key to understanding the field's development.

Project Type 3 - walking tours and signage

The walking tour is another project type that works thematically to highlight the experiences and achievements of certain groups of people. My example is the Boston Women's Heritage Trail, in Boston, MA, which began in 1989 when a group of Boston public educators decided that women were being slighted in the city's history curriculum and in Boston's world-famous self-guided walking tour, the Freedom Trail, which began in 1958. These women went on to create the first women's history walking tour in the country. A guidebook now provides maps, images, and short biographies of over 180 culturally and racially diverse women from five centuries of Boston history. Additionally, the project helps students in Boston public schools research the neighborhoods around their schools and create their own tours. While the Heritage Trail does not in itself preserve the sites along the tour, it increases respect for historic structures and landscapes significant to women's history, and thus holds the possibility of converting others to the cause of preservation. Walking

tours are vital instruments for re-attaching history to place.

A second preservation strategy in this project type is signage. No doubt many readers are familiar with local or national systems of plaques on historic houses that draw our attention to places where history happened. In 1994 in New York City, an activist group called *REPOhistory* presented a project called 'Queer Spaces.' The group placed interpretive historical markers at sites throughout New York City that were important in gay and lesbian history. The signs brought attention to places whose stories had been hushed, consciously erased, or celebrated among only a segment of the population. Attaching, or re-attaching the histories to these places is an important step in the process of preserving them.

Project Type 4 - physically re-place the stories in the landscape

Often, important sites of women's history are gone or altered because they were not respected or recognized in time to save them. Two examples for these Type 4 projects raise important issues about the preservation of sites that are structurally compromised or have been erased.

In the early 1980s, urban historian Dolores Hayden began a collaborative project in Los Angeles called the Power of Place. The aim of the project was to foster a sense of community memory and identity in the present by recounting forgotten stories of past communities, and making those stories visible in the landscape. The Power of Place worked to highlight the history of the working class in the L.A. landscape, and thus into the history of Los Angeles, through preservation and site-specific art projects.

One notable, and lasting Power of Place project is the Biddy Mason Memorial Park in downtown LA. Mason was a prominent African American midwife, community leader, and property owner in the mid-late nineteenth century in LA. In 1994, the former site of Biddy Mason's house was developed into a public park with a memorial sculpture wall that tells Mason's story in words and images; from her legally earning freedom from enslavement for herself and several others, to her becoming an important figure in the community. The site inspires present day visitors and brings attention to the experiences of the working class, African Americans, and women in LA's past by grounding those stories in a physical location.

An architectural park in Seneca Falls, NY, does similar work for middle class, white and black feminists of the mid-nineteenth century. A church there called Wesleyan Chapel gained notoriety for hosting the first major women's rights convention in the US. In 1848, women and men from the Seneca Falls area organized to hold a public meeting to demand equal rights for women under law. The success of the convention helped launch the national movement for women's rights. While the Chapel has remained important to generations of feminists, who have used it symbolically to draw attention to women's rights issues,[4] the site has gone through many incarnations — garage, car dealership, laundromat. The movement to restore the site began locally in the early 1980s. The site the founders hoped to preserve was in poor condition after years of neglect. The directors of the project held a public artwork competition, a common strategy in modern commemorative projects, to turn the remains of the chapel into an interpretive park area. Original fabric (ca. 1848) was maintained, while subsequent changes were removed. The site now contains the chapel remains, a memorial fountain with the Declaration of Sentiments carved into it, green space, and an amphitheater.

Project Type 5 - new interpretations

The final preservation project type is reinterpreting sites that are already being preserved.[5] An example of innovative, feminist, re-telling is at the Porter Phelps Huntington House Museum in western Massachusetts. The family that owned this house for six generations was not famous, but they saved everything, and subsequently left the whole as a museum. Local historian Marla Miller has discussed the curators' decision to change the interpretation there to tell a new story of working women in New England. Four women officially lived in this house, but about 60 women worked there to maintain the household and care for the owners' family. Stories of these women's experiences can be told through the architecture, which evidences the changes in social and domestic customs through time. For example, there was a gradual separation of physical space between the servants and the owners. With this separation came more privacy for both, but also less surveillance opportunity for the owners and less cohesiveness as a household. Miller has suggested that new thematic frameworks can be illustrated and explored in this setting — e.g., social welfare, immigrant careers, sexual liaisons, or balancing private and public life. This reinterpretation of an otherwise redundant house museum illustrates what can happen when feminist theories are applied to preservation and interpretation.

Feminist Preservation Projects: new spaces for change?

These preservation projects prompt us to question the power of preserved places and landscapes to foster social change, make political statements, educate, and make people more aware of the importance of and intersections between history, place, power, and identity. If we decide that we want our work to be more empowering and socially just, I believe we need to apply our feminism more consciously to the work that we do — as preservationists, historians, and interpreters at historic sites. To that end, I present a framework for Feminist Preservation Projects. This framework could aid in the development of new projects that preserve and revalue the historic built environment in order to explore new, or neglected, possibilities of social, cultural, and political systems that recognize gendered experience and knowledge.

The framework begins with assumptions about power and place. Places (a.k.a., cultural landscapes) both reflect and shape human activity; they offer material evidence of our lives and affect how we live. Places are also *shared* realities; as geographer John Brinkerhoff Jackson said 'no group sets out to create a landscape, of course. What it sets out to do is to create a community.' Thus, preserving various sites will help us ask and answer questions about societies, in the past and present, by giving us material evidence of how communities worked, how they changed through time, and how they were experienced by the various people who lived in, passed through, or otherwise interacted with them. Preserving historic sites and presenting their stories should therefore be regarded as empowering.

Assumptions about power are here seen through feminism, which I define as a belief in and effort to work toward social, cultural, and political structures that recognize and value gendered experience and knowledge. We must realize that standpoint shapes thought and action (e.g., our unique experiences and identities affect how we see, behave in, and experience the world) and that we each possess varying degrees of power in various situations and thereby we can all make change. Power is also built into the structures around us — infrastructures, and physical spaces. This relies on the notion that 'all information systems are necessarily suffused with ethical and political values, modulated by local administrative procedures.'[6] Information systems must be denaturalized, understood as complex structures of power that have histories, creators and agendas. History should be seen as such an information system, constructed by certain people to achieve certain goals. Remember Orwell's epigraph: Those who control the past control the present.

We should then combine these ideas about place, power, and feminism into our practice. To begin with, we must acknowledge in our work with what we preserve and how we present it, that gender, race and identity, are socially constructed and intersecting. We can accommodate this by maintaining a feminist insistence that representing the historical experiences of both sexes equally will also require that we recognize and include *difference*. A second element in our feminist preservation practice is the refusal of simple dichotomies. Instead, we should explore the connections *between* local, national, and global, *between* personal and political, and *between* public and private, allowing for both/all of the possibilities to be valid and related, rather than either one or another.

An agenda for multicultural preservation projects should, for example, ask questions appropriate to various people's experiences, such as the house's owners, their children, the hired cooks and groundskeepers, the visitors, etc.; look to a variety of evidence, acknowledging that not everyone left written material behind to tell us of their experiences; and look to material and visual culture, the cultural landscape and written and oral sources. We should also challenge what we have come to naturalize as the American story–white, upper middle class, and male–by presenting a wider definition of historical experience and collaborate with a range of organizations and individuals, always acknowledging the work and influences of all involved.[7] Collaboration is one way we can better incorporate alternative or multiple ways of knowing and doing into our histories and public programming.

Our work could create physical places for discussion, exploration, and open conversations. An important recent study about how Americans use history in their daily lives demonstrates that historic sites matter in real ways to visitors.[8] I think feminist preservation projects can take that to heart and use preservation to make change and honor the variety of the American experience by encouraging conversations through interpretive programming. For example, we challenge the meanings of public space, and of women in public space by showing visitors that women have always been there, but that they experienced it differently from men and differently from each other based on race, class, economics, ethnicity, age, and sexual identity.

We could also use the historic cultural landscape as a tool for consciousness raising about contemporary issues. Several preservation projects already work on this theory. For example, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum offers several thematic tours of their site, including one called 'Piecing It Together: Immigrants in the Garment Industry' which uses the site and its history to discuss social justice issues related to immigrants and labor from the nineteenth century to the present. Perhaps if we can

begin to talk about the construction of gender, sexuality, sexism, and equality and difference, as well as race and class *through* our preservation projects and interpretive venues, people will begin to talk about these issues when they visit, and still after they've left.[9] Preservation actually has a long history of using the built environment to reach political ends. For example, the Anglo-American elite in New England at the turn of the century used preservation in a culture contest to 'Americanize' the new immigrants streaming into the country. More recently, the addition of Japanese American Internment Camps to the National Park Service properties illustrates how erasing sites or — in this case — making places visible again affects our collective memory of the past.

Finally, feminist preservation practice should work to develop a critical consciousness of how the past is constructed.[10] We need to ask questions related to how we come to know about the past. Questions like: What is historically significant? Who decides? And who has the power to preserve a place? There is an argument, made pointedly by feminist preservationist Gail Dubrow, that sometimes we need an 'official' seal of approval on a site to fully legitimate a history. For example, consider this request made by a woman who worked in a California shipyard during World War II: 'I'm 83 years old now. I would appreciate if you would check and find out that I was truly there and did my part to the end, and add my name to the [other] women who did their part'. Sometimes we desire that our country recognize the value of our stories and experiences, and validate that 'we were truly there.' This woman wants her country to tell the story of women's work on the World War II home front. Currently, the National Park Service is developing such a story as they restore a retired shipyard in San Francisco Bay. I anticipate that this extensive site will become a prime example of a feminist preservation project.

We can also use the physical spaces and the interpretation of the site's history to explore how the past is constructed by challenge so-called 'official' histories, by bringing new histories to light through new perspectives, and, most importantly, by allowing for multiple versions of the same event. In doing this, we must also acknowledge that our feminist preservation projects themselves will necessarily be subjective and selective. That is why, in the end, we must allow for change in the interpretation, because these projects should always be in flux and tuned to the needs of the time.

As a final example of a feminist preservation project, I suggest a book, *Sento at Sixth and Main*.[11] Authors Gail Dubrow and Donna Graves worked closely with Japanese American communities and individuals along the American West Coast to identify those locations that they considered culturally significant. Subsequently, the authors and their informants researched the stories of those places, including conducting extensive oral histories. Their conviction was, that prompting people to recognize those places important to their sense of identity may eventually lead toward community-based preservation projects. It seems to work, as the title location, the bathhouse on Sixth and Main Streets, has been preserved and adapted into a teahouse. The Japanese bathhouse in the basement, closed during the relocation of Japanese Americans to internment camps in the 1940s, is also being preserved and developed as a historical landmark. In addition to inspiring preservation, the project also wanted to use the built environment to trigger community memories that lay forgotten or undervalued: 'to fill in the gaps in the histories' of these communities. This valuing of community history, of a variety of viewpoints, and of buildings and landscapes has created a project that works toward both empowerment for the Japanese American communities and preservation of historic structures and landscapes. For these reasons, I see the book itself and the work that surrounds it as an exemplary feminist preservation project.

Conclusion

The value of this proposed framework and of feminist preservation projects is that they allow us to intervene in the powerful, complex system of history writing. The framework prompts us both to critique and to re/create. Feminist theorist Katie King notes that feminists should seek projects that involve denaturalizing information systems that are generally taken for granted (such as history), 'because then we can explore how things could be some other way.' I believe that preservation can be such a feminist project when we understand that preserving and presenting historic sites are not projects solely about revaluing the past, but are projects for exploring alternate presents and futures. This belief might allow these sites a more active and central role in empowering marginalized communities or fostering social change.

Many of the theories of feminism can empower preservationists, inspire us to re-connect the preserved built environment with those who created and maintained it in the past, and those who live within it today. Likewise, preservation can inspire women's historians to look again at our surroundings**,** to renew our respect for the landscape and the places that have been entrusted to us. These places have much to tell us about the past, and we must learn to read them and find there evidence of our

foremothers. Where that evidence is already erased from the landscape, we should work to recover and re-place it through feminist preservation projects.

Notes

1. Jane Legget, *Local Heroines: A Women's History Gazetteer of England, Scotland and Wales* (London: Pandora Press, 1988).

2. Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: a history,* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1996).

3. Patricia West, *Domesticating History*: *the Political Origins of America's House Museums*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999.)

4. Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas, Susan B. Anthony Slept Here: A Guide to American Women's Landmarks (New York: Times Books, 1994)

5. The Women's History Landmark Project produced a second resource in 1996 — a 'how-to' booklet for managers, historians, and educators at historic sites on why and how to incorporate new scholarship on women's history into existing and new interpretive programming.

6. Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: M.I.T., 1999), p. 321.

7. Huyck proposes that feminist preservationists "work to include everybody in this discovery process, making this truly public history, truly a participatory past." Heather A. Huyck, "Proceeding from Here," in *Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 356.

8. Roy Rozenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

9. John Schlotterbeck, a professor at DePauw University in Indiana, noted at a conference that we have so few models for how to talk publicly about race, perhaps historic sites can offer one.

10. These are steps in Sandercock's suggested methodological framework. Leonie Sandercock, "Introduction," in *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History*, ed. Leonie Sandercock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

11. Gail Dubrow and with Donna Graves, *Sento at Sixth and Main: Preserving Landmarks of Japanese American Heritage* (Seattle: Seattle Arts Commission, 2002).

[The photographs accompanying this article can be found on pp. 26– 27.]

‘Remember the Ladies’: Re-presenting Women’s History at U.S. Historic Sites and Museums

Linda C. Brigance

State University of New York at Fredonia, USA

Introduction

When the United States was in its infancy and drafting its constitution, Abigail Adams warned her husband, who would become the second president of the United States, that the architects of the new nation should ‘remember the ladies and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors,’ when they established rights of citizenship, or the women might mount a rebellion.[1] Despite Abigail’s appeal, John Adams and his compatriots adopted the English judicial perspective of coverture that suspended married women’s ‘legal existence.’[2] In the past three decades, however, the country has increasingly ‘remembered the ladies’ through museum exhibits and historical sites. While this may not have been what Abigail Adams had in mind, the public’s increasing interest in women’s history is a cause for celebration. However, this celebration must not blind us to the importance of paying critical attention to the ways in which women’s history is reconstructed and re-presented — to what stories are told, how they are told, and who is telling them. The subject of this paper is a rhetorical analysis of two of the most well-known and well-attended U.S. women’s museums, the museum at the Women’s Rights National Historic Park in Seneca Falls, New York, and The Women’s Museum: Institute for the Future, in Dallas, Texas.

Why does the representation of women in museums and historical sites matter? It matters because, according to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, ‘each society has its “general politics” of truth.’ She adds that this knowledge is produced through regimes of practices, of which the museum is one.[3] Thus, museums are not mere apolitical cabinets of curiosities; rather, they are contested ideological texts. Museums construct knowledge through narratives that are ideological texts because they tell about the past in order to influence the present and shape the future. As rhetorical critic Sonja Foss explains, a narrative is ‘a frame upon experience [that] functions as an argument to view and understand the world in a particular way’. She adds that narratives work as arguments by ‘imposing order on the flow of experience . . .[therefore] privileg[ing] and repress[ing] [various aspects of a culture], form[ing] and structuring a world view, and interpret[ing] reality.’ [4]

The Museums

Because of a number of important differences between the museum at the Women's Rights National Historic Park (WRNHP) and The Women's Museum (WM), they offer an overview of the continuum of women's history museum culture in the United States. Seneca Falls, which opened in 1993, after almost a decade of planning by officials from the federal government and local leaders, was one of the earliest sites to celebrate women's history exclusively. As part of the U.S. National Park Service, which is charged with preserving and interpreting sites of national historical significance the park is an agency of the U.S. government.[5] It is located on a historic women's space, the site of the 1848 women's rights convention, which is generally acknowledged as the birthplace of the First Wave of the women's rights movement in the U.S. The park includes the museum, which is housed in the Visitors' Center; the restored homes of several of the women's rights leaders; as well as the remains of the Wesleyan Chapel, the actual site of the 1848 convention. As might be expected, given the geographic location, the focus of the museum is on the origins and evolution of the nineteenth century U.S. campaign for women's rights. Preservation and education make up the primary mission of the site; while informative and interesting, the exhibits are low tech. A video loop of clips of women comedians is the extent of the use of contemporary media technology.

In contrast, the mainstay of The Women's Museum: Institute for the Future is its numerous high-tech, multi-media exhibits. Run by a private, non-profit group of well-connected women from the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, the museum is located in a renovated cattle showplace on the former Texas state fairgrounds. The site has no direct link to either regional or national women's history. Rather than the narrow focus on Seneca Falls, WM boasts that it is the 'first comprehensive women's museum,' and it takes on an entertainment role far more than that of preservation or education.

Rhetorical texts

The texts used in this rhetorical analysis are promotional materials provided to the public by each of the sites including brochures, newsletters, and the museums' official web sites. These texts were chosen for analysis because of the rhetorical functions they fulfil for the museums. Specifically, these are the materials through which each site establishes 'who they are' with their audiences, and they do so in a succinct manner. These promotional pieces are designed by the sponsoring organizations as a first introduction to the public. In fact, many audiences are exposed to the print and Internet materials even *before* they actually visit the sites; they often help in deciding whether or not to visit or in obtaining basic information, such as hours of operation and location. Thus, for those readers/viewers of the promotional material who do eventually visit the physical site, the material frames the expectations of their visit. And, for those who never actually visit the museum, this material may constitute their only experience with the site.

Brochures, newsletters and web sites also serve as rich rhetorical texts because they must articulate their messages clearly and succinctly. Such media are constrained by the space available in the brochure, newsletter or web site as well as the time a reader/ viewer may devote to them. Therefore, to make use of the limited time and space, producers of these promotional pieces must communicate with their audiences in a more immediate manner than other publications, such as annual reports or catalogues of collections.

Using Kenneth Burke's (1945) dramaturgical concept of 'agent',[6] that is, what kind of person performed the acts that take place, this article will offer some conclusions about the stories and narrative themes communicated by these two women's history museums, as well as some of the consequences in terms of the construction of knowledge about women.

Seneca Falls: Motherhood and Rebellion

While the *story* being told at Seneca Falls is about the beginnings of the women's rights movement, the *narrative theme* is about the celebration of the American political system. Here, story is used as a ' [sequential] description of a situation involving characters, actions, and setting' and narrative theme as the meaning or significance articulated through the story.[7] Thus, the story of women who rebelled against their government is subsumed by a narrative that celebrates that government.

One of the primary ways in which the museum uses the story of the women's rights movement as a celebration of the American political system is by portraying the agents as non-threatening to the status quo. Specifically, there is an overemphasis on the early leaders of the movement as nurturers—as mothers. The presentation of biographical information about three leaders of women's rights in the United States, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martha Wright, and Susan B. Anthony, illustrates this narrative paradigm.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, co-founder of the Seneca Falls

1848 convention, whose radical demands included a call for the end of marriage and organized religion, was one of the most formidable forces in nineteenth century U.S. politics. Yet, she is first introduced to readers and viewers of promotional material from the museum as a nurturer, not a revolutionary. For example, the home page of the museum's web site has only two short paragraphs of introductory material. In this short passage, Stanton is *twice* characterized in terms of motherhood, rather than political agency. The section opens with the descriptive label 'As a thirty-two year mother of three . . .' and the second paragraph presents Stanton's home, the nerve centre of the movement for several decades, as 'where she raised seven children.'

This focus on the movement's leaders as nurturers continues throughout the promotional material. For example, a bronze statue located in the lobby of the museum, depicting twenty people walking together to attend the women's rights convention, is featured in brochures and on the web site. Of the twenty figures, ten are female. Of these, one is a pregnant woman, one is guiding a young child, and one is the young child. In one brochure, we learn that one of the adult women depicted is Martha Wright; but before we learn that she had a 'distinguished career in human rights,' we are told that she was seven months pregnant when she attended the conference.[8]

This norm of motherhood is further communicated in relation to an *exception* to that norm. Unmarried and childless herself, Susan B. Anthony's rigorous cross-country public speaking career is justified in a way that emphasizes the maternal roles of the others. One brochure tells us, 'As a single woman, Anthony was free of many of the domestic duties that tied Cady Stanton to her home, and so could travel and make speeches promoting women's rights'. And, to make sure that we know that — despite her single status, Anthony herself was a nurturer — we are told, 'to give Cady Stanton time to write those speeches, Anthony would visit Seneca Falls and care for the Stanton family.'[9] Thus, the primary characters in this story are first framed as nurturers and only secondarily as people who mounted a rebellion against hundreds of years of legal and social inequality. By framing the agents of the women's rights movement first and foremost as nurturers, the fury of their discontent with the U.S. political system and the threat their ideas posed to the status quo are contained.

In considering the stories and the narratives communicated by museums and historical sites, it seems appropriate to consider who is presenting the stories and narratives to the public. As previously mentioned, the museum at Seneca Falls is an agency of the U. S. government. In sponsoring a museum about a rebellion, the government had a rhetorical dilemma: how to re-present the history of a group that has been denied the rights, responsibilities and obligations of full citizenship since the founding of the government, without creating a text that focuses on the weaknesses and abuses of that government. One of the ways Seneca Falls artfully achieves this balance is by acknowledging the political changes achieved by the women's movement, while portraying the leaders of that movement as non-threatening agents. The story of this rebellion is told in a way that is controlled and constrained; after all, it was a rebellion mounted by mothers. Therefore, the story of rebellion serves the narrative theme of celebration rather than indictment of the American political system.

Dallas: Bootstrap Philosophy

The stories told in The Women's Museum: Institute for the Future in Dallas, Texas, are the biographies of women who are acknowledged leaders in a variety of fields. The primary narrative theme communicated through the promotional material of this museum is the valorisation of the individual as the agent of fulfilment, achievement, and social change. Ideologically it celebrates 'pulling oneself up by the bootstraps' rather than relying on collective efforts or government structures celebrated at Seneca Falls. The entire focus is on individuals: their stories, their pictures, and their artefacts. This message is communicated through every aspect of the museum, from the statue above the entrance of the museum to the exhibits and educational outreach programs.

This focus on the individual is immediately evident. According to pictures and descriptions in museum promotional materials, the statue that greets visitors entering the museum is a stark contrast to the group of bronze figures that meet visitors to Seneca Falls. This figure is a lone woman, a scantily clad, mythic, Venus-like figure, rising out of a seashell.[10] Wherever she has come from, wherever she is going, she is doing it on her own. Greeting the over one hundred thousand people who have visited the museum since it opened in 2000 is an enormous job; however, her commanding position loudly communicates the message that she is capable of representing all of womanhood by herself.

The narrative theme of the individual continues through personal biographies. These biographies drive the exhibits that focus on women who have made their marks in a variety of fields including business, sports, science, entertainment and religion. Descriptions of the exhibits in promotional material illustrate the importance of the solitary actor. For example: (1) the Unforgettable Women exhibit 'highlights 38

outstanding women;' (2) Breakthrough Artists 'showcases women authors and speech makers who had a major and lasting impact on American society and culture;' (3) Business, Technology and Beyond 'explore[s] the stories of contemporary women powerbrokers;' and (4) Sports and Adventure offers 'a look at the heroines of athletics, exploration and adventure.'[11] This focus on the individual drives the centrepiece of the museum, which is prominently featured in various pieces of promotional material: a gigantic electronic quilt made of photographic close-ups of individual achievers alone in their quilt squares. Each image is isolated from the others, separated by the straight-line edges of the square, and in a number of cases further separated by solid coloured squares with no pictures at all.

This idealization of the individual is perhaps best illustrated by the museum's use of 'trading cards' to single out the agents in this story. Visitors to the museum's web site are greeted with pictures and biographical information of thirteen women. This material is formatted like a trading card with a headshot on the front of the 'card' and biographical information on the back. There are three cards for 'women of tomorrow', high school seniors who have been chosen winners of college scholarships awarded by the museum in conjunction with the manufacturer of Arrid Total deodorant. Thus, the three are the 'Arrid Total' Women of Tomorrow. In addition to the women of tomorrow, this web page includes five trading cards picturing the 'Total Women of Today' and five 'Total Women of Yesterday.' Like sports trading cards, these cards emphasize the 'statistics' and achievements of each individual in order to portray them as unique. For example, one card tells us that 'woman of tomorrow' Nicole Evans is from New Mexico, was a victim of street violence at the age of 14, founded a students-against-violence organization while in high school, is a member of AmeriCorp (a government sponsored service organization), and plans to major in Peace and Conflict Studies in college.

This concentrated focus on the individual as the basic unit of achievement, fulfilment and social change through elements of the museum, such as the statue, the exhibits, the electronic quilt and the three sets of trading cards, has two major consequences. First, the role models presented are lone women accumulating what appear to be unique, individual achievements, while the powerful role of affiliation in women's private lives and collective effort in women's history is disregarded. This focus diverts attention away from structural inequities and other barriers that women face *as a group.* Second, this representation of individual fulfilment, achievement and social change doesn't promote the questioning of society's values, structures, or processes. This museum tells us that it is individuals that shape society, ignoring the role that society plays in the construction of identity.

Who is telling the stories and narrative at Women's Museum? In general, museums tend to be conservative institutions, primarily because it takes substantial economic resources to take on such an endeavour. In the U.S., that means big business and government. While the narrator of the story at Seneca Falls is the U.S. Government, at the museum in Dallas it is big business. The theme of individual achievement is frequently used to promote the cause of big business in America. Corporate concerns love to retell the biographies of entrepreneurs like Sam Walton–a small town shopkeeper who started with one store in his rural community, which grew into one of the largest retail businesses in the world –Walmart**.**

Big business-as-narrator of the Dallas museum is evident in the promotional material, where the names of corporate sponsors of exhibits are as prominent as the exhibits themselves. For example, the name of SBC Communications, whose $10 million grant was the largest ever to a women's project, is conspicuously linked with the 'Unforgettable Women' exhibit, the 'Business and Technology' exhibit and the 'Electronic Quilt.' 'Pathways to Health' and the 'Arrid Total Women of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow' are sponsored by Johnson and Johnson, producer of personal health and beauty products. The 'Cyberspace Connection' where 'visitors can record *their own stories'* is made possible by the financial investment company Charles Schwab.[12] Corporate donations helped the museum achieve a fund-raising miracle by securing $30 million in start-up funds in less than two years. The imprint of these and other corporations is so evident that the most common criticism of the museum is that it ignores the complexity of women's lives Some have charged this is because sponsor's money 'influence[s] what is included [and what is not included] in the exhibits.'[13]

Conclusion

So, why does it matter which stories museums and historical sites tell about women's history? By identifying who is re-presenting the past and the narratives they tell, we can better understand the present. Few would argue that governments and corporations are the source of most of society's master narratives. In addition, the analysis of the rhetoric of museums also helps identify competing visions of the future. The managers of museums consciously acknowledge that they consider their museums as tools for influencing what comes next. For example, the Seneca Falls Mission Statement states that

its goal is 'to. . . inspir[e], and benefit present and *future* generations' (emphasis added).[14] The full name of the Dallas museum is the Women's Museum: An Institute for the *Future* (emphasis added) –and the slogan it includes on all of its promotional material is: 'Honor the past. Shape the Future.'

Hooper-Greenhill clearly explains how understanding the rhetoric of museums can provide valuable insight into larger societal conditions. She said, 'museums have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, the social, economic and political imperatives that surrounded them. Museums, in common with all other social institutions, serve many masters, and must play tunes accordingly.'[15] Thus, by identifying the tunes museums are playing, or the stories they are telling and the themes those stories promote, if you will, we can identify the contextual imperatives to which they are responding. And, understanding how and why knowledge about gender is constructed is a necessary first step in crafting and communicating alternative responses.

Notes

1. Quoted in M. Schneir, ed., (1972). *Feminism: The essential historical writings*. New York: Random House. p.3.

2. H. Tierney, ed..(1991). 'Coverture.' *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*. NY: Peter Bedrick, p. 84.

3. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, (1992), *Museums and the shaping of knowledge*. London: Routledge. p. 183.

4. Sonja Foss, (1996), *Rhetorical Criticism Exploration and Practice*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, pp. 400-401.

5. Women's Rights National Historical Park. www.nps.gov/wori

6. Kenneth Burke, (1945), *Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

7. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism Exploration and Practice*, pp. 400, 405.

8. Women's Rights National Historical Park. 'First Wave' [brochure], Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior.

9. Women's Rights National Historical Park. 'Elizabeth Cady Stanton' [brochure], Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior.

10. Women's Museum, 'About the Exhibits' and www.thewomensmuseum.org

11. Women's Museum, 'About the Exhibits'.

12. Ibid.

13. Debra Michals,. (2001, June-July). Did the Women's Museum wimp out? *MS*, p. 67.

14. Women's Rights National Historical Park. www.nps.gov/wori

15. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge*, p. 1

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Women's Rights National Historical Park. 'Created Equal.' [brochure]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior.

[Author's pictures]

(above) A memorial to Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman in Boston.

(opposite upper) A group prepares to tour the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York with guide Corinna Chan. November 2003.

(opposite lower) A sculpture of Abigail Adams is part of the 2003 Boston Women's Memorial on Commonwealth Avenue. Designed by Meredith Bergmann.


be individually listed on the National Register
United States Department of the Interior.
September, 1992

Women as the Producers of Historical Material in Finland—Transitions in National Margins and Centers

Saara Tuomaala
*University of Helsinki, Finla*nd

This report is linked to the book project, *Women as the producers of historical material in Finland* being put together by Finnish historians.[1] The writers involved in this collection of articles hope to discuss the role of women in national history, and Finnish women will be examined as writers of history from the nineteenth century to the present. At the same time, we will also examine Finnish women's history and the stages of its development more generally. The anthology's eleven authors include researchers, university teachers, post-graduate students, and library, museum, and archive professionals, who all share an interest in women as historical narrators and researchers.

When we, the editors, started gathering together our ideas about women as producers of history, we reflected on the very question, which Virginia Woolf formulated eloquently in the 1920´s, identifying the disappearance of female writers and researchers in the canonized historiography and historical narratives. Virginia Woolf set forth the project to add the 'other' histories into the genre of professional writing, incorporating women in the knowledge of the past:

It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking, about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to students of those famous colleagues that they should re-write history. Though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? Calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?[2]

The people we will study in our anthology, which is the first to deal with female historians and writers on historical issues in Finland, are not all 'academic' in the traditional sense. Many of these women, born at the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century and interested in history, were intellectual and social generalists: politicians, active members of civic organizations, teachers, collectors of information, journalists, translators, or writers, and in some cases even all of those. Despite being on a path towards academic, cultural, and political professionalism, female writers of history were placed on the margins of the production of national history and information. The texts we will examine cover a broad range of genres from essays to biographies and novels to dissertations.

In the histories of learning included in general Finnish historiography, women have been passed over, mentioned only briefly and the study of history has been defined as male dominated. This method of examination obscures women's significant actions in the field of history. Even in the nineteenth century, women wrote many different types of historical texts within the university sphere as well as outside of it. Because women have not been studied as the producers of historical material, a skewed picture has been passed down to the present. Women's careers as academic researchers are most often short or fragmented. One must consider to what degree their decisions were forced. How has gender defined the terms and opportunities of women's work? What kinds of structures have prevented women from advancing in their careers as researchers? Have the subjects women have chosen perhaps forced them away from the focal points of national historical research? By asking what kind of narrative is created from these different margins in relation 'to the hard core of discipline,' it is possible to broaden the concept of history as narrative and as a field of study.

Women as outsiders and newcomers in historical narratives and professions

1. The following 'textualized story' illuminates the question of women as the producers of historical material, alongside with the transitions and continuities in national margins and centers of historiography. In 1996 and 1998, the last anthologies dealing extensively with the history of historiography were published in Finland. But this study failed to deal properly with any female historian. Although Dr. Alma Söderhjelm, Finland's first female history professor (appointed in 1927), has illustrated the book, the male authors predominantly emphasize her literary work. None of the many younger female historians who followed Söderhjelm are mentioned, despite the active role some of them played in the twentieth century academic debate on history. In addition, women's history saw its first renaissance beginning in the 1990s, which produced, among other things, a great number of dissertations on women's and gender history.

2. Another story takes us one hundred years further back to a time when Finnish women were admitted to study at the university level and the first received their PhD's. The number of female university

students increased as early as the 1890s when they started studying at the university with a new kind of freedom. Along with medicine, history was one of the first subjects in which women advanced in graduate studies, which made history appear to have a bright future as the pioneering subject for academic women. Tekla Hultin was the first woman to receive her PhD in 1896 and her subject was the social and economic history of mining. She did not remain in academia as a researcher, but served as the first fulltime female newspaper reporter and later as a Member of Parliament for twenty years. On the other hand, Alma Söderhjelm, who received her doctorate in 1900, combined an academic career with that of a novelist. The daughter of a wealthy upper-class family, Söderhjelm became the first female docent and university teacher. She was named adjunct (extraordinary) professor in general history at the Swedish language university, Åbo Akademi in Turku, in 1927 and studied revolutionary France.

3. The third story outlines the structures and processes connected with the inclusion and the exclusion of professional women in Finnish academy. Until 1901 when nearly fourteen percent of university students were women, female students were officially required to "renounce" their gender. Female students did not, however, remain in academic research, teaching, or administration, as their careers floundered due not only to attitudes, but also to rules regarding civil servants and disqualification. In other words, the first academic women were not legally allowed to hold such positions. The number of female PhD recipients did not truly start to increase until the 1930s, and in the period between 1930 and 1940, the percentage of all doctorates granted to women was 7.5%. The majority of history students became teachers, and those who worked as researchers were rare exceptions up until the 1970s and 1980s.

4. Today, the position of female Finnish historians as researchers falls somewhere between the utopia of women's education, and the male-dominated history of historiography. In 2002 at the University of Turku, a woman received a permanent professorship for the first time in Finnish history, and the second one was appointed at the University of Tampere this year, in 2004. The first female professor was appointed in 1971 and the next one 1994 in so-called general history, which deals with areas outside of Finland. Numbers of women serving as acting professors have been increasing since the 1980s and women have also been selected for other academic teaching posts. There is, however, significant variation in the status of female researchers in the history departments of different universities. Furthermore, a woman working as an assistant and a man as a professor is still a common sight in history departments. At the same time, the percentage of women among history students has grown steadily, particularly since the mid-1990s. Some 35-40 % of the PhDs yearly are for women historians. Despite of this progressive rise, there are only four professorships held by women out of the totality of the 34 professorships in history in Finland.

The gendered positions of national history in transition – the perspective of change and empowerment?

As we planned our book project, we contemplated how masculinity is defined in historiography, the academic genre to which studies of history belong. Which genres have offered women as history researchers—and writers —'contested terrains'? Can the long-term marginality of women in the field of national history research be seen in excerpts from their studies and in their positions as researchers? We considered women as writers of history through different thematic questions, which also shed light on continuity and changes in the discipline and consciousness of history. Thus we divided our themes into three periods or phases (see Appendix):

I Women as historical writers outside of academia since the 1840s
II Women enter academia beginning in the 1890s
III Women rooted in academia since the 1950s

In the different themes of the anthology, there is emerging the intertwining question about the gendered positions of national history in transition in the 19th and 20th centuries: is that transition to be interpreted and historicized in the perspective of engendering change and female empowerment? Again, there are three different positioning histories, considering women as producers of history in national times, spaces and bodies, or in other words, three following 'sequels' of subjectifying processes. Alongside these, the gendered positions of historiography are conceptualized narratively as transitional change/empowerment from the historical materials and viewers to the subjects and agents in academic history. By this act of narrating particularly the project of national history, it is construed as structured and discursive gender politics and thus, as the subjectified and embodied performances, anti-essentialized:

I Women as viewers and recipients of the historiographic traditions of upper-class and bourgeois society defined mainly by male narrators, and transmitting it to the lower grades and generations.

II The first women to receive a doctorate in history, subjectifying and embodying the gradual transition of women into modern historiography, and rise of the understanding of history as a political and cultural process including (upper class) women.

III The first female academic historians, Alma Söderhjelm and Tekla Hultin, producing professional historical information through handwritten magazines of female students, through their research, seminar and teaching practices, journals, published statistics, pamphlets, committee reports, parliamentary decrees, and historical novels: the transition of women into active producers of the discipline of history.

Dr. Alma Söderhjelm – the simultaenous story of the empowerment and remaining as an outsider

Dr. Marja Engman, outlines the biography of Alma Söderhjelm, the first woman professor in Finland:

Alma Söderhjelm (1870-1949) became the first Finnish woman to teach and be appointed docent at a university when she held a docentship in general history at the University of Helsinki between 1906 and 1926. She also became the first woman professor in Finland when she was appointed Professor Extraordinary in General History at Åbo Akademi, the Swedish-language university of Turku, in 1927. However, this position was merely a personal post for Söderhjelm at a private university and was eliminated after she left.

Börje Colliander, a student of Söderhjelm, described his teacher's arrival in Turku in 1928 by noting that 'it was like dropping a bomb in our peaceful town.' Alma Söderhjelm's teaching methods gave the students, used to a more conservative academic style, something to think about: she wanted to teach historians French and to improve the students' social skills by arranging meetings with actors and artists.

The basis of Söderhjelm's academic career was her doctoral dissertation, written in French in 1900, on the French press during the Revolution. The book was highly praised abroad and its continuing significance was manifested by the fact that the book was reprinted in 1971. Söderhjelm presented new material and new research results in her book on Sweden and the French Revolution, published in two parts between 1920 and 1924. In 1927 she published an overall history of the French Revolution in Swedish.

Alma Söderhjelm was rediscovered by the French when she published *Fersen et Marie Antoinette* (1930), a book based on the notes and correspondence of the Swedish aristocrat Axel von Fersen. Söderhjelm's next work on the secret correspondence between the revolutionaries and the Queen was an outright sensation. Söderhjelm was able to prove that the letters, earlier regarded as forgeries, were actually genuine. The book was published in France in 1934 under the title *Barnave et Marie Antoinette*.

Alma Söderhjelm's vast collection of literary works includes scientific publications, collections of essays, bibliographies and memoirs - a total of 25 works and 34 volumes. In addition, she published a collection of poems, plays, a film manuscript, five novels and eight collections of humorous essays.´

Despite her extensive and intensive volume of work as a historical writer and a researcher, later on Alma Söderhjelm´s position as a historian was brought into question. Her crossing the different genres from academic displine to the arts and media, rather than gaining merit, was considered transgressing and diminishing for an historian in the academy.

Sara Wacklin, a woman who wrote about the national past – but merely through a picturesque 'picture window'

Of the many research topics in our anthology, finally I will discuss Sara Wacklin (1790-1846), presented by Eva Packalén. Sara was a European of her time and as a woman, a trendsetter. She was the daughter of a merchant in the northern seaside town Oulu, who, since childhood, had been intelligently curious and eager to acquire a formal education for herself. She earned a teacher's degree from the Sorbonne in 1836 and was, as far as is known, the first Finnish woman to receive a college education.

Sara Wacklin belonged to a group of intellectually active men and women who were inspired by the pedagogic ideas of the Enlightenment and Romantic period at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They established girls' schools in various towns around the country. Sara was among the first Finnish woman to publish novels and in the 1840s, she became known for her historical short novels and descriptions of customs, both dealing with her home locality in northern Ostrobothnia. The men of the intelligentsia and the culturally influential of Wacklin's time considered her a dilettante writer, but not a creator of national history who was equivalent to male writers. Thus, Sara Wacklin, who wrote about the national past, was not canonized as a national writer or historian. Instead, she was defined as a woman who wrote about the past in an expert, picturesque, or humorous manner.

Reprints of Wacklin's writings, *A Thousand Memories from Ostrobothnia* (first published in 1846 and 1848*)*, have been issued right through to the end of the twentieth century.

Eva Packalén analyzed Sara Wacklin's skill as a writer, whose texts 'illuminate the gender system (…) both in the public and private sectors. Sara Wacklin has been especially conscious of the power patriarchal society had to restrict a woman's life and the relative strength of the genders in upper-class society. Emotions and often even sickness, tears, grief, and sorrow are brought up in the descriptions of female characters.'

In her historical texts, Sara Wacklin understood the gendered, embodied *habitus*, i.e. people as expressers of their own culture and the customs, relationships, rituals, and tastes of their time. At the same time, she raised the desire of eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois women for education and culture. For example, in her biographical narrative *Majuri Myhrberg*, Sara Wacklin takes Christina Myhrberg, the daughter of a small town merchant and the wife of a major, as a personal example of a woman who attempted to be a part of the discipline of history and historiography:

'Although Mrs. Myhrberg considered a woman's responsibilities and role in the home most important and focused her hobbies on such activities, she still had time to acquire a spiritual education. Her liking for geography and world history was apparent at an early age, but these interests were considered so useless that through only her own diligence and desire for knowledge, getting nothing from teaching, she became familiar with the way of the world. Thus, she was called `the library of the Raahe´ (a small town in northern Ostrobothnia in Finland) for good reason, as there were no libraries in towns at that time. Then, she was perhaps also the woman most familiar with literature in the entire country.'

Appendix

WOMEN AS PRODUCERS OF WRITTEN HISTORICAL MATERIAL—PROJECT AND ANTHOLOGY 2002-2005

I Women as historical writers outside of academia since the 1840s

Elina Katainen, Tiina Kinnunen, Eva Packalén and Saara Tuomaala (Universities of Helsinki and Joensuu): Women as historical writers in Finland

Kirsti Salmi-Niklander (University of Helsinki): Handwritten magazines, the writing of women, and history

Eva Packalén (City Museum of Helsinki): Women writing in the nineteenth century and the birth of the historical novel: Sara Wacklin and Fredrika Runeberg

Minna Hagert (University of Turku): The narrative on women's history produced by the turn of the twentieth century women's movement: Alexandra Gripenberg, Lucina Hagman, and Helena Westermarck

Marjaliisa Hentilä (Archives of Labor Movement): The narrative on women's history produced by nineteenth century working-class women: the life and writings of Sylvi-Kyllikki Kilpi and Martta Salmela-Järvinen

Riitta Oittinen(University of Helsinki): Tyyni Tuulio—a jack-of-all-trades: writer, journalist, and influential cultural persona

II Women enter academia beginning in the 1890s

Marja Engman (University of Åbo Akademi): Alma Söderhjelm—Researcher of French history and the Enlightenment

Kaisa Tuunainen (University of Joensuu): Liisi Karttunen—a woman historian and the history of the Roman Catholic Church

Elina Katainen (University of Helsinki): Maija Rajainen—Researcher of the Enlightenment education tradition and the women's movement

Mervi Kaarninen (University of Tampere): Sisko Wilkama—a contextualizer of national women's education

III Women rooted in academia since the 1950s

Mervi Kaarninen (University of Tampere): Women historians become professionals since the 1950s

Saara Tuomaala (University of Helsinki): From the societal motherhood to life histories of women. Finnish gender history from the 1970s to the 2000s

Notes

1. Elina Katainen, Tiina Kinnunen, Eva Packalén and Saara Tuomaala, eds., *Women as the producers of historical material in Finland*.

2. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One´s Own*, 1929.

Education

M.A. in Women, Gender, Culture
Histories 1500 to the Present

Full Time 1 yr /Part Time 2 yrs

In 1990 the M.A. in women's history at Royal Holloway was the first such degree course to be established in the U.K. Students have gone on to win national essay prizes and graduates have pursued careers in academia, museums, the BBC, journalism, teaching, marketing and PR, but many have joined primarily to share the intellectual excitement and forge new friendships with those who share their interests.

The M.A. offers a firm grounding in history and historical method and is designed to address a range of methodological issues, from the application of gender theory to the use of historical sources. Students take a core course covering gender and society in Britain and Europe 1500-1980, plus two options from a selection offered in History, English, Classics and Social Policy departments covering every period from classical antiquity and the middle ages to the present day. Students are also given the opportunity to visit major London museums and archives, and to utilise the resources of the Bedford Centre for Research in the History of Women, which houses the college archives and organises regular interdisciplinary gender related conferences and seminars.

Recognised by the AHRB. Many of our students are funded by AHRB awards.

For more information or an informal discussion please contact:
Dr Nicola Pullin, The History Department, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX.
Tel: 01784 443748.
Email: Nicola.Pullin@rhul.ac.uk
We positively welcome applications from all sections of the community.

ConferenceNotices/Calls for papers

The Women's Studies Group: 1500 -1837

The Women's Studies Group: 1500-1837, a multi-disciplinary scholarly group that meets every second month at the Senate House, Malet Street, University of London, is looking for papers for the dates below.

We are quite informal and we give good feedback. Papers are welcome on ANY aspect of women's studies within this chronological period, in ANY field of scholarly or critical enquiry. You do NOT need to be a woman, OR a member, to deliver a paper to our group. Moreover, we welcome papers-in-progress and papers that have been given at another venue.

The group meets from 2:00 to 5:00 on the Saturdays listed below. Paper length is quite flexible - anything from 20 minutes to one hour is fine! (We have discussion afterwards)

Sat 25 Sept 04: One paper needed
Sat 27 Nov 04: One paper needed
Sat 29 Jan. 05: Two papers needed
Sat 21 May 05: Two papers needed

To find out more, please contact Lois Chaber at loisneil@themutual.net or call: 0208 449 9491

Migration in Historical Perspective

The Economic History Society's Women's Committee 15th Annual Workshop
IHR, London, 12-13 November 2004

This workshop will take place on 12-13th November at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. The theme is 'Migration in Historical Perspective'

Details and a programme can be found on the WHN website at http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org/conferences_&_papers.htm

Women's Studies Network (UK & Ireland) Association

18th Annual Conference
10-11 September 2005
King's College, University of Aberdeen
Scotland

Call for Papers

GENDER AND VIOLENCE:
An Interdisciplinary Exploration

News coverage of the role of women in recent events in Iraq has confirmed that the relationship between gender and violence is still a highly charged issue. On the one hand media reports of the activities of female soldiers and terrorists and, in other contexts, 'girl gangs' suggest that women are just as capable of violence as men. On the other hand, the horror expressed in these reports – perhaps mixed with a certain salacious satisfaction – reinforces the traditional view that violence is not 'natural' for women, and that violent women are therefore monstrous anomalies. In a British context, responses to Myra Hindley, even after her death, and to Maxine Carr show the same ambivalence. And equally, is it fair to assume that violent men are not monsters, but merely extreme versions of the norm?

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 inter-disciplinary in approach. Contributions from activists as well as academics are most welcome.

Conference themes 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

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

Further information can be obtained from the Conference Administrator, Dr. Joyce Walker
Email: j.a.walker@abdn.ac.uk

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

'Making Cloth(es): Women, Dress and Textiles'

The SWHN Autumn Conference 2004

Saturday 23 October

Royal Scottish Academy for Music and Drama, Glasgow.

The conference will address questions regarding the role of gender in the production and design of textiles of all kinds (from tweeds to lace), and will also be concerned with the marketing and sale of clothing and textiles. Scotland has a high profile as a producer of distinctive textiles and clothing, from Shetland hosiery and Harris tweeds to Borders cashmere, Paisley patterns and Ayrshire lace. Urban Scotland was also a centre for the mass production and sale of ready-to-wear clothes and as such depended heavily on female labour.

The conference will take place at the newly refurbished Royal Scottish Academy for Music and Drama in the centre of Glasgow. This conference provides an excellent opportunity to consider the wider historical issues concerning women, men and clothing in the context of Glasgow's reputation as a centre of fashion and design.

Details appear on the Scottish Women's History Website: www.swhn.org.uk

STEERING COMMITTEE NEWS

The Committee is pleased to report that membership of the Network is healthy and has been increasing over the last two years. At the last count, we now have 288 members. It is therefore with great thanks that we say goodbye to our membership secretary, Amanda Capern, who steps down in September when her term of office comes to an end. Thank you Amanda, for all your efforts and hard work. We will miss you.

There will be a number of vacancies on the Committee from September and we would urge all members to consider standing. You can find out more about serving on the Committee from having a chat with any existing member or by emailing enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org

Details of who's who on the current Steering Committee can be found on our website at www.womenshistorynetwork.org

We are looking forward to the annual conference in September. This year we have been able to offer fourteen domestic bursaries and four international bursaries to enable people to join us in Hull.

The Committee is seeking to have the WHN accepted as a nominating body for RAE. More news will be available as we have it.

Finally, please do not forget that all members are welcome at meetings of the Steering Committee. The next gathering is scheduled for 3pm on Friday 3rd September at the Quality Royal Hotel in Hull, prior to the start of our annual conference. If you would like to attend it would be best (but by no means essential) to ensure that there have been no last minute changes of plan by first emailing enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org.

Volunteers Required

for Peer Review and Book Review

Women's History Magazine is seeking to create a database of members who would be willing to peer review articles for possible inclusion in the magazine and a database of members who would be willing to review books.

If you would be able to contribute to the WHN in this way, we would be very grateful to receive an email, with details of your specialist area(s).

For Peer Review, please email Claire Jones: enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org

For book reviews, please email our Book Reviews Editor, Jane Potter: bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

FUTURE MAGAZINE ISSUES

Given the strength of the articles submitted following the *Contested Terrains* Conference, we have agreed some themed issues as follows:

Autumn 2004	Science and technology
Spring 2005	Early Modern, with emphasis on sexuality
Summer 2005	Double issue with Empire and the American South as linked themes
Autumn 2005	Political terrains and gender

We also expect to publish a 'Nineteenth century' issue, but may fit some of these papers into one of the others.

Please do continue to send in submissions, since there may be spaces in these issues, and it takes time for the peer review process to take place. Remember to provide one or two pictures (copyright clear) if you can—it brightens up the look of the magazine.

Our Publicity Officers

The following people should be contacted on matters relating to publicity:

Claire Jones, who concentrates on academic groups and peer reviewed material. She can be contacted by email: enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org or at 7 Penkett Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 7QE

Lissy Klaar, who concentrates on the amateur and local historical groups and journals. Her contact is elisabethklaar@yahoo.co.uk

WHN Regional Organisers can request current and back numbers of this magazine (plus WHN T-shirts!) to sell at conferences on a sale or return basis. Please contact Joyce Walker by e-mail: (admin@womenshistorynetwork.org)
or c/o History Dept., University of Aberdeen, Meston Walk, Old Aberdeen AB24 3FX.

WHN CONTACTS

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

Deborah Simonton, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Aberdeen AB24 3FX.
Email: d.simonton@btinternet.com

Nicola Pullin, Dept. of History, Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX
Email: Nicola.Pullin@rhul.ac.uk

Claire Jones, 7 Penkett Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, CH45 7QE.
Email: enquiries@womenshistorynetwork.org

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

To update contact details, or for any membership inquiries (including subscriptions), please contact Fiona Reid, at the following address: 29 Upper Street, Totterdown, Bristol, BS4 3BU, UK
Email freid1@glam.ac.uk or Fiona.Reid@uwe.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 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 your cheque to **Fiona Reid, at: 29 Upper Street, Totterdown, Bristol, BS4 3BU, UK.**